# Rivers & Rails

## Race Weekend Runner Guide

**Brunswick, Maryland • Saturday, November 14, 2026**

**Final Version**

Welcome to the inaugural **Rivers & Rails Marathon!** (Also featuring a half marathon and Veterans Challenge 5K.) Get ready for a weekend of running, railroad history, fall scenery, and small-town hospitality along the Potomac River.

**MARATHON & HALF MARATHON: THIS IS A CUPLESS RACE.**
**Bring your own reusable collapsible speed cup, water bottle, or hydration pack. Aid stations will have water, but no disposable cups. See hydration details below.**

**PLAN AHEAD FOR TRAINS.**
**Marathon and half marathon runners should be on the river side of the tracks by 6 a.m. - one hour before the start.** Trains can stop for extended periods and block access. Allow additional time if you need race-morning packet pickup.
**See the parking and start/finish overview below.**

Follow the **Rivers & Rails Marathon Facebook page** for last-minute announcements, including weather and course updates. **Check it again on race morning.** We will also send updates by email leading up to the event.

## Important Course Update

As shared in previous emails and on Facebook, **the Byron Bridge will not reopen in time for our race.**

The project has continued to be pushed back for nearly a year. When this race was being planned, every indication was that the bridge would reopen earlier this year. Despite continued communication with park officials, construction and additional bridge repairs will not be completed in time.

We have been preparing for this possibility - and **as backup plans go, we have a beauty.**

**The marathon and half marathon will take place entirely on the C&O Canal towpath, remaining on the Maryland side of the Potomac River.** Expect beautiful fall scenery, river views, and miles along one of the region's most historic corridors.

Because of the time constraints involved in switching courses, **this year's course will not be USATF-certified. However, it has been very carefully measured for accuracy. This means this year's marathon cannot be used as a Boston Marathon qualifier.** The original course would have been certified, and we plan to have a certified course next year.

**Final course maps are now available on our website: horizunevents.com.**

# Weekend Schedule

| Event | Time | Location |
|---|---|---|
| Friday packet pickup - November 13 | 2-8 p.m. | Upstairs at Smoketown Brewing |
| Free runner safety workshops | 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. Friday | Smoketown Brewing |
| Race-day packet pickup - November 14 | Opens at 5:30 a.m.; continues until each race starts | Square Corner Park |
| Race-day 5K registration | 5:30-8:30 a.m. | Square Corner Park |
| Marathon and half marathon start | 7 a.m. | Brunswick boat ramp parking area, river side of the tracks |
| Veterans Challenge 5K start | 8:30 a.m. | East Potomac Street near Square Corner Park |
| 5K and half marathon awards | Approximately 10:30 a.m. | Square Corner Park |
| Marathon return checkpoint | **11:20 a.m., regardless of any unlikely delays** | Dargen Bend, approximately mile 16 |
| Marathon awards | Approximately 11:30 a.m. | Square Corner Park |
| Marathon and half marathon course support ends | **2 p.m., even if the start is delayed** | Marathon and half marathon course |
| Post-race festivities | Through 2 p.m. | Square Corner Park |

# Registration

**Marathon and half marathon registration will be capped soon, likely before race day.** Please register in advance; do not count on race-day registration for either distance.

**Veterans Challenge 5K registration will remain open until its 8:30 a.m. start.** Race-morning registration will be available at Square Corner Park beginning at 5:30 a.m.

# Packet Pickup

## Friday: Our Recommended Option

**November 13 • 2-8 p.m.**

**Upstairs at Smoketown Brewing**

223 West Potomac Street, Brunswick, Maryland

We strongly encourage Friday pickup. It makes race morning easier and gives you time to enjoy Brunswick before the big day.

Smoketown is also a great place for your pre-race dinner. Stick around and fuel up with pizza and other options from the menu.

**Every runner must pick up their own packet and present a valid ID. No pickup by friends or family members.**

## Free Runner Safety Workshops

**Krav Maga Maryland** will offer free, hands-on runner safety and self-defense workshops at **5 p.m. and 6 p.m.** during Friday packet pickup.

No reservations are necessary. Pick up your packet around either session and join in.

## Race-Morning Pickup

**Saturday, November 14 • Beginning at 5:30 a.m.**

**Square Corner Park**

East Potomac Street and South Maple Avenue, Brunswick

Packet pickup will continue until the start of each race. **Bring your valid ID and allow plenty of extra time.**

Marathon and half marathon runners must get from Square Corner Park to the starting area on the river side of the railroad tracks. The availability of late pickup does not guarantee that you can reach the start in time.

