Original Marathon – London's newest, oldest marathon launches

Wednesday 13 December, 2023

Introducing the "Original Marathon": This is an opportunity to run in the footsteps of legends in London's newest, oldest marathon. Celebrate London's rich sporting history and heritage with the re-creation of the first ever 26.2 mile marathon.

Event dates: Saturday 16 March and/or Saturday 20 April 2024 – Lace up your running shoes and prepare to take on the "Original Marathon". This 'new' marathon retraces the iconic route of the first-ever 26.2mile marathon. The now global standard marathon distance of 26 miles, 385 yards was first set at the London 1908 Olympic Games. The 1908 race had an amazing story which captivated the world and included; a distance influenced by royalty, an exhausted runner, a controversial disqualification and a special cup awarded by the Queen (see the full story below).

As the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games approaches, 2024 will be a great time to celebrate the extraordinary feats of the pioneers of marathon running and the legends of 1908.

Run in the Footsteps of Legends:

Original Marathon enables participants to run in the very footsteps of the legends of 1908. This unique running experience allows runners to connect with the legacy of marathon running, drawing inspiration from those who paved the way over a century ago and to tick off a true bucket-list challenge.

In keeping with the ethos of the Original Marathon only 75 places will be available for the challenge. In 1908 only 28 of the 75 competitors finished (we are hoping for a better success rate in 2024). Original Marathon is not a race, and the event is not closed road. Runners will depart in paced groups, with a run/pace guide to follow.

London's Newest, Oldest Marathon:

Original Marathon proudly takes its place as London's newest, oldest marathon by following the historic route of the 1908 Olympic Games marathon. This event is a celebration of the pioneers of marathon running and a testament to the timeless appeal of the 26.2 mile challenge.

Celebrating the Rich Sporting History and Heritage of London:

The 75 runners will not only experience the physical challenge of the marathon but also immerse themselves in the rich sporting history and heritage of London. The route includes running past an original waymarking sign in Eton (still on a wall from 115 years ago! – see image), past Wembley stadium and finish at the location of the actual 1908 finish line, which has been respectfully preserved in White City.

Event Highlights

1. Historical Significance: Runners will run the exact route that made history during the 1908 Olympics as the first ever 26.2 mile marathon. A must-do event for any marathon runner.

1. Iconic Landmarks: The original 1908 sign in Eton, the actual finish line location and a journey through the London neighbourhoods travelled through by Olympians.

1. Commemorative medal: a recreation of the actual 1908 medal.

1. Celebration of the marathon community: The Original Marathon aims to bring together runners of all levels to celebrate the enduring spirit and camaraderie of the marathon.

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1. Charitable Cause: Run for our amazing charity partner, Aspire who are a national charity that provides practical help to people who have been paralysed by Spinal Cord Injury.

“Aspire is delighted to be involved in such an exciting project. We are a charity that seeks out interesting endurance events and the Original Marathon is a unique and fascinating challenge to raise money for people paralysed by a spinal cord injury.” *Brian Carlin, Chief Executive Officer, Aspire*

Registration for the Original Marathon is now open at OriginalMarathon.com welcoming individuals from around the globe to be part of this historic experience. Whether you’re a seasoned marathoner, a running ‘geek’ or a first-time participant, join us on 16 March and/or 20 April 2024 for an event that celebrates the history, heritage and legend of the marathon.

About the Original Marathon

The Original Marathon will run again:

- Saturday 16 March 2024
- Saturday 20 April 2024

Original Marathon story:

The London 1908 Olympic Games marathon was the first ever over the 26.2 miles distance. Prior to 1908, marathons were run over varying distances.

The 1908 route from inside the grounds of Windsor Castle, through Eton, Harrow and Wembley finished on the track in the White City Stadium in front of the Royal box. Some historical elements of this race remain to this day - there is still an original marathon waymarking sign still up from 115 years ago on a wall in Eton and the site of the Olympic finish line is etched in stone in the new BBC White City development.

The 1908 event was also famous for Dorando Pietri (Italy), who due to exhaustion, went the wrong way when entering the stadium, fell five times and was helped to his feet by officials. He was first across the line, but was subsequently disqualified for receiving assistance following an appeal by the US team. The American Johnny Hayes was awarded the Olympic gold medal. This caused a great deal of public love and sympathy for Pietri, who subsequently received a special cup from the Queen.

Following the success of the 1908 marathon, a legacy event was created running from 1909 to 1996. The Polytechnic Marathon (Poly Marathon) was London’s first marathon and the race hosted 8 world record times, including the first ever sub 2 hour 20 marathon (marathon running’s ‘4 minute mile’). The Poly Marathon is STILL the longest running European marathon!

Original Marathon will replicate the 1908 Marathon route. The aim is to develop the event into a must-do event in the running calendar, raise money for charity and re-establish a famous, historical run with fantastic sporting heritage.

We believe that the story of the infamous 1908 Olympic Marathon needs to be shared and celebrated. The 1908 Olympic Marathon was the very first to be held over the (now standard) distance of 26.2 miles (42.195 km). A distance that was ratified in 1924 and has been the standard marathon distance ever since. Original Marathon will replicate the route, start time, medals and even replicate the original number of entrants (75) of the original 1908 run. The run will be on open footpaths and guided in pace groups. The route retraces the 1908 route as much as possible, with some necessary minor deviations.

Original Marathon will be an opportunity for runners to follow in the footsteps of sporting legends.

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