

Geneva Half Marathon

This was part of a full program of races over the weekend which consisted of a junior 1k, 2k, 2.5k, 3k, 5k all on the Saturday. Also 5 variations of 10k, including a walking and a women only event. The Sunday hosted the Half and full marathons, with the full marathon having the option of a team relay effort. How much did it cost? I entered the half marathon well in advance and took advantage of the low opening price of £42. Flights to Geneva can be found direct from Newcastle by EasyJet and are very low in price. Switzerland itself is not a cheap place, but it has lots of advantages too which more than make up for it. I chose to go with EasyJet Holidays to combine Hotel with the flight. This cut the costs of the same hotels to almost half the advertised price. It worked out at only £179 per person for return flights including 2 nights in a very nice, central, 3 star hotel. Couldn't fault the hotel for location, staff, cleanliness, style and comfort. With check out at 12 noon, we had plenty time to stroll back after race have a shower then leave bags with them so we could enjoy the rest of the day watching the marathon, boat trips, lunch and generally lazing in the sun.

Public Transport

The public bus, tram, rail and boat services are all FREE to anyone staying in a hotel in Geneva. The airport is only about 3 mile from the centre and when arriving you can get a free transport ticket from one of the machines which give you 80 minutes on any public transport within Geneva (zone 10) to get you to your hotel, then your hotel provides you with another free pass for the duration of your stay. Your boarding pass also qualifies you for free transport to and from Airport, so does your race entry for the day of race. As if that was not enough, you can also hire cycles for up to 4 hours for FREE. So all bases were well covered for transport and a spot of sightseeing.

Marathon Village.

This was an area right in the heart of Geneva on the lake where all the races ended and was the central 'go to point' for information, free goodies, bib and t-shirt collection, posing for photos and all sorts of running related essentials. Also lots of Pastas, Pizzas, coffee etc for sale which was not cheap but very nice and only for one day really. Cheaper alternatives were available at small shops dotted around the City side streets. The various flavoured and natural water was available free of charge.

The Race.

Kurt chose the 10k race which was at 7.45pm Saturday. After walking around all day and a very long day too, I have no idea how he had the energy to even get on the bus to the start, but he did and he came home in a very impressive sub 32 minutes. I chose the half marathon on the Sunday morning at 8.30am along with Matthew, Chris, Nick and Suzanne. We had all been given official string bags to put anything into for the baggage trucks at the start, then pick them up at the end. So in the morning we all made our separate ways to accommodate our various methods of pre race warming and fuelling up. It was not until I got off the bus at the start area, that I realised I had left my watch in the Hotel. All the way to Switzerland to do a half marathon and the voices in my head just kept repeating 'if it is not on strava it didn't happen' . Drastic measures had to be applied and I made the reluctant decision to run with my mobile phone in my hand using the strava live app, great on a cycle but not sure with my sweaty hands, swinging arms, crowded start and water station stops. Then a few minutes before the start Kurt turned up and offered me the use of his watch, which left me thinking how I could return this favour one day and let him use my watch..... {cunning snigger}..... So my phone was swapped for a watch and off we went. The weather was very hot, even though still early in the morning, but the views and general feel was amazing. I had not been into the race very long before realising I had, once again, not trained

for a half marathon to the level I really need to if I want to hit the times I say I am aiming for. But I decided to relax back and forget about times, just enjoy this amazing event. I knew at some point we would be leaving the flat fields and start to flow down hill towards the lake and that would be where most of the crowds, entertainment and adrenaline rush would kick in (hopefully). I was starting to feel a little out of fuel and realised I had not had any breakfast at all not even a cup of coffee. I had taken an orange and a banana with me to the start but the orange seemed to just turn to mush as I attempted to peel it, the banana was far too dry so got slung after one bite and the small bottle of water was used to wash my hands of the disintegrated orange as I was planning on carrying my phone at the time. They did not appear to have any water available at the start, which was a shame. But then we hit the first water station, which was full of cups of water, energy drinks, quarter oranges (made me chuckle) biscuits and gels. I took some water on board and grabbed a sachet of energy gel, which I never ever use, to try and get some fuel into me. As soon as I swallowed it, I realised why I never use them. I should have drank the water after it maybe, but too late now. Then right on time, the gift from above, we hit the downward slope. This presented itself in the form of a long tunnel under the mountains sloping slightly down in a straight line, lovely air conditioning and a DJ blasting music out, I could have ran for ever under those conditions. Then as we came out the tunnel the heat was immense, the light was bright. An immediate up hill section was a little evil and a sharp reminder I was going to have to work for this after all. The uphill section was not for long though and the amazing sight of Geneva lake hit us below and the fountain in the distance gave the impression we were almost at the end, even though I knew we were only on about 8 miles into it. I ran the rest of the course on auto pilot, taking in the breath taking views and atmosphere and making the most of it. As is all too often the case, I finished well over the time I had hoped for but with too much energy left and wondering why I had not tapped into that earlier on. On the whole, this was a brilliant weekend and we are all planning on a return visit next year when we are more prepared. In comparison, I am doing Liverpool R&R half marathon in 2 weeks time which has already cost me more in registration, transport and hotel fees and that is only for one night.

Tony