

Mobile Alabama First Light Marathon Trip Notes **January 9-12, 2009**

Why run Mobile Alabama's First Light Marathon? If you like

- small marathons where you can walk out your hotel at 7:20 and start promptly at 7:30.
- lovely old Southern homes.
- inexpensive entry fees -- \$32 with 50-states discount.
- high tech shirts even styled for women.
- inexpensive yet comfortable hotel.
- friendly southerners who really want you to like their town.
- historically significant and interesting locations.
- adding another state to your 50-state belt and a Southern Bell charm to the charm necklace.
- difficult and challenging course with plenty of major hills.
- food at most water stops, and early in the race with back of the pack still obtaining oranges and bananas.
- post race food was a full meal.
- free pasta dinner pre race.
- giveaways and freebies at expo better than some big time marathons.

Why not choose Mobile's Marathon? If you don't like

- no chip and limited number of time clocks.
- Massage closing down after 5 hours.
- some streets without spectators.
- a bit of concrete and some rough surfaces.
- a second half of the marathon course with only 370 runners in total.
- small airport resulting in indirect flights.

Results: Maricar came in at 5:16 and I came in at 5:26 with a few behind me. #325 of 371 and 2nd in my age group out of 5. I was very happy and wasn't sure I deserved that after being on 'rest' for so long, but taking it easy paid off and there appears to be no injuries and no soreness which surprised me.

Touring: We were lucky beyond dreams. While in Paris, sitting at a restaurant in the Louvre, we met a nice looking 40ish guy with his son. They were on a 17 day European tour. Accents made for the usual question of domicile and we found Richard Powell was from Mobile. Richard offered his number, insisted we call, and Southern Hospitality at it is best happened on Saturday. He drove up in his Porsche, took us to one of his homes, a hilltop-Japanese-teahouse-inspired home on 14 acres overlooking the bay, to trade for his 'truck' a Tahoe (a BMW Z was stored there too.) Lunch was at his country club and home of the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, a historic 1875 550 acre resort overlooking Mobile Bay. He drove the marathon route laughing all the way over all the hills and ended our full day with lemon custard in an old fashioned ice cream parlor.

On our own we took the trolley tour around town, walked the old fashioned and partially deserted Dauphin Street, and toured the amazing and memorable Mardi Gras Museum where Maricar exited with a huge 5-color boa not only looking very appropriate for her but useful in her chemistry class. I begged her to not wear it to the airport. The night I arrived and was alone I had walked the town, criss-crossing the streets, and came to the conclusion that it was a mixture of new and old, confused about if the town was in recession or growing, and quite the hodge-podge. The old buildings are reminders of the many wrought iron balcony buildings in New Orleans. Did you know that the Mardi Gras originated in Mobile? That individuals pay for the costumes, floats, balls, etc. in Mobile whereas its sponsors in New Orleans?

A lovely old historical hotel is the Battle House where Andrew Jackson held court. Parks and memorials abound as well as there being a recreated waterside fort. The night I arrived one of the museums were in full regalia with pirate costumes and ball starting and I was sort of sorry to have already eaten or I might have indulged in their \$35 event. There are two large cruise ship terminals and a multi decked one had parked waterside our last day, always a surprise to see.

Weather: I'd think one could expect reasonably warm temperatures in Mobile but not so. We were chilled to the bone in 30s temperatures, not reaching over 50, with winds at 13-18mph and didn't warm up until later in the day. It was a rare time that neither of us would venture to an ice bath. We had 3 layers plus hat and gloves and it was a good thing.

Hotel and Food: The Hampton Inn, a brand new facility, was only 2 blocks from the host hotel and 3 blocks to the start line, and even closer to the finish line. The breakfast was better than expected with great egg pizzas plus lots of buffet food including fresh cut fruit. My first night I'd asked all of the info desk, the taxi driver and the hotel clerks where to eat and it was unanimous that I eat at Winschell's Oyster House. We went back Sunday night. The marathon itself fed us well for the pre pasta party and then a full BBQ dinner after the run.

The course: We are at risk of being unbelievable since each marathon seems to get hillier than the last. This one might have only been outdone by Atlanta. It was of course a major surprise to be at 9' above sea level in coastal town Mobile and find so many long hills. We were taken through universities and colleges, parks and neighborhoods and never was there a dull moment. Residents and/or fluid stations always had a food selection and always had enough support. The only other 'costume' runners we saw were friends of Charlotte and Tara (from Shamrock, Atlanta and most recently Charlotte NC) in grass skirts and purple wigs. What were they? We loved them. Spectators asked if we were going to wear our Lady Liberty hats the whole way, why were we wearing it, were we from New York, and/or what was it. It gives us exactly what we want – attention and ability to be found.

