



Key events

(December 2014 version)

Below is a summary of the key events in the history of the International Four Days Marches Nijmegen.

1909

The first Four Days Marches take place. Participants can start from 15 different places in the Netherlands. They must walk 140km in four days, 35km per day. The marches are organised by the Nederlandse Bond voor Lichamelijke Opvoeding (NBvLO) [Dutch League for Physical Education], which was founded in 1908. Of the 306 male participants, ten are civilians.

1910

From now on, participants can only start from one place. This place changes from year to year. Participants walk 35, 45 or 55km per day. Bronze medals are awarded to participants who complete the full four days.

1913

The first woman takes part in the marches, she does not reach the finishing line.

1914

The Four Days Marches do not take place in 1914 and 1915, due to World War I.

1917

All military participants have to run one kilometre each day after walking. Participants who do not manage this do not receive a Four Days Marches Cross. Six hundred walkers are not allowed to take part due to lack of space.

1919

The first woman, Mrs N. van Stockum-Metelerkamp, is awarded the Four Days Marches Cross.

1922

The start of a tradition. The Four Days Marches end with the Blister Ball.

1925

From now on, the Four Days Marches are held in Nijmegen. A woman, Mrs F.H. Jongtien, walks 4x55km for the first time in history. A few dozen others later follow her example.

1928

Foreign participants take part in the Four Days Marches for the first time. From Germany: 48 military servicemen, 40km; Great Britain: 40 civilians, 55km; Norway: 20 military servicemen; France: one photographer.

1930

Youth participants receive a special Aanmoedigingsmedaille or Encouragement Medal from now on.

1932

For the first time, there are more civilian participants than military. The Four Days Marches also receives radio coverage for the first time. The Four Days Marches song is introduced.

1933

Swiss participants take part in the Four Days Marches for the first time.

1934

Military participants have to carry 17kg of marching kit during their daily 40km march. The pontoon bridge near Cuijk is laid for the first time. The first woman, Mrs M. J. van der Kley-Vrijenhoek, is awarded the Golden Four Days Marches Cross for participating in the event for the tenth time.

1935-1939

The Four Days Marches are also held in Indonesia, then a Dutch colony, for the Dutch military servicemen stationed there. Civilians also take part in these events. It is unknown whether it also took place in 1940 and 1941.

1936

Participants walk over the Waalbrug for the first time, which was opened earlier this year.

1937

His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands attends the Four Days Marches.

1940-1945

The Four Days Marches do not take place.

1946

The Nijmegen Four Days Marches take place for the first time following World War II.

1951

The Flag Parade is held in the Goffert stadium for the first time, previous locations being Molenveld and De Wedren.

1954

For the first time, more than 10,000 men and women take part in the marches. Only in 1955 do more than 10,000 actually finish the marches.

1955

The first Israelis take part in the Four Days Marches.

1958

To mark its 50th anniversary, the NBvLO receives the designation "Royal" and is known as the Royal Dutch League for Physical Education (KNBLO) from now on.

1961

Youth participants had received a special encouragement prize up to now. From this year onwards, they are awarded the official medal.

1962

Camp Heumensoord is used for the first time as a base for the military participants in the Four Days Marches.

1966

This is the last year when men aged between 19 and 50 have to walk 55km per day. This distance is reduced to 50km per day in 1967.

The Four Days Marches are held for the 50th time.

1967

His Royal Highness Prince Claus of the Netherlands successfully takes part in the Four Days Marches.

1968

The date of the Four Days Marches, which had always been "the last full week in July", is moved to the four days starting on "the third Tuesday in July", in consultation with the organisers of the event in Apeldoorn.

1969

Computers are used for administrative tasks for the first time.

1970

There is a festive atmosphere in Nijmegen thanks to the first edition of the Zomerfeesten or Summer Festivities.

1971

The minimum age for participation in the Four Days Marches is lowered from 14 to 13.

