Palma Mallorca, marathon - 2015

Having enjoyed a few days of sunshine in October last year, we decided to return this year.

A group of 9 of us made the trip, with NEMC members Adele, Davina, Michele, George and me choosing the marathon option.

Arriving mid morning at the airport, we got the bus directly to the registration area in front of the cathedral in the centre of town.

Registration was due to start at 11, but in stereotypical Spanish fashion, didn’t.

The organisers this year appeared to be the local council, rather than TUI who organised last year’s event.

The registration process was rather different and not in a good way.

To get into the registration area we had to demonstrate that we had the waiver form and had filled it in. This was new and seemed pointless.

After getting past this we reached and area with a tent for each of the three distances, 10k, half and full and also a tent for locals.

So far, so good. The short queue seemed to be taking ages to go down and as we reached the front, we discovered why. They were demanding an extra €5 for a one day registration with the Spanish athletics federation. This was also new from last year and was in contradiction to the online process which said that a national licence such as a UKA membership would suffice.

It seemed that everyone had the same argument, but had to stump up in the end. We were also given and orange wristband which had absolutely no discernable purpose.

Finally, we were handed our t shirts. This was a bit odd as we were supposed to get finishers t shirts as part of the entry fee, with the option of buying an event t shirt if desired. It turned out that this was the only t shirt available, which was bad news for those who had also paid €10 online for an event t shirt in addition to the promised, but not supplied, finisher’s shirt.

To add insult to injury, as with last year, the shirts were undersized, with a medium being the size of a small and so on.

Naturally, they would not change them, saying that they had only the correct number of each size.

This wasn’t a good start and we were left hoping that the actual event would be better organised.

Moving onto Sunday morning and we got a couple of taxis to the start on what was looking a rather warm day.

The bag storage consisted of what looked like ex army tents, where you handed over your bag at a table, and it was then hung up.

Unfortunately, these had been placed directly opposite a line of Portaloos, so was very crowded.

The start was on a dual carriageway, with zones, supposedly according to your predicted times, but actually appeared to have been issued rather randomly.

New this year was starting the full and half together, so I made my way to pen C and realised that having entered the barriered area, there was no demarcation of zones once in there, so George and I just wandered towards the front of zone B, all a bit odd.

Any way, off we went, on time as far as I know and we started to head west along the coast. This year the course for the full was two laps of the half, with each lap consisting of, in approximate terms, a 11K out and back on the dual carriageway, then 10k through the town.

I mentioned that there was also a 10k run. This was set off about 20 minutes after the main start, which ensured that we had motorcycle outriders trying to force a way through the crowded half and full runners, to let the 10k leaders through. It would have been so much easier to set the 10k off first.

After 6 or 7 k there was plenty of room to move as we headed back to the start area for the town section.

Drinks stations were regular and with much needed bottled water. Quite a few also had cups of coke and electrolyte drink and some had bananas too. Couldn’t fault this aspect at all, and it’s an important one in hot weather.

The town section involved a lot of back and forth through narrow streets and open squares, with bands playing in some of them.

There was plenty of support in this section, particularly as we passed many outdoor cafes and bars.

After about 20k, the half split off to finish their race and we were led onto the 11k out and back along the sea front.

This was much harder the second time around. Fewer people, no shade and of course, it was an out and back.

Passing 31k, I saw our shorter distance group members, basking in the sun by the roadside, having finished their endeavours.

It was just after this point, entering the town section for the second time, that the wheels started to come off for me.

A combination of heat and general fatigue set in, this being my fourth marathon in four weeks.

That last 10k had rather more walk breaks than I would have liked but I still managed to get to the finish, in a comfortably sub 4 time. It also had a couple of short variations from the first lap, presumably to make up the distance.

On the walk back to the bag store, there was water, coke, biscuits and beer. Proper beer, not the awful non-alcoholic stuff of the previous year.

I made a start on my rehydration programme and made my way to get my bag.

On the way, I passed the result being pinned up on a wall and saw that my name was already there, 270th. That was an impressively quick service.

After changing, I made for the beer again, as that was a convenient point to wait for Michele, Davina and Adele. Honest!

After we met up, we walked back down the course to wait for George coming in.

A local temperature gauge was reading 28.5C, so it was indeed a tad warm, which had affected all of us.

After a couple of days, the final results were in, bumping me up to 268th and there were also a lot of photos that you could buy, if you really wanted. I saw one of me with both feet off the ground, which doesn’t happen very often, but I wasn’t tempted.

Whilst there were a number of administrative issues this year, the actual event was pretty well managed and we were already talking about going back next year, before we had left.

With ease of access from the UK, good weather conditions and a lovely setting, it makes for a great Autumn break.

And did I mention the free beer?

Ian Richardson

26 October 2015.