

02 The London Marathon Course

Course Details

Blue Start at Blackheath, Shooters Hill Road

Elite Men
Elite Women
UKA & AAA of England Championships - Men and Women
Flora London Marathon Wheelchair race - Men and Women
Ill & Injured
UKA Clubs
Ballot runners

Red Start at Greenwich Park, Charlton Way

Gold Bond runners
Overseas runners
Guaranteed runners

Green Start at St. John's Park on the edge of Blackheath

Good for Age runners
Media runners

Briefly

Overall, the course is flat and fast. It starts in Blackheath, passes the Cutty Sark in Greenwich at 10km on its way to crossing the River Thames at Tower Bridge. The course then loops round the east end of London, past Canary Wharf in Docklands, before heading west again. The course at this point was altered slightly in 2005 to avoid the cobbles by the Tower of London before continuing along the Embankment to Parliament Square, Birdcage Walk and to the final corner in front of Buckingham Palace. From 1982 until 1993 the finish was on Westminster Bridge, but since then it has been in The Mall.

An Historical Jog Around London's 26.2 Miles

- MILE 3** The runners pass the Woolwich Royal Artillery Barracks which has the longest Georgian facade in Britain.
- MILE 6** On the runners' left is Inigo Jones' Queen's House built for James I's Anne of Denmark in 1616. On their right is Christopher Wren's spectacular architectural creation, the Royal Naval Hospital.
- MILE 6.5** The Cutty Sark is circumnavigated by the runners. This tea clipper held the record for the fastest loaded voyage from Australia to London carrying wool. She was built in 1869.
- MILE 8.5** The runners reach Surrey Docks and for the first time the London Docklands area. This was the only dock complex built south of the River Thames. The first dock opened in the early 1700s, several more were built between 1807 and 1926. Today, only two of the docks have survived a programme of in-filling in the 1970s before the Docklands Development Corporation was set up in 1981. The Surrey Quays Shopping Centre was opened in 1988 next to Canada Water, and a new station on the Jubilee Line extension of the underground has been built and is now open.
- Mile 9.5-10** The route passes by Greenland Dock and the new Docklands residential areas as well as the Surrey Docks City Farm and the four star Holiday Inn which is next to Nelson House, built in 1740 as the home of a wealthy ship-builder.
- MILE 10.5** The route passes within 250 metres of the Mayflower Pub. It was here that the Pilgrim Fathers assembled to set sail for America. However, money ran out and the ship was moved to Plymouth to avoid mooring dues.
- MILE 12** As the runners approach Tower Bridge they pass by Butlers Wharf, a warehouse conversion of businesses, apartments, Sir Terence Conran's 'Gastrodrome' – a mouth watering array of restaurants, food shops and a chefs' school – and the Design Museum, a museum of everyday objects explaining the contribution of design to the quality of our lives. Tower .

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Bridge was built in 1894. All the original machinery for raising and lowering the drawbridge is still in place. It has never once failed to raise the 1,000 ton bascules

MILES 13-14

Once over Tower Bridge, the course turns eastwards along The Highway towards Docklands, passing St George-in-the-East (built as a result of the 1711 Coal Tax and designed by Hawksmoor). The Highway was formerly The Ratcliffe Highway inhabited by sailors. The literary figure Thomas de Quincey wrote in 1827 that the Ratcliffe Highway was a "public thoroughfare in the most chaotic quarter of eastern, or nautical, London".

MILE 14

The route passes near the western entrance of the mile-long Limehouse Link Road Tunnel (opened May 1993), built by the London Docklands Development Corporation under the Limehouse Basin, the home of the Cruising Association and new marina, and linking through to the Isle of Dogs. Just past mile 14 the route passes St Anne's Church, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor and built between 1712 and 1730. The Church has been extensively refurbished over recent years with money from the LDDC. The herring gull sculpture on Narrow Street is by artist Jane Ackroyd. To the right is the Grapes pub, a listed building built in 1720 which was originally a tavern serving the workers of the Limehouse Basin. There are unsavoury stories of watermen and the pubs along this stretch. As a child, Charles Dickens was made to stand on tables and sing to the customers.

MILE 15

Runners pass under Westferry Circus and onto Westferry Road which takes them down to the tip of the Isle of Dogs peninsular, originally known as Stepney Marsh. Dykes and windmills were constructed by Dutch engineers in the 17th Century to drain the marsh. The earliest reference to the area as the Isle of Dogs is on a map of 1588. It was so named because King Henry VIII kept his hunting dogs there. Here you can also see Pierre Vivant's Traffic Light Tree, one of the many sculptures of the area. It is in the middle of the roundabout where Marsh Wall and Westferry Road meet. The restless changing of lights, pointing in all directions and giving mixed signals, might say something about how people feel towards the area and its manic, ever changing nature.

MILE 16

East Ferry Road is on an area of the peninsular called Mudchute, formed in the 1840s from the spoil of the excavation of the Millwall Dock. Silt from its channels and waterways was dumped on nearby land, creating "The Mudchute". It's now home to the biggest inner city farm in Europe.

