

Luxembourg night Half Marathon Report. Cate Leonard

I ran the Luxembourg half marathon on the 11th May with my old school friend, as it had been her 60th birthday and we had run the Yorkshire marathon for her 55th! So, the distance was shorter, but we went 'international' (and because her sister lives in Luxembourg!).



Travel was easy, flying from London City Airport on Friday morning, arrived in 26 degree heat, and it didn't get any cooler! After an afternoon of sight seeing, we went to collect our race numbers and packs from the Luxexpo – a huge exhibition centre where the race was centered. It was all very well organised and we were given a bright orange 'swimming bag' with our numbers on it, which we were to deposit the following evening with our post race items. We then went to enjoy free pasta and drink, (which were enormous) overlooking the finish line and entertained by loud rock music and light shows!

The next day felt very odd - I have only run any distance races in a morning, and I had failed to consider the implications of a race starting at 7pm in heat. What to eat and when? My porridge wasn't going to hold me all day and night, and eating porridge at 4pm seemed wrong! Suffice to say I grazed and had more pasta for a late lunch.

All public transport is free in Luxembourg, and the bus service was brilliant, getting everyone to the start area. Bag drop was easy to the area corresponding to your number. There were 13,000 runners, and the marathon and half marathon set off together. It took almost 20 minutes to get over the start line, and it was still 24 degrees! The first 4km were great, a steady decline along a long, wide boulevard, followed by a picturesque circuit around the concert hall, then through parks and across town squares, all the while bands, drummers and



dancers lined the route with seemingly most of the inhabitants of the town too! Then it got tricky as we entered the residential area of Limpertsberg for about 8km, where the streets got narrower, and short but noticeable, hills and more uneven road surfaces with cobbles at times became the norm. The feet of the barriers, and people suddenly walking made it difficult to navigate running through this stretch. We then emerged onto beautiful squares with

government buildings and the royal palace. The marathon route left us at this point and went out into more parks and along one of the rivers. We began to meander (felt like shuffle in my case as my back started to cease up!) back towards the Luxexpo. It was still hot, and thankfully there had been welcome refreshment stations every 2.5km after the first at



5km. There was water, energy drinks and fresh orange wedges on offer all the way. After managing to talk to Hilary all the way round the Yorkshire Marathon (we had a lot of catching up to do!) we ran together but hardly spoke a word after the first 5km in



Luxembourg!

With about 4 km to go, the leader of the marathon, the Kenyan Richard Marakwen, seemed to effortlessly run passed us with his motorcade to complete in 2hrs 23 minutes. We completed the half in 2hrs 14, and a cold concrete floor has never felt so good for my aching back.

I would recommend the race for it's organisation and the location, but unbeknown to me it is apparently known to be a difficult race even for seasoned distance runners (now they tell me!).