



# RUN AFRICA

The EA Guide to  
Comrades Marathon

14 June 2026





# Welcome to your Comrades Marathon adventure

Congratulations!

You're about to take on one of the greatest endurance challenges in the world. The Comrades Marathon is more than just a race; it's a test of grit, strategy, and heart. With nearly a century of history, this legendary ultra-marathon between Durban and Pietermaritzburg has pushed runners to their limits – and changed lives in the process.

This ebook is your essential guide to conquering Comrades. Inside, you'll find everything you need to prepare – race-day logistics, training tips, course details, and how to make the most of your time in South Africa. Whether you're running to win, finish, or simply be part of the camaraderie that makes this race so special, you're about to experience something truly unforgettable.

So dig deep, trust your training, and get ready to run a race that will stay with you forever.  
Your Comrades journey starts now!







# Race details

## **Where & when**

The Comrades Marathon takes place in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, between the cities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The 2026 event will be held on Sunday 14 June and will be starting in Pietermaritzburg and finishing in Durban.

## **How to register**

Visit [www.comrades.com](http://www.comrades.com) and follow the prompts. Entries are limited, so early sign-up is recommended. This is the only thing you need to organise yourself – Encompass Africa will do the rest!

## **Race options**

Comrades Marathon (approx. 89km) – starts at 5:30am; cut-off time: 12 hours.  
This is a timed ultramarathon with multiple pace “buses” to help you hit your goal. The course includes five major hills and is known for being both beautiful and brutal. A qualifying time from a standard marathon (sub 4h50) is required to enter. You must be 20 or older on race day.

## **Entry costs**

Approximate cost: ZAR 1,200–1,800 (subject to change; international runners pay slightly more).

## **Race bibs**

Race packs and bibs must be collected in person from the Comrades Marathon Expo in Durban in the three days leading up to race day. Encompass Africa will provide full details and help coordinate your arrival and collection.



# Getting there

There are no direct flights from Australia to Africa, but excellent connections are available via major hubs such as Dubai (Emirates), Doha (Qatar Airways), and Johannesburg (Qantas & SAA codeshares).

For the Comrades Marathon, most runners fly into King Shaka International Airport (DUR) in Durban. Durban is well connected with domestic flights from Johannesburg, Cape Town and other African hubs, making travel from Australia smooth via the Middle East or South Africa.

Flight times from Australia to Durban range from 18 to 26 hours, depending on your route. Consider adding a layover in Johannesburg, Dubai or Doha to break up the journey and arrive feeling fresh. With more than 20,000 runners and limited race-week accommodation near the start or finish, early bookings are highly recommended.

Australian passport holders do not require a visa for tourist stays of up to 90 days in South Africa, but always check the latest entry and health requirements before departure.





# What to pack

In addition to your regular travel gear, we recommend you pack the following:

## **Your race kit**

Wear what you always do on race day, but remember that temperatures can vary from cool mornings to hot afternoons. Pack gear for all conditions, including a light rain jacket and warm layers for pre-dawn starts. Your race shoes (broken in, but not worn out!) are a must – but bring a backup pair of shoes and running kit in your carry-on, just in case your luggage is delayed.

## **Other essentials**

A hat, sunscreen and sunglasses are vital in equatorial and high-altitude conditions, while insect repellent is essential, especially in mosquito-prone areas. Bring a printed race confirmation and medical certificate if required. A running watch is useful for tracking your pace and progress on race day.

## **Hydration gear**

Check whether hydration vests or belts are allowed on course.  
Bring electrolyte supplements or energy gels you've trained with – availability can be limited locally.

## **Recovery gear**

Pack your favourite post-race recovery tools, such as a foam roller or massage ball, compression socks, and electrolyte sachets.









# Health & vaccines

Travelling to South Africa for the Comrades Marathon requires some basic health precautions to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. It's always best to consult a travel doctor or visit a travel clinic at least 4–6 weeks before departure for personalised advice on vaccinations and health precautions, but here are some top tips:

## **Yellow Fever**

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required if you're arriving from or transiting through a country with a risk of yellow fever transmission. South Africa is not a yellow fever risk area, but proof of vaccination may still be requested if you've passed through an affected country.

