

# The First Annual Ultimate Pier-to-Pier Swim

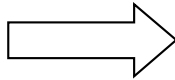
## A 66 Mile swim off the California Coast near Los Angeles

Every summer, swimmers are drawn to piers like moths to a flame. One of the favorite swim events is either a round a pier swim, or as is even more popular, a Pier-to-Pier Swim (or p2p for short). In Australia they have modified the tradition by having a Pier to Pub swim, as well as a Pub to Pub swim—which probably has different traditions that you can incorporate into your Ultimate p2p Swim.

The course of this ultimate, but virtual p2p Swim will start at Balboa Pier, and finish at the Santa Monica Pier, crossing the paths of at least 3 separate p2p actual swims along the way, and swimming by 11 piers in its 66 mile length.

The swim starts at Balboa Pier, in Newport Beach, California, sometime home of Dennis Rodman. Newport Beach is in Orange County, which is also known for being the home of the Mighty Ducks, the Angels and Disneyland. At the Balboa Pier, you can probably head out into the surf without incident, and start swimming north. The stretch of beach you are tracing is part of the Balboa Peninsula, which protects Newport Bay from the open ocean. After **two miles** of swimming, you reach the Newport Pier, which is shown below, and your swim angles a little farther north and less west than the first leg. This first leg is the course of the annual Newport Beach Pier to Pier Swim, a popular swim in late June or early July that includes local age group swimmers, as well as Masters competitors.

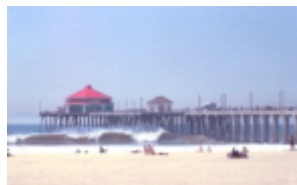
**Newport Pier**



If you want to see what the conditions you are swimming through virtually look like, you can link to [www.surflife.com/surflife/livecams/getsurfmaphsurfbreakreport.cfm?alias=newportpiercacam](http://www.surflife.com/surflife/livecams/getsurfmaphsurfbreakreport.cfm?alias=newportpiercacam), courtesy of Surflife.com. The Newport Pier is home to an array of restaurants, but you probably want to keep swimming north. Be careful as you swim by the Wedge, it's a tough body surfing beach known for big surf in shallow water.

The next pier as you swim north, is just about a **six mile** swim. It's a double leg with lots of sand bars as you swim past the mouth of the Santa Ana River. When you approach the Huntington Beach Pier, you have arrived at Surf City. Huntington Beach prides itself on being the home of one of the largest west coast surf competitions. If you don't have experience entering and exiting through the surf you probably want to keep swimming well outside near the end of the Pier.

If you do swim in, you are around in late June which is an actual, not a because there is always or the other side of the swimmers have found themselves forced to "shoot the pier". If you want conditions, here is a link to a surf camera to let you see what you are <http://www.hbonline.com/surfcams.htm>.



might want to visit the Surf Museum in Huntington Beach. If you or early July, you might want to try the Huntington Beach Pier swim, virtual race, and one of the oldest in California. It's a little tricky some surf and some pier. Even



rip pulling on one experienced ocean to check the actual missing:

If you skip the surf, the museum, and the Surf Open, you can keep swimming north. Here you are retracing the steps of another ocean swim, the Seal Beach **10 Mile** Swim. It starts on the North side of the Huntington Beach Pier and ends on the north side of the Seal Beach pier. There has been a swimming tradition at Seal Beach dating back to 1888. The facilities are much different now than then, of course.



Grand Army of the Republic Encampment taken in the year of 1868 at Anaheim Landing. Warehouses in the background were built in 1868



The famous Seal Beach roller coaster, 1915.

The roller coaster, which was part of the standard equipment for Pleasure Piers in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and which is shown here, is now gone. The only remaining old-style roller coasters along the California coastline are at Mission Beach, at Belmont Park in San Diego, the famous roller coaster in Santa Cruz, and the newer style Pacific Park at Santa Monica Pier—but you aren't there yet.

