

Boston Tips

After six trips to Boston I have picked up a few tips along the way. Hope they can be useful

PRE RACE

- The expo is big. It can be hot and crowded.
- You really do need your card to pick up your number so do bring it with you.
- Bring a picture ID, your drivers licence or your passport. (If you have lost your card they will replace it but you need ID)
- Make sure you get a copy of the poster being given out at or near the Adidas clothing. It has the names of everyone who ran the race on it (half on one side and half on the other).
- They tend to run out of sizes in the Adidas Boston Marathon Gear so don't wait to buy what you want.
- There is also a store on the street close to the finish line which carries the Adidas line. Last year they had a better selection of sizes than the expo by the last day and the lines were MUCH shorter than the killer lines at the expo.
- The Adidas stuff does not go on sale but lots of other stuff does late Sunday. If you are in the area its worth stopping by the expo a couple of hours before it closes.
- If you have family and friends coming to cheer you on there is a 5k open to anyone on Sunday morning. Lots of walkers so no worries about being last. You can register on-line through the Boston marathon website. There were almost 4000 people in the race last year. I would not recommend doing it if you are racing Monday.
- The Pasta dinner is good but the line is long and your ticket will have a time on it. If you want to go with friends who are also running, you will have to do some ticket trading so you all have the same time on your tickets.
- There are a limited number of extra tickets available for purchase at the expo if you want to take the family (children under 12 are free).
- I believe the extra tickets can be used for any sitting.

RACE DAY

- To get to the start either take the race busses from Boston Common or get someone to drive you to the drop off in Hopkinton State Park (not in Hopkinton) where you will be bussed to the start.
- Don't try and get to the start line by car – they don't let private cars get close on race morning.
- Be cautious about hotel shuttles particularly ones that claim they can drive right into Hopkinton. I have been on shuttles that were turned back and the traffic jams going into Hopkinton are remarkable!

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- Use the port-a-potties in Boston Common before you get on the buses. The traffic can move very slowly.
- With the new 10 am start time you really do need to take the bus as early as recommended. If you are in the first wave this is especially important.
- If your hotel does not provide transport or is not located on the subway you may need to drive to Boston Common because a lot of the trains don't run early enough to get you to the buses.
- There is a parking garage under Boston Common and parking is not outrageous because Monday is a holiday.
- You will get a drop off bag at the expo, which you can fill with stuff for the baggage buses at Hopkinton and pick-up at the finish.
- The baggage busses will not take anything that does not fit in your bag and they only take the official bags.
- If it's wet it is a good idea to write your number on the bag with a Sharpe. One year it rained really hard and all the stickers started falling off the bags...25,000 identical bags belonging to 25,000 cold wet runners at the finish.
- You may be hanging around outside in Hopkinton for a long time before the start so be prepared. (In 2007 it poured down and they let the runners into the gym, that is the only time I have ever seen them do that. Assume you will be outside the whole time).
- There are large open sided tents but there is not enough room in the tents for all runners.
- There are lots of port-a-potties but the lines are huge! In 2008 some runners bib numbers and chips were removed for peeing in the bushes so beware!
- Although you can only bring home what fits in your bag, anything you leave behind in Hopkinton is picked up and given to charity. So, I always bring extra stuff and look at it as a donation. Go shopping at Value Village!
- Every year I see people on the bus in shorts without a bag of extra clothes. Do not be one of these people you will be cold and wet and miserable and that is before you start running.

Stuff to bring:

- Something to put between you and the ground. (a garbage bag, a heat blanket from another race, an old blanket even an air mattress)
- Warm clothes – I have a set of clothes from the thrift shop that I wear- anything that does not fit in the bag gets left behind.
- A hat and gloves –if it's hot you need the hat to keep the sun off before the run.
- An extra pair of running socks just in case your feet get wet before the race.
- An extra large garbage bag to put over your clothes in case it is wet or cold (you can also start the run in this if you need to)- I bring extras every

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year and I always end up making new friends by giving them all away. Dollar store raincoats work well too you can even get ones with Canadian flags on them.

- Food and water – there are bagels, water and Gatorade available but the lines can be long.
- Vaseline or Body Glide.
- Music or a book if you need a distraction.
- Two grocery bags to put over your shoes to keep them dry in case the ground is wet.
- Your race number, pins and timing chip.
- A permanent marker so you can write your name on your arm or leg. (people will call out encouragement to you by name if they can see it)
- Us Canadians tend to have a maple leaf or flag somewhere on our running clothes as well.

Things to bring and make sure you put in your bag so you have them at the finish

- Dry clothes
- Sandals to put on after the race (when you have that I never want to wear these shoes again feeling)
- Money for a cab? In the past Subway was free with your race number.
- Cell phone? (there is a risk it can get lost in the baggage bus but it can be very useful for finding friends at the end)
- Every year you see people looking very cold waiting in Hopkinton with nothing but the clothes they plan to run in!
- Lots of people wear extra clothes to start the race and toss them in the first couple of miles. There are T-shirts everywhere! See Found In Boston: <http://www.runnersworld.com/article/0,7120,s6-239-420--12546-0,00.html>

More Race Day Advice

- Go to the start when they tell you to. It's not that close to the athlete's village and there are a lot of people to get through. I ended up starting two corals back one year because I could not get to my coral before the race started.
- They do check bib numbers going into the corals and they will not let you start in a faster coral.

THE COURSE

- The course is challenging. It's hard to do but you have got to hold back at the beginning.
- There is a lot of downhill.
- Heartbreak hill is actually the last of three hills in Newton. See <http://www.runnersworld.com/article/0,7120,s6-239-420--11717-0,00.html>
- For a good description of the course

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- Water stops are every mile on both sides of the road so you do not have to cross the course to get water.
- It's a very well run efficient course. I have never had any problems getting water or Gatorade on the course. The one exception is the water stop at 25 which has only been on the right side of the road for the last couple of years.
- If you have friends who want to watch you run the best bet is to have them look for you somewhere before the last few Km where the crowds are very thick. It also helps to agree before the run on where they will be looking for you and which side of the road you will be on. It is possible to run by and have them miss you completely because of the crowds both on and off the course.

AT THE FINISH

- Take a foil cape even if you don't think you need it. It can take a while to get your stuff back.
- The buses are not all on the same street but there are volunteers to tell you which way to go. The crowds at the buses can be bad because the buses are filled by race number and the race numbers are assigned by qualifying time; as a result the runners for one bus tend to finish at about the same time. This means there are hundreds of runners trying to get stuff from one bus while other buses are full of people with nothing to do. Why they don't do the buses by last name is beyond me!
- The family meeting area can be a zoo. We usually pick a place to meet in Boston Common with a back-up indoor spot.
- DO NOT PLAN TO MEET AT THE FINISH LINE only VIP's can get near it.
- If you lose a runner send another runner to look for them. You can get back into the finish area with a race number and a little fast talking.
- The athlete alert system is great but it can be very slow on international cell phones. It will give you the correct lap or finish time but you may get it an hour after the fact.

Have fun !

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