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"Here's to the crazy ones. The ones who see things differently. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." - Apple

Neptune Swimming Foundation 2022 Athletes,

Welcome. You are standing at the doorway to an exclusive club of those people who are just crazy enough to swim the waters of San Francisco Bay in an extraordinary way - or two. Very few people in this world experience the preparation, anticipation and elation related to successfully swimming from Alcatraz to San Francisco. Fewer still have seized the opportunity to swim directly under and along the path of the world-famous architectural landmark known as the Golden Gate Bridge. And it is a far fewer select group of people in this world who accomplish both in one weekend.

If they haven't already, people will call you "nuts," "crazy," "foolish" and more. But they won't be able to ignore what you're about to do, and you won't be able to ignore the impact of these events on your own approach to life either.

The 2022 event weekend marks the 15th Annual Alcatraz and 13th Annual Golden Gate swims. The Neptune Swimming Foundation is honored to play a part in facilitating your escape from your limitations. Whether this is your first event weekend with us or your 12th, our hope is that you have a great time, make great friends and come back again next year.

The growth and success of this event over the years is directly attributable to our alumni. The adventure, the people it attracts and the weekend we spend together speaks for itself - whether you're an athlete, spectator, volunteer, or a member of our tremendous San Francisco support team. Be sure to thank everyone involved. Without them, this event would not happen.

We look forward to bringing you and your family together onshore on day one at Aquatic Park, and back on the boat on day two near Sausalito to celebrate your unique, amazing – and a little bit crazy - accomplishment.

Thank you for swimming with us, and thank you for your support of the Neptune Swimming Foundation

Best Regards,

Joe, John and Helen Zemaitis
Steve, Stacey and Braxton Bilbrey
Sherry Whitener

Swim F.A.S.T. 2022
The Neptune Swimming Foundation

COMMITTING and PREPARING Q&A

Can I really do this?

The right question to be asking is “do I *want* to do this?” With a commitment to training and a willingness to go through the process to acclimate to cold water and challenging conditions, many swimmers of all ages with a competitive swimming background can successfully complete the swim.

The distance

The Alcatraz swim is about 1.4 Miles (about 2,500 yards) and the Golden Gate Bridge Swim is approximately 1.2 miles (about 1,750 yards).

The conditions

Temperature: Water temperatures during our swim are in the low to mid 50's. That is cold water! It's also the approximate temperature of Bartlett Lake in January and February. Wetsuits are required for the event and for training starting in November.

Current/Chop/Wind: The water conditions of the San Francisco Bay can be unpredictable and change rapidly. Our event dates and jump times are chosen to give us the best chance to have favorable currents. Chop and wind can lead to rougher water. This is also difficult to train for as we cannot simulate these conditions in the lake.

Weather: San Francisco weather is also notoriously unpredictable. Fog is the biggest enemy of the swim. If safety boats cannot see the swimmers the swim will be postponed or cancelled.

Water: There is limited visibility in the San Francisco Bay. The visibility (or lack thereof) is similar to what it is in Bartlett Lake. Swimmers comfortable with sighting and swimming in the lake should be comfortable in the Bay. The salt water in the Bay is different from the lake. The salt water makes a swimmer slightly more buoyant it also “feels” a little warmer than fresh water. Not sure the science behind that, but anyone who jumps in 55 degree fresh water and 55 degree salt water would agree!

One Swim or Both?

While these swims are in the same body of water only a few miles apart they are completely different and uniquely great experiences. You're trained and you're already all the way out in San Francisco, so do them both!*

If you're not sure if you will be up for two swims on back to back days then make sure you go to both days of one of our training weekends. If in January/February you can swim hard for an hour in cold water on Saturday then come back and do it again on Sunday you will probably have the same success doing two swims in San Francisco.

*P.S. Don't just take our word for it. The vast majority of people in previous years who decided to swim only one event usually remarked that they should've done both.

What is the training commitment?

The majority of the training commitment for competitive swimmers is what you are already doing in the pool right now. If you are training with a competitive team at least 3-4 days a week you are doing adequate yardage to complete the swim. The lake swims aren't so much about training but more about acclimating to conditions.

What are my first steps?

