

PROVISIONAL RUNNER INSTRUCTIONS AND RACE RULES FOR 2023 RACE

Please note that these instructions are provisional, and may change depending on circumstances. We felt it would be useful for all competitors to have an idea now of the instructions, to help their planning. A final version will be issued in May

Registration:

Registration will take place on Friday 16 June 2023 between 9.00pm and 12.00 midnight at St Joseph's RC Church Hall in Milngavie. The church hall is located across the road from Milngavie Station, where the race starts. At registration you will be given your race number, which will also be your timing device to be used at each checkpoint throughout the race, and a numbered race band, which should be worn until you finish or withdraw.

All runners will be required to show photographic ID to collect their race number. You will be given your goody bag and any merchandise you have purchased. One member of your support crew is required to attend registration with you and will be given a support crew permit which needs to be displayed on the support vehicle for the full race. You will be weighed and your weight recorded. Unlike earlier years, you will not be weighed at any checkpoint unless the medical team have specific concerns.

We would encourage those who are able to do so to register as early as practical, to help reduce congestion later in the evening. We are keen to keep the number of people inside the hall at any one time to a minimum, so please complete the registration process and leave the hall immediately afterwards. If you wish to leave drop bags, please take them to the drop bag vehicles which will be parked in the station car park.

The station car park can get very busy with race traffic. If you are unable to park there, additional parking should also be available in local car parks or in the nearby Tesco, which remains open well into Friday evening.

Race briefing and race start:

All runners should gather at the start line (which is at the bridge beside Milngavie Station), ready to start the race, at 12.45am. There will be a short race briefing and then the race will start at exactly 1.00am.

Race numbers:

Race numbers will be posted on the website a few days before the race. If you would like to be allocated a special race number please e-mail me at ianbeattie@westhighlandwayrace.org between 1 May and 31 May. **Please do not e-mail me before then, as your request will not be processed.** Numbers can be requested from 1 to 200.

Checkpoints:

Each runner is required to check in at a number of checkpoints throughout the race. The checkpoints and the cut-off times are as follows:

Balmaha (19miles) – 5hrs 0 mins

Beinglas Farm (42miles) – 12hrs 0 mins

Auchtertyre (51miles) – 15hrs 30 mins

Bridge of Orchy (60miles) – 18hrs 30 mins

Glencoe Ski Centre (71miles) – 23hrs 0 mins

Kinlochleven (81miles) – 28hrs 0 mins

Fort William (95miles) – 35hrs 0 mins

Any runner not reaching a checkpoint within the allocated time will be withdrawn from the race. This will be based on the electronic timing and all cut-off times will be strictly enforced. To give an example, a runner arriving at Beinglas Farm at 12 hours, 0 minutes and 59 seconds will be allowed to continue. A runner arriving at 12 hours, 1 minute and 0 seconds will be withdrawn. It is a condition of entry that any runner failing to reach a checkpoint within the designated timescales surrenders their timing card and does not continue in the race. The only exception to this is where a runner has stopped to help another runner in trouble and this has caused them to miss a cut-off; in that case the runner will be referred to the Race Safety Officer or Race Director, whose decision will be final.

If a marshal is concerned about the condition of any runner, this will be referred to the Race Doctor, the Race Safety Officer, or the Race Director. They will determine what action, if any, needs to be taken: this could include a variety of measures including, if considered appropriate, instructing withdrawal from the race. Such an instruction would only be given where it was considered necessary for the runner's own safety, and would not be taken lightly. However it is a condition of entry that any such instruction must be followed, and the decision of the Race Doctor, Race Safety Officer or Race Director is final.

As a general rule no food or drink will be provided at checkpoints; it all needs to be provided by the runner and carried by the support crew or put in a drop bag. There may be water available at some checkpoints.

Support crew:

It is a condition of entry that all runners must have motorised back up for the full duration of the event. Up until Auchtertyre you need at least one crew member, and from Auchtertyre onwards you need a crew of at least two people, one of whom must be capable of accompanying you during the last two stages if required. You are required to provide details of your support crew in the run up to the event, with the form needing to be completed and submitted once the final instructions have been issued, but no later than 28 May. **(Note – these details should not be provided now – you need to wait until May when you will be sent the relevant form for completion).** You will not be allowed to take part in the event unless these details have been provided. Please submit your details using the designated form and not by any other way: it makes it much easier for the organising team to access the information if required on race day.

If there are any changes to your support crew details after you have completed the form, please complete it again and e-mail it to me at the same address to let me know.

