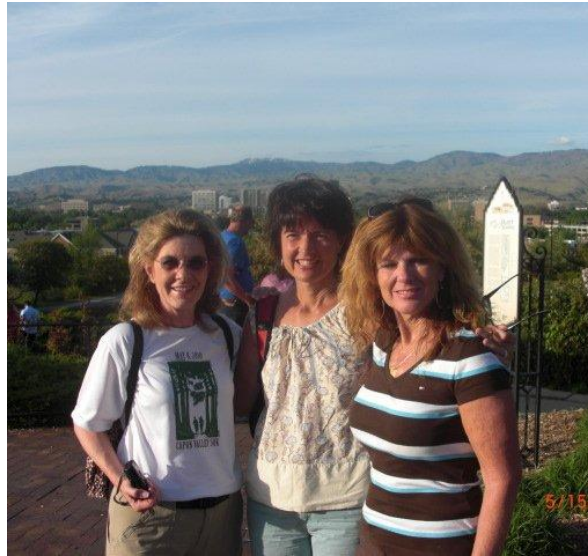


Boise Idaho Marathon Trip Notes May 13-17, 2010



On the course with Donna's friend Machelle in front of one of the waterfalls; touring with Annette and Donna up on the hill of The Depot overlooking the city; Annette emerging from a solitary confinement cellblock at the penitentiary.

This is no joke: It's called "The Idaho Great Potato Marathon." See those hills in the middle picture? See that huge dam and waterfall in the first one? And we ran all along a gorgeous river on what's referred to as the Greenbelt for pretty much all of the 26.2 miles. Seeing America 26.2 miles at a time, as our friend and Southern Belle Charlotte would say. Yes! This is not the Idaho I had expected!



Pictures from on the course compliments of Donna Jacobs and featuring Liberty Lady Diana, Machelle, Annette and Donna

Highlights of the marathon

- Course is a delight all along their river-front Greenbelt which not only sports waterfalls, a strong river but one park after another.
- Easy walk to the Expo from the hotel (Residence Inn or Hampton Inn) and to the bus that takes you to the start line way up high in the hills.
- The organizers were the local YMCA and they were very friendly, helpful and accommodating from the start through the finish.
- The weather was hot, there were some effects of altitude, and weather is generally noted to be either cold or hot with little in between.
- I gasped every time I tried to run a few feet and blamed it on the above and not that this was my 10th marathon of the year with a 50k only the week before.
- Most runners expected the 80s that were predicted and therefore showed up at the start line to wait up to an hour in the open where the winds were strong and the chill might have been in the

40s. I was fortunately wrapped in a space blanket skirt and 30-gallon garbage bag top but I still shivered. I think the start line banner blew down.

- Boise has tourist sites aplenty making a 4-5 day visit worthwhile.
- T-shirt was tech and well designed and sized correctly.
- If you win your age group, you get a sack of potatoes. If you want them.
- Medals? Who knows, as they ran out, but I trust that one will be mailed. Seems some volunteers at the finish line enthusiastically gave half marathoners the marathoner medal.
- Food was non-existent at the end but to be expected when your finish time is 6:15.
- Traveling to Boise is easy enough if you don't mind the little United airplanes. It was no worse than going into SLC though I grumped. Remember I'm spoiled by Continental and being Platinum Elite so maybe it's not the fault of United.
- University town with the expected effects of thriving culture, music and pubs and giving a nice mixture of retirees and youthful students.

The other original Liberty Lady Maricar was off to Green Bay Wisconsin with friend and newly indoctrinated Liberty Lady Peggy. I've heard that there will soon be three new Liberty Ladies and at least one and hopefully two guys vying to be named Liberty Laddies. There is still discussion as to whether they fulfill the requisite requirements but they are our favorite guys who always wanted a challenge so we look forward to welcoming Tim for sure and hopefully David too.

The start line

Okay – my sincerest apologies of Idaho Sports Photography but I didn't have my camera on the course yet I wanted you to see these mountains to here are a couple roughly copied photos not for resale. According to AAA there are 10,000 foot peaks in Boise National Forest and these are the backdrop of our starting line. Isn't it still a surprise that we're in Idaho? (Don't distribute or resell these proofs, please.)