The Seal Beach pier is beautiful at sunset, and depending on when you are doing your swims, you might be swimming then. In that 10-mile leg, you swim along the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, which is environmentally significant as one of few surviving wetlands along the California coast. You also swim by the Anaheim Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Huntington Harbor and the Seal Beach Naval Weapons Center.

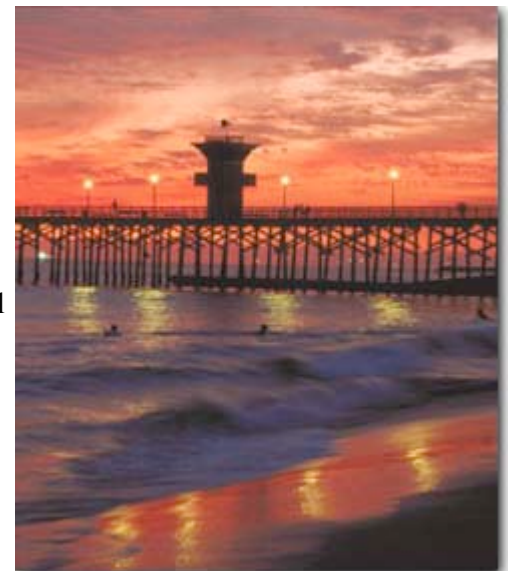
After you keep swimming past Seal Beach, you cross the mouth of the San Gabriel River, and leave Orange County behind at the midpoint of the channel. You keep swimming for about **3 miles**, until you reach Belmont Pier. Belmont Pier is mostly a fishing pier, but the name may be familiar to long time swimmers because it is close to Belmont Shore Swimming Pool, home to numerous national championships, and Olympic Trials in the past, and the location of the Annual Holiday Invitational SCM Masters Meet hosted by Long Beach Aquatics and UCI Masters. It is also right next to Naples, where every summer, the locals put on the Naples swims, which circle the Naples Island in the middle of Alamitos Bay. If you want to add another **3 miles** to your course, you can retrace the steps of the swim.

If not, you have now reached one of the most dangerous parts of the swim. You have an **8 mile** swim to Cabrillo Pier, across the Port of Los Angeles. The Long Beach-Los Angeles harbor complex is filled with giant containerized shipping vessels that dock, unload and load again with breathtaking swiftness. The volume of traffic makes the LA Harbor one of the busiest in the world.



If you were actually doing the swim, you would need to be very careful. As a virtual swim, the risks are less. You will be able to see the Queen Mary, and all the other sites of Long Beach as you swim along, but I recommend swimming well offshore along the breakwaters on the most direct route to the Cabrillo Pier. The manmade breakwaters were needed because Los Angeles and Long Beach were not blessed with great natural harbors. You will also swim past the mouth of the Los Angeles River.

Your target on this leg of the swim, the Cabrillo Pier is primarily a fishing pier, but as you round past it, you also pass the first of the LA County Lifeguards protected beaches, Cabrillo Beach, which is right by the Point Fermin lighthouse. You can check out the conditions you are swimming through by checking out the beach





camera at <http://watchthewater.co.la.ca.us/beach.cfm?bid=17>. The LA County Lifeguards are the process of having a large web presence with what will someday soon be 27 webcams from south to north along the beaches they protect.

The next leg of the swim is the longest without a pier, and then ends with the largest pier you will visit, the Redondo Beach Pier. To reach the Redondo Beach Pier, you must swim for **16 miles** past the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Palos Verdes is known for beaches and surf breaks that can only be reached by climbing down narrow hilly paths. After picturesque swimming along the steep cliffs of Palos Verdes, you turn the point and swim past the San Vicente lighthouse, along the beaches of South Torrance and Redondo Beach, and reach the Redondo Beach Pier. Current conditions can be seen at <http://watchthewater.co.la.ca.us/beach.cfm?bid=31>.

