

# Chateaux of Wine for Marathon 99

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## Marathon Du Medoc Weekend 2017 by Paul Monaghan

After a number of years running the Bacchus wine marathon it was finally time to head for the real thing. 26.2 miles through vineyards in Bordeaux with 23 wine tasting stops. I mean what's not to like? **Dean Allaway, Martin Bush, Peter Bowles** along with **Caroline Jackson** & myself took the plunge and booked the race. You basically have about 2 hours from race opening online to book. Seems quite a few people enjoy a spot of vino whilst running.



**Caroline & I at Château Pichon-Longueville**

receptions that were about 10 steps apart. What a stupid nana I felt. French guy in other reception waved and gave a big grin.

Next morning the others arrived. I as always like to keep everyone together when we do trips, so texted at 1:50pm to find others as expo Pauillac was about to leave. Bushy sounded unconcerned having a beer with the rest a couple of blocks away. They had wrongly thought it was a 2:30 departure and with that came running down the road just to catch the coach in time. That was a close shave and we hadn't even reached the expo yet.

Admittedly the drive to expo was slightly too long at 90 mins but it certainly compensated when we arrived, as the wine tasting had already started. There were samples everywhere.

First order of the day was fancy dress. The theme was 70s Rock stars on 33rpm so after a week of search of Amazon I came up with a hippy costume, Caroline borrowed an Abba costume (her Amazon order never made it in time but that's another story) Bushy also picked a hippy costume and Dean opted for a blow up Gorilla costume (I know. We thought the same ☺).

Hotels were hard to come by so Caroline & I booked our own in Bordeaux just around the corner from the others. We also arrived a day earlier to get acclimatised to the wine. We booked both an Ibis budget for first eve and normal Ibis next door for the rest of trip as couldn't get all the days we wanted in one hotel. The Ibis budget was about as big as a shoebox so we were glad to get out after first eve. We walked 50 metres around the corner to check into next hotel only to find when we got there that there was a door connecting both

Bushy was in his element as free souvenirs were in abundance. When he clocked the bottle top magnets he thought he'd died and gone to heaven. However that would have to wait till tomorrow.

Our coach departed from Bordeaux on race day at 6:30am as race would kick off at 10am we all arrived without incident decked out in our fancy dress. Dean had to blow his up so started to get changed after we arrived.

As usual we had our photoshoot. The town of Pauillac was lit up with everyone in their gear. Yellow Submarines, Vikings, Freddy Mercurys, Elvis', George Michaels, you name it they were all there. Was like stepping back to a trippy version of the 70s. The atmosphere was electric and we hadn't even started running or visited a château yet. As it was my 99<sup>th</sup> marathon Bushy had the brilliant idea of buying me a flake (99er) which I really loved. Caroline had her mike ready but have you heard her sing? Good job she'd be too busy running and sampling the goods.



**Randoms, Bushy, Myself, Pete B, Caroline & Dean All Ready to Run**

There was a slight problem. Dean's Gorilla costume bust its zip so wouldn't blow up, and he must have been an hour trying to fix it. We all give it a go to no avail, so he did the wisest thing possible and ditched it just before the start.

There was a crane holding up a band platform above the start line. They were blaring out rock tunes as a horn blasted and we started. I can only be described as a carnival atmosphere and bared not much resemblance to a serious race.



**Dean's Doomed Gorilla Costume**

Bushy was behind us still eying up the souvenir shops and taking photos whilst Dean had ran off ahead with Pete Bowles so Caroline & I just ran on our own. Must have been half a mile in when we came to a complete stop as we hit a bottleneck (pardon the pun). Caroline asked me to look left as seems there may have been an accident as runners were all veering in that direction. It was only then I'd noticed it was the first wine stop. People were already posing for photos so was impossible to move, so we did what we do best and joined them for a glass.

Normally we'd finish any marathon under 4 hours but immediately we began to worry we'd not make the 6:30 hour's cut-off as we hit the 2nd wine at about 2k, and again felt it would be rude not to indulge. Also began to worry if Bushy would make it, as if he didn't receive a medal, Brexit would be the least of our probs

I'm trying my best here to describe the next stop so I'll give it a shot. On running we approached something that looked like it had been plucked straight from a Disney movie. It could have easily been Cinderella's Castle. It's called Château Pichon-Longueville it was absolutely stunning with its small lake at the front. If you ever visit South of France and visit just one Château, than make it this. We just hung and chatted to the crowds drinking the excellent wine they had on offer, Let me add that most was served in proper glasses, the French have class. What a brilliant photo opportunity, no selfie heads getting in the way of this shot.



