



Boulder Backroads Marathon – Course Description

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*This complementary Race Course Description is not an official product of the Boulder Backroads Marathon

START – For the first 0.5 miles you'll wind around the west side of Boulder Reservoir and start a gradual, rolling climb (of approx. 0.25 mile) up to Mile 1. The road continues to curve around to the northeast (past the model airplane runways to the east), with a gentle rise to 1.5 miles, and then you'll get another gradual rise of 0.3 mile up to Mile 2 at Monarch Rd. Use this slight uphill grade for the first two miles to hold back and allow for a proper warm up, (start out approx. 1 minute slower than goal pace for first mile).

MILE 2 – North of Monarch Rd. for 0.5 miles, the course is fairly flat with a slight rise to Niwot Rd., which is paved. Turning west on Niwot Rd., take advantage of this flat stretch to get into a good rhythm and soak up the beautiful views of the Foothills as you run 0.75 mile to N. 49th St. Back on the dirt and headed north on N. 49th St. to Mile 4, take care to find a smooth line to run as this road can be a little “washboarded”.

MILE 4 – Approaching the 4.0 mile marker you will descend to a gorgeous shaded section of the course, as the route crosses a creek and passes equine farms. Continue to relax and hold back for the next 0.5 mile as the road slightly rises up to Oxford Rd. Turning west on Oxford Rd., “run tall” for the next slightly inclining section by keeping your eyes focused on the ever approaching foothills. At N. 41st St. the course turns north again towards Mile 6 and more beautiful farms.

MILE 6 – Nearing Mile 6, the road curves west and then back north again and you will again find yourself climbing slightly. At 6.5 miles, (the turnaround point for Half Marathoners), you'll see the Table Mountain Antenna Field to the east and also be sure to look west/north for more amazing views of the mountains (and a few modest little abodes!) 6.5 to 7.5 is the first “tester” section of the race, as the course continues to rise with two distinct “speed bumps”. This mile may seem longer than normal because of the unimpeded views, and resist the temptation to increase tempo as you reach the high point of the race course (5,550 ft.) at 7.5 miles and Nelson Rd.

MILE 8 – Turning east on the springy new pavement of Nelson Rd., relax and descend rapidly around the north side of Table Mountain. The next two miles of the course are very fast, so fight the “urge to surge” as there is still climbing left to come in the race! This is a good opportunity for a quick mental check, and also be prepared to pick a good line (low near the gutter), as Nelson Rd. does have a bank/camber to it in sections. Just before Mile 10, the race course turns back south onto the dirt of N. 55th St. Coming off of the smooth pavement, again be aware of the “washboard” effect of the dirt road and pick your line well.

MILE 10 – N. 55th St. curves to Mile 10 and then is a rolling incline up to Mile 11 and Prospect Rd. Here is your first big test of the race as you stay steady and run up a pretty steep incline for approx. 0.25 mile. Past this hill is a unique and favorite section of the course as N. 55th St. turns into Ouray Dr. which snakes and winds through beautiful trees and foliage on the southeast side of Table Mountain.

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MILE 12 – Just past Mile 12 and continuing south on Ouray Dr., you will be rewarded with a nice cruising descent to Oxford Rd. at 12.5 miles. Hold back yet as you get another 0.5 mile incline tester heading east into the rising sun on Oxford to Mile 13, and the halfway point of the marathon. On days with no cloud cover, this is the most exposed section of the course (until Mile 15). After the peak of this incline, Oxford continues to roll slightly downhill for approx. 0.3 mile to a paved section at 13.5 miles. The next 0.5 mile is a big downhill to N. 63rd St.; remember to hold back during this section as you will need to conserve enough energy for the return trip back west!

MILE 14 – Continuing east past N. 63rd St., the course is again dirt, and flattens out as it turns south to become Nimbus Rd. and the 15 mile marker. Heading east past the aid station, Nimbus Rd. is well shaded and beautiful as you cross another creek on your way to N. 73rd St. The next 4 miles are a very flat and KEY section of the marathon. This is your opportunity to find a consistent, relaxed stride in order to conserve enough energy for the remainder of the race.

MILE 16 – Running east past N. 73rd St., you'll be without shade for a short bit again until Nimbus curves north and turns back into Oxford Rd. The course turns north on N. 81st St. for a quick section to the turnaround point at the large Cottonwood trees. (Be thankful that Race Director Lesley Kinder didn't place the turnaround point further up this road!) Hit the turnaround point, put the sun at your back and keep running strong back the way you just came!

MILE 18 – Oxford Rd. becomes Nimbus Rd. again as you run west back across N. 73rd St. towards the shaded section and Mile 19. Heading back onto the exposed section of Oxford Rd., (this time with the sun at your back), mentally prepare yourself for the incline starting at Mile 20.

MILE 20 – Settle in and collect your thoughts for the big ascent back west on Oxford Rd. (approx. 200 ft. to Mile 22), starting with that 0.5 mile long hill you descended at mile 13.5. Stay steady, and keep your breathing full and relaxed as you crest this hill and continue on the slightly rolling grade of Oxford Rd. Use the downhill sections here as “mini recoveries” so that you can keep a consistent pace on the inclines.

MILE 22 – Turning south on N. 49th St. to Mile 22, this will be your chance to recover and pick up some time as the route declines just over 100 ft. to Mile 24 at Monarch Rd. Even if you're feeling strong, definitely make sure that you keep your heart rate in check and conserve enough energy for the final rolling 2.2 miles. Again, be sure to find good running lanes on the dirt roads so that your stride can remain as efficient and relaxed as possible. You'll pass back through the beautifully shaded equine farms as the Boulder Reservoir and finish line draws ever closer!

MILE 24 – Running south past Monarch Rd. on N. 55th St., the finish line is just around on the south side of the Boulder Reservoir. Buckle down and stay strong as the road takes a steep but short rise of approx. 0.25 mile up to Mile 25.

FINISH – Cresting this rise, the finish line is in sight to the south but stay focused on your stride and the rolling road in front of you. Know that you will be sore tomorrow if you stop now or at the finish, so run strong to the finish! Keep it going as you rise gently up to the entrance to the Reservoir, and accelerate through the turn and the cheering fans on downhill to the finish line!