



Route guide

The course is a spectacular and inspiring challenge. Rarely leaving the shores of Kielder Water, it follows the Lakeside Way meandering through the forest and heath land that surrounds the lake. There are a few inclines to negotiate but most are of the short sharp nature and are rewarded afterwards with nice long stretches of easy running. Most inclines come in the first 15 miles or so and the final few miles are amongst the easiest running on the course.



Depending on your pace my advice would be to employ a tactical walk on one or two of the sharpest rises. They are short but can be energy sapping and a brief walk will not lose you much time but will save you precious juice for later. As with all marathons pace judgement will be key for everyone but Kielder has so much else to offer visually that hopefully its challenges are balanced out.

The terrain varies between a mile or so of tarmac and the trail type surface which is ideal for running. The Lakeside Way is still relatively new, however the surface has bedded down well. The areas covered in pine needles are particularly enjoyable. Anyway, here is my brief guide with some pictures:

Start



We begin next to the shoreline on the Leaplish visitor centre loop road. After a few hundred yards the road rises up the hill away from the lake. A good way to start at the right pace. We then drop down into the central area at Leaplish before swinging right under the finish gantry (see you later) and down onto the Lakeside Way after about 1.5 miles. There is a short bridge to cross and then we're off and away.



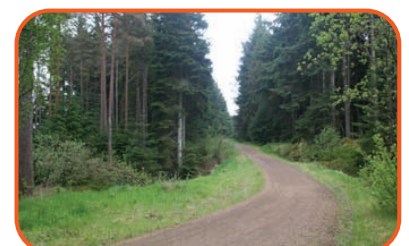
Start-5km

A little undulating but easy running. Passing the Hawkthirst Scout Activity Centre we run a couple of hundred yards on the old access road before returning to the path up towards Matthew's Linn and the first feed station enjoying great views of Kielder Water.



5km-10km

Shortly after Matthew's Linn we turn into Lewisburn and the sharp switchbacks which take us over the spectacular new bridge over the burn. After climbing away and around Lewisburn we enjoy a flat straight section for a couple of miles through the forest. As you approach 10km you might be tempted to visit the bird hide where ospreys and other birdlife can be viewed. Maybe next time!!



10km-15km

For the first time in 2011 the route incorporates the famous Kielder viaduct providing another stunning feature to the course with great views of the far end of Kielder Water. The new section rises to rejoin the trail.



This undulating section is an area not to push on too much if you're feeling good. Save it! At around 15km you could make a 50metre detour into the forest and visit Silvas Capitalis, the 'giant forest head' to see if you can get any bright ideas about reaching the finish line!



15km-halfway

Not long after Silvas Capitalis there is a taxing climb up to the 10 mile point. Tactical walk?



The next few miles are really enjoyable. Passing the Janus Chairs, if you need a brief sit down you will have some of the best views of the day in this section.



Robin's Hut is approximately half way and if you pause to look across the lake you can see its counterpart Freya's Cabin awaiting you near the finish.



Halfway-25km

Just beyond the halfway point is the Belvedere landing jetty. Hopefully you won't be tempted to wait for the ferry to head back across to Leaplish!



Climbing away from the lake up the switchbacks, another tactical walk might work here although it is fairly brief. A little later you can get a good view of your fellow marathoners as you navigate around a long inlet. Better off looking across when you are on the far side I think.



Now you can catch glimpses of Kielder Dam at the far end of Kielder Water.



25km-30km



After crossing the dam you are now heading for home. If there's a bit of breeze coming from the lake then the locals use the wall for good protection. The path then winds through heather towards Tower Knowe Visitor Centre on the south shore. No big hills but every incline here will probably be a test. The route between Whickhope and Bull Crag Peninsular is pleasantly gentle and secluded.



30km-35km



The switchback climb to access Bull Crag is a definite walking opportunity. Again its short but at this point in the race it will appear steeper than you think. The rewards once on top are worth it though. The peninsular offers some of the best running on the route and much of it gently downhill.



35km-40km



A brief section along the now almost totally submerged old road gives you a tantalising view over the water to the finish at Leaplish Waterside Park but there's still some running to be done. A view back along the path shows the gentle turns of the closing kilometres.



40km-finish



At Freya's Cabin you have just about a mile or so left to run. You could pause and pick out Robins Hut directly opposite on the north shore and check out if there is still anyone negotiating halfway! The final few hundred metres are through pine forest and finally into the finishing straight.



Well done!