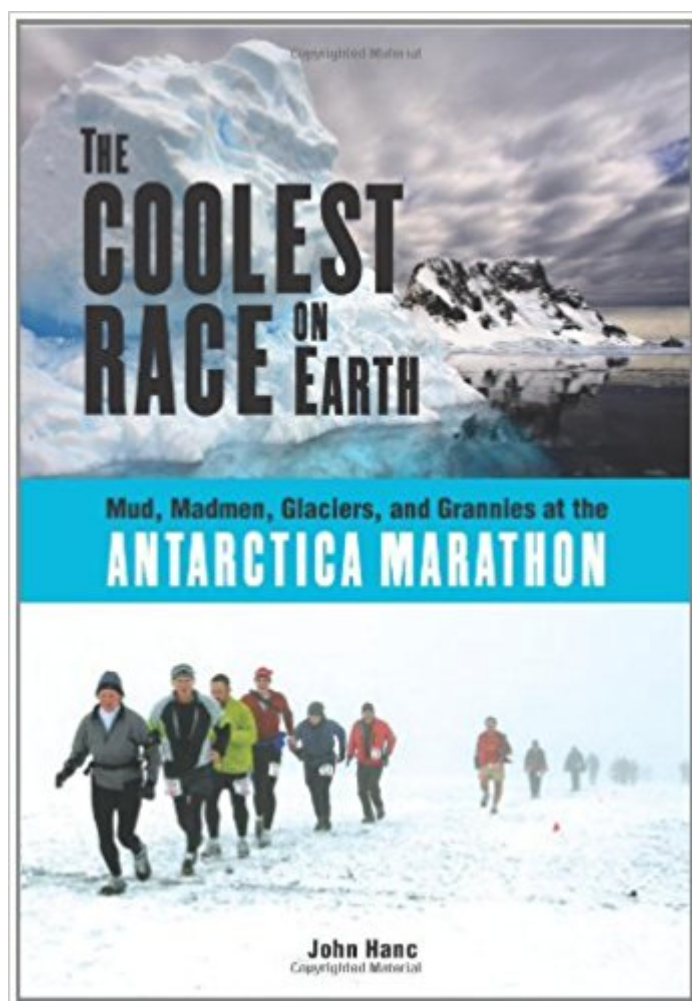


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# The Coolest Race On Earth: Mud, Madmen, Glaciers, And Grannies At The Antarctica Marathon



## Synopsis

What would induce hundreds of people from all over the world to spend thousands of dollars each and two weeks of their lives just to run a marathon in Antarctica? Especially one with a reputation as the toughest marathon on Earth? The answer is: John Hanc may have the answer. When he turned 50 he gave himself the birthday present to end all others--a trip to the end of the Earth to run his most unforgettable race. The Coolest Race on Earth is both Hanc's story and the story of the Antarctica Marathon, first held in 1995 and now an annual event that sells out years in advance. It's full of humor, adventure, and inspiring characters--including a wheelchair-bound competitor, three record-breaking grandmothers, and an ex-Marine who described the race as "the hardest thing I ever did in my life, next to Vietnam." Muddy, cold, hilly, the race is by all accounts horrible--up and down a melting glacier twice, past curious penguins and hostile skuas, and finally to a bleak finish line. Even the best runners take longer to run the Antarctica Marathon than any other. Yet the allure of marathon running combined with the fascinating reputation of the Last Continent has persuaded runners to brave a trip across the world's most turbulent body of water, the Drake Passage, to a land of extinct volcanoes and craggy mountain peaks, lost explorers and isolated scientists, penguin rookeries and whale sightings, all for a chance to run those crazy 26.2 miles. The Coolest Race on Earth brings the world's most difficult marathon to life in a book that's not only a ripping read, but also a deeply funny meditation on what makes people run.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. What happens when runners tackle a marathon over slush, ice and naked rock on an Antarctic island? Yes, their race times are much slower, but this bizarre exercise has, over the past 10 years, raised concerns far beyond the typical marathoners'. Author and Runner's World contributing editor Hanc (The Essential Marathoner) devotes the sea lion's share of this ice-bound marathon memoir to these concerns, especially in examining the determined, colorful runners competing alongside him (including "bicycle-riding grandmas" and a wheelchair-bound marathoner from Singapore). The 50-year-old writer became interested after speaking with a recently returned friend ("It feels like I just got back from another planet,' Lipsky said") and soon found himself considering the race in spite of his better sense-improbably, the devoted runner had pushed himself to the point where running 26.2 miles on the streets of New York, Chicago or London was just too cushy. The Antarctic, of course, provides all the challenge he could ever want, and his sharp, fun and funny account captures well the incredible ferocity of life there. Though a special treat for runners, travel readers and non-athletes interested in extreme human experiences will also find this a bracing read. Copyright ÃÂ Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"While it may seem as simple as putting one foot in front of the other for 26.2 miles, the world of the marathon is a complex, funny, strange and fascinating one. . . . John Hanc shows us just how far that world extends and reminds us how compelling and admirable&#151;and okay, zany&#151;are those who go the distance."ÃÂ &#151;Runner's World Magazine"ÃÂ No pomp.ÃÂ No generalizations.ÃÂ Just a friend with a great little story to tell.ÃÂ Witty, informative and inspiring."ÃÂ &#151;Benjamin Cheever, author, Strides:ÃÂ Running Through History With an Unlikely Athlete"John Hanc takes us along on an adventure you will never forget.ÃÂ A book that will haunt your thoughts and run with your mind."ÃÂ &#151;Toby Tanser, author, More Fire: How to Run the Kenyan Way and The Essential Guide to Running the New York City Marathon"With Hanc as our trusty guide, we emerge from the tale of the trek feeling as if we were there&#151;although we suffered no bouts of seasickness and have not a speck of mud or penguin dung on our boots."ÃÂ &#151;Mark Will-Weber, author, The Quotable Runner and Run for the Diamonds: 100 Years of Footracing in Berwick, Pennsylvania"A must read for any

