

Jaimie Monahan

6 Marathons, 6 Continents, 16 Days

August 13 – 28, 2018

Swimmer Biographical Data

- Jaimie Monahan
- 39
- United States
- New York, NY, USA
- Previous marathon swims completed: <https://db.marathonswimmers.org/p/jaimie-monahan/>

OVERALL NARRATIVE

Each of the following swims were part of a personal project to complete 6 marathon swims on 6 continents in 16 days. I was inspired to do this challenge after meeting a runner named Kelly McLay in Antarctica in 2015 who went on to win the Antarctic Ice Marathon and complete the World Marathon Challenge (WMC) in early 2017. The WMC consists of seven running marathons in seven days on seven continents with formal organized races and a chartered private plane for runners and crew. This idea captured my imagination and I wondered if I might be able to organize a similar individual expedition with marathon swims.

Upfront I knew my project would need to make two adjustments to the seven marathons in seven days concept. The first was in terms of safety. I won't say it's impossible, but I will say it's extremely inadvisable to attempt a swim of 10km+ under MSF rules in current Antarctic water temperatures, so I defined my challenge as six swims on six continents. The second was in terms of timing and logistics. Using commercial air travel, seven days for even six continents and swims wasn't feasible, but I thought sixteen days had a nice ring to it and would be doable.

Hundreds of people have swum in Antarctica, from researchers in the 1950's to modern day tourists and scientists. A handful of those have swum on all seven continents, at least three over a timeframe of less than a year. And although many have done marathon swims on six continents, especially on the FINA professional circuit, I felt comfortable positing that sixteen days would be a record for the fastest elapsed time to complete marathon swims on six continents in sixteen days.

Over the course of the year, I played around with potential itineraries, selecting swims based on attractive waters, ease of access via commercial air travel routes, potential local support, and various other factors. Star Alliance's Round the World (RTW) booking tool was helpful - it has its own set of defined parameters to follow, but after much research, offered the most flexibility and support for this type of trip. I also wanted to use at least one of the locations from the original World Marathon Challenge, include places important to marathon swimming history, and ideally start and end the project with the Rose Pitonof Swim and the Geneva Classic - two organized swims that are personally meaningful to me.

A key innovation that made the entire endeavor possible was Oru Kayak, an ingenious origami kayak that folds up into checked luggage size. It is a practical and beautiful piece of engineering that made it possible to have Arik by my side during each swim of the challenge.

Swim #1: South America

August 13, 2018

Cartagena, Colombia: Pendales to Corales del Rosario National Park

SUPPORT PERSONNEL DATA

Observer, Kayaker, Crew	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA
Observer	Santiago Marin Piedrahita, Cartagena, Colombia
Boat Pilot 1	Johnes Luis Pimentes Avila, Cartagena, Colombia
Boat Pilot 2	Oscar Bedoya, Cartagena, Colombia
Kayaker	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA

RULES

Standard equipment	1 swimsuit, 1 silicone cap, 1 pair of silicone earplugs, 1 pair of goggles, sun protection (zinc)
Other equipment	n/a

SWIM REPORT

MSF Standard Swim Log Attached	Yes
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ROUTE SPECIFICATION

Route name / description	Point-to-point: Pendales to Corales Del Rosario National Park - Cartagena, Colombia
Start location coordinates	LAT: 10.246 LON: -75.618
Finish location coordinates	LAT: 10.167 LON: -75.669
Route distance (minimum possible)	10.2 KM

SWIM FACTS (included in observer report)

Start date & time	13 AUG 2018 9:40 AM
Finish date & time	13 AUG 2018 3:10 PM
Local time zone	GMT -5
Elapsed time of swim (HH:MM.SS)	05:25.1
GPS	Track.rs
Stroke rate	47 - 44 per min
Water temp	30 - 32.7 C
Air Temp	31 - 33 C
Wind Speed	1 kn - flat
Wave height	minimal wave activity 0.5 meter or less
Notes	

NARRATIVE

The World Marathon Challenge (WMC) features races in Novo Antarctica, Perth Australia, Dubai UAE, Cape Town South Africa, Lisbon Portugal, Cartagena Colombia, and Miami Florida. Although most of these are great swimming locations too, for various reasons, Cartagena was the only location of the original WMC that remained in my final lineup. It was a top contender for many reasons, including proximity to NYC, easy boat hire, and clean turquoise waters but the true reason was far less practical: I wanted to experience the Cartagena of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the birthplace of magical realism.

