

Trip Notes for Alaska Adventures August 5 – 20, 2010

This was a momentous trip for me: A trip into Anchorage for touring, a six-day hiking adventure in the Kenai Peninsula (Girdwood and Seward areas) with a tour group, followed by a return to Anchorage for the weekend and a marathon, then the McKinley Explorer dome train to Denali National Park ,returning to Anchorage via coach. I haven't been gone from home so long and maybe never before.

I should talk about the marathon first since that has been the primary reason for my trip reports and the primary audience.

Why run Humpy's Marathon?

- Easy start and finish area just a couple blocks from the hotel.
- Tech t-shirt is well- designed and classy.
- Pick up expo bag is a keeper.
- Pasta party had speakers and dignitaries (Bart Yasso and Jeff Galloway)
- Age awards are a nice designed mug – and I got one out of default.
- Manageable and easy city to get around.
- Coupon for 20% off at a top-sports store in town.
- Course includes the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail full of amazing sites and wildlife.
- Course allows one to run to the side on dirt (mud in this case) for much of the trail. (My hips needed that dirt.)
- Plenty of food and Gatorade on the course even though they advertised BYO-Gu.
- Great entertainment at the finish line.
- Alaska is a draw and if you go that far you may as well run a marathon.
- There aren't many Alaskan marathons if you're seeking your 50-state punch off.



At the early starting line

These negatives are not because I didn't like the marathon – I like to give a balanced view.

- Anchorage is a very long ways away and the air fare is rather hefty.
- Alaska is huge and hard to get your arms around. You can travel for days and only see a bare touch of it.
- Weather can be hard to deal with – on the same day Fairbanks had 91 degrees. There could be snow. Anchorage has just come off 40-days and 40-nights of rain and lows in the 40s.
- There was NO expo but I like that they sent runners to a local store.
- You might meet more people from New Jersey living there than native Alaskans. Honest – we kept running into summer workers from New Jersey.
- Prices for gas, food and rental cars are steep, as are many of the tours. I often asked if the decimal point was in the wrong place.



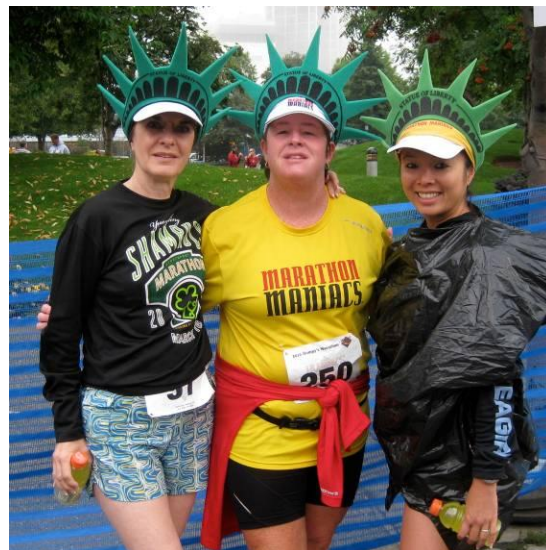
On the trail: Maricar, Dave, a group of cheerleaders posing as a fluid station, David and Diana

The players

Six days of pretty good hiking before a marathon (well, one day was mostly spent on a wildlife sightseeing boat but some of us were pretty green that day) is not the best way to have a PR but many of our hikers-turned-runners did just fine. Dave Cole got 3AG with his 3:35, Kathy managed a 4:17 despite raw and bleeding feet from the hiking trip, David Williams and Maricar came in at 5:56 and me happily at 6:00 even. (This was my 14th marathon of the year on top of three major week-long hikes.) Loudean was on the marathon course as a volunteer and we sure appreciated her efforts and recognized that this had been her first major hike and she just wasn't sure what to expect of her legs, nor the fairly recent hip surgery. We suspect she could have run just fine.

Joining us for the marathon were David "Parker" who managed a 4:44 despite having walked miles of the marathon course to spend time with me, and Peggy gave herself a respectable 6:24 despite having produced a marathon finish in Oregon the week prior.

Here's the Liberty Ladies who have been flattered that our friend Dr. John Connors, podiatrist and sports medicine to a lot of famous runners, has asked for our picture to include on his office wall.