The start line was especially crowded and between that and the speed bumps we saw a few crashes. I'd guess that the organizers either need to start the marathoners and half marathoners at separate times or limit the total numbers. The other events were starting later.

Hotel and restaurants

While I stayed at the Residence Inn Downtown (there is another Residence Inn farther out so don't get confused) the Hampton Inn would have been suitable too. The host hotel is at the airport and has a shuttle bus to the start but it appeared to be a challenge to return to the Airport Holiday Inn following

the marathon. My hotel's area was about 2 blocks to one of the bus locations to take us to the start line and about 3 blocks from the finish line. It also had a selection of restaurants close by as well as the University area. I very much enjoyed the family style food and low prices of Elmer's Diner just across the street from the Residence Inn, as well as the big free daily breakfast every day plus a manager's reception with drinks and food mid-week.

Touring – in my view there's no sense in going without seeing

Annette had stayed with Donna for the marathon then moved into my Residence Inn hotel for some touring. She's a good sport and most willing to walk and only afterwards admitted that the feet were tired. She'd have gone on and on.

Downtown – lots of shopping areas and little boutiques as well as classy major chains too. There is a cultural district complete with musical venues populated with hot shot little cuties who either don't have a mirror at home, their mother's don't know they are looking this way, or they want to be noticed. Well, maybe all of the above. There's some good looking one's too, like the prom outing at The Depot high up on the hill. The pink sparkly boots with two different colored legs were our favorite.



Basque population has a cultural center, museum, restored boarding house that's the oldest house in the Boise area, restaurants, a market and they host festivals. Who would have thought that this is the largest population of Basque folks in the world outside of Basque-land situated between Spain and France on the Bay of Biscayne. I was fascinated and not only spent time in the museum, watched the movies, but chose the ancient Basque symbol as my collector charm for Boise.

The Basque are noted for having started ship building that allowed for the Atlantic crossings, whale catching which brought whale oil and thus light to Europe, cod catching and drying which allowed for drying of food and thus longer journeys, and even the first of the Jesuit movement. I was most impressed and have purchased a book called "The World of the Basque."



High fashion?

Not on Basque Block but just around the corner in downtown you can find high fashion in Boise. Are we in Cowboy-land? I was fascinated with the cowboy boots and there were also sequined dresses, hats, and wild accessories. Who wears these other than Dolly Parton?



Boise State University is the state's largest institution and home to the Bronco Stadium that's noted for their blue artificial turf.

Tours – I took the Trolley Tour my first full day and Annette and I took a walking tour on Sunday after the marathon. It was a good variety and gave the feel and helpful overview of Boise. The trolley tour was worthwhile but the gal owner wasn't very enthused whereas Julie of the www.boisewalkingtours.com really knew her stuff and is a noted travel author. What a bargain at \$15 each for the walking tour.



Old Idaho Penitentiary State Historic Site visit was the idea of Annette since her brother is a professor specializing in criminal justice. I wouldn't have thought of going out to the edge of town for this tour but I'm especially glad we did. We got a ride on the hotel shuttle and then returned via hitch-hiking with a lovely local couple in their big Denali SUV. (Turns out they were going the other direction but readily and insistently played taxi for us.) These grounds were interesting, came with a guided tour, and high up on the hill were zillion dollar houses.



*The prison complex with a tombstone
 "Here lies the body of Lester Moore, shot by a guard with a forty-four, now there is no Les no more."*

Adjacent Botanical Gardens has been a labor of love by the locals for over 33 years and are in the shadow of the penitentiary. We climbed the hills to the Lewis & Clark native plant gardens, found numerous fountains and stream coursings and laughed at the sound of frogs that we first guessed were artificial but later learned were not. There seemed to be a multitude of hiking trails up in the hills that we'd have enjoyed taking a day to investigate.



