

Lost Dutchman Marathon

A small race with a colorful history and unique eccentricities.



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There is a cinematic ambience to the Lost Dutchman Marathon course in Apache Junction, Arizona. Sixty-some years ago, the locale played a featured part in *Lust for Gold*, starring Glenn Ford and Ida Lupino. Ford and Lupino didn't run marathons, but they got in some meaningful cardio, what with all the lovin' and gold-thievin'.

These days, the half-marathon version of the runner's own cowboy movie begins with Teton Ken and his mule greeting assembled runners at Prospector Park. This is that rare race where, to quote Teton Ken, you can "kiss your ass good-bye." You can kiss her/him again at the finish line and have your picture taken to boot.

The marathon begins on a darker note, as runners huddle around bonfires before dawn at the foot of Superstition Mountain. The cliffs are barely visible as runners pull their garbage bags closer against the chill air. As race time approaches and

The Basics:

NAME: Lost Dutchman Marathon

INFORMATION ADDRESS: PO Box 6417, Apache Junction, AZ 85178

REGISTRATION ADDRESS: Lost Dutchman Marathon, c/o RacePlace Events, PO Box 71121, Phoenix, AZ 85050

HOTLINE: 480/983-1500

WEBSITE: www.lostdutchmanmarathon.org

E-MAIL: grady@lostdutchmanmarathon.org

RACE DIRECTOR: Grady McEachern

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2002

COURSE CERTIFIED: The marathon is USATF certified. The half-marathon is also certified. The 10K and 8K courses are not certified.

FUTURE RACE DATE: February 19, 2012

COURSE TYPE: Hard-packed, unpaved road for the first six miles, then paved streets. There are two stretches of 1.5 miles each along US Highway 60. The course is rolling, with a downhill “trough” in the middle and long, flat stretches after mile 20.

TYPICAL WEATHER: Around 40 degrees at the start (bonfires and coffee provided). Generally sunny, with temperatures warming up to the high 60s or 70 degrees, with low humidity.

COURSE ELEVATION: The marathon starts at an elevation of 2,330 feet and finishes at 1,840.

START TIME: The marathon starts at 7:00 A.M. The half-marathon starts at 7:15 A.M. The 8K starts at 7:45, the 10K starts at 8:00, and the two-mile fun run starts at 8:05.

TIMING: The race is chip timed using ChronoTrack bib chips.

COURSE RECORDS: Zachary Thomas 2:27:27 (2010); Julia Prince 3:00:12 (2010).

MASTERS RECORDS: Johannes Rudolph 2:40:52 (2010); Pam Reed 3:10:11 (2002).

ASSOCIATED EVENTS: Half-marathon, 10K, 8K, two-mile fun run. The marathon features Clydesdale and Athena divisions for heavier runners.

PRIZE MONEY: \$500 prizes to male and female runners who set open course records; \$250 prizes to male and female runners who set masters course records.

MARATHON AWARDS: Every runner receives a long-sleeve T-shirt. Marathoners and half-marathoners receive distinctive high-quality medals. Finishers in the 8K and 10K events also receive a medal. The awards ceremony takes place after the race. Presenters give out random prizes as time allows in between giving out age-group awards. Runners who can't stay for the awards ceremony may have their award mailed for a fee.

ENTRY FEE: Through December 31, the marathon fee is \$80. From January 1 to January 31, the fee is \$90. From February 1 to the day before race day, the fee is \$105. There is no race-day registration for any event except the 2-Mile Fun Run.

DONATIONS: In 2011, the race donated \$55,000 in scholarships and grants to economically disadvantaged youths.

PARKING: Parking for all races is available in the large lot at the Rodeo Grounds, approximately one-half mile from the marathon finish at Prospector Park. Some parking is available at Prospector Park, the start for the half-marathon and shorter distances. No parking is available at the start of the marathon. Shuttle buses provide continuous service between the Rodeo Grounds and Prospector Park before and after the race.

RACE TRANSPORTATION: All marathoners will be bused from the Rodeo Grounds to the marathon start. No private transportation to the race start is allowed, owing to lack of space on the narrow dirt road.