In Anchorage both before the hike and after



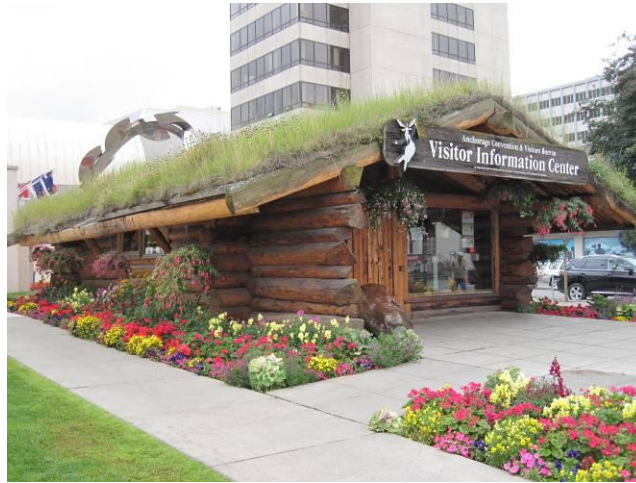
We ate reindeer hot dogs from a cart, took a tour through the surprisingly large airfield of water taxi airplanes, and saw moose at Earthquake Park. Did you know that there are about 1100 airplane accidents in Alaska compared to 300 in the lower 48? Yet there are thousands of bodies of water for the planes to land. Did you know that one of the best places to see moose is in Anchorage City proper? They are known for having babies in downtown flower pots, putting their head in the McDonald's drive up window and getting stuck, being on the marathon course (Dave saw a momma and baby), and charging cars that they think are in their way. They are big animals too, and they look so docile that many a tourist is caught unaware. (My closest sighting was from the Denali raft trip when I didn't have my camera and it was even closer than a zoo.)



We visited the heritage museum outside of town, visiting reproductions of various tribes housing, saw crafters, and watched native dancers. At the downtown well-rated Anchorage museum more of Alaskan life came together with the help of a docent tour.



Art was the backdrop but the costumes gained my attention. The middle one is of fish skins. We saw boots made of fish skins too.



The downtown visitor's center is one of the few remaining original buildings from before the 1964 earthquake. It was then that much of the town from 4th Avenue to the water slid right off the hill and into the water (including the area of our hotel.) The 9.2 earthquake in 1964 was the second largest ever recorded after one in Chile and the resultant tsunami(s) totally flattened many coastal cities. We were amazed at downtown's plethora of flowers, huge and healthy, despite the short summer growing season. We can only guess it's the 20-plus hours of sunshine that short growing season acquires.



On both of our trips to Anchorage we took in the local weekend market, tasting all sorts of creations with my favorite being the salmon quesadillas. Color and dignitaries abound but the fact that these couple characters were Paula Dean and husband would have evaded me. Paula's husband looked like he belonged to Alaska (men: the odds are good but the goods are odd). She is a southerner.





The sled dog demonstration and the stuffed animals of downtown museums or visitor centers would be the best sights we got of the animals. Yes, later we saw animals in the wild but a zoom lens or an imagination was very helpful. I am reminded that I'm not only a city girl but probably a zoo girl too. Trying to find animals in the wild was either too difficult, too nervous making, or just plain inconvenient and time consuming. Later I'll show you some of what I saw in the wild. Sightings by three of us who visited Denali's wilderness were all quite different from one day to the next.



Downtown was often colorful. There was an Irish festival our first weekend and this little gal and the Galway music were the highlights. Her sign says "Guinness Gives You Strength." We watched a tango demonstration. The souvenir shops, and there were many, sported huge stuffed animals too.



Here we are at Resurrection Park with our National Parks Ranger walking-tour guide in front of Captain Cook. He discovered so much of the Alaskan coast. Here's more evidence that "the goods are odd." But of course that doesn't include us (smile), on our way to the McKinley Explorer dome train trip towards Denali. I am distressed that we didn't get David's picture when he came to the train station to say goodbye Monday morning. We could have included him in this group of odd-ducks. Thank you, David!



This restaurant scene, taken at Humpy's Restaurant in Anchorage, includes a cutie from NJ – just one of many folks from NJ we met. Next frequent were Floridians who work the summer in Anchorage. Maybe it's of interest that there were many one-and-done workers too.

First we went hiking – so here we go backwards in time

With Loudean, Kathy and Maricar having spent from Thursday to Sunday in Anchorage, we were picked up at our downtown hotel, drove to the hikers host hotel where we met up with Dave (Cole), multi hike friend Dr. Chuck Wasicek from Watertown NY and another couple Mary Ann and Glenn from Richmond VA. On our way to Girdwood we stopped at Portage Glacier for the start of our 6-day hike.

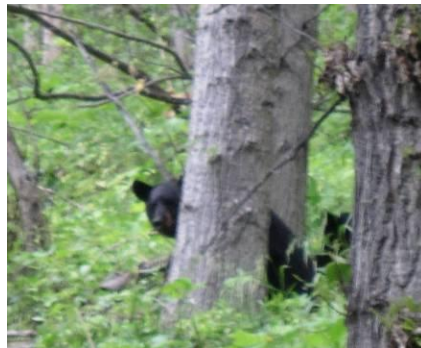


Here I am freezing at our first glacier walk, and then the group later picnicking after the hike to Lost Lake which could also be called the Lost Cause Lake since it was the Fogged in Lost Lake. And four happy hikers yet still bundled up.



Dave taking cover and resting up at cold, cold Crows Pass hut, Loudean and Glenn in a different kind of travel – a rope pull hand cart to traverse a river; and a group of European hikers at Harding Ice fields and glacier.

