

## MS Blues Marathon Trip Notes January 7-12, 2010



*With Larry - Maniac of the Year, with friend Peggy from NJ and Yolanda – Female Maniac of the Year Finally! At the finish line! Photos compliments of Maricar, Fellow Liberty Lady*

### **Why run MS Blues Marathon?**

- The spectators and volunteers are wonderfully supportive. Where else would warm-blooded southerners come out in 2 degree temperatures to man fluid stations, course marshal and spectator?
- Goody bag was a unique cinch backpack filled with a commemorative harmonica and a CD of blues music.
- The Expo included speakers plus blues music and more vendors than one might expect.
- The Course would normally have many bands but who would expect anyone to come out in this weather? Some did.
- After marathon entertainment was the best and most different: a trolley tour of blues bars offering up local foods, beer and entertainment.
- The town of Jackson and even more so the Natchez Trace Trail into Natchez contains good tourist sites.
- To be with friends. Lots of 50-staters attend. Maybe in part because there aren't many marathons in Mississippi.
- Hotels are inexpensive and walk-to-the-start is very convenient.



### **Not everything is perfect**

- T-shirt is plain ole cotton yet some people like the 1980s stuff.
- Mississippi is high crime rate with lowest per capita income, Jackson is on the top 10 in the country for crime, but supposedly the town is relatively safe.
- The town closes down at 5pm.
- It was record hot last year and record cold this year.
- Water pipes burst but fortunately after most marathons went home. It created a state of emergency and zero water downtown which remained for days.

**This was my 50<sup>th</sup> completed marathon** and in celebration Maricar bought each in our group of gals (Peggy from NJ, Charlotte and Tara southern belles and us) some local beer at one of the trolley stops.

**Results:** Maricar and I crossed the finish line at 5:49 which was reasonable considering that many finished slower. I didn't realize that cold created slowness but now I think it's true. Tip toeing through the fluid stations and the skating rinks went slow. We'd crossed the half at 2:45 and thus were on a 5:30 finishing schedule but for various reasons including potty stops and bundling and re-bundling we added 19 minutes to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.



**There was said to be about 2000 registered runners but only 1200 starters.** Why? Not only the weather kept people home but numerous airport closures. Some of our friends group gave up trying to get to Jackson for fear of being stranded on their own in the connecting city. (Recognize that no one would have had a direct flight into Jackson.) Some had trouble getting home too in part due to the near accident at Newark airport and the continual de-icing conditions needed in the south that's not used to the cold. For me it was a TSA wrong call and I missed my flight and thus my connection. Here's my explanation as much by way of warning my friends to give TSA extra time: There appeared to be no line and the gate agent warned me that the only decent restaurant was outside of security. When I finally went to security a long line had developed which would have been okay had they not wanted to go through my baggage and then my hand-bag. That too would have been okay had they not gone through it the second time plus a pat down. That too might have been okay had I not so overly packed that I had trouble repacking my suitcase and hand carry. Then when I did show up at the gate at 12:10pm for a 12:20pm departure, the gate was not only shut but the plane was taxiing down the runway. I can't remember a plane leaving on time, let alone early. TSA hadn't liked my marathon medal, harmonica, zip bag of computer and camera wires, chargers, or hair rollers. I temporarily didn't like them but I recognized they were just doing their job. I was paged while in line but all to no avail. They give no sympathy. Again, that's their job. I did however continually think about how BIG the terrorists have won to so inconvenience all of us and that I truly believe the security process is not worth much.

**Weather.** It wasn't the fastest marathon I'd done but it was the coldest. The newspapers reported that the wind chill temperature at the start was 2 degrees with 16 real and never reaching over 23 degrees. The good side of that is my legs never hurt; it must have been like having an ice bath the entire 26.2 miles. The bad side of that is a potty stop can be challenging if not amusing.

**The weather created a state-of-emergency** when water pipes burst throughout the city of Jackson. Fortunately the water held through marathon day and started turning muddy that evening. Three days later there was still not a single drop of water in town. Think about that – nothing to drink, no toilets, businesses closing down, computer cooling systems not working, etc. Those few workers who came to work in the city were using our marathon port-a-potties. Painfully I'd guess.

The Marriott Downtown did all they could to help by delivering bottled water to the rooms and the last day they brought me a big orange 5-gallon Igloo container of boiling water for a much needed bath.

**Touring** – I maintain that's my primary reason for going to marathon and Jackson was no exception.

**Old State Capital** -- Jackson is the state capital so of course we'd tour the old and the new state capital. The old one was just restored with Hurricane Katrina funds and is the Mississippi Historical Museum, flanked by two other museums, one a civil war memorial.



