



THAMES MARATHON



Sunday 9th August 2026
Swimmers' Information Pack - 5.5km



We are really looking forward to seeing you at the
2026 THAMES MARATHON 5.5KM SWIM

Everything you need to know about the event should be covered in this information pack. Please read it through carefully in advance of setting off. If we've missed anything, please check our [FAQs](#) and if you can't find the answer email using the contact details below.

The Thames Marathon is a chance to complete a long distance swim, along this beautiful river, in a safe and supervised environment. It is a challenge rather than a race. There are no prizes for the fastest swimmers. There may be times when you are asked to wait while a boat passes, or there may be queues getting in and out of the water or for the food at the locks. Please consider any delays as part of the experience - take in your surroundings, chat to your fellow swimmers and enjoy the moment.



Sunday 9th August 2026

Event Location: Higginson Park
Marlow, SL7 2AE

Distance: Approximately 5.5km

Follow us on social media for the most up-to-date event information



henlevswim.com | hello@henlevswim.com

Getting There - Marlow Event Village



Car Parks and Street Parking:

There are several parking options available in Marlow. These include the Pound Lane Car Park adjacent to Higginson Park, West Street Car Park – 5 minute walk, Marlow Central Car Park, Riley Road – 8 minute walk. Also Dean Street, Liston Court and Institute Road. These are all pay and display and range from £1.10-£6.10 for the day. Please see the options on [Parkopedia](#)

There are also a number of roads away from the centre of the town, including Pound Lane, where street parking is possible free of charge. Please check the street signs carefully before leaving your vehicle.

Car Share:

We encourage swimmers to car share wherever possible. If you are looking for a lift or would like to offer space in your car, please post on [Henley Swim Chatter](#) our Facebook group.

By Train:

The nearest train station to the event village is Marlow, which has links to London and Reading via Maidenhead. The first train on a Sunday arrives in Marlow just before 9am. Higginson Park is a 800m walk from the station.

Getting There - 5.5km Start



Runner and Walkers:

Runners and walkers will need to calculate how long it will take them to run/walk around 6.5 km, to ensure that they arrive at the start in time for their start window. Please remember that only your swim time will be recorded, the run or walk is just for fun.

Coach:

Swimmers taking the coach to the 5.5km start will need to be **swim ready** at the event village by 10:10, to be directed to the coaches which will leave at 10:25/10:35/10:45 (Times for Waves 14&15/Wave 16/Waves 17&18 - slowest swimmers first)

Spectator Buses:

Spectators that have booked a place on the bus should go to the bus stop with or ahead of their swimmers. There will be one spectator coach for the 5.5km leaving at 10:25. Please note that this will travel to the opposite river bank to the start to allow spectators to join the Thames Path on the South side of the river - see page 15

Shoe Drop:

All swimmers will be able to leave shoes in a bucket at the start, that will be brought back to the finish.

Non-wetsuit swimmers will also be able to add a **single** item of clothing eg a hoodie to be returned to Marlow. This must not be a changing robe as they are too bulky to be transported.

Please have an easily identifiable (and ideally unique) carrier bag to put your shoes and clothing in. Please do not try to take more items than allowed, as we will not be able to transport them back to Marlow and there is nowhere at the start to leave them. The marshals will be briefed to only accept shoes and a single item of clothing.

Event Timings - 5.5km Distance



Saturday 8th August 2026	
15:00 - 18:00	Race pack collection at Higginson Park, Marlow. This is optional, you can collect on Sunday morning if you prefer

Sunday 9th August 2026	
09:00	Race pack collection opens for 5.5km Swimmers
09:30 - 10:45	Runners / walkers set off from Marlow
10:25	Spectator Bus leaves
10:25/10:35 10:45	Swimmer only coach sets off from Marlow Wave 14&15/Wave 16 Swimmer only coach sets off from Marlow Wave 17&18
11:00-11:10	Wave 14 & 15 - Estimated time 2 hours 40 mins +
11:10-11:20	Wave 16 - Estimated time 2 hours 20 mins - 2 hours 40 mins
11:20-11:30	Wave 17 & 18 - Estimated time SUB 2 hours 20 mins

There will be a cut-off time at each lock, to ensure that all swimmers complete the course within three and a half hours.

All swimmers must be through Hurley Lock by 13:00

All swimmers must be through Temple Lock by 13:45

Tow floats are compulsory for all swimmers. You will have selected wetsuit or non-wetsuit when you registered.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE FACT THE ROADS ARE NARROW
AND THERE IS NO PARKING, IT IS NOT AN OPTION TO BE
DROPPED OFF BY FRIENDS AT THE 5.5KM START**

Level Water exists to help children change their path in life - from inactivity and exclusion to resilience, confidence, and joy. By choosing to swim with Level Water you're literally swimming so that children with disabilities can learn how - does it get any better than that?

**LEVEL
WATER**

Thanks to swimmers like you, we deliver over 70,000 lessons every year at 240+ pools nationwide.

We believe every child deserves the joy and freedom of swimming and together, we're making that happen.



TO ALL OUR HENLEY SWIMMERS
THANK YOU!