Cartagena was originally intended to be the second swim of the challenge, but the original first swim in NYC was cancelled due to intense thunderstorms.

We flew to Colombia that night via Panama City, Panama. Dropped our luggage off at our hostel in Getsemani, confirmed our pickup time with our observer and boat charter company and walked around Cartagena. It was technically wintertime there but the sun was relentless and the air temperature a steamy 94F/34C. Had some lunch, did our best to hydrate and stay out of the sun until it was time to check into our hostel. Did some work, ate a light dinner of bread and cheese and tomato and lots of sparkling water, and went to sleep very early.

We took an Uber to the Muelle Navas dock to meet our observer and the boat pilots around 8am. We motored out to the Rosario Islands and Pendales Point was our start point on a pretty beach. It was already so hot the Desitin was melting as Arik applied it. It was a relief to get in the water – temperature was already in the 30's but it was clear and beautiful otherwise. Water was super flat and there was almost no wind. It felt like there was a slight current in our favor for the first 30 minutes or so coming off Pendales, but after that there seemed to be a small adverse current for the remainder of the swim. The water felt fine for the first 5 hours but the last 30 minutes we hit an eddy or something and there was stronger flow against us as we approached the finish around another outcropping point. To combat some of the flow, Arik guided me into very shallow water near shore next to mangrove roots where the water got even hotter with an unpleasant earthy smell. Towards the very end we passed a pleasant white oceanside mansion on the point with people barbeque-ing on the deck. We passed them, went around the point and then I climbed up on a rock sea wall to clear the water and end the swim. Not my favorite swim but I hoped our next five would be more enjoyable.

After the swim we motored back to the dock, folded up the kayak with help from some fascinated tourists, took an Uber home, washed off the zinc, got dressed and went out for the night. Cartagena has a vibrant nightlife but our celebration was fairly sedate – leisurely dinner and cocktails at a rooftop restaurant in the old town. We watched the sun set and processions of horse drawn carriages through the cobblestone streets. Flowers bloomed in the dark and there was music everywhere we turned. A little magic, a little realism.

Swim #2: Oceana

August 17, 2018

Sydney, Australia (Little Bay Beach to Bondi Beach)

SUPPORT PERSONNEL DATA

Observer/Kayaker	Vlad Mravec, Sydney Australia
Fellow Swimmer	Dean Summers, Sydney Australia
Kayaker	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA

RULES

Standard equipment	1 textile swimsuit, 1 silicone cap, 1 pair of silicone earplugs, 1 pair of goggles, sun protection (zinc)
Other equipment	Sharkbanz on wrist and ankle to deter wildlife

SWIM REPORT

MSF Standard Swim Log Attached	Yes
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ROUTE SPECIFICATION

Route name / description	Point-to-point: Little Bay Beach to Bondi Beach
Start location coordinates	LAT: -33.980 LON: 151.252
Finish location coordinates	LAT: -33.891 LON: 151.282
Route distance (minimum possible)	10.5 KM

SWIM FACTS (included in observer report)

Start date & time	17 Aug 2018 8:55 AM
Finish date & time	17 Aug 2018 1:06 PM
Local time zone	GMT +10
Elapsed time of swim (HH:MM.SS)	04:11.12
GPS	Track.rs
Stroke rate	49 - 46
Water temp	15 C
Air Temp	10 - 17 C
Wind Speed	1 - 3 KN
Wave height	1 meter
Notes	

GPS TRACKING DATA

Name of tracking link	Track.rs/Jaimie
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OTHER SUPPORTING DATA

