



**Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources Administration**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Navajo Nation - A Haven for Year-Round Adventure**

**MONUMENT VALLEY** – Winter time paradise.

When Mother Nature segues from summer to winter, it is a time for unparalleled extravaganza for people who enjoy life on the mild side.

And for serious outdoor winter enthusiasts, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park is definitely the place to be.

No matter what kind of blanket Mother Nature covers the valley of fiery red rock formations here in December, Monument Navajo Tribal Park will ablaze with excitement.

Yawning canyon walls will awaken as runners from throughout the world will gather for the very first time to participate in a marathon, half marathon and relay here on the northern outskirts of the Navajo Nation on Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> beginning at 10 a.m. Runners will be able to see one of the world's finest natural master pieces as they immerse themselves in the tranquil and rustic charm of Navajoland.

Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye, explained, "We are very excited to bring a new event to Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park in December. We are very fortunate to attract many worldwide visitors to our parks between the spring and fall months; however, it has always been a challenge to attract tourists to our parks during the winter months."

After months of planning with various different entities, Begaye said the Department is pleased to announce running as a new venue for outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

"Many of our visitors enjoy taking photos of our tribal parks, but there are more and more visitors who want to experience our parks by venturing in some sort of outdoor activity,"



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Begaye stated. “We want to enrich their memories of the Navajo Nation and let them know that we are a year-round tourism destination.”

The inaugural event will include a marathon, half marathon and relay. According to Tom Riggenschach who is the CEO of Navajoyes.org and marathon organizer, the marathon and half marathon will be competitive while the relay will be non-competitive and have few strict guidelines. The course will be dirt road, which includes a 400-foot climb in the final couple of miles of the race.

Riggenschach stated, “I know of many runners from afar who are willing to participate in this place of timeless beauty. There is truly a sense of peace and calm when you run on the Navajo Nation. There are many runners who are looking forward to this much anticipated event.”

The marathon event was the brainchild of Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez who is an avid runner and a strong advocate of living healthy.

“Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and I want our people to live long healthy lives and one way of achieving that goal is through physical exercise such as running. Not only do we want more visitors to embrace our unique Navajo culture and our land of enchantment, but we also want our own Navajo people to visit our tribal parks. The marathons provide a great opportunity for the Navajo people and our visitors to see our beautiful parks.”

Avid runners Nez and Riggenschach both echoed that many runners serve as an inspiration to others and every runner is a winner.

The coveted event is a collaborated effort between the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department, the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, the Navajo Nation Division of Health, and Navajoyes.org, which is an entity that promotes healthy living for the youth.

The Annual Monument Valley December event will also include hot air balloons that will grace the crisp blue skies on December 11-13<sup>th</sup>. The balloon launches will be held from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. with evening glows at the Monument Valley Welcome Center on December 11<sup>th</sup> and in Kayenta on December 12<sup>th</sup>.



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For more information about how to register for the marathon, contact Riggenbach at [www.navajoyes.org](http://www.navajoyes.org) or [chuskaman@yahoo.com](mailto:chuskaman@yahoo.com). He can also be reached at (928) 429-0345.

Individuals who want to obtain information about the hot air balloon event can contact the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647 or via their website at [www.navajonationparks.org](http://www.navajonationparks.org)