



The Sparkasse 3-Laender Marathon

The Sparkasse 3-Laender Marathon claims to be the only race in the world with a course that takes the runners through three different countries - Germany, Austria and Switzerland. No passport needed. PBMT runner Madeleine Lenke participated in this unique race in 2012. Here is her story.

“When we travel, I always check if there are any local races in the area. A trip to Munich in early October last year coincided with the race date of the 3-Laender Marathon, a small, but spectacular marathon by Lake Constance (Bodensee). The area of Lake Constance is also breathtakingly beautiful and situated only 2 hours by car or train from Munich. The lake is surrounded by snow-covered alpine peaks, but luckily the marathon course follows the lakeshore and is therefore relatively flat. The thought, however, to run one marathon in three different countries was enough to convince me to sign up.

We arrived in Germany a week before the race which allowed for plenty of time to recover from jet lag, do some sightseeing, and indulge in a German-style carbo loading regime consisting of spaetzle, pretzels, an endless variety of bread and, of course, a few pints of great beer. German brew masters know how to produce surprisingly tasty, full-bodied non-alcoholic beer! The marathon takes place during Oktoberfest, the world famous beer festival. Beer was also offered as a recovery drink after the race.

For the race, we decided to stay in a hotel close to the finish line in Bregenz, Austria. The start of the race is in Germany on the picturesque Island of Lindau right across the lake from Bregenz. From Bregenz, runners could either hop on a boat or take the train direct to the start line. Both options are complimentary to all runners. The event attracts some 7,500 runners of which about 1,200 run the full marathon and the others either the half or quarter marathon.

The route took us through the town of Lindau, over a bridge to the mainland and then followed a scenic, mainly asphalted, path along the eastern shore of Lake Constance. After 6 miles we entered Austria and continued along the lake to Bregenz where large crowds cheered us on. The crowds, despite a cool temperature of 54 F and a light drizzle, were very supportive and loud. The bibs were personalized with first names and it was fun to hear my name being called out with a German accent followed by “Hep! Hep! Hep!” or “Super!” The volunteers at the energy stations were equally supportive and made sure you got your supply of water, sport drinks, warm tea, gels, energy bars, oranges, bananas and dried fruit. After Bregenz, the crowds thinned out as we entered a forest with soft gravel paths for a few miles.

The race continued through smaller villages with typical alpine architecture and over fields with grazing cows and horses. People had brought picnic chairs and tables or sat in their gardens or on their balconies to watch and cheer on the runners. At mile 15, we approached the border between Austria and Switzerland. The border patrol guards waved us through and soon we entered the Swiss town of St. Margrethen where we were greeted by a large brass band and cheering spectators. After a few miles in Switzerland, we returned to Austria and continued to follow the shore of the lake. The Casino Stadium in Bregenz was a welcome sight and after half a lap on the track I crossed the finish line happy and tired. In the evening, restaurants in Bregenz filled up with



runners wearing the bright yellow finish t-shirt and medals and even though most participants were German-speaking, a few words in English, a nod, a smile and a toast was enough to feel part of the celebratory atmosphere. The marathon was the highlight of the trip, and I would not hesitate going again only to run this special marathon.

Signing up for a race abroad is a great way to combine a nice vacation with a unique running experience. The Sparkasse 3-Laender Marathon is a small, fun and well-organized race. Travel to Lake Constance from the United States via Munich, Zurich or Milan, then rent a car or take the train.

We combined the race with a visit to Munich where the Oktoberfest was in full swing, and then toured the countryside with visits to spectacular castles and quaint towns. For more details about the race, visit www.sparkasse-marathon.at”

By Bob Anderson.

PEACHTREE MARATHON July 4th Atlanta, GA.

