

So...You're going to run Estonian Wilderness Marathon!



ESTONIAN ACE ADVENTURE / LA SPORTIVA · WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2019



On Sunday morning shovel in some porridge, put on your running clothes and arrive at the parking lot of Ülemiste Shopping Center in Tallinn or Aegviidu schoolhouse in sufficient time before the departure of the special bus to race start. You get your race number and finish bag tag from information desk in Aegviidu or when boarding the bus in Tallinn. When choosing the bus, try to overcome anxiety and follow the signs, so that the ride will take you to the right starting place - 42+ km marathon to Kõnnu and 25+ km trekking to the lakes of Järvi.



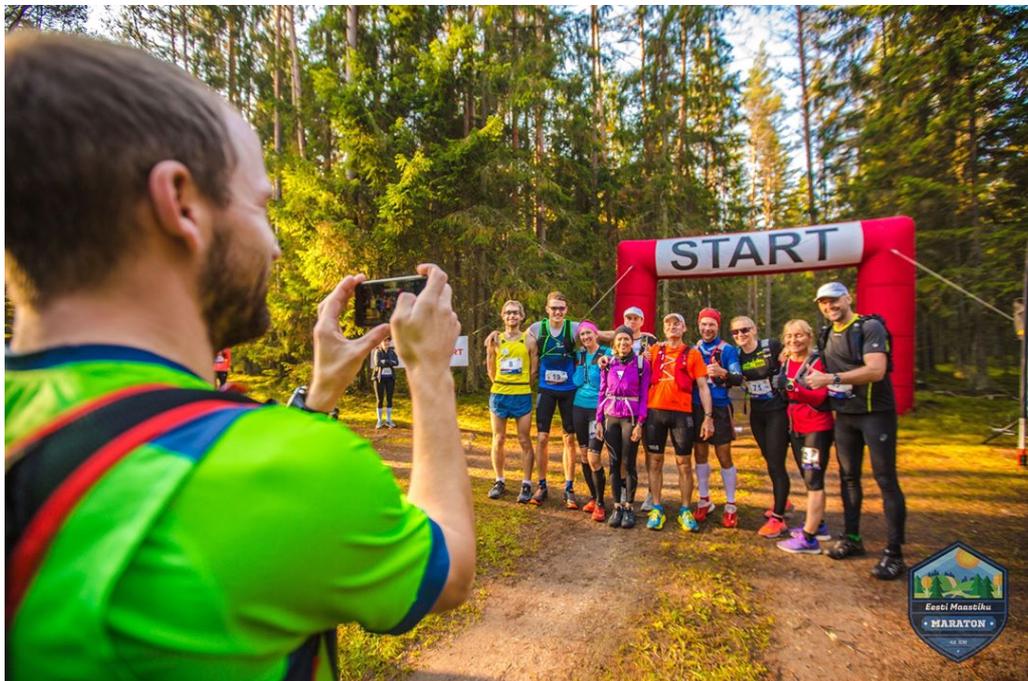
The bus ride takes about 45 minutes. "+" after kilometers means that the final course length is dependant on the weather conditions. The trail has been up to 1.5km longer in previous years due to high water levels in bogs...

There is a good mood on the bus. Just chill! Study the course map and plan the sports food you take with you. I make sure you have your own drink container. A small drinking bladder in your backpack and/or a soft folding cup. Let's care about the environment ... disposable cups are a meaningless burden on nature!



The course map provides an overview of the surroundings and refreshment points, but it is also helpful for locating yourself in an emergency. Navigation skills are not required to complete the course!

There is no other task at the starting line than to come up with the last combination of clothes, put your finish bag marked with your tag in a marked transport and communicate with other running friends.



Keep an eye on the weather and keep in mind that the weather may change during the long run. Or you will be tired and want to walk ... then a spare layer of clothing can be really helpful!

Who are rabbits, who are foxes, who are wolves and who are bears? These are the different types of runners that day in a playful sense. The start is in waves every two to three minutes so that narrow trails do not become overcrowded and you can look at something else than the

bottom of the runner in front of you. Since the timing is in net time, you don't even have to start exactly as your group opens. Take it easy and go when there is enough space on the track! "Rabbits" go first, they are fast runners. They are followed by "foxes" and "wolves" and last but not least - the "bears".



Head organizer Timmo Tammemäe sending off "bears" during 2018 marathon

The trail is marked with red arrows on white signs, pink silk ribbons and a permanent marking on trees - white circle with red line. And sometimes with red painted arrows on ground...