The age at which men can choose to walk 30km per day is reduced from 70 to 65.

1972

Due to high humidity levels during the event, the marches start an hour earlier each day. The marches on the second, third and fourth days are even shortened by ten kilometres.

1973

Individual military participants may no longer carry weapons as part of their marching kit.

From now on, groups where some of the participants withdraw are still eligible for a medal, as long as the withdrawals do not total more than 10% of the group.

The compulsory 1kg marching kit for groups and contingents walking 50km no longer applies.

1975

The Four Days Marches is entered in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's biggest walking event.

1978

The minimum age for participation in the Four Days Marches is lowered from 13 to 12.

1980

The extended distance is introduced for people aged 18 and over. Participants can choose to walk 10km further than the regulation distance.

1983

A special orange gladioli, cultivated for the KNBLO's 75th anniversary, is named "Vierdaagse" after the event.

1985

Mrs Mies Klaver-Budding is the first person to take part in the Four Days Marches for the 50th time.

1986

The extended distance now applies to all categories.

1991

A record number of walkers once again takes part in the 75th Nijmegen Four Days Marches. Over 40,000 people register, and 38,942 start the marches on the first day.

1993

Following a trial in 1992, all participants are given a card with a magnetic strip to use to sign off every day.
The pontoon bridge near Cuijk is laid for the fiftieth time.

1995

For the first time ever, wheelchair-bound people are allowed to take part in the Four Days Marches officially, as part of a trial. However, they receive the Penning van Stad Nijmegen or Medal of the City of Nijmegen instead of the official medal.

1996

Mrs Annie Berkhout takes part in the Four Days Marches for the 60th time.

1997

Walkers are given a bar code card to use to sign off each day.
Wheelchair-bound people are allowed to take part again. They still do not receive the Four Days Marches Cross, but instead a special certificate, stating that they have completed the Four Days Marches in a wheelchair.

1998

The number of people to have participated in the Four Days Marches reaches one million.

1999

For the first time since 1951, the Four Days Marches are not officially opened at the Flag Parade preceding the event. The fire brigade and police order the parade to be cancelled before the official part begins, due to a heavy storm.
As a consolation, the event is opened officially at 4am on Tuesday morning when the first walkers start the march.
Mr A. Th. W. de Blécourt is the first man to complete the Four Days Marches for the 60th time.

2000

A record number of walkers once again takes part in the 84th Nijmegen Four Days Marches. Around 43,000 people register. More than 40,000 walkers start the marches for the first time ever.

2001

The Start and Finish point of the marches moves from the De Vereeniging concert hall to De Wedren. Mrs Annie Berkhout completes the Four Days Marches for the 65th time and receives a royal honour for her achievement.

2002

The KNBLO founds the Stichting Internationale Vierdaagse Afstandsmarsen Nijmegen –Stichting DE 4DAAGSE- for all activities related to the Four Days Marches. The commercial TV channel SBS6 broadcasts five editions of a popular Four Days Marches TV Journal. Mrs Berkhout completes the Four Days Marches for the 66th time. A Canadian military delegation takes part for the 50th time.

2003

A combination of tropical temperatures and high humidity levels causes the march coordinators to reduce the distances by 10km on the second day. Participants cannot be collected by family and friends at the De Wedren on Friday. The "Meet and Greet" area, set up for them on Van Schevichavenstraat, is a big hit. 44,812 walkers start the marches on the first day, breaking all previous records.

2004

The number of people who can participate in the Four Days Marches is restricted for the first time ever. This is in order to guarantee safety and public order, and therefore also walking pleasure. The board of Stichting DE 4DAAGSE sets a limit of 45,000 participants. The "first come, first served" registration system provokes much protest and many heated discussions.

