

# MARATHON: Races are opportunities to visit new places

FROM A1

whose idea of fun is not just running a marathon but running as many as possible. They'll be out in full force Sunday for the running of the Seattle Marathon, one of the largest such events on the West Coast.

Supkoff will run Sunday, but it won't further his primary goal: completing marathons in all 50 states. He's run 14 marathons this year, adding eight states to his tally, which stands at 29 states.

Supkoff, 41, an e-commerce director for Costco, runs one or two "doubles" a year, mostly out of necessity - making separate trips to New Hampshire and Maine would be both time-consuming and expensive. A week after pulling that double, he ran a marathon at Mount Rushmore.

"I enjoy the travel component," he said. "Running gives me a good excuse to go to cities I always wanted to go to. And a lot of other places. Like I ran one in Fargo, N.D., and I've got to tell you, it was a cool city to visit. But except for running, there's probably no reason I would have gone there."

The Marathon Maniacs spend a lot of time on the road - have bib, will travel - and it was on one such trip that the group was conceived. Steve Yee, Chris Warren and Tony Phillippi came up with the idea after a 2003 marathon in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and quickly found that there were plenty of people like them eager to share training and fellowship.

"We love the camaraderie," Yee said. "It's great exercise and makes us feel good. We love to push ourselves to our physical and mental limits. It's a better

hobby than smoking, plus it's fun to get together at the end of a marathon for a great meal and ice cold beer."

The minimum qualification for Maniac membership is to run three marathons in three months. Paul David is not yet a full-fledged member, but he trains with people in the group and hopes one day to complete marathons in every state and on every continent. He's already run in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

"I really enjoy running with people who are faster than me and good company, and this group is both," said David, a 41-year-old software engineer. "This is actually a fairly relaxing hobby. All you have to do is keep moving. I find it very relaxing. I know it's a little weird."

Running until you drop is relaxing?

"It really is," said Eric Gierke, a 43-year-old Seattle neurologist and Maniac. "It's a quiet time to think, and then there's a social aspect. It's good company."

Gierke ran his first adult marathon on his 40th birthday, and that's an age many people take up the sport. A large number of the Maniacs are in their 40s and 50s.

"It's a sport that rewards perseverance and planning, and us old people tend to be better at that," said David, who ran his first marathon at 34. "It's about the same time we stop being good at skill sports like basketball."

The Seattle Marathon began in 1970, and last year more than 11,000 people entered to run or walk the full and half-marathons. This year's race benefits the Living Legacy Foundation, which builds community aware-

ness of organ and tissue donation.

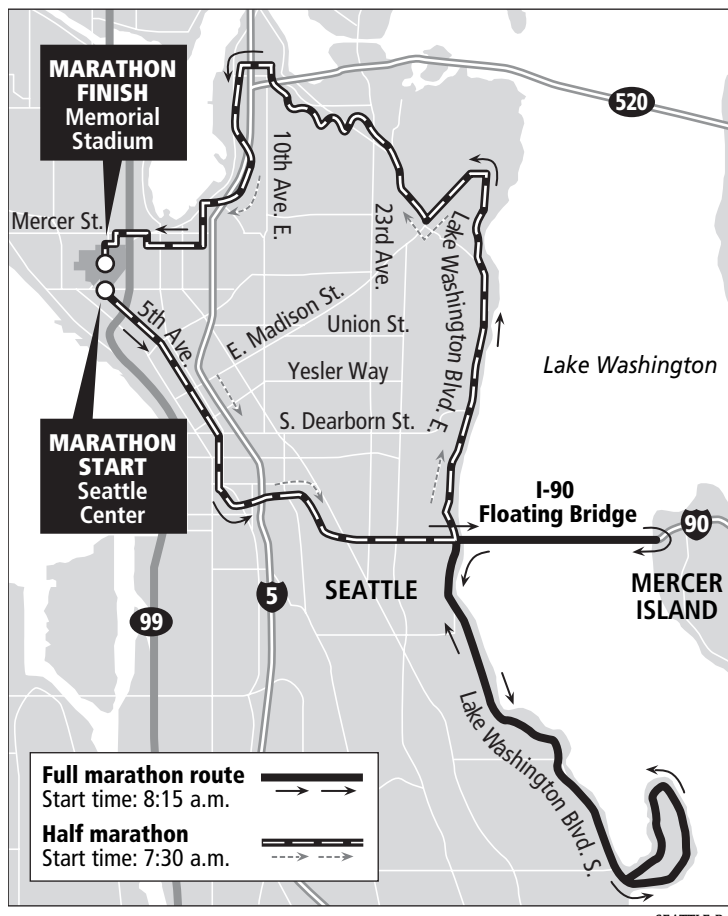
The route begins downtown near the Seattle Center and finishes at Memorial Stadium. It's the third route in the event's history - a group of hard-core runners does the unofficial "Ghost of Seattle," following the original route near Seward Park, the day before competing in the Seattle Marathon.

