

The London Marathon

What Is a 'Marathon'?

The marathon race comes from a Greek legend that tells of a soldier who was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens with news that Greece had beaten the Persian army. It is said that the soldier ran the entire distance without stopping, bursting into the assembly with his good news before collapsing and dying.

What Is the London Marathon?

The London Marathon is a long-distance running race. Runners from around the world come to take part in the race, which is well known for the historic route around London and the carnival atmosphere of the thousands of spectators. The London Marathon course is 26 miles and 385 yards long and takes runners past many famous sites in London, for example, the Cutty Sark.



When Was the First London Marathon?

The first London Marathon took place on 29th March, 1981. It was the idea of John Disley and Chris Brasher, who had recently taken part in the New York Marathon. They were keen to create a London Marathon that would show off the famous sites in the city and prove that Britain was best when it came to organising major events. The first London Marathon was a huge hit! 20,000 people entered and 7,747 runners took to the start line with thousands more filling the streets of London to cheer them on.

Who Can Take Part in the London Marathon?

- Elite runners (the best, fastest runners in the world)
- Club and fun runners
- Wheelchair and Paralympic runners

Many people choose to run for a charity and raise money for a good cause. More than three quarters of the competitors now run for a charity. Sometimes, they run the course in fancy dress.

The London Marathon: Facts and Figures

- Major Tim Peake ran the London Marathon on board the International Space Station!
- The fastest man to run the London Marathon was Eliud Kipchoge from Kenya in a time of 2:03.05.
- The fastest woman was Paula Radcliffe of Great Britain in a time of 2:15.25.
- The fastest marathon runner dressed as a plant was Lee Goodwin with a time of 3:02.43.
- The slowest London marathon was run by Lloyd Scott, who wore a deep-sea diving suit and finished the marathon in five days, eight hours, twenty-nine minutes and forty-six seconds! (The organisers have since set a 24-hour time limit in which to complete the London Marathon.)



Questions

1. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.

2. What is the London Marathon?

3. Why might people be keen to take part in the London Marathon?

4. When was the first London Marathon?

5. Which event inspired John Disley and Chris Brasher to create the London Marathon?

6. Why did they want to create a London Marathon?

7. How do you know the London Marathon was a hit?

8. What is the largest group of runners at the London Marathon?

9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for a good cause?

10. Why was it unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon?

Answers

1. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.
Answers should include reference to the Greek legend of a soldier running from Marathon to Athens with news of a great victory.
2. What is the London Marathon?
The London Marathon is a long-distance running race.
3. Why might people be keen to take part in the London Marathon?
People are keen to take part in the London Marathon because of its historic route, carnival atmosphere and famous sites.
4. When was the first London Marathon?
The first London Marathon was held on 29th March, 1981.
5. Which event inspired John Disley and Chris Brasher to create the London Marathon?
The event that had inspired John and Chris was the New York Marathon.
6. Why did they want to create a London Marathon?
They wanted to create a London Marathon in order to show off the sites of the city and to prove that Britain was the best when it came to organising major events.
7. How do you know the London Marathon was a hit?
We know that the marathon was a hit because 20,000 people entered the race and 7,747 actually took part, while thousands more lined the streets.
8. What is the largest group of runners at the London Marathon?
The largest group of runners in the London Marathon are charity runners who make up more than three quarters of the field.
9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for a good cause?
Answers may vary but could include reference to the challenge of the race, the community spirit or the fun.
10. Why was it unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon?
It was unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon because he was in space at the time!