

Rachel's 26 Lessons from The Queenstown Marathon

by [RSCole November 25, 2018](#)

Rachel's 26 Lessons from The Queenstown Marathon

About a week ago I finished my 3rd marathon. It's a huge feeling of accomplishment and such a rewarding moment when you cross that finish line after months of training. I feel like I take lessons from every marathon or half marathon I complete, but this one taught me the most by far! Just for reference, I've done the New York City Marathon and the Paris Marathon, in that order. So, I've completed marathons both within and outside of the US prior to this one. But, for your reading enjoyment....here are 26 things I learned, or was reminded of, along this journey!

1. New Zealand is stunning – no joke, it is one of the most beautiful places I've ever been. I can't believe the scenery and the beauty. Photos just can't do it justice, but I tried.
2. It's ok to stop for photos – for real, I stopped. I was blown away by the number of other people that also stopped. And everyone was offering to take photos of everyone else. It was quite humors and none of us cared that it was affecting our time. It was just the sheer beauty and taking it in that mattered at the time.

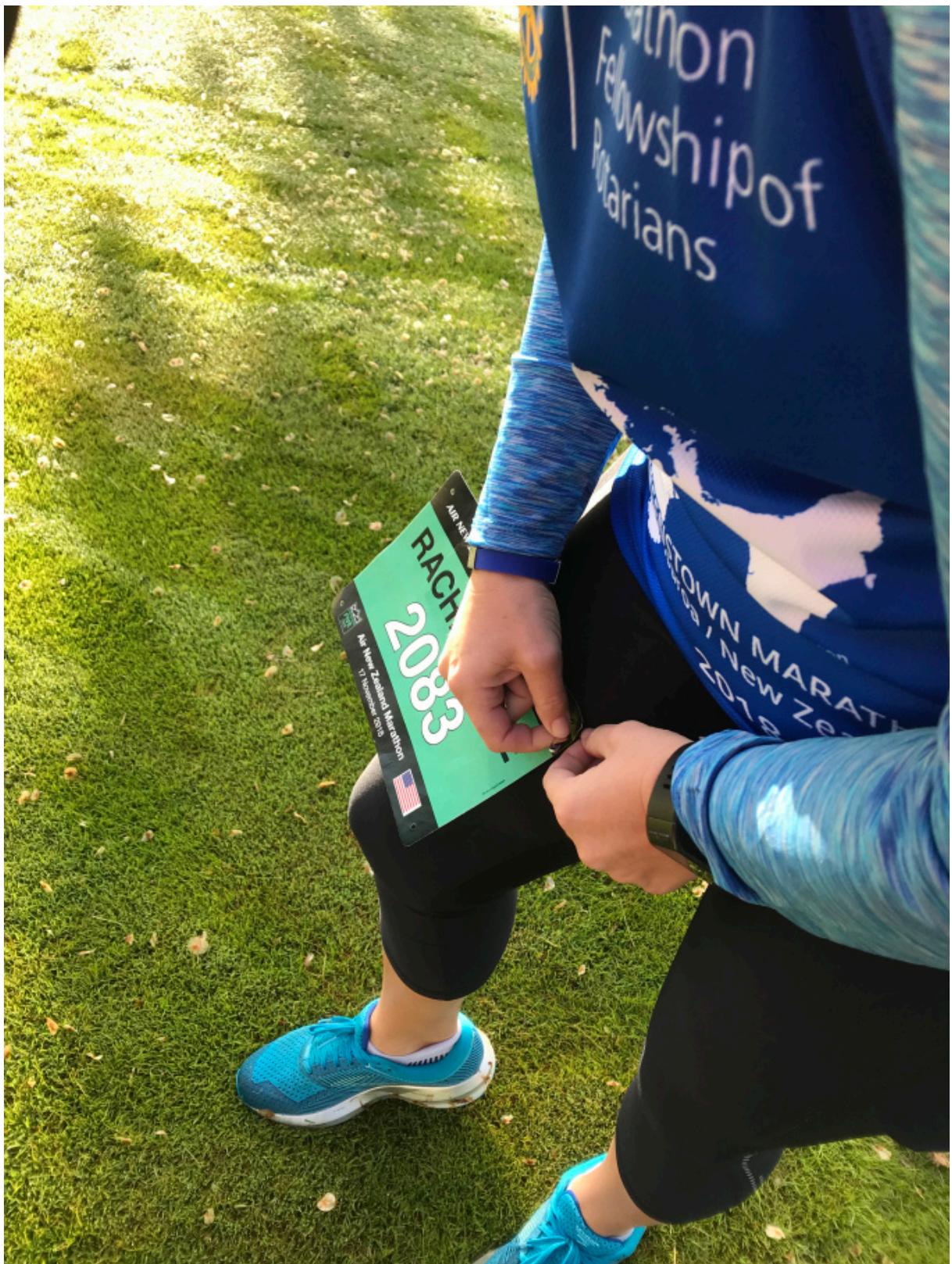


One of many stunning mountain and water views that I stopped to photograph!