1. To get started please visit the Neptune Swimming Foundation Alcatraz/Golden Gate website at <https://www.teamunify.com/team/reczzfast/page/home>. Complete the registration to have access to all event information, training swims, spectator tickets and the latest news.
2. Like us on Facebook for the fastest updates and to connect with everyone involved at <https://www.facebook.com/FASTfoundation/>
3. You also MUST be a USA Swimming or US Masters registered swimmer to participate in the training swims in Bartlett Lake and the actual event. (If you are not already, we can help: email us at sjwhitener@cox.net).

What safety precautions are taken?

Event safety is our highest priority. The training swims are designed and monitored to ensure that only swimmers who are strong enough to complete the swim continue with the program. Every year we have swimmers begin the training but realize that their efforts are better directed at a future year. In the lake swims we have adults in the water swimming with the kids as well as a USA Swimming certified coach on the training course in a kayak in order to quickly respond to any swimmer who needs assistance. Should any situations arise, we maintain a hypothermia kit for use at every training (which fortunately has gone unused for all these years).

For the events, the safety precautions we take are second to none. The Coast Guard recommends that there be one support craft for every 25 swimmers in the water. In past years our ratio has been one support craft per five swimmers. We have a Marine Unit of the SFPD on site manning jet skis in order to instantly respond to any issue in the water. Our support staff is in constant radio communication with the Coast Guard to ensure a safe event. We have a medical response team on standby at the finish ready to deal with any emergency. And we are blessed to be hosted each year by the most knowledgeable and most personally-experienced San Francisco-based planners, event directors, boat captains and guide swimmers possible.

What's the hardest part?

Many people tell us the training is the hardest part, and for kids it's typically the second cold lake swim. Swimmers only have to get used to open water during fall swims (at 60+ degrees). At the first cold lake swim kids are fired up, although maybe a little nervous about what to expect, but by the second cold swim excitement can be replaced by dread. In reality the first five minutes of every cold water swim are brutal. It takes five to ten minutes to acclimate and "warm up," and the biggest challenge is to keep going and keep your face in the water. The longer – and more often - your face comes out, the more painful it becomes. Once your hands, feet, and face go numb they don't hurt anymore! Each practice swim becomes a little bit easier once you overcome that hurdle and realize that you can recover within 10-20 minutes of exiting the water. Ultimately, this is a mental challenge as much as it is a physical one.

How many practice swims do I need to go to?

We typically have six-eight practice swims on the schedule. You need to do as many practice swims as necessary to be completely confident that you can swim hard for at least an hour in water in the low 50's. For most people that is 4-5 practice swims. Some older, stronger swimmers need fewer practice swims to gain that level of confidence, some swimmers need more. We have an eight-swim schedule because we don't expect that you can make all of them. The first swim we shoot for 35-40 minutes in the water. The second swim we shoot for 45-50 minutes. Each of the remaining swims the goal is 55 minutes +.

Is it a race?

The Alcatraz/Golden Gate weekend is an event, not a race. While we do keep time and can let you know what your finish time is we do not post full results or recognize the top finishers in each age group. There are plenty of Alcatraz "races" out there. Our event is different because we focus on the journey, not just the event. The success of your participation has little to do with how long it took you to complete the swim; rather it's about how you challenged your own perceptions of what was possible, how you overcame the many obstacles along the way, and how you ultimately Escaped Your Limitations.

Is there a chance the swim could be cancelled?

Yes. We have taken great pains to pick a date that looks, at this point, like the best possible conditions for successful swims. That includes (1) scheduling the weekend in April, as soon as is feasible after Arizona lakes become too warm to simulate the Bay conditions, and (2) scheduling each swim's jump within a very specific time window that sets swimmers up for success. That said, Bay swims are "box of chocolates" swims – you never know what you're going to get. If conditions are unsafe for any reason on the day of each swim then they will be modified or cancelled. If the wind is too great or the water too choppy to allow for a safe event we will not swim. Early morning jump times make high winds and significant chop unlikely, but the chance is always there. If the fog is too thick for the support boats to see the swimmers we will not swim. We will attempt to postpone the start for the fog to lift, but there is a very specific tide window we aim for. Once that window closes the swim becomes impossible. Other unlikely, but possible events, such as natural disasters/earthquakes/pandemics/etc. could force the cancellation of the event.

