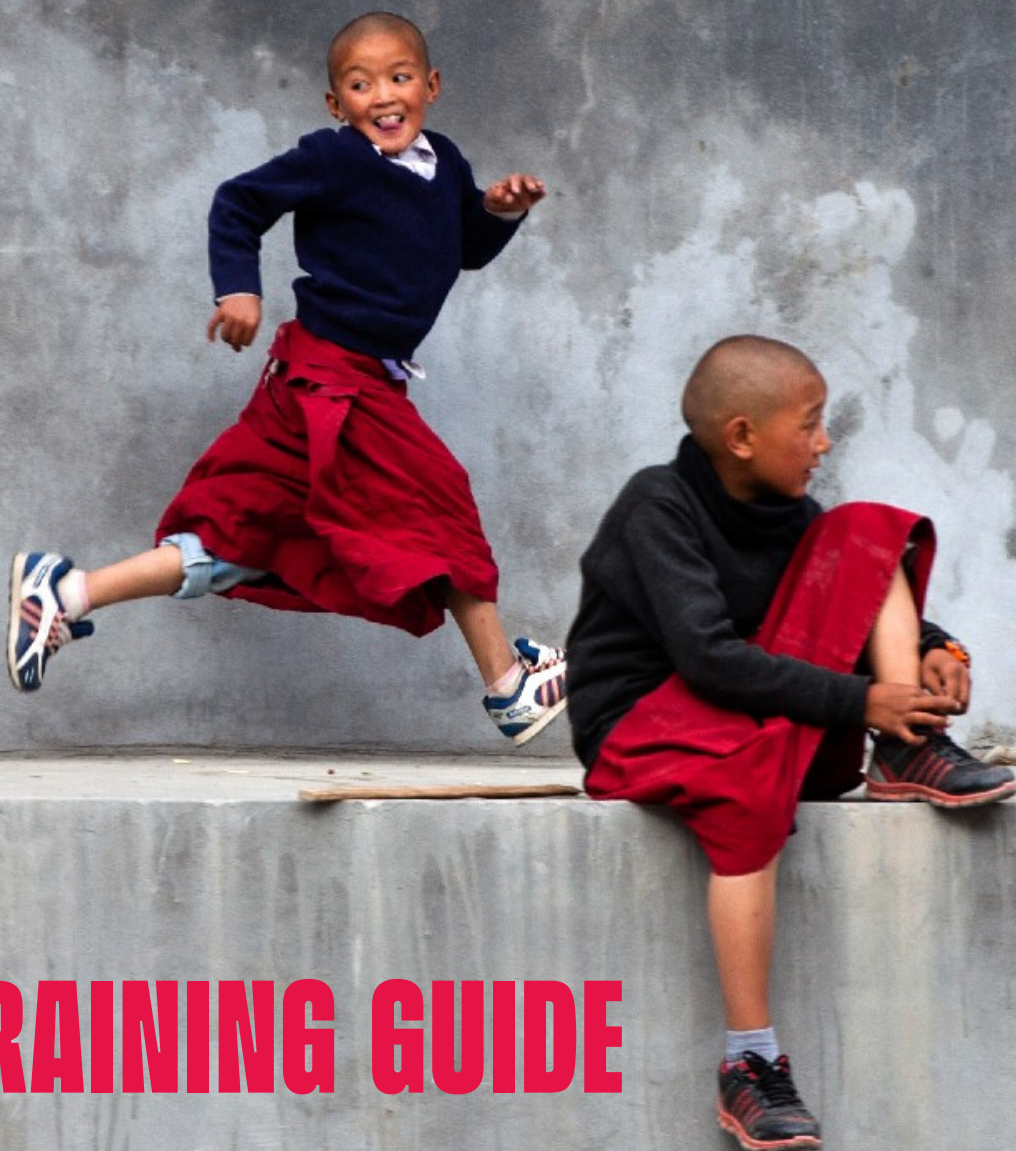


FREE TIBET



TRAINING GUIDE MARATHON

FREE TIBET & TIBET WATCH



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SO, YOU'VE SIGNED UP FOR A MARATHON?

Running 26.2 miles is something only a tiny percentage of people will ever do, and just by signing up, your epic journey to join those elite ranks is already underway. Marathons take a large amount of physical and mental training and preparation - but don't panic! By breaking your training down into manageable chunks, you'll be giving yourself a great chance of achieving your goal, whether it's running your first ever race or beating your personal best. Don't be put off by something that's further ahead in the plan than you are; whatever stage you're at now, you're not expected to be where you want to be before you've even started!

