

FLYING IN BARCELONA



Standing at the start of the marathon

Courtesy of *PUMA* and as a representative of *Runner's World*, I jetted off on 1 March to Spain for the Barcelona Marathon. What an awesome experience!

My travelling companion was **Joanne Lillie** from *Shape* magazine, also a VOB member.

As per the theme for the marathon weekend "Enjoy PUMA Running. Enjoy Barcelona"... I certainly enjoyed the whirlwind three-day stay in this beautiful city!

One of the many highlights was meeting and running with the legendary 800-metre specialist, **Wilson Kipketer**.

As a group (about 30 journalists from running and sports magazines from all over Europe and the East) we stayed in a top hotel... toured this beautiful and historical city on a bus and helicopter (incredible views!) ... visited the marathon expo ... and savoured the local Catalan flavours in superb restaurants, including a delicious dinner at the vibrant

waterfront. Plus, I was treated to the latest PUMA kit before and during the trip. Really, what's not to enjoy?

Experiencing the excitement of the Barcelona Marathon on the Sunday was unforgettable. I had VIP passes, which allowed access to barricaded areas along the marathon route and in the finish area — I could have touched the winners as they crossed the line!

I found it interesting that the 42km and 10km entrants all started at the same time (8:30am) and place and ran the initial 10km loop together. Then the 10-kayers finished, back in front of the Magic Fountain, beneath the National Palace, where they had started, while the marathoners continued on another big loop of the city. It's a fast and flat PB course, and was run in ideal mild and windless conditions. What better way to take in all the major sights of this fascinating city, such as the Sagrada Familia, Casa Battlo, La Rambla and the Torre Agbar!

FLYING IN BARCELONA continued



The marathon finish

Kenyan, Johnstone Chebi, won the marathon in 2:12:04, while Knstijna Loonen from Holland won the women's race in 2:42:03. The 10km race was won by Tom Payn of England (29:59) and Tracey Morris of Wales (33:45). There were over 8000 finishers in total.

Barcelona is beautiful, fascinating and vibrant. In true South African spirit, I crammed as much sightseeing as possible into the already-full agenda. I was struck by the diverse architecture, ranging from the ancient Gothic Quarter, where I attended mass in the Cathedral, to the modernist masterpieces in the newer Eixample district: the renowned Gaudi's works include the Casa Mila, Casa Battlo and the famous, breathtaking Sagrada Familia.

Running and travel are both incredibly enriching! I firmly believe we should all dream about completing at least one international marathon. Go on, make it a reality! The experience will live on in your heart for ever!

Sue Dickson



Running with Wilson Kipketer and Joanne Lillie