Course marking on a tree

- now a small section just for marathon runners -

The first kilometers of marathon run on slightly wider trails, but then you pass Pärlioja valley and the trail becomes narrow and twisty. Five kilometers after the start you will reach the famous Viru bog. In the bog you run along boardwalk and therefore there is no need to follow additional markings (except for the left turn right at the start of the bog). Viru bog is a very popular tourist destination due to its good accessibility. Although warning signs are located at the ends of the boardwalk, be aware that non-runner bog enthusiasts will have to fit on the boardwalk - runners have no privilege! In the middle of the bog, the lakes begin and in some places your feet may get wet at higher water levels. In case of rain, the boardwalk can be very slippery.



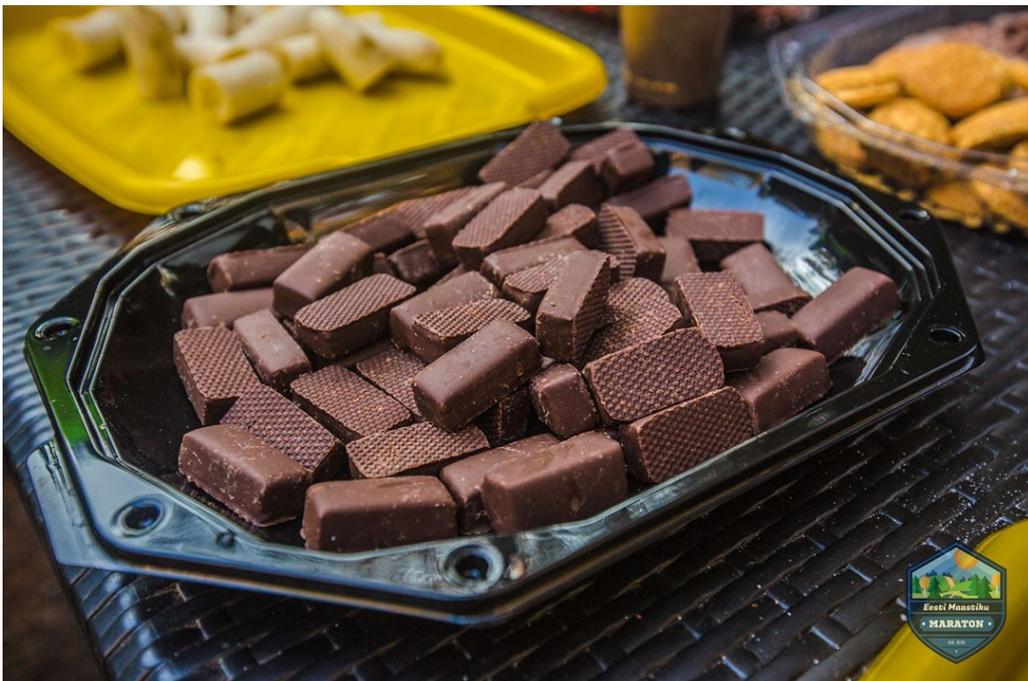
Take care not to step off the boardwalk while posing to photographers 😊

After the observation tower, the boardwalk becomes wider, so you can comfortably pass each other. If you want to pass someone moving with a slower pace, please kindly ask and if asked, just let people pass. Enjoy the view, maybe even climb the observation tower!



Right hand traffic also applies to the boardwalk

Once out of the bog, you will continue on forest path and reach the first drinking point at 7.5km. It has water and candy ... yes!



No need actually to consume gels when running - candy, cookie or banana give the same effect, unless your heart rate is close to your absolute maximum.

Now the hard part is supposed to start and it does. The long straight forest path is getting wetter and at times it is difficult to find a suitable place to put your foot on the ground. Your pink sneakers will be pink no more 😞 As you reach the Narva Highway you will run through the tunnel, and the hard trail continues. You will soon cross a forestry area and find yourself on a narrow muddy beaver dam !!!



A good tip to avoid twisting your ankle on an uneven track - in a risky place, turn your foot out a bit horizontally, just like a duck.

You're already so tired, but everyone else's faces are suspiciously enthusiastic ... pushing on! Now luckily it gets easier, at times you can even run on gravel road. Refreshment point on half of the course at the lakes of Järvi has banana, candy, cookies, sports drink, water. Everything you need.



