



FirstEnergy Akron Half Marathon Course Description

In our continuing effort to treat each of our participants like a world-class athlete, we wrote this course description from a runner's perspective to help you prepare for your successful race. Our description highlights the many different segments of the course – we think this variety makes our race an excellent choice for both first time and veteran half marathoners who like an interesting course and appreciate race-execution perfection. We know that our half marathon is not “fast and flat”, but we think that savvy veterans and thoughtful first timers who understand the changing elevations, and prepare for them, can enjoy a great run on our course, like we hope you will on September 28th.

The Start, North Hill

The course begins with participants toeing the starting line in downtown Akron on High Street next to the Akron Art Museum. In the first mile, you will step onto the All-America Bridge, a Y-bridge that offers spectacular views of the Cuyahoga River Valley nearly 300 feet below. On a clear day, the sunrise should just be visible on your right. Participants deeper in the pack can also see the race leaders returning on the east side of the bridge, adding to the excitement of the start. This scenic bridge crossing early in the race reminds us of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge at the start of the New York City Marathon. You will reach the first mile mark before you begin a short jaunt into North Hill, Akron's International District. By now you've noticed that the first mile is mostly downhill until the middle, and lowest point, of the Bridge. Even though it may be fun to notch a quick opening mile, we recommend you use this opportunity to relax and ease into your pace. The course stays straight on North Main Street until Tallmadge Avenue where you will turn left. On Tallmadge Avenue you will pass by Findley Community Learning Center and make a sharp right on Cuyahoga Falls Avenue and soon pass the two-mile mark. Once you hit Main Street you will turn right and start the journey back south, this time at the three-mile mark, before traveling back across the Y-Bridge.

The University of Akron

Once over the Y-Bridge, participants will experience their first incline as they continue south on Broadway Street and make a left at Market Street around mile four. Participants will climb Market Street then turn right onto College Street and The University of Akron campus. At this point, you will then approach the first relay exchange zone located at Union Park. Marathon and Half Marathon runners will hug the corner as you turn left onto Mill Street. Relay runners will swing wide and prepare to “pass the baton” to your teammate. From Mill Street you will turn right onto Fir Hill and pass by the Hower House which is listed on the National Historic Landmark Registry. You will notice the course shift from a slight uphill to a slight downhill at this point. Next, turn left onto Buchtel Avenue and make a quick right onto Spicer Street.

Firestone Park

Next up is the five-mile mark near The University of Akron's InfoCision Stadium. You will cross over Exchange Street and make a right on Power Street. Taking a quick left onto Brown Street, you will notice the elevation start to rise for the second time. Once you pass under the interstate you will be at the six-mile mark. You will continue on Brown Street for over two miles. Once you reach the new Kenmore-Garfield Community Learning Center you will be at the mile-seven mark and the elevation will head back down so you can catch your breath from the last climb. Continue on Brown until you reach E. Wilbeth Road and make a right as you head towards Firestone Park. A right onto S. Firestone Boulevard is followed quickly by another right onto Aster Avenue. You will pass the Firestone Park Branch Library and then make a left onto N. Firestone Boulevard to hit the eighth mile of the race and the Harvey Firestone inspired Firestone Park that resembles a shield. Keep right as N. Firestone turns into E. Firestone Boulevard. You'll continue on E. Firestone Boulevard until you make a right onto Main Street.

Back Downtown

Over the next mile you will pass many Akron businesses, ranging from restaurants to manufacturing plants, on this stretch of a mostly commercial Main Street. You will stay on Main Street until you go under the interstate and turn right onto Thornton Street. There will be a quick rise as you run over the railroad tracks and then make a left onto Wolf Ledges to continue downhill until mile eleven when the elevation starts to climb again. On Wolf Ledges, as you approach the Exchange Street overpass, it is important that marathoners and half marathoners stay to the left while relay runners stay to the right. Marathoners and Half Marathoners will hug the curb as they turn left to continue onto Wolf Ledges. Relay runners will turn wide onto Wolf Ledges and see the second exchange zone on their right.

Those running the third leg of the relay will join the marathoners and half marathoners to turn right onto University Avenue where participants will re-enter UA's campus and see Dale Chihuly's rock candy sculpture. This piece of work is made from polymer materials locally sourced, stands out in the day, and shines in the nighttime sky. You will then take a quick left onto Hill Street followed by a quick right onto Forge Street and a quick left onto Lincoln Street. The next left you will make will be onto Mill Street where you will pass Quaker Square. This is the home of the original Quaker Oats factory where they processed oats through the silos that you see. Catch a glimpse of them as you turn right onto Broadway Street. On Broadway near mile twelve you will pass the familiar location of our Health and Fitness Expo, the John S. Knight Center and the spot you started, the Akron Art Museum. You will turn left onto Market Street, followed by a quick right onto Main Street. On Main Street, Half Marathon runners will stay left while the Marathon and relay participants will stay right. Half Marathon runners will turn left onto Martin Luther King Boulevard to head to the finish line, while the Marathon and relay continue straight down Howard to the Towpath Trail.

The Finish

You're almost there as you bend around the Innerbelt and make a left onto Mill Street with the exit ramp. A quick right onto Main Street at the Akron Rubber Worker Sculpture means you are in the final stretch. Gain a glimpse into the future of downtown with newer businesses before

you reach the historic Akron Civic Theatre on your right. This is your chance to let it all go and finish with an extended kick, as the last half mile of the race is flat and straight with the finish in front of Canal Park, the home of the Akron RubberDucks!

Our Review

We know our course isn't the "flat and fast" track some runners look for, but we think it is a fair course with a lot of variety. The half-marathon course covers historic neighborhoods such as North Hill and Firestone Park all while returning you downtown for a fast finish. Most of all, we think you will be surprised by, and enjoy, the scenic beauty of our course. We have tried to give you a personalized tour and a unique perspective of Akron, with side trips past natural beauty, local landmarks and wonderful neighborhoods.

Along with all the race organizers, we are gratified each year by the consistently positive and enthusiastic comments from our participants. We hope that this personal tour will help you have a great race day!

The Akron Marathon Board, Staff & Volunteers