To learn more about Level Water and get involved in future swims head to www.levelwater.org

Scan me



Learn more

On-the-day Checklist



What to bring with you...

Photographic ID for registration

Swimming costume and wetsuit

Goggles and anti-fog spray

Tow float (compulsory)

Carrier bag for shoes and clothing at the start

Sun cream

Small kit bag or rucksack, to contain everything you want to leave in the bag drop area.

Warm clothing and warm hat for after your swim

Reusable drinks bottle and reusable coffee cup

Money / contactless card



Arrival:

Please arrive at Higginson Park between 9:00am and 10:15am to allow time to register, change and be ready for your departure to the start.

Race Pack Collection:

Collect your race pack from Higginson Park on Saturday 8th August between 3pm and 6pm or Sunday 9th August from 9:00am to 10:15am. On the Sunday, please allow plenty of time to find parking (see page 3) and to get to Higginson Park. You will need photographic ID. A race number will be allocated at registration. Your pack will contain a numbered hat, timing chip, velcro ankle strap and bag tag. Check the number on your hat matches your timing chip and your bag tag.

Preparation:

Change into your swimming kit, thread the ankle strap through your timing chip, wear on either ankle **outside** your wetsuit. Make sure you have your hat, goggles, tow float, shoes (+ single item of clothing for skins swimmers but no robes) and named carrier bag, pack everything else in your bag.

Bag Drop - Marlow Only:

You will be able to leave your belongings in a small bag at the secure bag drop area. Attach your bag tag to your bag (double checking it is the same number that is written on your hat), and deposit at the bag drop area. The bag will remain here for the duration of your swim. When you finish your swim, you will be able to reclaim your bag by showing your hat number to the bag drop team.

Walkers & Runners:

Set off from the event village any time after 09:30. Please calculate the time it will take you to cover 6.5km and leave at an appropriate time, so that you can start your swim in your chosen Window. On arrival at the start, you will receive a short safety briefing and then be invited to walk into the water. Your time will start when you cross the timing mat.

Coach Travellers (swimmers only):

You will be taken to the start from Marlow by coach. Be ready in the event village 15 mins before your coach time (see page 5). You must be completely swim ready on the bus. On arrival, there is a 10 minute walk to the start where you will receive a short safety briefing and then be invited to walk into the water. Your time will start when you cross the timing mat. **Please note there is no toilet at the start, use the facilities before leaving the event village.**

During Your Swim:

Please be as considerate as possible towards your fellow swimmers. If you are caught by faster swimmers, please move to one side to let them through. If you catch slower swimmers, please don't swim over the top of them.

Food Stops:

There are 2 locks on the route, where you are required to get out of the water and walk around the lock. There is food and drink available at both of these locks. You can choose to have a leisurely break, or to immediately re-enter the water with only a short stop. It is possible that there will be queues at the food stops, and the exit and entry points. We will provide a bit of everything, including bananas, energy bars, energy drinks, water, chocolate, sweets, and some salty snacks. If you wish to use energy gel, please bring your own in your tow float, so that you know the particular brand that you use will suit you.

Finish:

When you reach the end you will be helped out of the water, your timing chip will be removed, you will be given your medal and offered hand sanitiser. You will be able to collect your bag by showing the number on your hat, and will find food, drink and memorabilia available to purchase.

Venue & Event Facilities



Food & Drink:

There are a number of different food outlets serving hot and cold food. Drinks will include tea and coffee, soft drinks and a licensed bar.

Timing:

Your time will be available on the results page online. Your time is a total time, including the time you spend at the locks.

Toilets & Changing Areas:

There are toilet facilities and changing areas at Higginson Park. **Please note there are no toilets at the start, please make sure you use the facilities before leaving Higginson Park.**

Medical and Safety:

Our safety and medical teams will be onsite to deal with any needs.

Equipment & Kit:

ZONE3 offers a range of outdoor swimming products from wetsuit to accessories and swimwear, and has long been a supporter of grassroots swimming. They are offering all Henley Swim participants a 15% discount on all their swim gear and equipment by using the code **HENLEY** (not valid on sale or custom products).

Simply visit the [ZONE3 website](#) and add the code at checkout



PREPARE. PERFORM. *REPEAT.*

Preparation starts now. The right wetsuit gives you warmth, buoyancy and support, helping every stroke feel smoother and every session feel stronger. Our designs are shaped by years of experience in open water, built to help you feel confident from the moment you step in.

Find the wetsuit that fits your swim and your goals.

RENT YOURS FOR THE SEASON - *FROM JUST £69*

SHOP NOW

ZONE3 

Useful Information



Massage:

We are delighted to be welcoming therapists from Activate Training & Sports Therapy in Wokingham to provide post event massage, if you need a little help with aches and pains after your race. Just pop over to their gazebo once you have finished and they will be ready to congratulate you and hear all about your race experience as well as aiding your recovery. It will be card payments only on the day so don't forget your wallet or phone.

iTaBs:

You can still order an itab to commemorate your swim time. Simply log back into your hub using the link on your confirmation email to purchase an insert for the ribbon of your medal. This will be engraved with your name and time and sent to you after the event.