3. Headphones aren't a necessity – in addition to the 3 marathons I've done, I have completed 20 half marathons and numerous other runs. During every run of any distance over 3 miles I ALWAYS wear headphones. I listen to music or books. Anything to just keep me going. I was chatting with friends at the start line of this run and I didn't put my headphones in right away. It wasn't until probably 6 miles in that I even realized they were still in my pocket and it wasn't because I wanted them but rather because I was getting my nutrition out. It was amazing how motivated I stayed without my headphones! I never used them and even more, never wanted to.
4. You can meet people without headphones in – I had tons of chats with other runners along the way and it was pretty cool. Not long conversations (because I can't talk and

run lol) but just quick chats about who we are and where we came from and, of course, how amazingly beautiful it is.

5. It's not just me that breathes hard – I am always self conscious about my breathing when exercising. I feel like I am a super loud breather. But it's not just me! Maybe if I would have taken my headphones out long ago I would have learned that ☺
6. People read your shirts – this marathon was part of my Rotary adventures. I was participating with the International Marathon Fellowship of Rotarians. This group has done over 10 runs together (I've only joined them for Paris and Queenstown) and all the runs for the group were listed on the back of our shirts. Numerous people commented on my shirt and the locations of the runs around the world. They also commented on the Rotary emblem. It was great to hear comments from people that did other marathons on the list or commented on the shirt in one way or another.
7. People also read your running bib – if you ever participate in a run that will print your name on the bib if you register in time....Register In Time! It is amazing. Another great thing I learned by not wearing those dang headphones. People along the course, throughout the entire 26.2 miles, were cheering everyone on by name. And the last portion of the course was amazing with tons and tons of people yelling for each runner and calling you by name. Unbelievable and so moving!



Putting on my running bib with my name on it.

8. Flat out Beautiful is the only thing flat in Queenstown – it is incredibly hilly! For this coastal South Carolina girl, the hills were crazy! The only “Hill” we have in Charleston is the bridge. Very different here in Queenstown! There are so many hills. My Garmin tracked 1,135 feet of elevation gain through the course...I think that's

way under calculated



Hills ahead of me...



And hills behind me!

9. Volunteers are phenomenal – the volunteers on the course of this marathon were absolutely amazing. And they came out in huge numbers! Every hydration station had more than enough volunteers to make sure everyone had quick and easy access to what they needed and they were all so friendly!

10. People of Queenstown are so friendly – every volunteer or bystander along the course was super friendly. They were all so encouraging and happy to be there. Even after hours...many, many hours, there were still tons and tons of people around and they all were happy and friendly. On the main drag coming into the city the streets were absolutely overflowing with people and all the pubs were slammed on the patios with people cheering. It was unbelievable.



Finish line area with all the spectators.



Tons of people showed up to support the runners

11. Adrenaline is real – I think this is the first run I really felt the adrenaline as a driving force. I was not as prepared as I'd hoped for this run. The last few months got extremely busy with my business (which I am very grateful for!) and I ended up with a heck of a chest, sinus, and ear infections during what should have been the longest of

my training runs. I was set back on my training for sure and didn't seem to catch back up from being sick. But through the run adrenaline was pumping and I was able to get through it, hills and all!

12. Running on packed gravel is way different – all my training at home was on paved trails or roads. A lot of this course was on beautiful footpaths that were packed gravel. It is not quite the same as paved roads and definitely has a different impact on your feet. And no matter how packed it is, those pesky little pebbles find a way into your shoes.
13. Live music is a huge bonus – there were a couple of spots where live bands were playing on the course and also where DJs were out. This was awesome and definitely helped the momentum going. Great addition to the course!
14. Queenstown knows how to handle logistics – I'm a bit of a logistics nerd. I plan things for a living. And I can tell you, Queenstown knows what they are doing! Everything, from start to finish, was extremely well organized! Great job Queenstown!
15. I'm not the only one on the phone during a run – friends and family often laugh at me for answering their calls or responding to their texts while on a run. Look, I'm not fast enough for it to be a hazard! And, apparently, I'm not the only one doing it. There were lots of others on the phone texting and even chatting along the run. It was quite funny to see. I may have been the only one on the phone as I crossed the finish line though...I have to chat with my mom as I finish.
16. The right merchandise sells – I really already knew this but they obviously know it in Queenstown as well. I didn't pre order any of the marathon merchandise and while looking at packet pick up wasn't planning to buy anything until...I saw these awesome shirts! Another advantage of registering early. For the marathon runners, and I think both of the other distances of half marathon and 10k, they had shirts made with all the participants names on the back. A pretty awesome unique touch...and a sure selling point for someone like me! I had to get one.



