

The Manchester Marathon is one of the UK's largest and most popular road races, attracting thousands of runners every year to one of [the5runner](#) the nation's most vibrant cities. For anyone considering taking on this iconic 26.2-mile challenge, knowing exactly **where the race starts and finishes** is vital — especially as recent years have seen course tweaks and logistical changes. In this guide, I'll cover the current starting point and finish line, entry details, charity places, course specifics including elevation and certification, plus useful resources so you can prepare properly for race day.

Manchester Marathon 2026: Date, Scale and Time Limit

The Manchester Marathon is set to run on **Sunday 20 April 2026**. It remains one of the UK's largest marathons by participation, with approximately **30,000 runners** taking to the streets annually. The event is organised by Run For All in partnership with the Manchester City Council and local sponsors.

Race Time Limit: The official time limit for completing the marathon is *7 hours 30 minutes*. This means runners must complete the course within this window, with cut-off points enforced along the route for safety and logistical reasons.

Entry Process and the Reality of Sell-Outs

Official entries for the Manchester Marathon fill up quickly, often selling out within hours after the online portal opens. To give you a ballpark figure, the entry fee for standard runners is around £65-£75, but there are also alternative routes to securing a place:

- **Ballot System:** The majority of places go to a public draw with thousands competing for limited spots.
- **Charity Places:** Many runners secure entry through affiliated charities by committing to fundraise a minimum amount.
- **Tour Operators & Partners:** Some places are reserved for international packages.

Be warned: if you want to guarantee a spot, entering via a *charity place* is often your safest bet — but this comes with financial commitments.

Charity Entry Example: MS Trust's Fundraising Requirement

For example, the MS Trust offers charity spots where runners pay a registration fee of **£40** plus agree to a minimum sponsorship target of **£500**. This is a sizeable commitment, so please factor this into your budget and planning.



Where Does the Manchester Marathon Start?

The start line for the Manchester Marathon is now officially positioned **beside Old Trafford stadium** — home to Manchester United Football Club. This location offers ample space and excellent transport connections, accommodating the large number of competitors safely and efficiently.

- **Precise Location:** The starting pens are on Warwick Road, outside the stadium's main gates.
- **Transport:** The nearest train station with best walking access is *Manchester United Football Ground Station*. Alternatively, tram lines serve the stadium area, notably the *Old Trafford tram stop* on the Metrolink.
- **Race Morning:** Expect large crowds, so aim to arrive at least 90 minutes prior to your wave start time to navigate bag drop and security.

Starting beside Old Trafford is an iconic and energising spot — the buzzing atmosphere of the football ground alongside thousands of runners ready to tackle the course makes for a memorable beginning.

Finish Line: University of Manchester on Oxford Road

The finish line has remained on **Oxford Road** in the heart of the city, more precisely in front of the *University of Manchester* campus. This central location allows excellent spectator access and provides a spectacular backdrop of city life as runners complete their marathon journey.

- **Exact Finish:** The finishing chute is located just outside the Whitworth Building on Oxford Road.
- **Transport Connections:** For post-race transport with minimal walking, the *Oxford Road train station* is only a few minutes' walk, offering easy options back to Manchester Piccadilly or further afield.
- **Amenity Access:** Nearby cafes, medical huts, and gear collection areas make this a practical finish location.

The **University of Manchester finish** gives runners an urban, celebratory close to the race, often lined with crowds cheering you across the line after those gruelling 26.2 miles.

Manchester Marathon Course Route, Elevation and Certification History

While the start and finish spots are fixed, the precise course route has seen minor adjustments over the years, aiming for the perfect mix of spectator-friendly urban running and challenging stretches.

Current Course Route Overview (2026)

1. Start beside Old Trafford, Warwick Road
2. Heading north-west towards Salford and the Quays
3. Looping south-east through Trafford Park
4. Passing notable landmarks such as the Imperial War Museum North and MediaCityUK
5. Heading east into the city centre via Deansgate and Portland Street
6. Finishing on Oxford Road outside University of Manchester

In addition to its metropolitan flavour, the course offers visually diverse views — from modern waterfront architecture to leafy parkland sections.

Elevation Profile

Segment Elevation Change Description Start to 10 km Mostly flat with gentle rises Passing Old Trafford and Salford Quays, slight uphill ramps 10 km to 20 km Minor undulations, rolling hills through Trafford Park Invigorating but manageable challenges 20 km to Finish Flat, city centre streets Final push on mostly level roads to Oxford Road finish

Elevation gain for the full course is approximately 100 metres, making Manchester a relatively flat marathon suitable for fast times, but bear in mind crowding and weather conditions can impact performance.

Course Certification and Accuracy

The Manchester Marathon's current route is officially **UKA measured and IAAF/AIMS certified**. This guarantees the 26.2-mile (42.195 km) distance is accurate and earns times achieved official status for qualification and record purposes.

For those interested in pre-running or analysing the course, third-party tools can help.

Using GPX Files for Route Preview

If you're a runner who likes to familiarise yourself with the course route beforehand by studying maps or even running parts of it, GPS route files can be invaluable.

One handy resource is goandrace.com, where you can download **third-party GPX files** for the Manchester Marathon 2026 route. While not the official organizers' file, it is widely used by runners to prepare.

After downloading, devices like Garmin watches or GPS-enabled smartphones can load these GPX files easily. For example, if you own a Garmin Forerunner or Fenix model, you can transfer the GPX to the device's courses folder via Garmin Connect or direct USB connection.

Note: Always cross-check with official route changes announced by the organisers close to race day, as minor alterations can occur.

Race Week Kit List: What to Bring

Based on my experience covering UK marathons including Manchester, here's a compact kit list you should keep in your phone notes well before race week:

- Race number and timing chip (collected beforehand if required)
- Hydration belt or handheld bottle, especially if you like to carry your own fluids
- Weather-appropriate running kit (layers, waterproof if rain forecasted)
- Comfortable, broken-in trainers
- Energy gels or snacks
- Watch or GPS device loaded with GPX course
- Post-race warm clothes and waterproof jacket
- Travel cards or tickets for Manchester United Football Ground Station or Old Trafford Metrolink
- Plastic bags for race day rubbish
- Cash or card for food/transport after the finish

Summary

To recap:

Aspect Details Race Date Sunday 20 April 2026 Start Location Beside Old Trafford Stadium, Warwick Road Finish Location University of Manchester, Oxford Road Time Limit 7 hours 30 minutes Entry Fee (Standard) £65-£75 (subject to change) Charity Entry Example MS Trust: £40 registration + £500 minimum sponsorship Course Certification UKA & IAAF/AIMS certified marathon distance Nearest Stations Manchester United Football Ground Station & Oxford Road Station Useful Tools goandrace.com (GPX route); Garmin devices (route loading)

If you plan on running the Manchester Marathon, knowing these start/finish locations and logistical details ensures you can focus on the running part without last-minute surprises. Remember to secure your entry early, and if going down the charity route, factor in the fundraising commitment. Happy training, and hopefully I'll see you on Oxford Road finishing strong!