Event Memorabilia:

Event memorabilia is available to purchase. To ensure that you get the items you require we suggest that you pre-order. You can do this by logging back into your online entry using the link from your email confirmation.



Water Bottles & Coffee Cups:

As part of our environmental strategy, we will not be selling water in single-use plastic bottles. Please bring your own bottle to refill from one of our water stations. We would also love you to bring your own reusable coffee cup.

Useful Information



Volunteers:

Many of the crew that will be helping you on the day are volunteers. Please give them a smile and thank them as you see them around the venue, as without them there would be no event. If you are interested in volunteering at one of our events in 2027 please email hello@henlevswim.com to register as a volunteer.

Water Temperature and Flow:

The river temperature in the Thames depends upon both the outside temperature and the quantity of rainfall in the days and weeks running up to the event. It is therefore very difficult to predict. The strength of the stream also depends on the rainfall.

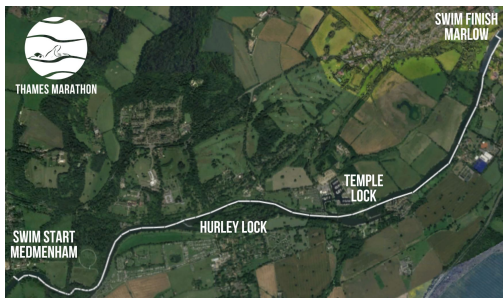
Based on previous years, in mid-August, we would expect the water to be between 17 and 20 degrees centigrade.

The Course



The Course:

This runs downstream along the River Thames from the start to Marlow. It is split into 3 stages, with feeding stations and exit routes to avoid the locks. The three stages are approximately 1.5km / 1.5km / 2.5km

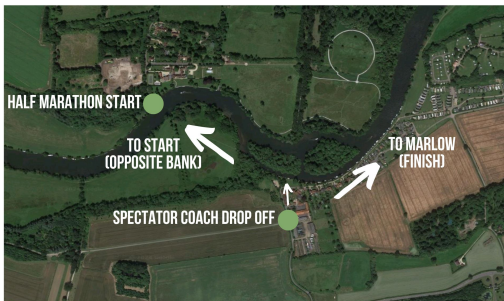


There is no car parking or drop off at the start of the 5.5KM, except for the official coaches. Please do not attempt to drive to the start, the local residents have kindly allowed us to start the swim here, we have promised to cause them as little disruption as possible.

The Course - Supporters



Spectators that have booked a place on the bus will be dropped on the South side of the river, a few hundred metres downstream of the 5.5km start on the opposite bank. This will allow them to walk along the Thames Path back to Marlow.



They should get off the bus and head towards the river. Immediately opposite are islands, so they will not be able to see swimmers at this point.

If they wish to try and see the start, they should turn left, and keep the river on the right. Walk for approximately 500m and they will be able to see the start on the opposite bank.

Alternatively they could turn right and start to walk to the finish at Marlow keeping the river on the left.

The Course - Supporters



Opposite Medmenham to Hurley - spectators can walk along the river for this section.

You will not be able to meet with spectators at the Hurley food stop as the footpath is on the other side of the river to the food stop.

Hurley to Temple - The Environment Agency has closed the footbridge near Temple Lock, this means it is no longer possible to walk along the river from Hurley Lock to Temple Lock. This does not affect swimmers in any way, and there is a diversion in place for walkers, that takes them away from the river and around Bisham Abbey and into Marlow across the bridge.



Temple to Marlow - It is possible for spectators to see swimmers all the way along this section, but due to the closed footbridge this is only possible if walking from Marlow, upstream towards Temple.

[Temple bridge closed- Thames Path on diversion May 2023 onwards - National Trails](#)

Alternatively your spectators can wave goodbye at Higginson Park, and walk the 2km to Temple Lock, wait for you there and then walk back alongside the river on the North side of the river and back to the park.

Safety Advice & Information



Water Quality

Open water swimming by its nature, carries a certain level of risk, and by registering for this event you have agreed to accept these risks. Swimmers are interacting with natural and ever-changing environments where factors such as currents, weather and water quality are not always predictable.

We test the water quality in the Thames a number of times between June and August, and since 2019, 93% of our tests have shown good or excellent water quality when measured against [Environment Agency Guidance for Bathing Water Quality](#).

The Thames Marathon covers several stretches of the Thames, water quality will not be consistent across the entire river.

Please visit our [website](#) for a full explanation of how we gather information, what we know and what this means for our events this summer.

Safety Advice

Whilst water quality tests provide an indication of the suitability of a venue for open water swimming they do not mean that there is a complete absence of potential pathogens.

You are advised to adopt the following procedures to minimise the risk of infections.

- Cover all cuts and abrasions, however minor, with waterproof sticking plasters. You should not consider swimming if you have deep cuts
- Use hand gel or wipes provided/wash hands in fresh water after you have swum and before you eat
- Take a full shower at the earliest opportunity
- Try not to ingest water while swimming

In addition all swimming kit (wetsuit, costume, goggles, hat) should be washed in clean water and thoroughly dried prior to your next swimming session or event.

We look forward to
welcoming you soon!



www.henleyswim.com