The great shirt for marathon participants



All marathon participants are listed on the back of the shirt

17. Nutrition is important along the way – another thing I haven't really done well in the past runs is paid attention to my nutrition. A few months before this event I read an article that made me rethink it. So, I started taking nutrition along with me. I actually ate different before this run (more than just a banana!) and had some food intake along the way. Huge difference! I felt so much better during and after because of this.
18. Hydration is just as important – one of the best pieces of advice I received before the NYC Marathon from a teammate was to take the water and/or sports drink at every stop. Even if I didn't think I wanted it, my body would need it. I had fallen off of that practice but forced myself to do it again during this run. It is so very important! And, it really helped with not becoming dehydrated and cramping. I didn't have any cramping issues during or after the run. A huge part of the reason is because I stayed hydrated with both water and electrolytes.
19. Rotarian friends are awesome – as previously mentioned, I belong to a running group that participated in this marathon together (like us on Facebook! Rotarian Run Page or

www.rotarianrun.org). I have only met these people once over the years and have spoken to them only via Facebook or email since meeting them in Paris. They are an awesome group and so encouraging! Many of us started the run together and everyone was so supportive and encouraging within our group it was amazing!



Group of Full Marathon Participants from them International Marathon Fellowship of Rotarians.

20. You can do anything you put your mind to – I would have never dreamed I'd be traveling the world and completing marathons. I didn't start running until my late 20's, completing my first half marathon just a few months before I turned 30. I started my running journey thinking it would be "one and done" but it has definitely surpassed that at this point. And I love it and am so glad I put my mind to doing that first run.
21. Weight plays a roll – since my first marathon in 2013 I have lost quite a bit of weight. Since the Paris marathon in 2015 I have lost probably around 20 pounds. I can't even begin to tell you how much of a difference it makes. I completed the previous two but recall for sure the pain of recovery after the first one. With better training and more attention on weight loss, the runs are easier and not so hard on my body. Recovery is a breeze when you aren't pounding so many pounds into the ground for 26.2 miles.
22. Marathons are hugely mental – I've heard it a million times but I still believe it. You can be as physically fit as the fittest person but if you don't have the mental capacity to get through hours of running, you won't make it. Completing a marathon requires a lot of mental discipline. Even the most elite runners will tell you this. Running for

hours on end and staying out of your own head can be a challenge. Mental ability is required for sure.

23. Cross training makes a difference – I've not done a whole lot of cross training through the years and the past couple months I fell off more than I should have but it was in my routine as I trained for this run and it definitely makes a difference. Cycling, cross fit, and strength training all assist in the marathon process. These different activities allow your body to train other muscles that running doesn't always exercise. It definitely helps. Things like box jumps (which I was once terrified of!) and jumping rope have certainly helped me get better at lifting my feet rather than shuffling them, just to give one example.
24. Each run is easier – I'm not sure if I'll ever consider a marathon "easy" but each one is a bit easier than the last. Even after stopping for photos or crawling up the hills during the Queenstown Marathon, I still managed to have my best time and feel better than ever both during and after a distance run. It leaves me looking forward to the next one knowing I'm only going to continue to improve.
25. My family and friends are outstanding – I have an amazing support group of family and friends. They all encourage me along the way and send supportive thoughts to me before, during, and after the run. I'm so lucky to have such a great circle of people!
26. I have the best husband ever – again, something I already knew but it is worth "relearning" along this run. John is such a huge supporter pushing me to train and supporting me on my runs and the journeys they take us on. He supports me throughout the entire journey and is there for me at the finish to celebrate with. He greeted me at the bottom of the toughest hill right at the end and trotted up it with me pushing me along the way (kind of literally and physically pushing lol). Turning the corner near the end and seeing him standing there, yelling for me to come on to the finish and receiving his encouraging messages along the way as he tracked me helped me get through every mental block a marathon can pose. I am so lucky to have such a loving and supportive husband to journey along with!



Pre run with my biggest supporter, John!



Post run...I have finished and got the bling to show it!

Everyone takes away different things from a marathon. I could list so many other things I've learned through my running journey as it teaches you so much about yourself. For me, it pushes me both physically and mentally and I love it. Running is a passion, even though I often hate it. I hope everyone has something that pushes them like running does for me. The

best part...it leads us to some amazing journeys and we now get to explore the amazing world of New Zealand. So, be sure to stay tuned because next up will be our adventures through the country. We already know it's absolutely amazing and can't wait to share ColesAdventures through New Zealand!