

Runners description of The Great Wall Marathon

Stretch No. 1 Section A - B 0.8 km on highway 'Village Zone'

The shot has just been fired and you have set out on one of the big challenges of your life:

The Great Wall Marathon
You will pass this very stretch of 0.8 km that you have just entered four times in all.

The first time is NOW.

The second time you pass it, you will be heading in the same direction, just after leaving the Wall.

The third time, on the contrary, will be just before hitting the Wall again!

The fourth time you are on this stretch, it will have changed into the homestretch!

You must watch out for traffic at all times and keep to the left-hand side of the lane along the river. Stay on the roadway facing the river, even when it means that you will be running practically in the middle of the road.

Keep a sharp watch out for all traffic on the road. Be aware of the locals, especially the children. Remember to smile and wave to other fellow travelers and family members. You are about to perform the athletic feat of your life and may be envied by many.

Enjoy the contact with the road and before you realize it, you will be on Stretch 2 but to get there make a 90 degree turn to your LEFT, through the magnificent, colorful wooden portal that indicates the upward sloping approach to the Wall. Follow the directions of the guides, and you will progress very quickly.

Stretch No. 2 Section B - C 4.5 km uphill on a very steep asphalt mountain road

You are going to face the second greatest challenge of the tour but you will already have an idea of what is in store, as you will have gone along this stretch by bus on Inspection Day prior to the race. But making the trip by sightseeing bus is one thing, and it is quite another going by foot

and maybe even at a running pace! You will have plenty of time to consider your strategy though, because there is a distance of 4.5 km before you meet the Wall for the first time. So take care not to overtax your strength or it would sure be a defeat NOT to reach the Wall if only once.

If this is any comfort to you, consider this: the next time you will be here at this point, you will be facing in the opposite direction and you will be running downhill, which has its own very special charm. Try to look forward to this while you make your way up the stretch, almost 'reaching a boiling point' as you struggle upward!

We have made sure that you will not boil over or dry out by placing drink station 3 at the beginning of Stretch 2 (just after the bridge), another after 3.2 km and one more just before the transition from Stretch 2 to Stretch 3, which is on the Wall itself! But even with these stations available, please remember to tank up thoroughly before starting out. It is absolutely necessary!

You also have to watch out carefully for traffic here. This very steep stretch of road with its many curves and bends will really tempt you to cross the road several times in order to make it easier on yourself. Be prepared, however, for traffic coming downhill. Drivers cannot see around the sharp bends.

Keep your eyes peeled and listen for a honking car, which may indicate that a car is approaching at full throttle around the next bend. You did not come to China to be run over by a car! You are here to complete The Great Wall Marathon. Enjoy the view as you climb, and before long you are on The Wall itself and on Stretch No. 3. Shortly before reaching The Wall, you will run through a great white portal with three engraved Chinese characters and then cross a big open square. If you need to pay a visit to a rest room before The Wall, be sure to do so now!

Stretch No. 3 Section C - A 3.2 km on The Great Wall

At the very end of the big open square, after climbing a paved approach, you will see a sign attached to a wall of uneven stones that says "Entrance to The Great Wall."

Now we are getting down to serious business! You will pass this stretch twice, once in each direction.

Right after the entrance sign is the start of several sequences of the many many steps that you will eventually traverse either running or walking! Please note that going downhill on these steps is more dangerous. After taking the first flight of steps uphill, you begin running on The Wall itself at point W1.

Do not change your speed, even if you feel pressed by people passing by you on the first leg of The Wall. You may be the one passing many of them later on, as they will pay for starting out at too fast a pace. Instead, concentrate on coming through this stretch of 3.2 kilometers of the Wall safely. There are plenty of people in this world who take wild risks, and you do not need to imitate them. Keep this in mind here.

Point W1 - Tower 3

At point W1 you pass through a stone portal, then turn to your left at a 90-degree angle.