**The new state capital** looked pretty old to me:



**Famous people** from the area include the Muppets creator Jim Henson, Elvis Presley, Oprah, B.B. King, Sarah Dickey, Walter Payton of the Chicago Bears, William Faulkner, Bennie Thompson now chief of homeland security, and Brandi. Noted Blues musicians include Bo Diddley, Charles Patton, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Tommy Johnson and some big record companies such as Trumpet plus Ace Records.



Famous to us include friends Tara and Charlotte, real Southern Belles, who dress up in pertinent costume at every marathon and in this case they were gorgeous in perfect costume! The Blues singers on our trolley tour just ate it up and they should have – they were some of the few musicians on the course.



**More touring -- the Art Museum** is flanked by a planetarium, another museum, and the convention center. The marathon gave us free entry to the art museum. Oddly even on Sunday the planetarium and other facilities were not open. Maricar and I were like kids in the art museum which featured Sesame Street and the Muppets, the real thing and films too. Here are a couple pictures before Ms Security Guard caught us unknowingly and illegally taking pictures. It's Jim Henson who is the Mississippian and the creator of course.



**The Liberty Ladies confess to being Camera Whores** and here's the proof. We found a piece of "art" if you can call it that -- it was a collection of mirrors -- and we could hardly leave it. I won't tell you how many pictures we both took but the proof is in the pudding. We were in "kid" mode after the Muppet display.



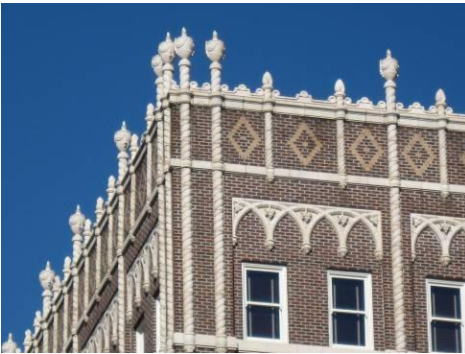
**The Old King Edward Hotel** is now on the historical register and recently opened as a Hilton Garden. It's a potential to stay instead of the Marriott but it's about three blocks farther away and at the train station where there's a lot of vagrants. It's lovely and friend Carol Goslin said they couldn't have been nicer and even accommodated a late night dinner which is something nearly non-existent in Jackson. Here are some pictures from the inside:





The outside is interesting but you wouldn't want to walk at dark. I was told the same thing numerous times about all of downtown.

Jackson does contain some lovely buildings, and I learned to look UP for some of the highlights.



The ***Natchez Trace Trail-Parkway*** is a highlight of this tour. While it runs from the bottom of Mississippi in Natchez up to Nashville a total of 444 miles, I only drove the portion south of Jackson into the town of Natchez which was worthy of the trip. It commemorates the Old Natchez Trace which began as an American Indian footpath between Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations. Later it was a post road and a pioneer trail.

Maricar and I drove south into the historical town of Clinton and tried to visit the Visitors Center which was closed and I later learned while visiting it that it was due to the cold and lack of heat.



At the bottom of this, as a footnote, you can find a description of the sites along the way and I stopped at them all plus more. I also walked the portion of the footpath that remains and is a very deep channel caused by foot traffic, pictured here.

**The town of Natchez** was lovely and I'd go back. I hired a tour guide and he thought they have a marathon so I was totally prepared to return but I can only find a half marathon. This lovely little town is:

- Like a Cape May but much larger.
- Multiple antebellum homes open to the public.
- Older than New Orleans.
- 19 of American's 28 millionaires lived here before the bow-weevil ruined the cotton crops (around the 1830s).
- This was a Wall Street in early days (due to the cotton prices controlling so much wealth.)
- Thirty percent of the B&Bs are still owned by the same family from pre-civil war.

Hurricane Katrina money restored much of the town and helped bring in financiers who built five new (but old looking) hotels. Glorious B&Bs abound. Their historical society created The Natchez Pilgrimage when homes are open with costumed tours. Once a year they have the Great Mississippi River Balloon Races. The tourist office features a museum, a view over the river, and a historical film. It was there I found a tour guide to drive me through the sites.



*Pictures of balloon race, cliff top homes, and costumed Natchez Pilgrimage taken from Visitors Center film*

The Under the Cliff old town is just what it says, on the river and now only about a block in depth whereas before the Corp of Engineers widened the Mississippi it was about five blocks in depth. The Isle of Capri Riverboat offers gambling.