## Your Bib and Emergency Information

**Under no circumstances may runners swap bibs. You must run with the bib assigned to you.**

Your specific bib will include your emergency contact information on the back. Wearing someone else’s bib could give responders incorrect information in an emergency and disrupt our timing process.

# Train Safety and Getting to the Start

**Trains are part of life in Brunswick. Planning ahead is essential.**

CSX is supporting this race and is communicating with the City of Brunswick and race officials. We are working together to prevent trains from blocking access to and from the parking lot and the marathon and half marathon start/finish area.

**These efforts cannot guarantee that trains will not stop at crossings for extended periods.** Brunswick residents know that these delays can be significant.

For the marathon and half marathon, **plan to be on the river side of the tracks by 6 a.m.** If you need race-morning packet pickup, arrive earlier.

Please take these precautions seriously:

- Cross railroad tracks only at designated public crossings.
- Obey gates, lights, signs, and instructions from officials.
- Never go around a lowered gate or attempt to cross in front of a train.
- Never climb over, crawl under, or pass between stopped railroad cars.
- Stay off railroad property outside designated crossings.
- If a train blocks your route, wait safely. **Making the start is never worth risking your life.**

These instructions apply to **runners, spectators, and everyone attending the event.** Train delays may also affect your departure after the race.

# Parking

Free parking is available in the Brunswick train station parking lot. You may also use legal public parking elsewhere in town.

Please obey posted restrictions, respect residents and businesses, and keep driveways and emergency access clear.

Allow time to park, pick up your packet if needed, and reach your starting area. **Do not assume you can cross the tracks immediately upon arrival.**

# Parking and Race Start/Finish Areas



# Race-Day Amenities

**Portable restrooms** will be available at the marathon and half marathon start/finish area and near Square Corner Park.

**An on-course restroom is available at Dargen Bend**, approximately **miles 10 and 16 of the full marathon**. Half marathon runners do not pass this location.

**Gear check** will be available at the marathon and half marathon start/finish area. **There is no gear check for the 5K.**

**True Sports Physical Therapy** will have staff near the start and finish lines of all races.

At Square Corner Park, enjoy **beer sales by Smoketown Brewing and food from the Whistle Punk Farm food truck - two local favorites helping us celebrate Brunswick.**

# Hydration: Know Your Race

## Marathon and Half Marathon - Cupless

**Bring your own reusable collapsible speed cup, bottle, or hydration pack. There will be no disposable cups at the aid stations.**

Water will be available to pour into your container. You are also welcome to carry your own hydration for the entire race.

A collapsible running cup is an easy option to carry. If you need one, you can find options on Amazon.

Please help keep the C&O Canal towpath and historic parklands free of litter. Carry wrappers and other waste until you reach a designated receptacle.

## Water Stations

The revised towpath course uses **four physical water stations**, several of which runners will pass twice.

| Race | Approximate water-station miles |
|---|---|
| Marathon | 3.1, 6.5, 9.9, 12.1, 14.1, 16.1, 19.6, and 23.2 |
| Half marathon | 3.1, 6.5, and 10 |

Distances are approximate. Plan your hydration with the spacing between stations in mind.

## Veterans Challenge 5K

**There is no water station on the 5K course. Water will be available at the start and finish.**

If you expect to take longer to run or walk the course, or know you will need hydration along the way, please bring your own.

# Course Etiquette

**Marathon and half marathon runners: We do not have exclusive use of the C&O Canal towpath or parklands.** You may encounter hikers, cyclists, other runners, and visitors throughout the race.

Please help us be considerate guests:

- Stay alert and leave room for others to pass.
- Announce your approach politely when overtaking someone.
- Avoid spreading across the full width of the towpath.
- Use extra caution in narrow areas and wherever visibility is limited.
- Follow course markings and instructions from race marshals.
- Keep all litter off the course.

Our marshals will guide runners and let other visitors know that a race is underway. **Other visitors still have the right to use the park.** Patience and courtesy will help everyone enjoy the day.

# Time Limits and Marathon Checkpoint

**The marathon and half marathon have a seven-hour course limit. Course support ends at 2 p.m., even in the unlikely event of a delayed start.**

Marathon runners must maintain approximately a **16-minute-per-mile pace**, including time spent at water stations.

## Dargen Bend Return Checkpoint

**Marathon runners must pass Dargen Bend for the second time - on the return toward Brunswick, at approximately mile 16 - by 11:20 a.m.** This is 4 hours and 20 minutes after the scheduled 7 a.m. start.

