

100 MARATHON CLUB

NAVIGATION

Members

[Home](#)[Membership System](#)[Joining the 100MC](#)[Online Ordering](#)[100s](#)[Club Rules](#)[Question and Answer](#)[Club Kit](#)[Results](#)[Forms](#)[Lifetime Members](#)[Challenges](#)[Contact Us](#)

Statistics

[Members Totals](#)[Records](#)[Milestones](#)[Trophy Winners](#)

Events

[UK & Ireland Events](#)[European](#)[USA/Canada](#)[Worldwide](#)[Best Marathon List](#)[Expensive Marathon List](#)[Excluded Events](#)

Miscellaneous

[Links](#)[Marathon Stats](#)[Paul Watts](#)

Stories, Articles and Race Reports

Rauchwart Marathon 2014

11:00. Saturday 7 th November 2014, Rauchwart, Burgenland, Austria

Ongoing Conquest of the German-speaking World

Over a number of years I've had a self-appointed conquest of finishing a marathon in every German state. Last year I managed to finally complete this feat only for it to allow me to think about the rest of the German-speaking world of which the obvious candidate was Austria.

In theory, Austria with only nine states should be an easier task compared to Germany's sixteen states, but as I discovered early on, Austria also has less marathons to choose from.

Now most of the Austrian states do though have at least one marathon and before I had finished conquering Germany I had already starting ticking off Austria states over the years with a large batch of them over late last year and early this year.

However, the states of Burgenland and Carinthia were proving problematic. In Burgenland's case it was down to the fact that the few marathons that have operated in the past were either taking a sabbatical this year or had stopped completely.

The Life Line

Not to be deterred by such minor inconveniences and what is clearly inconsiderate by Austrian race organisers, I searched high and low on the mighty World Wide Web until eventually I found one.

A new race starting this very year organised by a new running club that had also only began this year. The event website was all in German but with my rather rusty German language skills and some translation help from Google I worked out all the necessary information to allow me to enter.

Unfortunately registration seemed to be limited to residents of Austria and neighbouring countries such as Hungary, thus excluding the UK. So I emailed the organiser, a Jürgen Penthor, in my 'beste Deutsch' asking if I could register by email. After an exchange of a few emails of which I was complemented on my German I was registered.

All I had to sort out now was how to get there and my accommodation over the event weekend.

The Logistics

The race was to be held in what appeared on Google maps as a small village called Rauchwart, which had no rail links and little in the way of accommodation. Thus a rental car seems the obvious mode of transport to get there, and as for accommodation I did manage to find a place in the neighbouring town of Stegersbach, which is apparently famed for its thermal baths and golf.

Also, although the nearest airport is at Graz, there are no direct flights there from the UK, which I discovered when I did the Graz marathon, so my real only option was to fly to the next nearest airport, which was Vienna.

Now, my experiences at Vienna airport haven't been great with most notably my last visit (see my Wachau marathon report) requiring an extensive plan B to be deployed. This time though I had my wallet and required paperwork, so getting the rental car was straightforward and although I've still haven't updated my SatNav, it seems little of the Austrian landscape has changed south of Vienna including Burgenland in the last five years, so despite it being nightfall and unfamiliar, I arrived at my hotel as planned, on time and with no dramas.

My accommodation though wasn't manned 24 hours and was closed when I arrived. However, before I left the UK I had warned the hotel owners of my late arrival and in turn they had a cunning plan of leaving a back door to the place unlocked and leaving my room key with a welcome note at reception.

Glad to report said door was indeed unlocked and said room key and note were located as described. Plus I was able to thank the owners for their plan the next morning at breakfast.

Castle Hunting

The race was being held on a Saturday but I had arrived the evening of the preceding Thursday so that I could get a full day of sightseeing on the Friday.

According to my German, and Google did confirm it, Burgenland literally means 'castles country' or 'land of castles' so for my pre-race sightseeing I decided to make full use of the rental car and hunt down some of these castles in the vicinity. To be honest there wasn't much else to do in either Stegersbach or Rauchwart. I'm not really in to thermal baths and certainly not in to golf.

I did find some castles but sadly they had recently closed for the winter, so my sightseeing was limited to browsing the outsides only. But being able to see these magnificent buildings without hordes of tourists flocking round them actually made up for that.



1 - Castle Schlaining

The weather though wasn't particularly great. No sunshine just thick clouds that would occasionally offer the odd spit of rain. Things though were to get worse on race day morning.

Registration

When I woke up on race morning and peered through the window, it was chucking down with rain, and looking at the roads awash with water it seemed it had been raining for some time. However, the forecast was suggesting it would ease off later, and as the race didn't start until 11am that allowed me a bit of a lay in and a rather leisurely breakfast before the short drive to Rauchwart with the hope that conditions will indeed improve at some point.

