

Swimmer OUTDOOR
presents

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO OUTDOOR SWIMMING



2
PART

* YOUR FIRST MILE * LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING * OPEN WATER SKILLS



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Editor's letter



Dive in, the water's lovely! Welcome to part two of our two-part guide to outdoor swimming, in association with online swim shop ProSwimwear. Whether you want to swim your first mile or cross the English Channel, read on to find out all the practical advice you need to start your outdoor swimming journey. We have a training plan for your first mile as well as an introduction to open water racing. Plus, we teach you how to hone your open water skills so you can have a faster and more enjoyable swim.

If you have your sights set on more distant horizons, we explore the world of long distance swimming. And for the adrenaline junkies among you, we look at the endurance sport of swimrun and adventure swimming.

Enjoy the guide and I hope to see you in the water soon.

Jonathan



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WILL MONSTERS EAT ME AND DO I HAVE TO COVER MY BODY IN GOOSE FAT?

OUTDOOR SWIMMER'S TOP 10 SWIM MYTHS

#1 *Outdoor swimming is dangerous*

False! As with many outdoor activities there are a few safety issues to keep in mind, but with a little common sense, wonderful adventures await.

- * Wear a bright coloured swim hat so you are visible to other water users;
- * Don't swim when under the influence of alcohol;
- * Swim within your capabilities;
- * Don't swim alone;
- * Know your entry and exit points;
- * Assess conditions on the day. If you're not sure, don't swim!

For more information on staying safe when swimming outdoors see bit.ly/2nig1hz



#2 You can only be an outdoor swimmer if you swam for a club as a child

False! Whether you're learning to swim for the first time as an adult, returning to swimming following years out of the water, or you're a regular club swimmer, outdoor swimming offers something for everyone.

Making the transition from pool to open water can be daunting for anyone, but there

are masters swimming clubs, adult learn to swim courses at local leisure centres and specialist open water coaches that can help you develop good technique and build confidence in open water, in addition to the many friends and informal swim mentors from the outdoor swimming community you will meet along the way!



#3 YOU HAVE TO WEAR A WETSUIT

False! It's up to you what you wear! However, some swim events will stipulate that a wetsuit is required or may request evidence of acclimatisation and experience if you're seeking to participate without a wetsuit. Other events will be non-wetsuit only. There's something for everyone!

#4 YOU HAVE TO SWIM FRONT CRAWL

False! You can swim whatever stroke you like. However, for swim events front crawl and breaststroke are likely to be the preferred strokes. Backstroke is sometimes not allowed at swim events.

#5 You must cover yourself in goose fat

False! Contrary to the evocative pictures of grease-clad English Channel swimmers of the past, goose fat does not keep you warm. Rather, Channel swimmers train to acclimatise to the water temperature. The main reason for covering your skin in a greasy substance is to prevent chafing, which can be a real issue for swimmers, especially in salty water. Vaseline is adequate for short swims. For wetsuits, it's best to use non-petroleum based products.

#6 YOU'LL GET TANGLED UP AND HELD DOWN BY WEEDS

Getting 'dragged down by weeds' is a common fear for beginners but is extremely unlikely, if not impossible. Nevertheless, pond weed and other plants can impede your swimming and possibly induce panic. Stay calm and gently extract yourself.

#7 I'll get ill from the water

The risk is low and most swims pass without incident. However, it is possible to pick up bugs that may cause vomiting and diarrhoea. To reduce the risk, use beaches that meet bathing water standards. In inland waters you need to rely more

on your own judgement and the experience of other swimmers. Avoid swimming in rivers after heavy rainfall that might wash contaminants or sewage into the water.

Weil's disease is also something to be aware of. It's a bacterial infection that is spread by animals and can affect people. You can catch it through contact with soil or water that's been contaminated by urine from affected animals. That means swimmers are at risk, but it's a very low risk.

It's all about common sense: avoid water that looks suspicious, cover cuts, wash your hands before eating, avoid swallowing lots of water, and shower after swimming.



#8 JAWS!

Don't even think about it...or may be you won't be able to help yourself...But rest assured, there aren't any records of sharks attacking swimmers around the UK. The fear of what lies beneath is something all swimmers contend

with. Calm breathing, re-directing your thoughts and building up experience can all help. If you're swimming elsewhere, do your research and get local advice first before venturing into the water.

The people most fearful of jellyfish stings are those who have never been stung, so celebrate your first jellyfish sting as it will reduce your fear. This doesn't mean jellyfish stings are pleasant. Far from it. They can hurt a lot. However, experienced swimmers usually find they can cope with the pain and just keep swimming.

#9 YOU'LL GET STUNG BY JELLYFISH AND DIE

#10 The water is too cold to swim outside, even in the middle of summer

The average sea temperature around the UK ranges from about 8 degrees Celsius in February to 17 degrees in August. Inland waters have a wider range and can freeze in winter and exceed 20 degrees in summer. While cooler than a heated indoor pool, most people can adapt to swimming in typical summer water temperatures.

A more immediate danger is cold water shock. It can cause a sharp intake of breath and a sense of panic. It passes within about two minutes and the more experience you have of swimming outside, the easier it is to manage. To stay safe, it's best to slide into the water gradually.





RACES AND CH

Simon Griffiths explains how to get started in mass participation swimming events

It's just getting light on a mid-summer morning. You're standing in a crowd by a river. Mist hangs over the mirror-flat water. In a few moments, you – along with all the people beside you – are going to disturb that calm and swim 2.1km upstream towards Henley and the church which you can't see yet, but know is there. Your stomach tingles. You've been training hard, but this is still going to be a big challenge.

A week later you're standing on a beach on a

blustery afternoon, staring out to sea from the Jurassic Coast. The sea is choppy and agitated. You try not to think about jellyfish or 'jokes' about great whites. This is going to be a tough swim and you hope you're ready for it.

Next month you're in an East End London dock. A few weeks ago you didn't even know it was possible to swim here and now you see hundreds of people doing it. The water is slightly briny but you barely notice; you've never seen the city from this perspective

before – and it's awesome.

The next weekend you're in Cumbria. The water is a few degrees cooler. You notice its bite, but appreciate its clarity. It's raining gently, but sunlight breaks through to light up the mountains. You're about to swim 5km, the furthest you've ever done, and you wonder if you're up to it, but you know there's only one way to find out...

Welcome to the world of mass participation racing. Unlike the pool where you swim pretty



Images: Swim Serpentine

CHALLENGES

much the same distance, in the same type of water at the same temperature every time, no open water race is the same – these events will take you to rivers, lakes, the ocean, docks and estuaries and conditions will always change. When it comes to organised racing, distances range from a few hundred metres to more than 10km.

Signing up for an open water event is often the first step on a wonderful swimming journey. The challenges become addictive. Once you've done one, you start to wonder if you could have done it a little bit faster, or

could you swim further, or could you do it without a wetsuit?

So, how do you get started?

Find an event that appeals to you. With about 200 in the UK each year and many more around the world, there are plenty to choose from. Something of around a mile or less is a good place to start.

A strong swimmer can complete this distance in around 25 minutes, 45 minutes would typically be mid-pack while someone swimming breaststroke and chatting to a

friend on the way around could be out there for 90 minutes or more.

Know what you are signing up for and prepare accordingly. A sea swim is very

RACING WILL TAKE YOU TO RIVERS, LAKES, THE OCEAN, DOCKS AND ESTUARIES →



TYPICAL MASS PARTICIPATION EVENT DISTANCES

750M – a popular introductory distance, especially with triathlon organisers as it's the distance you swim in a sprint triathlon

HALF MILE – another popular introductory distance

1500M – the longest distance people race in a pool in the Olympics (where it takes the winners just under 15 minutes) and a common distance for triathlon organisers as it's the distance you swim in a standard distance triathlon

A MILE – The extra 150 yards or so definitely makes a difference. There are a few famous mile swims around the world such as the Tiburon Mile and Midmar Mile. It's a swimmer's distance, not a triathlete's

1.9K – Aimed at triathletes, it's the distance of a half-ironman swim

2.5K AND 3K – Popular swimming distances pushing beyond the comfort of a mile. 3k is the distance used in the ASA Open Water Nationals

3.8K – An ironman distance swim. Expect lots of triathletes

5K – The shortest distance for elite open water swimmers at international events

10K – The marathon swimming distance used for the Olympic open water event

25K – Rarely offered to amateur swimmers, this is the longest distance in the World Championships where it typically takes the winners nearly six hours to complete

88K – The longest race on the FINA Grand Prix circuit. It is at least current assisted

***Note that the distances of some events are determined by geography – for example, the length of a lake**

← different from one in a small, shallow lake. How much training you need depends on your current experience. At a minimum I'd recommend that you are able to complete a continuous swim in a pool of a mile and a half for a one-mile race. This is because you do not have walls to rest on or push off from in open water and it's easy to swim more than the

PANIC IS OFTEN CAUSED BY SURPRISE AT THE WATER TEMPERATURE

event distance if your navigation is poor.

If you're going to wear a wetsuit for your event, you should practise in it at least once and preferably several times. Whether you wear a wetsuit or not you should still acclimatise to outside water temperatures. Three or four

swims should be enough to reduce the initial shock of entering cool water.

Your confidence and enjoyment of the swim will be massively improved if you are properly prepared. Event safety officers report that the majority of people who don't finish are pulled out in the first couple of hundred metres. The reason is often panic caused by surprise at the water temperature, not being able to see the bottom, feeling unable to breathe because of the wetsuit or distress caused by being among a mass of swimmers. The more you swim outdoors before your event the less likely it is that you will be bothered by these things.

Write down a plan for your challenge to help ensure everything runs smoothly on the day. List all the kit you need and pack the night before. Note down all the steps you need to take such as a reminder to put on wetsuit lube and how you will tackle the swim (eg start near the back and swim steady until half way). Your plan can also include some "if – then" statements such as: "if my goggles

MASS PARTICIPATION SWIMMING EVENTS – QUICK Q&A



Swimmers about to set off on a mile race at Swim Serpentine

leak then I will roll onto my back and empty them” or “if I feel myself starting to panic then I will swim a few strokes of breaststroke to re-orientate myself”. These can really help if something goes wrong.

Finally, enjoy yourself. Soak up the atmosphere that you only get when you line up for a challenge with other excited and nervous swimmers and take a moment to appreciate your surroundings. Remember all the training you’ve done and have a fantastic swim.

How good a swimmer do you need to be?

You need to be able to swim continuously for the entire distance of the challenge. Speed is irrelevant unless the event has a time limit. Remember, if you are slower, you will be in the water for longer and therefore at higher risk of getting cold. However, if you have prepared and are acclimatised, this needn't be a problem.

Do I have to do front crawl?

No. You can swim any stroke on your front. Some events don't allow backstroke because they ask people to turn on their backs to float if they are in difficulty and need help – they might think you need rescuing if you are swimming backstroke. Note that some people find it difficult to swim breaststroke in a wetsuit because the buoyancy of the neoprene can lift your legs too high in the water.