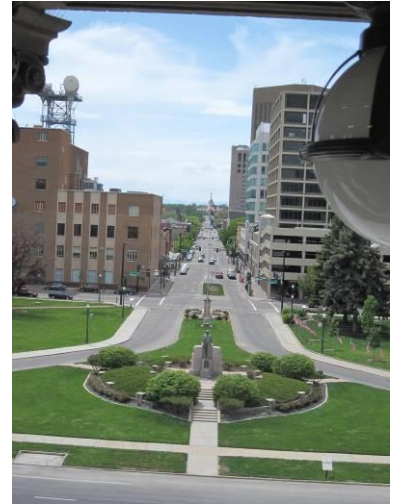
Warm Springs Road aka Mansion Row runs between Boise and the Penitentiary/Botanical Gardens complex. Many of the mansions on this road are fed by geothermal heat as are their swimming pools.



State Capitol is said to be Boise's most treasured public building and it should be. The sandstone exterior base is carved to resemble logs – a tribute to pioneer cabins. Vermont and Georgian marble dominate the bright and newly restored interior spaces of all four floors of the rotunda. A 5-foot-tall

statue of a golden eagle sits atop the Capitol dome 208 feet above the street level. (And Peregrine falcons nest in an adjoining building.) I had two trips to the capital and with Annette we toured all the interior spaces we could to include climbing as high in the dome as possible.

Here's the state capitol from the outside, looking up, and looking down in the domes



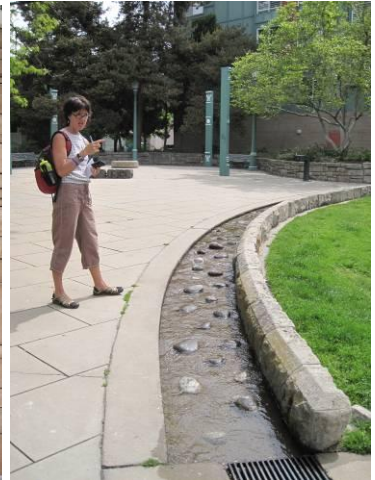
Art work inside the capital and a view from the top looking down Capital Avenue, one mile to "The Depot"

The Depot was a train station in disrepair until a wealthy Boise resident or company (Morrison Knudson) paid for restoration. It is now a lovely garden, with a series of ponds with waterfalls and streams, home to weddings and proms, and one of the tallest look-out towers in the city. It is exactly one mile from the Capitol to The Depot, miles that our legs did more than a few times. Big Mike is one of the last remaining steam engines housed here too.





Boise really is The City of Trees as well as parks and museums within those parks. We started our marathon adventure in the Ann Morrison Park and across the street lies the huge Julia Davis Park filled with a zoo, the art museum, a black history museum, an Idaho Historical Museum and the Discovery Center. One of the oldest rose gardens is adjacent to the art museum, as are band shells for weekly concerts, a lagoon and playgrounds. A novel way to enter the parks is by way of the river and trails.



The Art Museum in Julia Davis Park with adjoining Rose Garden and the Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial which is located across the street behind The Log Cabin

Downtown appears to be vibrant and full of culture, more museums, restored old theatres and buildings, large business complexes and open spaces complete with fountains and seating.

The tallest, the center and the Wells Fargo building



If you want the really fun notes about the trip? Read the trip notes by Annette. They'll soon be up on the website www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com or ask. She's a ball to travel with, always up and bright, and most willing to see anything that comes her way. Have I now figured out that mothers of boys are the most ambitious and the most Type B around? It's perhaps because they have to be. It's also interesting how we all see an area differently or at least focus on different highlights.

All things come to an end and it's time to get home, recover and pack for a Grand Canyon adventure. If the legs survive going down into the Canyon to Phantom Ranch from the North Rim, and then again down into Havasupai Indian Reservations, all on a 6-day hike, I will continue my plans to take in Casper Wyoming Marathon the following weekend which is the first weekend of June. That will be before heading out on June 9th to Portland with Tom for touring and then for another 6-day hike in the Columbia River Gorge. See www.timbertours.com if you'd like to accompany me on some hikes.

Next marathon? Next up will be the possible Casper Wyoming Marathon June 6th and it will be my 12th of the year, my 39th state and my 61st in total finish -- if it works. I am cautiously optimistic.

