BORDEAUX – THE MARATHON DU MEDOC

A lot of runners ask "what is the Marathon du Medoc like?" Hectic. Fun. Entertaining. Exhausting. Like no other marathon in the world. The concept is brilliant, the execution fabulous and the social program never ending. Or maybe that was just us.

This isn't your normal street marathon where you strive for a PB, albeit the winner did come in just a tad over 2:26. For the everyday runners this is where you come to run, sip wine and enjoy a unique atmosphere. Possibly the most fun I've ever had at a marathon weekend…. which is something you wouldn't naturally think of when you think of a marathon weekend.

Here's what the weekend looks like – an exceptionally long weekend in Bordeaux. Enjoy

WEDNESDAY - DAY 1

The trip from Sydney to Bordeaux is a long one. Awfully long. We leave Sydney on a clear, blue sky day and arrive in Paris early the next morning. We fly our favourite airline, Singapore - the service is great, the fight smooth and the comfort fabulous. Flying is a fascination of mine and has been since I was a young child, when I would lie on my back in the front yard and watch the vapour trails, wondering what fascinating destination the plane might be headed to.

Being locked in a cabin for the best part of a day, with no phones and no computers, with movies, books and my every whim taken care of, is my idea of heaven. Whilst it is (unfortunately) no longer the case that you can hide from the internet or even phone calls, I can still pretend they don't exist at 40,000'.

THURSDAY - DAY 2

On arrival at CDG we have a light queue to get through customs. We are in the express lane which isn't really express when there is only one counter open. Onto the train and off to T2 to connect with our train to Bordeaux. We are in heaps of time for the 9:47am but find it's booked out so we'll wait for our 11:18am. The trains are fully booked so good move to book in advance of our arrival.

TIP #1: book the train from Paris to Bordeaux in advance as they are booked solid in the days leading up to the Marathon du Medoc.

We settle into **Cafe Paul** while we wait - sounds French so must be ok. Given it's in the train terminal.

Our train trip is comfortable and we arrive to a sunny afternoon in **Bordeaux**. There is a taxi on the rank and we take the 10min trip to our hotel, the **Mercure Cite Mondiale.**

Check in is efficient and we have a couple of boxes of marathon stuff to sort through before our meeting this evening. Bib numbers, tshirts, information, etc.

The briefing all goes well and we've got a nice group. As always

There are a lot of restaurants along the waterfront, within blocks of the hotel. It is perfectly situated.

After a bit of a wander we decide on a super looking **Le Bistrot due Formager**, a great fromagerie and wine cellar. It is buzzing on a Thursday evening and we find a couple of the runners (who are part of our group) firmly ensconced, complete with platters and wine.

The runners are from Florida and are great company. They are waiting on their friends, also from Florida, to join them. We join them for the rest of the evening and have a fabulous time. This is how it all starts when you are at the Marathon du Medoc!

We share a cheese and meats platter and it is superb. Washed down with a few vinos. Welcome to Bordeaux!

FRIDAY - DAY 3

The breakfast venue at the hotel is on the 7th floor with views over the Garonne River and the city. The morning is bathed in sunshine so we sit outside. The breakfast is excellent and the baguettes to die for. Baguette, cheese, fruit and coffee…. the day is off to a brilliant start.

We are off to explore Bordeaux in brilliant sunshine. The Jardins Public (gardens) is only 5mins up the road and is spectacular. The part combines the famous honey-coloured stone of stately 18th century buildings with a relaxing setting. The morning still holds a touch of coolness but there are people everywhere in the park… walking, jogging, sitting, admiring.

We continue into town…. it's the loveliest walk and there are people out everywhere.

Bordeaux is a very walkable city and is littered with cafes and parks where you can sit, take a breather and watch the world go by.

This evening we have the ***Dinner 100 Pates***, ie the Marathon du Medoc Dinner and Fireworks. The bus departure point for our coaches is only 5mins from the hotel. Again, perfect location!

The trip to **Trintaudon Larose Chateau** takes longer than it should as we have a deviation to pick up an additional four people. The Chateau is divine and basked in evening light. The gardens are a blaze of red begonias, there is a band playing and the wine is flowing.

You can take the girl out of the country….
Our marathon trips are nothing if not fun!

Seating at the dinner is a bit of a free for all. The dining marquee holds 1500 people and the crowd starts to build outside. All at once the flaps go up and the people swarm… first in, best dressed! We manage to seat all of us together. Not your usual dining experience, that's for sure.

The food comes and they manage the whole process exceptionally well, considering there are 1500 for dinner. We are surprised at the quality of the food, given the number of plates that need to be served up. The servers are a well-oiled machine and know how to get the plates on the table quickly.

We start with an enjoyable pasta salad with chorizo, followed by chicken and mushroom pasta (maybe just a touch on the dry side). The desert is rich Gorgonzola served in a huge pasta shell. The wine continues to flow. If you need more wine you simply hold the bottle in the air and bingo, it is replaced with a full one. The band is fantastic and the large dance floor is full. What a sensational night!

