



B.C.

I Ran the Half Corked Marathon in the Okanagan—Here's What It's Really Like

Running for 19 years and counting, the highly anticipated Half Corked Marathon in Oliver Osoyoos celebrates B.C. wine and simply having a good time

By Sandrine Jacquot / July 23, 2026

Standing under the morning Okanagan sun, surrounded by rows of vines, I shift my weight on the gravel path at the start line.

A man in a baseball cap and sunglasses announces the important rules for the day—don't stray from the course, finish before 2:15 p.m. He (half-jokingly) asks who's stretched before the 20-some-odd-kilometre run we're about to embark on. This prompts many participants, myself included, to (half-heartedly) do a few quick leg stretches.

The energy is high. Everyone in the silver wave (everyone's divided into different groups to stagger start times) is eagerly anticipating the "run" to 14 winery stops through the vineyards in the [Oliver-Osoyoos](#) valley. It's not even 9 a.m., but everyone's ready for their first sample.

We're also dressed like superheroes. I'm surrounded by group costumes like the "Super Moms," or ensemble classics like The Incredibles in their skin-tight suits. I look down and adjust the borrowed children's Superman cape pinned to my plain red T-shirt. Sure, I may be underdressed, but there's a buzzing atmosphere that's enough to make me forget about my attire.

Then, the MC asks a group of women dressed as Care Bears to count us down. And when they shout "one," our group sets off on the [2026 Half Corked Marathon](#).

The always sold-out, highly anticipated event takes over Oliver Osoyoos every year on the last weekend in May. Originally inspired by the Marathon du Medoc in Bordeaux, France, B.C.'s Half Corked is a several-day-long event full of laughter and old friends reuniting for a girls trip—and the vino is *flowing*.



Indeed, we were primed even the night before the race at the official block party hosted by [Nostalgia Wines](#) off Black Sage Road in Oliver. I sampled wines from local Oliver Osoyoos makers like [Adega on 45th Estate Winery](#), [River Stone Estate Winery](#) and, of course, our hosts, Nostalgia.

Surrounded by the dramatic backdrop of the rolling desert hills and the soundtrack of live music, we also indulged in delectable dishes from various food stations, like juicy slow-braised beef cheeks from [Casa Molina](#).



Crucial to successfully (semi) running a half-marathon with next-to-no training while drinking lots of [wine](#)? A good night's [sleep](#).

Before heading to the block party, I checked into my suite at [Spirit Ridge, Unbound Collection by Hyatt](#). With views of the desert mountains and Sonora Dunes Golf Course, my suite was complete with a full kitchen, dining area, living room and, importantly, two very large, comfortable beds to get in some good shut-eye before the big day.

It's also worth spending time exploring the area around Spirit Ridge, too. The [Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre](#), owned by The Osoyoos Indian Band, and Indigenous winery [Nk'Mip Cellars](#) are all just steps away.



What It's Like to (Mostly) Run the Half Corked Marathon

On “one,” I start jogging on the gravel path with the group.

Since I'm running solo, I've brought my headphones. However, I quickly realize my mistake and, for the next few hours, regret having to pause my music and remove my headphones every time we reach a station—only to reset after downing a wine sample. We reach the first stop, [Road 13 Vineyards](#), after what feels like maybe a kilometre.

Along the course, you can sample wine in its many forms. Of course there's white, red and [rosé](#)—some stations serve sangria or even wine freezies. It feels like you can sample as much as you want (but be careful of drinking too heavily while exerting yourself on a sunny, hot day).



The uphill feel *very* uphill, many of which I walked. The downhills make me feel like I really am Superman.

Along the way, I meet groups who've come from across B.C., Canada and even internationally to reunite for the weekend. Though I'm running the course solo, everyone's excitement, positivity (and slight inebriation) means it's easy to make friends along the route. It's also easy to chat at the lunch stop, where everybody is catching their breath and fuelling up on an array of hearty [snacks](#) like bread, fruit, cookies, sausages, pickles—and more wine samples. And don't worry, there are plenty of port-a-potties along the route.

We have roughly three-and-a-half hours to complete the run. This time constraint seemed daunting at first (since I essentially went from couch to half marathon), but it's actually fairly doable. It helps to take the shuttle bus, aptly named the Saggin' Wagon, up the roughly three-kilometre hill up Black Sage Road. I highly recommend this strategy.



The Half Corked Marathon does take you through some truly jaw-dropping scenery. It doesn't hurt that it's a beautiful day—hot, but not unbearable, blue sky with a scattering of clouds. We run through seemingly endless rows of vineyards and valleys along Black Sage Road and the Golden Mile Bench. I'm tempted to stop and take photos—but I promised myself to run as much as I could, and I'm sticking to my word.