Do I need a wetsuit?

It depends on the event. Sometimes wetsuits are compulsory; sometimes optional and sometimes forbidden; and sometimes it depends on the water temperature. Check in advance.

What other kit do I need?

Swim hats are usually compulsory – they make it easier to see swimmers in the water. Most event organisers provide caps and you are usually required to wear the official one. However, it's a good idea to have your own for practice or to wear underneath the race cap if it's very thin.

Goggles – the key thing is that you can see through them clearly as you need to navigate the course. You might like to have two pairs – one clear and one tinted to cope with different light conditions.

For non-wetsuit races check the costume rules. Some events allow FINA approved racing costumes, while others won't allow anything that covers your thighs.

Other useful kit includes: lube to reduce chafing, flip flops, a large towel or changing robe and warm clothes to put on afterwards.

Where do I find out about races?

Outdoor Swimmer maintains a list of UK races and a selection from around the world.

I'm thinking of going longer – what do I need to do?

It's a big topic! Our top tips are:

- work on your technique so you move as efficiently as possible through the water
- spend more time in the water. Don't just swim longer distances but dedicate time to developing technique and building experience. Check out some of our training sessions for inspiration
- if your swim is likely to take more than around 90 minutes you may want to consider your nutrition needs
- the longer you swim, the more important it is that you acclimatise and get to know your own limits. You can only do this through experience, so build up gradually

Can you give me some survival tips for my first race?

- Train, prepare and practise.
- Make a plan for the day.
- Arrive in plenty of time.
- Review the course from land as best as you can to help navigation.
- The first part of the swim is always the most chaotic. Remind yourself it will get better.
- Start slowly. A common mistake is starting too fast and struggling to finish.
- Most events have brilliant safety cover. If you are really panicking, roll on to your back and call for help. A quick word with a safety kayaker may be all you need to regain your confidence and continue.
- Give yourself space.
- Increase your speed gently as you approach the finish. A sudden change of tempo may cause cramp.
- Make sure you know where the finish is. Keep going until you have crossed the finish line and remember to smile for the cameras.
- Rinse your wetsuit and wash your hands before eating or drinking anything.
- Wrap up warmly and celebrate!



← SAM CRABTREE

Age: 17

Competitive swimmer.

Highlights Started OW swimming when he was 12 in 2012 after the Olympic Games and started competing in 2013. Trains with Thanet Swim Club.

Sam trains around 16 hours a week including one long-course session on Saturday mornings at the London Aquatics Centre Beacon Programme. Course records for the 2016 Henley Swim Bridge2Bridge (14km), the Docklands Dock2Dock 10km race and the Swim Serpentine 1-mile race. Sponsored by Selkie Swim Co.

How did you first get into outdoor swimming? In 2012, when I was 12, my club organised an open water taster session at Holborough Lake in Kent. I was quite good at the 1500m pool distance so I went along just to see what it was all about. I loved it. I now help run these taster sessions and mentor our junior swimmers who want to try open water.

What does open water racing mean to you? Open water racing means a lot to me. It gave me an opportunity to make it to 'Nationals' when I was just 13 years old and has developed my confidence as a swimmer. When I was 14, I entered my first non-ASA races, competing alongside adults, and to my complete surprise I was actually good enough to win some of them - I was even the fastest 'skins' swimmer in the Henley Classic 2014 (at that time I didn't even own a wetsuit!). I have made so many friends through open water and it's great to catch up at the different events.

What made you take up competitive racing? My open water swimming basically started with competitive racing and making the transition from competitive pool racing. I love the fact that at races like the Great Swim Elite races I have had the opportunity to compete alongside the GB open water team and even Olympian Jack Burnell and Commonwealth Games medallist Jay Lelliott - that was amazing!

What are your top three tips for beginners starting racing? If you can, practise mass starts, turning round buoys, sighting and racing finishes with a bunch of other friendly swimmers before you try a race. Make sure you are acclimatised and get your breathing under control before you set off. Just go for it!

What kind of training do you do? I train with Thanet Swim Club. I train every day, racking up on average 16 hours per week. Mondays and Thursdays are doubles, so that's two hours from 5:45 in the morning and two hours in the evening, usually 6-8pm. Every other day is two hours either in the morning or evening depending on club pool slots. On Saturdays I have a two-hour long-course training session at the London Aquatic Centre.

What would you say to someone considering getting into outdoor swimming? Find a group of open water swimmers locally and join them for a casual swim. If you enjoy that, progress to open water training sessions. Once you've built your confidence think about entering a small local race and take it from there - you'll love the freedom and variation you get with racing outdoors!



Open water racing means a lot to me



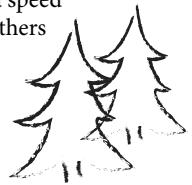
WHERE TO

THE SEA

Sea swims are often more challenging than those in inland waters. There may be waves, chop, and sometimes you might need to swim against a current. Conditions can be very changeable so sea swims are the most likely to be postponed or cancelled in bad weather. There's also the chance of an encounter with jellyfish or other marine life. Salt water causes more chafing so you need to protect your skin, especially if you wear a wetsuit. Despite this, there is something especially invigorating and exciting about swimming in the ocean. Sea water is often cleaner than river and lake water and the added buoyancy due to the salt can help you swim faster.

RIVERS

Most river events are downstream and it's fun to get a speed boost from the current, but some are upstream and others are out and back. It's worth checking before you sign up! A good thing about river swims is that you are never far from the bank, which can be reassuring if you think you might need to stop and rest. Water quality varies hugely. Some rivers carry a heavy silt load, which can reduce your visibility under the water. While this can be disorientating it doesn't necessarily mean the water is polluted. However, river water in general is more likely to be polluted than lakes and the ocean, especially after heavy rain.



I have made so many friends through open water and it's great to catch up at events



my favourite swim spot is Lulworth Cove

ROSE ENEVER

Age: 25

I have been open water swimming for the past six years, but been a part of various swim teams all my life.

How did you first get into outdoor swimming?

I worked in an American summer camp for three consecutive summers. My favourite part of the camp was the lake, where I spent most of my days in the water. This is when I realised how great outdoor swimming really was, it's not every day you can wake up, jump into a beautiful still lake and do some laps while the sun comes up.

What does outdoor swimming mean to you? I find outdoor swimming to be a release. You have no boundaries and nobody to compete with; you are free to enjoy nature at its finest.

What made you take up outdoor swimming? I joined 'Swim Dem Crew' two years ago and was asked to assist with a project called 'Swim Challenge', which saw 20 non-swimmers take on a one-mile open water swim after six months of training.

Favourite swim spot? My favourite swim spot is Lulworth Cove in Dorset. It's so picturesque, with rocky cliffs to climb and jump from into the water.

What are your top three tips for beginners to outdoor swimming?

I think the most important thing is your choice of wetsuit. Once you've found the right wetsuit, make sure you use vaseline or other lubricants so that your wetsuit doesn't chafe while swimming. Finally, I think finding the right people to swim with is very important. It's great to have people with varied abilities. Having experienced swimmers that can help give tips and motivation, is a great way to improve and make your open water swimming venture even better.

What kind of training do you do? I like to vary my training as much as possible. I train twice a week with Swim Dem Crew in London. I really look forward to these sessions as the sets are always varied. I also like training on my own. It always takes me the first 10 lengths to clear my head and push through those aches and pains and then I feel like I could go on forever. As soon as the temperature starts to pick up in May, it's time to get out into the open water.

What would you say to someone considering getting into outdoor swimming? I think finding the right venue is the best place to start. If you live in London, West Reservoir is a really great place for beginner open water swimmers. You have to have an induction first, where they give you a safety talk and then introduce you into the open water and get you comfortable in the water. I think being comfortable in the water is the most important thing in open water swimming.

Finding the right people to swim with is very important. It's great to have varied abilities

SWIM



Swimming conditions in rivers are usually benign as they tend to be more sheltered.

LAKES AND RESERVOIRS

Small, shallow man-made lakes offer some of the easiest open water conditions. The water warms up fast in spring, is generally clear and the quality good. However, as the season progresses, visibility can decrease due to algae growth. Natural lakes and reservoirs are often larger, deeper and therefore colder. Water quality is generally good but can be affected by blue-green algae. The larger the surface area of the lake, the more exposed it is to the elements., which can generate surprisingly big waves.

DOCKS

You almost certainly wouldn't want to swim in a working dock but in the UK there are plenty that are no longer used for shipping. Extensive environmental work also means they are suitable for swimming. Docks can be deep, dark and intimidating but that doesn't stop many first timers completing successful swims.





OUTDOOR SWIMMING SKILLS

Simon Griffiths looks at some basic skills that will make your outdoor swim more enjoyable and, if you race, faster

When talking about the skills you need to swim outdoors, we often start by making the comparison with swimming in a pool: there's no black line to follow, the water may be murkier, it's colder, there's no wall to grab hold of, you often can't see the bottom and so on. But really, it's pools that are unusual, with their uniform shapes and constant water temperature. Still, most people learn to swim in pools and transferring to the natural environment presents some differences. These differences require us to use a few additional skills and techniques to those we use in the pool.

The primary purpose of improving your outdoor swimming skills is to enhance your

enjoyment of being in the water – this isn't just for people who want to race. However, if you do wish to race, mastering these skills will undoubtedly improve your performance. So, here goes:

Bilateral breathing

The ability to breathe both sides, while not essential, can be very useful when swimming outside. For example, if you are swimming parallel to the shore then keeping an eye on the land can help you stay on course. If you can only breathe one side, you may find yourself staring out to sea instead. If you're swimming early in the morning or late in the afternoon and the sun is low on the horizon, it might be more comfortable to breathe away from

it. If waves are hitting you from a particular direction, it might be easier to breathe away from them.

Some people find breathing either side easy. Others really struggle. But even if you're one of the latter it's worth persevering. Practise whenever you can. The traditional approach is to breathe every three strokes but experiment with other patterns such as breathing to one side for 25m and then switching to the other. Every time you swim, try to take a least a few breaths to your least favoured side.

Bilateral breathing is also good to practise for your development as a swimmer as it helps symmetry in your stroke.