**The checkpoint deadline remains 11:20 a.m., regardless of any unlikely delays to the race start.**

Runners who have not passed the Dargen Bend checkpoint by **11:20 a.m.** are responsible for arranging their own ride back to Brunswick from the Dargen Bend boat ramp. Runners who choose to continue must **surrender their bib** and understand that **course support is no longer guaranteed**.

This checkpoint allows us to manage the course within the event’s time limit. Please respect the instructions of race officials and volunteers.

# Emergencies

**In an emergency, call 911 first.**

Local EMTs are aware of the event and will be on call. When contacting emergency services, provide your location as accurately as possible, including a nearby mile marker, access point, or landmark.

After calling 911, notify a race marshal or aid-station volunteer if possible. Keep access routes clear for emergency responders.

# Spectator Guide

Spectator access along the towpath is limited. **The two best on-course viewing locations are Weverton at Keep Tryst Road and the Dargen Bend boat ramp.**

Please park legally, keep access routes clear, and leave room for runners and other park users.

## Weverton / Keep Tryst Road - Marathon and Half Marathon

Park in the Keep Tryst Road access area and walk across the railroad tracks **using the designated public crossing** to reach the towpath.

Runners pass this area at approximately:

| Race | Outbound | Returning |
|---|---|---|
| Marathon | Mile 3 | Mile 23 |
| Half marathon | Mile 3 | Mile 10 |

There will also be a water station here. Please leave room for volunteers and runners using the station.

**Trains may block access. Never cross between stopped train cars, bypass crossing gates, or enter railroad property to find another route.**

## Dargen Bend Boat Ramp - Marathon Only

The Dargen Bend boat ramp has a **large parking area** and offers a viewing opportunity at approximately **miles 10 and 16 of the marathon**.

**Half marathon runners do not pass this location.**

Keep boat-ramp access, race operations, and emergency access clear.

## Brunswick Start and Finish

The marathon and half marathon start/finish area is a convenient place to cheer runners off and welcome them back.

**Allow extra time for trains and follow all railroad crossing rules.** A stopped train can affect your ability to move between town and the river side of the tracks.

## Veterans Challenge 5K

Spectators may cheer from public areas along the course while keeping the running route clear.

We especially encourage veterans to gather near the **monuments and tank along East A Street** to support our runners.

# Awards

**Awards will recognize the top three overall male and female finishers in each race: the marathon, half marathon, and Veterans Challenge 5K.**

Swift Running will provide the following gift certificates:

| Overall place | Swift Running gift certificate |
|---|---|
| First | $100 |
| Second | $75 |
| Third | $50 |

Awards ceremonies will take place in **Square Corner Park**:

- **5K and half marathon:** Approximately **10:30 a.m.**
- **Marathon:** Approximately **11:30 a.m.**

# Celebrate After Your Race

### Square Corner Park - Through 2 p.m.

Stay and enjoy Brunswick! Post-race festivities will include **three local musicians, food from Whistle Punk Farm, and beer sales by Smoketown Brewing**.

Meet up with friends and family, celebrate your finish, and cheer for runners still coming in.

### Evening After-Party at Upstairs at Smoketown

Keep the celebration going with a concert by **The Few** on Saturday night at Upstairs at Smoketown.

The **first 50 runners to purchase tickets** can use code **RAIL** for **$10 off**.

Visit Upstairs at Smoketown for tickets and concert details.

# Where to Stay

**Holiday Inn Express in Brunswick** is a convenient local option.

**Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton in Charles Town, West Virginia**, is farther away but has offered discounted runner rates for November 12-15: **$149 Thursday and $169 Friday and Saturday**.

Call **(304) 725-2200**, speak with the front desk, and ask for the **“Rivers & Rails Marathon” room block**. The November 6 reservation deadline has passed, so discounted rates and availability are no longer guaranteed.

# Running Through History

## Brunswick: A Town Built by the Railroad

Brunswick grew into a railroad boomtown as the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad developed its extensive rail yard. At its peak, the yard stretched approximately five miles, operated around the clock, and supported thousands of workers. Railroad work shaped the town's neighborhoods, businesses, and daily routines.

That heritage is part of the Rivers & Rails experience. The tracks beside our starting area remain a working transportation corridor - and a reminder that trains have helped set Brunswick's rhythm for generations.

## Brunswick's Tradition of Honoring Veterans

Brunswick's veterans memorials are part of a long community tradition. Memorial Park on East A Street honors local service and sacrifice, including **Harold Steadman and Alvey Dayton Keenan**, who died in France during World War I. The city's Veterans Day parade traces its beginnings to an Armistice Day ceremony and parade in 1931.

