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VIA Lehigh River Relay Marathon



# Marathon Rising

More than 410,000 people finished marathons in America last year. This September, the Lehigh Valley will get a piece of the action.

WEDNESDAY, Via of the Lehigh Valley announced it will host the first marathon in the Lehigh Valley in 24 years - the Via Lehigh River Relay Marathon Run, for individuals and teams, on Sept. 9. Now, if you're asking yourself, who the heck wants to run 26.2 miles, the answer is: a lot of people.

Each year in the United States, there are almost as many marathons as there are days. Totaling more than 330, marathons are run everywhere from Anchorage, Alaska, to Yonkers, N.Y. Last year, Running USA estimated more than 410,000 people finished marathons in the United States, with the largest contingency coming in New York City, where 37,866 completed the five-borough course.

Here are some other marathon tidbits you might not have known:

### Why is it called a marathon?

As the legend goes, in 490 B.C. a Greek soldier named Pheidippides ran from Marathon to Athens to spread word of the Greek victory over the invading Persians. It is believed Pheidippides ran 25 miles, delivered his message and died of exhaustion

### Why 26.2 miles?

In 1896, the marathon made its Olympic debut as a 25.8-mile race (40 kilometers). Prior to the 1908 Olympics in London, the International Olympic Committee established its own "official" marathon distance of 26 miles. The race started in front of Windsor Castle to give

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- Juan Pablo Mo
- None Of The A

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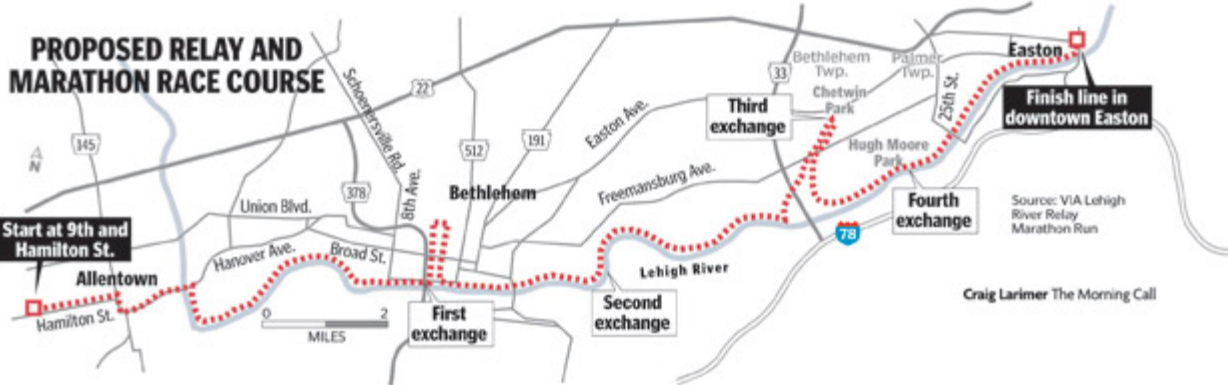
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the royal family a view. However, when the finish line was determined, it fell on the far side of the Olympic stadium, away from the box where the royal family would be sitting. When Queen Alexandria arrived, she insisted the race finish in front of her, hence the additional two-tenths of a mile.

**What is the world record?**

At the Berlin Marathon in 2003, Kenya's Paul Tergat finished in 2 hours, 4 minutes, 55 seconds. That's an

average of 4 minutes, 46 seconds per mile. The women's record is 2:15:25 by Great Britain's Paula Radcliffe.



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**Marquee marathons**

**New York** (First Sunday in November): 38,000 participants

**Chicago** (October): 33,000 participants

**Boston** (Third Monday in April): 20,000 participants

**Regional marathons**

**Philadelphia** (Third Sunday in November): 6,000 participants

**Scranton's "Steamtown"** (October): 1,700 participants

**Pocono Mountains 'Run for the Red'** (May): 400 participants

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