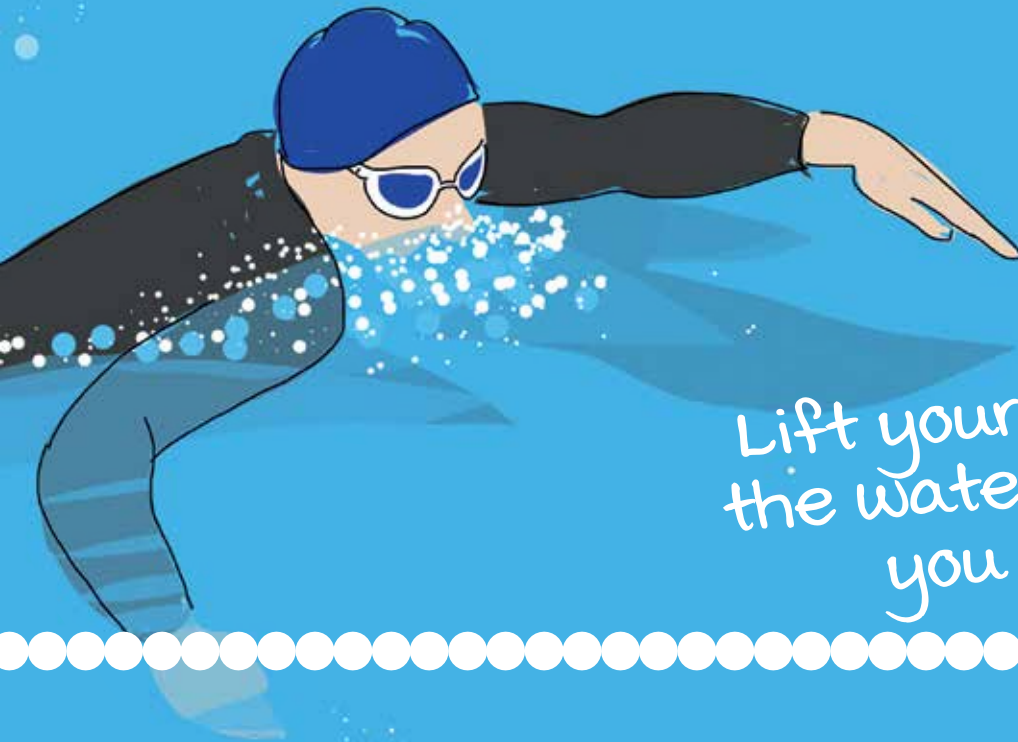


SIGHTING

Sighting is just looking where you are going. In breaststroke, it's easy as your head clears the water and you can look forward with each breath. With front crawl, you breathe to the side, so looking forward is harder. However, it's a useful thing to do if you want to swim in a straight line. The skill is to incorporate it smoothly into your swimming so it causes minimal interference with your stroke. If you lift too high or get the timing wrong it can all but bring you to a halt in the water. If you watch the best swimmers, it doesn't affect their speed at all.

To sight on front crawl, lift your eyes above the water (not your whole face) just before you turn your head to breathe, then turn your head to your regular breathing position and continue swimming normally. Don't attempt to breathe while looking forward. An alternative method is to lift your eyes just after you've taken a breath. Experiment with both to find which feels most comfortable for you. Make the movement swift and don't break your rhythm. You may need to kick a little harder to maintain your body position.

Don't worry if you don't see what you're looking for and definitely don't stop for a better look around. Instead, just sight again on the next breath and look in a slightly different direction. Do this as many times as necessary to find your target. Once you're going in the right direction you should be able to do six to 12 strokes before looking again. In the pool you can easily incorporate sighting practice into any swim by putting a water bottle or a float at the end of the lane and looking at it on each length.



Lift your eyes above the water just before you breathe



←Swimming straight

In a pool, we make micro adjustments to our stroke to stay on track, guided by lines on the floor of the pool and lane ropes. When you take those away, it's surprising how many people quickly veer off course. Some people will swim in circles. The straighter you swim, the less often you will need to sight and the quicker you will reach your destination. Veering to one side or the other is usually caused by asymmetries in your stroke, so practising bilateral breathing will help you swim straighter.

You can check how straight you swim by swimming with your eyes closed – preferably with someone you trust watching you to ensure you don't have a collision. Try 10 strokes first, then 20 and 30. Do you always veer to the same side? Once you know, you can attempt to fix any underlying causes and compensate for it while you swim.

Pacing

In a race, pacing is the art of regulating your swim speed so that you arrive at the end in the shortest possible time. Pacing is also relevant on any long distance swim, whether it's a solo marathon or a leisure swim with some friends.

The biggest mistake is starting too fast. It's very easy to do. At the beginning of a swim your nerves are tingling and you're pumped with adrenalin. If it's a mass start, the swimmers around you surge forwards and drag you along.

If you analyse the winning times in long distance pool races, it's apparent that the optimum strategy is to swim each part of the race at the same speed. The first length is usually slightly faster because of the dive start, not because of faster swimming, and the final length is often the quickest due to a sprint.

Other than that, top swimmers churn out the lengths with metronomic efficiency.

The same principle applies on any long distance swim. The trouble is, swimming at your sustainable pace will initially feel so ridiculously easy that it's almost impossible to resist speeding up, but you should try.

The best way to master pacing is to do regular timed swims in the pool. Try doing a set of 15 x 100m with about 10 to 15 seconds rest between each one. Aim to swim all of them at the same speed and notice how much easier it is at the beginning than the end. Or notice what happens if you do the first few too fast and how hard it is to maintain that speed. Get

AT THE START,
CHOOSE A
POSITION
APPROPRIATE TO
YOUR SPEED

a friend to time you for a 400 or 800m swim in the pool and record your time every 50m. After, analyse the times to see if you started to slow down at some point. If the second half of the swim was more than a few seconds slower than the first, you probably started too fast.

Things are different in an open water race because tactics come in to play. You may decide it's more important to try to stay with the pack and try to live with the surges and changes of speed than to swim your own race. However, if you start too fast you will pay for it later.

Close proximity swimming

Is swimming close to other people a skill, or something you just have to get used to? If you take part in a mass participation event, you will end up swimming close to other swimmers. Sometimes that will result in physical contact, usually accidental, especially at the start or around turns. This can be quite unnerving. The skill perhaps, is how you deal with it, both physically and mentally.

Firstly, try to minimise the risk. At the start, choose a position appropriate to your speed and race plans. Avoid starting on the front line in your first race unless you are exceptionally fast. Be aware of what's going on around you and anticipate pinch points. Drop back, surge ahead or take a different line accordingly.

Secondly, stay calm and keep focused on your own swimming. Usually collisions are accidental but even if someone has purposely swum over you, it's still not worth wasting energy to retaliate. There's very little you can do about someone else's swimming so just stay focused on your own. Relax and swim on.

One of the most annoying things that happens with open water swimming is when a person behind you repeatedly touches your feet. They shouldn't do it, but they do. Some people actually think that you're supposed to touch the person-in-front's feet when drafting. Resist the urge to kick harder and don't try to race ahead. You'll only waste energy and give the person behind an even faster tow than they are getting already. Unless you want to engage in some advanced race tactics, just stay calm and swim on.

If you can, find some friends to practise close proximity swimming with. You can do it in a

DRAFTING

Your leading hand should be about 15 to 30cm behind the other swimmer's feet



pool if it's not too crowded. Try swimming side-by-side as close as you can without touching and practise swimming one behind the other to get the feeling of swimming in someone's slipstream.

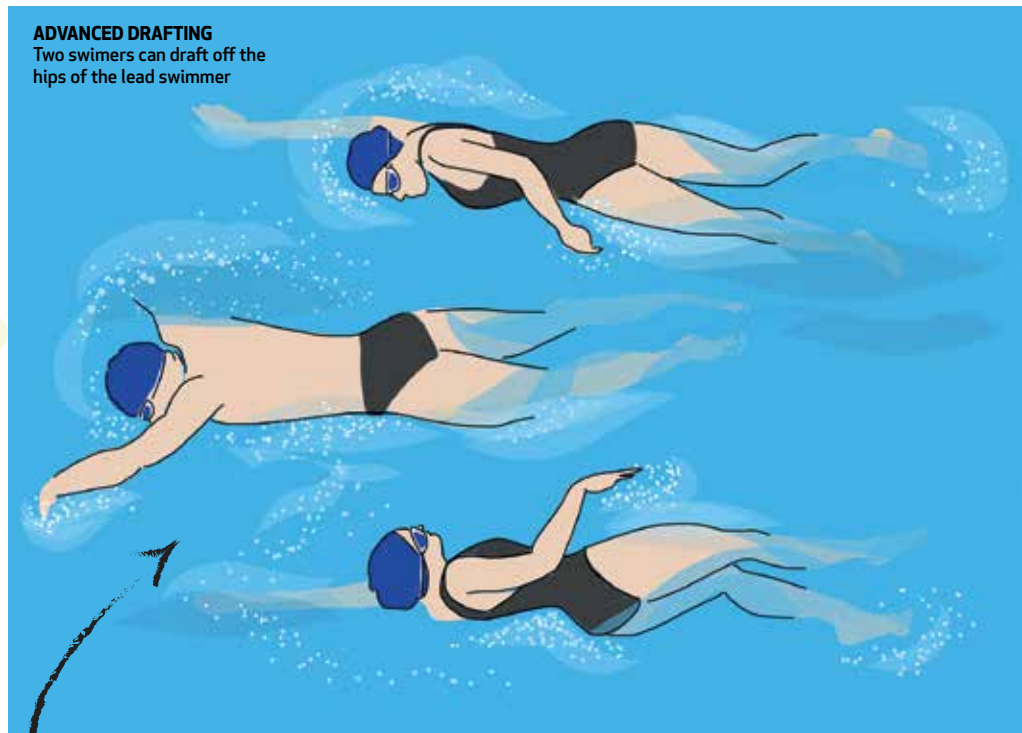
Confidence

This isn't a skill in itself, but rather the result of having mastered some open water skills and feeling at home in the environment. The confidence also comes with familiarity. There isn't any trick that we know to remove the anxiety of being out of your depth and not being able to see the bottom but the more you swim, the less you worry about it.

Skills we haven't covered here include beach starts, deep water starts and feeding during a swim. The first two are only relevant if you're racing and unless you're super competitive you can get away without them. The latter becomes important for swimmers that last more than about 90 minutes. If you're going to do swims of that length, we'd strongly recommend taking advice from experienced swimmers, and keep reading *Outdoor Swimmer*, of course.

