

Hash House Harriers: A Drinking Club With A Running Problem



The Lima Hash House Harriers and the inaugural South America Red Dress

Run in Chaclacayo, Peru.

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The next time you're out for a run and you notice flour or chalk on the ground, it probably means you're fresh off the tracks of the Hash House Harriers.

But this running group isn't like your traditional track-runs-twice-a-week, non-competitive running club. The Hash House Harriers has become an international phenomenon, growing to nearly 2,000 chapters across the globe in 1,304 cities and 185 countries. However, the message is the same in all languages.

Famously known as "a drinking club with a running problem," the Hash House Harriers only has one requirement for membership—a sense of humor—as the offbeat group prides itself on eccentric costumes and social activities often involving alcohol.

"Hares" within the group are given the task of marking a trail to direct runners, throwing in some dead ends, false trails and forks as challenges. "Packs" or "hounds" will then follow these paths. A trail will periodically end at a "check" point and the pack must work together to find where it begins again.

The purpose of these challenges is to keep the pack together, regardless of fitness level or speed, as faster runners tend to slow down and stop as they figure out the new trail, which allows the slower runners to catch up.

Often called a kennel, each chapter is individually managed without a uniting organizational hierarchy. Management of the chapter is known as MisManagement, with titles such as Grand Master, which goes to the president of the club.

When Angela Rogers founded the Bay 2Beaches H3 in the Tampa Bay metro area, she wanted to create a kennel that was different from the others.

“Most kennels have running trails, while others bike or paddle. Our kennel is multidimensional so we have at least two different kinds of activities. For example, we’ll paddle on the water for four miles and then run for three miles on the hash trail,” said Rogers, who’s known as “Casual Friday” to her teammates.

Other kennels, such as the Boston H3, work together to host local gatherings like the New England/Northeast Hash Weekend. The festivities start with a pub crawl on Friday, the main hash on Saturday and a recovery hash on Sunday. The weekend then culminates with a hash on the Boston Marathon course where refreshments are provided at mile 20.

“We’re a diverse group. We hail from many professions, age groups and backgrounds. As a Boston Hasher, you have the opportunity to meet many new people, and over the years, I’ve made many friendships,” said “Hare Club.”

To join a hash, runners can visit www.gthhh.com to contact the nearest kennel.