### Tap Dancing Was Also Part of The Fun

The tone was set as the châteaux and wine stops came thick and fast, I counted 22 in all. Each chateau is a picturesque stately home in itself, this race is absolutely stunning unmatched by any of the other 98 marathons I'd ran up to this point. The rain poured at certain points and Caroline's Abba costume she had borrowed was covered in mud as it had flared trousers, though I don't think she was alert enough to notice.

What was this? David Bowie puking up? Freddie Mercury urinating over a vineyard? Elvis with his mouth under a barrel tap? A Clockwork Orange group lined up with canes? A Yellow submarine passing us? Michael Jackson asking me for a selfie?

After visiting so many châteaux we became oblivious to time until about mile 23 at the Oyster stop. The tangy, lemony saltiness washed down with the wine brought me to my senses. I needed this marathon to count as I'd arranged my 100<sup>th</sup> marathon and celebrations in Richmond the following week, so I just couldn't slip up. We decided to go for it the last few miles just briefly stopping at last vino stops (come on, we're TeamJackMon).

The last mile was in sight and we went hell for leather, except the last mile was two miles. This really is the world's longest marathon as we'd miscalculated the extra miles running into the châteaux. Slightly worse for wear we eventually hit the finish line in 5 minutes inside cut off at 6:25. Sunburnt and tipsy we received our boxed bottle of Château Haut-Bergey and a medal. I was now just one marathon away from my magic 100<sup>th</sup> the following week. Dean had finished 20 mins earlier but Bushy was nowhere to be seen.

I've never seen a race finish with so many smiles, many were even in tears but that may have been the wine & cheese. The rain started pouring so we were then ushered into a tent



### **Caroline Beats Bushy to The Corks**

intentions when we booked). The firework display was 8pm in the evening with our bus returning 11:30pm. It suddenly hit us we may have problems the next day. Caroline & I decided to just hang about but the others decided to grab a train, by this time the rain was pouring down.

We were sitting having about to eat and a rain drenched Dean & crew returned as apparently no trains were leaving Sunday evening. The stage was eventually lit up and an array of bands & dancers eventually entertained us for the eve so we decided a dance in the rain was in order. The excellent fireworks lit up the sky and rounded off a day of entertainment like no other.

We all slept on the return coach as had been a long day. Tomorrow would be a different story.

Bushy to his credit was up the next morning ready for the vineyard walk but the rest of us were out for the count and decided to have a rest. He didn't want to go on his own so gave it a miss also. The funny thing is we we're talking to some American couples later on who had done the same thing and stayed in bed. They mentioned many at their hotel had also done the same. A lesson for next year perhaps?

with ( you've guessed it) Even more wine, beer, cheese, foie grass and some French delicacies I've never even clocked before. Was not long before we bumped into Dean & Pete Bowles who were already tucking into the goodies. The Gorilla suit saga was long forgotten.

Bushy came in disappointed as he'd just missed the cut off. He still received a medal (thank got as would have been a riot) but didn't receive the boxed bottle of Château Haut-Bergey. He'd seen the sweeper van in front but gathered they'd be relaxed about it. After numerous photos it was time to head to the town where entertainment firework display had been laid on.

We'd arranged a walking wine tour around the vineyards with pickup at 8:30am the next morning. (I know it sounds crazy now but we had good



### **The Sweeper Van Complete With Brooms**

Caroline & I decided a day of Bordeaux sites was in order so wandered around the town visiting the excellent Water Mirror at Place De La Bourse, Triangle d'Or, Basilique Saint-Michel and Arch of Aquitaine as well as numerous other places plus some really cool French café's, All the while trying our best to avoid British themed places as we may as well stay at home for that.

A break was needed so we decided to open our bottle of Chateau Haut-Berget and sit by the river.. One problem, we did not have a corkscrew as they're not allowed through customs. Being in Bordeaux I explained to Caroline they'll be as popular as phones to carry. We must have asked 20 people and not one person carried one. Finally a little old lady in a second hand shop came to our rescue though she was having none of it when I mentioned she should enter a marathon.

At an outdoor café we got chatting to a guy who hand glided around the world for a hobby. It sounded like great fun. His hobby just seemed so similar to ours as he was also constantly looking for places around Europe to 'glide'. After a chat he'd decided he's enter Medoc next year.

I guess Caroline & I (and the rest of us for that matter) can come across as a cult except there's no supreme being but just a medal and a few magnets to worship. We're constantly spreading the marathon word as a few of us do this kind of thing quite often, and it's not just marathons.

***If you're interested in joining us for one of our European jaunts then keep an eye on Facebook or give us a shout. It would be rude not to.***