The animals



From sea to land, some exciting and some nervous making, but don't be jealous thinking we ever saw any animals like you'd see in the zoo. It took binoculars or a zoom lens most of the time. The Orcas from the boat trip out of Seward, the momma bear with two babies caused a few of our hikers to nearly wet their pants, and the marmots were just plain cute to everyone. Whales were later seen from an Anchorage restaurant but they were too fast to get their picture taken.



As part of our hiking adventure we took a day boat trip out of Seward for animal watching and probably saw as much on the water as ever.



For some the highlight was the glaciers and especially as they were 'calving' which thunderous sound never seemed to coincide with the breakaways. I'd seen glaciers and avalanches in Switzerland (and hiked across them) but never glaciers breaking away in the ocean. If you want a lesson on why glaciers are blue, watch the video by Maricar. I made a number of videos of glacial calving and sent them via email from my iPhone which technology never ceases to amaze me.

The Dall Sheep were often visible but always far off and requiring zoom lens or binoculars. Yet every time we saw them we acted like city kids in our excitement.



So much water

Alaska has 6,640 miles of coastline which is more than all the rest of the U.S. Add it all up and it could be more than the distance around the entire earth.

Anchorage's coastline can be considered dangerous. They call their coast mud flats and we could see the 39 foot tides necessitating floating docks but also much caution. We heard from our race director why we should not venture off the coastal trail onto the 'shore' line: a newly married bride walked across the flats for photos and got stuck up to her hips. They tried to extract her with a helicopter and ropes and later with fire hoses to free the mud. Nothing could be done -- the tides and Mother Nature finally took her.

Along Turnagain Arm it's said that a 6 foot foaming wall of water can move across. I have only seen that phenomenon outside of Mont St Michele in France where the waves roll in with the tides. With more time I would have liked to see this wall of water again – but from a distance!

Alaska has over 12,000 rivers including 7 of the largest 20 in the U.S. Alaska also has 200 million acres of wetlands which is more than 2/3 of all wetlands in the U.S. Thank Jimmy Carter for saving them, though not all Alaskans agree and Carter was burned in effigy the years he signed over another 6 million acres of park lands.

Over 30,000 square miles or 5% of Alaska are covered by glaciers. The pilots and tour guides all told us that they are NOT losing glaciers in Alaska.



The hike

From www.TimberTours.com brochure: Alaska, perhaps more than any other region in North America, is cloaked in a mystical aura that ignites the imagination. To some extent, that aura obviously is the product of Alaska's incredible, incomparable natural beauty. Its mountains, glaciers, coastline and wilderness are without equal. Arguably, though, without in any way diminishing its physical magnificence, Alaska's irresistible attraction is that it symbolizes the "Final Frontier," a last opportunity to experience the wilderness in its most pristine, unspoiled expression. Alaska still promises the opportunity to see a bear scramble through the brush of a mountain valley or to sit in a kayak and watch a massive glacier calve ice off its face into the fjords below.

Basically – this is the week's schedule with a total hiking mileage starting at 44 miles and going up from there with optional walks.



Day 1	Group assembles afternoon in Girdwood (shuttle from Anchorage); afternoon hike along Winner Creek Trail to Gorge Bridge	4 miles
Day 2	Historic Iditarod Trail to Crows Pass	10 miles
Day 3	Harding Trail along Exit Glacier to Harding Ice field	8 miles
Day 4	Lost Lake - Resurrection Peaks	14 miles
Day 5	Kenai Fjords National Park - Tour of the Fjords by Boat	
Day 6	Johnson Pass Trail	8 miles

Hotels

I would have loved to stay at the Alyeska Resort but that would have been an atrocious price so we stayed at the local condos at the foot of the ski lifts and some were charming with two story staircases and some were not. By luck of the draw mine was not and thus I contemplated



a move to the resort but that would have been cumbersome as it was too far of a walk. The local breakfast café was a star as were the

flowers surrounding it. For a view of the resort, see www.alyeskaresort.com and this picture. The interior is lush and the surrounding mountains are said to give experienced skiers a run for their money.



At Seward we were at the new wing of a rather simple hotel but with a view of the water and the last day we woke to find a huge ocean liner parked practically out our door. It was here too that our breakfast location was super and just a short walk to town.



The town was full of odd-ducks and one of the taxi drivers was so proud of the fact that he covered his taxi with a collection of golden ducks.

Happy hikers

We were always happy to have survived the day and our celebrations in the evening exhibited that enthusiasm. It would be tempting to add some of the dinner treats but there are far too many. Some ordered a 'few' appetizers and followed on with a main course and dessert which would tell you how many dinner pictures there might be. Here's a cute mail that tells the story. It wasn't mine!