ADVANCED DRAFTING

Two swimmers can draft off the hips of the lead swimmer



DRAFTING

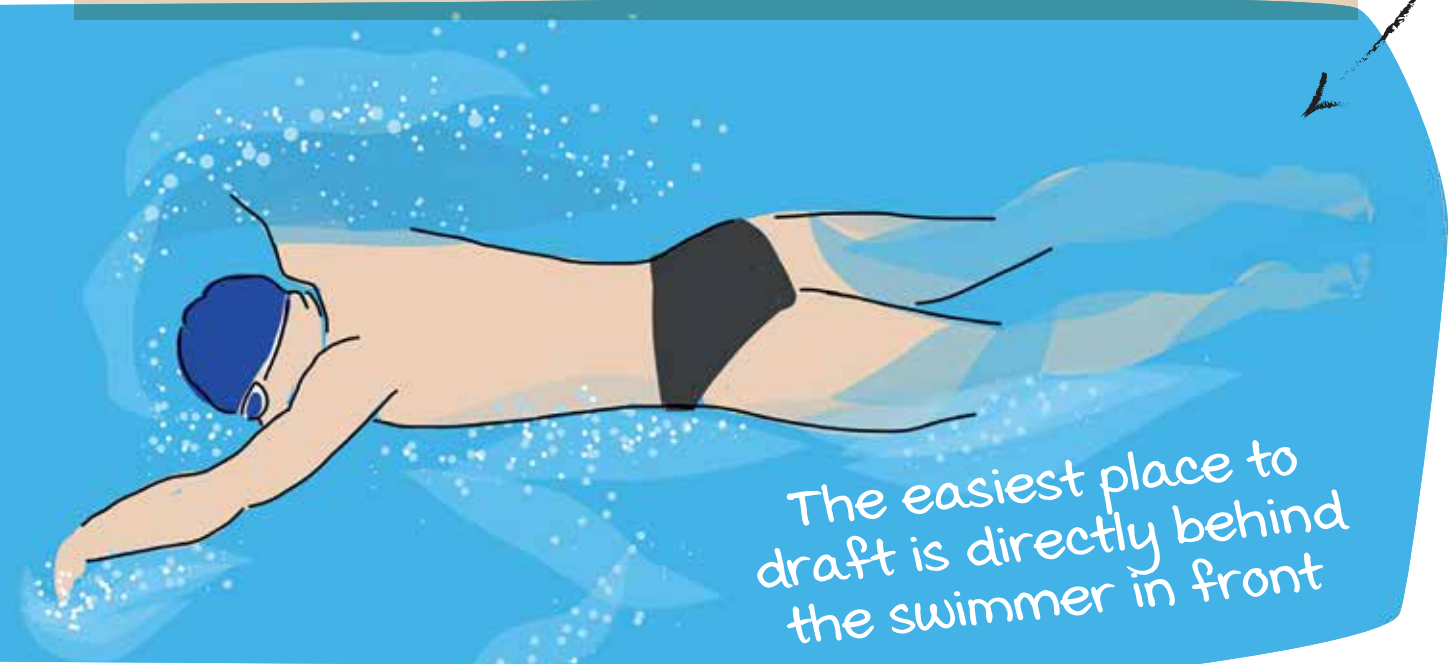
Drafting works in swimming just like in cycling. If you swim directly behind another swimmer, or in their wake with your shoulders close to their hip, you can swim much faster for the same effort. You don't even have to be that close. In an experiment we did in a pool with a 4m gap between swimmers, heart rate was about 10 beats per minute lower when drafting compared to leading.

You might think that drafting is primarily a racing skill but there's no reason you can't make use of it on recreational swims. It makes it easier for swimmers of different speeds to swim together for example.

The easiest place to draft is directly behind the swimmer in front. The closer you are, the better the draft. However, if you get too close you risk annoying the person in front (if you keep touching their feet for

example). A good distance is if your leading hand is about 15 to 30cm behind the other swimmer's feet.

A more advanced skill is to swim close to the other swimmer's hips. This is more technical as you have to time your arms to theirs. Drafting next to someone's hip is particularly useful in a racing situation, as you have a smaller gap to close down when overtaking.



The easiest place to draft is directly behind the swimmer in front

Face your first open water mile with confidence with coach Dan Bullock

Following a structured and progressive training plan that incorporates fitness and technique work is the best way to improve your event-day performance. As a prerequisite, I would suggest you can swim front crawl for at least 10 minutes continuously. A training session is usually split into the following parts: **WARM UP** – the ‘warm up’ literally helps warm up the body and mind for the hard work to come. Start slowly and focus on good technique.

SUBSET – this might consist of ‘drills’ (swimming exercises that help you improve your technique), some work on strokes other than front crawl to add variety to your training or exercises to increase your heart rate prior to the main set. Make this optional if you find the full set too hard initially.

MAINSET – this is where the main fitness work is done and is the core part of this programme.

COOL DOWN OR SWIM DOWN – after all the hard work this is your chance to relax, swim slowly and let

WEEK 1

Session 1

TIME TRIAL + STEADY ENDURANCE

100m FC with 15s rest
200m FC with 25s rest
300m FC with 35s rest
 10-minute time trial
 Swim with a steady and sustainable effort except for the time trial. Keep a record of how far you swim in the time trial.

Session 2

BUILD SPEED WITH TECHNIQUE

4x100m FC with 10s after each.
4x100m FC with 15s after each.
4x100m FC with 20s after each.
 Aim to maintain a strong but sustainable effort throughout. The extra rest is to offset the fatigue building through the set.

Session 3

STEADY ENDURANCE

100m FC with 15s rest
200m FC pull with 25s rest
300m FC with 35s rest
400m FC pull with 45s rest
300m FC with 35s rest
200m FC pull with 25s rest
 100m FC

WEEK 2

Session 1

PRACTICE DIFFERENT BREATHING PATTERNS

500m FC, breathe every 5th stroke.
400m FC pull, breathe every 4th stroke. Switch sides each length.
300m FC, breathe every 3rd stroke.
200m FC with as few breaths as you can.
 Rest 20s after each*
100m FC & a fraction faster breathing every 3rd then 2nd stroke (i.e. 3-2-3-2 etc).

Session 2

RACE PACE PRACTICE

3 x 500m FC swum as:
50m at target race pace, rest 10s
100m at target race pace, rest 20s
150m at target race pace, rest 30s
200m at target race pace
 Rest 45s between each 500m.
 Don't start too fast. Aim to keep your pace even throughout.

Session 3

PACING AND BREATH CONTROL

10 x 100m FC with 30s rest after each 100m. Aim to only allow 4 or 5 breaths on last 25m of each 100m. This helps break autopilot and lower drag, and hence improve technique when it's usually at its worst.

*Intermediate swimmers start with the 500m swim, beginners start with the 400m swim. It's OK to stop for a breather at the end of the length if necessary.

WEEK 3

Session 1

TECHNIQUE FOCUS. TRY TO MAINTAIN STROKE COUNT AS PACE INCREASES.

4 x 300m FC with 45s rest after each swum as:
1 & 3: Alternate 50m full stroke, 50m pull.
2 & 4: Increase effort in blocks of 100m.
Alternating 50m full stroke, 50m pull.

Session 2

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL CHALLENGE

Swim as many sets of **150m** + 30s rest after each as you can in 24m.*
 Swim as many sets of **75m** + 15s rest after each as you can in 12m.
 Swim as many sets of **50m** + 10s rest after each as you can in 8m.
 Swim as many sets of **25m** + 5s rest after each as you can in 4m.
 Aim to achieve the same number of repeats in each block.

Session 3

STEADY ENDURANCE & PACE CONTROL

4 x 300m FC with 45s rest after each swum as:
6x50m FC with 10s rest
3x100m FC with 20s rest
6x50m FC with 10s rest
3x100m FC with 20s rest
 Don't start too fast. Aim to keep your pace even throughout.

*Intermediate swimmers can start with the 24-minute swim, beginners can skip this and start with 12 minutes.

WEEK 4

Session 1

FITNESS BOOST

12 to 18 x 100m FC with 15s rest after each 100m.

Aim to swim each 100m in exactly the same time. Your first 100m should feel easy. The last few will be challenging. If you start slowing down at the end it means you started too fast.

Session 2

TIMED SWIM/ MENTAL PREPARATION

Swim as far as you can in 30* minutes. Aim to match three times the distance you swam in 10 minutes in week 1.

Session 3

IMPROVE LEG KICK

500m FC, steady pace. Kick every 5th length (kick board optional).
400m FC, steady pace. Kick every 4th length (no kick board)
300m FC, steady pace. Kick every 3rd length.
200m FC, steady pace. Kick every 2nd length (no kick board)
100m FC hard kick (board optional)

*Beginners can do 20 minutes.

DEFINITIONS FC = Front crawl. **100m FC** means swim 100 metres (four lengths if you're in a 25m pool) of front crawl. **Pull** = Swimming with a pull buoy (a special type of float) between your legs. **100m pull** means you swim straight in front or rest them on a float. Many swimmers use a large flat float known as a 'kickboard'. **Interval training** = Repeating a fixed distance within a fixed time. For example, 4 x 50m FC off 90s means swim 50m for place in front of you until you have completed a full cycle of the stroking hand.

your heart rate return to more normal levels.

In your first session, I recommend you test yourself to see how far you can swim in 10 minutes, and repeat the test perhaps two weeks after you finish the programme to gauge progress.

We also provide examples of warm-ups and cool-downs that you can use as you choose with each main set to build a full training session. Also, feel free to add in other strokes during this part of the sessions.

WARM-UPS

WARM UP 1: 400m easy FC swim followed by 4x50m getting quicker each one with 10s rest after each. (Use with session 1, week 1)

WARM UP 2: 200m easy FC, 150m FC pull; 100m opening and closing the fists every 2-3 strokes; 50m FC kick. (Use with session 2, week 1)

COOL-DOWNS

SWIM DOWN 1: 200m easy swim, include 100m backstroke

SWIM DOWN 2: 200m alternating lengths FC with a pull buoy, then double arm backstroke.

SWIM DOWN 3: 100m, not FC

Dan Bullock is the founder and head coach at Swim For Tri (SFT), a swimming coaching company specialising in open water swimming. He is an accomplished swimmer himself and has many times won his age group at the ASA National Open Water Masters Championships.

WEEK 5

Session 1

SPEED AND PACING. AVOID SLOWING DOWN THROUGH MAIN SET.

Complete the following swims at about 70% effort with 15s rest after each. All FC.

50m, 100m, 150m, 200m, 250m, 300m, 350m, 400m..

Session 2

STROKE TECHNIQUE AWARENESS

Do this twice:
150m FC at 50%

**150m FC at 60%.
150m FC at 70%
150m FC at 80%**

Immediately after each 150m swim 50m FC as six strokes with fists clenched, six strokes normal. Take 30s rest after each.

Swim as far as you can in 2m30s.

Session 3

STROKE TIMING AND ACCURACY

5 x 300m as:

Numbers 1, 3 and 5: 250m FC at 60% effort followed by 50m of catch-up

Numbers 2 and 4: 50m of catch-up followed by 250m FC at 75% effort.

Take 30s rest between each 300m.

***Swimming with either your fists clenched or with your fingers spread out is a useful drill to develop your feel for the water. You obviously wouldn't swim like this in a race.**

WEEK 6

Session 1

IMPROVE YOUR CATCH

300m FC using different breathing patterns from week 2.
250m pull, breathing every 5 strokes. Keep the head still when not breathing.

200m FC. Try to maintain a similar stroke count on first and last lengths.

150m pull breathing every 5 strokes.

100m FC. Reduce stroke count by 1 stroke per length each length through focus on good technique.

Session 2

SINGLE ARM DRILL

8 x 100m FC with 20s rest after each as:

Numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7: 25m single arm (half distance on each arm) followed by 75m FC.

Numbers 2, 4, 6 and 8: full stroke FC but focus on perfect technique.

Session 3

MAINTAIN GOOD TECHNIQUE

500m continuous swim as: 50m catch up

200m FC pull (70% effort)
250m FC (80% effort with 3,2,3,2 breathing pattern)

Intermediate swimmers can repeat three times with 30s rest after each.