Continue uphill again on a short stretch of steps and then you will be on The Wall. Be sure to enjoy the view to your right (north) it is magnificent! Watch out for the rain furrows that cut across the path. A foot might easily be caught in one of these. We organizers have tried to carefully indicate all these rain drainages with white paint, but as a runner, you still need to watch out! Please also note that The Wall slopes slightly downwards toward the sides.

Tower 3 - Tower 4

You go up and down a lot of steps here. There is the drink

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station 6 in Tower 4. Make sure to take advantage of it!

Tower 4 - Tower 5 (The Blind Tower)

By now you are approximately 100 meters above the entrance sign. This is also one of the highest points of the Marathon; after this, the route is more or less downhill. After passing Tower 5 you will get to a very strenuous stretch.

Tower 5 - Tower 6 (The Widow's Tower)

Runners must cross this stretch in single file. Therefore, no overtaking! Please help a fellow contestant if necessary. For quite a while along this stretch there will be no wall on your left hand side, which means a potential free fall!

At some points the downward slope of The Wall is quite steep, and some heavy ropes with knots have been fastened here to help runners whose shoes do not grip the stone foundation very well. Slow down in order to avoid getting rope burn or losing your foothold. Medics, an emergency squad and assistants will be stationed at this point in case of accidents.

Tower 6 (The Widow's Tower) - Tower 7 - Tower 8

After passing Tower 6, you must be extremely careful. All at once there will be giant steps going downhill and there is a risk of a free fall to your left! For a short while you will be running on uneven stones, but before long The Wall is made up of bricks again and has a shielding parapet on each side. You still have to be very careful though, as the lengths and heights of the steps vary a great deal! This makes it almost impossible to get into a rhythmic pace on this stretch of The Wall. Tower 7 has no roof and no superstructure, but is still considered to be a tower by the Chinese. Just run straight through.

Tower 8 - Tower 9

After having left medical and drink stations in Tower 8, you go downhill towards Tower 9. On this first passage through Tower 9, you turn left at a 90-degree angle, heading south. As at many other spots along the way, an assistant will be posted here to direct you.

Tower 9 - W2

After having passed Tower 9 and turning left, The Wall becomes rather and very wide. If you are game, this is the place to slip past some of your fellow contestants - with care. Soon The Wall changes again, with more tough climbs and descents. This is where you get some of the most fantastic views of the whole stretch on The Wall. The last of the descents is a treacherous place that has to be passed extremely cautiously. It is a sort of plateau, from which the route 'breaks' at an angle of 90 degrees and continues downhill to your left. There are guides to direct you at this spot. Set your pace according to the conditions and pick up your pace for a while. The Wall will narrow shortly, there will be a drink station ahead and you will have to slow down anyway. After the drink station 8, make two turns at 90-degree angles in rapid succession. The first turn of 90 degrees is to your right. There are guides telling you to slow down and pointing to a descent of 11 steps, and after that to a turn of 90 degrees to the left. Be sure to go slowly here, as right after the steps there is a long steep descent, so be careful! You are now running along a narrow goat path, where you are only allowed to go single file for safety reasons - no overtaking! Even though the route is swept, there is still a risk of stumbling over loose pebbles so watch out carefully and be sure to enjoy the magnificent view! From here you can see a river that you will pass later. You will also be able to see the finishing area of the fort, so there is something to look forward to. The path changes from being a

goat path of dirt and clay back to The Wall path made of bricks, and once again you might have to make use of the rope to descend! The Wall takes a wide swing here, and with a free fall on one side!

Before long though, you will be leaving the wall again by turning 90 degrees to your right, descending 2-3 steps, and then turning 90 degrees to your left. Follow the indications of the guides and adjust your speed accordingly, as you now have 576 descending steps without any shielding brickwork! Keep your own pace, and do not worry about the daredevils who decide to race downhill. If your descent is giving you trouble, if you lose your rhythm or your eyes play a trick on you then step aside, take a break, enjoy the view and then get back to work again. You are now on the last part of Stretch 3, which means you will soon finish your first run on The Wall.

