

WORLD ATHLETICS ROAD RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIPS

SAN DIEGO 2025 OVERVIEW

September 26-28, 2025

Updated: May 22, 2024

- San Diego bid for the World Athletics Road Running Championships in either 2025 or 2026, and on Monday, August 14, 2023, San Diego was awarded the 2025 Championships.
- Due in large part to anticipated hotel capacity and the various availabilities of the Convention Center, Waterfront Park, and Balboa Park, and after a number of conversations with involved parties, including the world's best athletes, the dates proposed to and approved by World Athletics were September 26-28, the weekend after the World Track & Field Championships in Tokyo end.
 - The LOC is currently working with the San Diego City Special Events Department and the Balboa Park museums and institutions to finalize the courses and race day schedule specifics in the best interests of all concerned with a goal of creating a Championships with the greatest positive impact to the sport and the City, with the least possible disruption to the involved local communities.
- The Championship events are the Men's & Women's Road 1 Mile, Road 5km, and Half Marathon
- In addition to the World Championship races, there is for the second time ever a Mass Participant aspect to every race.
 - In Riga, Latvia this past October 1 was the first time that this Road Championship, which was formerly contested at just the Marathon (at first) and then the Half Marathon distance, had all 3 races and had the masses / citizen runners compete in all 3. In recent years this Championship has been held every other year. Beginning in 2025, it will be an annual event with 2026 being held in Copenhagen, DEN.
 - We are hoping for about 50,000 entrants over the 3 events, expecting 67% of the participants to be from outside San Diego, mirroring past (2019 and earlier) Rock 'n' Roll Marathon demographics.
 - Achieving the following entry numbers is a reasonable goal based upon precedence and Tracy Sundlun's personal experience (44 Rock 'n' Roll's in 9 cities in his tenure with over 25,000 combined half and full marathoners, 7 Carlsbad 5000's with 8,000 – 9,500 entrants, and over 8,000 entrants annually in the New York Road Runners' 5th Avenue Mile).
 - Goals / Expectations: 1 Mile: 7,500-10,000; 5K: 9,000-12,500, Half Marathon: 25,000-35,000.
 - Given that there will be 3 days of competition and many of the citizen runners will run multiple races, the direct economic impact to both the City and the County should well be a record for a running event in California.
 - Based upon the Economic Impact Report of the 2019 Rock 'n Roll San Diego Marathon & ½ Marathon with just a total of 23,567 registrants, 22,109 room nights, \$25,716,897 of direct spending, and \$48,784,954 of total economic impact, it would be surprising if the numbers weren't at least double that.
- The 1 Mile races will be conducted similarly to New York City's 5th Avenue Mile (the world's premier road mile), with a series of age group, Masters, and other unique division races about every 10 minutes culminating with the World Championship Women's and Men's Miles last.
- The 5K Races will be conducted similarly to the Carlsbad (CA) 5000 (the world's original major 5 km road race where since 1986, 16 World and 8 American Records, and 11 world wheelchair bests have been set), with a series of age group, Masters and other unique division races about every 25 minutes culminating with the World Championship Women's and Men's races last.

- The Half Marathon will be conducted as one mass race started in waves of 500-750 separated by 30 seconds to 2:30, based upon the athletes' seed times or unique competitive division, with the World Championship athletes starting first.
- Everyone is committed to conducting each race distance on a different day, though it is technically possible to conduct the Mile and 5K races on the same day if absolutely necessary for whatever reason, but not without severely impacting the quality of the events.
- The Championships' competition venue will be centered around Balboa Park.
 - The west side of Balboa Park between 6th Avenue and Balboa Drive will be the location of all post-race activities, including the Headliner Post-race Concerts, Awards Ceremonies, beer garden, food and souvenir concessions, and hospitality venues, etc.
- As a part of the Mass Races, there will be a number of unique divisions, including the World Masters Athletics (35 & over) Championships (pending), military, race walk, wheelchair, and several paralympic / challenged athletes divisions. In the 5K there will also be a high school division, and in the Mile there will also be both a high school division and Junior Olympic (14 & under) age group sections.
- As an entirely separate event, outside of the Championships but held on Day 1 of the Championships just before they begin, will be held *Junior San Diego*, a free event for all junior high and elementary school kids, which will consist of a series of age-group miles, half-miles and quarter-miles (depending upon their age). This will be a part of a fitness program conducted through the schools and other local youth organizations, geared at improving children's health and fitness and introducing them to running in a fun and supportive atmosphere. Numerous local Olympians and National Team members would be involved, and the goal would be to have as many as 10,000 children take part.
- In an effort to promote health and fitness both locally and world-wide, two additional features are being planned.
 - A Health Walk / Run section of each race, which would be supported by online "Couch to the Finish Line" training programs.
 - A Virtual component of each race, which could involve a competition to reward the countries with the greatest number of virtual participants with the "Federation Cup".
- There will be prize money provided not only in the World Championship races (at least \$321,000 between the 3 Championships), but also in the Mass Participation Divisions / Races.
 - Consistent with all major road races world-wide, in an effort to both draw the deepest and best fields in all the age-groups emblematic of these World Championships, \$141,000 in prize money will be evenly spread over all the open and masters age-groups in the 1 Mile, 5K, and ½ Marathon races.
 - Currently budgeted: Age-graded (1st - \$1,500, 2nd - \$1,000, 3rd - \$500), Overall (1st - \$3,000, 2nd - \$2,000, 3rd - \$1,000), Individual 5-year age-groups (35-39 -- 90+, 1st - \$500, 2nd - \$300, 3rd - \$200), Team 10-year age-groups (40's - 80's, 1st - \$500), Men & Women, All 3 races
 - Another \$30,000 will be spent on both prize money and travel assistance for our wheelchair and paralympic athletes in all 3 distances (\$60,000 total).
 - And finally, an additional \$60,000 total will be spent on prize money and travel assistance for the race walk division in all 3 races. This will allow all three of the races to become World Athletics Race Walking Tour Gold Label events making the World Championship weekend very desirable to the world's best walkers.
 - San Diego has long been the hub of U.S. race walking, including having been the home at one time or another of most of the U.S. Olympic race walk team in this century, as well as the host of 4 of the last 5 U.S. Olympic 50k / 35k Race Walk Trials, the 2024 U.S. Olympic Team Selection Event for the new Marathon Race Walk Mixed Relay, and at least one USATF National Championship in each of the last 11 years.
 - With the race walkers competing side-by-side with the runners – and at the same distances - these World Road Running Championships will provide the perfect venue to show all the world's