MILE 18

Runners pass by the City Pride pub seeing runners three miles behind them on the other side of the building.

MILE 19

Canary Wharf. The runners pass the base of Britain's tallest building (the second tallest in Europe): the 800ft tower, One Canada Square, at the centre of Canary Wharf, one of the largest single business developments in the world. The tower is flanked by the HSBC and Citigroup towers as well as the new Barclays headquarters building. Canary Wharf is built in the West India Dock which opened in 1802. It includes 13.1 million sq ft of office space and over 75,000 people work on the estate, including approximately 7,500 people in the tower itself. Over 200 shops, bars and restaurants are now open through three retail malls.

MILE 20

When the East India Dock Road was built, Poplar High Street became a little used back street – "a quaint straggling length of gabled houses, many built of wood, little gardens and trees in front of many of them, almost every second house an inn, beer house or place of refreshment". In the High Street was St. Matthias Church, the old East India Company chapel and also "a quaint building, Poplar Hospital, a home of refuge or hostel for the East India Company's aged seaman." Much later at the narrow end of the street there was The Queens Theatre, a very popular Music Hall and one of the last theatre buildings to survive in east London.

MILE 21

Commercial Road was constructed in 1802-4 to link the East & West India Docks with the City. St Mary & St Michael is a RC church of 1856 built to serve the Irish navvies and dock workers. The health centre is in the premises of the former East End Maternity Hospital (1889-1968).

MILE 22

St Katharine's Dock is reached. Wonderful views of Thomas Telford's magnificent 1828 warehouses.

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- MILE 23-24** Into the City of London, past Billingsgate Market, no longer the fish market of London but still retaining three feet of perma frost created after centuries of cold stores on the site.
- MILE 24** Cleopatra's Needle, one of a pair that originally stood at Heliopolis in Egypt. Its twin stands in Central Park, New York, just a few feet away from the New York Marathon course. Neither of them has any connection with Cleopatra.
- MILE 25** Parliament Square and Big Ben, and a sign that the race is almost over. Now there is a mile to go as runners turn right into Great George Street and Birdcage Walk.
- MILE 26** The runners reach the finish in London's great ceremonial avenue, The Mall, in front of Buckingham Palace.

The Blue Line

The Flora London Marathon has a number of tight corners and winding sections of road. It is essential, therefore, that leading runners know where to run to be on the shortest possible route. A dashed blue line is put down before the race by a professional road marking company – Wilson & Scott (Highways) Ltd. It takes around five to six hours of intensive work to paint the line in its correct place and it can be only be done at night when the roads are dry.

The paint – Tempro – has to dry almost instantly and has to be stable enough to last for three days without fading. Finally, to satisfy police and local highway engineers, it has to be quickly removed. Tempro can be washed off the road with a special non-polluting solvent and gallons of water. The removal team takes about six hours to wash off the paint. By midnight on race day, all traces of the blue line are gone.

Mile and Kilometre Markers

There are digital clocks set on seven feet high stands at all the mile points and at every 5km mark and at half-way: 35 double-sided clocks in all. All the clocks around the course are started at precisely 09.00 for the Elite Women and again at 09.45 for the Elite Men, the Championship races and the massed runners of the 2006 Flora London Marathon. Official timing is by Timex.

Time Keeping

The Flora London Marathon will again employ ChampionChip to time all runners in this year's, race including the wheelchair athletes and the adidas Mini London Marathon. All runners will be issued with a ChampionChip, a transponder that is attached to their running shoe.

This Chip is read each time the runner passes over strategically placed mats at 5km, 10km, 15km, 20km, 25km, half-way, 30km, 35km, 40km and at the finish line. These times are instantly relayed using an integrated communications system developed by Technologie Made Simple (Techms), the marathon's information services provider, to BBC Sport for immediate on-screen display. The same information is also delivered to the marathon's race day press centre to provide an instant resource for the world's media.

For the first time this year, there will be official time keepers at the 30km mark to time runners in both the men's and women's races for 30km road running record purposes.

All results will be posted on the Flora London Marathon website on race day. The address is www.london-marathon.co.uk.

Drinks and Drinks Stations

Dehydration is the biggest problem that marathon runners have to overcome. In a hard race on a hot and humid day, up to four litres of fluid can be lost through sweating and exhalation. It is important for runners to keep well hydrated.

Water supplied by Vittel is available at every mile site starting from mile three with the last drink available at 25 miles. Around 660,000 330ml plastic bottles of water have been supplied to meet the needs of the marathon.

In addition to water, Lucozade Sport is available at the start and at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 miles. Lucozade Sport comes in 330ml pouches.

Many of the elite runners prefer to have their own special drinks available during the race. These special bottles are collected on Saturday night and kept in secure and cool conditions overnight. On race day they are taken to the appropriate 5km points. At the 5km points, eight in all, there will be three numbered (1-3) tables allocated between the various elite athletes from which they will take their special drink bottles.