2005

For the first time a draw is held ever to determine who may and may not participate. The new registration procedure clarifies matters, but also leads to a lot of people being disappointed. Over 53,000 walkers register for the 47,500 places available. Walkers' progress is hindered due to the masses of people on In de Betouwstraat and Van Weldenstraat in the centre of Nijmegen. This is not the first time this has happened. The board sees this as a good reason to change the route next year. The last certificates are awarded on Julianaplein on Friday. From now on, everyone has to walk the regulation distance that applies to his or her age.

2006

Lots do not need to be drawn this year, since the limit has not been reached - around three hundred starting tickets are still available. The 90th Four Days Marches will go down in history - the event is cancelled after just one day, due to the excessive heat, the deaths of one participant en route and another one after completing the first day's march, and the number of people requiring urgent medical assistance. Walkers who took part in the march on the first day do not receive a medal, but they are sent a special remembrance badge.

2007

Only walkers who started the marches in 2006 (and the 12 year old age group) are allowed to register during the first period. The number of registrations then increases slowly, meaning that lots do not need to be drawn. On Saturday 14 July, shortly before the marches, Mayor Thom de Graaf unveils a monument in the Julianapark in memorial of all those who have died either during or as a result of the Four Days Marches. The organisation has taken quite a few

measures to avoid a repeat of the events of 2006. Thanks to advance communication with the walkers, informing them of their responsibilities as participants, the 91st Four Days Marches runs smoothly.

2008

Johan Willemstein takes over from General Manager Wim Jansen as March Coordinator. The Flag Parade is moved to the Sunday evening, and registration for the marches opens a day earlier. As part of a trial, a few thousand walkers are given a lace chip, which is supposed to detect the speed at which people are walking. Parents and other orderlies, who have been granted a dispensation to accompany a participant aged between 12 and 15 and therefore do not complete the regulation distance, receive the Orderly Medal. The "mother" of the Four Days Marches, the Koninklijke Nederlandse Bond voor Lichamelijke Opvoeding [Royal Dutch League for Physical Education], KNBLO-NL for short, celebrates its centenary.

2009

KNBLO-NL cooperated with Stichting DE 4DAAGSE to set up the joint project Via Vierdaagse, offering training and support to inexperienced walkers to help prepare them for this walking achievement event. As was the case in 2005, interest in the Four Days Marches is so great that a draw is necessary to allocate starting tickets. The draw is among the thirteen thousand individual people registered for reward 1. Over three thousand people are to be disappointed. This year was also the introduction of 'de4daagselive.nl'. Via this system the exact location of the participants can be determined through their mobile phones. The location can be requested via the Internet or text messages and provides the organisation with adequate information on crowds on the route.

2010

Due to the expected heat (33°C), the plan of action for extreme weather conditions is tested properly for the first time since the 90th Four Days Marches. One of the measures taken is letting participants of the 94th Four Days Marches on the 40km and 50km start one hour earlier. Participants on the 30km start no less than an hour and a half earlier. Also, extra water supply locations are set up along the route.

This year the wristbands are introduced. The wristbands are scanned at the start, the finish and on the check points on route.

The teething troubles of this new registration system quickly become apparent. When it becomes clear that walkers are experiencing great delays at the check points, the old and familiar control system of control cards and nippers is reinstated on Wednesday night. It was a challenge to get 80.000 control cards printed in only 6 hours in time for the start on Thursday. This decision is a disappointment for the organisation but a resolution for the walkers.

2011

For the first time in our history, the Four Days Marches can be characterized as a charity walk. Every year the board of the Four Days Marches is inundated with requests of organisations that want to link the Walk of the World to a good cause. Also, every anniversary year the board comes up with a premium for an international good cause and the walkers. This year the premium was the launch of the charity walk and the development of the associated website, www.devierdaagsesponsorloop.nl, and putting it online. The organisation, the

charity walkers and the charities themselves are very happy with this initiative and the result.