Marine buoy readings	
Local tides & current predictions	Low tide: 6:39 AM (0.44m) High tide 1:04 PM (1.5m)

NARRATIVE

We flew to Sydney from Cartagena via Panama City, Panama and LAX. Everything went smoothly and we were able to stay hydrated, watch some movies, and sleep most of the long flight. Arrived in beautiful Sydney, checked in, and got showered up. Walked around a bit and met Coach Vlad of VladSwim to discuss logistics which was a pleasure. He came highly recommended from many swim friends including Wyatt Song, the Australian Ice Miler and Channel Swimmer, and it was for very good reason. Had an early pasta dinner with my friend Kobie in the Circular Quay neighborhood, then went

to bed early. Got up early to do work, changed our swim plan completely, then met up with Coach Vlad and Kobie at Little Bay Beach.

I had never been to this beach but it was incredible – just a perfect little cove with stunning cliffs and the most beautiful water breaking on the cliffs. I was completely envious of the locals we met coming for their daily swim. Water was cool seawater around 15C/59F which was definitely a change after Cartagena but felt so nice on a sunny winter’s day. Fellow swimmer and Oceans Seven aspirant Dean Summers came along with Coach Vlad which was a wonderful surprise too! Dean is much faster than me but was very kind to come with us – we wanted to adhere to English Channel Rules so he mostly swam out of my eye line next to Vlad where I swam next between Arik and Vlad, but it was nice to start and finish the swim with him and have them both point out various landmarks during the swim.

We went from Little Bay past Malabar Beach, Boora Point, Magic Point, Coogee Beach and the beautiful local landmark Wedding Cake Island, Shark Point, then Clovelly Beach, gorgeous Bronte Beach, Tamarama, then around the corner into the world-rekowned Bondi Beach. The water was so clear and beautiful and every time we looked towards shore there were amazing cliffs and rock formations at each point. When we reached Bondi, It was great to walk up on the beach in such a familiar and scenic place and lovely Kobie greeted us with hot chocolates she has somehow managed to grab in between walking the entire Coastal Cliff Walk from Little Bay to Bondi! We shivered a bit, washed out the kayaks in the public shower, and grabbed an uber home to shower and change. That night Kobie took us out for a festive thai dinner and fancy cocktails in Newtown, and the next morning we enjoyed a wonderful brunch with the VladSwim squad back in Coogee Beach, then coffee with the amazing Helen Conway.

Next day it was back on the plane, next stop Singapore.

Swim #3: Asia

August 20, 2018

Singapore, Length of East Coast Park

SUPPORT PERSONNEL DATA	
Motorboat Pilot/Observer	Kelvin Tan, Singapore
Kayaker/Observer/Crew	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA
RULES	
Standard equipment	1 swimsuit, 1 silicone cap, 1 pair of silicone earplugs, 1 pair of goggles, sun protection (zinc)
Other equipment	n/a
SWIM REPORT	
MSF Standard Swim Log Attached	Yes
ROUTE SPECIFICATION	
Route name / description	Point-to-point: Constant Wind Boathouse to End of East Coast Park by Marine Docks
Start location coordinates	LAT: 1.316 LON: 103.978

Finish location coordinates	LAT: 1.289 LON: 130.888
Route distance (minimum possible)	10.5 KM

SWIM FACTS (included in observer report)

Start date & time	20 Aug 2018 10:52 AM
Finish date & time	20 Aug 2018 2:19 PM
Local time zone	GMT +8
Elapsed time of swim (HH:MM.SS)	03:27.13
GPS	Track.rs
Stroke rate	47 - 44
Water temp	29 C
Air Temp	30 - 32 C
Wind Speed	2 - 4 KN
Wave height	minimal wave activity 0.5 meter or less

OTHER SUPPORTING DATA

Marine buoy readings	
Local tides & current predictions	High tide: 6:49 AM (1.8m) Low tide: 11:55 AM (1.3m) High tide 5:52 PM (2.1m)

NARRATIVE

Direct flight from Sydney to Singapore – it seemed short but was still a bit longer than SFO to NYC. Heat and humidity was oppressive, but our hotel was very comfortable with a stunning view of the Marina Bay. Rested up, then headed out to Constant Wind sailing and water sports academy on Changi Coast Walk near the airport. The world-renowned multisport athlete and coach David Tay was kind enough to put us in touch with Mustafa Sulaiman, the watersports director who helps organize support for David's Liberty Wave marathon swim. His colleague Kelvin was a former sailing coach for the Singapore National Team and did a great job piloting for us.