REGISTRATION LIMIT: The marathon is limited to 600 runners. The half-marathon is limited to 1,100 runners. The 10K and 8K are each limited to 650 runners. The two-mile fun run allows an unlimited number of participants.

COURSE MARKINGS: The course is marked every mile.

FINISH LINE: All races finish in Prospector Park, 3015 North Idaho Road in Apache Junction. Prospector Park is also the start for all races except the marathon. The finish line officially closes after 6.5 hours. Runners in danger of missing the official finish time will be picked up in the sag wagon and brought to the finish line. The finish area includes a burrito breakfast, photo ops, a playground, medical assistance, massage, and restroom facilities.

MARATHON FINISHERS IN LAST RUNNING: 550

MALE/FEMALE RATIO OF RUNNERS: 62 percent males; 37 percent females in 2011

VOLUNTEERS: Hordes of volunteers at every stage of the race, plus ham radio operators on the course.

AID STATIONS: There are aid stations every two miles for the first 20 miles and then every mile to the finish. In addition to water and sports drink, there are bananas at four of the aid stations. The stations at mile 10 and 19 have energy gels.

MEDICAL AID: Aid stations have basic first aid supplies. Major medical support is provided by Southwest Ambulance and Apache Junction Fire Department. There is a medical tent at the finish line.

DROP BAGS: There is a drop bag area at both the marathon and half-marathon starts and a retrieval area in Prospector Park, a short walk from the finish line. Volunteers provide quick assistance in bag retrieval.

ON-COURSE ENTERTAINMENT: Loud volunteers at aid stations; spontaneous music only.

EXPO: The Health and Fitness Expo is the day before the race at the Apache Junction Multigenerational Center, 1035 North Idaho Road, from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

LODGING AND TOURIST INFORMATION: February is peak tourist season in Arizona. Please make your reservations early. The official hotel for the Lost Dutchman Marathon is the Gold Canyon Golf Resort featuring two four-star golf courses. On race morning, a shuttle will pick up marathon runners who are hotel guests at 5:25 A.M. and drop them off at the start at 6:00 A.M.; 6100 South Kings Ranch Road, Gold Canyon, AZ 85218. Phone: 800/827-5281 or 480/982-9090. Gold Canyon Best Western: On race morning, a shuttle will pick up marathon runners who are hotel guests at 5:30 A.M. and drop them off at the marathon start at 6:00 A.M.; 8333 East Sunrise Sky Drive, Gold Canyon, AZ 85218. Phone: 480/671-6000. La Quinta Inn and Suites Mesa Superstition Springs. No hotel transportation to start; approximately 20 minutes' driving time to Rodeo Grounds; 6530 East Superstition Springs Boulevard, Mesa, AZ 85206. Phone: 480/654-1970.

GETTING THERE: From Phoenix: Go east on Highway 60 (Superstition Freeway). To reach Prospector Park and Idaho Road, take the Ironwood exit. Turn left and proceed north on Ironwood approximately 4.5 miles and

then turn right on McKellips Road. Go one mile and turn right onto Idaho Road. To reach the Rodeo Grounds, take the Tomahawk Road exit, go north approximately two miles, and turn left into the Rodeo Grounds entrance. From Mesa/Scottsdale: Use US 60 as for Phoenix, or if traveling southeast on SR202 (Red Mountain Freeway), exit on University, and turn left. Go east to Ironwood, north to McKellips, east to Idaho, and south to the park. From Tucson/Casa Grande/Chandler: Traveling northeast on SR202 (San Tan Freeway), use US Highway 60 or University and follow directions above.

runners move to the start line, the sun slips over the horizon. Its rays touch the mountain, turning the rock face to reddish gold. There's a collective "Ooh!" as runners acknowledge the power of that big, yellow light in the sky.

