

Angel Island Round Trip Swim

Doc written by Jari Salomaa (jari.salomaa@gmail.com) on Sept 4th 2020 to remember the longest swim I've done to-date in terms of distance and time. Hopefully it inspires others and myself to enjoy more the beautiful oceans we have. This swim was inspired after reading this [blog](#) from Evan.

My swim happened on August 13th 2020 5:24:05am to 12:11:06pm in 6 hrs 41 mins and 1 sec for tracked (estimated) 20,020 meters - roughly 12,4 miles.

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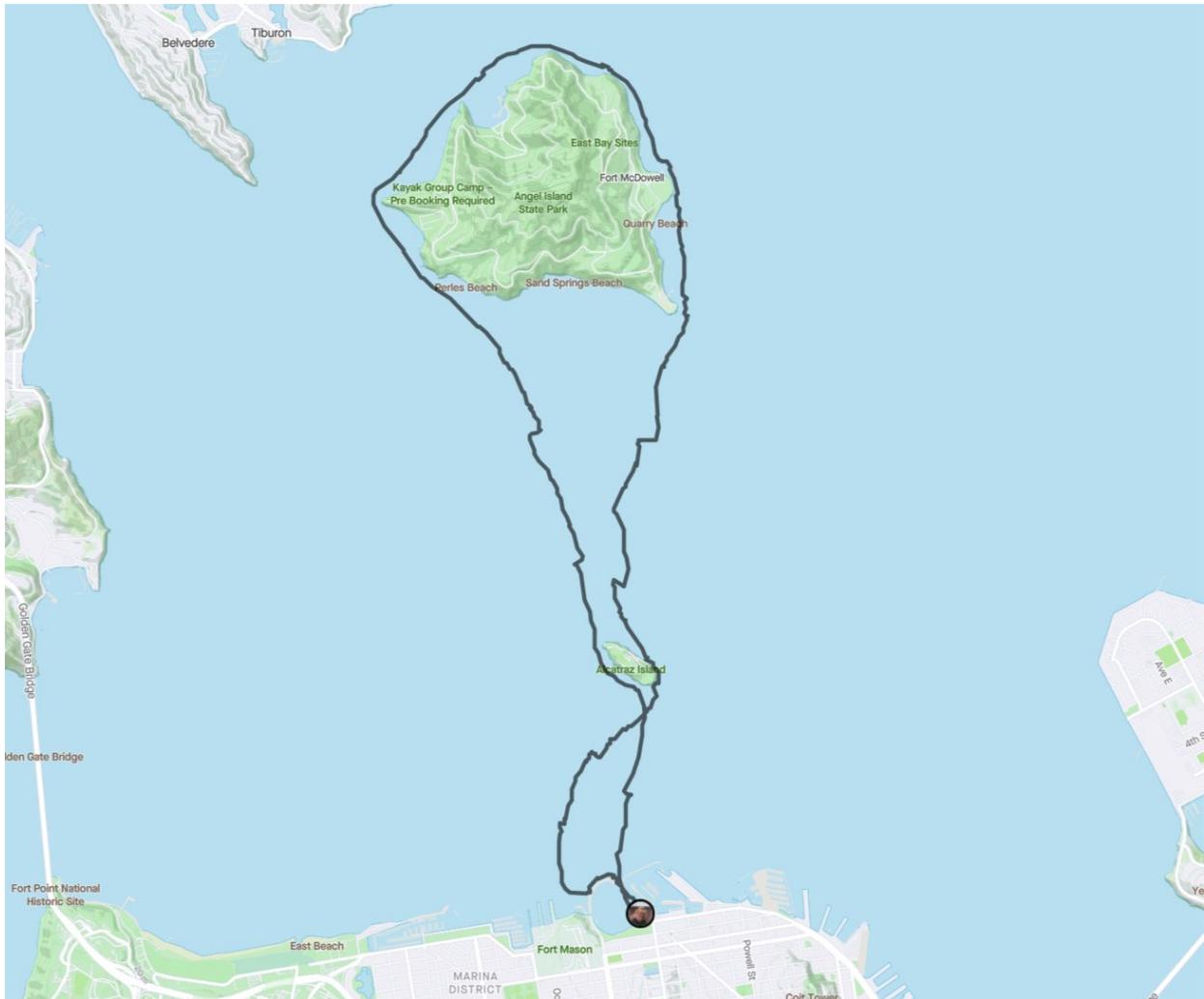
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Route

GPS Data (gx file tracker from the boat)

<https://www.strava.com/activities/3908637137/embed/7a4dfa44e05dd681af3fca038e09116e8bd8f51a>



Weather

Air: Highest 83F (28C) / Lowest 55F (12C)

Water temperature: about 61F (16C)

Crew

Captain: Jon Grunstad (tel. 415-608-1592)
Observer: Brian Kiernan (tel. 415-596-8619)
Land support: Katariina Salomaa (tel. 650-245-0301)
Swimmer: Jari Salomaa (tel. 650-996-0611)

Swimmer Details

Name: Jari Salomaa
Address: 1354 McAllister St, San Francisco, CA, 94115
Phone: 650-996-0611
Date of birth: 10th February 1978 (42 years as of swim)
Country of birth: Finland
Residence: San Francisco, CA
Swim team: Dolphin Club, San Francisco
Previous notable open water swims: multiple times Ft. Point to Aquatic Park Dolphin Club (record), Sam's (Tiburon) to Aquatic Park, Santa Cruz Roughwater (around and back the pier) age group, trans Tahoe relay etc

Gear



Boat: Jon Grunstads inflatable boat with lights, rescue equipment, radio comms and water and food

