



Auroville Marathon 2011

Description

The Auroville Marathon has placed Pondicherry on the marathon map of India.

The day break of Feb.13 at the Auroville forest saw unprecedented activity in the usually quiet area. A few hundred people had tied up their shoe laces and pinned up their running bibs to run the Auroville Marathon 2011.

This marathon started in the year 2008 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the founding of Auroville Township. This was the 4th edition. The marathon has grown in strength and gained popularity over the 4 years since its inception. This year 1400 participants ran the forest trails at Auroville. There were groups from Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi and other parts of India.

The marathon was divided into many categories – the full marathon of 42.195 kms, the half marathon or 21.8 kms and the 10K run. There were shorter runs of 5K and 2K for teenagers and children. The different categories had staggered starting times, with the full marathon starting at 5.00 a.m.

Buses arranged by the organizers picked up the runners from different parts of Pondicherry and brought them to Auroville. Some of them were put up at the guest house in Auroville.

The runners were put through a warming up and stretching regimen to the tune of some fast music and pep talk before the start of the marathon. Then the runners were led to the start line. Once the go was given, the runners ran in a crowd, which quickly spread out as the distance progressed.

Matri Mandir, the spiritual and architectural centre of Auroville, was sighted in the first mile. There was a local band of percussionists beating out a forest rhythm to energise the runners.

Auroville Marathon is one of the most beautiful Trail marathons in India. The entire distance of the runs was charted through the Auroville forest, covering areas where normally visitors do not set foot on. There is a good tree cover to shield the runners from direct sunlight.

The aid stations were placed at every 3 kms and were well-manned and well-stocked with quick bites, water and electrolyte. They also had a first-aid counter at every aid station. The organizers and volunteers were helpful and efficient.

The route was well marked with arrows indicating the routes for all the categories. Volunteers stood at major turns to guide the runners, lest they lose their way in the forest. Volunteers on cycles rode past to make sure things were going smooth. The local villagers from Kuyilapalayam and other nearby areas whizzed past on cycles or bikes occasionally. Aurovillans had formed impromptu cheer groups along the way who motivated the runners. And of course the runners themselves were all geared up.

The last leg of the marathon had all the different streams of runners mingling to reach a common finish line. The children from the 2K and 5K were also in the mix. The forest band had shifted to the finish line and guided the runners through the last leg with their rustic rhythms.

The finish line was a maze of activity. A huge crowd had gathered to welcome the successful marathoners. There was jubilation in the face of the runners as they crossed the line. The runners went to the T-shirt counters and collected their free T-shirts with the Auroville marathon logo. Next stop was the breakfast queue! The runners were famished and eagerly savoured the hot south Indian breakfast. Later the buses dropped back the participants to Pondicherry.

The experience at the Auroville marathon was amazing, with a capital 'A'! Many of the runners have vowed to come back again next year. Auroville marathon has placed Pondicherry firmly on the Marathon map of India!

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Category

1. Special Features

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