The Lost Dutchman Marathon has been enlightening runners for 10 years now. A small race by big-city standards—the marathon is limited to 600 runners—it nevertheless provides everything runners need to succeed, helped along by an enthusiastic core of volunteers. The Apache Junction area makes a good destination for a family vacation, with a variety of outdoor activities ranging from golf to nature photography to hiking to museum hopping. The low-desert environment means that weather at this time of year is long-distance friendly. It's cool in the morning with daytime highs in the upper 60s, turning cool again in the evening. Rain is an infrequent phenomenon—infrequent but not impossible. In 2011, cloudy, windy conditions saw runners off, and it started raining three and one-half hours into the marathon. There are numerous places to eat in the community of Apache Junction and along Superstition Springs Boulevard coming from Mesa, a suburb of Phoenix.

Area history

Spanish endurance explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado came to the New World in the 16th century in search of treasure for Spain. His expedition pursued a meandering course across the western half of the continent. Everywhere he and his men went, they heard rumors of cities of gold, the Seven Cities of Cibola. In spite of their searching, the cities always seemed to be just down the road. When Coronado heard a rumor of gold in the rugged mountains of what is now Arizona, he made a commitment to find it once and for all. Several of his men were killed on the expedition, and once again he came away empty handed. Weary and disillusioned, he named the mountains the Superstitions to commemorate the rumor.

However, there really was gold in those hills. People knew it and kept looking for it. Three hundred years after Coronado, Don Miguel Peralta from Sonora,

must see/must avoid

MUST SEE

Lost Dutchman State Park offers numerous hiking trails. The park is located on the Apache Trail, State Route 88, north of Apache Junction.

Goldfield Ghost Town, a historic gold-mining town with shops, a museum, gold panning, and a narrow-gauge railroad. The ghost town is 4.5 miles northeast of Apache Junction at 4650 North Mammoth Mine Road, Goldfield, AZ. Phone: 480/983-0333.

The Superstition Mountain Museum showcases artifacts, history, and folklore of the region dating back to the first inhabitants some 9,000 years ago. There is a 20-stamp ore crusher that was used by 19th-century miners to extract ore. Other attractions on the grounds include the Audie Murphy Barn and the Elvis Presley Memorial Chapel. The museum is at 4087 North Apache Trail in Apache Junction, AZ. Phone: 480/983-4888.

The Arizona Renaissance Festival takes place from mid-February to early April. It is seven miles east of Apache Junction on Highway 60. The festival features a medieval amusement park, a circus, arts and crafts, a jousting tournament, and food. Phone: 520/463-2700.

Lust for Gold starring Glenn Ford and Ida Lupino. They didn't behave any better back then than we do now.

MUST AVOID

Getting lost in the mountains. Hikers should take a map, food, water, and spare clothing. Be wary of prickly vegetation. (A comb and white glue are useful for getting out cactus spines.)

Too much desert sun. It is intense even at low temperatures. Wear sunblock and a hat. Reapply the sunblock every hour or two.

Mexico, found a rich vein. Unfortunately, the gold was located on land sacred to the Apaches. Peralta and his men were killed in the ensuing confrontation. The story of a rich deposit of gold, however, did not die with them.

In the late 19th century, "the Dutchman" arrived. According to the story, German prospector Jacob Walz (or Walzer) learned the location of the gold mine from an Apache maiden who was killed for revealing its whereabouts to him. The Dutchman found the gold and mined it for years. In his old age, he moved to Phoenix, where he lived a reclusive life, returning to the Superstitions periodically

to replenish his store of gold. Other prospectors tried to follow him but invariably lost him in the maze of canyons or lost their lives under mysterious circumstances. When Walz died in 1891, he supposedly left the location of his mine to Julia Thomas, the proprietress of the boardinghouse where he lived. Over the years, several miners have claimed to rediscover the Lost Dutchman gold mine, but the truth remains in doubt. People continue to come to the Superstitions to hike and bird-watch and maybe turn up a nugget. Lost Dutchman State Park was developed by the Bureau of Land Management in 1972. Located on the west side of Superstition Mountain, its numerous hiking trails provide a bounty of beautiful scenery, if nothing more lucrative.

runner's highs/runner's lows

HIGHS

The race starts as the rising sun turns the cliffs to gold.

Getting through The Wall.

Making the last turn into Prospector Park.

Climbing up on the mule for a photo op.