We launched kayak, RHIB, and swimmer from the boat ramp which was nice and easy. The day was very hot but not too sunny and in the middle of the day we were treated to a beautiful rainstorm. A good rain swim is always my favorite, and in a beautiful place like Singapore it was twice as special. Swim was smooth and uneventful until after the finish, when our RHIB broke down and we had to have another boat come and rescue us. I was just so happy this didn't happen until after I'd completed the swim.

Lovely rooftop dinner and cocktails with Singapore local and American Expat/powerhouse marathon swimmer Julie Newton, who we'd met in Hong Kong. Julie was so kind to take us out for a celebration and we enjoyed the views and company very much. A good night's sleep, lush buffet breakfast and then on to our next destination. We flew to Cairo via Bangkok, then on to Sharm El Sheikh.

Swim #4: Africa

August 24, 2018

Alexandria Egypt, Eastern Harbour to Beau Rivage Jetty

SUPPORT PERSONNEL DATA

Observer/Jetski	Ahmed Badawy, Alexandria, Egypt
Observer/Safety Diver	Adem Badawy, Alexandria, Egypt
Kayaker	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA

RULES

Standard equipment	1 swimsuit, 1 silicone cap, 1 pair of silicone earplugs, 1 pair of goggles, sun protection (zinc)
Other equipment	n/a

SWIM REPORT

MSF Standard Swim Log Attached	Yes
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ROUTE SPECIFICATION

Route name / description	Point-to-point: Al'Mina Ash Sharqiyah Marina to Beau Rivage Jetty
Start location coordinates	LAT: 31.201 LON: 29.892
Finish location coordinates	LAT: 31.259 LON: 29.976
Route distance (minimum possible)	10.5 KM

SWIM FACTS (included in observer report)

Start date & time	24 Aug 2018 3:52 PM
Finish date & time	24 Aug 2018 9:13 PM
Local time zone	GMT +2
Elapsed time of swim (HH:MM.SS)	05:21:00
GPS	Track.rs
Stroke rate	48 - 44
Water temp	30 C
Air Temp	30 - 25 C
Wind Speed	3 KN (leaving marina) - 14 KN open sea
Wave height	1.5 meter

GPS TRACKING DATA

Name of tracking link	Track.rs/Jaimie
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OTHER SUPPORTING DATA

Local tides & current predictions	Low tide: 2:59 PM (0.1m) High tide: 9:27 PM (0.2m)
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NARRATIVE

Egypt has a tradition of amazing marathon swimmers and was one of my top choices for the Africa segment. Alexandria was on my original wishlist too, but at some point the plan evolved into a swim in Sharm El Sheikh on the Sinai Peninsula which was a spectacular failure. So we headed back to Cairo a day early, then hired an (amazing!) car and driver through The Blue Cab to take us 4 hours to Alexandria on the coast. We got there just after midnight and the city was still buzzing, people flooding the streets

for the Eid al-Adha holiday. I was dead tired but the whole place felt so festive and alive compared to Sharm in the dead of summer.

The next day we started the task of trying to organize an impromptu replacement swim. Our amazing concierge, Mohamed El Sayed far exceeded every expectation we had and went above and beyond even the reputation of the fabled order of Les Clefs d'Or by securing a boat, pilot and observer from a local dive center, Sub Marine, on just a few hours' notice. Our swim was saved! But I should have known it wouldn't be easy, even with "Miracle Mohamed" on our side.

