

Lazy girl running

“This year I was just as keen to combine three of my favourite things into my birthday weekend: seeing friends, drinking beer and running a few miles”

As I rushed from the swimming pool near Tottenham Court Road to a spin class in Holborn I bumped into a former colleague. “Hey, how’s it going?” he said. We chatted for a few minutes and exchanged gossip before I pointed at my wrist where, other than when I’m running, there’s rarely ever a watch and said: “Got to go, I’m late for my spin class.”

“We’ll have to meet up for lunch soon.”

“Um, errrrr, well...” An offended look shot back at me, “... the thing is, pretty much every hour of my life is accounted for during the next six months. Between going to work, training for London Marathon and the Ironman, as well as leading my running groups, I have very little time to play with.”

He wished me luck in a ‘rather you than me’ kind of way and we went our separate ways, me to sweat it out on a spin bike and him to buy some lunch and head back to the office. At first glance this story might seem a bit worrying and as though I’ve got my priorities the wrong way round - shunning friends and human interaction in favour of exercise isn’t, after all, the way to a happy, balanced life. But this isn’t the case.

Over the past few years my social life has changed. Where it once centred round a pub after work on a Friday night leading to a hangover on a Saturday morning, it has now expanded to include running, swimming and riding bikes. Where I’d once suggest to a friend that we catch up over a couple of glasses of wine, I’m now just as likely to suggest we go for a run together. Or maybe go for a run and finish up at the pub at least.

Last week was my 32nd birthday. Once upon a time I was guaranteed that this occasion would always fall in the half-term holidays which meant I never had to go to school on my birthday. Now I’m guaranteed that this date will always fall in the midst of spring marathon training. Last year I was taken away for the weekend which saw me cramming all my scheduled runs into five days to leave the weekend clear for celebrating. On the



A rainy run



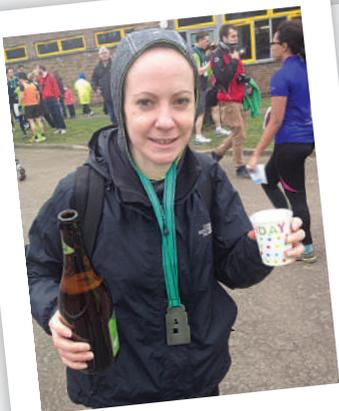
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Laura Fountain is a blogger, author and editor living and running in London. She’s run seven marathons and is now training for an Ironman but just six years ago she couldn’t run 400 meters. Her book *The Lazy Runner* was published in 2012. She’s a UK Athletics qualified run leader and helps beginner runners learn how to run and, more importantly, how to enjoy it.

Friday morning I got up early to do 18 miles in the snow before catching a train at midday. It meant instead of running the weekend was full of pubs with warm fires and a few too many beers knowing that I wouldn’t have to head out in the cold the next morning to trudge through the snow with a fuzzy head. I can fully recommend drinking beer by an open fire but the part about cramming a week’s training into five days, not so much.

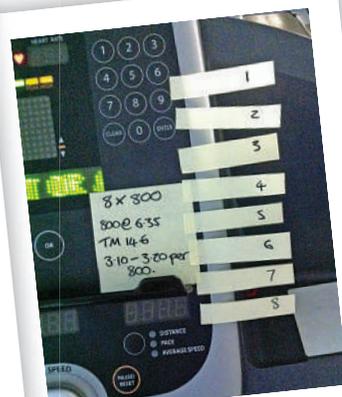
This year I was just as keen to combine three of my favourite things into my birthday weekend: seeing friends, drinking beer and running a few miles. So I invited my friends to run a race with me and to celebrate both their own running and the fact that I was getting another year closer to the Vets category in the pub after. We headed to the Hampton Court half marathon, four of us to race and a few more to spectate. In the pub after the race I was with friends I’d known for years, since before I’d even bought a pair

of running shoes or knew what the word ‘Fartlek’ meant, and new friends who running has brought me into contact with.

Running can be a solitary sport if you let it. But it doesn’t have to be. Whether it’s an old friend who doesn’t think they can, or a new friend waiting to be made, all it takes is a few words: “Fancy going for a run?”



Finish-line beer at the half marathon



Treadmill interval session post-its



Oh, and I went for a run with Haile Gebrselassie!