

**Midnight Sun Marathon, Tromso, Norway**  
**22-23 June 2013**  
**by Andy Grainger**

With an hour to the race I was looking out of my hotel with considerable trepidation as the rain bounced off the pavement! The 10k runners in the preceding race certainly got a good drenching. Thankfully, the Nordic gods blessed us and the Midnight Sun actually did peek in and out of the clouds for most of the race, with only a little drizzle here and there in the 2nd half.

The MSM is the Northernmost AIMS certified Marathon in the world, over 70 degrees north, within the Arctic Circle and is organised by TUIL AS, the city's athletics club. It is, of course, characterised by the fact that it starts at 8.30 pm on the Summer Solstice night (22nd June this year) and is run in total daylight as this part of the world has no night time for several months. Tromso is the 7th largest city in Norway, situated on the island of Tromsoya, which is connected to Tromsdalen on the mainland by the impressive and steep Tromso bridge. The surrounding scenery is stunning, with a wide fjord and snow topped peaks all around.

The race starts in the city centre and takes a course down 2 of the main streets, lined with a mix of locals and the supporters of the 1200 foreign entrants of the 3 races (10k, half & full marathons), then out towards the docks and over the bridge. Running on the downslope of the bridge towards the impressive and iconic, triangular shaped, Arctic Cathedral, you then have one half marathon along the Tromsdalen side of the fyord, where the locals organise parties and sit in their gardens, on their balconies or stand along the roadside, to cheer you on with characteristic, Ski-Sunday like chants! The support was fabulous! At half way it's back over the bridge, through the city again then out towards the airport, 6 miles out of town. It gets a bit less pretty out there and there were some long steady climbs to tire the legs. In the last 3 miles you are back being cheered on by local residents in their gardens, then into the city centre, where the Saturday night drinking revellers, give you a rousing, local Mack lager-fuelled reception along the high street!! I finished in 4:20. This was 22 mins slower than my Berlin marathon, but I was pleased considering how I had needed to ram the training into just 12 weeks.



A good friend of mine drew my attention to the race a year ago and I just had to do it! Running in Arctic midnight sunlight was a unique experience. I'll never forget the view along the side of the fjords of the sun glancing off the water and snowy mountain tops ... just beathtaking. I had to make sure I took it all in, in spite of the running! And all the young children who had been allowed to stay up to slap our hands and shout encouragement were petty special too. I would recommend it to anyone, though you'll need to save up ... Norwegian prices are eye-watering!