The hotel car took us to the port to meet our guide, Ahmed, and his colleagues. We took a boat to a boat to a boat but unfortunately when we got on the final boat and motored out to the marina, we learned that President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was visiting the waterfront and all large motorized craft were banned outside the harbor along the length of Alexandria and our entire planned course. Ahmed was kind enough to rework our plan and observe the swim via a jetski, augmented with one of his rescue divers, Adem, who swam with me in full wetsuit, dive mask, and flippers in 30C+ water.

We started the swim in late afternoon. Swimming from the West end of Alexandria's Eastern Harbour was really neat. Visibility was low but it was thrilling to think I was swimming over Cleopatra's Sunken Palace on the submerged Antirododos Island and the ruins of the historic Pharos Lighthouse of Alexandria. It took us a while to get out of the marina as there was a bit of a flow into the harbor. We came out of the cove and passed the Ancient Library of Alexandria. Shortly after that, I started seeing these large white jellyfish. (I learned later that they are called *Rhopilema Nomadica*, but at the time I knew nothing about them.) They were beautiful and I hoped they would not sting. I avoided them as long as I could, but my hopes were for naught. The first sting was my right wrist. It didn't feel nice but I knew I could keep swimming. I kept dodging them, and for a while avoided them, until my left hand and arm hit one flat on.

My hand hit the tentacles and immediately felt like it was slammed in a car door. The soft underbelly of my forearm hit the top of the jelly's bell, and it was so much worse that I would have imagined. It felt spiky and surprisingly solid, like an electric pineapple. I looked at my arm because it felt like my skin had been flayed off where it hit me. I couldn't move my hand and I started to really worry. I didn't know these jellies and didn't know how much venom I could take. Then the sun started to set and I thought of Caroline Block's second North Channel double attempt, the way the jellies came up to the surface when it got dark, so many that she felt she was swimming through jellyfish soup. I was scared in and in pain but knew there was nothing I could do and figured I'd tackle more stings if it happened. The water was wavy with fairly brisk winds against me, but I barely noticed, I was so focused on avoiding every jelly I could see. I even curled up in a ball when I fed, because I thought my feet and legs might get stung if I let them hang down while my head was above the water.

It was a shame, swimming at dusk is usually my favorite and this Egyptian sunset was particularly gorgeous. In my head I logged the beauty of it, but I could not enjoy it thoroughly. The skyline sparkled and I could hear people and music at the waterfront hotels and cafes, but all I could do was think about avoiding jellyfish. I told myself I would get stung four times, and that I could handle it. In the end I only ended up getting stung three times. The last time was on the right side of my chest (bell I think) and on my lip/nose (tentacle.) Mercifully after a few hours the encounters stopped. I don't know if they were just in one area, or they descended as it got dark, or what, but I am so happy for whatever saved me.

After that the swim was fairly uneventful, the wind even calmed down a bit. Our finish jetty was about 2 kilometers from our hotel beach, and it was quite mentally tough to go past it in the dark. But after what felt like ages, we were there. We went around the jetty, I wasn't allowed to walk up on the beach and the rocks were too slippery to climb in the dark, but I touched the pier's metal pilings to finish the swim, and we were done. Unfortunately since we didn't have a motorized boat and no platform for the jetski, I still had to swim 2km back. The swim home was a lot easier since the wind and waves were with us on the way back, but I was not in a happy mood. Adam the rescue diver was super nice and trying to be helpful, but now that the swim was done and he could get closer to me, he kept startling me by popping up next to me in the dark with his black mask, suit and fins!. I asked him if he'd ever gotten stung by those jellies and he said he had never been stung by one. I was completely envious of this, and of the fins he was wearing. I wished I had fins, I wished the jetski had a nice platform like New York Open Water's, I just wanted to be home already, back at our hotel in the big nice bathtub. We walked up on the beach, got reprimanded by a security guard, folded up the kayak, and took the elevator up to the room. I sat in the bath and held all my jellyfish infected parts under the hottest water I could stand, but nothing helped. We got back around 10 or 11pm and had to be on our way back to Cairo airport by 3am to catch our 7am flight. After a bath and a few hours of sleep we packed up and slept most of the car ride and flight to Geneva.