Here's a few of the homes that are on the historical register and open to the public. If you look closely you'll recognize the Linden B&B by the doorway made famous in "Gone with the Wind." This B&B retains all its original antiques.



There were freed slaves who later owned their own slaves and set up mansions, and of course as any old town, there is a city cemetery. This town includes a national civil war cemetery said to be the largest and oldest in the country. I walked through it but didn't find it as exciting as a recent one in Milan except for the very old pin oaks.

Maybe the cemetery is where I should end this tale.



**A note about Hurricane Katrina.** A little recognized fact is that Mississippi had some of the worst damage from the hurricane and yet they went about their business and cleaned up and rebuilt and used their federal funds to good purpose. Tour guides continually told of new buildings and renovations as a result of Katrina. Meanwhile Louisiana pilfered and there was a major crime spree. They whined and sued and complained and they remain in trouble. I know I'll hear a cry and hue about this but do you really think Louisiana's governor and New Orleans' mayor did the hurricane survivors any favors? Haley Barbour of Mississippi really worked it and it shows. Read "The Great Deluge" before you holler please!

### **Itinerary**

#### **Thu 1/07/10 - Diana**

7:55am Depart Newark (EWR) via Continental #211  
Change planes in Houston  
2:57pm Arrive (JAN) Jackson Mississippi

Rental car Hertz

Directions: Go South on Airport Road for 1 mile. Bear right on ramp at sign reading I-20W and continue on I-20 for 6 miles to Exit 46 (I-55N). Take I-55N for 1.8 miles to High Street. Bear right on High Street and turn left on Lamar Street. Go South for 0.3 miles and the hotel is on your left.

Hotel Jackson Marriott  
200 East Amite Street, Jackson, Mississippi 39201 Tele 601 969 5100

Per hotel, no shuttles available and taxi \$27-\$35 plus tips (web site says \$25); safety downtown ok despite in top-10 crime in U.S. but downtown closes up at 5pm and taxi would be needed to restaurants; no tourist sites in vicinity per hotel

The Jackson Marriott is located in the heart of downtown Jackson and only 15 minutes from the Jackson-Evers International Airport. As the host hotel, the Marriott is only a short walk (less than a half-mile) to the Expo and start/finish line.

**- Maricar**  
3:15pm Depart Newark via DL#908  
Change planes in Atlanta  
8:40pm Arrive Jackson  
  
5:00pm Expo opens until 9:00pm  
Jackson Convention Complex, 105 Pascagoula Street, Jackson, MS 39201  
[www.jacksonconventioncomplex.com](http://www.jacksonconventioncomplex.com)

#### **Fri 1/08/10 – Charlotte and Tara**

7:00am Depart Wilmington via U.S. Air #2601  
Change planes in Charlotte  
12:24pm Arrive Jackson

**- Kathy**  
11:23am Arrive Jackson

**- Mary Lenari, Diane Bolton & Annette Wulffe**



12:45pm Arrives in Jackson via Southwest from Chicago

\\

**- Debra Pennington and son with family from Lafayette**

5:00ish Arrive Jackson and heading direct to the Expo - running with son for his first marathon

**- Peggy McKean and Tracey**

5:30pm Depart Newark through Charlotte on USAir 497 connecting to USAir 2515

9:14pm Arrive Jackson (staying at Marriott Downtown)

10:00am Expo open until 7:00pm at Jackson Convention Complex

The Blues Expo promises again to be a pre-race experience like no other! - Thousands of people attended our 2009 Expo, so we've extended the expo by half a day. In 2010, we will host the Blues Expo for the 3rd Annual Mississippi Blues Marathon and Half-Marathon at the Jackson Convention Complex on January 7 and 8. This state-of-the-art facility provides over 11,000 square feet of event space with stunning panoramic views of downtown Jackson that has allowed us to create a unique Expo experience for everyone. Runners, walkers, friends and family will sample Southern treats provided by Mississippi vendors and listen to live blues music while relaxing with friends in our Blues Lounge. Participants will also have an opportunity to shop for running gear, items unique to Mississippi, and hear acclaimed runner, author and speaker Bill Rodgers. Another Expo speaker is Dane Rauschenberg. Dane became a sought-after motivational speaker after he ran a certified marathon every weekend in 2006 (Yes, 52 marathons in 52 weeks!) to raise money for the Mobile, Alabama chapter of L'Arche Internationale. He has a good blog posting of last year's Mississippi Blues Marathon. Plus, he'll run the marathon as his "charity chaser," where he collects pledges from donors to pay a certain amount for every runner he passes.

Dinner No official pasta dinner but they listed three downtown restaurants with discounts.