Schedule: I would have liked to stay a couple days as there was plenty more to see and the weather had warmed up. Alas, I was to get home for a short two days before heading to see my parents in K.C. as they have both been in and out of the hospital and are worrying me that they may have used up their 9-lives each.

Itinerary:

Fri Jan 9

Diana arrived around 4pm and Maricar came in at 9pm, meeting up at the hotel. Shuttles available from airport to hotel for \$18 but not between 3-5pm without reservations. (True, they close down!) Taxi is set price of \$35.

Hotel Hampton Inn ⁽²⁾
62 South Royal Street, Mobile, Alabama 36602
Conf #81478776; \$94 govt rate (\$99 LAN marathon rate)
251 436 8787 251 436 8860 fax

Host hotel is Radisson Admiral Semmes, lovely lobby but said to be ancient. Hampton Inn is 2-3 blocks away towards the water and brand new and includes breakfast and free internet for similar price. Battle House is 2-3 blocks farther away but still convenient, historically special hotel if in old section, but quite a bit more money.

Sat Jan 10

Expo, registration and package pick up at Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel – Saturday only
Technical shirt to 1st 1500 who register. Careful – they had numerous colors and styles and the race bag didn't have the size requested.
Free pasta party next door to host hotel in huge atrium.

Sun Jan 11

7:30am Bank Trust First Light Marathon ⁽³⁾ start and finish near to hotel

Early entry was only \$32 with 50-state club. www.firstlightmarathon.com

No chip, no banners, just start and go!

Post race meal of BBQ sandwich, slaw, pasta salad was good but scanty as I think they were worried about running out.

Mon Jan 12

Diana and Maricar left at similar times around 5pm, but on different flights, and supposedly getting into Newark at 9:30 and 11:30pm but we were both delayed.

Participants:

Maricar 908 907 5054 cell

Diana 732 804 7514 cell or 732 671 7045 home

Tourist info from The Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel: is conveniently located in the heart of Mobile's historic, business and cultural district, near the Mobile Civic Center, the new Convention Center, historic Fort Conde, the City Museum and minutes away from historic USS Battleship Alabama Memorial Park, Bellingrath Gardens, historic Oakleigh, Mobile Greyhound Park and Bel Air and Springdale malls, theaters and restaurants. Easy access via I-65, I-10 and U.S Highways 90 and 98.

About Mobile: Alabama's "port town," Mobile has open access to the Gulf of Mexico, and a sliver-like strand of Gulf Coast islands somewhat protects Mobile Bay from seasonal storms that kick up in the Gulf. Thus, it's easy to see why this consummate Southern town has become a center for manufacturing, shipping, and shipbuilding, given that everything from paper and petrol to textiles and timber passes through its busy docks. Located near the port area are Battleship Park and the dry-docked USS "Alabama," which protected our country from World War II to Desert Storm. Mobile is not all wharves and cargo bins, though, and visitors to the downtown area find much of its historic Italianate, Greek Revival, and Creole architecture lovingly preserved. Stroll down any given street and find yourself shaded from the sun by 200-year-old oak trees and hauntingly beautiful Spanish moss. Come in April and enjoy the city's famous Azalea Trail Festival, a 30-plus-mile floral tour that winds past some of Southern Alabama's loveliest antebellum homes. Other must-see sights include Fort Condé, once home base for France's Louisiana Territory; the Museum of Mobile, whose paintings and exhibits celebrate the city's rich French, British, and Spanish heritage; and the Richards-DAR House (circa 1826), an exquisite example of Italianate architecture whose lace ironwork, period furniture, and ruby Bohemian glass entrance recollect the extravagance and wealth of the Old South. When the day wanes and your appetite peaks, Mobile standards like Roussos Seafood on South Royal, known throughout the South for Creole-style gumbo, and Wintzell's Oyster House, home of "stewed and nude" shellfish, are just what the doctor ordered.

Did you know?: Each summer, the Mobile Bay Bears, a minor league affiliate of baseball's San Diego Padres, celebrate our nation's national pastime in beautiful Hank Aaron Stadium, named after the Hall of Fame slugger of Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves fame. The stadium opened in 1997, bringing professional baseball back to Mobile for the first time since 1970. Hammerin' Hank threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the inaugural game, a 4-2 victory over the Birmingham Barons.