This guide will talk you through everything you'll need to get you race-ready, including:

Gear: What footwear and clothing to look for

Fuel: Tips and recommendations for nutrition and hydration

Race week: What you can expect in the run-up to, and during, the main event

Training: Tips and guidance, plus 17-week plans for beginner and advanced runners

GEAR

Running is a relatively inexpensive sport that needs very little specialist kit. If you've been running for a while you have probably amassed quite a good collection already, but if you're a new runner there are a few considerations that will help to make your experience a good one. Remember, everyone is different and you may find these suggestions don't work for you.

Shoes

Your shoes are the one bit of kit that you should really try and get right. The initial cost might seem high, but it's completely worth the investment to avoid injuries and niggles that could affect you more than just financially. A specialist sports retailer will be able to provide you with a gait analysis to assess your running style and the way that your feet land and recommend suitable trainers. Try out a few different pairs and go for comfort over style.

Top

Your running top should be relatively close-fitting, lightweight, breathable and moisture-wicking. Mid- to top-range tops will keep you warm or cool depending on when or how you wear them, with good air circulation and quick-dry fabric. For long-distance running, you may want to opt for a t-shirt over a vest to avoid chaffing.

If the weather gets really cold or wet it's also worth investing in a good quality waterproof/windproof running jacket.

Sports bra

Ladies, it's important to wear a sports bra that gives adequate support while still being comfortable. There are a lot of great sports bras around and everyone is different; you may need to try a few different options before finding the right one for you.

The ideal bra fits snugly without any bulges around the sides; the shoulder straps shouldn't dig in; and when you run there should be minimal movement.

Socks

Any sports socks will be fine, but if you're prone to blisters or prefer extra cushioning, specialist running socks are designed with more padding in certain areas (so are specific to the left or right foot) and wick moisture away from your skin.

Shorts / leggings

Legwear should be comfortable, lightweight and ideally made of a Lycra and/or moisture-wicking material. The length of your legwear is very much a personal choice and style and depends greatly on the weather. In hot weather, shorts are great for allowing the blood in your legs to stay cooler but factors like the style, body and shape may cause chaffing. A good solution to this is longer cycle-length shorts. Leggings will keep you warmer and thus reduce the risk of injury in the cold but similarly could cause you to overheat.

Gloves

Non-essential, but gloves can certainly help if you suffer from cold extremities. Woollen gloves will do the trick, but if you're running in the rain a lot then lightweight synthetic fabrics will dry a lot quicker. Some versions will offer waterproofing as well.

Hat

Similar to gloves, woollen – or better still, fleece – hats can help to take the chill off during the colder months. Running buffs tend to be the more popular option for women as they keep your ears warm but are easier to wear over a ponytail. Caps also offer good protection from rain, snow and sun, especially if you wear glasses.

FUEL

There are a lot of articles and theories around nutrition and hydration, but here are a few basics that will help to aid and enhance your running experience.

Stay hydrated

You should be drinking plenty of water – around 2 litres – throughout the day anyway, but adding exercise into your routine calls for a higher water intake, with the main focus on post-workout. Proper water intake will greatly reduce any cramping you may suffer post-run.

Refuel - but don't overeat

A common misconception is that you can eat whatever you like after you've been for a run, but be mindful of your calorie consumption. If you find you're more hungry than usual after going for a run, first make sure that you're well-hydrated and then opt for healthy snacks like fruit, nuts, rice cakes with peanut butter and homemade flapjacks. We know it's difficult to fit training into your everyday life but try to avoid eating a large meal straight after a long training run.

Keep it balanced

There's so much information out there about fancy diets and carb-cycling, but there's no need to overcomplicate things; as long as you're eating a balanced, healthy variety of food you will feel the benefits in your running. If you've got a long run ahead of you then you may wish to eat more carbohydrates in the run-up; wholewheat pasta the night before a race is perfect as it tops up your muscles' energy stores and releases the energy steadily rather than all in one go and then causing your blood sugar to crash.

Power up

Your body needs good quality training fuel and eating 2-3 hours before a run will ensure you have enough energy to get you through. Any later and you may find yourself battling with stomach pain (or worse...).

Supplement

If you're finding yourself struggling with your energy levels during runs lasting 60 minutes or longer, it might be worth having a go with energy gels. There are all sorts of brands and flavours available, some with and without caffeine and not everyone gets on with them, so if you do decide to use them make sure you try them out during training rather than waiting until race day.