5:30pm Kathy Kass and Beth Davenport arranged for 8 seating at Restaurant Sal and Mookies.  
<http://www.salandmookies.com/>

**Sat 1/09/10**

7:00am MS Blues Marathon – 3<sup>rd</sup> annual  
[www.msbluesmarathon.com](http://www.msbluesmarathon.com)

New start/finish line in front of the Old State Capitol where Capitol Street meets State Street. The new course will run west on Capitol Street, take in the Metro Parkway out to Jackson State University, and come back through downtown on Pascagoula Street before picking up the original course and winding through Belhaven. The stretch along Lakeland Drive has been shortened, and runners will also enjoy a less crowded course through the Eastover area. The final miles will run south along Old Canton Road from Briarwood Drive, crossing over Interstate 55 and continuing south to State Street before finishing downtown.

**- Tracey, Diane and Annette**

Pm Depart Jackson (to Mobile Marathon?)

**Sun 1/10/10 – Peggy**

10:37am Depart Jackson DL 5123 through Atlanta for connection

4:03pm Arrive Newark

**– Charlotte and Tara**

12:58pm Depart Jackson via US Air #2560

5:32pm Connecting through Charlotte  
Arrive Wilmington

**- Maricar**  
2:09pm Depart Jackson via Atlantic Southeast / DL#5571  
Connecting through Atlanta  
7:43pm Arrive Newark

**Mon 1/13/10 - Mary**

7:50am Departs Jackson

**Tues 1/12/10 - Diana**

12:20pm Depart Jackson via CO#2461  
Connecting through Houston  
7:05pm Arrive Newark

**Participants/Cell #s:**

732 804 7514 Diana Burton cell (does not work at home); 732 671 7045 home  
908 907 5054 Maricar Korff cell  
910 512 2552 Charlotte Johnson cell with Tara (at Marriott)  
908 433 4278 Peggy cell with Diane Bolton and friends Annette & Tracey, staying at Marriott  
423 314 6669 Bonnie Wasson cell, with husband/spectator Jim? – watch for the umbrella  
941 321 2367 Mary Lenari cell  
847 997 7145 Debra Pennington with son and his family from Lafayette  
917 613 7331 Kathy Kass cell arriving around noon on Friday  
Yolanda  
Isabelle Schweitzer – driving to Mobile for Sunday

## **FAQs:**

**1. When will the marathon take place?** The 3rd annual Mississippi Blues Marathon and Half-Marathon will be on Saturday, January 9, 2010, in Jackson, Mississippi. Start time will be 7:00 a.m. Both the marathon and half-marathon will be open to walkers and disabled competitors as well. There is a separate wheelchair category for both the marathon and the half-marathon.

**2. Who will benefit from the Mississippi Blues Marathon?** A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Mississippi Blues Commission. Additionally, the race will focus positive attention on the state and its rich blues heritage. The positive economic impact of this event will be realized from restaurants and hotels patronized by competitors and visitors.

**3. Is it a challenging course?** The course is challenging! It includes hilly areas and straight flat sections, so be ready!

**4. Will prize money be available to the winners?** Yes! Additional details will be posted soon.

**5. Is this a certified course?** Yes! The courses for the Mississippi Blues Marathon and Half-Marathon have both been certified with USA Track and Field.

**6. Will the race have chip timing?** Yes. The Marathon, Half-Marathon and Relay will all use chip timing. The Kids' Marathon is a fun run and will use clock timing.

**7. Is there a time limit for the Half-Marathon? Whole?** Yes; Half – 3.5 hours; Whole – 7 hours.

**8. Is the event walker-friendly?** Yes, as long as you can complete the race under the time limits.

**9. How many aid stations will there be on the course? What race drinks and supplements will be provided?** There will be a total of 17 aid stations along the course. The race drink on the course will be Gatorade Endurance. Hammer Gel will be provided on the course at miles 8, 15 and 20.

**10. Will there be gear-check stations?** Yes.

**11. Will there be on-line and mail-in registration?** Yes. Online registration is available for all races (marathon, half-marathon, relay and Kids' Marathon) and we encourage you to apply online and early. You can request a hard copy application, if necessary.

**12. Will there be medals for every finisher?** Yes. In addition to medals for all finishers of the half and full marathon, age-group awards will be three deep in the standard five-year age categories.

**13. Is there a designated hotel with set rates and a block of rooms?** Check on our Preferred Hotels and Area Accommodations pages for hotel information. Please let your hotel know you are attending the Mississippi Blues Marathon and Half-Marathon, and request late check-out.