Tower 12 - Tower 13

After getting down the steps safely and soundly, you must turn 90 degrees to your right inside the tower, in order to get to the bridge that you saw from the top of The Wall. Crossing Bridge 1 you easily pass over both the river and the north-south highway. At the end of the bridge is Tower 13. Coming out of the tower, make a 90-degree turn to your left.

Tower 13 - Tower 14 - Tower 15 - Tower 16 - Tower 17

This stretch is passed only once. The route goes all around The Great Wall Complex and renders a fine and comprehensive view of how the buildings are positioned in relation to each other. At the same time you circle the Yin Yang Square and will be able to wave to your friends on the square. You enter the Castle Wall as you turn 90 degrees to your left, leaving Tower 13 and then pass a pagoda tower with a guide. Exit to the left of the souvenir stall inside the tower.

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At Tower 14, you make a 90-degree turn to the right and from there you go up a short flight of stairs to get to Tower 15, also a pagoda tower with another guide. Then turn left around the tower, go down another flight of steps from Tower 15, and immediately afterwards, turn 90 degrees to your left.

You will enter a wide curve of 90 degrees, and it might feel a little strange to be running in this direction, but you will probably not have enough time to get dizzy before the curve ends. There will be a short stretch going straight ahead, and then another rather long curve.

Both curves swing to the right. While tearing along, you will see the Wall Museum on your right. Next to it, among many other things, is a great maze, and some of your fellow travelers might be here taking the opportunity to stroll in the museum garden. Be prepared to wave at somebody you know!

Straight up ahead is a long stretch, climbing slightly up towards Tower 16. Shortly before the tower there is a big notch to your left, an ideal place for a cheering section to take position. There is enough room for about 50 people.

Inside Tower 16, go to your RIGHT around the stall (the passageway around the left of the stall is extremely difficult, as it is made up of stone steps right out of the brickwork).

Watch out now, just after Tower 16 there are about 20 steps going down. Be alert in order to avoid stumbling, as they turn up all of a sudden! Shortly after the steps, make a right turn at a T-crossing of the Wall. There will be a guide there. (We probably will not see you again today if you turn left, as this stretch of the Wall runs towards Beijing for the next 55 km.) Be sure to follow the directions of the guide.

On the next even stretch there are two canons, over which you might consider hopping over, but only make the attempt if you are an able-bodied gymnast.

Technical or artistic skills will not

buy you time here!

A little further ahead you will see Tower 17 as you are making a right hand turn, going down stone steps to reach the Yin Yang Square. A guide will be there to direct you, but watch out because the steps are steep and you will find it rather dark going down the 'tunnel' after the full sunlight on the Wall.

Before entering Stretch 4 and setting a good rhythm and pace, there is now an opportunity to visit a medical stand and use a rest room, as the next one is approximately 7 km further ahead.

Do not forget the possibility of stopping the Marathon completely ó but who can imagine being exhausted already at this point in the race? Quite soon you will be going on to the Highway Stretch, where there are neither steps, nor towers, nor hikers to slow you down.

Stretch No. 4 Section A - B 0.8 km on highway óVillage Zoneó

Again, this Highway Stretch of 0.8 km will be passed 4 times all in all. And -

The first time is over and done with

The second time you are on this stretch is now ó and still going in the same direction as the first time, right after having left The Wall and Yin Yang Square.

The third time will be just before you óhitó The Wall again!

The fourth time you get here, the stretch will have turned into the home stretch!

As it is of great importance, we shall repeat the lesson from the first time on this stretch, which you must learn by heart: You must watch out for traffic on the road at all times and keep to the left hand side of the lane along the river. Stay on the roadway facing the river, even if it means that you will be running almost in the middle of the road.

Keep a sharp watch out for all traffic on the road. Be aware of the locals, especially the children. Remember to smile and wave at

other fellow travelers and family members. Some of the locals might even recognize you after seeing you pass by the first time - quite an extraordinary thought that can really keep you going! You have come quite far in your attempt to perform the athletic feat of your life.