To Thomas: Your wife is super dangerous. First marathons. Second Europe. Now, hiking! I can't keep up with her. I keep falling in love with the experiences she is introducing me to. I cherished every single second on this trip and how lucky we were to be able to do it physically, financially and emotionally. I see why D keeps booking Timber Tours. You would have loved dinner. In fact, when things got rough during the hike, I would just visualize how good dinner was going to be. I took pics for you of ALL the food we ate. They let us order whatever we wanted. So of course I always ordered an avg of 4 appetizers and shared with everyone. They took us to some fancy restaurants. My fave appy of the trip was a watermelon sushi roll with tuna! Never saw it before in my life. They must have stole the recipe from NOBU. I ate like a queen. Anything we wanted! Breakfast and dinner! I didn't mind having sandwiches for lunch since they were with avocado and red onions. YUM! It was such a great experience that Lou Lou and I committed to doing one trip a summer with Timber. As long as we can eat like queens, we're in. Thought of you lots when I had good food b/c you know how Diana gets. She doesn't care as much. She's happy with her PB and J.

***If you are lucky enough to be in the mountains,
You are lucky enough.***





This glacier almost evaded us with the fog and only at the last did we find a good view. We generally found a good picnic spot however and here's from the last day. Bear day.

The weather – wet is the best way to put it

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT - NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
 ANCHORAGE AK - **440 AM AKDT THU AUG 19 2010 - ...STREAK OF CONSECUTIVE DAYS WITH PRECIPITATION IN ANCHORAGE ENDS...** THE CITY'S STREAK OF CONSECUTIVE DAYS WITH PRECIPITATION HAS COME TO AN END. A TOTAL OF 31 CONSECUTIVE DAYS BETWEEN JULY 18 AND AUGUST 17 SAW AT LEAST A TRACE OF PRECIPITATION AT THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE ON SAND LAKE ROAD...ECLIPSING THE PREVIOUS RECORD OF 27 DAYS SET IN 1951. A TOTAL OF 4.66 INCHES OF RAIN FELL DURING THIS PERIOD. A NUMBER OF DAYS SAW ONLY SPORADIC PERIODS OF LIGHT RAIN. NINETEEN DAYS DURING THIS TIME FRAME SAW LESS THAN A TENTH OF AN INCH OF RAIN...WITH FIVE OF THESE DAILY TOTALS AMOUNTING TO ONLY A TRACE. THERE WERE SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT RAINFALL EVENTS IN THIS STRETCH...WITH A TWO DAY PERIOD FROM JULY 25-26 SEEING CLOSE TO 1.50 INCHES OF RAINFALL.



The end to the hike

We were all rather proud of our exercise and the resultant assist to our behinds. More odd ducks.

A video is available with much much more!

For a fast and furious and cute YouTube video by Maricar, check out <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjQNXZwLkwQ>. Set it to slow motion if you can! There was a lot to put into ten minutes.



Paula and Steve Boone's photo link - Great photos from Humpy's Marathon and their Anchorage trip: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/31215162@N07/sets/72157624610688707/>

Next we're off to Denali National Park

It's Peggy and Diana on their way. Dave Cole will spend a week in and out in his rental car but we never met up. But since this report has become too burdensome with many pictures it might never be accepted on email if I continue so it will become a separate trip report.

Itinerary

Sun Aug 8 – Day 1

Our Alaska Hike assembles in Girdwood near Anchorage at noon of Day 1 (we'll provide van transportation from Anchorage earlier in the day) and we'll spend our first of two overnights at the Alyeska Resort.

Hotel Condos at Alyeska Accommodations – for 2 nights
 P.O. Box 1196, Girdwood, AK 99587 Tele: 907 783 2000
 Alyeska Resort: 1000 Arlberg Avenue, Girdwood, AK 99587 Tele: (907) 754-1111
 www.alyeskaresort.com for main resort

Mon Aug 9 – Day 2

The Winner Creek Trail is planned for Day 2 as we explore the historic Iditarod Trail that provided access to the gold fields near Crow Pass during the early years of the 20th century. We'll continue to climb moderately along the upper reaches of the creek to the picturesque falls of Winner Creek Gorge (6 miles). Along the way, we'll pass the remains of the Monarch Mine, a hard-rock gold mine that ceased operations in 1948. Nearby Crystal Lake lies nestled beneath a steep mountain wall and then it's on to the Raven Glacier overlook before descending to the trailhead. We'll spend a second evening at Alyeska.

Tue Aug 10 – Day 3

In the morning we'll head out along the Course Creek Trail with its startling views of Right and Wrong Mountains. We'll continue on to Crescent Lake and then return to our trailhead and a late afternoon shuttle to Seward, where we'll spend our final three overnights (12 miles).