**14. Are there hotel shuttles to/from race?** It is up to each hotel to determine if they will provide shuttle service to and from the race and the airport. We encourage you to call your hotel and ask if they are providing any shuttle service for race participants.

**15. Will you have a pre-race dinner?** We are working to determine the level of interest. If we do not, we will provide information about area restaurants.

**16. Will there be a pre-race Expo? Do we have to pick up packets at the Expo? Is there race day pickup?**

Our pre-race Expo will feature vendors from around the country and a chance to reconnect with old friends and make some new ones! All race participants MUST pick up their packets at the Expo. There will be no late or race day packet pick-up. Please be sure to bring a photo ID for packet pick-up! For Expo details, see the [Expo page](#).

**17. Can I pick up a friend's or family member's packet if they cannot make it to the Expo?**

- Yes, but only if you have a copy of their registration confirmation or another form of proof (photo ID, signed note, etc.) that you were asked to pick up more than one packet. If you do not have a copy of their confirmation or another legitimate form of proof, you will not be allowed to pick up more than one packet.

**18. Will there be music entertainment as part of the event?**

Yes, most definitely! While showing off the hospitality of our state, we want to entertain those from near and far with a great mix of authentic blues music and showcase our rich history, heritage and culture of this genre. We will have musical entertainment before, during and after the event. During the race, bands will be stationed along the course. We'll also have music in the finish area, and be prepared for a great evening of blues on Saturday night!

**19. What's the weather like in Jackson in January?**

The average high temperature in Jackson in January is 55 degrees Fahrenheit, with an average low of 35 degrees Fahrenheit.

**20. How does the relay competition work?**

We are offering a relay for corporate and open relay teams. Teams are limited to five competitors. The first four competitors will complete five miles, and pass their timing chip off at the 5, 10, 15 and 20 mile marks. The final competitor will complete a 10K (the final 6.2 miles of the course). Read more about this fun way to compete on our [Relay page](#). You can [register online for the Relay event](#), and there's a paper registration form you can download from that page.

**21. Is there an event for kids?**

- Yes! The Kids' Marathon is open to all children between the ages of 6 and 13. Additional details will be provided soon.

**22. Can I wear headphones, use a cell phone or push a stroller in the race?**

- The safety of all participants is a primary concern, and headphones, cell phones, iPods and strollers can cause problems along the course - so we request that you refrain from using them during the race.

### **Tourist:**

Jackson is the state's most populous city  
Old Capital Museum open Tues-Sat and Sun afternoon  
State Capital with guided tours Mon-Fri with reservations required  
On Old Natchez Trace Trail  
Governor's Mansion with free tours Tues-Fri  
Convention and Visitors Bureau at 111 E. Capitol 800 354 7695  
Self guided tours available from above office  
Online tours of historic neighborhoods and key sites from 1960s civil rights movement  
City Hall has free tour Mon-Fri  
Eudora Welty House at 1119 Pinehurst has guided tours Wed-Fri w/reservations required  
Manship House Museum with tours Tues-Sat 10-4  
Museum of Art in the Mississippi Arts pavilion with tours Tues-Sun  
Planetarium/Ronald McNair Space Theatre next to Museum of Art  
Plus more houses and museums

AAA gem – Mississippi agricultural and forestry national agricultural aviation museum outside of city  
- Mississippi Museum of Natural Science within LeFleur's Bluff State Park  
- Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum

### **History of the Blues:**

People say the blues was born in Mississippi, traveled to Memphis in its youth and grew up in Chicago, but the truth is - the blues never left home. If you've not fed on the Mississippi blues, you've never tried the real thing. The unique Mississippi art form of the blues has long been recognized as the foundation for much of today's musical styles.

The Mississippi Blues Marathon and Half-Marathon honors musicians who have made history over the years. Check out the links below for more information about the Mississippi blues.

Explore the Mississippi Blues Trail and see how the Blues lived and grew throughout the state.

The Delta Blues Museum offers a tremendous history of the blues and its roots in Mississippi. Nestled in the heart of Clarksdale, Mississippi, the museum is a destination point for musicians and fans of the blues. Read more about Robert Johnson, long recognized as the most influential early blues musician. Click here for information about the famous Delta Blues and Heritage Festival, held each year in Greenville, Mississippi. And we can't help but brag-there's more to Mississippi music than the blues. Check out the Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame and be ready to be surprised by the number of talented, influential Mississippi musicians in many genres.