Itinerary

Thu May 13

10:00am Depart Newark via United Airlines#731
12:33pm Arrive Denver for plane change
1:45pm Depart Denver via United Airlines #6157
3:34pm Arrive Boise

Hotel has free shuttle from airport – about 5-10 minutes away.

Hotel Residence Inn Downtown – Boise Central – for 4 nights
1401 Lusk Avenue, Boise, Idaho 83706 Tele 208 344 1200

Host Hotel Holiday Inn Boise-Airport with YMCA group rate starting at \$59.99 with Continental Breakfast.

Fri May 14

2:00pm Race packet pick up to 7:00pm at Ann Morrison Park (race finish line)

From 9th Street South, cross the Boise River then turn right onto Royal Blvd and proceed 3 blocks into the park. Pick up your race number, timing chip, official "potato" pin and other goodies. T-shirts will be available at the finish line on race day. Any packets not picked up on Friday will be available Saturday morning at the starting lines.

Sat, May 15

8:00am 32nd Annual "Famous Idaho Potato Marathon"
Point-to-point from Discovery Park and finishing at Ann Morrison Park.

<http://www.ymcatvidaho.org/index.cfm?ID=98,4,9>

Parking is limited at the starting lines. Use shuttle service by parking at the finish line and bus to the start. Marathon & Half Marathon Shuttle 6:30 to 7:00am. 5K & 10K Shuttle 7:00 to 8:00am

Water will be provided at the start of each race, as well as at the finish line. On the marathon course, aid stations will be available every two miles up to the 20 mile mark and every mile thereafter offering water, Gatorade and Powerbars as well as first aid supplies.

Mon May 17

9:41am Depart Boise via United Airlines #6854
11:34am Arrive Denver for plane change
12:33pm Depart Denver via United Airlines #750
6:30pm Arrive Newark

'09 results: 119 in full, timed to 6:50. 853 half and 458 10Ks and 445 5ks.

'10 results showed over 200 in the full timed to about 6:45.

From: Race Director <RaceDirector@ymcatvidaho.org>

To: 'Diana Burton' <dianab@juno.com>

Date: Tue, 1 Dec 2009 08:54:45 -0700

Diana -

The Residence Inn - Boise Central is about 3 blocks from the finish line of the race, so that one would be great! The Residence Inn is listed on Lusk Street, but if you look at this map, it is right next to Ann Morrison Park, and the same side of the park as the finish line and shuttle pick up.

<http://www.bing.com/maps>

That hotel is also sits on Vista Avenue which is a straight shot to Downtown Boise, and right across the street from Boise State, so there are a few restaurants across the street as well.

I'll send you the registration information as soon as I have it together. Let me know if I can help you with anything else!

Denise Peterson, Marketing and Administrative Coordinator | Treasure Valley Family YMCA

Phone: (208) 344 - 5502 x 232

From www.marathonguide.com

★★★★☆ **Marathon not the featured event** (about: 2009)

Course: 3 Organization: 3 Fans: 1

T. S. from Seattle, Washington (6/15/09)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

This is one of those marathons that share a common start with the half. This was my 24th marathon, and 19th state, and I don't recall one where the field was so dominated by runners racing an alternate distance - a ratio of 8 to 1. I felt like I had mistakenly showed up for a half-marathon with the option to run a long 6.5-mile out-and-back at the end of the half-marathon course.

The morning park and bus ride to the start was very well organized. As usual, not enough praise is given to the organizers and volunteers running these events, especially when things go right. Subsequently, it appeared that getting enough volunteers to staff the water stations for the first 13 miles was a challenge. At least one station was completely overwhelmed by needy runners. I skipped that one - others were piled-up with half marathoners.

From previous comments, marking this course with visible mile markers is evidently a non-starter. This year was no different. Some miles are marked with paint, or lime on the pavement, but good luck finding them. They were easier to see after the half field peeled off.

No problems with following the marked course on the river trail after the crowd from the half disappeared. The winding river trail makes for a nice running surface, but it was packed with bicycles during the race, making running the tangents of the trail difficult to dangerous. Once the riders learned that an official race was in progress, they would yield. It would have been nice to have posted just a few signs on the trail of "Marathon in Progress" to alert other trail users.

