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Half Corked Marathon

The imagination runs wild at
Canada's nuttiest half-marathon

By Joanne Elves

It was the glint of sun reflecting off the plastic wine glasses bouncing on his 'fro that led me through the rows of lush green vines. With no kilometre markers and a minimal amount of pylons marking the way, I used the hippy as my beacon. With each passing aid station, his wife would tangle yet another glass in his hair. After a dozen stations he started to sound like a tambourine.

Inspired by the Medoc Marathon of France, Tony Munday, the executive director of the Oliver-Osoyoos Winery Association in B.C. brought the idea of a run through the vineyards to the 40 regional wineries as a way to boost tourism in May. And it worked. Now Munday is also the race director of an annual sold-out extravaganza.

"I didn't know it would take off like it did. The first year we had around 100 people but I guess they all told two friends. We've changed the entry for our event to a lottery held in October," says Munday. Now, the organizers see over 4,000 people enter the lottery. If they are picked, they are offered two registrations.

The race weekend starts with a pre-race primavera party where participants feast at a long table lit by twinkling lights strung in the shade of a big tent on the expansive lawn of a winery. Gourmet pasta and wine is plentiful.

The start is quite casual. There isn't a start line, nor is there an official clock and it's not a real half-marathon distance. And, the first one across the finish line isn't the winner. Winning is for the people in the best costumes or those who create the best drama as they cross the finish line.

Forget pacing. No wait, it is all about pacing as you work through the 15 wine and food stations. You'll sip red or white wine and sample the cuisine from the region while mingling with people who have taken up to six months to prepare their costume. Ballerinas, nuns, grapes, monsters, calendar girls, the entire crew from *Gilligan's Island* to *Beetlejuice* and *Ghostbusters*—all serious contenders to win.

Take for instance Terrie Faulkner and Jason Broome of Kelowna, B.C. They have attended all seven Half Corked Marathon events and take the costume competition very seriously. This year they were the characters from the Disney movie *Up*. The house and balloons floated from Faulkner's backpack and the badges on the Boy Scout sash on Broome's costume were exact matches to the movie.

The route changes course once in a while to include different wineries. The current route starts at the Burrowing Owl Winery. Four different waves of runners are released to allow the participating wineries time to prepare for the runners emerging from the vines. The course winds down to the river and follows the trail to the next vineyard to link to the vineyards either on dirt roads or the secondary highway. There is a time limit of 3.5 hours for the roughly

18 kilometres on the slightly rolling route. When you cross the finish line at the Oliver Community Centre you can meet with friends to continue the party with more wine tasting.

Darren Robinson





DESTINATION
OSOYOOS,
BRITISH COLUMBIA



Half Corked Marathon

DATE May 26-28, 2017

DISTANCE Around 18K

FOOD & DRINK STATIONS 10-12 wineries

FEES \$165-200 (Lottery in effect)

RUNNERS 800+ in four waves

WEBSITE oliverosoyoos.com



Kiss the day goodnight with a bottle of wine as you attend an outdoor concert at the Tinhorn Creek Vineyard Summer Concert Series.

Make sure you sign up for the newsletter at oliverosoyoos.com to stay informed. It's the only way to get your entries into the lottery held in October. Then start crafting that costume for the race, May 27, 2017. 🍷

Joanne Elves is a runner and freelance writer based in Calgary.

If you go

Penticton Regional Airport is only 45 minutes from Osoyoos.

Hotels book up fast so consider booking now. Great picks include the Spirit Ridge at NK'MIP Resort and the [Watermark Beach Resort](#).

There is no parking at the start area. Shuttles from four designated hotels in Osoyoos will take you to the start and back from the Oliver Community Centre.

Darren Robinson, Darren Robinson, Kieran Frey



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