Hampton Inn-Downtown: Explore bountiful nature and deeply-rooted history in Mobile, one of America's most colorful historic port cities. It has been dubbed the "City of Six Flags," since it has flown the flags of Britain, Spain, France, the Republic of Alabama, the Confederacy and the United States. The hotel upholds this sense of history and community with professional and personal service. We are located on the Mobile Mardi Gras parade route, only a half mile from the Mobile Cruise Terminal and just steps from the RSA Tower, the Mobile Convention Center and the downtown Mobile business district. Enjoy historical, natural and cultural attractions just minutes from our Mobile hotel. Relive history at a preserved historic antebellum home or tour the USS Alabama Battleship. Commune with nature at the Estuarium at Dauphin Island Sea Lab or the 5 Rivers: Alabama's Delta Resource Center. Or catch a performance at "Alabama's Greatest Showplace," the historic Saenger Theater. Our hotel also easy access to local malls and over twenty golf courses - plus, the casinos in Biloxi are only a short day trip away.

On the House™ hot breakfast; On the Run Breakfast Bag™ ; Complimentary high-speed Internet access; Cloud Nine, The Hampton bed experience; coffeemaker, irons, hair dryers, work desks, refrig, microwave.

(3) '08 marathon had 311 participants with latest clocked at 6:58; 5:30 was #273; no females in 60-64 AG; females 55-59 3rd AG was 5:30 and 1st AG was 5:22. Fran Libasci had 2AG.

Canceled: Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel ⁽¹⁾ for 3 nights
251 Government Street, Mobile, Alabama 36602

888 201 1718 or 888 201 1718 251 432 8000

(1) Admiral Semmes Radisson. Free internet and yes coffee pot. Recently renovated historical hotel in heart of downtown. From website: With a prime location in the heart of downtown Mobile, the newly renovated Radisson Hotel Mobile offers the kind of warm southern hospitality, historic charm and topnotch services sure to please business and leisure travelers alike.

Where comfort counts the most, the Radisson Admiral Semmes offers the finest in accommodations. A private, residential style prevails in the guest quarters with custom furnishings of the Chippendale and Queen Anne era. The 170 guest rooms and suites are luxuriously appointed with designer wall coverings, writing desks and comfortable seating areas. The sparkling tile and marble baths feature separate vanities with full length dressing mirrors. You will also enjoy cable television with in-room movies. Comfortable surroundings and a special assortment of guest amenities, in room coffeemakers will make your stay at the Radisson Admiral Semmes a memorable experience.

Amenities: 170 spacious guestrooms; Non-smoking floors and rooms available; Key card access systems; New 25 inch color televisions and in-room movies; In-room coffee and tea; Iron and ironing board; ATM on site; Complimentary health club at nearby YMCA; Outdoor pool and whirlpool; Gift shop; Express Checkout; Charge covered parking; Same day dry cleaning and laundry; Room service; Complimentary use of washer and dryer for longer stays; High speed internet in-room; Wireless access in restaurant, lounge, lobby and meeting rooms.

Registration Pickup	<p>Saturday, January 10th 12 noon - 8 p.m. Sunday, January 11th 6 a.m. - 7:15 a.m. At the <u>Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel</u></p>
Pre-Race Pasta Party	<p>Saturday, January 10th 5 - 6:30 p.m. <i>Free to all Marathon, Half Marathon and Relay runners. Guests \$5.00.</i> Location: Mobile County/City Building Atrium - entertainment by Brett Lagrave</p>
Health & Fitness Expo	<p>Saturday, January 10th 12 noon - 8 p.m. At the <u>Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel</u></p>
Race Times	<p>Marathon & Half Marathon: Sunday, January 11th 7:30 a.m. 1.2 Mile Fun Run: Sunday, January 11th 8:00 a.m., Marathon Start Line</p>
Water Stops	<p>There will be 18 water stops along the route at the following approximate locations; Miles #2, 3.5, 5, 7.2, 8.5, 9.2, 10, 11.3, 13, 15, 17, 18.5, 20, 21.2, 22.6, 23.5, 24.5 and 25.2.</p>
Showers Available	<p>Beginning at 10:00 a.m., the Moorer YMCA will be open for Runners to use the shower facilities.</p>
Post-Race Gala & Awards	<p><i>Free to all Marathon, Half Marathon and Relay runners.</i> Sunday, January 11th 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.: Post-Race Meal & Entertainment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Knockouts (9:30-10:25am)</i> • <i>Excelsior (10:30-11:30am)</i> • <i>Phil and Waylon (11:40-12:45pm)</i> • <i>El Cantador (1:00-2:30pm)</i> <p>2:30 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.: Awards Presentation Location: Bienville Square (adjacent to finish line)</p> <p>Marathon & Half Marathon: Unique plaques decorated by L'Arche Mobile residents will be awarded to the top 10 overall winners and the top 3 winners in each age category - senior grand masters, grand masters, masters and age categories beginning at 16-19 and every fifth year after that. Relay Racers: Awards presented to the top 3 finishers in each category and division.</p>