

TRAVEL

I traded rest and relaxation for a ‘run-cation.’ Here’s why running vacations are a growing travel trend

Guided group trips are hitting the trails. Destination races are selling out fast. The running boom is going global.

May 29, 2025 | 3 min read



The buzz phrase “run-cation” has been coined to describe the trend of people travelling for events like the Broken Goat in B.C. (shown).

Steven Wells

By Lisa Kadane Special to the Star

Last summer, as I ran along an alpine ridge flanked by steep scree slopes in B.C.'s Bugaboos range, I realized I was hot on the heels of a new trend in travel: run-cations. I jogged alongside a mother and her teen son from Toronto, a “recovering lawyer” from Chicago, a retiree from Vancouver Island and a kinesiologist from Squamish, B.C.

Instead of seeking rest and relaxation on vacation, we were pursuing the heady scent of adventure in the Purcell Mountains. We ranged from casual joggers (me) to serious athletes (one had just completed part of the Alps' Mont Blanc circuit).

We were on this [guided trail running trip](#) with CMH (Canadian Mountain Holidays) to push ourselves, safely, amid stunning scenery: turquoise glacial lakes, towering granite spires, and snowfields striped pink with algae.

I was hooked.

I enjoyed the challenge so much, I quickly signed up for another running trip, this time to B.C.'s Okanagan Valley. My itinerary centres around the [Half Corked Marathon](#), which winds through wine country from Osoyoos to Oliver for approximately a half marathon. Held each spring, the non-timed run is more leisurely than competitive, with winery sampling en route, followed by more tastings and live music at the finish line in a community park.

Like many outdoor activities, running picked up momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its popularity continues to grow. In its [2024 trend report](#), the fitness tracking app Strava noted a “huge rise” in run clubs: a 59 per cent increase in running club participation globally.

Meanwhile, buzz phrases like “run-cations” and “[marathon tourism](#)” have been coined to describe the trend of people travelling to participate in these athletic adventures. And judging from the sold-out races across Canada and beyond, travelling to run is a movement with legs.



Runners cross over Tower Bridge during the 2025 London Marathon. More than 1.1 people have entered the race lottery in the hopes of participating in 2026.

Felix Diemer/London Marathon Events

Since the pandemic, Toronto-based runner Rebecca Durcan has twice completed the Boston Marathon, and her travel plans include the Semi de Paris half marathon in France's capital. "It gives you a reason to be there and see parts of the city that you run through, that you might not see otherwise," says Durcan, who always arrives early pre-race, or stays a few days afterwards, to sightsee.

Some races are so popular, scoring an entry involves winning the lottery, and the odds aren't in your favour. For the 2026 edition of the [London Marathon](#), for example, more than 1.1 million runners — a record number of hopefuls — entered the ballot for approximately 50,000 spots. For some of the most sought-after events, niche companies such as [Marathon Tours & Travel](#) offer race entries as part of travel packages (which are quick to sell out, too).

Closer to home, the Okanagan Valley's Half Corked Marathon sees up to about 7,000 racers vying annually for 1,000 lottery spots. Runners fly in from across Canada, the U.S. and even international destinations. "It hits such a broad spectrum of visitors. (Whether) you're a race runner or a recreational jogger, you can do it," says Jennifer Busmann, executive director of the Oliver Osoyoos Winery Association, which organizes the event.

Many participants come for the lake and mountain views, and the memorable experience of running through vineyards in full leaf. In fact, for many runners, the promise of gorgeous scenery is a major motivator when travelling for their sport.

That's what drew Kelowna resident Duane Bentley to the [Broken Goat](#), a trail race with three distances (12K, 25K and 50K) along the spectacular Seven Summits alpine route near Rossland, B.C.

"The big appeal is getting into nature, (and) going somewhere to see a new canyon or new vista," says Bentley, who is also running the Enchantments Traverse near Leavenworth, Wash., and the [Minotaur SkyRace](#) in Alberta's Crowsnest Pass this summer.

These runs are his warm-up for the [Transalpine Run](#), a seven-day, 243-kilometre stage race across the Alps between Germany and Italy in September. After the race, Bentley and his girlfriend will recover by eating pasta and drinking wine in the Italian resort town of Riva del Garda.



Trail runners on the legendary Transalpine Run race across the Alps from Germany to Italy.

Andi Frank

“Destination races often draw people who are looking for a running vacation,” says Rene Unser, owner and race director at [P.A.C.E. Trail Runs](#), a club that hosts running clinics and events, including the Broken Goat. “I think it’s quite common to gather your friends and pick a destination race that everyone can do together.”

It’s true. I’m running the Half Corked with my husband and some good friends, and Durcan will be racing in Paris with girlfriends. It’s not only the endorphins and feeling of accomplishment that lure runners to new destinations but also the camaraderie.

“The beauty of running is that it doesn’t have to be marathons or halves. It’s about getting out there and moving,” says Durcan. “When you combine it with friends and travel, it’s fabulous.”

Lisa Kadane travelled as a guest of CMH and the Half Corked Marathon; neither reviewed or approved this article.