

# ONE OF A KIND RACES

**For going green or the best swag, these 10 races stand out from the rest.**

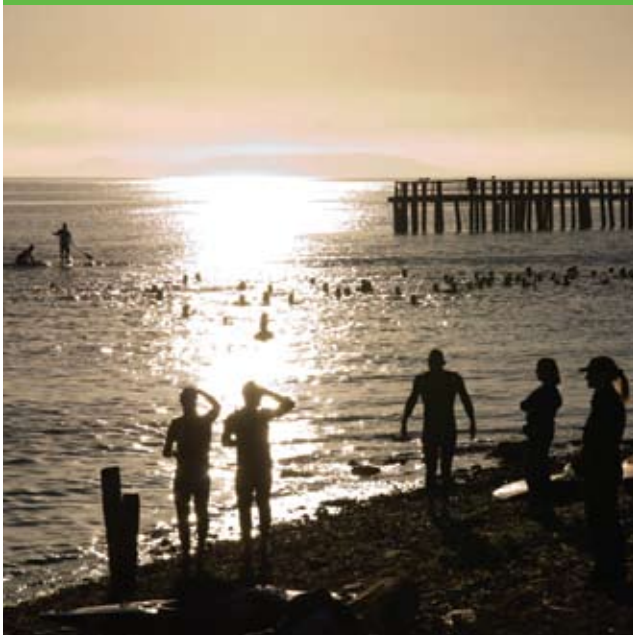
*By Nan Kappeler*

Each triathlon is different from the rest, but some triathlons are special. A select few events have rare features that set them apart from others. Whether it's by training exceptional volunteers or a serving a cut-above post-race feast, some race director go the extra mile to ensure a wonderful experience for all.

We are honoring those races around the country that most

inspire us in our first "Best of Triathlon Guide." But we didn't want to just give you our opinion. Even though we did have some input in the final results, our winners were selected through feedback from a variety of sources, ranging from surveys given to triathlon teams, suggestions from multisport shops and comments from professional and amateur athletes. And the winners are ...

## BEST GREEN/ECO-FRIENDLY RACE



Jerry Downs

### MARIN COUNTY TRIATHLON SAN RAFAEL, CALIF.

Race Director: Mark Liebert  
Date: Nov. 1, 2009  
Marintriathlon.com

While many triathlons have made great strides to reduce their waste and become more sustainable by sending less trash to the local landfill, the Marin County Triathlon wins our green award for sending only 40 pounds of its total waste to the local landfill after the race—40 pounds!

Every aspect of the Olympic-distance race took the health of the environment into consideration. Race-day operations for the 500 athletes were powered with solar energy. Peanut oil fueled the generator. Bio-diesel shuttles provided transportation to the race for athletes and spectators. Post-race food was brought in from local sources and included organic burritos wrapped in wax paper (which is compostable) and recycled aluminum foil. Local farms provided apples, grapes and pears. Biodegradable plastic water bottles were available at the bike turnaround, and stainless steel, clean canteen water bottles were available at the finish. Finish medals were made from recycled bike parts, and trophy sculptures were made from old bike parts and running shoes.

## BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

### GREAT FLORIDIAN CLERMONT, FLA.

Race Director: Fred Summer  
Date: Oct. 24, 2009  
Greatfloridian.com

If you're looking to maximize your race dollars, the Great Floridian Ironman, at a price of \$195 (early registration), is our top choice. But even though the price seems unbelievably low compared to the usual \$500 price tag for the 140.6-mile race, no expense is spared.

Race director Fred Summer says the goal is for athletes to "experience" the race, therefore, he tries to be as accommodating as possible (e.g. allowing athletes to check in as late as 8 p.m. the night before the race). All participants receive a T-shirt, water bottle, pre-race pasta dinner and breakfast. Finishers receive another shirt and a medal. The race takes place each October in the Orlando, Fla., area, after the tourism season, allowing racers to take advantage of off-season hotel rates that are often as low as \$50 per night.