Hotel Murphy's Alaskan Inn – for 3 nights
 P.O. Box 736, 911 Fourth Avenue (corner of 4th & D), Seward, Alaska 99664
 Tele: 907-224-8090 and 800 686-8191

Wed Aug 11 – Day 4

Lost Lake is our goal for Day 4 as we climb moderately along Box Canyon Creek. The snow-clad Resurrection Peaks hover above our trail as we approach the lake. Spectacular views of the Kenai Mountains and Resurrection Bay are added features of this exciting hike (14 miles).

Thu Aug 12 – Day 5

A change of pace is planned for Day 5. Seward is the gateway to Kenai Fjords National Park and we'll explore this extraordinary treasure in the context of a scenic boat cruise. The glacier-laced fjords offer an exceptional wildlife opportunity that, with a little luck, can include whale sightings.

Fri Aug 13 – Day 6

Our visit to Kenai Fjords Park continues on our final day. We'll hike the Harding Trail along Exit Glacier to the Harding Ice field, one of the largest ice fields in North America (7 miles). The ice field is 35 miles long and 20 miles wide, and is the source of the glaciers of Kenai Fjords. Following our visit to the ice field, we'll van shuttle back to Anchorage.

Late pm End of hike – by 6pm and will be dropped at our Hilton downtown

4-7pm Expo at Performing Arts Center (PAC) downtown

Hotel Hilton Anchorage – at City Center and about 4 blocks from start
500 West Third Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501 Tele 907 272 7411

Sat Aug 14

9:00am Expo at the PAC downtown until 4pm

4:00pm The Pasta feed will be held at the Denaina Convention Center, downtown until 7pm.
Half and full marathoners and volunteers do not have to pay for their meal. Everyone else must pay \$10 at the door.

Sun Aug 15

8:00am Walkers start of Humpy's Big Wild Life Run Marathon;

9:00am Runners start (but one place shows 8:10am start for Run and 9:00am half)
www.anchoragerunningclub.org/bwlr/index.html

The start and finish line for the ½ and full marathon is on 6th Avenue, in front of Town Square, just to the east of the PAC. Course map promised but not available as of July 27.

'09 results 226 finishers with last runner #216 finishing at 6:15 but walkers timed to 7:25
An early start is available.

BYO Gu. No food on the course.

Weather 40s and 50s and rain not unusual with August being transitional yet Anchorage is in a mild spot for Alaska

New course BIG WILD LIFE RUNS CHANGES COURSE: One of the most exciting aspects of this year's Big Wild Life Runs is a change in course structure to better support the thousand or so individuals who will participate in 2010. Heidi Beer, the BWL Runs committee member entrusted with much of the course design, says that the Anchorage Running Club made the decision to alter the BWL courses to pull the focus downtown, where a common start and finish will provide racers and spectators with needed space. "We want to encourage everyone to make a day of it," Beer says. "Like an Italian piazza, we're offering food, music, and tons of room for people to cheer on the racers." It's about community as much as racing, for sure. Everyone starts and finishes downtown, Beer says, but instead of immediately branching off into the Coastal and Chester Creek trail systems, runners will loop around Anchorage streets before hitting the Alaskan wilderness. "I think it's great to offer racers the opportunity to see a little of our city's history and some of the nature they desire as well," Beer says. "That's what our visiting participants want, and we're lucky to have it."

The marathon route will take you alongside Cook Inlet on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and then through several parks and greenbelts on the Chester Creek Trail.

Anchorage tourist ideas:

Anchorage City Trolley Tours from 612 W. Fourth Ave (between F & G Streets) Tele 907 276 5603.

Alaska Center for Performing Arts Discovery Theatre at 612 W. Fourth Avenue – large screen slide show called “Sky Song” with stunning images of aurora borealis. Also shown is “Alaska: Spirit of the Wild.” Tele 907 263 2900.

Convention and Visitors Bureau, 524 W. Fourth Avenue, Tele 907 276 4118 or 800 478 1255.

Self guiding walking tours available at Log Cabin Visitor Information Center, Fourth Avenue and F Street, Tele: 907 274 3531.

Alaska Native Heritage Center outside of town. AAA Gem. Free shuttle and 2 for 1 admission with Heritage Center and Anchorage Museum of History and Art per tourist magazine. Tele: 907 330 8000 or 800 315 6608.

Alaska Public Lands Info Center, 605 W. Fourth Avenue, exhibits and displays on culture, history and wildlife, with films and interpretive programs offered. Free. Tele: 907 644 3661 or 866 869 6887.

Alaska Railroad Scenic Rail Tours departing from 411 W. First Avenue, Tele: 907 265 2494 or 800 544 0552.

Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. AAA Gem. See Heritage Center above re 2 for 1 admission. 21 W. Seventh Avenue, with exhibits on art, history and cultures of Alaska. Summer films. Free. Tele: 907 343 4236.

Phillips '26 glacier cruise' in one day. See www.26glaciers.com or Tele: 907 276 8023.

Anchorage Trail System with 120 miles of paved and 300 miles of unpaved trails. The 11-mile Tony Knowles Coastal Trail stretches from downtown and winds along scenic coastline. Flattop Mountain is popular 3-mile day hike with views.