There is no loud music nor a fancy start gate at the start of 25+ trekking.

The start of the 25km trekking was at the same time as marathon here at Järvi lakes. Why trekking? Well, the event is still timed, but why stress about time and place when you can just enjoy the same landscape in a more relaxed fashion... let's take it easy 😊!

- Marathon runners and 25km runners continue on the same course -

Once again, you will reach the boardwalk - the crossing of Kõnnu Suursoo is more than 2 km long. This is the bog that was shown in the beautiful Facebook video. I bet you would like to see yourself from a drone as you run between these beautiful bog lakes. Like an explorer through true wilderness. Cool! OK it really doesn't matter, you know you are here and this place is so genuinely Estonia!



Kõnnu Bog



Center of the bog is almost open ground. Don't worry if you step off the boardwalk. It's just some wet moss, you will not disappear into the depths... 😊

The last big bog lake with many islands leaves you in awe and suddenly you are facing a wall. Literally a mountain like a wall. You hike up and down the winding and jagged trails on a high ridge. On both sides in the depth, lakes blink. This section is pretty complicated to run, physically demanding and you have to mind your step all the time. Where's the hurry, you can just walk!



The best shoes for this event are with rough but still soft soles.



One of the easy trails after Kõnnu bog

Suddenly you feel an irresistible smell. Is this... grilled sausage? You have been fantasising about vegetarianism, well at least vegetable Tuesdays, but at the moment it is Sunday and you don't intend to give your portion of the sausage to anyone. Grilled sausages as race food? How have others not come to this idea? A cup of tea boiled from lake water? Well, who would bother to carry water for miles from the nearest car accessible place, when there is plenty of clean water in the lake.



For those who don't really want sausage, there is bread and candy at the refreshment point and lingonberries in the woods

Narrow and twisting trails on steep hills continue, so do sightings of new and new forest lakes ... At some point, the trail disappears into forest and soon you reach a vast heathery plain. Jussi heather fields. Looks like Lapland. You have never seen such a place in Estonia before ... The narrow winding trail on the hills disappears in the distance, some clouds sail across the sky. A really cool place you are at. Soviet military used to drop thousands of training bombs here and now it is again in threat of being closed for military training.



Jussi heather fields

You reach the forest again, cross the river on a bridge, jump between some muddy puddles and then you're in a familiar place. These are Kõrvemaa ski trails !? There is a great variety at the refreshment station here.



Cramps are traditionally associated with salt deficiency in the body, although scientifically they are more likely to appear due to muscle strain that is unsuitable for your fitness level.

There are salty pickles available here and it just tastes great! Pickle fluid has had great testing results against the cramping legs ... Only 10km to the end ... you can do it, now it's pretty clear! Fill some water to your bladder for the final 10k ...



Really, at times you can just walk and admire the forest!

Wider skitrails are easier to progress on. Some climbs pop up now and then and narrower trails. Soon you will pass a beautiful swampy shore bog lake. Fatigue disappears as you admire the view.



Your feet are unlikely to stay dry during Estonian Wilderness Marathon

As you progress on the trails you reach the top of yet another hill and find the legendary resuscitation point. The menu is somewhat unconventional ... with surprising snacks and liquids. What the heck, let's try some! It might just give you the power needed! The last few kilometers, a small section in the mossy spruce forest, and that's it.



There is 7.5h to complete the course. If you fear that it will take longer just take a headlamp with you.

Upon reaching the paved road asphalt seems unfamiliar under your feet. Why have you run so much on asphalt? I guess you're a trailrunner after all! Finish arch, happy chatter, happy faces.



Holding hands to support your fellow runner is OK

Photo clicks, finisher memorabilia and a diploma ... like craft class at school 😊



Diploma can be stamped by “finisher” stamp

You will be starving and the cooks of Kõrvemaa know how to solve this problem.



Soup with or without meat and the house cheesecake of Kõrvemaa sportscenter ...
yummy!

Get to sauna and it's good that you brought your swimwear. There are hot-tubs at finish area where you can let your aching muscles soak. You will feel good - proud and satisfied!



Hot-tubs are unisex unless the participants make it obvious they are not 😊

Riding back to Tallinn by train, you will get sleepy and close your eyes. Trees and boardwalks, roots and mud, the sun shining in the sky and the clouds flying (or that endless torrential rain and gray haze:) and all those other happy faces ...



Have a good preparation!