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10 Themed Races to Take Running to the Next Level

By Kirsten Ballard in **FITNESS**

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Training for a 5K is an impressive feat—3.1 miles isn't something to scoff at. But if you're tired of the standard road race and want to spice it up, there are plenty of other options popping up around the country. These races are guaranteed to amp up the adrenaline rush of a normal race, especially if you're escaping zombies or lapping Cinderella. They all include T-shirts with the registration fee, and some even give you medals or a complimentary beer—all great incentives for exercise! We've got the lowdown on some of the more extreme, interactive, or just plain muddier races.

If you've **trained for a 5k**, and are ready to a more interactive race...

1. The Color Run

Distance: 3.1 miles



Known as “the happiest 5K on the planet,” **The Color Run** is five kilometers of flying color paint and fun. Runners start the race dressed in white and then run by color stations at each mile mark, where they are covered in powdered and liquid paints. By the end of the race, you'll be covered in paint, which will make for awesome post-run pictures and a great souvenir T-shirt!

“I think what makes them different is the experience. It's not betting your personal record time, it's about running and having fun,” says Sabrina McCarthy, a student at Northeastern University. “Everyone knows the race is for fun, so it's a lighter atmosphere than other more competitive races!”

You can find a Color Run location near you [here](#).

2. Dirty Girl Mud Run

Distance: 3.1 miles

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Race, jump, climb, and crawl your way through this 5K! With obstacles named PMS (pretty muddy stuff) and Utopian Tubes (a belly crawl through winding tubes), the **Dirty Girl** race series is as fun as it is difficult. Bring sunscreen and clothes that you don't mind getting dirty!

Like a typical mud run, the Dirty Girl combines 12 different obstacles for racers to compete. This run will take a more complex **training regimen** as it requires arm, back, and abdominal muscles to make it through the obstacles.

A list of participating cities can be found [here](#).

3. Krispy Kreme Challenge

Distance: 5 miles



You know what's better than running? Donuts! The **Krispy Kreme Challenge**, held in Raleigh, North Carolina, is half eating contest and half road race. This five-mile race involves eating a dozen donuts halfway through the course, then running back while trying not to lose your stomach contents. If speed eating doesn't interest you, you can enter as a casual runner and just run back carrying your donuts. But if you're up for a crazy hard (and delicious) challenge, competitive racers must finish in under an hour.

The Krispy Kreme Challenge began as a competition between some North Carolina State University undergraduates in 2004. Then-sophomore Ben Gaddy finished the challenge in 34:12. Nine years later, the event is number 85 on *Sports Illustrated's* **list of 102 More Things You Gotta Do Before You Graduate**. Proceeds from the race benefit the North Carolina Children's Hospital.

4. Electric Run

Distance: 3.1 miles



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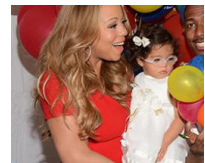
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Electric Run is a raving 5K that features pulsing music and glow sticks, making it feel more like a concert than a workout. Racers are encouraged to wear neon and dance-run their way through the 3.1 miles.

Ready to bust a move? Check out the list of locations [here](#).

5. 5K Foam Fest

Distance: 3.1 miles



Less creepy than a fraternity foam party, the **5K Foam Fest** will suds you up as you complete the course. Combining the elements of a mud run with foam and water, Foam Fest is a slippery obstacle course. Wear running shoes that you're okay getting wet, and prepare to get foamy, sandy, and muddy. There is a 30-foot slip 'n slide and a human car wash on the course, so you can cross those off your bucket list.

Find out where you can get foamy on this [list of locations](#).

If it's the thrill of the chase that keeps you going...

6. Run For Your Lives

Distance: 3.1 miles



Has *The Walking Dead* made you crave adventure, guts, and glory? **This race** allows runners to hurdle over obstacles and mud while being chased by the living dead (or, at least, convincing actors). Equipped with “life” flags—similar to flag football belts—racers attempt to get through the course without becoming a zombie. If you lose all your flags, you are marked as “Infected,” with the only hope being to get to the finish line as quickly as you can and pray for a cure. You will receive a racer’s medal regardless, but it will be marked with whether you survived or were infected.

The list of locations can be found [here](#).

7. The Prison Break

Distance: 0.6, 3.1, or 6.2 miles



Hopefully this will be the first time you’ve run from the cops. **The Prison Break** allows you to race along prison grounds against other “suspects.” With a 1K, 5K, and 10K option, this race allows for all types of runners. But don’t fear the dogs or prison guards—fear your fellow runners! Running along roads and train tracks, racers try to escape the historic reformatory. This race promises more than a T-shirt; it promises freedom at the finish line!

The Prison Break is currently held in [Springfield, Virginia](#), and there is another version of it in [Danville, Kentucky](#).

If you are an extreme cross-training runner ready for a challenge...

8. Spartan Race

Distance: 3.1, 8, or 12 miles

Spartan Race is an obstacle course that comes in a variety of distances, allowing racers to pick their ideal length. There are no race maps issued, challenging competitors to think on their feet and be prepared for anything—like a true tough-as-nails Spartan warrior.

The obstacles require total-body conditioning. We suggest running this race with a team so that you can haul and push each other over the obstacles. Be prepared to crawl through mud on your belly and climb over lots of obstacles!

Want to unleash your inner Spartan? The list of locations can be found [here](#).

9. Tough Mudder

Distance: 10-12 miles



Known as the most extreme race on earth, **Tough Mudder** is 10 to 12 miles of super intense obstacles, from barbed wires to electric wires. Nothing says badass more than receiving a medal from Tough Mudder.

While this race may not be for everyone, don't discount yourself—you may be surprised what you can accomplish. Northeastern collegiette Amanda Gross completed a Tough Mudder race and lived to tell the tale.

"When the event day finally came around, I was more focused on having a good time with the people I was running with, and pushing my self to my mental and physical limits to make it through as many obstacles and finish the course," she says.

Tough Mudder will test agility and strength more than other races. People traditionally train for it with a cross-training regimen that combines weight lifting and cardio. Tough Mudder also provides **Boot Camps** to help you train.

Do you think you've got what it takes? Find a [location near you](#).

If you're a tough runner but a girly girl at heart...

10. Disney Princess Half Marathon

Distance: 13.1 miles



Completing a half marathon is an impressive feat, but running it in the Happiest Place on Earth just makes it even more awesome. Hosted in Orlando, Florida, the **Disney Princess Half Marathon** is one of a kind. You get to run 13.1 miles through the (relatively flat) Disney parks dressed as a princess as guests cheer you on. It is *highly* recommended to don a tutu and tiara.

Disney also offers full marathons, creating the perfect runcation (runner's vacation) destination for a three-day weekend.

No matter how fast or slow you run these races, they're sure to create priceless memories and some great photo opportunities. So whether you decide to get down and dirty or go royal, here's hoping that you hit the ground running!

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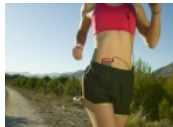
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