If you're doing fine without them, great!

TRAINING

Health checklist

Before you get stuck in with your training, it's a good idea to **make sure** there aren't any medical reasons why you shouldn't take on an exercise programme. Have a look at the checklist below and if you answer 'Yes' to some or all of the questions and you have any concerns, we advise you to make an appointment with your GP and request a check-up.

If you answer 'No' to all of these questions or have the all-clear from your GP, it's time to get going!

	YES	NO
Are you aged over 30 and / or haven't exercised for some time?		
Do you suffer from any medical conditions?		
Do you smoke, or have you recently given up?		
Have you undergone any surgery in the past two years?		
Are you currently suffering from any injuries?		
Do you currently take any prescribed medication?		
Are you unsure about beginning an exercise programme?		

When to train

Everyone has a preferred time to exercise and ultimately, there is no right or wrong time as long as it works for you. It doesn't even have to be the same time each time; for example, you may choose to do your longer runs in the morning on a weekend so that it frees up the rest of your day, but all other runs in an evening. Just make sure that you're giving your body enough time to rest and recover between sessions.

Where to train

Generally speaking, nowhere is out of bounds, whether you stay indoors on the treadmill or run around the pavements, roads, paths and parks locally. That said, the transition from treadmill to road can be tricky so keep the terrain of your goal race in mind and try and stick to similar during training. For the Brighton Marathon the terrain is tarmac and fairly undulating.

TRAINING

Structuring your sessions

To get the most out of your running, regardless of whether it's during training or on race day itself, you should follow correct exercise protocols to avoid injury.

1. Warm up

Spend at least five minutes raising your heart rate, get blood flowing to your muscles and preparing your body and mind for the exercise that you're about to undertake. This can be as simple as a brisk walk or very easy jog.

2. Mobilise

Perform a few dynamic stretches; that is, lengthen your muscles and loosen your joints without holding a stretch. Think of this as though your muscles are a piece of Blu Tack; if you try to stretch them out too much when they're cold they will snap, whereas slowly warming and manipulating them first will make them much easier to work with.

3. Main session

This is the bulk of your training session; either a timed or distance run. On your long runs - remember to start slow and ease into your comfortable pace.

4. Cool down

Bring your heart rate and body temperature back down steadily to flush waste by-products from your muscles and tissues to allow for a much faster recovery. Jogging or walking for around 10 minutes is ideal.

5. Flexibility

Now you can hold those stretches! Your muscles should be nicely relaxed following your run and stretching properly will help you avoid cramp, muscle tears and stiffness. Spend 5 to 10 minutes in total.

Top tip:

Many experienced runners will have experienced pain particularly in their knees and hips. This is often due to inactivated glutes* so make sure to focus on glute activation when mobilising your muscles before a run.

*The gluteus maximus muscle is located in the buttocks and is regarded as one of the strongest muscles in the human body.

TRAINING

Picking the right guide

Our 17-week plans are designed to help you achieve your goal, whether you're a newcomer to marathons or you've seen your fair share and want to beat your best time.

Top tip: If you've never run before, perhaps take a look at a Couch to 5k plan first before undertaking any further distances. This will build you up gradually from not running at all to running consistently for 30 minutes, over the space of nine weeks.

BEGINNER	
You've been running for less than 12 months	
You can run for at least 60 minutes	
You're training for your first marathon	
ADVANCED	
You've been running for at least 12 months	
You've completed a number of shorter events, including half marathons and 10ks	
You've already completed at least one marathon and want to improve	
You're comfortable running approximately 30 miles per week	

Everyone's pace is different, and for the first few weeks the distance that you cover during training sessions isn't important. Instead, it's more about building up your speed and stamina so that by the time you come to the distance sessions, you're more than prepared to tackle them. The harder you push yourself in the earlier weeks, the easier you'll find the longer distances - but make sure you take your rest days as well to stretch properly and let your body recover.

If you miss a session for any reason, don't panic! There's no need to try and make up the missed session, just skip it and carry on with the plan as soon as you're able.

TRAINING

Training notes

Both of the training plans are made up of sessions that require not only different distances and amounts of time, but also running paces. Here's what they all mean:

Easy run

Your easy running pace will be a comfortable one that you can easily hold a conversation at and requires very little effort.

Steady run

Your steady running pace will be one that you need to put a bit of effort into; you should still be able to hold a conversation in shorter sentences and you should be getting a little out of breath.