Feasting on a variety of foods at the finish line.

Easy access to cars parked at the Rodeo Grounds via a quick bus ride or a short, easy walk through the desert.

Volunteers along the course are cheerful and helpful.

The finisher's medal is big and beautiful, a keeper.

LOWS

Getting down off the mule after the photograph. One of you has cramped up.

Chilly temperature at the start, in spite of the bonfires. Bring warm sweats.

The two stretches along US Highway 60 are not as pleasant as the rest of the course but don't last long.

Almost certain sunburn.

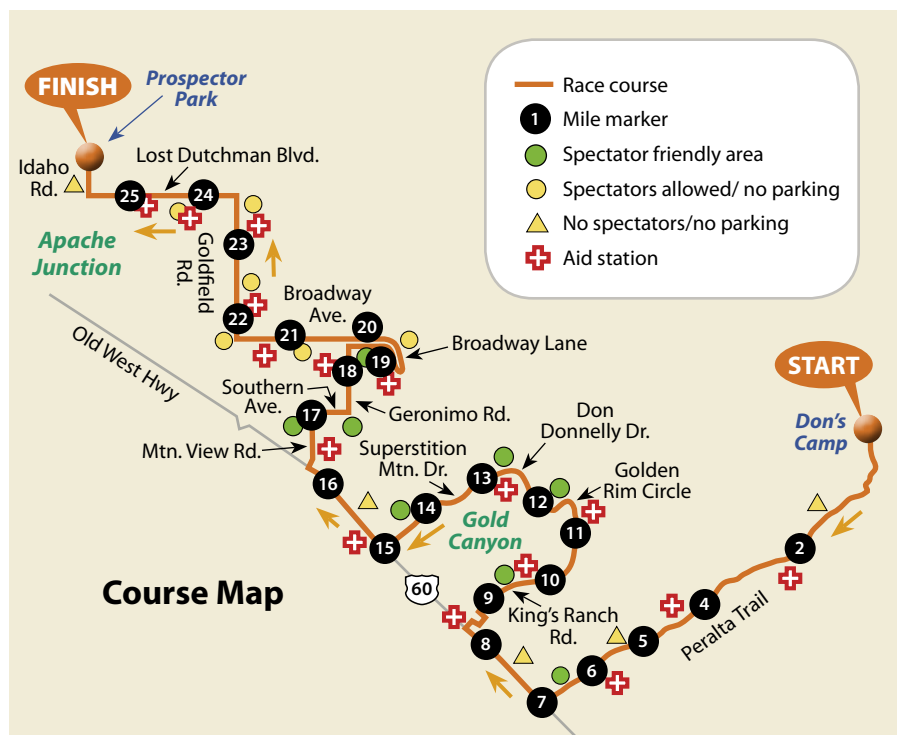
Low humidity equals quick loss of sweat and salts. It's easy to become dehydrated.

The expo is smaller than most, with few vendors.

Course description

The marathon course combines paved streets and hard-packed dirt roads that take runners through open desert and suburban neighborhoods, along a state highway, and back along traffic-free paved roads to the finish line at Prospector Park. The Superstition Mountains provide an inspirational backdrop to the race. The present course differs from the original course mainly in that Dutchman's Revenge, a steep hill that used to bite runners late in the race, has been routed around. The rolling course loses elevation overall but has some worthy uphill at miles nine and 17. (The Wall waits at mile 24, with a photographer focusing on your late-marathon smile, grimace, rictus, or whatever.)

Starting at Don's Camp a half mile south of the Peralta trailhead, runners enjoy six miles of hard-packed dirt road through the desert. At mile six, the road transitions to pavement. At mile seven, runners turn onto Highway 60 and run along a coned-off lane for about 1.5 miles. At about mile 8.5, the course leaves Highway 60 and turns onto King's Ranch Road through the Gold Canyon area. Spectators turn out here to offer encouragement. Runners work their way through the race's hilly midsection via Golden Rim Circle, Don Donnelly Drive, and Superstition Mountain Drive. At mile 14.7, runners return to Highway 60





for another 1.5-mile-long stint. They then head north onto Mountain View Road, turn east on Southern Avenue, go north again on Geronimo Road, and then go east again on Broadway Avenue. Runners will be directed to make a hairpin turn at mile 19.4 and head back west.