Enjoy the contact with the road. Before you realize it you will be on Stretch 5, which begins right after the magnificent, colorful wooden portal that indicates the sloping approach to The Wall. But remember that this time you will have to run straight on past the portal. Follow the directions of the guides, and you will soon be on your way to unknown stretches.

Stretch No. 5 Section B - D 2.7 km on 'mixed' surface highway

Very quickly you will be outside the developed area, and have a 2.7 km stretch of asphalt road ahead. You will be able to see the river on your left most of the way.

You have to go through Stretch 6 once in each direction. Remember to stay on the left hand side of the lane facing the river. Pay careful attention to any traffic and do not cut corners! If you are not among the very fastest, you might meet runners coming at you here, but do not pay any attention to them. Remember to keep your own pace or you will pay for it later.

At Point D where you go from Stretch 5 to Stretch 6, there is drink station 9 and a bus stop, where bystanders and runners can be picked up by the special buses shuttling around the Marathon area especially for this event.

When passing from Stretch 5 onto Stretch 6 do not go back onto the asphalt road, but instead follow the unpaved road that goes left through rather difficult terrain.

There is a guide by the drink station; if in doubt, be sure to ask for directions here. Better to ask ten times too many than not at all. It is terribly annoying to go astray, especially when a quick question could have saved you a

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long and tiresome detour!

Stretch No. 6

Section D - E

1 km on unpaved road from the Highway to the Village

Having left drink station No. 9, you also have lost one of the sure signs of civilization: the asphalt road ends!

For the next 3.8 km you will be running on dirt roads and this might stir up some dust, especially if cars are sneaking by. The police are here to keep order. Cars will be going at very low speeds and spectators will be kept well off to the sides of the road.

Still, remember to run more or less in the middle of the road, and step aside to your left if pressed. You are running along right next to an irrigation canal. Give yourself a moment to observe this means of agricultural improvement.

Later on you will be running along the river and you might see a lot of people and tractors in the riverbed. They may look as if they are dredging the river, but in fact, they are gathering gravel and sand from the riverbed to use for local building materials. They will probably not be distracted by you rushing by, but try to wave at them anyway.

Getting to the end of Stretch No. 6 you will reach Point F and Bridge 4. You still carry on due south towards Point G.

Stretch No. 7

Section E - F

0.4 km on unpaved road from Bridges 3 to 4

When you reach Bridge 4 you can see the houses of Duanzhuang village across the river. Carry on due south to Bridge 4, make a sharp 90-degree turn to your left, cross Bridge No. 4 and you will be in the village and entering Stretch 8.

Stretch No. 8

Section F - G

0.4 km on surfaced road into Duanzhuang Village

You are now running into the village of Duanzhuang on a newly paved road. Follow the

road through a long curve and carry on for a few hundred meters. When you reach the last houses in the village, you will have reached the point where the half and full marathoners go their separate ways. The runners doing the half marathon will make a sharp turn to the left whereas you runners doing the full marathon will carry on straight ahead. Watch out for the guides showing the way or you will be on your way to completing the half marathon. At the turn you will find Drink station 11 and just behind that a primitive toilet.

Stretch No. 9

Section G - H

2.0 km on dirt road from Duanzhuang Village to Xiaying

Stretch No. 9, which you have reached after crossing Bridge No. 4, is much like Stretch No. 8, but you are now running on dirt road and there will be some dust, even though cars will be driving at very slow speed. Soon you will arrive at a village of considerable size, lining the route down towards the town of Xiaying. Actually, you will be running through two villages, first Duanzhuang Village, then through open fields for a little while, and then Xiaying Village. You will be very close to the houses, practically running through people's living rooms and kitchens!

Bystanders are kept at the side of the road. The stage is yours, so use it.

Naturally, this is also a great event for the residents of these villages, to watch this many foreigners come pushing along, steaming with perspiration, through their humble village. But they should not get too close to the runners. If a person happens to get too close, you must try to grin and bear it, even if for a short while it looks a bit dangerous for your running! Remember that a smile is the shortest distance between two people.