Anchorage Day tours at www.alaskadenalitours.com/anchorage_alaska/anchorage_tours.html including a \$49 highlights tour with museum entry.

A New Big Wild Course

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2010 brings some exciting changes to the BWLR course. All races will still start and finish in the heart of downtown Anchorage, but for a change of pace, marathon and half-marathon runners will wind through the streets of downtown before heading out on the scenic Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. 5K participants will take in all the city sights and sounds as they run their entire race downtown. With zero elevations gain, this could be your fastest 5K ever! Not only is this new course a bit more runner-friendly, it's more fun, interesting and convenient for race fans. For more information and a course map, check out <http://www.anchoragerunningclub.org/bwlr/course.html>.

## Jeff Galloway Running Clinic



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World-class athlete and running legend Jeff Galloway will hold a running clinic on Saturday, August 14 from 9 a.m. - noon, at the Providence Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Center, located at 3801 Lake Otis Pkwy, Ste 100. Galloway has written and produced several running books, manuals and DVDs. He pioneered the run-walk-run method and has opened up doors for thousands of runners with his methods that reduce pain and injury to almost zero. This clinic is an excellent opportunity for anyone running or aspiring to run any distance race, as well as beginners looking for some expert advice. Cost is \$99 and you can register online

at http://www.jeffgalloway.com/resources/running_school.html.

Pre-Race Pasta Feed

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Come carb-up and mingle with fellow runners at the annual Big Wild Life Runs Pasta Feed. This year the all-you-can-eat extravaganza will take place Saturday, August 14, from 4 - 7 p.m. at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center. Marathon and half-marathon participants as well race volunteers can eat for free. For all other runners, coaches and family members there's a mere \$10 charge for all the spaghetti you can handle. We need

to know how many pounds of pasta to prepare so please RSVP at [bwlr@gmail.com](mailto:bwlr@gmail.com).

From [www.marathonguide.com](http://www.marathonguide.com)

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★★★★☆ **Worth the trip from the East Coast** (about: 2009)

**Course: 4 Organization: 4 Fans: 4**

*Just a runner* from the nyc area (9/24/09)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Humpy's Classic Marathon

If you enjoy friendly, small, well-organized races in stunning settings, this marathon is for you.

Much of the course was along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, which was lovely. My only disappointment was that I didn't meet any moose on the course. I'd never been to Alaska, so what better excuse to go than to run a marathon? I currently live in the NYC area, so I loved the wonderful, clean, crisp air! Breathing that in alone made the trip worthwhile.

My only suggestion: Please provide more aid stations along the way - especially in the last 8 miles or so, when we need them the most. I started hitting the wall just before mile 18, and was looking forward to the next aid station. Unfortunately, Mile 18 only had water. I needed more than that, at least Gatorade. The next aid station after that was just after mile 21 (more than 3 miles later) and by then I was about to fall over and was seriously doubting I would finish. When I finally reached the next aid station, I was thrilled that one of the volunteers was thoughtful enough to provide banana bread and M&Ms. I consumed as much of these as I could and I have no doubt that if this angel had not appeared just in the nick of time, I would not have been able to continue - let alone finish the marathon. So whoever you are, thank you!

Bart Yasso from Runner's World Magazine was at the finish. As we ran across the finish line, he announced our names and hometowns, and had a little factoid about where we were from, which was a nice touch.

Humpy's was terrific, definitely worth the trip from NJ. I highly recommend this marathon.

P.s. After the race, I rented a car and visited Turnagain Arm, Denali, Mount McKinley, Talkeetna, Seward, Whittier, Homer... what a stunning state. I will be back next year.

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★★★★☆ **On a clear day you can see Denali** (about: 2009)

**Course: 5 Organization: 4 Fans: 2**

S. F. from Birmingham. AL (9/12/09)

**6-10** previous marathons | **4-5** Humpy's Classic Marathons

Yes, the course is mostly on a bike path, but a very long stretch of it runs along Cook Inlet. It was overcast in the morning, but I was fortunate enough to be slow, so that by the time I reached the coastal section the last time I could see the snow-covered mountains begin to peak out across the water. The part through the woods is green and lovely, and last year I saw a porcupine. My son saw a moose on the trail in 2007. (There are customarily a lot of moose in this area, but they tend to be a little more shy on marathon day.) The marathon is small enough that I have placed in my age group 3 of the 4 times I have run it, and like I said, I am slow. The finisher's medal features a picture of a humpy, which is a type of salmon, and it says, "fishiner" on it. The age group medals are similar, but there is no ad on the back, and they are made into key chains, so you have an excuse to actually carry them around. The race has improved each year, and it seems that they clearly respond to feedback. I would strongly recommend the race, especially to those who run to savor the experience.