More on the blues:

<http://www.groundzerobluesclub.com/home.php>

<http://www.blused.org/>

<http://www.indianolablues.org/>

<http://www.bluesnewsnow.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.sunflowerfest.org/>

<http://www.highway61blues.com/>

**From David Williams on 11/09:**

Mississippi Blues - hilly course. There is a flat section in the middle that is out-and-back along a street/highway, but then the hills start again. Good music and they gave us a CD with local blues. I stayed with my parents 45 miles away so no help on hotels. You park at the football stadium that is a short walk to start/finish line so it is convenient from any hotel. Look for the signs to Yazoo City - that is where I grew up.

From: [david.o.williams@shell.com](mailto:david.o.williams@shell.com) on 11/13/09:

Previously I wrote some stuff about the Mississippi Blues Marathon in Jackson. I just checked their website and they have changed the course slightly for 2010. The new course is attached. It sounds like an improvement, but it will still be a hilly course. It will start and finish in front of the Old Capitol building (statehouse until 1903). I remember touring it as a kid. That should make for some nice photos. The new course is a very similar loop to the old one, except the old start/finish was about mile 24 on the new one. I guess that makes the last couple of miles less hilly, but I'm thinking there are still 2 pretty good hills at 24 and 25, and still an uphill finish. But the course before was a killer the last 7 miles. From about 8 to 14 should be pretty flat, but the right turn at 14 is up a steep hill. Last year that was about 19 so I'd rather get that done sooner. Mile 2 is at Jackson State University, a historically black school. Walter Payton, great running back for the Chicago Bears ("Sweetness"), went there. About mile 6 you go by Eudora Welty's (author) house. Then you run by Belhaven College. My grandmother went there for 2 years until she married my grandfather (about 1925).

Now a downtown hotel makes sense. I grew up 45 miles away but of course never stay at a hotel in Jackson so I'm no help on those. North of downtown or just east of the Coliseum are OK. I wouldn't look west or south, unless you go far enough west to Clinton. I don't know if downtown is OK these days. For a while it wasn't.

Also from David Williams:

The Natchez Trace is interesting but only for a little while. It is like a park road, but runs from Natchez to Tennessee. There are some scenic spots but it is not just full of things to see. The Trace southwest of town is a pretty way to drive down to Natchez but it doesn't really have any sights. To the northeast of Jackson, as I recall from 30 years ago, it goes by the Ross Barnett Reservoir. I don't recall any other sights, but that has been a long time. Mostly the Trace is a pretty park road through rolling hills and woods.

The Mississippi Marathon used to run on the Trace on the southwest side of Jackson, starting in Clinton near Mississippi College and going out and back on the Trace. I tried to run it back in December 1997 but got so sick the night before (staying with my parents) that I could not even get out of bed, much less run a marathon. It just moved into downtown when it became the MS Blues race a couple of years ago. It was pretty before but guaranteed no spectators because it was inaccessible on the Trace.

Vicksburg is about 45 miles west on I-20, right on the Mississippi river. The civil war battleground national park is quite interesting - the very steep hills made any kind of attack very difficult so it was mainly a siege, with some tunneling to try to blow up the defenses. There are also some old homes you can see in Vicksburg (at least there were 25 years ago - I haven't done much in Mississippi in a long time other than visit my parents).

If you see the governor of MS, Haley Barbour, say hi. He is from my hometown (Yazoo City - yes that is really the name) and went to high school with my older brother. Good guy. He did a great job for Mississippi for the recovery from Hurricane Katrina. It helped that he was Republican and worked well with Bush compared to the combative Democratic governor from Louisiana, but he and his wife also rallied the state to help the people on the coast without relying just on Federal aid. While the

national news covered the flooding in New Orleans, the actual brunt of the storm went through Mississippi.

Downtown Jackson is better than it was for a while, but that ain't saying much. Remember that Mississippi traditionally ranks at the bottom of lists like per capita income and education. Jackson does rank high on some lists, like murder rate. But Jackson is a fairly pretty town, with small colleges like Millsap's and Belhaven along the marathon route. The northeast side of town where much of the race runs is nice.

From: "MS Blues Registration" <registration@msbluesmarathon.com>  
Date: Fri, 22 May 2009 20:46:44 -0500

Hi Diana,

We have set up the discount code for members of the 50 States Clubs. The code is BluesIn50States and will reduce your entry by \$10. Good luck and let me know if you have any trouble getting the discount.