Take 30s rest between each 300m. Count strokes on the 250m FC section and rethink your technique if this number starts to go up. Take extra rest if necessary to maintain technique.

WEEK 7

Session 1

AEROBIC FITNESS AND TECHNIQUE

Rest 45s after each of:

250m FC, breathe every 5.
200m FC, breathe every 4 (alternate sides each length).
150m FC pull, breathe every 3.
100m FC breathe every 2
50m FC strong effort but only 3 to 5 breaths per length.

50m easy

100m FC, breathe every 5.
150m FC pull, breathe every 4 (alternate sides each length)
200m FC, breathe every 3
250 FC breathe every 2 (alternate sides each length)

Session 2

PACING AND ENDURANCE

4x400m with 45s rest after each swim as:

1 & 3: Alternate 50m FC, 50m pull
2 & 4: Increase effort after each 100m

Session 3

AEROBIC FITNESS AND TECHNIQUE

Repeat session 1 from this week, but complete entire set using full stroke (i.e. no pull buoys). Work on the breathing patterns to improve symmetry in your stroke and to give you versatility in your swimming so that you can cope with varying conditions when swimming outside.

***Novices can stop here. Intermediate swimmers continue!**

WEEK 8

Session 1

HOLD TECHNIQUE UNDER PRESSURE

12 to 20 x 50m FC at strong effort & with a generous 45s rest after each to allow decent recovery.

Aim to swim the same speed and with the same stroke count on each. Use the rest to refocus and concentrate on maintaining good technique.

Session 2

PACING AND SPEED ENDURANCE

12-minute timed effort: swim 75m as many times as you can taking 15s rest after each.

50m easy swim

8-minute timed effort: swim 50m as many times as you can taking 10s rest after each.

50m easy swim

4-minute timed effort: swim 25m as many times as you can taking 5s rest after each.

50m easy swim*

Session 3

PACING AND SPEED ENDURANCE OVER 1500m

3 x (200m) steady pace, rest 30s after each (including the 3rd) and go straight into

5 x (100m) strong steady pace, rest 20s after each (including the 5th) and go straight into

8 x (50m) strong steady pace, rest 10s after each..

***Use a countdown timer on your watch for this. Aim to hit the same number of repeats on each.**

four lengths (25m pool) using just your arms with the float held between your thighs. If you don't have a pull buoy, just swim these parts as normal front crawl. **Kick** = Using your legs only. Either hold your arms out and crawl four times and start each one 90 seconds after the previous one. This means if it takes you one minute to swim 50m, you will get 30 seconds rest. **Catch-up** = a swimming drill where you leave your leading hand in

HOW TO WARM UP ON

Dan Bullock explains why your swim needs to start before you hit the water

GET THE TIMING RIGHT

Ideally, you want to enter the water and feel like there is continuous momentum from your land-based warm up to your swim. The aim is to promote blood flow to your shoulders and to elevate your breathing and heart rate but without leaving you exhausted, so you need enough time for this but not so much that you get tired or that your muscles get cold again between finishing the warm up and starting the swim.

For a training session this is easily manageable. At an event you will need to take into consideration a number of variable factors such as the amount of space you have while waiting to be called to the start.

The ideal would be about 20 minutes before the start of the swim with a smooth transition to the water. If this is not possible, strive to do the best you can in the circumstances, and don't panic. Any warm up you can do is better than nothing. As

you get closer to the start you will likely have less space as more competitors enter the start area, so try to get your exercises with bigger movements done first.

Do the right exercises

Save your static stretches until after your swim. Instead, focus on mobility and activating the muscles you will need for swimming through replicating swimming movements.



TRICEPS SWINGS

Swing the arm from down by the hip sideways up over the head to the opposite ear. Repeat 20 times, alternating arms with a loose relaxed continuous rhythm. Repeat the exercise a further 20 times, this time reaching to the opposite shoulder.



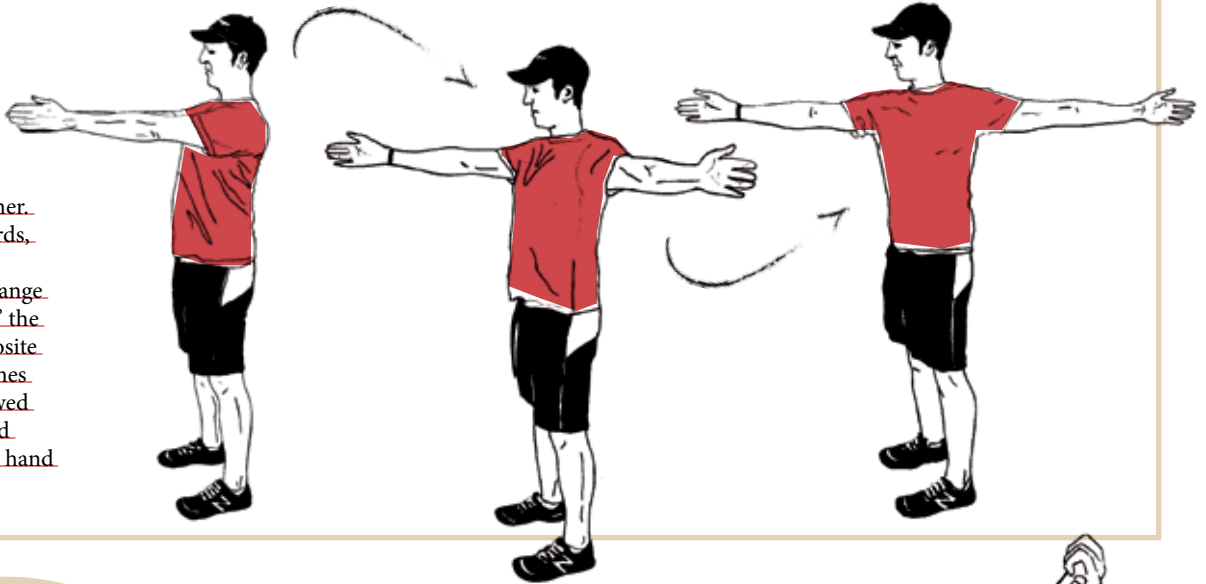
CHICKEN WINGS

Bend over at the waist with the upper body leaning forwards. Stick out your elbows with your hands in front of your chin ('chicken wings') and draw circles with the elbows. Increase the size of the circles until the arms are straight and windmilling. Maintain this movement for a few seconds and then reduce the size of the swings until you return to the chicken wings position.

LAND FOR SWIMMING

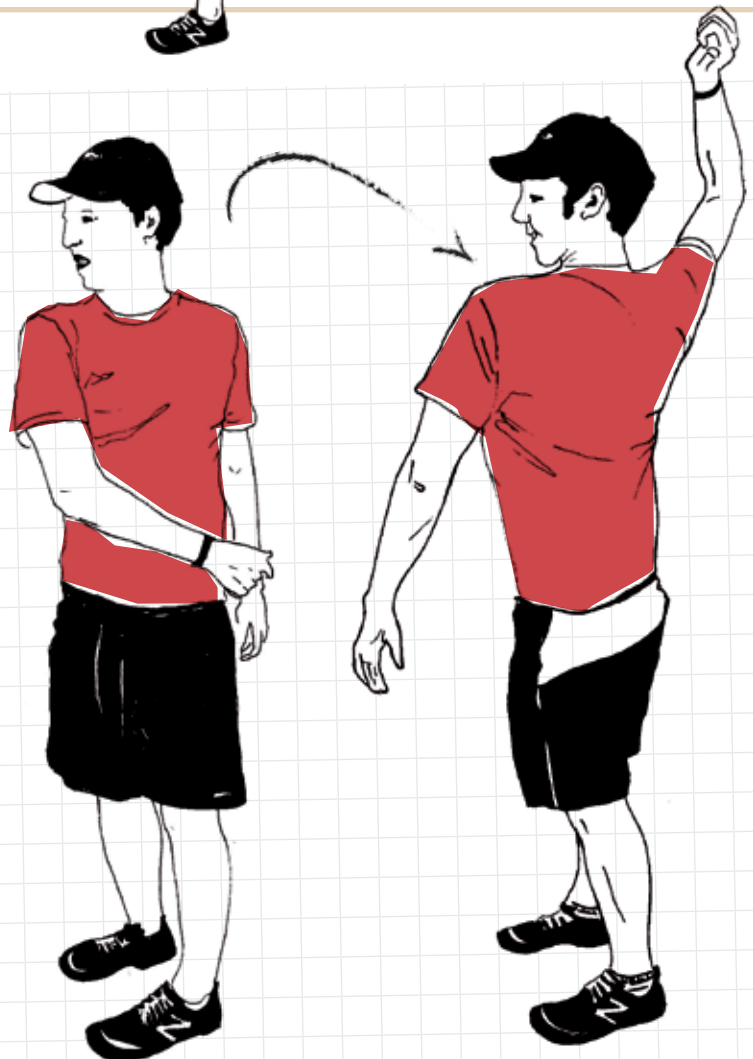
TRUNK CLAPS

Stand straight with arms out in front parallel to the ground and palms together. Swing one hand backwards, travelling parallel to the ground through its full range and bring it back to 'clap' the hands and send the opposite hand back. Repeat 10 times with the head still, followed by 10 times with the head following the path of the hand as it travels behind you.



STANDING TORPEDO

This will help the trunk to mimic the front crawl body position. Keeping the head still, swing your shoulders from side to side aiming to bring each shoulder in turn as close as possible to your chin. Allow the hips to follow the shoulders.



SWORD DRAWS

These combine upper body rotations with a sweeping movement of the arm. From a standing torpedo position take the hand of the lead shoulder and place it into its opposite pocket. Draw an imaginary sword and as you rotate back arc the hand up and around to the base of the neck to finish above and behind the head. Do 10 on each side.



Where the impossible is possible. Welcome to the world of long distance swimming.
By Alice Gartland

ENDLE HORIZ

The funny thing about outdoor swimming is that the parameters of what you think are possible can change rapidly. What starts off as a few 25metres in the local lido, can, quite quickly, turn into your first mile and then somehow you find yourself standing under the white cliffs of Dover about to swim to France...

Of course long distance swimming is not all about the English Channel. The water world is your oyster – Windermere (10.5 miles) and Lake Geneva (42 Miles) to the Catalina Channel (20 miles) and beyond, these swims are a test of mental and physical endurance, requiring swimmers to spend hours in the water (often at cooler temperatures), with some swims even going past the 24-hour mark.

For example, Sarah Thomas swam 80 miles across Lake Powell Arizona-Utah, in 56 hours and 5 minutes between 4-6 October 2016 – epic!