runners - from the front of the pack to the back of the pack - just how remarkable and fast race walkers are and elevate their status within the sport.

- All the Championship races will have a live international broadcast feed. The Championships will be a national and international infomercial for San Diego.
- All the races will be staged as the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series was designed, with live bands at every mile, cheerleaders at every mile, themed water stations, and a different Headliner Concert at the post-race party every day. The courses will also feature promotions / exhibits from major San Diego attractions, including but not limited to, the Zoo, Sea World, the Balboa Park museums, San Diego Padres, San Diego Wave Women's Football Club, Del Mar Racetrack, and the new MLS San Diego Football Club.
- There will be a 3-4 day running expo held at the San Diego Convention Center to support the Championships, where in addition to all manner of sales booths and interactive exhibits, all the participants will pick up their bib numbers and souvenir T-shirts.
- There will be a major Global Road Running Symposium involving race directors from all over the world conducted by World Athletics in the days prior to the Championships, as well as an International Marathon Medical Symposium.
- There will be several Hospitality functions and dinners held for the World Athletics Family and Championship participants throughout the week. They will be held at unique San Diego venues such as on the USS Midway Museum and a Hornblower Cruise ship.
- There will be a charity component to the Championships as well, with citizen runners encouraged to raise money for charities of their choice as started here in San Diego with the original Rock 'n' Roll Marathon in 1998, and is now done in road races all over the U.S. Our goal is to raise at least \$1,000,000.
- Consistent with World Athletics' commitment to sustainability and protecting our planet for future generations, San Diego 25 is committed to conducting the most sustainability-focused and eco-friendly championship road race in history and has engaged Tina Muir of *Running For Real* to lead that effort.
- Whatever proceeds there are from the Championships will go to support track and field, road running, cross country running, and race walking in the San Diego area.
- Leading the effort locally are *Sports San Diego* (the local public / private organization tasked with bringing sports events to the region) and Tracy Sundlun, co-founder of the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series, supported by many of the local San Diego road running event organizers. Also in a leadership role is John Palmer, an Australian native who is the Co-Founder and Director Kirra of Sports & Entertainment and formerly involved with the Los Angeles Marathon as well as numerous major Australian international events. A 501-c-3 not-for-profit entity called World Athletics Road Running Championships – San Diego 25, led by Tracy Sundlun has been established to run the Championships.
- The current budget for the Championships is \$8,300,000 supported mostly by registration fees and corporate sponsorships. We have already begun soliciting sponsorships locally, nationally, and internationally at all levels in numerous sponsor categories.
- 4 "Event Ambassadors" with local ties were enlisted to help promote both our bid and then – if we won them - the Championships ... Des Linden (Boston Marathon Champion), Meb Keflezighi (Boston & NY Marathon Champion and Olympic Silver Medalist), and Steve Scott (American mile record-holder, world road 5k record-holder and Co-founder Carlsbad 5,000), who all lived much of their lives in San Diego County, and Eliud Kipchoge, 2x Olympic Marathon Champion and World Record holder, who has run four times in San Diego and is a good friend of Tracy Sundlun. Other Event Ambassadors could also be enlisted.
- Part of the motivation and the hope for this bid effort, is that San Diego will be able to create an on-going major, economic-impact-generating, world-class running event, as a legacy result of hosting these World Road Running Championships.
- **Please, contact Tracy Sundlun with any questions or ideas. Both are welcome.**

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