Some 38,422 walkers completed the 95th Four Days Marches, with just 174 withdrawals on the fourth and final day. In terms of percentages, this was the lowest withdrawal rate since 1968. The youngest and oldest walkers (aged 11 and 12, and 90 respectively) and those who had walked the Four Days Marches the most (over 60 times) were all among those reaching the finish.

The 95th Four Days Marches will go down in history as one of the most relaxed editions ever. The walkers and organisation had everything going for them: there were no incidents, and apart from the odd shower, the weather was excellent.

2012

This year the unstable Waalkade's sheet pile wall creates challenges for our organisation. The opening ceremony – a collaboration between Four Days Festivities and the Four Days Marches on Sunday evening – cannot take place in the newly planned form. Unfortunately the Four Days Marches firework display on the Waalkade cannot go on. The western part of the Waalkade, which should serve as an escape route, is partially closed and with the expected number of spectators, the safety of the spectators can not be guaranteed. Due to the closure of the western part of the Waalkade, the original marching route on Wednesday must be adjusted. All distances will turn right off Veemarkt, into Rode Toren, before walking along Nieuwe Markt and Oude Haven, back onto the Waalkade, upon returning to Nijmegen.

Start and finish location De Wedren will have a completely different layout this year, which should give the tens of thousands of visitors to the pulsing heart of the Four Days Marches more room and therefore more breathing space. The new layout will see the whole of De Wedren and Julianaplein set aside for music, meeting and resting, with refreshments available for purchase. Julianapark will focus on administrative services for walkers. Registration desks for all distances will be located there. Medical services such as the Dutch Red Cross and Nederlands Genootschap voor Sportmassage (Dutch Society for Sports Massage) tents will be in the southernmost part of the park. The Nederlands Genootschap voor Sportmassage or Dutch Society for Sports Massage (NGS) will once again be deploying its national team of masseurs during the 96th edition of the Nijmegen Four Days Marches, for the 40th time to be exact. An agreement was signed to guarantee this collaboration for another five years.

The Promotion Parade will give the Four Days Marches sponsors and other advertisers the opportunity to give away items to the numerous Four Days Marches supporters, many of whom will have been sitting in their strategic spot on Via Gladiola since the early hours.

The Four Days Marches has this year once again lived up to its status as a spectacular media-friendly event. Millions of viewers tuned in to SBS 6, KRO and Omroep Gelderland's television programmes. Also, this year for the first time, the entire Entry, will be live reported from the Via Gladiola by collaborating local broadcasters. The Four Days Marches also triumphed in its use of social media.

A week of Twitter and Facebook activity has given us over 100,000 hits and page views on the website and Facebook page, as well as thousands of new followers.

The online world behind the Four Days Marches is clearly just as dynamic as the real one.

2013

For the first time in the Four Days Marches' long history, the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport will fire the starting shot. Edith Schippers will fire the shot on Tuesday 16 July so that walkers can start the 97th Four Days Marches. Also this year social media is being used in abundance during the Four Days Marches. Within a week the number of fans of the VierdaagseNijmegen facebookpage has increased with 3030. Right after the Four Days Marches the number of 'Likes' for this page is 14,503; almost three times as much as last year. The Twitteraccount of the Four Days Marches, @St_DE4DAAGSE, has 6996 followers (in 2012: about 5000).

Due to austerity measures, the Ministry of Defence has withdrawn from the usual military rest areas with medical support posts. However, the Ministry will continue to supply medical staff who will contribute towards the medical support services for all military participants, including the international military contingents, as well as caring for civilian participants.

During the upcoming Four Days Marches, there will be two major medical support posts instead of three. Now that Stichting DE 4DAAGSE is completely responsible for the organisation and set-up of the posts, locations on solid ground have been sought wherever possible.

The Ministry of Defence announced a new agreement, sealing the collaboration between the Ministry of Defence, Stichting DE 4DAAGSE and Nijmegen City Council. The agreement will be presented at Camp Heumensoord on Wednesday 17 July 2013 and signed by the parties involved.