The Redondo Beach Pier has dozens of restaurants, bars, shops, fishing zones, and a courthouse. From the courtroom, you can actually see beach, the sand and the water, and daydream of better things (and I have).



You are now in what is known as the South Bay area, and have entered into Santa Monica Bay. The water quality of Santa Monica Bay has been greatly improved over the last 15 years, thanks to the efforts of Heal the Bay (<http://www.healthebay.org/>) and others, and now if you are swimming, you may see dolphins below you or above you, if you are lucky.

From Redondo Beach Pier, you swim about **2 miles** to the Hermosa Beach Pier. Every summer, the three cities of Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach and Manhattan Beach put on what is called the International Surf Festival.



The swimming highlight is Hermosa Beach Pier to the second Sunday in August. careful if you do the actual mass wave so it can be a little around the Hermosa Beach

the 800 person p2p Swim from the Manhattan Beach Pier, on the first or That swim is another **2 mile** leg. Be swim—everyone starts in a single physical trying to make the turn Pier.

From Manhattan Beach, you along Dockweiler State Angeles International Airport. Aside from the airport noise it's a beautiful beach, and in the summer, on every Thursday night, there is a weekly Playa Del Run duathlon, which is a 1000 meter swim and/or a 5K run for ocean swimmers and triathletes. It's a great way to break up a work week.

have another long stretch of **5 miles** Beach, which is just to the west of Los

On this swim, you go past the mouth of Marina Del Rey: <http://watchthewater.co.la.ca.us/beach.cfm?bid=42>, and reach the Venice Pier at the end of the 5 mile leg. It is a fishing pier which has recently been rebuilt after being severely damaged in heavy storms. Venice Pier is at the south end of the Venice Boardwalk, which is known for its eccentrics, street performers and personalities. You can see what is happening while you swim by using the following website: <http://www.westland.net/beachcam/index.html>.

Venice Beach, like most of Southern California, was started as a housing development, which was founded on July 4, 1905 by Abbot Kinney, who wanted, like the similar concept in Naples which we swam by earlier, to recreate the canals of Venice. Some survive.



From the Venice Beach Pier, you have a final 3 mile stretch along the coast. While you cannot see them, you are swimming over the resting sites of at least 2 earlier Pleasure Piers that no longer survive.

Santa Monica Pier, which has been rebuilt several times, has an amusement park, a traditional wooden roller coaster, an aquarium started by UCLA and now run by Heal the Bay, and several fancy and not so fancy restaurants and hotels located on or near the pier. A pier cam is at: <http://www.westland.net/piercam/>, if you want to see what you are missing.



Congratulations on finishing the full 66 miles(if you have—its an honor system).

There are a lot more piers in California, and at least two more actual (and optional virtual) p2p swims—the 6 mile swim from Pismo Beach Pier to Avila Beach Pier, and the 10K(or about 6.2 mile) swim from Capitola Wharf to the Santa Cruz Wharf, which is called a p2p by the race organizer, who hosts a great event.

If you want more information about any of the actual swims mentioned here, you can link to the Morton Salt Report,

<http://www.mortonsaltreport.homestead.com/> for more information and entry details.

*This swim was created by Bill Ireland of Southern California Aquatic Masters (SCAQ). They are located in West Los Angeles and are the largest swim program in the United States. Bill is a great fan of open water swimming and can be found at many of the lake and ocean swims in California and the Northwest.*

### Swim Log:

Balboa Pier to Newport Pier	2 miles
Newport Pier to Huntington Pier	6 miles
Huntington Pier to Seal Beach Pier	10 miles
Seal Beach Pier to Belmont Pier	3 miles
Naples Island Loop(Optional)	3 miles
Belmont Pier to Cabrillo Pier	8 miles
Cabrillo Pier to Redondo Pier	16 miles
Redondo Pier to Hermosa Pier	2 miles
Hermosa Pier to Manhattan Pier	2 miles
Manhattan Pier to Venice Pier	5 miles
Venice Pier to Santa Monica Pier	3 miles