



10 great places for runners to hit the road

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By Stephan Savoia, AP

"The granddaddy of all marathons": The first wave of runners in the 113th Boston Marathon make their way down the course April 20.

Before the summer heat really hits, lace up your sneakers and do a little sightseeing while racing through town. **Bart Yasso**, chief running officer at Runner's World, shares his list of great road races where runners can tour the city with **Kelly DiNardo** for USA TODAY.

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Boston Marathon

Boston

"This is the granddaddy of all marathons," Yasso says. "It's the most prestigious and historic." The race — the oldest annual marathon in the country — takes place on Patriots' Day, a Massachusetts holiday on the third Monday of April that commemorates the start of the Revolutionary War (next race: April 19, 2010). The entire city gets behind the runners, including the Boston Red Sox. The team always plays a home game

at 10 a.m. so fans can cheer runners on as they race past Fenway Park before finishing in front of the John Hancock Building. 508-435-6905, bostonmarathon.org

Twin Cities Marathon

Minneapolis/St. Paul

The race, which also offers a 10-mile option, starts in downtown Minneapolis before leading runners along several lakes, the banks of the Mississippi, then through St. Paul before ending in front of the Capitol. "It's run in October during peak foliage," Yasso says. "And every time you look up, you're near a lake. You get the combination of a really scenic course and a tour of the city. It's spectacular." This year's date: Oct. 4. 763-287-3888, mtcmarathon.org

The Monument Avenue 10K

Richmond, Va.

This 6.21-mile race, to be held next on March 27, 2010, takes runners down tree-lined Monument Avenue, which is dotted with historic statues and surrounded by beautiful Southern homes. "You get the sense that Richmond really was the capital of the south," says Yasso, who explains it's also a very festive race. There are bands that play along the course and a costume contest. "It's a big party," Yasso says. 804-285-9495, sportsbackers.org

San Francisco Marathon

San Francisco

The marathon, which includes a half-marathon option, loops runners through the city's funky neighborhoods, then out and back on the Golden Gate Bridge, this year on July 26. "On a clear day, you get the best views of the city," Yasso says. "Every once

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in a while, it's completely fogged in. You hear the foghorns on the ships below you, but you can't see anything. It's so surreal. That's also part of the mystique of San Francisco." 888-958-6668, runsfm.com

Miami Marathon

Miami

This race, to be held next on Jan. 31, 2010, starts before sunrise to take advantage of the cooler temperatures and takes runners across a causeway into South Beach. "All the art deco lights are lit up and the clubbers are just heading home," Yasso says. "It's funny to see these Paris Hilton look-alikes cheering for you. It really shows off what the city is about." The race, which has a half-marathon option, also takes runners through Miami's neighborhoods and past where all the cruise ships are docked. 305-278-8668, ingmiamimarathon.com

Vermont City Marathon

Burlington, Vt.

"It's a hippie enclave and college town," says Yasso of Burlington. The May 24 race, which takes runners along Lake Champlain and through the city's neighborhoods, lets you experience the city's free spirit. "Most people cheering for you are wearing tie-dye and playing the Grateful Dead," says Yasso. "At mile 15, there's a hill and they have this ensemble of drummers playing at the base to get the runners pumped. It all speaks to the artsy vibe of the city." 800-880-8149, runvermont.org

Philadelphia Marathon

Philadelphia

"As a tourist, it would take a couple of days to see everything you see when running this race," Yasso says. The marathon, which includes a half-marathon option, starts and finishes at the Philadelphia Art Museum with its "Rocky steps." In between, runners see City Hall, the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall before winding along the Schuylkill River and Boathouse Row. Next race: Nov. 22. 215-683-2122, philadelphiamarathon.com

Rock 'N' Roll Arizona Marathon

Phoenix

This race, to be held Jan. 17, 2010, takes runners through Phoenix, Scottsdale and Tempe. "You're surrounded by mountains, but you're on the valley floor," Yasso says. "You get to see the mountains, but you're not running them." Participants also pass beautiful hotels and spas like the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa. "After the race, runners spoil themselves with spa treatments," Yasso says. "There's nothing

better than a mud bath and a massage after a marathon." 800-311-1255, mraz.com

Chicago Marathon

Chicago

Runners get a real tour of the city during the Chicago Marathon, which starts and finishes at Grant Park and weaves through almost 30 neighborhoods and along Lake Michigan on Oct. 11. In each neighborhood, crowds come out. "It's a very spectator-friendly race," Yasso says. "All the people who live there come out in droves and cheer. You feel like you have an intimate look at the city because you really see the people that make up Chicago." 312-904-9800, chicagomarathon.com

Cooper River Bridge Run

Charleston, S.C.

This 10K race in Charleston, S.C., to be held next on March 27, 2010, starts outside the city and takes runners across the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge, the longest cable-strung bridge in the USA. "You get amazing views of Charleston as you cross over the bridge," Yasso says. The race then takes you into the historic section of the city to Marion Square. "It's one of the prettiest towns, and the race gives you both a skyline view from the bridge and a more intimate look at the city." 843-856-1949, bridgerun.com

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