

SOLDIER MARATHON

SPECTATOR'S GUIDE

SPECTATOR VIEWING AREAS

Starting line: watch the runners at the start run down the Avenue of the Flags at the National Infantry Museum. Great fun and loads of energy.

Mile 7.5: Watch runners on the RiverWalk behind the southwest corner of the Museum. Caution: the first relay hand off is at mile 7.1 so this area may be congested.

Mile 13/20.7: On the RiverWalk just below the VFW and just before Bulldog Marina

Mile 13.2/20.5: On the RiverWalk at Bulldog Marina.

Mile 15.5/18.5 On RiverWalk near Trade Center

Mile 16.5/17.5: 14th Street Pedestrian Bridge- beautiful view of the river

While we encourage spectators to watch the race and support their friends and family, please be courteous and aware of the runners. They may be focused on their race and not others. Many of these locations are close to Aid Stations, so they are likely to be congested. Consider waiting for your runner a few hundred yards away from the Aid Station. If you are on a bike or motorized vehicle, please stay off the RiverWalk. Also, please do not attempt to drive on Water Works Road, it will be closed.

TIPS FOR SPECTATORS

Be Prepared

The water stops and food stations are for race participants, so you should be prepared with your own supplies. Pack some bottled water and snacks. Have some goodies for the runners, such as jelly beans, gummy bears, orange slices, etc. Tissues or paper towels also come in handy for runners. Runners really appreciate noise -- yelling, clapping, whistling -- and your hands may get tired from clapping, so you might also want to have some kind of noisemaker, like a cowbell.

Make sure you also have a reliable watch, a course map, cash, a camera, and cell phone. If rain is in the forecast, bring an umbrella, rain jacket, and extra socks. If it's sunny, don't forget sunscreen and sunglasses. You're most likely going to be standing still for a while. So it's always good to have extra layers in case you get cold. And, most importantly, make sure you're wearing comfortable shoes.

Have a plan

As a spectator, deciding that you'll be somewhere "near the halfway point" and "toward the end" is not enough. Create a specific plan with your runner for where you will be. If you are spectating at a large race, consult the spectator plan for recommendations on the best places to view the race and modes of transportation to get from spot to spot. Choose specific places and landmarks where possible, and look at the turns on the course to determine with your runner what side of the road you will be on. For instance, "I'll be as close to the 8.5-mile mark as possible on the right side of the road, just before mile 16 on the right side of the road, and between miles 23 and 24 on the right side of the road after you pass XYZ landmark." Avoid being near aid stations where there are half-filled cups of sports drink flying everywhere and lots of chaos.

Downtown Columbus can be busy on a Saturday morning and we encourage you to avoid driving down Broadway between 10th Street and 14th Street. The Saturday Market is great to shop at while waiting for your runners, but be aware of the congestion.

Make Signs

Runners love to read signs along the race course to help break the monotony. Try some of these phrases for signs: "You're my hero!"; "There's beer at the finish line."; "All walls have doors" (good one if you're cheering around mile 20 or beyond). If you're supporting a family member or friend, make a sign with his name that will encourage your runner but also help them to easily identify you.

Respect the Course

Don't stand or walk on any part of the course. It's not fair to runners if you make the race course even more crowded or become an obstacle that they have to run around. If you can't see the runners from where you're standing because it's too crowded, move to a different viewing location.

Pick an Encouraging Phrase

Rather than just clapping as runners go by, pick a phrase or two to yell. Some good ones include: "Way to run;" "You can do it;" "Looking strong;" "Nice job;" "You're flying;" or "Looking good." Many marathon runners display their first names on their shirts or race bibs. So if you see someone's name, you can always add that to the end of your catch phrase.

But Don't Say This...

Unless you're right next to the finish line, don't yell, "Almost there" or "Not far to go." Trust me, marathon runners don't want to hear that phrase unless they are about to cross the finish line. It's also not a good idea to yell out a specific distance such as, "Two miles to go," unless you're 100% certain that the number is the correct distance to the finish line (if you happen to be standing next to a mile marker, for instance). Too many spectators give out wrong information, which can be frustrating, confusing, and disappointing for runners.

Use Technology

Track your runner by using our online tracker system. A link will be available at www.soldiermarathon.com starting Wednesday, November 9th with all the participants registered. If your runner is carrying his or her smart phone, there are apps such as Find My Friend, that can help you track them.

Timing Is Everything

If you're looking for a family member or friend, find out his or her projected pace per mile ahead of time. This will help you figure out where and when they should reach certain points in the course. But keep in mind for a race of this size, it could take a runner as much as 5 minutes to cross the starting line because of the crowds. So don't base the predicted viewing times on the start time. You can adjust your projected viewing times after your first sighting of your runner.

Find Your Runner

Make sure you know exactly what your runner will be wearing, from head to toe. In crowded races, it's easier to spot a purple shirt, for instance, rather than looking at everyone's faces. Let your runner know what you'll be wearing and where you think you'll be standing, so he or she knows to look for you. If the race and cheering sections are really crowded, it's helpful for the runner to know what side of the street you'll be standing on. Some spectators even carry balloons so their runners can easily spot them from a distance.

