

Not just a walk in the park

FIND OUT HOW LONDONERS WHO RUN TOGETHER CAN HAVE FUN TOGETHER.



High five: A parkrun volunteer encourages runners at Northala Fields PICTURES BRUCE LI

Over the last couple of decades, parkrun has taken the UK by storm.

The organisation puts on free, weekly 5km runs every Saturday, at hundreds of different parks across the UK. Lucky Londoners can take their pick from an impressive 52 locations.

The timed runs start at 9am in local parks and are fully staffed by volunteers. Sign up online to join for free and print off your runner's barcode, then just turn up on the day at whichever parkrun you like.

Feel free to go round the course at your own pace – your barcode will be scanned at the end so you can see how you did.

TAKING PART

The parkrun events are open to everyone, whatever your age or ability (or even species – it's not uncommon to see a canine friend taking part). If you're a keen runner, it's a great way to enjoy a regular timed event and work on improving your personal best.

You don't need to have the stamina of Mo Farah to enjoy the run – it's a sociable occasion and a good way to incorporate some exercise into your weekend. There is always a volunteer tail-walker to provide support at the back, meaning you are guaranteed not to finish last.

Children are welcome to take part on Saturdays, but for those aged

4-14 who might find 5km a bit much, there are junior parkruns. There are currently 24 of these 2km runs across Greater London, on Sunday mornings at 9am.

Running really not your thing? Sign up as a volunteer and have fun scanning barcodes, manning the stopwatch or pointing runners in the right direction. They're sure to appreciate the odd cheer and bit of encouragement too.

FIND YOUR EVENT

Listings for all local parkruns are available at parkrun.org.uk.

Popular London locations include Finsbury Park, Greenwich Park, Hampstead Heath, Richmond Park and Tooting Common. With a huge variety of local parkruns, you're

bound to find one near you. Then, once you've given your nearest parkrun a try, why not try a spot of tourism? Your barcode will work at any parkrun event, so you can visit a new locale and take in the sights while you are there.

GETTING THERE

Most parkrun events have attendees numbering in the hundreds, so to avoid congestion it's best to leave the car at home.

For maximum health benefit, try walking or running to the start line, or making your way there by bike. Just search on the TfL website to find the nearest Santander Cycles docking station.

For the best ways to get there by public transport, visit tfl.gov.uk



Running in the family: Take the children on a junior parkrun in London



We can provide better care on the platform

#TravelKind



Goodness me: Running has numerous health benefits

Running score

Taking part in parkrun isn't just a fun way to make the most of your local green spaces, it's also good for you:

- **Health** – running gives your body a full workout and can also boost your mood
- **Social life** – go along with friends or use the run as an opportunity to meet like-minded people
- **Bank balance** – a free alternative to the gym, parkrun means exercise needn't cost a fortune

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