When you reach a bigger and more crowded road, you enter Stretch 10 by making a 90-degree

turn to the left where the road meets the main street of Xiaying. There will be guides giving directions at this point. Pay careful attention to the traffic once you are on the bigger road! Those who have participated in earlier Great Wall Marathons will remember turning right and having to negotiate a crowded rural weekend market here.

Stretch No. 10

Section H - I

400 meters along the main street of Xiaying

In front of you there is now a short stretch of a partially paved road going through the town of Xiaying. There are many folklore items to look at in this town and street vendors have an abundant range of goods. Watch the road itself though, as this part is in serious need of repair.

Stretch No. 11

Section I - J

1.9 km of paved main road

As the route exits Xiaying, it meets up with the main road and the running gets smooth. Over the next 2.6 kilometers the route takes you along a wide, level, newly paved road with poplars on both sides that provide a bit of much-needed shade. Orchards and fields are on both sides of the road. On the left are the low foothills of the mountains to the north. They do not seem to be much at this stage, but we will be negotiating sections further on that will prove to be quite challenging.

After 1.9 km a small bridge leads across a narrow ditch. Just as you cross the bridge there is a factory on the left and a school on the right hand side.

Stretch No. 12 & 13

Section J - K

2.8 km of winding road

A sharp turn to the left takes you away from the main road and onto a narrow but paved country road that winds its way between fields. Many vegetables are cultivated on these fields and you will be able to see many people

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working in the fields. As we head north the road also gradually begins to climb. It continues gently upward up to Point P, where Stretch No. 13 begins. At Point P, you can see First Aid Station 5 on your left, and Drink station 13. If you look upward to your left you will be able to see some small pavilions and temples on the mountainside. Imagine what beautiful views there are from there and also what it would take just to walk all the way to the top.

Stretch No. 14

Section K - L

3.0 km ascent and descent on well-paved road

At Point N, stay to the right. After about 300 meters, look to your right and you can see a lake and a big dam. It is also near this point that you pass the 21st kilometer (the half-way point), so from now on you are homeward bound!

The road is still ascending and will be for the next kilometer or so. When you pass under an irrigation pipe that carries water across the road, you have reached the top and the course becomes more level.

Up ahead we will be entering Qingshanling village. As you pass a red steel gate on the left and a yellow house a bit further down the road on the right, you enter the village proper. The road now runs between stone walls that hide the homes and courtyards from sight.

Up ahead you can see a gate framed with blue tiles. By the gate the road makes a sharp turn to the right. A lot of the farmers here earn part of their income from agro-tourism. The houses with colorful signs outside are small hostels that cater mainly to weekend tourists from the nearby cities of Beijing and Tianjin. If the going is getting too tough, you can fantasize about resting here for a few days. This area is quite dry and sunny. Solar panels on the roofs of many houses indicate how most people here get some of their electricity and all of their hot water. On the right you

will pass a 2-storey white building that is another hostel. After this, the road makes a sharp turn to the left. Straight ahead a deep valley comes into view. Carry on ahead and pass the gate of a small hotel on the right. Further up ahead on the left hand side of the road is a small spirit wall with flowers that protects the farmers against evil spirits. After running almost a kilometer through the village we now come out on the other side. Tall radio masts can be seen on the right hand side of the road. As you pass the masts, the road starts to descend into the valley below. Further on, a tall, white lookout tower is on the right. Up ahead across the valley, there are remnants of the wall and old watchtowers.

Stretch No. 15 & 16

Section L - M

2.5 km on main road

Having descended to the bottom of the valley, the road from Qingshanling meets the main road. Follow this to the left along the bottom of the valley following the riverbed. Just after the turn, a bridge leads across the river. The road stays on the right side of the river slightly above the bottom of the valley. From here a fairly wide road winds along the river and then follows the slopes on the right hand side of the valley. On the right are steep slopes covered with bushes and small trees, and occasionally small ravines that fill the river with water during the wet seasons. On the left are open fields and the riverbed in the middle of the valley.

