



Aquathon: A Daredevil's Dream

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Aquathon: A Daredevil's Dream

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By [Carisa Carlton](#)

Grounded in tradition and passion, the Laguna Beach Aquathon is an adrenalin junkies multi-stage non-competitive endurance event involving the completion of sequential disciplines along eight dangerous miles of richly ragged coastline. Limits of courage are vigorously tested on the Laguna course that involves swimming, bouldering, and hiking in immediate succession for 6 to 7 hours.

Even when weather and tide conditions are on their best September behavior, otherwise sane women and men assume great risk of bodily harm amongst reef-feeding sharks and jagged rocks in search of the ultimate thrill: A new life discovery on a rip-roaring sightseeing tour with scrapes and bruises for trophies.

Who wins? Who cares?

The idea at these Aquathon events isn't so much to log a record time as to *have* one.

The Laguna Beach Aquathon began in 1985 when local men triumphed in making their way south along the coast from Emerald Bay to Victoria Beach. The testosterone-intensive challenge proved so victorious, they planned the event each year thereafter. When Laguna Beach expanded its south border to Three Arch Bay, the course was extended to the same. What's radically different from 28 years ago, however, is the breadth of local offerings. [Blended Giving](#) serves coffee at Emerald Bay, the Montage Resort hosts a halfway-point



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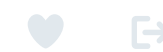
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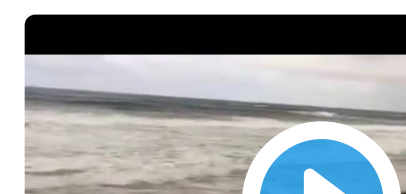
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luncheon on their gardens, and scores of hotels offer water and their restroom facilities to Aquathoners. Some might think of the Aquathon as a catered extreme workout rather than a race.

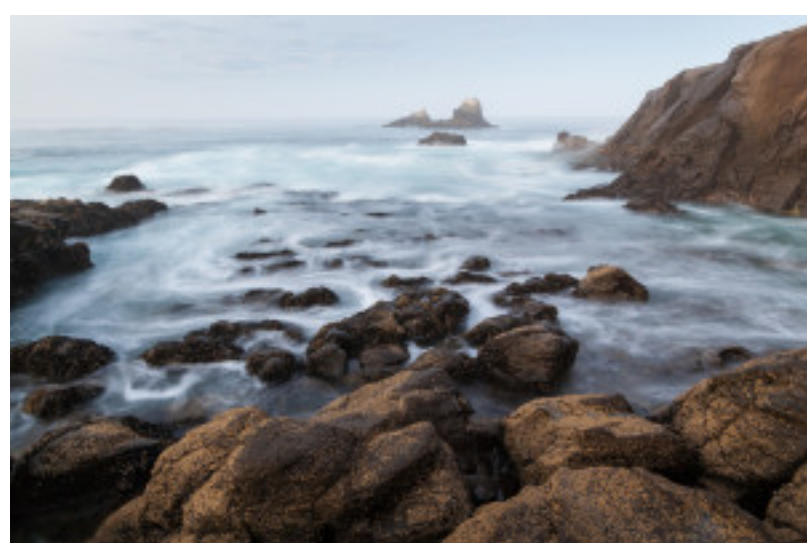


The Aquathon isn't just a hobby or a fitness craze that connotes something faddish and temporary, like topsiders or Instagram. This is who organizing committee members Gary Cogorno, Scott McCarter, and Nuby Sears are – and no one can take that away from them. The Aquathon is in the midst of a sustained trend. The number of finishers has multiplied from 4 since its inception to 150 in 2012. During that time it's become increasingly important to put the seat down in the restrooms: The Aquathon has gone from 100% male to about 50%

female.

Long before the event begins Cogorno, McCarter, and Sears – all Laguna residents – plan the Aquathon around tides and weather in hopes of fortuitous conditions. The tides, according to Cogorno who has lived in Laguna since childhood, are usually stable during September with little variation. **Still, one's adversary in the Aquathon is not another athlete but the forces of nature.**

Sand, Sweat and Beers



Emerald Bay sets the stage as the most challenging place to avoid cuts and scrapes. If the tide is low enough, Aquathoners can walk the rocks between Emerald Bay and Crescent Bay but most of this convoy is single file. Strong swimmers breaststroke 1/2 mile around the elevated reef with snorkel and fins. Waves can push swimmers into the reef, causing abrasions if not for a protective wetsuit. The water as of this writing is 62°. Even with a wetsuit, the bone-chilling temperature compels many to exit the course here. After passing Seal Rock at the

north end of Crescent Bay, the course becomes easier – a relative term.

Less confident athletes can begin the Aquathon at Heisler Park to avoid the difficult Emerald Bay and Crescent Point sections of the course.



Tablerock Arch is another challenging spot. Athletes either boulder from Tablerock Beach and jump about 8-feet down into Secret Cove, then walk through the often turbulent-wave arch, or they swim another 1/2 mile around Tablerock to Thousand Steps Beach.

Thousand Steps Beach presents a long stretch of easy sand to walk, but the south end arch is a bit tricky. Swells come in from the south and at high tide athletes are forced to swim around the arch in the hammering swells instead of walking through it.

Some people become weary, they cry, and they cannot go further...When the will to finish disappears, Aquathoners can exit on one of the many beaches along the course and take Pacific Coast Highway public transportation to get where they need to go.

When the knackered Aquathon party reaches Paradise Bay, they hike the cliff-side across private property to get to the finish line at Three Arch Bay. Paradoxically, the finish line is the beginning of a philosophy shift, a collective attitude of non-judgment in which Aquathoners celebrate everyone else who made it – with beer.

Aquathon Funds

The organizing committee keeps the entry fees ridiculously low so everyone can afford it. Proceeds are donated to the [MiOcean](#) project, a local foundation that uses 100% of its donations exclusively on the 42-miles of Orange County coastline. Organizers handle the proceeds in a way that benefits others and they cast on their own resources for supplementing Aquathon donations to the MiOcean foundation. "A good conscience," as Ben



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Franklin put it, "is a continual Christmas."

If you are apprehensive about entering the Aquathon, don't. For those who cannot stay away, who cannot resist the temptation, [register for the October 2, 2016 Aquathon on their official website](#).

Special thanks to Gary Cogorno and Diana Greenwood-Cogorno for their generous time, details, and tour for this article.

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