Swim #5: Europe

August 24, 2018

Lake Geneva Swim Association: Geneva Classic

SUPPORT PERSONNEL DATA

Event Organizer	Tim Davies, London, England https://db.marathonswimmers.org/events/lake-geneva-classic/
Results	
Kayaker	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA

RULES

Standard equipment	1 swimsuit, 1 silicone cap, 1 pair of silicone earplugs, 1 pair of goggles, sun protection (zinc)
Other equipment	n/a

SWIM REPORT

MSF Standard Swim Log Attached	Yes
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ROUTE SPECIFICATION

Route name / description	Point-to-point: Lausanne Switzerland to Evian-les-Bains France
Start location coordinates	LAT: 46.510 LON: 6.611
Finish location coordinates	LAT: 46.400 LON: 6.582
Route distance (minimum possible)	13 KM

SWIM FACTS (included in observer report)

Start date & time	26 Aug 2018 11:39 AM
Finish date & time	26 Aug 2018 4:29 PM
Local time zone	GMT +2
Elapsed time of swim (HH:MM.SS)	4:50.00
GPS	Track.rs
Stroke rate	47 - 45
Water temp	20 C
Air Temp	21 - 22 C
Wind Speed	2 - 5 KN
Wave height	minimal wave activity in beginning 0.25 meter or less

GPS TRACKING DATA

Name of tracking link	Track.rs/Jaimie
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OTHER SUPPORTING DATA

Marine buoy readings

Local tides & current predictions	No tides or current predicted in lake
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NARRATIVE

Direct flight from Cairo to Geneva, then we drove from Geneva to Evian les Bains but ended up arriving after the swim briefing had ended. Helped load kayaks but decided to skip the welcome dinner in favor of checking into our hotel. My left hand was so swollen from the venom, it looked twice its normal size. We usually stay in a small family owned hotel in Evian, but they have some administrative issues. (There is a generational struggle there – the son and daughter put the rooms on the online bookings website, but the parents ignore it and book the rooms via phone and walk in and don't update the system!) We had a confirmed room but the hotel was full. I had a feeling this might happen so we made a quick online reservation for the Hilton Evian and drove down the road to check in. It was a little more expensive but well worth it. Had some dinner, did work, and went to sleep.

The next morning we met up with everyone at the ferry terminal and settled in for what turned out to be a fairly wavy ride. Luckily by the time we arrived in Lausanne the water had completely calmed down. Got to meet up with old friends and make new once while we waited, and again, the Oru was a huge hit amongst kayakers and swimmers alike. There were a few waves of swimmers but once we got in the water was just perfect, cool clear and gorgeous. Straightforward, uneventful and enjoyable swim, straight across Lac Lemman. I didn't know how my hand would hold up as it was still so swollen, but it ended up being fine and I think the clean cool water actually helped.

Lovely awards ceremony and celebration afterwards, so much fun. It would have been fun to celebrate a bit more, especially if this had been the final swim of the challenge as planned, but instead we had to go to bed at a reasonable hour for another flight and another swim. We went home, said goodbye to the lake and drove back to Geneva at the crack of dawn to make our morning flight back to NYC.

Swim #5: North America

August 28, 2018

Swim Around Manhattan

SUPPORT PERSONNEL DATA

Observer 1	Janine Serell, South Carolina, USA
Boat Pilot 1	Sean Makofsky, New Jersey USA
Kayaker/Crew/Observer	Arik Thormahlen, New York, NY USA

RULES

Standard equipment	1 swimsuit, 1 silicone cap, 1 pair of silicone x earplugs, 1 pair of goggles, sun protection (zinc)
Other equipment	n/a

SWIM REPORT

MSF Standard Swim Log Attached	Yes
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ROUTE SPECIFICATION