After almost 2 kilometers on this road a portal comes into view. The sign tells us to protect the trees and plants. Large reforestation projects have been undertaken in this area. Just after the portal the river veers off to the right, but you follow the road straight ahead.

A little further on you will see a road on the left, and then you are back at Point N. We have now made a full loop.

We stay on the main road for another 500 meters before we

turn right, running towards a white *pailou* or portal and enter Stretch 17.

Stretch No. 17

Section M - N

1.3 km on roads of varying standards through Chedaoyu Village

We run from the main road towards the white gateway. On the left hand side of the road we see small hills crowned with yellow buildings. On the right is the riverbed that we meet up with once again. At this time of year it is normally dry. Beyond the river are low hills with pavilions for viewing the surrounding countryside.

Just as the route passes beneath a bright blue building with a tall radio mast on the left, the road starts climbing and leads into the village of Chedaoyu. Here the road branches off into several narrow village roads. We follow the one on the left and make a steep ascent into the village. We have now climbed to the blue building with the radio mast that we passed below. A narrow road turns right into the village. We run on straight ahead along another narrow road lined on the right with the typical local red brick houses with closed courtyards in front of them. On the left is a drop into the valley. The road is still paved - enjoy it, as this will not last for long. Going through the village, we pass a long new house on the left, a pink house with solar panels on the right, a spirit wall in red brick and behind that a gate framed by pictures of cranes and pine trees - symbols of longevity - before reaching an open area with greenhouses on two sides and vineyards up ahead.

Stretch 18

Section N- E

2.6 km of dirt road from Chedaoyu to Duanzhuang

As we pass the greenhouses and run along the vineyards, the going starts getting a bit tougher. The road ahead starts off level and gradually descends towards the village of Duanzhuang. Watch

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your step, as this section of dirt road does not see much traffic and is very uneven with lots of holes, rocks and loose stones - it can only be driven by tractor, motorcycle or jeep.

As we descend along the dirt road from Chedaoyu we enjoy beautiful views over

Duanzhouang village and the surrounding countryside. We will soon return to familiar roads. Just before entering Duanzhuang, we will meet up with the half marathon route. A narrow path with willow fences and orchards in front of the small farmhouses leads us into the village itself. A few hundred meters after entering Duanzhuang village we come to a small crossroads. Follow the paved road to the right for approximately 200 meters until this road leads to a larger road. Here we turn right and continue until we reach the river. Turn right and follow the river to Bridge No. 3 (the northernmost bridge across the river). Cross the river towards Point E and Stretch 19.

Stretch No. 19

Section E - D

0.9 km of gravel road from the village to the highway
Reaching Point F, you are back in familiar territory and will remain so for the remainder of the race. There will be about 1.5 km of country and gravel roads before you once again feel asphalt under your feet. This will not bother you at all, when you realize that you have only 12 km to go before reaching the finish! It is still a bit too early to consider a spurt though.

Again you will be running along the river, and soon you must say good-bye to another steady runner - the water in the irrigation canal. At the end of Stretch 20 you will be back on the Beijing Highway. Here at Point D you will find Drink station No. 9, and also the bus stop for the pick-up bus. Little by little you are approaching the finishing area, which includes the second run on The Wall, so consider your well being, and drink a lot of water!

Do not forget that now you have to run on the right hand sides of the lane facing the river, and also that you have to run to your right when leaving the drink station - or you will be led up the garden path for good. It is a long way to Point K and even longer to Beijing!