Are there refunds if the swim is cancelled?

Unfortunately, no. By the time that the swim is scheduled all of the money to get permits, insurance, boats, etc. will have already been paid out. Bay swimming experts generally estimate that approximately 5-8% of Alcatraz event swims are cancelled. So there is a chance, albeit slight, we could go through all this training and not have an event. If that risk is not acceptable or too great for you then we ask that you don't participate.

What kind of wetsuit do we need?

A wetsuit is required both at the lake and during the swims in San Francisco if you are under 18 years old. No exceptions. If you are 18 or older a wetsuit is highly recommended. If you are 18 or older and you decide you do not want to wear a wetsuit, you will need written permission from Joe Z. or Sherry W. to be able to train and swim without a wetsuit.

Far and away the most important thing about whatever wetsuit you choose is that it fits snugly around ankles, wrists and neck, trapping a layer of water between the suit and body that the body can warm up. We recommend swimming/triathlon wetsuits which are made for open water swimming. The triathlon suits are thinner, offer more mobility and make swimming easier and faster through design, material and construction that in turn generates more body heat to keep swimmers “warmer.” We recommend the Xterra website and they offer great deals online and have excellent customer service. Unfortunately, wetsuits may only be good for one year because kids outgrow them.

Wetsuit Resources:

www.xterrawetsuits.com – swimming/triathlon suits for adults and kids. Interactive sizing on site (based on height and weight), 30-day return policy.

Swim Outlet (http://www.swimoutlet.com/Kids_Full_Suits_s/1910.htm) – swimming/triathlon suits with good inventory and range of options.

Wetsuit cap vs. hood?

You definitely want to wear something on your head! Body heat is quickly lost through your head, making a wetsuit hood a must. A wetsuit hood covers your entire head and neck, leaving only a portion of your face exposed. While warmer, they offer much less head mobility and limit hearing and sight, all of which can make it more difficult to breathe, can feel claustrophobic and somewhat limit the swimming experience. A wetsuit cap looks like and provides similar coverage to a swim cap with a Velcro strap under your chin. The cap doesn't provide as much warmth, but does not limit hearing or sight and has greater mobility. Choose whatever works best for you. Girls with longer hair will want to wear a normal cap under the wetsuit hood. All swimmers must wear a yellow cap over their hood/wetsuit cap during all lake swims and during the San Francisco swims.

Can we wear gloves, booties, or fins?

The short answer is “no”. Fins on an able-bodied swimmer amount to just plain cheating yourself out of claiming an amazing achievement. Gloves and booties are often more troublesome than beneficial. These items would only be permitted/approved under special circumstances (e.g. a circulation issue, for medical reasons, etc.). Please talk to a member of the Neptune Swimming Foundation Team about concerns or questions you may have.

Who is going to swim with my child?

The best answer is “you!” Dozens of parents have completed the swims, all testifying to the incredibly unique and special parent-child bonding experience this is. Plus it gives parents their own goal to train and get in swim shape for! If that is not possible there are a couple options:

1. Find someone in advance who can come out and swim with them. I’m sure you know a masters swimmer, triathlete, etc. who might like to tag along on this experience. (Note: triathletes in particular are great targets, as the Alcatraz swim is part of an annual race that can only be entered via lottery.)
2. On the morning of the swim, pair up your child with a local support swimmer. These folks swim the SF Bay every day. We have had great success with them in the past. However, they are in somewhat limited supply and will not know your child's pace in advance.

Note: if you want to know who your child will be swimming with it's best to secure that person in advance. Don't count on the training team to stay with your child on event day, as they'll be attending to a number of responsibilities on that day.

What do we take on the boat?

This question is a bit tricky, but you can save yourself from disappointment with this general rule: if you take it onto the boat, you need a personal plan for getting it off.

- Alcatraz is “one-way,” leaving from the boat and arriving on shore. The boat crew will not be responsible for anything you leave behind, so most swimmers board with only swim gear (wetsuit, goggles, cap, hood, etc.). If you'd like to have items on the boat, plan to have a spectator* on board who can retain and return them to you.
- Golden Gate “boat-to-boat,” so any clothing/gear can be managed by the swimmer. Keep in mind that the journey from port to the bridge does take some time (30-60 minutes depending on conditions), so think in terms of warmth, hydration and food.