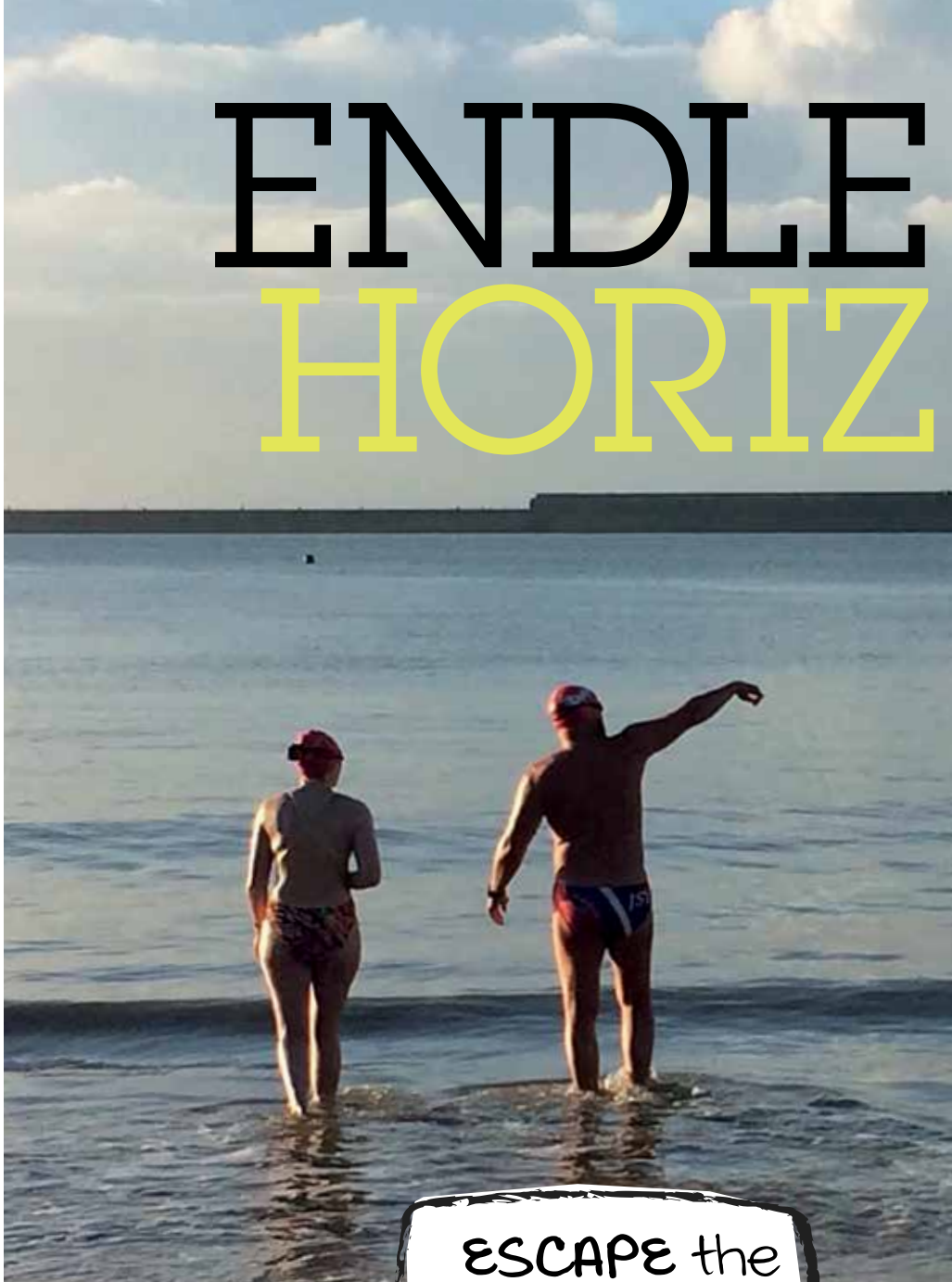
Of course, we will all find our own Lake Powell and it won't necessarily be 80 miles long.

When getting started there are a number of 'shorter' long distance adventures to choose from, like Lake Coniston (5.25 miles).

My long distance swimming adventures started with the Dart 10k (wetsuit), and then in 2013 I completed a two-person relay of Lake Zurich (26.4km). That was my first 'big' non-wetsuit swim, and I picked it in part because of the warmer water temperatures of the Swiss summer.

A lot of distance swims tend to have water temperatures of around 15-18 degrees, and acclimatising to that when not wearing a wetsuit always felt like a big step. I adjusted gradually, taking fun dips with friends all year around rather than embarking on a 'programme of acclimatisation'; so that the 'skins' swimming that had once seemed totally intimidating and far too challenging for me became a fun thing and just how I swam.

In 2014 I swam the Solent from the UK mainland to the Isle of Wight in just under two hours, in temperatures of around 17 degrees. It was my first time swimming with kayak support and across a shipping lane, so was a fantastic introduction to some of the additional dynamics of ocean swimming, and the exhilaration of point to point swims. Since then, I have also enjoyed the Henley Thames



Marathon and a four-woman English Channel relay and I am really excited about what might be on the swimming horizon.

Long distance swims can include exhilarating encounters with sea life, with tales of withstanding man o'war stings, being circled by sharks, and accompanied by pods of dolphins, a growing group of people is redefining the parameters of human swimming endeavour and inspiring a community along the way!

I caught up with Emma France, an experienced long distance swimmer who runs training at Dover beach, where many swimmers prepare to swim the English Channel, and Mark

ESCAPE the world and get closer to NATURE

than in the pool – mark VARIETY – open water is always changes, the weather changes, between lakes, rivers and the s

- WE ALL LEARN SOMETHING
- COMMUNITY: the open water everyone involved seems to have
- ESCAPE THE WORLD and get

WHY
BREAK FR
embrace
IT'S LIBER

SS ONS



GET INTO LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING?

FREE FROM THE POOL – no more turns or lane etiquette – and the endorphin rush of cooler temperatures! – Emma
RATING – the distance covered seems to be more effortless

is different, even the same bit of water. The temperature you can have waves, currents and tides. You can choose sea – Emma

NEW from each open water swim – mark
 er swimming fraternity a very friendly one where almost
 ve an inspirational life story – mark
 et closer to nature – Emma

EMMA FRANCE

Age: 48

Swim highlights:

2 x English Channel Solo; 9 x English Channel Relays; Round Jersey; Jersey to France. I have a collection

of 'not quite finished yet' - Lake Zurich, 3 x English Channel solos, English Channel two-way relay, S.C.A.R Arizona Challenge Swim. I've been training in Dover since my first solo attempt in 2007. At the end of 2015 Freda Streeter (who ran training for 30+ years) decided that it was time to retire and hand over to someone new. She asked me to take over and 2016 was my first season. The important things stayed the same, and I introduced a few 'Emma' twists! We had a blast and the success rate was pleasingly high.



Open water is always different

Sheridan, president of the British Long Distance Swimmers Association, to find out more about the what, why and how of one of the most challenging sports on the planet.

What is long distance swimming?

In many ways it's a question of perspective. As Emma points out: "For most pool swimmers 1500m is long distance, and in open water, there don't tend to be shorter races (unless you are participating in really cold swims), so again, it depends on your perspective, but I'd say 3k upwards. I once heard a definition of marathon swimming and ultra marathon. A marathon was defined as 10k. Anything above that was an ultra marathon."

And the main focus of this article is the 10k plus distances.

To get started in long distance swimming, the first thing is to "make sure you are comfortable in deep and cool water", says Emma. You can find local swim groups based around seas and lakes and a variety of training venues where safety cover is provided.

A team sport

"Despite very often being viewed as a solitary undertaking, long distance swimming really is a team sport," says Mark.

That team is the long distance swimming community that promotes an ethos of giving back as experienced swimmers pass on their knowledge and practical advice to newcomers.

On longer swims, a swimmer will be

supported by a kayak or boat. And whether you're swimming solo or in a relay, you'll need support crew.

It's important to have a clear feed plan and it helps if those involved know the swimmer, and are aware of the risks [see box] and be prepared to respond and adapt to any changes in the swimmer or conditions.

It's also important to think about communication. "When you stop for a feed, make sure that only one person speaks to you," says Emma. "It can be very confusing in the water to have lots of people talking to you at once." And short simple communication can ensure time is not lost unnecessarily.

What do you eat on a long distance swim?

It's very much about working out what suits you. "Experiment" says Mark. "And don't be afraid to change." A lot of swimmers use carbohydrate powder based water and juice mixes and on longer swims, people also appreciate having some solid food, like pieces of banana and jelly babies or tinned peaches. Whilst rehydration is critical, "the use of electrolytes depends on the swim. If you are in salt water then you really don't need them, and if you do use them, then make it sparingly," says Emma.

Overall it's all about finding the right mix for you. Rehearse feeds in training – not all products digest the same way and you don't want to discover that on the day of your big swim.

Also bear in mind that the food needs to be "quick and easy to eat. Speed is very important with feeds, especially on a tidal swim as when you stop for a feed you are actually still moving, but sideways and away from the course you want to be on," explains Emma.

How do you prepare for a big swim?

There are many opinions about how best to prepare for a big swim and people work out what's best for them. But Emma suggests some key things to consider are getting your technique right in winter and upping your distance in spring.

Swimming for hours at a time is not just physically tough, but can be mentally daunting too. The big thing is to do the training, that's "probably the biggest mental boost." But it can be tough and things that can help include:

1. Training with others who are training for the same thing
2. Be honest – If you're struggling, talk about it
3. Recognise that mental implosions are temporary, you can get through them
4. Ask yourself (and answer honestly): can I swim for another 5 minutes? If the answer is yes – do it. Keep doing that and eventually you will finish your swim
5. If you don't know if you can, act as if you are someone who can. In time you won't be able to tell the difference.

ARE THERE ANY RULES FOR LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING?

If you're just swimming for pleasure, then, no. But if you're doing an organised swim there will be rules and the rules will vary – always do your research. Well known marathon swims often have local governing bodies, who set out specifications for a swim – these can include kit requirements, and may also require that an official observer is on board the support boat in order to log and ratify the swim.

Increasingly organisers use 'English Channel' rules, which essentially means the swimmer can only wear a swimming costume, swim hat, goggles and ear plugs.

VICKI WATSON

Age: 47 years old

Swim highlights: 2013: Cold Water Swim Champs - 0.5 degrees; 2014: Chill Swim – second in age group 60m front crawl; 2015: 2 Swim 4 Life – 1 mile every other hour for 24 hours (skins); 2016: Two-way relay crossing of North Channel (5 World records – fastest crossing, earliest crossing; first five-person two-way crossing; first all-female two-way crossing; first all-British team).

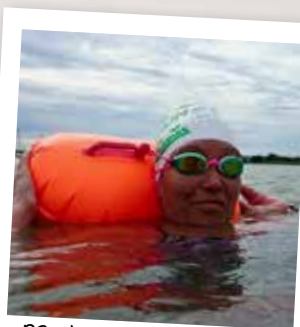
How did you first get into outdoor swimming?