I usually enjoy the small marathon experience - it's marathoning at its roots - and I do appreciate the YMCA for staging this event. But, I honestly felt like this was the Idaho Great Potato Half Marathon and 10K, maybe trying to be too much so as to not break with tradition.

After reading all of the comments and piling on a little myself, I suspect this marathon is all that it is ever going to be.

As far as the finisher shirt and medal, they're fairly unremarkable, if that is important to you.

My biggest compliment to a marathon is to say that I would spend the training time, travel money and effort to come back and run it again. Unfortunately I cannot say that about this marathon. Now the half... maybe. I would use any excuse to come and visit Boise again. What a beautiful city.

★★★★☆ **My First Marathon** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 2

[Ken Robinson](#) from Boise, Idaho (5/28/09)

1 previous marathon | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

Well this being my first marathon, I do not have a lot to go on, but I thought it was nearly perfect. Great, flat course; clearly marked; and nice folks at the support tables all along the way. Lots of shade trees along the greenbelt on the second half. Not many spectators in the second half once the half-marathoners peel off, but it was a great experience for me.

★★★★★ **A top-notch marathon from start to finish** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 5

D. A. from Bronx, NY (5/21/08)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

As a walker, you are dependent on a well marked course, but a blind person couldn't get lost here - that's how well the course was laid out. The volunteers were just awesome. This is one marathon I will always remember with wonderful memories.

★★★★★ **Fun, beautiful, and fairly flat** (about: 2007)

Course: 4 Organization: 5 Fans: 4

[R. K.](#) from Aurora, Colorado (8/2/07)

2 previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

Boise is a very beautiful city - especially in the springtime. The course started several miles east of town, and followed the Boise River into town. The mile-markers were sand-like material sprinkled on the road. The support was great. The Navy even participated (mile marker 16 water station, as I recollect). Gatorade-type drink and water were available every 2 miles, until near the end, when they were every mile. The Gu product and PowerBars were available a few places in the second half. The only negative thing was at approximately mile-marker 18. The course did a loop through wooded area, and there were crossing paths, causing confusion. The path was not well marked there. The YMCA let me park my camper in their lot, and also let me use their facilities while I was there. The food at the end was baked potatoes (imagine that!), fruit and beverages. Hats off to the Boise Treasure Valley YMCA for this marathon. It was a lot of work for them, but it was an outstanding event.

★★★★☆ **Beautiful, low-key run** (about: 2007)

Course: 5 Organization: 4 Fans: 3

a. h. from Salt Lake City, UT (5/23/07)

6-10 previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

I read all the comments before running this year's race (2007) and was a little worried. I had my husband on his bike as support team if I were to need water or anything out on the course. It turns out I didn't even really need him for that because the aid stations always had water, etc. (Though the Gatorade was really watered down!) I would agree that the mile markers need to be more prominent. Spray painting them on the ground just doesn't cut it. And they need to be more accurate. Also, I would suggest having more than just arrows spray painted on the ground. I never got lost, but if I hadn't been paying attention, I could've very easily.

I thought the race course was beautiful, though. Who knew Boise, ID was like that? I loved the greenbelt. There was only one small stretch on a hot, busy road that wasn't my favorite. But everything else was great! (And that small loop in the Riverside Elementary School parking lot? What was up with that?!)

Be aware, though, that this is a small race. If you're okay with that then you'll love it. Once the half and the full marathon split, it felt like you were alone for miles. There are not a lot of spectators either. If you're not in it for the big race scene, then I would definitely recommend this one. Plus, there are potatoes at the end!