Somewhere along the way, I overhear that we only have one stop left. I've lost track of time—and how much wine I've had. Every sample is starting to taste really good. And after a glorious downhill stretch, we reach the finish line.



Post-Race Recovery

Even though the point of the Half Corked is to have fun, I feel accomplished when I cross the finish line. But now, I'm ready for a filling meal. Included with the ticket is a paella plate from the Paella Guys, which I quickly devoured while sipping, you guessed it, more wine.



It truly is a party, complete with people cheering as racers cross the finish line. It feels so nice to lie in the shaded grass, listen to the live music and give my legs a break.

Eventually, I board the school bus back to Spirit Ridge to continue my recovery. As a notorious anti-napper, I spend the afternoon lounging by the beautiful blue pool at Spirit Ridge, watching people filled with energy (read: kids) swim in the pool. I dip my toes in but spend most of my time horizontal with a [book](#).



Then, it's time for the final dinner at [Domaine Artema](#). I'm seated at a table with head winemaker Justin Hall at Nk'Mip Cellars. We chat about winemaking and life in Oliver Osoyoos while enjoying a hearty, family-style, multi-course meal with pasta, veggies, meat, dessert and even more wine.

It's a soul-filling way to end a weekend that's definitely made the year's highlight reel. I make another promise to myself to race again with a prize-worthy costume and a big group of girlfriends.

Tickets for the 2027 Half Corked Marathon go on sale on July 28, 2026, and are \$299 a person plus taxes and fees.

More information at oliverosoyoos.com/half-corked-marathon.

The Road to the Race

The drive along Highway 3 through to B.C.'s Interior is a scenic route worth taking at least once. It was my first time travelling to the Okanagan, so I was actually looking forward to the roughly four-and-a-half-hour drive to Oliver.

I borrowed a Chevrolet Trax for the journey, an SUV with comfortable seats, good fuel range and a sunroof I kept open as much as possible. With my phone connected, I listened to music or an audiobook and cruised along the highway, admiring the creeks, tall trees and passing mountains.

Near Oliver, my GPS took me on a less-travelled dirt road that I initially thought was just for cattle. It wanted me to go *through* the hills instead of *around*. It seemed other cars ahead of me had also pulled over, unsure (which made me feel a little bit better). It was raining pretty heavily near Oliver that day, so the dirt road was actually a slippery mud road. Having never been in the area—and with very little cell service—I reluctantly trusted the navigation. I made it through to Oliver on the other side, and it was a direct road to the Half Corked check-in at the community centre. In that seemingly precarious moment, I was very glad to be driving a compact SUV instead of my older and much smaller car I left at home.

The Pit Stop: Chilliwack

If you're familiar with driving in Metro Vancouver, trying to leave the city is arguably the worst part of any road trip. So, I decided to turn off Highway 1 into Chilliwack to stretch my legs and grab some lunch before hitting the no-gas-station stretch of the journey.

Marais Tea Company & Cafe Marais



Tucked around the corner from District 1881 on Mill St., Marais Tea Co. & Cafe Marais is like a piece of Paris brought to British Columbia.

Founded by Ethan Maarhuis after he and his wife fell in love with the Parisienne boulangerie culture on a trip to France, Marais Tea Co. sells nearly 100 different rich, flavourful and high-quality teas. Doubling as a cafe, the cozy spot makes French-inspired pastries, eats and comforting drinks with its tea.

I had been absolutely craving an authentic French crepe, and La Parisienne—stuffed with ham and emmental cheese—was just the fix I needed. I took a glazed madeleine for the road (delicate and deceptively delicious), as well as the Parisian Fog from their spring drink menu—a twist on a London fog, Earl Grey tea, lavender-infused syrup (including real lavender flowers) and steamed milk.



Photo by Sandrine Jacquot

Don't forget to pop into [The Parisienne Market](#), which shares a space with Marais Tea Co. Owned and operated by Julie Maarhuis, Ethan's mother, the boutique stocks curated antiques and pieces (like linens, jewellery, dishes, mirrors and more) discovered on her travels to France.

The Love Chapter



As soon as I found out that one of B.C.'s few romance bookstores was in Chilliwack, I knew I had to visit. The Victorian-inspired bookstore is located off the main strip of the District 1881 shopping district.

I could've spent hours browsing the bookshelves stocked with different romance books—or simply staring at the ceiling decorated with hanging pages. Instead, I left with a book (*Alchemised* by SenLinYu) and a few literary-themed trinkets, ready to hit the road to the Half Corked Marathon.