

# Boston Marathon

By YUGESH MATHUR

Drawing inspiration from the first modern Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, the Boston Marathon in the northeastern U.S. state of Massachusetts has had a long run since debuting in 1897. It is the oldest city marathon in the world, and every year about 20,000 people run the challenging 42.195-kilometer route of winding roads, cheered by hundreds of thousands more.

The area of the eight cities and towns along the route—Hopkinton, Ashland, Framingham, Natick, Wellesley, Newton, Brookline and Boston—is considered a uniquely American setting, and runners say the marathon showcases that American spirit.

Traditionally held on Patriots Day, the marathon is on the 20th of April this year. The marathon is renowned for its level of difficulty; qualifying for Boston is considered an achievement in itself. Every runner needs to have completed a certified marathon within a certain timeframe that is determined by the person's age.

The marathon is also famed for its legendary roadblocks, prime among them are the Newton Hills. It's not that they are too high, but appearing shortly after the 25-kilometer mark, they've been known to break even the toughest runner.

The marathon drew its largest running contingent in its centenary year, when more than 35,000 people finished the race out of 38,708 entrants and were recognized by the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Other marathon milestones include: the first woman forcing her way into the race in 1966 by hiding in the bushes near the start until the race began; women permitted to run in 1972, and Boston becoming the first major marathon to include a wheelchair division in 1975 when it officially



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*Lance Armstrong, center, seven-time Tour de France cycling winner and cancer survivor, crosses the starting line of the 112th Boston Marathon in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, in 2008. More than 25,000 runners participated .*

recognized Bob Hall as a contestant. With a time of 2 hours and 58 minutes, Hall had collected a promise from Race Director Will Cloney that if he finished in less than three hours, he would receive an official Boston Athletic Association Finisher's Certificate.

From the first award—a wreath of olive branches—the Boston Marathon now gives thousands of dollars as prize money. Rob de Castella was the first runner to receive money in 1986, \$60,000 and a Mercedes-Benz for finishing first in a record time of 2 hours, 7 minutes and 51 seconds. Up to 2008, more than \$11 million had been awarded in prize money and bonuses.

<http://www.bostonmarathon.org/>

<http://www.adventure-marathon.com/Boston-Marathon.aspx>