

2003 Twin Cities Marathon Guide

By Kristin (Stone) Walters

When it comes to the Twin Cities Marathon, two things are certain: you'll be running one of the most beautiful marathons in the country, and 250,000 supportive spectators will be cheering for you along the course. Whether you choose to run, watch, or volunteer, you're taking part in a true Twin Cities tradition. According to past runners, if you keep a few things in mind, the experience will be even better.

Get ready

Your race packets will include all of the information you need about parking, shuttles to the starting line and timing of events. But if you're hosting out-of-town guests or just excited about the race, you might want to check out some of this information in advance.

Steve Brisse, a two-time marathoner and one-time Twin Cities veteran, recommends spending some time at the race expo.

"It's fun to go socialize and meet runners of all skill levels," Brisse says. "You also get to look at shoes, singlets, technology, and nutrition information." He recommends checking out the other events during the weekend, such as the 5K fun run the day before the race. "It's perfect if you have a friend in town," he says.

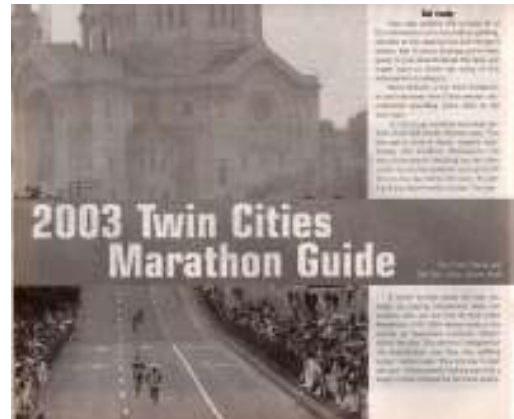
If you're worried about the race, you might try praying beforehand. Mary Lou Carlson, who ran the first 20 Twin Cities Marathons (1971-2001) always went to the service at Augustana Lutheran Church before the race. "The service is designed for the marathoners, and they sing uplifting songs," Carlson says. "It's a nice way to start the race." Unfortunately, Carlson says with a laugh, it hasn't helped her run any faster.

Spectators

Whether you're running or watching, the Twin Cities Marathon is a great time to appreciate the beauty of the entire area. According to Judy Roe of St. Paul, a two-time TCM runner, the scenery is gorgeous along the entire course. The wide variety of spectators is sure to keep you entertained.

"There are champagne brunches in Kenwood, students on the college campuses, and families in the neighborhoods along the course," Roe says. "There's a house on River Road where they set up bleachers in the yard, and informal parties all along the course. It's an uplifting day, whether you're a runner or not. It inspires a lot of people."

Dawn Given, St. Paul, has done the TCM once and two marathons total. She says the TCM is known for its excellent spectators. When Given ran the Las Vegas marathon, hardly anyone



turned out to watch. "It was the most depressing marathon," she says. "A lot of first-timers said they'd never run a marathon again, and I told them, 'You have to come to St. Paul!'"

Carlson has a few tips for spectators. "Don't tell the runners how much they have left," she says. "Don't say, 'It's just four more miles!' or 'You're almost there!' because it may not seem like it to the runner."

"Yell, 'Great job, keep up the good work!'—especially to the slower runners," Given says. She also suggests that runners write their names on their shirts. Spectators, if you see a name, use it in your cheering.

"When people are cheering and you hear your name, it puts energy in your legs," says Carrie Tschida, who will run her third TCM this year. "That's huge."

Following your runner

For spectators, the Twin Cities Marathon provides a unique opportunity to cheer on friends and family several times during the race. In addition, you can get great pictures just about anywhere along the course. Brisse suggests you check out the course map before the race to figure out where to go.

"Choose any of the spots around the lakes, along the parkway, or along the river," Brisse says. "All are pretty accessible. If you're following a person, make the stops an hour apart, such as at the start, mile six, mile 12, mile 18, and mile 22. And give yourself extra time to get to the finish line, so it can be relaxing."

In addition, tell the runners where you will be. "I look forward to mile 10, which is close to my home," Tschida says. "That's where I see my husband, and our dog, Frankie. It gives me such a boost to see them."

Most of the runners agree that the place they need the most support is along Summit Avenue. "It just keeps going," Roe says. After tackling the hill at mile 21, the runners face a gradual incline until they get to the last half-mile of the race.

Christine Headrick, who ran her first Twin Cities Marathon last year, suggests stopping to cheer even sooner, on your way toward the finish. "Have friends meet you right before you cross the river," says Headrick, referring to mile 19. "That's when you're dying."

Course tips

"The only real hill is that one at 21 miles," says Jerry Wilson, coach of the Team Salubrious running club. He's run the Twin Cities Marathon 15 times, and teaches a marathon-training class. "It's important to run the hill many times in training to mentally prepare."

Wilson recommends walking up the hill rather than running. "You might be two minutes slower than your running pace for that distance," he says, "but you'll finish it fresh and ready to begin racing the last miles of the marathon."

Carlson suggests bringing a little something extra to help out someone who may not have planned well. "One year I didn't have any Gu, and someone gave me some, and it saved my life," Carlson says. "That carried me quite a ways." In another race, she was injured and turned to another runner for some ibuprofen.

Get involved

An army of more than 5,000 volunteers helps ensure the race goes according to plan. From handing out water to helping people at the finish line, there's plenty to do to help along the course.

"There is an envelope stuffing party to get the race packets ready, and it gives you a chance to hobnob with the runners," Brisse says. "You can also help out on race day or in the pre-planning. Once you watch, you'll want to help out. It's really inspirational. You see people of world- or national-class and also older, strangely-shaped individuals. It's truly a group/community event."

It's too late to join a planning committee this year, but there are many volunteer opportunities for the race weekend: start line, finish line, information booth, packet pick-up, expo merchandise sales, athlete transportation, course marshals, medical, massage, post-race party, athlete sweat pick-up, aid stations, and more.

"If you want a one-day volunteer opportunity, you can work at the water stations," Roe says. "That's a way to really get into the excitement of the day." She also suggests being a course marshal. "There is one at every intersection, and it's amazing how many are needed over the 26.2 mile course."

For information on how to lend a hand, visit the event's website at www.twincitiesmarathon.org.

Post-race options

There are a number of great restaurants in the St. Paul area if you'd like to celebrate with pasta (Cossetta's) or cheesecake (Café Latte). According to Wilson, Team Salubrious likes to go to the Buca on Gannon Road. Spectators who wrapped up their cheering on Summit can finish the day at any of the restaurants or bars along Grand Avenue, such as Billy's or Dixie's.

Of course, after running 26.2 miles, some people just want to relax. "My husband makes me dinner and pours me a bath," Given says. Whatever you choose, enjoy the day and be proud of your accomplishment.