Help your runner see you before you see them.

This may not be as difficult for small races, but for races with tens of thousands of runners, it will be much harder for you to spot your runner in a sea of people than it will be for your runner to see you along the sideline. Make it easy for them to spot you early by carrying unique balloons he/she can see from 100+ yards away or other easy-to-spot items like large signs, funky umbrellas, etc. As a spectator, it might feel sort of silly to cart around some gigantic piece of flair, but you and your runner will both be glad you did if it means you see each other!

Have a Finish-Line Plan

The finish line area can be crowded and chaotic, so make sure you and your runner have a plan to meet up after he or she crosses the finish line. Some races have designated spots where runners can meet family members. If there's no family reunion area, make sure you designate another landmark where you'll meet or have a plan for contacting each other.

Make the weekend about the runner.

Even if you're traveling to a race and it's meant to be a racecation, until the day after the race, every day until then should be about your runner. What they want to eat, how much they do or don't want to walk, how much time they want to sit in the hotel room, etc. Don't add extra stress to your runner's mind by making them feel like you wish you were doing something else or pushing them to get one extra activity in the day before the race. After the race is over, you can make sure your runner dotes on you.

Do's and Don'ts

DON'T:

- bring pets
- litter
- try to drive down Water Works Way- this road will have participants going east and west
- ride your bike on the RiverWalk
- drive a motorized vehicle on the RiverWalk

DO:

- be respectful of the cities that allow us to put on this event
- always be on the lookout for runners
- listen to volunteers
- obey all traffic laws
- stay off the course

THINGS TO DO DURING THE RACE

Don't want to leave the general vicinity of the National Infantry Museum? Here are a few ideas.

Run/walk the 5k race. The 5k begins at 7:40 am, so you can still see your marathoner/half marathoner start their race and then run/walk your 5k race.

Check out the National Infantry Museum. The museum has recently been voted by USA Today Readers' Choice Awards as "Top Free Museum" in the United States. The museum opens at 9 a.m., so you can see your marathoner/half-marathoner start and come through around mile 7.5 before seeing the exhibits. The National Infantry Museum is the only museum in the country dedicated to the American Infantryman and preserves one of the greatest collections of military artifacts. This state-of-the-art facility tells the story of the United States Army Infantryman, from the fields of the American Revolution to the sands of Afghanistan. The museum houses an amazing display of artifacts from all eras of American history and contains numerous interactive multimedia exhibits, telling the story of our nation's past with the latest in technological innovation. Be sure to check out the "Remembering Our Fallen" traveling exhibit. *Remembering Our Fallen* is a photographic war memorial (national and state-specific) created to remember our country's Fallen who have died in The War on Terror. For more information go to <http://www.nationalinfantrymuseum.org>. Trip Advisor, the world's largest travel site, rates the National Infantry Museum as the highest rated attraction in the State of Georgia. The Soldier Marathon and Half Marathon start and finish at the National Infantry Museum, and packet pickup, the expo and the pasta dinner are also located at the National Infantry Museum

Visit Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center. Oxbow Meadows opens at 10 a.m. and is right across the street from the National Infantry Museum. Oxbow Meadows is a place where nature can be itself. Two walking trails wind between ponds taking hikers into the realm of native flora and fauna. For the nature lover, butterflies, birds, turtles and dragonflies can be found in abundance. The Environmental Learning Center is a hands-on interpretative facility focusing on the natural history of the region. Displays include mounted specimens of mammals, birds, reptiles and a small live animal collection of regional reptiles, insects, amphibians, and fish. For more information go to <http://oxbow.columbusstate.edu/>.

Volunteer. You can keep busy during the race by volunteering. To volunteer, go to soldiermarathon.com and click on the drop down menu for volunteers which is under "Get Involved". Please complete the form and submit.

FUN FACTS

Columbus is home to the largest urban whitewater rafting in the world.

House of Heroes, Inc. was founded in Columbus by Wayne Anthony in 2000. After attending a military funeral Wayne saw the need to honor our military veterans in a way that they could see their sacrifices were appreciated. He added public safety veterans to the list of those to be honored after their heroic efforts on 9/11. 15 years later, there are now 6 local chapters across the US, to include House of Heroes-Chattahoochee Valley Chapter.

Coca-Cola was developed here by Dr. John Pemberton, who resided in Columbus during the 1860s.

Trip Advisor, the world's largest travel site, rates the National Infantry Museum as the highest rated attraction in the State of Georgia.

Ma Rainey, the "Mother of Blues", was born in Columbus.

Synovus began in 1888 with an encounter between a worker and an executive at a Columbus, Georgia textile mill. The worker's dress became tangled in factory machinery, and money she had sewn into her hem spilled onto the floor. Explaining she felt this was the safest place to keep her savings, a mill executive offered instead to secure her money in the mill safe and pay her interest. That same service was soon offered to all the workers, and those deposits marked the beginning of the company that is still headquartered out of Columbus.

Aflac was founded in Columbus in 1955 by three brothers that saw the need for financial protection when a medical situation occurs. The company, which has appeared on *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For list for 17 consecutive years, continues to call Columbus home with its worldwide headquarters and corporate offices now making up the tallest building in Columbus.

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