

# CHANGING paces

FLEUR MEALING FINDS HER STRIDE IN QUEENSTOWN

**D**espite being 5ft 2 [1.57m] I have always had quite a stride. I would argue it's my mum's doing, often recounting to moaning slowpokes that if you didn't walk fast in my household you would get left behind.

Naturally, she was the first person that came to mind to come with me on an exciting, yet daunting, trip down south to Central Otago for the Air New Zealand International Queenstown Marathon.

Although we both lead active lives, neither of us had ever

participated in a marathon, nor did we feel up to running it, but several family members assured us that walking the Cigna 10km was more than achievable.

Arriving in Queenstown at least a day before was essential. With a 5.45am start on race day, it was great to get to the hotel and settle in at least 12 hours prior. As I waited for my mum, who was driving down from Christchurch, I made myself at home in Hotel St Moritz Queenstown.

Well and truly in active relaxer mode, I donned a cosy wool

blanket, gobbled up the cheese platter that was delivered to my room on arrival and all too easily fell asleep on the couch!

Although stormy weather from the day before had threatened to make another appearance, at 6.30am on raceday morning all was calm at Queenstown's waterfront.

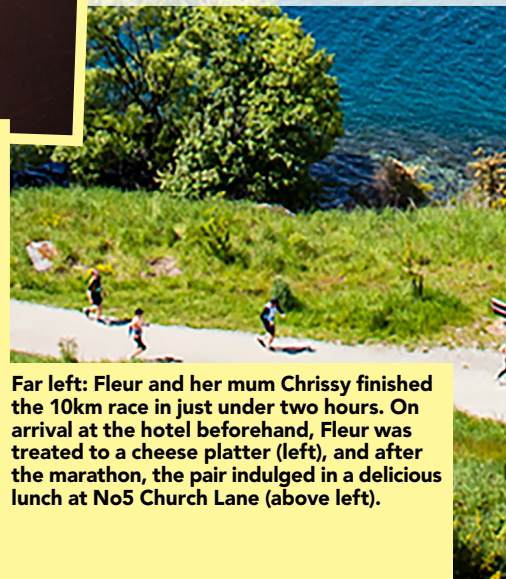
As we waited for our water taxi to ferry us to the starting line, we couldn't help but marvel at how still Lake Wakatipu was, and it only got more spectacular once we were actually on the water.

Speaking to a few people who had done the Queenstown marathon before, the one thing they all raved about was the atmosphere. And sure enough, there was an electric energy as people of all ages, sizes, abilities and nationalities lined up to complete the course.

Predictably, Mum started off with a hiss and a roar prompting a puffed "slow down!" from me. But as we reached the 2km mark, we both hit our stride alongside a group of new mums with babies attached in front packs. One eager woman had even brought her five-week-old along for the ride.

The scenery was stunning and being able to walk along the lakefront at sunrise makes for an unforgettable experience. Plus, having someone to chat to along the way makes it all go so much quicker.

By far, the best part of the marathon was crossing the finish



Far left: Fleur and her mum Chrissy finished the 10km race in just under two hours. On arrival at the hotel beforehand, Fleur was treated to a cheese platter (left), and after the marathon, the pair indulged in a delicious lunch at No5 Church Lane (above left).

48  
hours

## An insider's guide to... Queenstown

**BEST PHOTO OP:** At the finish line with your medal, of course!

**BEST DRINK/COCKTAIL:**

No5 Church Lane – a newly revamped wine list features only the best wines of Central Otago.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Hotel St Moritz Queenstown – not only are they a stone's throw from the town centre, but they were also in the spirit of the marathon, leaving out bananas and trail mix for the early risers.

**BEST PLACE TO PEOPLE-WATCH:**

If you finish early enough, the city centre or waterfront is an exciting vantage point to watch the super-human leaders from the full marathon as they make their way to the finish line.

**DON'T FORGET:** To take care of yourself. Get plenty of rest and always stretch, before and after a race.

line and claiming a medal, though. At one hour and 44 minutes, we finally made our way into the centre of Queenstown and ran the final few hundred metres. I honestly can't recall the last time I received a medal, which made for an immense sense of achievement when it was hung around my neck.

After briefly stopping to soak up the atmosphere, Mum and I made our way back to the hotel for a bath with plenty of Epsom salts (never forget to stretch) and a quick rest.

We followed up our morning efforts with a well-deserved lunch at No5 Church Lane, whose revamped menu and wine list features only the best local ingredients.

I picked a beautiful goat's cheese-stuffed orecchiette pasta and an Otago Riesling, while Mum opted for roast beetroot falafel and a "Quince of Hearts" cocktail complete

with Broken Heart gin, made just around the corner so we were told. By mid-afternoon we were both ready for a well-deserved nap, having enjoyed our Saturday to the fullest!

I never thought I'd be the kind of person to enjoy a marathon, but the buzz I felt while surrounded by thousands of competitors in one of New Zealand's most picturesque towns was truly exhilarating!

Having someone to enjoy the event with makes it so much sweeter too. We'll definitely be back next year to take on the half marathon – perhaps we will even run it all next time!

The Queenstown waterfront was completely still at sunrise before the big race, despite previous stormy weather.



PHOTOS: FLEUR MEALING AND SUPPLIED



The marathon wound its way around one of New Zealand's most picturesque spots.