Thanks! Rob Simmons

---

From: MSBluesMarathon <MSBluesMarathon@bcbsms.com>  
To: "Diana Burton" <dianab@juno.com>  
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 08:31:54 -0500  
Subject: Re: MS Blues Marathon Jan '10 questions

A paper application will be available but we will charge a \$15 processing fee for all paper applications. We are in the process of creating a paper application as I write this e-mail. As soon as it is completed, we will post it on our website. To avoid the \$15 processing fee, I would encourage you to use [www.marathonguide.com](http://www.marathonguide.com) to register for the race. The discount codes are being loaded into the system this week. I can send you the discount code as soon as they are loaded.

### **Crumbling Mississippi hotel restored to grandeur**

By SHELIA BYRD, Associated Press Writer Shelia Byrd, Associated Press Writer  
Wed Dec 16, 5:09 pm ET

JACKSON, Miss. — The King Edward Hotel — once a towering shell of broken windows and crumbling brick — stood as an eyesore in Mississippi's capital city for four decades, a gritty symbol of Jackson's slow decline.

After several failed bids by various developers to overhaul the historic landmark, a New Orleans-based company has gotten the renovation done. Thanks in large part to federal tax credits that flowed after Hurricane Katrina, the blighted building has been fully reworked with chandeliers and champagne-colored walls into a gleaming centerpiece of urban renewal.

HRI Properties, along with NFL star and former New Orleans Saints player Deuce McAllister and Jackson developer David Watkins, have transformed the King Edward into the newly named Hilton Garden Inn-Jackson Downtown.

Gone are the drug users and others who once hid inside the long-shuttered hotel, whose beginnings trace to before the Civil War. The \$90 million makeover has produced a 186-room luxury hotel and 64 high-end apartments, most already leased ahead of Thursday's grand opening.

"It will have a really good 'Oh my God factor.' You walk into that atrium and that's the first thing you're going to say," said Ben Allen, a former city councilman and president of a city improvement district called Jackson Downtown Partners.

"It's important because when Gov. Haley Barbour picks up a group of investors from Japan and brings them to the capital city to discuss investing in our state, we need to have first-class accommodations," he added.

With low-hanging chandeliers in the lobby, a domed ballroom ceiling and elegantly appointed suites, the renovated King Edward has few rivals in the city's hotel business. The apartments that rent from \$700 to \$1,500 monthly have hardwood floors and penthouse views of downtown Jackson. Guests who venture to the hotel rooftop for a swim in the pool can glimpse the Amtrak station tracks nearby, but soundproof windows block the whistles of trains.

"It's so exciting," said Trina McNair, who remembers the hotel as a place to avoid because of those who hid inside. Now, she calls it a blessing since she's been hired to work as a desk clerk after months of unemployment. "It was an eyesore for so long. I never dreamed I would work here."

Built in 1861, the original hotel was destroyed during the Civil War. Its current incarnation has been around since 1923. It's where legislators brokered deals not far from the state Capitol and parties and balls drew the state's upper crust. The hotel banned blacks for years, and after integration swept the South, the King Edward was shuttered in 1967.

For Jackson, that marked the grim decline of the King Edward, even though it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

"I've heard rumors that when the first black person checked in, all the legislators checked out," said Norman S. Amort, a vice president with HRI Lodging, a subsidiary of HRI Properties.

HRI Properties became the majority owner of the hotel in October 2007, after previous proposals from other developers faltered, including one effort to make it a casino.

For many, the renovated King Edward is more than just a flagship for hospitality and tourism; it's a harbinger of the city's renewal.

During the past decade, many of the city's businesses, including what was then known as WorldCom, Inc., moved to nearby bedroom communities. The city's population dropped from 202,000 in 1980 to the current 175,000 base, Allen said.

"It was declining, just like other big cities. There's no question about it," Allen said, adding federal tax credits to Mississippi and other hard-hit Gulf coast states after Katrina's devastation were a godsend. "When Katrina hit, developers all over the country started looking at Jackson."

Allen said the city has \$3.1 billion in development under way or recently completed.

Some of that was due to the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005, or Go Zone, which offered tax-free bonds to developers to finance shopping centers, hotels and other big commercial projects. Full Spectrum New York, based in Harlem, is one such developer, with plans for a \$1.1 billion residential, office, retail and entertainment development in 14 square blocks downtown.

HRI received a tax credit of 25 percent of the King Edward's total cost, Amort said. HRI also bought the nearby Standard Life building and is renovating that for apartments.



HRI's formula of leveraging public-private partnerships with tax credits was used to revitalize the New Orleans Warehouse District, and more recently, downtown Richmond, Va., said Eddie Boettner, co-chairman of HRI's board of directors.

McNair, a former city employee, is hopeful the hotel will help draw more tourists to Jackson.