*More details about boat capacities and spectator limits will be forthcoming.

Can I kayak in the Bay?

In a word? No. It takes intimate knowledge of the Bay, its currents and the support team to be a kayaker for the event.

But what about the sharks?

The man-eating sharks of San Francisco Bay were largely a successful myth designed to keep Alcatraz prisoners from making a swim for it. People have been swimming the Bay daily for the past hundred years. There has never been a case of a swimmer attacked by a shark. Large sharks' migratory patterns have them in the deep oceans near Hawaii from January through July and in Northern California from August through November. The Bay acts as a natural barrier and is fed by 17 tributaries that bring fresh water and silt into the Bay. Large sharks prefer the saltier waters offshore and in April will be thousands of miles away. So is there a danger from marine life? Perhaps, but you have a much, much greater chance of getting hit by a car while crossing the street in San Francisco than getting attacked by a shark. So put your mind at ease. And look both ways before you cross the street.

OFFICIAL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS – To Be Determined

Experience over the previous years has taught us that people are more likely to combine event weekend with other San Francisco/Northern California experiences of their own making. In response, we have learned to make the event-specific process as simple as possible. The “official” schedule of events lists the places where you really need to be. The rest, as they say, is up to you! ***Event Weekend April 9-10, 2022 (times/locations TBD)***

Fun things to do in San Francisco

Alcatraz Tour – highly recommended!

Cable Cars

Fisherman’s Wharf

Pier 39

Bike the Bridge

Golden Gate Bridge

THE SWIMS

Alcatraz

Swimmers board the boats at Hyde Street Pier or Pier 39 and begin the journey to Alcatraz. Depending on the currents, the boat typically holds at the east end of Alcatraz Island. When the start signal is given swimmers enter the water and begin swimming toward shore, following the directions of the support boats. Alcatraz is a cross-current swim. Participants swim approximately one mile in the Bay before going through the opening to Aquatic park and swimming the remaining 0.4 miles to shore. They swim while the “flood” tide is diminishing, slackens and becomes an “ebb tide.” Swimmers are usually instructed to stay toward the left and aim for the “grey ship” the Jeremiah O’Brien. Being “left” of the Aquatic park opening gives everyone the greatest chance to be successful as the tide shifts and begins pushing them “right.” Swimmers must enter aquatic park through a 60-yard-wide opening, or be picked up and repositioned for the finish.

As you hit the water, the first 10 minutes are the hardest. The shock of the cold water hits your entire body and you have to swim fast right away to get away from the island. ALWAYS follow the direction of the safety boats, as they have the most current (no pun intended...) information, which is generally to stay “left” to reach the breakwater east of the Aquatic Park opening. Once you make it safely through the opening you are almost home free! The friendly confines of aquatic park make for a smooth finish as you swim straight into the beach.

Golden Gate

This swim is a boat start and a boat finish. The boat leaves Hyde Street Pier or Pier 39 and makes its way toward the Golden Gate Bridge. The jump site is on the Pacific side of the South tower of the bridge. The swim proceeds from the South to North as you swim “straight” toward the North tower and the flood tide gently pushes you under the bridge. Take a moment to do some backstroke as you pass underneath. It’s a universally-recognized landmark that millions have driven over, walked over, and biked over but very few have swum under! Continue to the pick up spot on the Bay side of the North tower. If conditions are calm you can touch “finger rock,” the first part of land on the Marin County side of the Bay! Swim to the boat for pick up and get the celebration started!

Spectator Boat

Depending on final athlete numbers, spectators will either be on the athlete boat or on a separate boat. (Please note that there is a “yet-to-be-determined” cost for each spectator, likely around \$50 in advance, and up to \$65 in S.F. if still available). Specifics and details for how to get your ticket to follow.) This will give you an awesome view of the event and allow you to come as close as you can to experiencing the swim without getting wet! For Alcatraz, the spectator boat will be on the water during the event. If you are on the spectator boat we cannot guarantee that you will be back on the beach when your loved-one finishes. If you have two non-swimming adults in your group it might be a good idea to have one on the spectator boat and one at the beach finish. For the Golden Gate Bridge swim in order to see any of the event you will need to be on the spectator boat. Due to the location of the swim there isn’t much of it that can be seen from shore. Boats will not have food/drinks/snacks for sale. Any food or drink that is desired by the swimmers or the spectators must be brought aboard with you.