The Support Crew must check in with their runner at registration, and must meet their runner at the following checkpoints:

Auchtertyre Farm

Glencoe

Kinlochleven

Finish at Fort William

Support crews should note that there is currently a long term road closure on the A809 route heading towards Drymen and Balmaha. This may have been sorted by race day, but if not they should follow the marked diversion, which follows the A81 until the junction with the A811. Under no circumstances should support vehicles try to access Gartness Road. This road is officially closed to traffic and any vehicles on it would present a serious risk to the runners.

Due to access difficulties, support crews are not allowed to meet their runner at Beinglas Farm checkpoint. It will not be mandatory for support crews to meet their runner at the checkpoints at Balmaha, Rowardennan and Bridge of Orchy. Although not mandatory, crews are welcome to meet their runners at those places if they wish to do so. Remember however that it is the support crew's responsibility to ensure their runner's safety between checkpoints, and they must be prepared to go on to the course and search for their runner if they do not arrive at a checkpoint. They must also be prepared to collect their runner at a checkpoint if the runner has decided to withdraw from the race. Crews should therefore have arrangements in place to keep in touch with their runner by phone if they do not plan to meet up at the non mandatory checkpoints.

Faster runners are not allowed to have a support runner at any point during the race, and no-one is allowed a support runner before Auchtertyre farm. You are welcome to be accompanied by a support runner (or runners) if you leave a checkpoint after the following times:

Auchtertyre – after 10hrs 30mins race time (i.e. after 11.30am)

Bridge of Orchy – after 12hrs 30mins (i.e. after 1.30pm)

Glencoe – after 14hrs 45mins (i.e. after 3.45pm)

Kinlochleven – after 17hrs 30mins (i.e. after 6.30pm)

The check point marshals will advise on whether a runner is able to have a support runner.

If you are ahead of these times, your support crew are only allowed to run with you in the area one quarter of a mile before the checkpoint and one quarter of a mile after the checkpoint, and are not allowed to run with you at any other times. The support crew are however allowed to meet you at any safe point on the route, except the section between the top of Loch Lomond and Crianlarich as outlined below.

Please note that in the event of particularly adverse weather, all runners may be instructed to 'pair up' with a member of their crew or another runner for any of the later stages of the race.

We would encourage all runners to set up the 'Find Friends' (or similar) app on their phone to help their support crew identify their runner's location throughout the race.

Support vehicles:

Many of the roads on the route are narrow and not suitable for a large campervan / motorhome type of vehicle. We would recommend that this type of vehicle is not used at all for support, but in particular large campervans are not permitted for travel to Rowardennan, Auchtertyre or Lundavra. At Bridge of Orchy campervans are prohibited from going down the minor road to the checkpoint, and must park in the car park just before the Bridge of Orchy Hotel.

We have had a number of problems with large campervans in the past, and it is important that support crews use common sense in their choice of vehicle. We reserve the right to withdraw any competitor whose support crew or support vehicle are causing serious problems for the smooth operation of the race.

There are a number of car parks on the route where parking charges apply, including the finish at the Nevis Centre in Fort William. Please note that those charges need to be paid as your race vehicle permit does not exempt you from any parking charges.

Electronic timing:

A SPORTident Timing Card (SI-Card) will be issued to each runner at registration. At each of the checkpoints shown above, plus at the timing points at Rowardennan, Inversnaid and Lundavra, you need to lay the SI-Card flat over the hole in the SPORTident Timing station and the station will beep or flash. This indicates that a timestamp has been recorded on your card.

This procedure is an essential requirement of the race. Follow the same procedure at the Finish and hand your SI-Card to the SPORTident Timing Team. You will be given a small printout showing your split times through each checkpoint on the route.

Each time you register your SI-Card at a checkpoint, data is uploaded onto the SPORTident webserver in real time. This allows friends and family to follow your progress throughout the race, either at home on a computer or on any web enabled phone as they support you along the route.

Details of the website link will be confirmed nearer the race. This should help your friends to plan where and when they will meet you during the race as the information it provides includes an ETA for each runner at the next checkpoint.

Should you need to retire during the event, wherever possible please hand in your SI-Card at a checkpoint on your route. If you are "rescued" by a support vehicle, please ensure that you deliver your SI-Card to the NEXT checkpoint on the course.

Until each SI-Card has reached the finish or been handed in at a checkpoint, the event organisers will assume that you are still on the course. Failure to hand in your SI-Card at the event will cause an unnecessary search by rescue teams and you may be barred from taking part in future events. There is a charge of £30 for each SI-Card that is not handed in.

Medical advice:

Please ensure you have read, and taken heed of, the medical advice document which is attached to these instructions.

Specifically, please do not take Ibuprofen or other NSAIDs, such as naproxen or diclofenac. These can cause serious medical problems during endurance events and if we become aware of any runner taking Ibuprofen or other NSAIDs that runner may be disqualified. It is also very important that you note the dangers of over-hydration, and ensure you only drink to thirst.

