



POLAR BEAR RUN • GIMLI • GRAND BEACH • POLAR BEAR RUN • GIMLI • GRAND BEACH • POLAR BEAR RUN • GIMLI • GRAND BEACH



24th Annual Polar Bear

The 24th annual Polar Bear Run is scheduled for Sunday, March 20, 2014. The run is approximately 18 – 19 miles, starting at Kris'Fish & Chips in Gimli and ending at the Sand Bar Motel in Grand Marias. The start time is scheduled for 8.00 am (daylight saving time). Due to the popularity of the "Fat Tire" bikes, a group of cyclists will be joining us this year. The run is also open to cross country skiers, but the surface conditions will probably not be ideal for skiing.

This year due to the late freeze up of the Lake, the Snowman Trail has not been officially marked nor groomed. Snowmobilers have been crossing regularly but without the aid of the trail and the trail markers. I have made the decision to run two weeks later this year than normal, allowing the sun and warm temperatures to burn off the excess snow cover on the ice providing for better footing and riding conditions. Notwithstanding the positives with the later schedule, the downside is that there will be no trail markers going across.

Due to the navigation concerns, I will be implementing a rule that participants will run in distinct groups according to their running speed. The purpose of this rule is twofold. The first is that it is safer to control the location of say 4 groups rather than 30 individuals. On the ice surface the visibility will be restricted by distance and weather conditions. Should we encounter any participation or surface haze, participants within will have navigation devices and or familiarity of the land markers which will guide you to the right location at the east side of the lake.

The second concern is that you will more than likely encounter a surface crack in the ice that could be hazardous crossing. These cracks can be up to 10 feet wide and run north south in direction. The water won't be totally open but will have frozen chunks of ice that you can step across. Alternately, you will have to

run parallel to the crack and reach a point where it will be safe to cross. Running with a group will provide support should someone accidentally slip into the water.

The weather has varied greatly over the last 23 years, from rain to blizzards, and from plus freezing to minus 30 degrees. We run from west to east as the winds are generally prevailing from the west. Conditions are checked the night before and the run organizer will make the final decision if the race route has to be altered or cancelled. Generally speaking, the race would only be altered if there were strong easterly winds, open water, surface water on the ice or low visibility. The race has been cancelled and or altered 4 times due to weather over its history.. By running later in the winter season, the temperatures should be more moderate and surface conditions should be superior to past crossings. The alternate route will be Gimli to Winnipeg Beach return on the Snoman Trail for runners and Gimli to Chalet Beach return for Fat Tire riders.

This run/cycle is not a sanctioned event. Participants must have experience in winter running or cycling and need to treat this as a unsupported activity. This means bring proper clothing, liquids and food supplements. The temperatures, wind and visibility can change within the time period of the crossing. Participants will experience a natural drop in their pace due to the surface conditions. Plan on taking up to 15 - 20% longer than normal urban running.

There will be one or two ATV's who will meet the groups at various stages on the crossing. There will be periods of time that they may not be available to assist a participant hence the warning that you should treat this as an unassisted crossing. The local authorities, volunteer search and rescue and the local ATV Clubs on both sides will be advised of the event in the case of emergency but due to the logistics, the response time may take awhile.

After covering all the challenges of the run, it is only a 19 mile crossing, 3 – 5 hour duration. The late season planning should provide a footing that will be superior to the past and a surface for the Fatties to roll without sinking. The temperature will be warmer and if the sun is out, the experience and reward that you crossed will be one of a kind. This is what has driven me to cross each year and to continue organizing the event.

Dress warm. The best gear is a layer that is breathable but yet winds proof. The air temperature will generally be 3 – 5 degrees colder than the land temperature and if sunny, the sun will create the opposite effect and cook you. The worst is starting with a bright sun and at the end, the sky clouds over and we start getting a head wind off the opposite side. The temperature in this scenario can swing 10 – 15 degrees. Most people run on regular runners, wind pants with one layer underneath and maybe 3 layers on their upper bodies. It would be prudent to bring a balaclava just incase the wind changes and you need something to protect your exposed face. Shoe cleats would also be advised. Sunglasses are

a must and without them you will probably go home half blind and a splitting headache. Most runners come home with true sunburn from the run. One last trick, if you are running in summer shoes, duct tape the toes of your shoes to keep your feet dry. As you run, the snow will melt on your shoes and eventually wet your feet. Wet feet bring many blisters!

Additional gear; bring a compass just in case the weather changes and the visibility drops. Electronic devices are great, but depending on the temperature and how you store it on your body, they may fail. I have fried two phones due to condensation and everyone has experienced the warning message that your phone is too hot and shuts off. Insulated phone jackets are recommended to offset this risk. Insulated water bottles and some nutrients for energy are also recommended.

A brunch will be served at the Sand Bar Inn for all participants. Your cost for the brunch is not included in the registration fee. I will assist in organizing car pooling to those who may need a ride to Gimli, or from Grand Marais back to Winnipeg or back across the lake to Gimli. For those doing the double crossing, a late lunch/dinner will be served back at Kris'Fish & Chips.

Important:

All participations are required to complete an application form and waiver of liability. The cost of the run is \$25.00 per person payable in advance of the race day. We do not want to be collecting waivers and money on the day of the run/bike. The entry fee includes a coupon for a 4 oz pickerel fish & chips at Kris'Fish and Chips or a meal of equal value – alcoholic beverages are excluded. Participants who are not returning to Gimli can use their coupon any time during this upcoming summer. The money is used to reimburse volunteers for their gas and a food. Any extra funds will be donated to the Habitat for Humanity, Cycle of Hope as a fundraiser for Candy Badger who is participating in the 2016 ride. Entrance forms and the fee for the run can be dropped off, mailed or e-transferred to Jeff Badger, 1444 Wellington Crescent, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3N 0B3.

Remember, this run/cycle is organized to be a recreational event and not a race. I don't mind the faster groups racing, but with the slippery footing, you may cramp up. For the newbies, don't join a faster group beyond your skill. Running on the ice will affect your speed by 20% so judge yourself accordingly. The trick is to dress and bring water and supplements to sustain yourself for the crossing. Keep moving and don't stop until you hit the other side.

Trail Map below; please note that the starting point may vary depending on the conditions.