TRAVEL PLANNING

Neptune Swimming Foundation does not book group travel for this event. In the past we have not been able to get better “deals” on airfare/hotels than you would get by booking yourself online. We also have learned that people have varying expectations for this trip. Some families extend the trip several days on either side for a “mini vacation,” others have trouble getting away that time of year and get in and out as quickly as possible. We tell you exactly when you need to be at functions relating to the event and give you the freedom to plan travel so it works best for you.

Driving to San Francisco. From Phoenix the drive is about 12 hours. It’s not a difficult drive, especially with multiple drivers in the car. It’s certainly a viable option and can be considerably cheaper than flying.

Flying to San Francisco. We suggest flying in no later than Friday afternoon. If you are only doing Alcatraz you should be able to fly out Saturday late afternoon or early evening. If you are doing the Golden Gate Bridge swim you should plan on a flight after 3:00-4:00pm on the day of the swim.

Hotels

We suggest a hotel in the Fisherman’s Wharf area of San Francisco. If you are flying for the trip you do not need to rent a car as having a car in San Francisco is expensive to park and it can be hard to navigate if you are unfamiliar with the area. There are numerous hotels within walking distance. Nearly all of the weekend functions are centered around the Aquatic Park. In the past some people have had success booking on sites such as hotwire.com or hotels.com and can find a decent hotel for the most reasonable rates.

Travel Tips

Never place your wetsuit, hood, or goggles in a bag checked with the airline. *Always* place these items in your carryon. The chance of lost luggage can never be completely avoided. You do not want to try replacing your wetsuit the day before! Stay hydrated throughout your trip.

EVENT COSTS

Training: \$50	Includes all training swims offered and an event hoodie.
One Swim: \$400-\$450*	Includes all swimmer event costs, finisher medal and finisher shirt.
Both Swims: \$500-\$550*	Includes all swimmer event costs, finisher medals and finisher shirts.

*Prices vary depending on how early you register and pay.

FUNDRAISING

Neptune Swimming Foundation is inspired by the 2006 achievement of Braxton Bilbrey, who at age seven become the youngest boy ever to swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco. Asked what he would like to do in light of the recognition, Braxton chose to support drowning prevention in Arizona. From there the Neptune Swimming Foundation was born.

Event weekend proceeds go towards Neptune Swimming Foundation's mission of kids helping kids, teaching drowning prevention, water safety and swim clinics in Maricopa County. Those operational proceeds come through fundraising. We strongly encourage your family to easily create an online fundraising page through the Neptune Swimming Foundation website and promote it via email/social media. More information on fundraising will be communicated through the website. Most people who hear about this challenge are quickly moved to give at least \$25, and others are moved to give even more. Contributions quickly add up, and the online fundraising tools do all the work for you. You collect no money. You write no checks. You simply create an individual site, with a personal message or photo if you so choose, and then send the link for that page to family and friends.

And why would you fundraise? Because we'll reward you! A sampling of what we have in mind:

- Raise \$525, and participate in one swim at no event cost.
- Raise \$675, and participate in both swims at no event cost.
- Raise \$925, get both swims and two GoCar rental hours.
- Raise \$1,225, get both swims and a free four-person Alcatraz tour.
- Raise \$1,825, get both swims, a free four-person Alcatraz tour, a Ghirardelli Square Earthquake desert and up to two GoCar rental hours.

Get started SOON! Information on the fundraising will be sent to the email list as soon as it becomes available so look for that email soon! Questions? Contact: sjwhitener@cox.net

Neptune Swimming Foundation Athlete Guide Release

(Please complete and return to Sherry Whitener)

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Neptune Swimming Foundation 2021 Athlete Guide. I am also aware that it is my responsibility to read all information and policies inside and that myself, my swimmer(s), and any other family member is expected to understand and abide by these policies.

Swimmer Signature _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if swimmer under 18) _____

Date _____