★★★★☆ **Wonderful 1st marathon** (about: 2007)

Course: 3 Organization: 4 Fans: 1

[A. C.](#) from Idaho (5/22/07)

1 previous marathon | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

This was my first marathon and I had a wonderful experience. There were a few things to complain about, if that's what a person wants to do. However I had a wonderful time because of visiting with folks at the start, enjoying the scenery and beauty of the areas we ran through, visiting with other runners as we ran, enjoyed the cheers of the spectators when and where ever they were. The aid stations had plenty of water and PowerAde, plus PowerBars and gels. Once the half marathon and marathon split, there are stretches where it got very lonely and one intersection where having a race official would have been very helpful (a spectator insured that I went the

correct way because the arrows were confusing at the 21.5-mile point). As this was my first marathon, I was not out to set any speed records, but I think runners would be able to do very well on this course. I would like to see more spectators, especially after the marathon and half-marathon split. I will plan on running this marathon again.

★☆☆☆☆ **NO mile-markers!! Tables ran out of H2O!!** (about: 2006)

Course: 3 Organization: 2 Fans: 1

[M. H.](#) from Charlotte, NC (5/24/06)

3 previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

I cannot believe this past race (5/20/06) was the 28th! I would think the coordinators would have read the comments. Please use visible mile markers. They are mentally motivating. Please try harder not to run out of H2O - good thing I brought my own. More spectators would be ok, but they might get knocked down by the bicyclists. Also, definitely mark the route better. I too had to help a few runners find the right way. And re-running the same loop was mentally tough (which isn't a horrible thing, but running 26.2 is challenging enough - give me more hills instead:). Beautiful city, but the race needs a big improvement!

★☆☆☆☆ **Good race, but could use improvements** (about: 2006)

Course: 4 Organization: 3 Fans: 1

J. M. from Huntsville, AL (5/23/06)

4-5 previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

It was very hot, but not too bad. My mom and I stayed together the whole way, which was a good thing because we rarely saw other runners once the half and whole marathons split. The course could have used better markings although I suppose they were good enough since we never got lost. I also think water stops should have occurred more frequently due to the dry heat.

Also, and this was the worst to me, they ran out of finishers medals!!! How horrible to finish a race and receive no medal! They have promised to mail them, but I have nothing to show my friends and co-workers who have been cheering me on back home - and that is one of my favorite parts.

Idaho is beautiful and I loved the scenery along the route. Breathtaking!

★☆☆☆☆ **After 27 years, it should be much better** (about: 2006)

Course: 3 Organization: 1 Fans: 2

A. T. from San Francisco, CA (5/21/06)

50+ previous marathons | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

Weather was hot and sunny. The course was flat and mostly on bike paths. In all of my 71 marathons, this was the most poorly marked course. Here are my observations:

Positives:

1. Nice course
2. Friendly volunteers and fellow runners

Negatives:

1. Poorly marked course. Mile markers 2, 9, 10, and ? were missing. Mile markers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 - there were two marks for each mile point. Most were of equal size and appear to be quite recent. Mile marker 7 was 0.2 mile too long while mile marker 8 was 0.2 mile too short.

2. Water stations were not evenly spaced. At mile marker 18, there were two water stations within 0.25 mile. The next water station was at around 21.5 miles.

3. Lots of turns and twists. I saw runners taking the wrong turn. Most of these turns did not have any volunteers directing the runners.

Suggestions:

1. On each mile point, put a can of soup. Then, a potato on top of the can. Next, stick a flag on top of the potato with the mile mark. After the race, donate the cans and potatoes to a local soup kitchen or charity. Simple, cheap, and visible.

2. Need more volunteers for course direction.

After 27 years, this race (the 28th edition) needs to take care of the basics. Runners need reliable, accurate, and visible mile markers to gauge their pace. No one likes to take the wrong turn and either run a shorter or longer distance. Water stations need to be more

consistently spaced. I cannot recommend this race because of these poor logistics.

★★★★☆ Beautiful day but lonely race. (about: 2005)

Course: 3 Organization: 3 Fans: 1

[J. G.](#) from Boise, Idaho (5/17/05)

1 previous marathon | 1 Idaho Great Potato Marathon

This was my second marathon and the weather was perfect; however, I would have been really sad if it had not been for my friends out there cheering me on. The course was deserted and it often felt like I was out there alone. This race could use a lot more spectator support and a ton more runners. The volunteers were very nice and there were plenty of aid stations (although one was abandoned). Overall the race was nice but lonely. Course was well-marked this year, in my opinion... complex but well-marked.