The London Marathon

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 route around London which is 26 miles and 385 yards long. Runners are cheered on by crowds of spectators and are treated to many famous sites in London, such as Tower Bridge.

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 loved the cheering crowds and carnival atmosphere and wanted to see if a London Marathon could be even better. After lots of planning, the first London Marathon had 20,000 people wanting to run. 7,747 runners were allowed to take part with thousands of spectators lining the course. It was a hit!

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

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Because the London Marathon is a challenge, many people choose to run for a charity and raise money for a good cause. Sometimes, they run the course in fancy dress.

Where Did the Idea of a Marathon Come From?

In Greek history, there is a legend that tells of a Greek soldier who was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens with the news that Greece had won the battle. It is said that the soldier ran the entire distance without stopping, bursting into the assembly with his good news before collapsing and dying. The organisers of the modern Olympics chose this legend to make the running race popular.

Did You Know?

Major Tim Peake ran the Digital Virgin Money London Marathon on board the International Space Station. He finished in a time of 3:35.21.

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Questions

1. What is the London Marathon?

2. Why do you think it is important for the crowds of spectators to cheer?

3. When was the first London Marathon?

4. Why did John Disley and Chris Brasher have the idea for the London Marathon.
   Give two reasons.

5. How many people entered the first London Marathon?

6. Why do some runners choose to raise money for charity?

7. Where did the name 'marathon' come from?

8. Why was it unusual that Major Tim Peake ran the London Marathon?

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Answers

1. What is the London Marathon?
   The London Marathon is a long-distance running race.

2. Why do you think it is important for the crowds of spectators to cheer?
   Answers may vary but should include ideas about supporting the runners and creating an exciting atmosphere.

3. When was the first London Marathon?
   The first London Marathon was on 29th March, 1981.

4. Why did John Disley and Chris Brasher have the idea for the London Marathon? Give two reasons.
   Answers should include two ideas from the text. For example, John and Chris had recently taken part in the New York Marathon; there were cheering crowds and a carnival atmosphere; they wondered if London could be better.

5. How many people entered the first London Marathon?
   20,000 people entered the first London Marathon.

6. Why do some runners choose to raise money for charity?
   Some runners choose to raise money because the marathon is such a big challenge.

7. Where did the name 'marathon' come from?
   The name 'marathon' comes from a Greek legend where a soldier ran from Marathon to Athens to share news of a battle victory.

8. Why was it unusual that Major Tim Peake ran the London Marathon?
   It was unusual for Major Tim Peake to run the London Marathon because he was in space at the time.

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