My husband decided to take up Triathlons, and I wanted to spend time with him. Initially learning

to swim in a pool we decided to do an open water Olympic triathlon in Clacton, swimming in the North Sea, so we went to Activities Away in Lincoln to learn and feel safe in the open water.

What are your top three tips for beginners to long distance relays?

1. Remember why you started swimming, make sure you have "fun" swims for yourself as well as training swims
2. Be happy in your own head, as you spend a lot of time alone with only your thoughts for company
3. Talk to your friends and family and explain what and why you are doing all this swimming. You will need their



make sure you have "fun" swims

support.

What kind of training do you do?

Over the winter I concentrate on building speed and technique in the pool, with open water swims for acclimatisation. In the summer I spend more time in the outdoors, building endurance. I also cross train.

MARK SHERIDAN

Age 42

Swim highlights: President of the BLDSA; Windermere (2011); Loch Lomond (2012); Two-way Windermere (2013); English Channel (2014, 2015); completed all the events in the BLDSA calendar, and a 2swim4life solo which involves swimming a mile every hour on the hour for 24 hours. Other swims include: the Arizona SCAR swim, Catalina Channel, Swim the Suck in the Tennessee river and a 42-mile Lac Lemans/Lake Geneva solo in 2016.

How did you get into marathon swimming? I have been a real latecomer to the sport of marathon swimming. Before 2010 (when I was 36), I had never swum more than a mile. My friend Giovanna Richards encouraged me to head to my local lake and soon after I did a SwimTrek holiday to the Lake District, swimming in stunning locations like Grasmere and Easedale tarn. I was hooked and the wetsuit hasn't been used since.

How did you learn to swim for so long?

I re-learnt front crawl. I found that no-matter how long the pool swim, the water relaxed me, helped me mitigate the stress of the day job and was less impactful than running.

Despite swimming often being viewed as a solitary undertaking, it really is a team sport (as you need crews and kayakers) and I have met some incredible people from all walks of life.

What's your biggest swim?

The 42-mile Lac Lemans/Lake Geneva solo swim in 2016. I was the fourth person in history, first Brit and second male since 1986 to complete it. With that, I entered the 24-hour club as the swim took me just over 33 hours!



Mark swimming Lac Lemans/Lake Geneva in 2016



Swimming is really a team sport

THE BRITISH LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING ASSOCIATION

The BLDSA is a friendly organisation, whose history dates back to the 1950s and encourages all types of swimmer. It runs swim events all over the country from 1km to 21.6 miles. There's something for everyone from complete novice to experienced marathon swimmer.

You can join via the website blds.org.uk

"The BLDSA is run in a not-for-profit manner, meaning any profits are reinvested into the association. It's run purely by enthusiastic volunteers who give up so much time to ensure people get into the water and are overseen safely," says Mark.

RISKS

Emma's overview of some of the key considerations and how to deal with them.

Hypothermia

Build up your endurance to the cold and always err on the side of caution. It's normal to shiver after a cold swim, it's your body's way of warming up.

Post swim, wrap up warm (lots of layers and a hat is very important) and have a warm drink. Warm up naturally and slowly.

Things to avoid: foil blankets (they'll just keep you cool); hot showers (this risks opening up your blood vessels again and pumping cold blood to your heart, people have been known to pass out in the shower);

heaters in the car – just warm up naturally.

If someone does get too cold, remove all swimwear, dry off, put on as many layers as possible, keep them out of the breeze, lying down if necessary and give them a warm drink. Stay with them and if you become concerned, call an ambulance.

Jellyfish

In the UK the biggest risk is jellyfish in the sea. Unless you're swimming somewhere that has lion's mane jellies, they are generally harmless. Some hurt, some

you won't feel and some feel like nettle stings. The best remedy is cold water and if they still hurt after you come out of the water then an anti-histamine is a good idea.

Injury

Any sport carries the risk of injury. The best prevention is good technique and regular shoulder strengthening exercises.

Dehydration

Unlike running or cycling where you are very aware of losing fluid via sweat, you don't feel it with swimming,

but it still can be happening. If you're swimming in cold water, a warm drink is the way to go.

Sunburn / sunstroke

When you're swimming outdoors you are at great risk of very severe sunburn for any skin that is exposed. Even on an overcast day you can burn due to the reflection on the water.

Other water users

If you are in water where others are using it then make yourself as visible as you can and learn how to sight.

ALL ABOUT THE ADVENTURE



It's time to throw out the swimming rulebook and heed the call of the wild, says **Jonathan Cowie**

If long distance swimming is the (relatively) sensible big brother of outdoor swimming, then adventure swimming is the tearaway teenager. While the distances may be similar (and often even longer), adventure swimmers aren't constrained by pesky rulebooks or recognised routes. Adventure swimming does what it says on the tin: it's all about the adventure.

In a world where all aspects of our lives are increasingly constrained and

controlled by technology and rules, adventure swimming is a throwback to good old-fashioned exploration. Forget about your mundane office job, heed the call of the wild and get out there and create your own swimming adventure.

Calum Hudson is one third of the Wild Swimming Brothers, three brothers from Cumbria with a love of wild swimming. In August 2015 they took on their first adventure swimming challenge: swimming the 90-mile

length of the river Eden from source to sea.

"I was very bored with the way my life was turning out," says Calum. "I'd left university and moved to London, was working in a stagnant office job and losing the will to live on the daily commute. Like many people, I was stuck in a cycle and becoming miserable."

After training for and completing an Ironman triathlon, Calum was bitten by the outdoor swimming bug. "I realised I wasn't really bothered about competing against



What started as a DAYDREAM in a stagnant LONDON OFFICE had evolved into a RECORD BREAKING ADVENTURE



Left to right: Jack, Calum and Robbie Hudson

anyone and decided to attempt some adventure swimming challenges with my brothers that hadn't been done before."

After six months of planning, preparing and training, the Swim the Eden expedition got underway on 15 August 2015.

"What started as a daydream in a stagnant London office had evolved into a record breaking adventure. It was a chance to do something completely different, to create

memories that we'd never forget and to test our physical limits."

Their nine-day adventure started with a trek to the source of the river Eden in north Yorkshire and a first day of "weird and wonderful" swimming.

"Over the next 12 miles we swam down natural rock slides, jumped into deep pools, delved down into an underground gorge called Hell Gill, scrambled over a 9-metre waterfall

and waded barefoot along a shallow river bed. It was unlike any day I'd ever had swimming and it set the precedent for things to come."

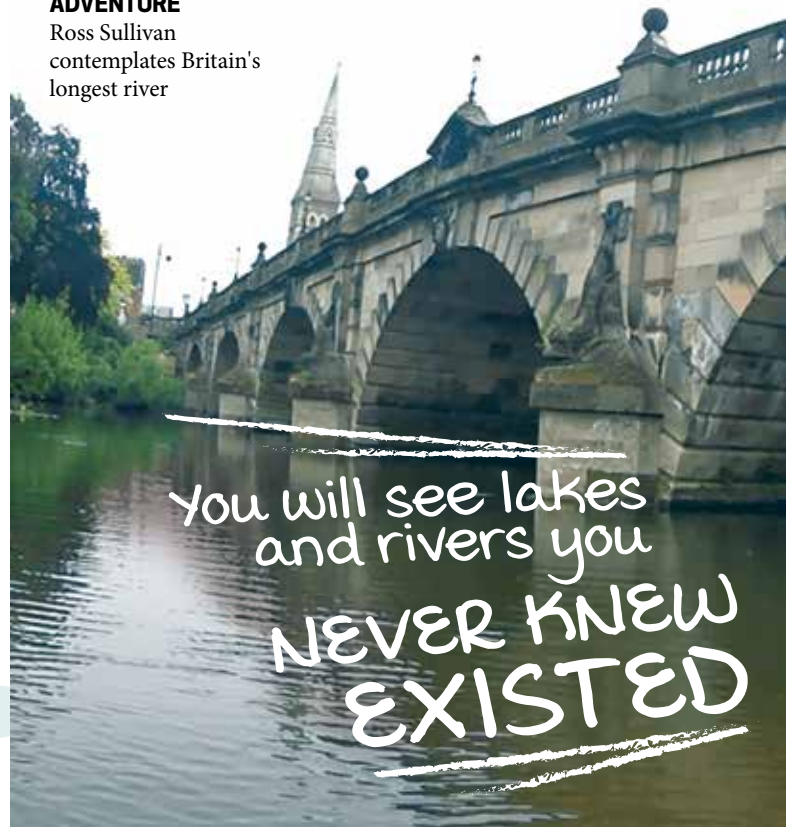
The brothers chose the river Eden as it was the river that ran past their back garden when they were children. It was a personal adventure, and for adventure swimming this is key: it is not about ticking off famous swims, it's about swimming a route that means something to you.





RIVER SEVERN ADVENTURE

Ross Sullivan
contemplates Britain's
longest river



You will see lakes
and rivers you
NEVER KNEW
EXISTED

← Nicola Goodwin, Ian Rivers and Julie Hardman had a similar inspiration behind their swim of the length of the river Wye.

"All three of us were experienced swimmers and coaches, but we realised we knew almost nothing about the river Wye that flows through our county. Now was the time to explore and what better way than by swimming," says Nicola.

And adventure swimming is not just for young adventurers. For Nicola, Ian and Julie, the mantra "You're never too old to have an adventure" was their motivation and inspiration.

"Life is sometimes too busy to find true adventure," says Nicola. "But, to our surprise, we had one in our own backyard. It was a tough challenge which tested us in different ways, but it was amazing fun and life affirming."

An adventure swim could be swimming a river source to sea, dipping in every tarn in the Lake District or swimming the length of the country. Adventure swims don't need ratification by official swimming bodies for them to count, so it doesn't matter if you wear Speedos, a wetsuit or

a tutu. If you want to stop for a pint mid-swim, no one is going to stop you. There are no rules. Indeed, if you want to sleep in your friend's aunty's caravan then that is ok too. Chris Mount did just that when he swam the length of the Thames in August

2016. The 28-year-old outdoor instructor had no endurance swimming experience before he set off on his 137-mile adventure.

"After running the Pennines [in 2015] I was in quite a lot of pain with my knee, so I decided to try my hand at swimming. I had always



NICOLA GOODWIN

Age: 42

Swim highlights: Winning the Cadgwith Regatta junior sea swim in 1982, swimming the length of the river Wye in 2016, the Bantham Swoosh swim in 2015 and a summer solstice night swim in the Wye with friends in 2013.

How did you first get into outdoor swimming? In the summer of 1983 when I was 9 years old. We were on holiday in Cadgwith in Cornwall and

the village held their annual regatta. We were taken out into the sea by boat and then raced back to shore. I thought it was amazing as I'd only swum in pools until then. I won the children's race and had a big cup on my shelf in my bedroom all year. I loved being in the sea with the waves and the wildlife.

What does outdoor swimming mean to you? It calms me, exhilarates me and helps me to feel alive. If I'm tired or stressed then swimming outdoors makes me slow down and calm down. I love the smell of the water and how it constantly changes with the seasons and the weather. I love how every swim is different.