The marathon course joins the half-marathon course at this point. (Most half-marathoners will be well ahead of the marathon pack, but the fastest marathoners may catch up to slower half-marathoners.) Runners turn north at Goldfield Road for a couple of flat and friendly miles. Just before mile 24, runners head west onto Lost Dutchman Boulevard, which is closed to traffic. At mile 25, the tantalizing strains of the finish line float across the intervening desert, providing an additional incentive to close the deal. The course goes across the highway overpass and turns right onto Idaho Road, which is closed to traffic. A brief downhill stretch brings runners to the final turn into Prospector Park. The finish line is about one-tenth of a mile farther. Volunteers hand out medals and water as soon as runners cross the finish line. Teton Ken and his pack mule stand by.

Runners' comments

In more than 30 years of racing, Mary Croft has completed marathons in all 50 states, many countries, and all but two continents to date. Her assessment of the Lost Dutchman Marathon: "I love it. It's so folksy and friendly. It has the most beautiful start of any marathon I've run. The aid stations are fantastic, and the race director really pays attention to detail."

Runners who responded to MarathonGuide.com's ongoing review page agree with Mary Croft. "J.M." from Florida, the veteran of more than 50 marathons, puts it simply: "Everything about this race was wonderful. The host hotel, race organization, information, and medal were all great—and the course was the highlight." "M.G." from Arizona, also a veteran of more than 50 marathons, says this: "the weather was perfect, the volunteers exceptionally friendly (as always), all the races started on time (as usual), and the post-race 'buffet' and bag pick-up were flawless (as usual)."

With so many major marathons filling their fields early, a whole universe of small, intimate, sometimes eccentric races are coming to the fore to fulfill runners' dreams of races with a personal touch—and a long-lasting afterglow.

the bottom line

We have weighed various aspects of a marathon within a 1,000-point scoring grid. Besides the author of the article, two dozen runners at the race were randomly chosen to score the race for us (LDM = Lost Dutchman Marathon). The results follow:

1. HISTORY/TRADITION

Evaluate the race's sense of history and tradition.

Possible points: 30 LDM score: 30

2. ENTRY FORM

Is the race entry form clear, concise, attractive, complete, and easy to fill out?

Possible points: 20 LDM score: 18

3. ENTRY COST

For most races, the entry fee covers between 30 and 50 percent of the cost of putting on the event. Rate the value of your dollar relative to this race.

Possible points: 30 LDM score: 28

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4. LOCALE/SCENICS

Is the race held in an area that is easy to get to and scenic and that offers adequate food and housing services and nonrace activities for family and friends?

Possible points: 50 LDM score: 45

5. REGISTRATION/PACKET PICKUP

Is registration well organized and efficient? Does it bog down unnecessarily?

Possible points: 20 LDM score: 19

6. PRERACE ACTIVITIES

Evaluate activities, such as pasta feeds, parties, and so on, during the days before the race.

Possible points: 50 LDM score: 40

7. EXPO

Does the expo offer a fair number and variety of booths relative to the race's size? Are there quality exhibitors and good guest speakers?

Possible points: 50 LDM score: 35

8. COURSE

Take into consideration the following: degree of difficulty, certified, sanctioned, quality of road or trail surface, adequate mileage and directional markers, aid stations, medical coverage, race communications, accessibility to course for friends and family, typical weather, and so on.

Possible points: 400 LDM score: 345

9. RACE AMENITIES

This category includes race T-shirt, finisher's medal, finisher's certificate, adequate and efficient finish area, ease of sweatbag retrieval, showers, postrace refreshments, awards ceremony, raffles, results postcard, results book, and so on.

Possible points: 250 LDM score: 225

10. VOLUNTEERS

Are the volunteers experienced and adequate in number?

Possible points: 100 LDM score: 90

TOTAL SCORE FOR LOST DUTCHMAN MARATHON

875 points out of 1,000 possible points