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Falmouth Road Race Guide

A free field guide from the people who actually live here.



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Every third Sunday of August, Falmouth turns into something between a serious athletic event and a full-on Cape Cod celebration. The Falmouth Road Race has been doing this since 1973 — drawing elite runners from Kenya, Ethiopia, and every corner of the American distance running world, then packing the finish line at Falmouth Heights Beach with 12,000 participants and tens of thousands of spectators.

What the Falmouth Road Race Is

The Falmouth Road Race is a 7.1-mile road race held each year on the third Sunday of August in Falmouth, Massachusetts. It is consistently ranked among the most prestigious road races in the United States. The race was founded in 1973 by Tommy Leonard, a Boston bartender and running evangelist who wanted to bring elite running to Cape Cod. Today it draws more than 12,000 participants and a world-class professional field.

The Course: Woods Hole to Falmouth Heights

The course starts in Woods Hole village and heads north and east along the coast of Vineyard Sound. The views are genuine — open water to the south, salt marshes, weathered shingle houses. The finish line is at Falmouth Heights Beach, where runners cross the line essentially standing at the edge of Nantucket Sound.

Getting Into the Race: The Lottery System

The Falmouth Road Race is significantly harder to get into than its 7.1-mile distance might suggest. Most applicants who enter the general lottery do not get in.

How the lottery works: Registration typically opens in October or November and closes within a matter of weeks. The lottery drawing happens in late fall or winter.

Charity entries: A significant number of race bibs are allocated to official charity partners — the most reliable path to a guaranteed spot.

The official race website is falmouthroadrace.com. Plan at minimum a year in advance.

Race Day as a Spectator: Where to Stand

- **The Start in Woods Hole:** Electric, narrow streets concentrate the energy
 - **Along the Course near Old Silver Beach:** Scenic, with open water behind runners
 - **The Finish at Falmouth Heights Beach:** The emotional center of the whole event — arrive early
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Logistics

- Roads close early — check the official race website for closure times
- Shuttle buses run from remote parking areas to the start in Woods Hole

- Book lodging six months out at a minimum
 - No parking at Falmouth Heights Beach on race morning
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The Full Race Weekend

- **Saturday:** Expo and Kids Fun Run at Falmouth Recreation
- **Sunday:** Race morning, then the Falmouth Heights Beach party continues all afternoon

The combination of a world-class athletic event, an August Cape Cod morning, and a beach party at the end is a particular thing. It happens here, and it's worth being part of it.



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