The Seattle event is popular and is one of the top 20 marathons in the United States, according to Runner's World magazine. The scenic course has provided unseasonably nice weather the past few years, but it looks like the runners' luck has run out this year.

It's not considered a "personal record" course anyway, thanks to a hilly stretch near Madison Park that falls between the 20th and 24th miles. Hills are nothing new to the Maniacs, though.

"That's the thing about training in Seattle," Supkoff said. "You go to other parts of the country, and they'll say it's a hilly course, but it's nothing compared to Seattle."

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## TRAFFIC ADVISORY

Several freeway offramps will be closed and express lanes on I-5 and I-90 will change operation hours Sunday to accommodate the Seattle Marathon. Drivers are warned to use alternative routes and expect delays at affected exits.

The I-5 express lanes will be closed until 9 a.m. The I-90 express lanes will close from 5:30 to 11:30 a.m. The westbound state Route 520 exit to East Roanoke Street will close from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. The northbound I-5 exit to Lakeview Boulevard East will close from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be no left turns from the I-5 Mercer/Fairview exit to southbound Fairview Avenue North from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; all traffic will turn right and northbound on Fairview.

No left turns from the southbound I-5 Boylston Avenue East exit onto Roanoke. Traffic can go right to Eastlake Avenue East or south on Boylston, which leads back to southbound I-5 or turns left under I-5 to Lakeview Boulevard.

## Church walls hold smog revelation

### High-tech coating cleans the air of pollutants

BY ELISABETTA POVOLEDO  
The New York Times

VENICE, Italy - When the American architect Richard Meier was asked to create a church in Rome to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of Christianity, he designed an imposing white concrete structure dominated by three soaring "sails."

The project's main technical sponsor got to work on a cement coating that would enhance Meier's trademark white sculptural forms. It came up with a material that essentially cleans itself, minimizing the need for maintenance.

What the sponsor, Italcementi Group, did not know at the time was that the new material - which contains titanium dioxide, a compound used as a white pigment - has another peculiarity. It "eats" surrounding smog.

Extensive testing, sponsored in part by a European Union research project into "smart" anti-pollution materials, has since determined that construction products containing titanium dioxide help to destroy air pollutants found in car exhaust and heating emissions, scientists say.

Several companies are now developing smog-eating products that can be used not only for the facades of buildings but also in paint, plaster and paving materials for roads. The new substances are being tried out in buildings, squares and highways in Europe and Japan.

Hailed by some scientists as a breakthrough, the process is still being evaluated by others. The question, said Melanie Sattler, professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington, is "whether coatings on buildings would be able to treat enough of the atmospheric air to make a difference."

Titanium dioxide had been used in self-cleaning coatings before because of its photocatalytic properties: sunlight touching the compound triggers a chemical reaction that acceler-

ates natural oxidation. Upon testing its new cement, however, Italcementi realized that the material also had the ability to break down nitrogen oxides emitted in the burning of fossil fuels.

"Theoretical work in photocatalysis has been going on since the 1980s," said Enrico Borgarello, Italcementi's head of research and development. "The problem is that no one had developed any practical applications."

According to Italcementi, tests in urban settings determined that some pollutants could be reduced by 20 percent to 70 percent, depending on atmospheric and light conditions, as well as the size of the area treated with the cement.

The reduction of pollutants is greatest within about 8 feet of a surface that has been treated, the company said. That means that a pedestrian walking down a street with traffic would inhale fewer pollutants while walking past treated buildings.

In one test, paving material using photocatalytic cement was used to cover the asphalt surface of a 1,000-foot stretch of road outside Milan with an average traffic flow of 1,000 vehicles per hour. Tests showed a reduction in nitrogen oxides at street level of about 60 percent, according to Italcementi.

Environmental scientists and engineers are following the development of such materials with keen interest.

"Philosophically, it is better never to form pollutants than to find ways to destroy pollutants, but this is a useful technique for air pollutants that humans already make," said Howard Liljestrand, an environmental chemist at the University of Texas at Austin. But he cautioned that the cost efficiency of such products would depend on long-term performance, adding, "Catalysts tend to lose their effectiveness over time."

Three years after Meier's church opened in the far-flung eastern Rome neighborhood of Tor Tre Teste, the bulk of the majestic structure remains remarkably bright, in contrast to the grimy gray joints, which were not treated with the product.

"It's hard to say if it's revolutionary, but we're happy with the results," Meier said.

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