

# Facts about Iditarod

## Iditarod:

- Iditarod: is a sled dog race from Anchorage to Nome.
- Starts: the first Saturday in March each year and restarts the following day. The race starts in Anchorage and runs about 11 miles on Saturday, covering a well groomed snow trail from downtown Anchorage (4<sup>th</sup> and G) to Campbell Airstrip. This is considered a ceremonial start and a time of celebration.
- IditaRiders: ride in each musher's sled as a fund raising event for the race.
- Restarts: on the Sunday following the 'Start' Day. The 'time' starts for each musher as they leave the starting line at Willow and head out on the race trail. Mushers start at 2 minute intervals. The difference in starting time is made up during the 24 hour 'lay over' that is required of each musher. This means that only the last musher to start the race takes a 24 hour break from the race. The second to the last musher to start takes 24 hours and 2 minutes, and each musher's 24 hour break is reflected in the differential to put each musher on an 'equal' starting time.
- Ends: when the last musher reaches Nome. The winner is the musher who gets to Nome with the best over all time.
- Runs: from Anchorage to Nome, using a northern trail route in even (2012, 2014) years and a southern trail route in odd (2011, 2013) years.
- 1,049 Miles: is the symbolic length of the race each year. 1000 miles is certainly something 'great' and Alaska is the 49<sup>th</sup> state. The race is run across the wilderness of Alaska, a 'great' accomplishment for any musher and team is their arrival in Nome after a race that may take between 9 - 15 days.
- Miles between checkpoints: are estimations. Each year, the race route and sometimes even distances between each checkpoint may differ slightly.

- The Last Great Race®: is another name for Iditarod.
- Is held because: As airplanes, snowmobiles, (or snow machines as they are called in Alaska) and other changes came about in Alaska, there were less and less sled dogs in Alaska. The once important working animal wasn't 'needed' as much for daily life in Alaska. (delivering mail, carrying supplies, helping minors with their quest for gold, or for recreational purposes) The sled dogs had played an important role in Alaska's history. Joe Redington, Sr. wanted the sled dogs to continue to be a part of Alaska's present day life.
- Joe Redington, Sr.: Is called the "Father of the Iditarod".
- Dorothy Page: Is called the "Mother of the Iditarod".
- The first race: was in 1973 and was run with a different set of rules than today's race. It took 32 days for the last of the 22 teams Of 34 teams that started the race on March 3, 1975, to finish the race. The champion was Dick Wilmarth, Red Devil, AK, finishing in 20 days, 0 hours, 49 minutes, and 41 seconds. The first finish line was made from Kool-aid.
- Teams of 16 dogs leave the 'restart' for Nome. At least 6 dogs must be in line at the finish line in Nome. A maximum of 12 dogs pull the sled at the 'start' of the race, which is a ceremonial start.
- Mushers: drive the sled using voice commands. (Reins are not used!) No whips are allowed. Mushers must take good care of their dogs. Mushers have competed in many races before they race their first Iditarod.
- Dogs: must pass physical examinations prior to the race and are microchipped for identification purposes. Only healthy dogs are permitted to run the race and good dog care is a priority for everyone. These dogs are athletes and have been in training for this race. Mushers and dogs have 'put on hundreds of training miles' before the race begins.
- Checkpoints: (designated stops) are set up between Anchorage and Nome. Supplies are sent in advance of the race so everything mushers need awaits their arrival at checkpoints. Volunteers, race staff, and veterinarians are situated at checkpoints to fulfill duties to ensure dogs are taken care of and the race rules and guidelines are maintained.
- Veterinarians: are at each checkpoint to examine the dogs. Some teams spend longer time at checkpoints than other mushers do, all depending on

strategy and racing conditions, but each musher carries a 'vet book' and veterinarians must make notes on the dogs at the checkpoints regardless of the length of time a musher remains at a checkpoint.

- Excellent Dog Care: is a priority - a focus for mushers, veterinarians, race officials, pilots, and volunteers. Dogs are priority and every means possible is used to ensure dogs remain as safe as they can and that they are given the best of care.
- K9 Athletes of Iditarod: are born, raised, trained, and in excellent physical condition.
- Race Rules: are posted on the Iditarod website.
- Men and Women: enter the same race and follow the same rules.
- Veterans: are mushers who have finished a previous Iditarod.
- Rookies: are mushers who start the Iditarod having never finished the Iditarod before, however, they may have raced it a previous year and scratched or withdrew.
- A Scratch: means that a musher for some reason decides to not finish the race that the musher started.
- A Withdrawal: means that a musher is not allowed to finish the race due to a race judge's decision. If a musher signs up for Iditarod but then chooses to not run the race, that is also considered a 'withdrawal' from the race.
- The winner of Iditarod: is the first person (musher) to reach Nome.
- The Red Lantern: is awarded to the last person to reach Nome and signifies the end of the race, all of the mushers and dog teams are off the trail!
- Volunteers: play an important role in the race. The race would not happen without the volunteers. Thousands of volunteers help out during the race and other times during the year. A HUGE thanks goes to the volunteers for 'making the race' happen each year!
- Staff: a small number of staff work year round for the race.
- Iditarod Headquarters: is in Wasilla, Alaska.
- More people have climbed Mt. McKinley (Denali): than have finished the Iditarod.
- [www.iditarod.com](#) is the official website for Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race®.

- The Iditarod Trail was used as a mail and supply route from the coastal towns of Seward and Knik to the interior mining camps at Flat, Ophir, Ruby and beyond at the turn of the century.
- Dog sled carried mail and supplies 'in' to those living in remote areas. During the gold rush, the dog teams brought out gold.
- As the mining of gold mining slowed, those seeking the gold left the area. The trail was traveled less.
- In the 1920's, airplanes meant easier access to Alaska's interior, travel by dog team was not as necessary.
- With Diphtheria threatening the lives of those living in Nome in 1925, part of the trail was the life saving highway for medication needed. The teams relayed the medicine (serum) from Nenana to Nome.
- In 1967, a short distance race that was a part of Alaska's Centennial celebration that year, was organized by Dorothy G Page and Joe Redington, Sr. commemorated the early use of the trail via dog team.
- A second short race in 1969 was followed several years later by the first "long distance" Iditarod from Anchorage to Nome.
- Congress declared the Iditarod Trail a National Historic Trail in 1978.