adventure-minded runner, or for those just looking to get a taste of what it's like to run a marathon on the most desolate continent on earth."Â Â &#151;Dean Karnazes, marathon runner and author, Ultramarathon Man: Confessions of an All-Night Runner"Full of humor, adventure, and inspiring characters."Â Â &#151;booksextremesports.blogspot.com

You will definitely not get this book confused with Tolstoy or Tennyson anytime soon. Just a fun book about quirky people who do "destination marathons." The destination for this one - Antarctica. In this travelogue, Hanc introduces us to the history of marathons and the history of exploration of Antarctica. He also details the fun of meeting penguins and seals and the quirky people who run the marathon and who are travel guides to Antarctica. Oh, yeah, and he runs 26.2 miles on King George Island in 4 1/2 hours. As a marathoner and traveler this is a fun book. Also, would probably be a great intro into Antarctic exploration. (I just put "Last Place on Earth" and "Endurance in my shopping cart").

I've read this book twice; once while still hoping to get off the waiting list for the race, the second time, after 3 years on that list, while counting down the weeks to the event. Gathering information is one of the ways to prepare for a race. John Hanc's book is full of information, history, tales of inspiration and practical advice. I'm sure that taking what it says to heart will make my upcoming Antarctica Marathon a successful event. It is probably a good book to give to all my family members who are seriously questioning my sanity!

Am in the processes of training for this incredible marathon in 2016. So excited to read how it all came about!

The Coolest Race on Earth: Mud, Madmen, Glaciers, and Grannies at the Antarctica MarathonÂ Â I ran the the first Antarctic Marathon in 1995 as chronicled in this book and know many of those who have done the subsequent races. The book accurately describes the experience and does a wonderful job of going beyond the running aspect and speaks to the very special place Antarctica is and how it affects those who go there. An inspirational book for all runners. It is a testimony to ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Some people will go to the ends of the earth to run a race. John Hanc, obviously, is one of those people. Hanc is the author of "The Coolest Race on Earth," and the subtitle tells you much about the

subject: "Mud, Madmen, Glaciers, and Grannies at the Antarctica Marathon."Marathons have been held practically everywhere in the past several years, but Antarctica was something of the last frontier in this department. If you haven't heard, it gets a little cold down there in the summer, let alone the winter.A race in Antarctica seemed like a great way for Hanc to celebrate his 50th birthday -- well, at least it's potentially better for him than a long weekend in Vegas.Hanc, a teacher and writer, does his homework nicely in this brisk (you've got a better word to describe a 200-page book on running in Antarctica?) book. He covers the story about how Thom Gilligan got into the business of staging running vacations near the South Pole, about the history of the exploration of the region, and about the state of the region.It's fun to follow Hanc's progress and meet some of his fellow runners. They flew to Argentina, and took a Russian ship to Antarctica. The race itself was located on King George Island, located just off the coast of the main continent.Conditions were tough there, but probably not for the expected reason. The temperature was a little above the freezing mark at the start, turning some of the course into the proverbial "giant mud pit" usually associated with monster truck shows. The times were pretty slow.Perhaps the biggest disappointment about the book is that the race mentioned here was run in 2005. That's a bit of a lag to publication in 2009. Since that time, there have been a few articles published about races that have been actually held on the continent itself in even colder conditions. That seems like it was closer to a true Antarctic experience, frankly.Hanc does have a nice way with words, and he uses that talent with the scenes of the Far South that most of us will never get to see (penguins, seals, icebergs, etc.). "The Coolest Race on Earth" is a good way to pass your time indoors while waiting for your favorite running route to thaw out.

Clearly the author put a lot into this book on many levels. And it is definitely an asset, not a detriment, for Hanc to give backgrounds and history of the people, both historic as well as those directly involved in the race, to give readers the full flavor of why this race mattered. Clearly it matters to people for differing reasons. Notably, while Hanc does go into his personal reasons, efforts, and experiences, he spends a lot more time on others. His writing gives deference to others and is not self-centered, which a lesser author might have shown. When done reading this book, I not only learned of this 2005 race, but other races as well as challenges, motivation, history, the post-scripts of the race, other races, and the people involved. It helps in such a nonfiction book to not only report the event, but to also give us reasons to care about the event and more so about the people. Very well done.

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