

Fussen / Romantic / Royal Castles Half Marathon (so good they named it thrice!)

This was originally booked pre-Covid, and I couldn't do it last year as I had another race re-arranged from pre-Covid. It has been interesting re-booking these runs to see the different approaches race organisers have taken. Some of the bigger ones have charged a fee to move to the next year, and some have just been downright morally corrupt in their approach (Rock and Roll Marathons – Paul's view, not a RR view).

And others have been really accommodating (Dubrovnik – “Yes, run whenever you want over the next 5 years, that's fine”) and this one – very happy to accommodate the change and seemingly just wanting me to come and see Fussen and take part in their run, whatever year.

Why Fussen? Mrs A said she fancied seeing Bavaria, and I had never been to Germany before, so I looked for a race out there – and this seemed like a very pleasant course. And – being a huge Disney fan – when I saw that the course went past the castle used as the model for Cinderella's castle (proper name, Neuschwanstein Castle), I was hooked!



Fussen is a lovely old Bavarian town, very popular with tourists, with cobbled streets, artisan shops and an old castle. And every year, it has its running festival – for which the main sponsor is a brewery.

There is a marathon starting at 7.30 am on race Saturday, a kiddies 1km at 3pm, a 'quarter marathon' at 4.30pm and then the half marathon at 6pm. And the beer sponsor's beer wagons are there all day. They start the races from one, end the races at one and have others with stock reserves in. And they are there from early morning until (presumably) late at night, handing out free beer to anyone with a race number or anyone accompanying a person with a race number. And they set up lots of tables to make it feel like Oktoberfest.

So we got there about midday – but, wisely perhaps, decided to visit the castle and museum, have a coffee, cheer on the kiddies – and avoid the free beer.



Come 6 o'clock, it was still pretty warm, but approximately 350 of us lined up for the start. I was interested to see how many people had succumbed to the free beer, and it actually appeared very few.

The course was two laps, running out of the town into the forest, past the castle and then back into town. There are two royal castles on the outskirts of Fussen (as you can see if you watch Chitty Chitty Bang Bang).



But we only saw one of them from the course. They were built by King Ludwig II, who was also known by the nicknames of "Mad King Ludwig" and "The Fairy Tale King", and who eventually died in mysterious circumstances having bankrupted the monarchy building very beautiful castles.

Little did he know (or care) that he was contributing to the creation of a pleasant running route of the future – and it was a lovely route ... ish ...



Lovely apart from the fact that they said it was 'flat'. It wasn't flat – in fact there was a .75 mile of pure incline – that I didn't knowingly sign up for!

But on the plus side, there was a lot of spectator support – and Mrs A was of the opinion that it was the most peasant atmosphere of any of the half marathons she has been to with me – and she's reluctantly been to quite a few now.



From a staffing perspective, it only needed about 3 marshalls on the route as it was easy to follow – the main one was to make sure we turned right as we arrived back in the town so didn't end up in Austria.

There was a nice medal at the finish, a little mug with a carabiner handle (nicely different), all sort of pizzas, fruit and other food and of course, the beer. The sponsors, it would appear, had a lot of different types of beers that

As I finished the race, I could see that there were still some of the marathon runners doing their best to help the sponsors ... they had finished 8 – 10 hours ago, but gallantly still there, assisted by quarter marathon runners playing catch up, and now the half marathon runners. And there were so many different brews to try. Alas, I was driving, so I could only try a couple, but they were very, very good – although I suspect any beer will probably taste a little bit better after running for 2 hours in fairly warm conditions.



I did almost enjoy the run (as some of you will know, I don't really enjoy running); it was certainly interesting, pretty, had a lovely atmosphere and was well managed – with a good motivational 'win' at the finish line. Well worth considering if you find yourself in the area in late July (and particularly if you like beer)!