



## BY THE WAY

# How to train for a marathon on vacation

Running in a new place can help break up the monotony of marathon training

Advice by Sonia Weiser

April 25, 2024 at 8:00 a.m. EDT

Micah Ling was all set to run her first marathon. After training for 15 weeks, just two shy of her training goal, the 43-year-old and her husband decided to take a vacation to Mexico. That's when things went south.

Ling's plan was to take her 22-mile runs on the road. But unlike the rocky dirt paths in her small Colorado mountain town, the trails she found in Baja California were sandy. She began experiencing pain, and by marathon day, she couldn't run at all. A physical therapist diagnosed her with peroneal longus tendinitis, the consequence of overuse while running on the unfamiliar terrain.

"I had no idea it would result in an injury," she says. Her symptoms lingered, but she hopes to be back to running all summer.

If you're training for a marathon, you may get bored by pounding the same pavement day in and day out. Runners should take precautions to avoid injury, but there are ways to safely and effectively train for a marathon while out of town.

Do it right, and it can even be fun.

## Rest up — or adjust your schedule

According to Abby Omerza, an [RRCA](#)-certified running coach and [ACSM](#)-certified exercise physiologist with countless marathons, ultramarathons, and triathlons under her belt, the simplest solution is to use a short vacation as a recovery period.

Training plans can be adjusted; you can tack on additional time to compensate for a milder week and end up with the same total mileage by race day. Taking a few days off from strenuous exercise won't set you back.

However, even at the most relaxed pace, you'll still be running, so "look for a place that's going to be safe," Omerza says.

Pick a destination with a variety of low-traffic areas, such as parks, where cars aren't a concern but you're also not alone.

And if you're planning on doing long runs, research routes in advance to ensure that you'll always be in a place with access to bathrooms, water, cell service and somewhere to seek help in case of emergency.

To eliminate some of the anxieties that may come from being in unfamiliar territory, see if you can join a local running club or book a vacation with a company such as [Rogue Expeditions](#), which will plan your itinerary in its entirety so all you have to do is show up at the airport.

## Plan for your new environment

What if you're going to be away for more than a few weeks and can't write off your entire vacation as a recovery period?

The first question you should ask is: How similar is your destination to your standard training conditions? A massive change in temperature, humidity, or altitude probably will hinder your ability to maintain your usual pace or mileage, so you'll have to add time at the beginning of your training plan to allow yourself a buffer upon arrival.

"Travel is a big stressor on your body, and if you push yourself too hard to stick to 'the plan,' you might actually end up setting yourself back because you won't be able to recover," says Ashley Mateo, a Denver-based runner.

Since 2015, Mateo has run 15 marathons including the six World Marathon Majors (Boston, Berlin, Chicago, London, New York and Tokyo) and has trained everywhere from Finland to Indonesia to the United Arab Emirates.

"If you miss a workout or two because you're tired or a cool opportunity comes up, don't beat yourself up about it," Mateo says.

## Running while sightseeing

If none of this sound appealing, it may be time to reframe your attitude about running. Instead of viewing it as a chore to power through, call it the main event.

Mauricio Sandoval, a 36-year-old runner based in Manhattan, travels to sightsee on foot while prepping for a big race in his destination. When he was training for the 2023 New York City Marathon, he completed half marathons in Mexico City, Guatemala City and Amsterdam as a way to incorporate long runs into his schedule while soaking in the atmosphere.

“I like big urban races, which include landmarks, scenic views and great crowds,” Sandoval says. He looks for “a race that will allow me to explore the city from a different perspective.”

Sandoval notes that some races have courses take you to parts of the city that are normally off-limits because they’re reserved for car traffic or because they’re typically not open to the public.

“For Amsterdam, the race is a big urban race that finishes in the Olympic Stadium,” he said. “DJ Ferry Corsten was playing in the stadium. So far, this has been my favorite half marathon.”