## **Malaria**

The Comrades Marathon route between Pietermaritzburg and Durban is not considered a high-risk malaria area. However, if you plan to travel elsewhere in South Africa or neighbouring countries after the race, check regional malaria maps and take appropriate precautions.

## **Routine vaccinations**

Ensure you're up to date with routine vaccinations, including hepatitis A & B, typhoid, tetanus, measles and influenza.

## **Drinking water & food safety**

Tap water is generally safe to drink in major South African cities, but bottled or filtered water is still recommended while travelling. Choose freshly prepared, well-cooked food to minimise the risk of foodborne illness.





# Where to stay

Choosing the right accommodation can make a big difference to your race experience.

Where possible, we recommend staying close to the start or finish line – ideally within walking distance. This will minimise stress on the morning of the event, and makes it easy to return and recover afterwards.

We carefully select runner-friendly hotels and lodges that offer early breakfasts on race day, quiet rooms for quality sleep, and nutritious meal options in the lead-up to the event. Many properties experienced in hosting marathon runners go the extra mile with welcome packs, late check-outs, or shuttle services to the race venue. We'll take care of all bookings and fine details, ensuring everything is sorted so you can focus on your run.

If you're travelling with friends, family, or a tour group, we'll arrange accommodation that keeps you together, so you can share the excitement and support each other before and after the race. Many of our recommended properties are also perfect for spectators and support crews, offering easy access to key viewing spots or event hubs. Just be sure to book early – accommodation fills quickly on race weekend!







## When you arrive

Aim to arrive at least three to four days before race day. This will give your body time to adjust to the local climate, altitude and time zone – which is especially important if you’re travelling from Australia or New Zealand, where the time difference can be substantial. This arrival window is especially important if your race is at altitude or in a warmer climate than you’re used to – your body will thank you for the extra time to adapt. Early arrival also allows you to attend pre-race briefings, collect your bib, get in some light sightseeing or shakeout runs, and settle in without stress.

Take it easy in the days leading up to the race. Focus on hydration and sleep, walk the course and do a gentle jog the day before the race to loosen your legs and get familiar with the conditions. Resist the temptation to pack in too much sightseeing at this stage! Stick to familiar foods where possible, especially in the 48 hours before the race. If there’s a race briefing, attend if possible. You’ll get final details, route updates, and practical tips from organisers. Use your arrival time to collect your race bib and get a feel for the start line layout. Wherever you’re staying, ask about mealtimes and transport on race morning to avoid any surprises.



# Training and preparation

Preparing for a marathon in Africa comes with unique challenges, from altitude and heat to maintaining your routine while travelling. Here's how to set yourself up for success:

## **Training for altitude**

If you're coming from sea level, altitude can affect your performance more than you expect. Arriving a few days early helps, and incorporating hill training and strength work into your program will build the resilience you need for high-elevation courses.

## **Tapering before race day**

Stick to your taper even while travelling – it's your chance to arrive fresh and ready. Many runners combine their marathon with a safari or holiday, maintaining fitness with shorter runs and active recovery while allowing for proper rest.

## **Heat & hydration**

African races can be deceptively hot, even early in the day. Hydration is key – know your needs, use water stations strategically, and consider electrolytes in extreme conditions. Practise this in your training so your strategy is second nature on race day.

## **Stick to what you know**

Race week isn't the time to experiment. Avoid new shoes, unfamiliar foods, or last-minute treatments like massages or ice baths if they aren't part of your usual routine. Trust your training, and stay consistent.







# Why book with Encompass Africa?

Planning a marathon abroad can be overwhelming – but with Encompass Africa, you can focus on your training while we take care of everything else. From flights and pre-race accommodation to post-race safaris and seamless transfers, we handle every detail, making your marathon experience effortless.

We've handpicked the best stays and support, ensuring you have comfortable, well-located hotels, nutritious meals, and reliable transport – all designed to help you perform at your best. Whether it's a pre-race hotel near the start line or a luxury safari extension, we know what works because we've been there.

With Jonathon's passion for running and deep knowledge of Africa, we understand what runners need – whether it's race-day logistics, recovery recommendations, or insider tips. When you book with us, you're not just signing up for a trip; you're getting a team that's as invested in your race as you are.

# Ready to run Africa?

Let's make it happen – get in touch today!

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