'Cloudy eye' is a problem which affects a small number of ultra-runners at our event and can bring your race to a premature end. Experience suggests that it is mostly caused by the prolonged exposure to the stresses of a long run in the outdoor environment. Its likelihood can be reduced, to a certain extent, by wearing eye protection for most or all of the distance. It can be readily identified through behavioural changes in the runner who is colliding with the landscape more frequently, combined with an inability to make out fine detail. For some, the eyes will actually look cloudy to an observer. This can of course be confused with the other issues mentioned in the race medical advice document, so our clear recommendation is to report anyone evidently affected to the medical team for review. It is normally self-correcting within a few hours once the runner is removed from the environmental factors but should always be investigated.

Please remove rings from fingers and toes. Numerous unfortunate runners over the years have found that over a long race, the combination of swollen hands and then a simple fall leading to hand injuries can seriously damage fingers through restricting blood flow past a tightening ring.

If you are in any doubt about a medical or safety issue during the event, ask for the medical team at any checkpoint. The team are very experienced and not here to stop you; they are here to make your completion of the race as safe as possible.

You are required to complete the medical details that are requested on the support and medical details form. The medical team may in some cases ask additional follow up questions of runners with a more complex or challenging background, with a view to mitigating any additional health risks as far as possible.

Mandatory kit:

As in previous years, we are insisting that every runner carries a lightweight space blanket throughout the race. These only cost a couple of pounds from any outdoor shop, and could make a significant difference if you are unfortunate enough to have a fall, particularly if it is in a remote part of the trail.

We are also insisting that every runner carries a mobile phone, with the following emergency numbers programmed in to it:

Sean Stone, Race Safety Officer – 07768 642314

Ian Beattie, Race Director – 07939 535523

In the event of an emergency, Sean should be the first point of contact. If contact cannot be made with Sean, Ian is the second point of contact.

There are other items of kit that you must have available if directed by a race official, although whether you need to carry them on the day will depend on the conditions at any particular time. These include the following:

A head torch, with spare batteries;

Full body waterproof clothing;

A whistle.

Other recommended items include:

Harveys map of the West Highland Way

Small Backpack/Bumbag or both

Towels

A number of complete changes of clothes

Various pairs of shoes

Sunhat/Woolly Hat

Gloves

First Aid Kit

Insect Repellent

Blister Repair Kit

Water Bottles

Skin Care

Suncream

Toilet Roll

Remember, conditions can vary considerably throughout the course of the race and it is better to carry too much kit in your support vehicle than find yourself short.

Walking poles:

No competitor is allowed to use walking poles at any stage of the race.

Dogs:

Dogs are not allowed to run with any competitor at any stage of the race, nor are they allowed to run with any person who is supporting a runner. This is a condition of our event insurance.

iPods/MP3 players:

iPods/MP3 players are permitted, but competitors must be able to hear what is going on around you at all times. Earphones must be removed at checkpoints, at road crossings, when approaching marshals, and at all times when running on public roads. If a marshal signals you to remove your earphones, you must do so immediately.

Dropbags:

There will be a facility for runners to leave drop-bags for Balmaha, Rowardennan, Inversnaid, Beinglas Farm and Bridge of Orchy. Please ensure these drop bags are clearly marked with your race number, and take them to the marked vehicle at the start at Milngavie Station. They should be as small as possible. It will not be possible to return the contents of any drop bag to you after the race.

Litter and general behaviour:

The West Highland Way is a route of outstanding beauty, and we try to ensure our race is well regarded by the West Highland Way rangers, by those living near the route, and by other users. To this end please make sure you do not drop any litter anywhere on the route, but that you carry it with you to the next checkpoint. Please also show consideration for walkers and other users.

Noise during the night:

In previous years we have had complaints from residents at Drymen about the noise made by support crews. To try and address this we would discourage support crews from meeting their runner at Drymen at all.

If you do intend to go there, you must not park either on the main road or in the dead-end road outside the houses. Instead you should park on the road heading down towards Drymen or in the car park in Drymen village, then meet your runner in the field before the route crosses the road. We will have marshals in place to make sure this is enforced.

We have also had complaints in the past from Kinlochleven residents about the noise levels during the Saturday night / Sunday morning. We are very keen to maintain good relations with people who live near the route, so please make every effort to keep noise to a minimum, particularly during the hours of darkness.

Noise at the finish in Fort William can also cause problems during the night-time hours. Again we would ask you to respect the local residents who do not wish to be disturbed.

'Low' route after Rowardennan:

The race follows the 'low' path between Rowardennan and Inversnaid. The turn off for the low route is just less than 2 miles north of Rowardennan, and one third of a mile after the gate at Ptarmigan Lodge. It is well signposted.