The Veterans Challenge 5K carries that spirit onto the streets. As runners pass the memorials and tank along East A Street, they are passing places where Brunswick has gathered to remember, honor, and give thanks.

## Park Heights Cemetery and Alvey Dayton Keenan

**Park Heights Cemetery** offers another connection to Brunswick's history. Among those commemorated there is **Alvey Dayton Keenan**, one of the two men for whom **Steadman-Keenan American Legion Post 96** is named.

Before serving in World War I, Keenan worked for the B&O Railroad and belonged to the Brunswick Volunteer Fire Company. He was killed in France on September 29, 1918, at age 23. Cemetery records document a burial in his name on August 18, 1921, although differing family accounts have left questions about the identification of his remains. His marker stands as a lasting tribute to a young man whose life connected Brunswick's railroad, community, and military history.

If you visit the cemetery during race weekend, please treat it as a place of remembrance and respect those visiting loved ones.

# Running Through History

## The C&O Canal Towpath

**The marathon and half marathon course follows the historic Chesapeake & Ohio Canal towpath**, once used by the mules that pulled canal boats carrying goods along the Potomac.

Along the way, runners will pass old canal locks - stone chambers that allowed boats to move between stretches of canal at different elevations. A boat would enter a lock, the gates would close, and water would be let in or drained out to raise or lower the boat. Once the water matched the level of the next section, the opposite gates would open and the boat could continue its journey.

These surviving locks offer a glimpse of the engineering and daily work that kept the canal moving. Today, the towpath preserves that history while welcoming runners, hikers, and cyclists. Help protect it by keeping the course clean and respecting other visitors.

## The Appalachian Trail

Part of the towpath near Harpers Ferry is shared by the **Appalachian Trail**, the long-distance hiking route connecting Georgia and Maine.

Runners will share part of this historic hiking corridor on the revised course. The Appalachian Trail's Potomac crossing uses the Byron Bridge, but our races will remain on the Maryland towpath this year.

## Harpers Ferry, John Brown, and the Civil War

Across the Potomac, Harpers Ferry holds an important place in American history. John Brown's 1859 raid on the federal armory, intended to help spark an uprising against slavery, intensified national tensions before the Civil War.

The town's railroads, waterways, and strategic location made it significant during the war. Nearby Bolivar and Bolivar Heights also preserve stories of the conflict and the people who lived through it.

Although these locations are not part of this year's course, they remain part of the region's story and offer opportunities to explore during race weekend.

## Smoketown Brewing

Friday packet pickup brings you into another piece of Brunswick's history: its former volunteer fire station. Built in 1948, the building also served as a gathering and entertainment space, with performers including **Patsy Cline** appearing on its upstairs stage. Today, Smoketown continues that tradition of bringing people together - making it a fitting place to begin and celebrate race weekend.

# Before You Leave Home

- Bring your **valid ID** for packet pickup.
- Bring your **reusable collapsible speed cup, bottle, or hydration pack** for the marathon or half marathon.
- Plan to wear **your assigned bib only**.
- Check the weather and dress accordingly.
- Review the parking and start/finish overview in this guide.
- Review the final course maps at **horizunevents.com**.
- Allow extra time for parking, packet pickup, and train delays.
- Marathon and half marathon runners: **be on the river side of the tracks by 6 a.m.**
- Check the **Rivers & Rails Marathon Facebook page**, including on race morning.

We look forward to welcoming you to Brunswick. Come early, run safely, and enjoy the towpath!

# Thank You to Our Sponsors and Community Partners

- BTS Software Solutions
- Swift Running
- Smoketown Brewing / Upstairs at Smoketown
- Maryland Real Estate Network - Sarah & Neal
- David Koonce Mortgage Team - Fairway
- Oxford Planning Group
- Veracity Sports Photography
- Heller Kowitz
- InsuranceWise - Maynard Scott Spedden
- Bridgeway Bikes
- True Sports Physical Therapy
- Krav Maga Maryland
- Whistle Punk Farm
- Papa Johns
- Domino’s
- Sheetz
- Weis Markets
- Lock Laces
- Road Runner Sports
- Operation WarriorFit
- American Legion Post 96 - Steadman-Keenan
- Brunswick Main Street
- CSX

Thank you also to the **City of Brunswick, National Park Service, local emergency responders, and all of our volunteers** for helping bring Rivers & Rails to life.