Stretch No. 20

Section D - B

2.7 km on mixed highway

It feels good to be back on the asphalt road without the dust from the gravel roads. You are quickly on your way to the town Huangyaguan with the Great Wall Fort and Yin Yang Square. It has been a while since you last saw the 'cheering section.' It will be nice to see them again. Soon you will also have to prepare yourself mentally for your second meeting with The Wall. You know that this fight will be far more difficult than when you won the first round. But the Wall has to be conquered. **If you did it once, you can do it again, can't you?**

When you go from Stretch No. 23 to Stretch No. 24, at point B, there is a risk of meeting runners dashing out from the colorful wooden portal. Look out here, as they are probably runners who only have 800 meters to go before finishing, and they will no doubt be a bit peeved if you interfere with their progress. So, do everyone a big favor and do what you should on a busy road: Show consideration and keep your distance! Do not have the negative attitude, 'I am the greatest, so I come first.' Today is a day of celebration, and we must try not to spoil it for anybody!

If you keep that in mind, you will get on to Stretch No. 22 easily and without any harm.

Stretch No. 21

Section B - A

0.8 km on highway

ōVillage Zoneō

The third time is lucky, and this is the third time! You are now so

close to the town Huangyaguan, the Great Wall Fort and Yin Yang Square that you can without doubt can hear the speaker and the faint roar of the cheering section, and they are almost right around the corner.

Now you have to build up your readiness, physically as well as mentally, before your second meeting with The Wall. The cheers of encouragement will no doubt carry you on to The Wall and from then on you can handle it, don't you think?

It may be rather crowded near the entrance to Yin Yang Square, so have a little patience and we will all get in there eventually. But remember - 'Show consideration and keep your distance!'

On the square, be sure to drink plenty of fluids because near the end of the square you will reach a flight of steps and after that there will be several more to come. Ready, steady, go: *Hit that Wall!*

Stretch No. 22

Section A - C

2.4 km on The Wall

By now you will have started up your turbo-charger, and are climbing the steps just to the right of the speaker's platform! Having made the first flight of steps through Tower 17, you turn to your right and go counter-clockwise inside the pavilion. Then continue down a short flight of steps and on to Tower No. 13, where you once took a stroll around the Castle Wall.

Do not do that this time!

just continue straight through Tower 13 in order to get to the long Bridge No. 1, which will lead you straight to h_ __. No, that is not the word. It will lead you straight to the steps up of your very special friend, The Wall! The wonderfully wide asphalt road of Stretch 23 is now 2.3 km ahead of you, over many mountains and beyond quite a bit of the world-famous Great Wall of China. So here you might regret not having made a much longer pit stop in the finishing area. There will be drink stations on The Wall though ó at the point where you enter The Wall and in

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Towers 8 and 4!

The easiest way to describe Stretch No. 22 would be: 'Stretch No. 22 is just a repetition of Stretch No. 3, but in reverse order.' But unfortunately it is not quite that simple! You will have to run or walk the following stretch:

Tower 13 - Tower 12

When you leave Tower 13, which you go straight through this time around, you cross the long Bridge No. 1 going over the highway and the river. At the end of the bridge you will reach Tower No. 12. Turn left at 90 degrees inside the tower in order to continue in the correct direction. And then you are at the foot of many flights of steps.

Tower 12 - W2

Go for it, and easy does it. That is how you will succeed. If you start to lose your breath during the climb, then make one or two breaks on your way. If you are lucky enough to find someone to talk with on your way up, this might prove to be the best way of coping with the stairs.

To get up on The Wall you will have to pass through a 'wall of malice' by turning 90 degrees to your right, going 2-3 steps up, and then turning 90 degrees to your left.

Once you are on The Wall the climb continues, and here you might have to catch hold of the rope to get safely up the last stretch.

After this you will reach the narrow path, and even though you know for sure that there is no oncoming traffic, you have to be careful and on the alert anyway, and don't forget that the 'no overtaking' rule still applies at this exposed place.

The path ends with another 'wall of malice,' another right-left combination, both of them 90 degrees, with 11 steps in between.