A lottery called VierdaagseLoterij is being set up in close collaboration between VriendenLoterij and Stichting DE 4DAAGSE. Participants signing up to the VierdaagseLoterij through a special promotional website will support the Four Days Marches with half of their stakes every month. In order to support the promotion, VierdaagseLoterij will present performances by the popular DJ duo Wipneus & Pim on De Wedren. The contributions from the participants will provide structural income for the Four Days Marches, which will partly be used to pay for the festivities relating to the 100th edition of the Four Days Marches in 2016.

In the end, only 7.29% of the on Sunday and Monday signed in participants do not make in to the Via Gladiola. After four days of sunshine 39,396 walkers finally received their well-earned reward.

After fourteen years as the Four Days Marches' main sponsor, New Balance is fulfilling this role for the last time in 2013. The shoe brand HI-TEC will take over from 2014, and shall remain linked to the Four Days Marches until at least 2016.

2014

As the new main sponsor of the International Four Days Marches Nijmegen, Frank van Wezel, owner and chairman of Hi-Tec Sports, had the honour of firing the starting shot for the 98th Four Days Marches. A countdown from ten to zero, a dry gunshot, thousands of cheers and the 43,013 participants in the 98th Four Days Marches were on their way.

In its last year as an independent municipality, Beek-Ubbergen was officially one of the 'en-route municipalities' of the Four Days Marches. The board of Stichting

DE 4DAAGSE decided to have the third day's route through Berg en Dal actually cover several dozens of metres of Beek-Ubbergen's territory in order to pay homage to this municipality's years of commitment to the Four Days Marches.

Participants and visitors can use the official Four Days Marches app during the 98th Four Days Marches. The app for participants contains route maps for each day, specifying the locations of medical support posts, toilets and water stations. It also provides information about the average walking speed, estimated time of arrival and the weather, and even lets participants track fellow walkers. The app also features a handy almanac with answers to questions or problems walkers might encounter as they walk the Four Days Marches. And then there is the Blister King, a feature that lets participants keep a tally of their blisters so far.

Due to the high temperatures expected, the starting times for 30km and 40km participants in the 98th Four Days Marches have been brought forward. The 30km walkers will start at 7am, whilst the 40km participants will start in two groups, at 5am and 6am. Military participants will no longer be required to march with 10kg of additional kit on the last day. These measures are in addition to those already announced, involving extra water to be provided for the walkers, an extra medical support post and extra Dutch Red Cross first-aiders.

Following the MH17 plane crash in Ukraine, the last day of the Four Days Marches will be marked with only very modest celebrations. The decision has been made to eliminate all music from the Four Days Marches on the final day. There will be no music during the entry and on De Wedren. "Fanfare music would not be appropriate today," says march leader Johan Willemstein. The City of Nijmegen and Stichting DE 4DAAGSE are advising spectators along the route not to make or play music and to celebrate walkers' completion of the marches in a fitting manner.

Not having music during the entry did not stop spectators and walkers from turning the day into a party. There was an excellent atmosphere on St. Annastraat. Spectators compensated for the lack of music by singing, clapping and shouting words of encouragement. Walkers understood the measure and did not seem to mind the lack of enthralling sounds. Numerous bands who only heard about the measures once they had already set off for Nijmegen decided to continue their journey anyway. They walked down Via Gladiola without their instruments, but in full costume, to loud applause from the spectators. The atmosphere on De Wedren was also good, albeit slightly quieter than in previous years.

Walkers braved the heat without any major problems, partly by following the march leaders' advice, protecting their heads and necks well and eating and drinking properly. The additional water stations along the last 15km of the route were really appreciated.

The oldest anniversary walkers finished at around 3pm. Bert van der Lans of Nijmegen completed the Four Days Marches for the 67th time this year, making him the new record holder. Dick Koopman of Ouddorp completed his 65th Four Days Marches and was presented with a special medal by march leader Johan Willemstein.