

Wife Carrying Race - FAQs

Who can enter?

Anyone can enter the UK Wife Carrying Race - but both carrier and carried must be 18 or over. We welcome all nationalities to the Norfolk Wife Carrying Race. Entry is strictly online only, via;
http://bookitzone.com/peter_duhig_1/Sb2FFX

How far is it?

The UK Wife Carrying Race is run over a course of approx. 400m, with a slight incline before the home straight.

Do you have to be married?

You do not have to be married (to each other, anyway) but it certainly helps if you are at least friends. We can have men carrying women, women carrying men, a woman carrying a woman, and a man carrying a man. I think that just about covers all the possible combinations. No blow up dolls allowed !

How does it work on the day?

Couples check in at registration and the 'wife' is weighed on a set of scales. The couples receive their t-shirts and they are asked to wear them and their race number during the race. At about 13.15, couples walk from the race HQ to the start line for the safety briefing and warm up. All the 'wives' being carried have to wear a crash-helmet (a cycle helmet will do) since tumbles and falls can happen. At 13.30, all the couples run in the same race. After the race there is a prize-giving ceremony. The Norfolk Wife Carrying Race is over quite quickly. At 14.00 the Downham Games prizegiving is due to take place.

What's the best way of carrying my 'wife'?

The choice of carrying style is up to you, but there are some recognised position that you might like to try in your practice sessions (you are practicing, aren't you?). Piggyback is popular, but slow. Shoulder-ride is precarious, possibly high-risk, but could be quite fast (the wife will get a great view of the race, at least). The 'Fireman's Carry' - where the 'wife' is carried across or over the shoulders - is quite fast, but rather uncomfortable for both carrier and 'wife'. The fastest position is the Estonian carry - where the 'wife' hangs upside-down on the carrier's back, with their legs over the carrier's shoulders and the wife's head in the 'danger zone,' next to the carrier's bum.

Possibly the least fast - but the funniest - is the reverse Estonian, or Soixante-neuf hold, pioneered in Dorking in 2013, which is a kind of Wife Carrying '69' position. This will guarantee you fame - and infamy.

Are there obstacles?

Oh yes. There are straw bales in a chicane format to run around, There are also some that the carriers have to climb over during the race. On the home straight, there is a battery of people with buckets of water and water-pistols waiting to target all runners. (We have buckets and water-pistols because the place where we run the Norfolk Wife Carrying Race is a local park and we can't dig a pit to have a pond - like many other wife carrying races around the world). The buckets and water pistols make it feel like an episode of 'It's a knockout.' Just to finish you off there is the Flours for your Partner obstacle, which amounts to being pelted with flour bombs – carefully of course !

Therefore it is best to wear old gear that can be washed out!

Is wife carrying dangerous?

Potentially, yes. Wife carrying can lead to slipped disk, broken legs and arms, spinal damage, facial injury, skull fracture, hernias, and other sundry injuries and illnesses, and potentially up to and including death or worse.

But don't let that put you off. There haven't been any serious injuries yet.

This is the first one of course !

Are there goodies?

Very much so. Only the carrier needs to enter the race - but both the carrier and the 'wife' get a t-shirt. In addition, all participants win a Norfolk Wife Carrying Race medal, and a mini-keg of locally brewed Ale.

When was Wife Carrying created and why?

The first UK Wife Carrying Race took place in 2008. The race was started for a laugh, (in Dorking, Surrey) after the race organiser saw the Finnish World Championships in his youth on ITV's World of Sport, hosted by mustachioed avuncular sports icon Dickie Davies.

It is growing in popularity, hence the 1st Norfolk event in 2017.

Is wife carrying a sport?

It takes strength, fitness, technique and practice to succeed, so yes, it's a sport.

Maybe it should be included in the Olympics!

Where does it take place?

The race will take place at 13.30 on Sunday the 11th June 2017, on the Memorial Playing Field, (known locally as the Federation Club) Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 9NR, as the finale event to the very successful **Downham Games**. There is parking at the venue.

Downham Market is both 10 miles north of Ely and 10 miles south of Kings Lynn on the A10 trunk road. It is a famous old market town known for its Horse Fair, which is still celebrated every year. It was also the venue for the invention and trials of the Breachers Buoy (the winched seat that takes a person from one ship to another in mid ocean). This happened because of the heritage of Lord Horatio Nelson in the area. He owned a house in Denver, just a mile south of the Town Hall and the old coaching inn, (The Crown.) where the trials took place across the high street. Downham is also famous for its splendid, ornamental, black & white clock in the town centre.

The Downham Games are a very much newer addition to the towns events. They were started in 2012 to celebrate the London Olympics, and have grown in popularity, and the number of sports offered, every year since. Echoes of 'Much Wenlock' can be had by taking part in the Games athletic event, or just browsing the many sports and activity stalls. Most stalls offer a come and try it option, to test your skill at the particular sport or activity.

How many couples take part in the Norfolk Wife Carrying Race?

We don't know ! 35 took part in the UK Race in March.
We would like to see up to 25 couples have a go at our race. But if we get double figures in our first year we will be happy.

Are there any other rules?

The 'wife' has to weigh at least 50kg - there is an official weigh-in, and if she weighs less than 50kg, she has to 'bulk up' with a rucksack full of bags of flour or sugar. Something weighty, but forgiving, is recommended. NOT Tins !

Are there prizes?

The winners of the Norfolk Wife Carrying Race

win a barrel of locally brewed ale.

Last-placed finishers receive the 'Norfolk 'n Good' Trophy.

Oldest carrier receives a packet of Pro-Plus.

Heaviest wife: There will be a special prize of a pound of Norfolk sausages for the carrier of the **heaviest wife** - who completes the course - for Olympian strength.

Is wife carrying a tradition in Norfolk?

We think that wife carrying may have started (with a little help from our Scandinavian cousins) in what became East Anglia when Viking raiders ransacked monasteries and villages on the North and east coast of England in 793AD. The sport was reborn in Dorking, Surrey in 2008.

Does wife carrying take place anywhere else?

Wife Carrying has its spiritual home in Finland, where the World Wife Carrying Championships takes place every year in the small and isolated village of Sonkajärvi. In Finland, wife carrying is called 'eukonkanto.' Finns have regularly won the competition, but their bitter rivals from Estonia challenge them hard every year. The British champion of 2013, Matt Witko came third in the World Championships in Finland in 2013. Wife carrying races also take place in the US, Canada and Australia.

What does it take to win the race?

To win the race, you must be a fit and strong carrier with a wife of 50kg or not much more. Relatively slight carriers have won the race in the UK - using superior technique. However, if you are a big strong guy, you should do well.

How difficult is it?

It is very, very tough.

Do people take it seriously?

Some of them take it very seriously - and why not? - there's a Norfolk title at stake! Most people are in the race for a bit of fun and bragging rights. You will dine out on this for years to come!

How important is the Norfolk Wife Carrying Race in the universe?

In the universe? Totally unimportant.
To the people competing in the race? **Everything.**