"At first, you really didn't have anything to look forward to downtown. Now, the King Edward is a new sight for sore eyes," she said. "Compared to what I have seen in the past, it is gorgeous."

**What Is The Natchez Trace Parkway?** - The 444-mile Natchez Trace Parkway commemorates an ancient trail used by animals and people that connected southern portions of the Mississippi River, through Alabama, to salt licks in today's central Tennessee. Today, visitors can experience this National Scenic Byway and All-American Road through driving, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and camping.

Choosing spots to visit along the 444 mile long Natchez Trace Parkway can be overwhelming. Regardless of your interests, there are plenty of opportunities to get out of your car and experience a part of the parkway. Whether you are traveling the parkway from Natchez to Nashville, or a section in between, you may find these suggestions helpful while planning your trip.

From Natchez to Jackson, Mississippi you will find a prehistoric mound site, a historic structure, numerous short hiking trails, and some of the best examples of the "Old Trace."

From Jackson to Tupelo, Mississippi, there are recreational activities at the Ross Barnett Reservoir, scenic overlooks, and archeological sites.

## **Natchez to Jackson**

The one hundred miles between Natchez and Jackson, Mississippi provides numerous opportunities to get out of your car and learn more about the history of the area. From prehistoric American Indian mounds, to a town abandoned in the early 1900's, there are thousands of years of history along the Natchez Trace.

NPS PHOTO

Visitors have the opportunity to see the evidence prehistoric people have left along the Natchez Trace at Emerald Mound.

Emerald Mound, at milepost 10.3, is the second largest Mississippian period ceremonial mound in the United States, and the largest mound along the Natchez Trace Parkway. The mound provides a glimpse into the story of the Mississippian period people who lived along the Natchez Trace.



NPS PHOTO

The Historic Mount Locust Inn, built in 1780.

Mount Locust, at milepost 15.5, is the only remaining inn, or "stand" on the Parkway. This contact station is open from February to November each year, and rangers are available from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm to share

information on the historic structure. Mount Locust allows you to see what the "Kaintucks" may have experienced at the road side stands.

NPS PHOTO

### The Sunken Trace at milepost 41.5.

The Sunken Trace, at milepost 41.5 is one of the most photographed sites along the parkway. The trace appears sunken in this spot due to thousands of travelers walking on the easily eroded loess soil. This short trail will allow you to walk on the Natchez Trace just as thousands have before you.



NPS PHOTO

The Cemetery at Rocky Springs is just some of the evidence left behind by residents of this abandoned town.

A short one half mile trail at milepost 54.8 allows you to walk through the abandoned town of Rocky Springs. In addition to the short trail, there is a picnic area, restrooms, and a campground. All campgrounds on the Natchez Trace Parkway are primitive and have no hookups. The sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis with no reservations available.



## **Jackson to Tupelo**



NPS PHOTO

### A view of the Ross Barnett Reservoir north of Jackson, Mississippi

The Ross Barnett Reservoir parallels the parkway for about eight miles, and provides spectacular scenery from the roadway. Those interested in spending more time in the area may enjoy starting at walk from the West Florida Boundary at milepost 107.9, or taking in the views at the Reservoir Overlook at milepost 105.6.



NPS PHOTO

The boardwalk trail at Cypress Swamp allows you to walk above a water tupelo/bald cypress swamp. Cypress Swamp, at milepost 122.0, is a self guiding trail through a water tupelo/bald cypress swamp. A lucky visitor may have a chance to see an alligator on this one half mile trail with boardwalks.



NPS IMAGE

A clear day provides spectacular views from the Little Mountain Overlook at Jeff Busby. The Little Mountain Overlook at Jeff Busby can be reached by a short drive to one of Mississippi's highest points along the Parkway. While the gas station at Jeff Busby has recently closed, the picnic area, campground, trails, and overlook are still available.



NPS PHOTO

A short trail at Bynum Mounds allows visitors to walk around a Middle Woodland period village and burial site.

Bynum Mounds is a Middle Woodland period burial mound site located at milepost 232.4. This archeological site consisted of six mounds, five of which were excavated in the 1940's. Two of the largest mounds have been restored, and you can see them today. Interpretive exhibits tell the story of early residents of the Natchez Trace.



NPS PHOTO

Imagine hundreds of people living in the open area of the Chickasaw Village Site.

The Chickasaw Village Site is an archeological site at milepost 261.8 that represents the village that once occupied the area. While there are no structures standing today, there is an outline of a Chickasaw winter home, summer home, and fort. A short nature trail gives more information on

native uses of plants in the area. This site also allows access to the Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail for those interested in longer walks.