Swim gear: zumo trunks, speedo clear goggles, pink speedo swim cap, red blinking light in the cap

Skin: vaseline in the armpits and sun screen on the shoulders

Feeding: goo, bananas, granola bar and hot and cold water

Between the ears: excitement, bit of fear but plenty of determination and Finnish [SISU!](#)

About me and this swim

I have been a swimmer all my life, born in Helsinki, Finland and swam for Tapiolan Uimarit swim team in Espoo competitively (now Cetus Swim Team) and when I lived in Brisbane, Queensland in Australia, I swam with Yeronga Park Swim Club. I've had the opportunity to represent my team and country in various championships and actively advocate for a clean ocean and environment throughout my life. Since moving to San Francisco I've been a member of the San Francisco Tsunami Masters Swim Team and the Dolphin Club for more than 10 years now. Getting older has meant that I've moved more from the pool into open water where swimming is less about the time but more about the adventure and personal test for fortitude to swim against the elements and also with the elements. I've also swam with Berkeley Masters when I worked in East Bay some years back and have enjoyed all corners of the San Francisco Bay and California coast line in some way or a form. I don't think there are many beaches in 100 miles from San Francisco that I would have not visited. Swimming, pool water or ocean water has been always part of my life and whether I'm swimming, diving, surfing or skiing on frozen water, I'm at home in my "church".

I've done many swims in the Bay, my favorite DC swim has been Ft. Point where I've enjoyed racing against Susanne Heim and done Alcatraz loops with Joe Locke and solo'd from Sam's to Aquatic park but I've never done round trip Angel Island before. I bumped into South Enders on the weekend before the swim and heard about good conditions for Wednesday and Thursday with a long slack and started to figure out who would be available to pilot and luckily found Jon and Brian who were available on two day notice to do this swim with me. Sometimes when you get a good idea, you need to execute immediately.

I knew Miguel (kayaker) with South Ender swimmers would be bit slower than me and looking at the currents we decided to leave at 5.30ish when South Enders jumped at 3am, thinking I might be able to catch up with them when coming back from the island. This ended up being quite costly mistake by number of additional miles and hours to me but hey - overall I made it so time was less relevant for me. Here's the timeline and some links to videos of the swim:

1. Jump and starting the swim



I jumped in at 5:24:05am from Aquatic park into the darkness. Weather was a bit cold but no wind and sunrise was scheduled for 6:24am so I had about exactly an hour to swim in the darkness. Unfortunately just about 20 mins into the swim, we had to stop due to massive oil tanker cruising to Oakland. This happened 4 times during my swim, something that is quite expected when swimming in an open shipping lane, one of the busiest in the US.

Here's a link to a video from the start of the swim: https://youtu.be/zS2O_BrYe0I

2. Between Alcatraz and Angel Island



Throughout my swim I felt great, despite the currents, I felt strong and seeing the sunrise warmed up the skin and the morning looked beautiful. I had my first stop to feed about 60 mins into the swim between Alcatraz and Angel Island. What a great day to swim in the San Francisco Bay!

Here's a link to the video from 6:54:09am between Alcatraz and Angel Island : <https://youtu.be/1P9IK14dUI8>

3. Half way mark at Ayala Cove

Swimming from Angel Island towards Tiburon was probably the most beautiful, lake like conditions I've ever enjoyed in San Francisco Bay. It was just pure magic. We met some dolphins, a couple of seals and a group of kayakers in Raccoon Strait enjoying their Thursday morning. Managed to make it to Ayala Cove at 8am, roughly two and a half hours of swimming, thinking this could be a sub 5 hrs swim but mother earth doesn't read tide charts and nice surprise was waiting for the trip back home

Here's a video of the half way mark at Ayala Cove in Angel Island at 08:03:02am:

<https://youtu.be/8ktGDh8LQyM>

4. Back at Alcatraz and feeding

Conditions changed dramatically from Point Blunt rock onwards. Strong ebb had started to push water towards Golden Gate and my original plan to cruise straight along the West side of Alcatraz was not possible. Additionally another huge cargo ship timed itself right when I was in the middle of the channel.

I stopped 6 times during this swim to feed. First at 60 mins and then roughly every 30 mins. I ate some goo, granola bars and a banana with some water and hot water.

On the way back from Angel Island, here's a video of my second last feed at 10:48:03am before pushing back to Aquatic Park, while actually swimming towards the Bay Bridge and eyeing the Coit Tower (swimming sideways the entire time): <https://youtu.be/rKvnTTpNOWU>

5. Back in Aquatic Park



I finished the swim at 12:11:06pm in 6 hrs 41 mins and 1 sec.

What could have been much easier swim, if we would have only left earlier like the SERC swimmers, I had no difficulties making it back to San Francisco but the ebb pushed us first to the "wrong side" of Alcatraz (west side) when we were suppose to go straight from the east side down to Aquatic park.

From making it around the east side, the ebb further pushed me to Ft. Mason and rewarded me with some additional yards but I'm humbly grateful for having Jon and Brian cheer and guide along the way (I couldn't really see anything because of the white caps and waves) I found my way to Aquatic Park and landed on the shore, quite tired but very happy.

Here's a video of the end of the swim: <https://youtu.be/TC5PLhjLCX0>

Thank you

Big thanks for Jon and Brian to find more than 6 hours of their day to spend it with me on the Bay. We bought burgers to all once Jon had loaded his gear.

Huge thanks to my wife Katariina for her support and love for my craziness in these shelter in place times and my lovely kids to inspire me every day to try to do better.