

The Manchester Marathon is one of the UK's highlights on the road-racing calendar. With tens of thousands of runners descending on the city every spring, questions around race logistics are both common and crucial. One especially frequent question among entrants is, " **When should my Manchester Marathon bib arrive in the post?**" This guide will walk you through the key dates, the entry process, what charity places really involve cost-wise, and practical tips on using race tools such as GPX downloads for the course.

Race Date, Scale and Time Limit

The Manchester Marathon usually takes place in mid-April, with the 2026 race scheduled for **Sunday 13 April 2026**. It has grown massively since its inception, now attracting around 25,000 runners, making it one of the UK's largest city marathon events outside London.

Aspect Detail Date Sunday 13 April 2026 Expected Entrants Approximately 25,000 runners Course Time Limit 6 hours

The time limit for completing the race is 6 hours – meaning a pace of approximately 13:44 per km or 22:05 per mile. This should be factored in both for entry and for planning your race day strategy.

Entry Process and Sell-Out Reality

The Manchester Marathon is well-known for selling out extremely quickly via the public ballot and standard entry routes. In some years, the official ballot opens in the summer of the preceding year and closes within days — so there's no room for procrastination.

- **Official Entry:** Typically, the official website releases entry slots by ballot or first-come, first-served contemporaneously. You will pay a registration fee (more below).
- **Charity Places:** These are popular alternatives but come with significant fundraising commitments.
- **Event Pack Dispatch:** Race confirmation and your bib number will be sent prior to race weekend.

Due to the scale and demand, the UK entrants' event pack (including your bib) is usually *posted to arrive by Friday* during the race weekend – just ahead of the event day.

When Exactly Should I Expect My Bib?

Historically, the Manchester Marathon organises postal delivery of race packs around 5-7 days before the race date. That means, for the April 13 2026 race, expect your pack to arrive somewhere around **Monday 7 April to Friday 11 April 2026**. However, many UK runners report their packs arrive near the Friday before the marathon, which is ideal timing allowing enough lead time.

Important: If you don't receive your race bib by **Friday**, contact the race organisers immediately. They also facilitate on-site race pack collection if required, but this can involve queuing.

Charity Places and Real Costs

If you don't manage to secure a ballot or direct entry, charity places are a common way into the race. A prominent example is the **MS Trust**.

Entry Type Details MS Trust Charity Place £40 registration fee + £500 minimum sponsorship

This means you pay a modest registration fee of £40 but commit to raising at least £500 for the charity through sponsorships. Many runners find this both rewarding and motivating but do consider the fundraising effort as part of your marathon planning.

Course Route, Elevation, and Certification History

The Manchester Marathon course is famed for its largely flat route through the city, which many runners praise as "fast and friendly". Here are the essentials:

- **Start Location:** The race starts on Upper Brook Street near Owens Park.
- **Route:** It weaves through the city centre, Salford Quays, and finishes near Manchester City Centre on Portland Street.
- **Elevation:** The course is mainly flat with minor rolling hills – total elevation gain is roughly 40m.
- **Certification:** The course is UK Athletics certified and measured by AIMS standards.

Third-party GPX Files and Race Route Apps

If you want a detailed GPS route loaded onto your device, goandrace.com is a [useful third-party tool](#) providing up-to-date GPX downloads, including for the 2026 Manchester Marathon. Remember this isn't the "official" race source but is widely used by the running community.

You can load the GPX file onto devices such as a Garmin running watch or cycling GPS. Simply download the route file and use Garmin Express or your app's interface to import the marathon course before race day. This can be excellent for pacing and visualising turns well before you run.

Practical Tips and Key Reminders

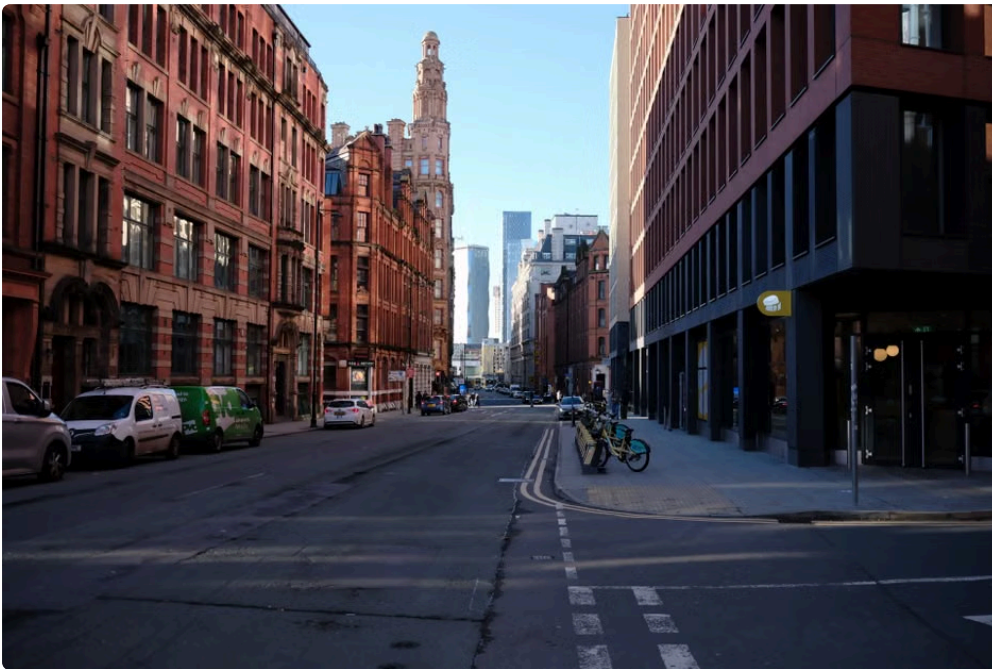
1. **Check Your Exact Postal Address Linked to Entry:** Race packs are sent to the address given when you registered, so double-check this in advance.
2. **Keep an Eye on Emails:** Organisers often send confirmation emails with tracking or delivery windows for your bibs and race numbers.
3. **If You Miss Your Postal Pack:** Race weekend delivery options and on-site collection spots usually operate on the Saturday before the race, located at central points near the start area.
4. **Plan Transport:** The nearest train station with the least walking for the start is Deansgate Station for city centre access, or Salford Central if you're approaching from the west side.
5. **Remember Time Limits:** Six hours on course and safety cutoff points, so pace yourself accordingly.
6. **Race-week Kit List:** I recommend keeping a simple note on your phone — bib, safety pins, GPS watch, charged phone, layers, energy gels, etc.

Summary Table: Manchester Marathon Bib and Entry Details

Topic Details Race Date Sunday 13 April 2026 Expected Entrants ~25,000 Bib Arrival Arrives by Friday 10 April 2026 by post; onsite collection available Entry Costs Ballot fees vary; Charity places e.g., MS Trust: £40 + £500 sponsorship Course Flat, certified UK Athletics standard, 42.195 km GPX Tools goandrace.com for GPX downloads, loadable to Garmin devices

Final Thoughts

You know what's funny? patience and preparation are key to a successful manchester marathon experience. Understanding when your race bib will arrive—typically posted to arrive by Friday of race week—lets you plan logistics calmly without last-minute panic. Don't underestimate the fundraising commitment if you're running via a charity place, like the MS Trust's £40 + £500 plan, and make use of online tools like goandrace.com to familiarise yourself with the course route well ahead of race day.



With these tips and timelines in hand, you're well on your way to a smooth, enjoyable Manchester Marathon weekend. Happy running!