



# MARATHON MANIA

Everyone wants to have run London at least once but not everyone gets a place. But have hope as there are plenty more marathons out there. Laura Fountain reports



PERFORMANCE

Every month brings with it a host of marathons up and down the country

**E**ach January, runners (and non-runners) across the country take to the streets to begin training for their spring marathon. By February their mileage will be climbing as they work towards their goal race. If you haven't signed up for a spring event you might feel you've missed the boat as far as marathons go this year, but that's not the case. Every month brings with it a host of marathons up and down the country, so there are still plenty of opportunities for you to make 2013 the year you take on your first marathon or dip under that number on the clock that you've been dreaming of.

**THE MARATHON**

London Marathon is often seen as 'the' marathon by new runners and failure to get a place in the ballot means their goal of completing the 26.2-mile distance can be put on hold for another year. But with the chances of securing a place in the ballot slim to say the least, it could be years before you get the chance to make that marathon dream a reality. With plenty of other quality races throughout the UK offering

guaranteed places, there's no time like the present to sign up and start training. So what are you waiting for?

When it comes to finding a marathon to take part in, one of the main problems you might encounter is choice - there are just so many races out there. It can be difficult - how do

you choose between them? Think about what's important for you in a marathon. Do you want to head to another city to run somewhere a bit different, or look for a race that's close to home where you're more likely to get a few friends and family cheering your name? Then speak to other runners and ask them which races they've done and which they recommend.

**SPRING MARATHONS**

If your weekly mileage is high enough and you're quick off the mark in snapping up last minute places, these races might just see you get a marathon in before the summer.

**■ GREATER MANCHESTER MARATHON  
28 APRIL 2013**

If you've maintained good mileage over the winter months, a 12-week training plan could see you at the start line for this even in good shape. The race boasts a flat course that has just 55m of elevation gain - perfect for chasing down a PB.

Jon Simpson took part in the race last year. He says: "The route was predominantly a flat and fast course, starting and finishing in the Old Trafford area of Manchester. The organisers claim the route is of PB potential which is believable, however in its inaugural year and under bad weather conditions, it was hard to test out this claim. The support in the last five miles, when the race re-entered the city, was particularly good (and when you need it the most when physical and mental fatigue start to kick in)." [www.greatermanchestermarathon.com](http://www.greatermanchestermarathon.com)

**■ RICHMOND PARK MARATHON  
5 MAY 2013**

A leafier, low-key alternative to the London Marathon if you want to say you've run a marathon in the capital, this race takes place in London's Richmond Park. Now in its third year, the race sees 300 runners completing three laps of the park giving spectators ample opportunity to see you.



## Autumn sees another bountiful crop of races up and down the country

Carol O'Beney completed the race this year. She says: "It's a beautiful course that started with over 200 runners running after a man dressed as a gorilla on a push bike. The marshals were really encouraging and the race had a great atmosphere with many casual, non-race runners encouraging us along the way. The hills were brutal but I was happy to finish in 4 hours." [www.richmondparkmarathon.co.uk](http://www.richmondparkmarathon.co.uk)

### AUTUMN MARATHONS

Autumn sees another bountiful crop of races up and down the country with events taking place most weekends. Training for an autumn race poses the opposite challenges to training for a spring race. Instead of trying to stay warm on your runs you'll be trying to keep cool. But training through the summer months does offer the added benefit of light evenings.

#### ■ LOCH NESS MARATHON 29 SEPTEMBER 2013

Fancy a bit of monster spotting to while away the miles? Run a marathon in the scenic setting of Loch Ness and you can do just that. And if you manage to see Nessie it might make you run a bit faster. This point to point course takes you along the south-eastern shores of Loch Ness, across the River Ness, and finishes in the centre of Inverness. (Monster sightings not guaranteed.) [www.lochnessmarathon.com](http://www.lochnessmarathon.com)

#### ■ DUBLIN MARATHON 28 OCTOBER 2013

If you're after the big city marathon feel, but without a big price tag that New York or London can involve, Dublin could be the race for you. 10,000 runners will be taking to the streets in 2013 for the 33rd Dublin Marathon (it's difficult not to say that with an Irish accent).

Gareth Fletcher took part in the 2012 race through the Irish city. He says: "The Dublin Marathon was a fantastic experience: well organised, flat (apart from 'Heartbreak Hill' at mile 20), and an interesting mix of scenery including four miles through Phoenix Park. But best of all was the crowd, who cheered enthusiastically throughout and were almost deafening leading up to the finish line – they gave me a real boost." [www.dublinmarathon.ie](http://www.dublinmarathon.ie)

### OFF-ROAD MARATHONS

Leave the city behind, grab some trail shoes and take on an off-road event. These types of races are becoming more and more popular with runners. They're less about the time on the clock and more about enjoying the scenery and a challenge.

#### ■ MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN MARATHON 29 JUNE 2013

If you've run a few road marathons and are looking for something a bit different, this one is about as different as they come. Set in the Brecon Beacons, this off-road trail marathon is a race up a mountain and back. The race starts at 5.30pm but you have to make it to the finish by midnight. [www.brutalevents.co.uk](http://www.brutalevents.co.uk)

#### ■ BEACHY HEAD MARATHON 26 OCTOBER 2013

Not one for the faint hearted - or the weak thighed - this scenic course is challenging to say the least. To call it a hilly race would be an understatement. Last year's winner finished in 3 hours 9 minutes - leave your PB attempts at home and run for the experience.

Kevin Abel has taken on this race twice. He says: "I love competing in the Beachy Head Marathon for the challenge it offers: over 3500 feet of climb along with gates, stiles and over 200 steps with most of the biggest hills in the last eight miles. The scenery is also amazing, especially from the top of the South Downs. Although this year I had to battle against 30mph winds whilst trying to take in the amazing views.

"There is a reason why the Beachy Head Marathon is one of the toughest Marathons in UK, come and try it." [www.beachyheadmarathon.org.uk](http://www.beachyheadmarathon.org.uk)