Registration along with the start and finish areas was at a small sports club building at the village sport ground. Although registration was officially available from 9am, the organisers were still setting up timing clocks and the single aid station when I arrived shortly before 10am, before they were able to hand out race numbers.



2 - The village sports ground

Although I introduced myself in German the guy handing out race numbers spoke English and he seemed quite pleased to have an 'international runner' at this event. A short time later Jürgen, who I had been having email correspondence with, introduced himself to me in English that was far better than my own pathetic introduction in German.

Meet the Lap Counters

As it was still raining, people were keen to get going when the start time neared. However, Jürgen wanted to do a race brief and some lengthy introductions. There was then some local dignitary who officially started the race after their own speech. Not sure what they said to be honest as Google wasn't around to help me out.

What I did know though was the race was 11 laps on a mix of asphalted cycle paths and off-road gravel

tracks. Each lap was exactly 3.836 metres long. At the end of each lap there was someone noting down which lap you were on. My lap-counter was a delightful young lady called Marlene, and in all there were 8 lap-counters in all, counting laps for about half a dozen or so runners each.

It was then a rather orderly crowd of runners who left the grassy sports ground for a flat cycle path towards a large lake on the edge of the village when the race did eventually get going.

The Breakaway

The initial pace seemed a bit slow for me, but I wasn't prepared to make a fool of myself and lead the way. Instead I tagged on the back of a small group of runners who became the lead pack.

I sense though everyone was waiting for someone to make a break and sprint off ahead and whilst I took a watching brief, the guys just ahead of me frequently swapped places until eventually just before we crossed a road, someone goes for it and within a few seconds the group disbands. I'm left behind with most of the group whilst 3 runners soon edged ahead.

The cycle path, partly covered by an abundance of yellow autumn leaves, took us alongside a main road before a sharp left turn in to what looked like a caravan site. Ahead there was a short but sharp rise and it wasn't until I was on it I realised there was quite a sharp downward gradient after that then took us pass a gate on to the off road section of the course.

On to Off-Road

The two things that concern me here were firstly, the incline and the start of the off road. The incline wasn't that bad but I imagined it would be a 'nuisance' on the latter laps with tired legs. The start of the off-road was already muddy with some sizable puddles. I could see this turning into bit of a slippery quagmire later.

Thankfully the off-road after that seemed to be more of gravel than mud, and although that didn't mean there weren't any puddles, at least the puddles were small enough so that it the main they could be negotiated without going through them. The other notably thing was it seemed we were going slightly but consistently downhill making for what felt like quite an easy run, that or my legs were in an unusually strong form today.

The off road continued to wind it way around the lake before we came cross a wooden bridge that we had to cross. The bridge felt particularly slippery, and I was glad to get other it and back on to the traction of the gravel track. I envisaged it would get more slippery in the latter laps.



3 - That bridge!

The track continued to follow the contour of the lake before a short slight rise that lead us to a straight road that also felt slightly downhill before we took a right turn onto another off-road track.

This section though had less gravel and more of mud and puddles, though by now I was fairly soaked by the constant rain, so getting wet feet didn't seem quite the drama it had felt earlier. Thus I now had a somewhat more cavalier attitude towards avoiding the puddles.

Finishing the Lap

The track was pretty much straight ahead except for a gentle left turning corner halfway along. It eventually finished by taking us up a short but rather steep gradient to a road where turning left on it we headed back to the sports ground to complete a lap.

With the rain continuing to fall, even the roads were now harbouring sizable puddles.

To officially complete the lap though we had to run pass the sports ground building making sure our lap counter had seen us, pick up any refreshments at the only aid station on the course and then head back out, dumping any rubbish at one of the bins provided.

This did though involved running on some grass that in the latter laps became very sodden and very slippery.

Time Checks

It was only on the second lap that I started to notice the distance markers. These were in the form of numbers painted on the ground in red paint, every half kilometre. They were highlighted via photos of the course on the website, but until now I had completely forgotten about this.



4 - The 2km marker

My GPS watch had informed me that I managed the first lap in way under 17 minutes, suggesting an easy sub 3:30 was on the cards. However, I couldn't help think that I had just done what would be my quickest lap of the race as eventually tired legs and ever deteriorating conditions under foot would slow me down.

At the end of lap 2, the GPS watch confirmed my reservation that the first lap was indeed a quick one by reporting a more realistic 18 and half minutes, a time that I managed to maintain on the next lap and even improved ever so slightly on the 4 th lap.

It wasn't until lap 5 that I slowed, but even then it wasn't that much slower. The legs were clearly working fine and with the rain now finally easing off, the puddles weren't getting any larger and the few places that were muddy could in most part be negotiated around without too much effort.

I was also now lapping the back markers including Jürgen who was indeed taking part in his own race. Actually, I know a few other race directors who do that.