Route name / description	Circumnavigation of Manhattan Island starting and ending at Pier A
Start location coordinates	LAT: 40.704 LON: -74.018
Finish location coordinates	LAT: 40.704 LON: -74.018
Route distance (minimum possible)	47 KM

SWIM FACTS (included in observer report)

Start date & time	28 Aug 2018 9:16 AM
Finish date & time	28 Aug 2018 6:59 PM
Local time zone	GMT -4
Elapsed time of swim (HH:MM.SS)	09:43.00
GPS	Track.rs
Stroke rate	48 - 46
Water temp	24 - 27 C
Air Temp	27 - 35 C
Wind Speed	0 - 12 KN
Wave height	1 meter
Notes	

GPS TRACKING DATA

Name of tracking link	Track.rs/Jaimie
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OTHER SUPPORTING DATA

Marine buoy readings	
Local tides & current predictions	At the Battery: High tide: 10:13 AM (1.5m) Low tide: 4:33 PM (.5m) High Tide: 10:20 PM (1.5m)

NARRATIVE

After the Rose Pitonof Swim was cancelled due to thunderstorms, I thought a lot about a North America swim I'd like to do as a replacement. We almost went up to Lake George that same day the swim was cancelled because I love that lake and the weather was much better there, but I was worried about

getting back in time for our flight to Cartagena. It would have been fun to do a swim in California, if we had slotted in a longer layover in SFO or LAX on the way to Sydney.

Lots of different options but in the end I decided to do one of my favorite swims, a simple loop around Manhattan. It was a bit of a rush to get permissions from NYPD and USCG, and luckily Sean and Janine were available to pilot and crew for us. One of the best support teams I could have asked for. I knew it would be a slow swim given the tides/flow for the day, but I hoped it would be enjoyable and a fitting finish to the project. It certainly was, but again, the theme of this project was that very little would be easy.

We started from Pier A and it was a nice swim around the bottom of our island, and up the East River. The bridges went by quickly, maybe not as quickly as usual but it felt really nice after being against the current for so many of my swims those two weeks. Headed up to the top of the island, enjoyed the skyline and even saw Rondi Davies and Alex Arevalo of New York Open Water out on Ward's Island. What a treat to see them cheering for us! Came around the top of the island, the Harlem River, Columbia Rock, and my favorite bridge of the 20, Spuyten Duyvil. It's not the most scenic of our bridges, but it's near where my dad grew up and used to swim in the river with his friends. They even used to jump off this bridge! I always think of him a little when I reach this landmark. Elapsed time was a lot slower than usual but the George Washington Bridge felt like it came fairly quickly. I was looking forward to swimming home straight down the Hudson. We passed Riverside Park, Columbia University, the 86th Street Boat Basin. Then the midtown skyline from the other side.

Then around 50th Street or so, Arik told me to sprint to try and get past a cruise ship that was departing at 5pm. I sprinted for a few minutes but they quickly tucked me into a cove. The cruise ship decided to leave early. Then there was more news. There was a second cruise ship, also slated to leave at 5, but where the other one was 10 minutes early, this one was 30 minutes late. And that's the story of how I spent 40 minutes in a shallow muddy cove during my longest Manhattan Island Circumnavigation swim to date. I wasn't even quite treading water because it was so shallow, just kind of floating. I didn't mind a break but the time was passing sooooo sloooooowly.

Finally the ship went by and we were on our way but the current was almost completely slack by this point. I dug in to get down the rest of the island, but I was worried. I knew I had swum way more than a 10k to officially complete the parameters of the project, but I wanted to finish what I set out to do in terms of this final individual swim as well. Luckily there was enough time before the tide turned for me to get back to Pier A, pass the jetty, and be done. By this time the sun was setting and we were ready to go home. I shed more than a few tears on the dock as we unloaded, which is unusual for me. I don't know if it was joy, relief, sadness at being done, or sheer exhaustion but probably a little bit of each. We said goodbye to Sean, cabbied it uptown with Janine, and then we were home.

6 swims, 6 continents, 26,000 miles of travel in 16 days and it was done. Around the world in 16 days.