Route into Kinlochleven:

This year we will again be using the alternative route in to Kinlochleven. On reaching the bottom of the water pipe, runners should take the route past Blackwater Hostel and Campsite, pass the Ice Factor, turn right at reaching the main road, and head in to the checkpoint at the Leven Centre. This will be well signposted.

Area from the top of Loch Lomond to Crianlarich:

Parking in the area between the top of Loch Lomond and Crianlarich is very limited, and we have had problems in previous races with businesses and landowners in that area. For that reason, support crews are not permitted to meet their runner at any point on the A82 between Beinglas Farm and Bogle Glen, above Crianlarich. This restriction includes Beinglas Farm, Derrydarroch Farm, Carmyle Cottage, and any of the lay-bys on that section of the A82. This will be strictly enforced, and any breach could lead to a time penalty or even your disqualification, so please make sure that your support crew are aware of this rule.

If your support crew wants to meet you after the Beinglas Farm checkpoint but before the next checkpoint at Auchtertyre, it is possible to park in Crianlarich, walk for a mile or so up the hill, and meet your runner at the point the West Highland Way comes in to Bogle Glen.

Parking is also restricted at the checkpoint at Auchtertyre. The one vehicle per runner rule will also apply at this checkpoint, and your crew will need to show their parking permit to gain access. Your support crew should not arrive at Auchtertyre too early, as there is limited capacity. We would strongly recommend that they have a sleep after leaving the east side of Loch Lomond, and should do this in a safe place such as a car park in Balloch at the southern end of Loch Lomond. Support crews arriving too early at Auchtertyre Farm will not be permitted access.

Food and refreshments:

A number of businesses on the route have kindly agreed to open their premises and provide facilities for support crews. The coffee shop at the Oak Tree Inn in Balmaha (19 miles) will be open from around 2am and will offer hot rolls and refreshments. Note that the hotel itself will not be open this year, but the coffee shop will (which is at the left of the building when looking towards it) – so do not try and gain entry to the hotel. Toilet facilities should be available in the nearby visitor centre. There is a café / shop at Auchtertyre Farm (51 miles). The cafe at Glencoe Ski Centre (71 miles) will stay open late on the Saturday night and will serve food until 10pm. There are a number of pubs and a fish and chip shop in Kinlochleven. We are very grateful for the help of these businesses; please support them if you can.

The finish:

The race finish is inside the Nevis Centre in Fort William. This is about half a mile further on from the old finish at Lochaber Leisure Centre. As you come in to Fort William, go straight on at the roundabout, follow the pavement until you reach the old finish at Lochaber Leisure Centre, then cross the road at the traffic lights. Follow the pavement towards the town centre, go round the front of the railway station, and follow the pavement past the bus station until you reach the Nevis Centre. This will be fully signposted. At the finish your time will be recorded and you will be given a printout of your splits. Showers are available for runners and crew (this will be badly needed!), and tea and coffee will be available. Please note that no alcohol is allowed in the Nevis Centre, nor in the car park outside.

Race merchandise:

All runners will receive a race garment and a race buff in their goody bag. Additional race merchandise for you or as a 'thank you' for your support crew will be available for purchase by the end of May. We will send a separate mail and post on our social channels as soon as it becomes available. Meantime there are a few ongoing items available on the race shop web page <https://westhighlandwayrace.org/shop/>

Prizegiving:

The prizegiving will take place in the Nevis Centre in Fort William (same venue as the race finish) at 12 noon on Sunday 18 June. Please try and attend – it is a great occasion where every finisher is presented with his or her hard earned goblet, and helps continue the great 'family' feel of the event. It is expected to last about an hour and a half. The Nevis Centre will serve breakfast from 10am. If you are unable to attend, please let a marshal at the finish know and we will arrange for you to take your goblet away with you. For those staying in Fort William, there will be the chance to meet up for drinks and some food on the Sunday evening. This is an informal gathering and all are welcome – it will take place from 7pm in The Great Glen, 104 High Street, Fort William.

Withdrawal from the race:

If you need to withdraw from the race, please notify this by e-mail to ianbeattie@westhighlandwayrace.org. A refund of £70 will be made for withdrawals notified on or before 31 May. No refunds will be given for withdrawals notified after 31 May, but it is still important that you let us know. **Please note that it is not possible to defer any entries to the following year's race.**

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:

The race twitter site can be followed at @WHWRace and the Instagram site is @whw_race. If you or your support crew are tweeting or posting on Instagram before, during or after the race, please use the hashtag #whwrace. The race also has a Facebook page which will provide updates.

2024 race:

The entry procedure for the 2024 race will be similar to this year, with entries open throughout November 2023. The qualification criteria will be the same: entrants will be required to have completed an off-road ultra marathon of 65k or more in the period from 2019 to 2023.