Threshold run

This is maximum effort; your breathing will be heavy and you may only be able to speak one or two words at a time. Bear in mind that your threshold pace will vary depending on the amount of time you need to be running for so that you can sustain it; your pace will be much faster over a two-minute interval than a ten-minute one.

Interval training

On the training plans, Wednesdays are set aside for interval training. The idea behind these sessions is to get your body used to running at increased speeds, which will both improve your endurance over longer distances and your speed over shorter ones.

It's especially important to warm up before and after interval sessions so that you're not shocking your body into the increased heart rates and muscle loads that faster running requires, and cool down again afterwards. Ten minutes of easy running either side is perfect.

Marathon pace (advanced only)

If you're hoping to complete your marathon in a certain time, work out your anticipated pace per mile or kilometre and try to stick to it as closely as possible. As the plan progresses, your long runs are the ideal time to put that pace into practice in order to get yourself used to running long distances at the speed you're aiming for, and to make sure your expectations are realistic.

Top tip: Tick off each session after you complete it and write a comment on how you felt the run went, whether you feel positive or negative; it's a great, visual way of seeing how much you've achieved and how far you've come. You've got this!

TRAINING PLAN

Beginner

Key: ER = Easy Run SR = Steady Run TR = Threshold Run

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
MONDAY	30 mins ER	40 mins SR	45 mins SR	60 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
WEDNESDAY	2 x 10 mins TR (3 min recovery)	8 x 3 mins TR (1 min recovery)	Hill reps	2 x 15 min TR (5 mins recovery)
THURSDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
FRIDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	60 mins	70 mins	80 mins	9 miles

	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
MONDAY	45 mins ER	50 mins SR	25 mins SR	40 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
WEDNESDAY	1 min TR, 30 secs ER 2 min TR, 1 min ER 3 min TR, 90 secs ER 4 min TR, 2 min ER Reverse back down	Hill reps	3 x 10 mins TR (3 mins recovery)	5 x 1km TR (2 mins recovery)
THURSDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
FRIDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	11 miles	13.1 miles	50 mins	15 miles

	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
MONDAY	60 mins ER	60 mins SR	40 mins SR	40 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
WEDNESDAY	Hill reps	2 x 15 min TR (5 mins recovery)	8 x 3 min TR (1 min recovery)	Hill reps
THURSDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
FRIDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	16 miles	18 miles	13.1 miles	20 miles

	WEEK 13	WEEK 14	WEEK 15	WEEK 16
MONDAY	40 mins ER	35 mins SR	35 mins SR	40 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
WEDNESDAY	5 x 2 min TR (1 min recovery)	Hill reps	Progressive run; 5 miles with each mile 30 secs faster	4 x 6 mins TR (90 secs recovery)
THURSDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
FRIDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	20 miles	22 miles	13 miles	8 miles

WEEK 17 - Race week

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
40 mins ER	Rest	Rest	Rest	5k ER	Rest	RACE DAY

TRAINING PLAN

Advanced

Key: ER = Easy Run SR = Steady Run TR = Threshold Run

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
MONDAY	30 mins ER	40 mins SR	45 mins SR	60 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
WEDNESDAY	2 x 10 mins TR (3 min recovery)	8 x 3 mins TR (1 min recovery)	Hill reps	2 x 15 min TR (5 mins recovery)
THURSDAY	40 mins SR	10 mins ER 20 mins SR 10 mins ER	10 mins ER 10 mins TR 5 mins ER 10 mins SR 5 mins ER	40 mins SR
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	60 mins TR	70 mins TR	80 mins TR	90 mins TR

	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
MONDAY	45 mins ER	50 mins SR	25 mins SR	40 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
WEDNESDAY	1 min TR, 30 secs ER 2 min TR, 1 min ER 3 min TR, 90 secs ER 4 min TR, 2 min ER Reverse back down	Hill reps	3 x 10 mins TR (3 mins recovery)	5 x 1km TR (2 mins recovery)
THURSDAY	60 mins SR	10 mins ER 25 mins TR 10 mins ER	10 mins ER 15 mins SR 10 mins ER	10 mins ER 2 x (15 mins TR, 2 mins ER) 10 mins ER
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	11 miles TR	13.1 miles MP	50 mins SR	15 miles MP