Lost of GPS and Losing Time

All seemed to be going well until at the end of lap 6 where I notice the GPS watch had stopped working. Not sure why it had stopped clocking my time as it was now showing the time of day instead.

I wasn't sure what time the race had started other than it had started late. So I guessed it was about ten minutes and estimated my remaining lap times accordingly to reach my goal of finishing in 3:30.

I reckoned I needed to do about 20 minutes per lap for the final laps to clinch that sub 3:30 but sadly the legs were now getting tired and after lap 7 my lap times stubbornly refused to go below 21 minutes.

Being lapped by the leaders didn't help and what seemed like a promising quick run wasn't looking as good now. The bit of the course that felt slightly downhill didn't seem as easy going now and that wooden bridge as I had predicted earlier, just seemed to feel more slippery on ever lap.

The Final Laps

At the end of lap 9, I had resigned to the fact that a sub 3:30 wasn't going to be. The lap was quite frankly bit of a slog and my time calculations suggesting I was actually nearer a pace of 22 minutes per lap not 20. Add to this the fact that earlier in the lap I was slowly closing in on a back marker to lap them but I never managed to catch them. If anything by the start of lap 10 I think he was slowing easing off ahead!

However, I did discover that my lap-counter; Marlene spoke English as she shouts out "Peter, two laps to go". That was quite vital as it meant her lap counting agreed with mine!

Lap 10 wasn't much better other than I did eventually close in on that back marker, but I reckon he had slowed as my lap time didn't indicate I had gone notably quicker.

However, on starting the last lap the legs decide to wake up a bit. It may have been psychological but the last lap didn't feel quite the slog as the previous two and I even managed to get a half decent sprint on the road leading up to the finish. However, long before that I had been passed by a fellow runner that I realised later was actually for position.

The finish was literally just before the start line. On crossing it I immediate went to Marlene to not only thank her for keeping my times, but to confirm my overall finish time. That was 3:35:35 and what I would find out

later was 12 th of the 44 finishers.

The web site mentioned that there was a finisher's medal but these weren't being handed at the race finish, but rather at a special awards ceremony at a local mountain-top restaurant nearby later in the evening.

So after thanking the folks manning the aid station I took the opportunity to head back to the hotel for a well-earned shower and snooze.

The Awards Ceremony

The mountain-top restaurant for the awards ceremony was called the 'Riegelbergschenke'. SatNav wasn't quite sure where this was, but thankfully from the main road that runs through Rauchwart, the place well signed posted so not as difficult to find as the winding roads up to it might suggest. Essentially, it was at the end of a single track road on top of a hill; the sort of restaurant that wouldn't be out of place on a ski slope.

I arrived a bit late and so when I entered the restaurant, Jürgen had already started the ceremony by taking about the day's event. He hadn't actually handed out medals yet, so I quietly sat down in a corner near the bar and ordered a beer and some goulash soup.

My rusty German once again failed to allow me to take in all that was said including when the medals were being handed out and a chimney stack in the middle of the room obscured me from Jürgen's view, so he wasn't actually aware of my presence. However, from what I could tell not everyone got medals, so I was thinking perhaps I was wrong in my translation of the web site regarding medals.

With the ceremony then formally closed a few people left. I still had my beer and soup to finish, but after finishing those decided to leave as well but not before thanking Jürgen and his wife Sonja, for the day's activities.

Marathon Talk

For what it was worth I thanked them in German only to be informed that Sonja is an English teacher! So thankfully for me the conversation then continued in English where I learn that I indeed do get a medal for my day's efforts. A nice unique medal that looked it was handmade. Jürgen then insisted on a photo shoot of me receiving my medal before we continued our conversation.



5 - My photo call with Jürgen

After reflecting on the day's event we perhaps naturally, moved the discussion to marathons in general and it seems Jürgen was keen to follow my example and run races throughout Europe. Unknown to me both he and Sonja had also recently ran Sofia with Jürgen completing the full marathon and Sonja the half. They too expressed their disappointment on the notable absence of the race medal at the finish line.

Noticing Jürgen's evident enthusiasm for running marathons in Europe, I suggested a few more for him to tackle before noticing that Sonja wasn't quite sharing the dream. I thus decide it was time for me to leave and on thanking them again, this time in English, I make my exit.

The following day I returned to Rauchwart to take some photos as I didn't really have the opportunity on race day.

Back in the UK and a few days later I receive through the post a medal from the organiser of the Sofia marathon. This was the direct result of contacting him regarding the race medal shortly before I headed off for my weekend at Rauchwart.

Knowing Jürgen's views on not getting a medal at Sofia, I dropped him an email about the fact I had received one and suggested he should contact the organisers like I did to get his. He replied, thanking me for the advice and information and in return had enclosed some photos of me from the Rauchwart marathon.