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★★★★☆ **Three Stars At Best** (about: 2009)

**Course: 3 Organization: 3 Fans: 2**

Dotty Maddock from Phoenix, AZ (8/20/09)

**50+** previous marathons | **1** Humpy's Classic Marathon

If you're going after the 50 states, there are limited options for Alaska. I chose this one because the date worked and I prefer the start and finish near my hotel (versus being bused out to the start). Now, there is always a thrill with traveling to somewhere remote for a race, and Anchorage is a cool town. If you can build in a vacation too, I would recommend that (although I didn't have that luxury).

The pre-race logistics were OK. The packet pickup is easy to find, and is right by the race start and finish the next day. I appreciated that the "last chance" pickup was also provided the morning of the race, since the day before it closed at 4:00 p.m. There was really nothing of interest in the "goody bag," other than the bib, chip, and shirt (which is long-sleeved, technical, and a pretty color). Double check the size shirt you get, as I ordered a medium but there was a large in my bag. Fortunately, they let me exchange it at the "last chance" packet pickup on race morning. The timing chip was a bit odd; it looks like it should just slip over your laces, but most people tied it on with their shoelaces to ensure that it didn't fall off. I saw at least one person who had lost their chip by not tying it on.

I didn't much care for the 9:00 a.m. start, but they did let walkers start at 8:00 a.m. Still, the sun was up a little after 5:00 a.m. there (this time of year), so why the late start? At the same time, it was good that the 5K and half-marathon had slightly later start times, so that helped reduce congestion at the beginning. The course itself is, well, boring. Rather than the "Alaskan wilderness" I pictured, it was basically a paved bike trail through rather "average looking" parks and woods. Other than a couple of views of water and Anchorage, you wouldn't have known you were anywhere special. While I couldn't find an official elevation chart (I think there is sort of one in the upper left corner of the race map), be prepared for some hills! Also, in the second half, the trail winds around quite a bit, and I could see how runners could take a wrong turn. Some of the volunteers were very good at indicating which direction to go, but some weren't. At one point, I had to stop and ask the person who looked like a volunteer (he was busy talking to his girlfriend) which way to go.

The finish area was adequate, and I liked the fresh watermelon and big cookies! Beer would have been nice. Having Bart Yasso announce the finishers was a nice touch. The medal is somewhat small, but of good quality. However, the back of the medal is an advertisement for the company that apparently made them (with phone number and all). I hung around for a while waiting for them to post results, but they were about 40 minutes back in posting. So I went to the hotel, cleaned up, and was back in plenty of time for the "awards ceremony." I was fortunate enough to win an age group award, but I was hoping for something more special than a key chain. I'm appreciative of the recognition, but certainly a bear claw or something more Alaskan would be more fun.

So, overall I would say that this was a decent experience to check off Alaska in the 50 states quest, but not one of my most memorable runs.

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★★★★★ **Great Race!** (about: 2008)

**Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 4**

C. A. from Dallas, TX (9/4/08)

**50+** previous marathons | **1** Humpy's Classic Marathon

What a beautiful race! I was very impressed by the course (definitely enjoy running along the coast, and through a forest with a bubbling brook beside you) and all the support! The Kodiak Cross Country team was stationed all along the course to cheer runners on and provide support as needed. The water/aid stations were eager to provide you with liquids - there was no waiting for water to be poured or asking for water. The mile markers were easy to see, and the course was fairly flat (a few rollers in the first 2 miles, which you repeat in the last 2 miles).



While it rained every day the previous 1.5 weeks, I was in Alaska, and the weather was ideal on race morning. It was around 55 degrees, with a light breeze, and overcast skies - perfect conditions!

I would agree with the comment below about post-race food. I wasn't able to find any food after the race and ended up eating at my hotel. There also wasn't any food on the race route (no pretzels).

I've completed over a 100 half marathons/marathons and can say this is one of my top events! I've recommended it to all my running friends and look forward to returning again. Would highly recommend Humpy's over Mayor's Midnight Run.

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★★★★☆ **Nicely Mellow; Basics Need Minor Attention** (about: 2008)

**Course: 4 Organization: 3 Fans: 4**

T. P. from Former Runners' Home, Metro Minneapolis, MN USA (8/24/08)

50+ previous marathons | 1 Humpy's Classic Marathon

This race is comfortable in its skin as Anchorage's 'lesser' marathon. I chose it rather than the purple circus Mayor's Marathon has become. I had no problems following the course or spotting the mileage markers (the staked ones, which were clearly marked with Humpy's Marathon logos). Spectators and fellow runners were surprisingly friendly and enthusiastic throughout. I was warned about path crowding later in the race (marathoners, marathon walkers, marathon relayers, half-marathon walkers, and non-race path users [particularly bikes]) and luckily the only problem I had was a loose dog crossing 10 feet in front of me; people managed themselves well.

The packet pickup and start/finish locales were in a nicely accessible spot downtown, and I saw reasonably close free street parking within a half-mile of the area. The race lit also mentioned free parking at the Conoco-Phillips lot, which is also near the start.