	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
MONDAY	60 mins ER	60 mins SR	40 mins SR	40 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
WEDNESDAY	Hill reps	2 x 15 min TR (5 mins recovery)	8 x 3 min TR (1 min recovery)	Hill reps
THURSDAY	10 mins ER 15 mins SR 10 mins ER	10 mins ER 2 x (2 mins TR, 1 min ER 3 mins TR, 90 secs ER 4 mins TR, 2 mins ER 5 mins TR, 2.5 mins ER) 10 mins ER	10 mins ER 5 x (2 mins TR, 1 min ER) 10 mins ER	5 mins ER 10 mins SR 10 mins TR 10 mins SR 10 mins ER
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	16 miles MP	18 miles MP	13.1 miles SR	20 miles MP

	WEEK 13	WEEK 14	WEEK 15	WEEK 16
MONDAY	40 mins ER	35 mins SR	35 mins SR	40 mins SR
TUESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
WEDNESDAY	5 x 2 min TR (1 min recovery)	Hill reps	5 miles (each mile 30 secs faster)	4 x 6 mins TR (90 secs recovery)
THURSDAY	10 mins ER 5 x (2 mins TR, 1 min ER) 10 mins ER	Rest	10 mins ER 5 x (10 mins TR, 5 min ER) 10 mins ER	35 mins SR
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR	parkrun / 5k TR
SUNDAY	20 miles MP	22 miles MP	13.1 miles MP	8 miles SR

WEEK 17 - Race week

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
40 mins ER	Rest	Rest	Rest	5k SR	Rest	RACE DAY

RACE WEEK

Taking part in official races can be daunting, not just because of the distance that you'll need to cover but also because there's lots to think about logistically. However, the vast majority of races follow the same format; here are some tips to help you know what to expect.

Preparing

Make sure you've read all of the pre-race instructions from the race organisers, which will tell you details like where you need to be and at what time, how to get to the start, where to park and details of local public transport.

The night before the race, spend a bit of time laying out your running kit, pinning your race number to your top and packing your post-race bag with a change of warm clothes so that everything is ready to hand in the morning. Some race organisers provide you with a specific bag for the bag drop, whereas others send you a tag to attach to your own bag; if you're provided with a bag, you must use this rather than your own. You might also want to bring an old item of warm clothing, or a bin liner, that you can throw away just before you cross the start line to keep you warm.

Use the information in your pre-race instructions to agree on a meeting point after the race for any supporters that are coming along with you.

Arriving

Give yourself plenty of time to get to the start; traffic can be heavy and queues for the toilets and bag drop can be long, with thousands of other runners all trying to get to the same place at the same time.

If you're leaving a bag at the bag drop, make sure that your number tag is clearly visible and that you have everything you need; once you drop it off, you won't be able to access it until after the race.

Most races have an announcement system to keep everyone updated as the start time approaches, so listen or look out for this.

Lining up

You will likely have been given a starting wave, which will be reflected on your bib by a colour and / or letter. Follow the signage around the race village to your starting pen and listen to any instructions from race marshals and officials. Use your time in the starting pen to warm up, chat to fellow runners, soak up the atmosphere and mentally prepare yourself.

Top tip:

Include a tasty treat in your post-race bag so you know you've got it to look forward to.



RACE WEEK

The start

You're off! Unless you're right at the front, it might take a little time for you to cross the start line, but if you're aiming for a time, don't worry – your timing chip will only activate once you cross the timing mats.

Try not to get swept up in the initial dash – you don't want to burn out. The adrenaline and excitement will undoubtedly make you want to shoot off. But remember to start slow and when you think you're running slowly go even slower. Even if you feel like everyone is overtaking you, try to stick to your own pace.

Main race

There will be mile and / or kilometre markers all the way around the course so that you know how far you've gone, plenty of hydration stations and a great range of support, from casual spectators to official cheering points and quite often, live music. For large events, water is often given out in bottles. Take little sips and drink to how you feel; if your stomach is starting to feel full of water it's definitely time to cut back. If it's hot, try pouring water over the inside of your wrists.

The finish

The finish line will be clearly marked with a gantry, banner or archway and a timing clock. The timing chip on the back of your bib will give you your individual race time after the event. It is important that you keep moving once you cross the line. You've just run a marathon if you stop suddenly your body will cramp up. Keep moving forwards and allow for others to cross the line behind you.

Post-race

Collect your race goodies – t-shirt, medal, water and goody bag – before picking up your bag from the collection area. Have a good stretch and celebrate your fantastic achievement!

Top tip:

Running with a Free Tibet charity place? Keep an eye out for details of our cheering station and post-race meet area in the run-up to the event – we'd love to see you there!