

Wellington's Marathon Partners with Japan

The Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon has been an annual highlight on the Capital calendar for three decades. This year it undertakes an international partnership that will see a lucky Wellingtonian win a trip to Japan's Senshu International City Marathon.

Established in 1986, the annual June event has been Wellington's major marathon event for 30 years. In recent years it has become New Zealand's fastest growing marathon event, attracting some 5000 participants from more than a dozen countries to be one of the New Zealand's "Big Five", alongside the Auckland, Queenstown, Rotorua and Christchurch marathons.

Based at Wellington's much-loved Westpac Stadium, the event follows a flat, fast and scenic tour of the Harbour bays that is popular amongst elite and recreational runners and walkers alike. The event features something for everyone, including the Kids' magic Mile, 5k, 10k, half marathon and full marathon options.

In 2016 it teamed up with sister-city promotion agencies Wellington Sakai Association, Sakai Sister and Friendship City Council, Sakai Wellington Association, Wellington City Council, and Sakai City Government in a marathon running exchange. In 2016 the first-placed Sakai woman in the Senshu Marathon won a trip to the 2016 Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon, and the first-placed woman in Wellington event won a trip to Senshu. In 2017 it will be the men's turn.

"Japan has a very big marathon running culture and it's great that the sister-city associations could see the potential in such an exchange," says event manager, Michael Jacques.

The Wellington/Sakai sister-city relationship was established in 1994. Sakai is a port city within Osaka prefecture, which hosts the Senshu International City Marathon, which runs through Sakai and the other ten districts of the south part of Osaka, which used to be called 'Senshu'. Around 5,000 runners participate to the full marathon.

In the 2016 Senshu International City Marathon, Wellington runner Tim Sutton finished second in the people's race in 2hrs 42min. The first placed Sakai woman, Yumiko Tanaka, was also the first woman in Senshu's people's race and went on to finish second in the Wellington race.

The idea is for the prize to alternate years, says Jacques. "2016 was for women and 2017 will be for men."

Jacques sees the exchange as a way for the event to help foster Wellington's top marathoners, saying, "The trip to Japan is extra motivation for our best marathoners to turn out in their hometown marathon."

The 2017 Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon is scheduled for 18th June and alongside the Japanese prize is another major travel prize where every participant can go into a draw to win a trip to the Paris Marathon.

"All entrants have to do is finish and attend the prize giving!" says Jacques.

To be in to win visit wellingtonmarathon.kiwi for online entry and event information, or pick up an entry form at any Shoe Clinic store. For more information on the Wellington/Sakai sister-city relationship visit wellingtonsakai.org.