W2 - Tower 9

At W2 you will reach the first drink station of The Wall, i.e. No. 8, at about 35 km. Gather some strength here after forcing your way up those many steps,

and get ready for the highly difficult passage around the platform. This may be the time for some 'Marathon Psychology.' Look around at your fellow contestants and say to yourself: 'I am certainly feeling bad, but the others are certainly feeling much worse.' Then all of a sudden you are able to go on for a little while longer!

Soon after the difficult stretch you will be going on a very wide section of brick wall with no speed limit - so go right ahead. If you are lucky enough to be running in the company of some kind, supportive people, then stick with them, at least for this stretch of The Wall.

Tower 9 - Tower 8

Soon you will reach Tower 9, where you have to turn right - inside the tower itself! After that make a climb in low gear to Tower 8, where you will be rewarded with a drink station. Make good use of it!

Tower 8 - Tower 7 - Tower 6 (The Widow's Tower)

You are on your way now towards Tower 6, and after Tower 7 you will reach what is technically the most difficult part of the whole race when the fatigue element is taken into consideration!

Consider very carefully - and take your time - do not press your fellow contestants on, instead support them as much as possible! Don't forget, that you are all on the same Wall together!

Tower 6 (The Widows Tower) - Tower 5

After Tower 6 you will be climbing towards Tower 5, and you may have to make use of the rope here. Remember that it is no disgrace to ask for assistance if worst comes to worst! On the contrary, pride is punished very severely indeed.

Tower 5 (The Blind Tower) - Tower 4

When you are safe and sound at Tower 4, be sure to take the time to enjoy the view and at the same

time to quench your thirst or treat your heartburn. You might have a bandage or two applied, in case you have blisters on your palms from the ropes.

Remember that you are now on the last stretch of The Wall and might never come here again - at least not until 2006.

Tower 4 - Point W1

From Tower 4 the trail goes more or less downhill, all the way to Point 1 on The Wall with the stone portal W1. Here you run down the steps, then to your right and onwards down the steps to the big open square, where you will find a medical team and a drink station. Here it is also possible to visit a rest room and since the next facilities are at the finishing area nearly 6 km away, it might not be such a bad idea!

Stretch No. 23

Section C - B

4.5 km of descent on a very steep asphalt mountain road

After the open square you will be running under 'The White Portal', and onto the descent of Stretch No. 23. You are now back at the spot where all your troubles began, i.e. the stretch where you fought your way uphill right after the start. This time you will be allowed to enjoy the fact that as long as you keep your legs moving, gravity will do the rest! It is not completely true physically, but almost. The asphalt road has a slope of 10% towards the finish, which makes it just as fine as having tail wind when riding a bike.

But with the good news, a small warning before starting downhill: Be very careful. Keep in full control of your running at all times, and do not let others tempt you to increase your speed. About 2 km after the finishing on The Wall, at 39 km, and again just before Bridge 2, you will find the last two drink stations.

Do not skip them.

Take a good look at the impressive wooden portal that

Runners description of The Great Wall Marathon

you will be passing from behind to get on the main road, but you should also pay attention to the road, as you will be mixing with the runners who are heading towards Yin Yang Square to enter the wall the second time! There will be plenty of guides in the area showing the way. Follow their directions. You are now heading straight for the FINISHING LINE and this might be the right time to start posing like a winner and practice lifting your arms! The medal is just ahead of you - GO FOR IT!

Stretch No. 24

Section B - A

0.8 km on highway

"Village Zone and Finish Line"

You are only a stone's throw from the finish line, and now you can enjoy the thought that your fantasies about reaching the finish line are realistic, that YOU DID IT!

The finishing line is situated on the Yin Yang symbol in the area with many towers that we call the square. Even though the speed limit for cars is reduced to 20 km per hour throughout the area, you should still take care when

crossing the road for the last time to make those last few steps to the finish line.

Enjoy your personal triumph when crossing the remaining meters towards the finish line. Enjoy the applause - you deserve it! Should it happen that your finishing time is a bit longer than what you expected, you will surely find comfort in having overcome the challenge of finishing The Great Wall Marathon

THE MEDAL

IS YOURS TO KEEP!