At 10:15pm we are ushered outside for the fireworks display, which is fabulous. Then it's back inside and back to the dance floor! At 11:15 we make our way to the bus for a 11:30 departure. We arrive back at the hotel at 12:30 and fall into bed.

SATURDAY - DAY 4 – RACE DAY!

We grab a baguette and stuff it in our backpacks before a 6:30am departure to the marathon start at **Pauillac**. The bus is directly out the front of the hotel this time.

It's an hour trip and it's drizzling when we arrive. The rain eases quickly and we make our way to the start line. The start line is a 15 min doddle along a gorgeous river front street. There are lots of festivities and a 'Cirque de Soleil' production on high wires prior to the start. Sensational!

Of course, the feature is the outfits. This year's theme is **Superheroes** and the creativity knows no bounds.

Marathon du Medoc Mascot

The race starts at 9:30 and 9,000 runners set off in all sorts of costumes which may or may not follow the theme of superheroes.

Really? Have they no shame? I mean who wears a tshirt in a marathon when you're supposed to be a superhero!

Back along the street there are dozens of vendors set up, with lots of local foodie options. And just as many wine vendors. It is, after all, 10:00am on a Saturday. There are also lots of activities going on, such as axe throwing, hay bale tossing, etc. It is a real carnival atmosphere and there is plenty to do while waiting the return of the runners.

We purchase some cheese and saucisson from one of the many vendors that are set up. There are seats down on a deck by the river and we set up there for 'breakfast'. The sun's warmth is relaxing and the river gently flowing in front of us. Not a bad way to while away some time.

The runners come back through town at the half marathon distance and we only need to wander up a few blocks to see them coming through. Most are moving quite well and pacing themselves well to finish the marathon. There are others who look a bit ragged though…. too late a night? too much wine? too little training?

We go back to the finish area and watch the winners come in on the big screen. 2:26 takes the winning position ... I seriously doubt that the winner was partaking of the wine and oysters out on course.

We go to a local Vietnamese for lunch. All the restaurants have a set menu and this one is spring rolls and noodles. The spring rolls are huge and would have been enough in their own; the noodles are ok. On a Viet meal scale, they would be a 3/10.

We wander to the finish line and watch our runners come in. They have paced themselves perfectly to come in a few minutes under the cut off time and have taken an hour to do the final 2km. Their logic being that it's a waste to not take up the maximum time to finish when they can be out on the course enjoying some wine. Can't fault it really.

9200
JAMES
9199
KELLYANN

5635
THOMAS
5630
JOEY
5634
BRENDAN

We go up and watch the awards ceremony where the winners get their weight in wine. It is a novel concept and a very entertaining presentation. If you look closely at the photo below you will notice that the gent on the left (wearing glasses) has his arm firmly placed on the runner's end of the see saw. She was a tiny woman and clearly they felt she deserved more wine! She had a few crates to get through by the end of the presentation!

Time to head off to the bus as we depart at 5pm. We take an hour to get back to the hotel. We go to the room, shower and drop into bed. Nothing left, finite, done.

SUNDAY - DAY 5

We have a quick brekkie upstairs as we have an 8:30 departure for the **Walk and Lunch at the Chateau.**

The activities are again centred at the **Chateua Trintaudon** and we wander through the vineyards, sampling wine along the way in a small tin cup we are given on arrival. We have teamed up with some of our runners. We have a hilarious time ... the walk is said to be closer to 12km and we arrive back around 1:30pm for lunch. We are seated efficiently and first course is on the table.

We have a bottle of wine on the table and if you want a refill you do so yourself from big wine barrels with taps on them. There is a band playing and, once again, people hit the dance floor. There are dancing girls in feathers leading the dancing on the stage. Never have so many marathon runners moved so well.

We are served a chicken starter, fish and a fruity slice for dessert. Again, an enjoyable meal and an all-round fabulous day.

We have a 15:30 departure on the bus. Returning to the hotel a few of us assemble on the 4th floor breakout area. Some of the runners have collected some bottles of wine and, as they only have carry on, they need to lighten the load. We all pitch in to help out, as do various runners as they pass down the hallway to their room.

A few of us wander off for dinner. We intend to go to the Fromagerie bistro but it's closed. Eventually we wander off to a local restaurant close by. Everyone is in an excellent wine-primed mood and we have a great time.

For the Marathon du Medoc weekend the key is stamina!

MONDAY - DAY 6

Departure day. Many of the runners call past our room to say their farewells. We have made some great new friends on this trip and our paths will definitely cross again in the future.

We check out and have an 11:30am taxi to the airport. It takes just under 30mins, cost **€55.**

There is no marathon like the Marathon du Medoc…. it certainly is a marathon, rather than a sprint. Participating in all the weekend's activities, including the run, sets a hectic schedule but the laughs are worth every bit of the pain.

Hopefully, we'll see some of you join us in Medoc in the future!