Two minor complaints:

I too think a long-running race should have sports drink available at all aid stations. It's not hard to do, as the number of aid stations needed in this out-and-back course is smaller than along a point-to-point course. And a pre-race pasta feed should be held at the evening meal time, rather than the odd noon-four period.

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★★★★★ **Humpy's rocks!!** (about: 2008)

**Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 5**

Bob Kroeger from Cincinnati (8/22/08)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Humpy's Classic Marathon

Running this marathon was an incredible experience! We arrived late Friday, which was typical (most Alaskan flights start and end in the middle of the night). Rented a car and drove to the Kenai Peninsula on Saturday: saw the Portage Glacier, salmon swimming upstream (could have plucked one out of the stream), snow-capped peaks next to the saltwater fjords, and had dinner in Seward, a quaint fishing village.

The marathon course was delightfully flat (a small hill at the end); volunteers and high school runners/cheerleaders were terrific; saw a porcupine on the course; weather cooperated - 55 and cloudy. Views from the course of the marsh and forest qualify it as one of America's most scenic routes.

Post-race food could have been better, but I don't feel like eating after a marathon, so that was not a factor for me.

Downtown Anchorage was a complete surprise: beautiful flowers everywhere, lots of shops; a wonderful museum on Anchorage/Alaska history; many fine restaurants.

Took a few days to visit the national park about four hours north. An easy drive on well-paved highways!! Denali on a clear day was spectacular. Snow-capped Mt. McKinley, at 20,000-plus feet, is something I will never forget. Took a full-day bus tour of the park: grizzlies and cubs, moose, caribou, fox, Dall sheep, etc.

And it's very hard to find an Alaskan who is not friendly. We never did. Hope to return in a few years!

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★★★★☆ **1 star says it all** (about: 2008)

**Course: 1 Organization: 1 Fans: 1**

d. s. from US (8/20/08)

## 11-50 previous marathons | 2 Humpy's Classic Marathons

My complaints are as follows. The course is very boring, unless you enjoy seeing nothing but trees and a little bit of water. The course was not marked except for some signs on the second leg. I did not see one volunteer, except for the police in the city, telling runners where to go. I was told that it was impossible to get lost. I followed several other runners for almost a half-mile before we realized we were going the wrong way. If you sign up for the walk (or slow runners), you will not be eligible for awards. They had sports drink at only 2 stops. No port-a-potties on the course or at the start line. The race director announced that, in Alaska, every tree is a port-a-potty.

I followed the arrows labeled "MM" on the second leg only to find out after I finished that they were painted on the street by the Mayors Midnight Sun Marathon (but it did take me to the finish line). The half marathon medal really sucks. It does not even indicate "half marathon." The front reads, "Skinny Raven Sports Anchorage, Alaska" in such small letters that you must magnify it to read it, and "2008." The back of the medal is an advertisement for Oxford. At least the full marathon medal indicates that marathon, but it also does not have the date of the event.

They did have mile markers at each mile. Humpy's bar/restaurant serves a very good, free pasta dinner.

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★★★★☆ **Pretty well done** (about: 2008)

**Course: 4 Organization: 4 Fans: 3**

C. S. from Springfield, Illinois, USA (8/19/08)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Humpy's Classic Marathon

This course was exactly as described on the website, so there should be no complaints on that front. Lots to do in the area, as long as you rent a car. The race started on time, and the course workers were enthusiastic. Lots of good things for the RD to be proud of. Only two negatives come to mind: 1) Need to put sports drinks at more aid stations. Lots of them only seemed to have water. 2) The parking garage charged \$1/hour for parking on race day. Neither of these are big problems - just something to look at. Overall, great job!!!!

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★★★★☆ **Good run if you're in the top tier** (about: 2008)

**Course: 3 Organization: 2 Fans: 5**

M. G. from Eagle River, Alaska (8/18/08)

6-10 previous marathons | 1 Humpy's Classic Marathon

This race has many great volunteers and enthusiastic spectators. The problem is that there were not enough signs pointing runners in the right direction, and a decent number of runners (including me) ran off the course. I missed an unmarked turn between miles 20 and 21, and it added about a mile to my distance. This race will lose runners unless they address the directional markers. Otherwise, everything leading up to the race and the post-race food was wonderful.

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★★★★★ **Invigorating and motivational. "I would love to!"** (about: 2007)

**Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 5**

T. W. from Vineland, New Jersey (7/15/08)

**First Marathon**

I came to Alaska from NJ for work; little did I know I would be signing up for a half marathon and this was my first time. Previously, I was only running and walking for fitness, never paying attention to time or pushing myself harder. Completing the course motivated me in many ways. Running is a part of me now and so are the memories. Thanks to my boyfriend, Jon, for inspiring me and joining me in Humpy's Half-Marathon. Thanks to the organization and volunteers. I would LOVE to do it again!