What made you take up adventure swimming? I love

exploring new places and pushing myself and doing it by swimming seemed a chance to have a great adventure. Even places you know well look totally different from the water so there are accessible adventures on your doorstep.

Favourite swim spot? Where the river Wye meets the river Lugg at Mordiford in Herefordshire. It's just down river from my house. The river is a joy to swim and we can jump out at our friends' house for hot drinks and home-made cakes.

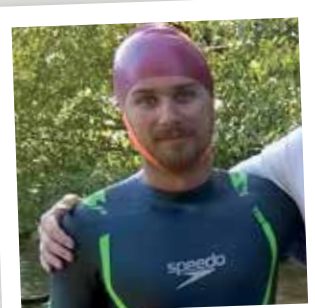
What kind of training do you do? In the winter I swim in the pool but concentrate on my strength and technique. In the spring and summer I get outdoors as soon as I can and start to acclimatise to the water and then get into the rivers, lakes and sea as often as I can.

What would you say to someone considering getting into outdoor swimming? Just do it, you won't regret it. It's a sport that you can do at any age, any size and with any level of fitness. It's wonderful for the heart, the head and the soul!

Places you
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The river is a joy
to swim



Just give it a go. You won't regret it.

CHRIS MOUNT

Age: 28

Swimming Highlights:

Swimming 137 miles down the river Thames with small support crew. They slept and ate in a caravan and occasionally popped out for warm showers and pub food.

Why did you do it?

I have always fancied swimming a river from source to (almost) mouth. I also enjoy the physical and mental challenge of multi-day endurance challenges, and thought that this could be a good way to raise some money for charity.

What are your top three tips for beginners for adventure swimming?

1. If you are a bit nervous about the legalities of it all, and want to find a safe spot others have used, have a look on wildswimming.co.uk to find places close to you.
2. Go with friends and get a group of you together.
3. If you are a beginner wanting to do swims in cooler water, take a good set of clothes with you in a dry bag and layer the bag, so the things you put on first are at the top.

What kit do you use? Swimming cap.

I wore a neoprene cap for the whole swim down the Thames. The water temp was really high, so I probably didn't need to wear this, but I started wearing it from the first day, and it worked for me, so I decided to keep it on. I did get massive chafing around my neck though from so much continual use (6-9 hours a day).

Goggles. Mine had mirrored lenses, which was ideal for swimming outside.

Ear Plugs.

Wetsuit. Just a standard, reasonably priced wetsuit. It allowed good movement, kept me warm for the whole Thames swim and became my second skin.

Jammers.

Neoprene Gloves. Thin and light, and good to protect your feet from rocks. Check the durability of different brands – particularly if you are going to be doing a lot of walking (eg between locks).

SwimSecure Tow Float. An amazing little bit of kit that I think is essential for open water swimming. It ties around your waist and floats behind you, it makes you visible and you can also put things in it. You don't even notice it is there when you're swimming.

What would you say to someone considering getting into outdoor swimming?

Just give it a go. You won't regret it. It is easy to sometimes take the comfortable option and stay on dry land, but this time leave land for a few minutes or even seconds. It is such a rush that gets your blood flowing and your heart pumping, you'll be left with a memory for life that you'll tell all your friends about.

Go with friends and get a group of you together

wanted to swim a river from source to (almost) mouth, and thought I would try my hand at the Thames," says Chris. "It's a real adventure through the heart of the country, down the country's most famous river."

While there are no rules, planning and preparation for an adventure swim are key. In June 2016, Ross Sullivan swam the length of the river Severn, Britain's longest river. "First, get out a map," says Ross. "It sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised what ideas fly into your head when you are looking at a map. You will see lakes and rivers you never knew existed."

Once you have decided on your challenge, you need to plan the logistics of the trip. Route, distance per day, support crew, nutrition, first aid and permissions are all factors that need to be taken into account.

"Choose your team well," says

Nicola Goodwin. "It's essential to have people that you trust and know well when you're doing such a challenge."

Once you have done the training and your adventure is underway, expect the unexpected.

"Welcome the challenges you will face along the way," says Ross.

And remember to have fun, says Nicola: "Swimming and exploring with friends is such a privilege. Get out

there and give it a go, even if it's just for a day."

There is no limit to where adventure swimming can take you. "The surface of adventure swimming has been barely scratched," says Calum Hudson. "Marathon swimmers have notched up a lot of swims over the years but there remain thousands and thousands of world firsts out there. Get creative, use your imagination and pick something personal to you."

SWIMMING AND EXPLORING WITH FRIENDS IS SUCH A PRIVILEGE



SWIMRUN: OPEN-WATER ADVENTURE

If you like a bit of trail running with your outdoor swimming then try swimrun, says **Jonathan Cowie**

If you haven't yet heard of swimrun, you are about to. The Swedish endurance sport is going to hit the UK big time this summer. What started as a drunken bet in Sweden just over a decade ago is now the latest international endurance sport phenomenon.

Swimrun does exactly what it says: athletes swim and run across a set course. But unlike aquathlons (which are essentially triathlons without the bike leg), swimrun races involve non-stop multiple swims and runs. Competitors must be experienced open water swimmers as well as confident trail runners.

Swimrun originated in Sweden with the Ötillö, which literally means "island to island". In 2002 a group of friends challenged each other to race 75km across the islands of the Stockholm archipelago to get to a hotel in Sandhamn. The last one there would buy the drinks. It took them over 24 hours. In 2006 the race became a formal event, and it has now expanded into the Swimrun World Championship. One of the toughest adventure races in the world, teams of two swim between 26 islands and run over

them, covering a total swim distance of 10km and 65km of trail running.

But you don't have to travel to Sweden to compete in a swimrun event. Although Sweden leads the world in the number of races, the sport is spreading across Europe and the world, with plenty of races to choose from in the United Kingdom.

Why you should do it

Put simply, these races take place in some of the most stunning and remote scenery

in Europe. If you want to swim across an archipelago in Norway, down a Swiss mountain valley or between the islands of the Outer Hebrides then there is a race for you. "Swimrun is fantastic for open water swimmers," says Ben de Rivaz, organiser of Brea

Swimrun. "The swim routes are challenging and really exciting to navigate. Also, it is one of the only multi-phase sports that rewards strong swimmers due to the swim distances involved."

As open water swimmers we are used to racing on our own. Swimrun is a different kind of experience as athletes compete in →

SHORT COURSE
RACES ARE
THE PERFECT
INTRODUCTION
TO THE SPORT





Image: Head



← pairs. “It is a team sport,” says Alan Anderson of SwimRun UK. “The camaraderie of swimrun is phenomenal.”

Swimrun straddles nicely a number of activities: wild swimming, trail running, adventure racing. There are elements that are akin to triathlon, but event organiser Paul McGreal of Swimrun Scotland is adamant that the sport is a completely different beast to triathlon: “This is not like a triathlon. It is very much more relaxed and much less contrived. It is just more adventurous.”

Where can I do it?

Handily there are some pretty impressive locations in the UK for swimrun events – and many of them also happen to be iconic open water swimming locations. The Isles of Scilly, the Gower, the Lake District and the Scottish highlands and islands are all host to swimrun races this summer. You can even sign up to a swimrun event in central London.

I love swimming. But running...?

Don't worry, you don't have to dive in to the full Ötillö-style 65km of running. Not all events are gruelling endurance challenges: short course races are the perfect introduction to the sport.

“We want to encourage people to give swimrun a go,” says Anderson, whose short distance races typically comprise 3km of swimming and 10km of running.

Chloe Rafferty of Love SwimRun Llanberis

agrees. “I wanted to put on a smaller race that would be more achievable by a bigger demographic. Love SwimRun Llanberis is only 16km in total, with 3.5km of swimming and 12.5km of running.”

And remember that those distances are broken down into smaller runs. You won't be running the full distance at once.

JENNY RICE

Age: 31
Swimming highlights

include: Taking part in the Christmas Day race at the Serpentine in 2009 (having persuaded my parents to drive up from Devon that same morning).

Completing a three-person English Channel relay and six-woman Loch Ness relay in 2010. Becoming a World Champion (!) in 50m free at the 2012 Winter Swimming World Championships in Latvia.

What made you take up swimrun? A friend from the Serpentine did Ötillö in 2006 and when he told me about it, I loved the sound of it, but was put off by the cost. A few years later, the first swimrun race came to the UK – Breca Buttermere. It was a tiny first event – just 14 pairs racing, but it was well organised, friendly, and took in some of the best scenery in the UK.

What are your top three tips for beginners for swim run? 1. As well as finding a partner that is of a similar ability at swimming and running, I'd say, more importantly, they need to be of a similar mindset. You won't have much fun if your partner is out to race, and you simply want to finish.

2. Practise swimming in trainers. It's not much fun, but just knowing how it changes how you feel in the water definitely helps.

3. Practise using a tether to keep you together on the swim. With the tether, my swimrun partner



You'll soon enjoy new adventures

Claire never felt she was towing me, but I was always on her toes. It was reassuring for both of us.

What kit do you use? A tatty old triathlon wetsuit with the sleeves and legs cut off. A swimrun wetsuit would be nice, but it's not essential – you just give yourself the time to unzip your wetsuit on the longer runs where you might start to overheat.

A small running waist belt for mandatory kit (usually a compression bandage, whistle, compass, map). Inov8 x-talon 190 trainers which are

unfortunately no longer being made so we'll have to find a new trainer to swim in!

You'll see most swimrunners with a pull buoy attached to their leg – we don't use one as we haven't really felt the need but that's not to say it doesn't work for others!

Hand paddles – another one you see most swimrunners using but Claire and I don't. Claire and I just want to keep it simple, and we love how little kit we need for swimrun. We also don't like the idea of running with hand paddles on! But, as with pull buoys, they work for others. It's a personal decision. If you do decide to use them, make sure to train with them and strengthen your shoulders to cope with the extra load.

What would you say to someone considering getting into outdoor swimming and swim run? Do it! You've got nothing to lose. If you can, especially for swimming, join a club. It's a wonderful way to get started and you'll soon meet some great people, discover wonderful places and enjoy new adventures.

How do I train for swimrun?

If you are an experienced open water swimmer then the challenge of swimrun will be upping your run training so you are confident in tackling the distances of your chosen event. As with any sport, training for swimrun is all about being specific. “Run a bit, swim a bit, and certainly swim in open water – but make it even more specific,” says McGreal. “The way to train for swimrun is to go and do some swimrun.”

What kit will I need?

Wetsuits are mandatory. The races are non-stop – so no getting changed between swims and runs. That means you run in your wetsuit and swim in your shoes.

Hand paddles and pull buoys are allowed on the swim and it is recommended that you wear a pair of light, well-draining trail shoes.

Most races have a mandatory kit list of whistle, map, compass and first aid bandage.

If you are inspired to sign up to a swimrun race, see the main magazine for event listings and training tips.



Images: Head: Paul Scully