

The Manchester Marathon is one of the UK's most iconic spring races, attracting thousands of runners each year eager to tackle the challenging and scenic course through Manchester and Trafford. Whether you're a seasoned marathoner or a first-timer, getting to the start line efficiently is key to a stress-free race day. One common question is: **which Metrolink stop is best for the Manchester Marathon start?** In this detailed guide, we unpack everything from race logistics to transport tips, including the pros and cons of using either *Old Trafford Metrolink stop* or *Trafford Bar Metrolink stop*.

[chester road start access point](#)

Manchester Marathon 2026: Essential Race Details

The Manchester Marathon 2026 is scheduled for **Sunday, 13 April 2026**. The race consistently fills up fast, usually selling out months in advance, so early preparation is vital.

Race Scale and Time Limits

- **Entries:** Over 15,000 runners
- **Race Start:** Between 9:30am and 10:00am (wave starts by ability)
- **Time Limit:** 6 hours to complete the 26.2 miles

The route is UK Athletics certified and UKA licensed, ensuring any qualifying times here are accepted for major international marathons like Boston. I've seen this play out countless times: learned this lesson the hard way.. The marathon's elevation profile is relatively gentle, with a net downhill trend through parts of the course, making it attractive for PB attempts.

Entry Process and Sell-Out Reality

The Manchester Marathon entries open in the autumn prior to race year. The official entry is normally capped, and traditional ballot entry has given way largely to charity and club entries due to high demand.



You ever wonder why consider:

- The **registration fee** for charity places is generally around £40.
- The minimum sponsorship commitment varies by charity, but the **MS Trust requires £40 registration + £500 minimum sponsorship**—a typical example of a substantial but worthwhile commitment for those wanting to support a cause.
- Third-party entries, including guaranteed places via running clubs or local organisations, often come with additional administration fees.

Unofficial race GPX routes, for training and navigation, are available through third-party sites like goandrace.com. However, remember these are not official race materials and may have slight deviations from the current route, so always cross-reference with official maps.

Course Route, Elevation, and Certification History

The marathon route begins near Old Trafford Cricket Ground and winds through Trafford Park, Salford Quays, Castlefield, and finishes in the city centre near the town hall. The course boasts:

- Flat to gently rolling terrain with a few mild inclines
- Multiple hydration and medical stations
- Course certifications by UK Athletics ensure accurate measurement

Elevation-wise, runners can expect a start/finish elevation of approximately 40m above sea level, with the highest point not exceeding 60m, making the course relatively fast but potentially windy in exposed park areas.

Metrolink Options: Old Trafford vs Trafford Bar

To reach the start line on race day, using Manchester's Metrolink tram system is often the smoothest option to avoid traffic congestion and parking limitations. Two nearby stops are regularly considered:

Metrolink Stop	Walking Distance to Start	Walking Time	Advantages	Disadvantages
Old Trafford	Approx. 0.8 miles	~15 minutes	Closer to the official start line near Sir Matt Busby Way; less crowded	Fewer connecting trams from central Manchester; limited shelter on route
Trafford Bar	Approx. 0.5 miles	~ 10 minutes	More frequent services; better shelter options; very pedestrian-friendly	Somewhat busier on race day with mixed passenger loads

Why Trafford Bar Metrolink Stop Is the Best Choice for a 10 Minute Walk

For runners prioritising the shortest walk, **Trafford Bar** offers the best balance of convenience and proximity. The ~10 minute walk is straightforward and well signposted on race day. Also, Trafford Bar stop tends to have more frequent tram services from Manchester city centre, especially early on a Sunday morning.

My personal race-week kit list always includes a lightweight poncho for potential spring drizzle and a small watch to time walking pace from Trafford Bar to start line. It's a win for both comfort and timing.

Old Trafford Stop: A Good Alternative for Less Crowding

If you dislike crowds or want a slightly more relaxing pre-race stroll, **Old Trafford Metrolink stop** is less crowded, although the walk is closer to 15 minutes. It's particularly handy for runners familiar with Trafford Park area or staying in nearby hotels.

Additional Race Weekend Tips

1. **Pack Collection:** Usually opens 2 days pre-race at the Vue Arena. Bring ID and printout of your race confirmation.
2. **Time Limit Awareness:** The course closes after 6 hours, so plan for clock cut-offs especially if you aim for a marathon debut.
3. **Download Course GPX:** Use your Garmin or similar device to load the official or near-official route (third-party downloads like those from goandrace.com) to familiarise yourself before race day.
4. **Arrival Time:** Aim to arrive at the start area at least an hour before your wave start, so around 8:30am or earlier, particularly if you plan to meet friends or need extra toilet breaks.

Summary: Best Metrolink Stop for Manchester Marathon Start

While both **Old Trafford Metrolink stop** and **Trafford Bar Metrolink stop** are viable options, the balance of walking time, tram frequency, and race day convenience tips the scale in favour of **Trafford Bar** for most runners. You'll benefit from a brisk 10 minute walk, more frequent early Sunday trams, and plenty of facilities en route.

If you can tolerate a slightly longer walk or prefer less bustle, Old Trafford remains a solid second choice. Either way, plan your route ahead, double-check your pack collection details and time limits, and make sure to download the route GPX file to your Garmin for peace of mind.



See you on the start line next April!