## BEST SCENERY

### LOBSTERMAN TRIATHLON FREEPORT, MAINE

Race Director: Will Thomas  
Date: Sept. 19, 2009  
Tri-maine.com

The Lobsterman triathlon takes place in the historic town of Freeport, Maine, located on a peninsula surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean. While this charming town is better known as the home of retailer L.L. Bean, the course offers participants a chance to swim, bike and run through sheer natural splendor.

The deep-water start begins in crystal-clear blue water, facing the Casco Bay Islands with numerous colorful lobster marker buoys visible in the distance. The islands protect the swim start from most waves, and water visibility is usually 15 to 20 feet. The transition area is located on a grassy knoll surrounded by gigantic pine trees.

Rolling back-country roads carry cyclists and runners through a historic village, a community of New England colonial homes and sprawling saltwater farms. Other local scenery along the route includes a yacht club, forests, craggy rock formations and white wooden churches surrounded by picket fences. The inspiring beauty of this course is guaranteed to push every athlete through the finish.

Reprinted with permission from *Triathlete* magazine.

# ONE OF A KIND RACES

## BEST SWAG BAG



### SILVERMAN TRIATHLON HENDERSON, NEV.

Race Director: Frank Lowery  
Date: Nov. 8, 2009  
Silvermannv.com

Everybody loves swag, and nobody does it better than the Silverman, held in Henderson, Nev., just 30 minutes away from the Las Vegas strip. The goodies vary, but 2008's participants in the half- and full-Iron-distance races received a custom Silverman logo backpack, a Silverman water bottle, plus two more embossed with sponsors' names, a custom towel, a running belt, a Silverman visor, a custom beanie hat and an assortment of energy products.

Past swag for this challenging race, which includes 10,000 feet of climbing through Fort Meade in the long-distance bike (half of that for the half, obviously), included custom fleece blankets and hot/cold packs filled with rice, all handmade by the race director's sister. The 2009 race promises to be even better, with special fifth anniversary swag.

## BEST RACE SUPPORT

### EAGLEMAN 70.3 CAMBRIDGE, MD.

Race Director: Robert Vigorito, Tri-Columbia  
Date: June 14, 2009  
Tricolumbia.org

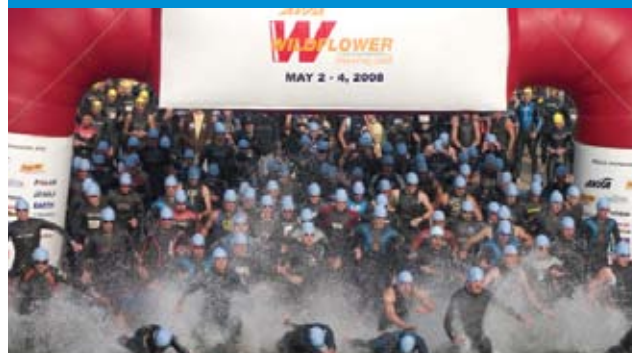
Residents of this picturesque Maryland town, located 90 miles east of our nation's Capitol, come out in full-force every June to support this half-Ironman race. Last year, approximately 1,000 volunteers from the community, non-profit groups, Team in Training and athletes' families helped out at the event. More than 50 local families provided home stays for professional and amateur athletes.

From the registration table to the finish line, support from the community is everywhere. Last year, 18 boats, along with several dozen kayakers and wave-runners, lined the swim course on the sometimes-unpredictable Choptank River, while the Coast Guard monitored passing boat traffic.

Last year on the bike course, seven aid stations were manned with 20 to 30 people from the local YMCA, girls clubs and fire services, passing out cups of water to the competitors. Run-course volunteers distributed more than 25,000 pounds of ice and offered unbridled encouragement at their posts until the last runner finished.

Post-race support included two misting tents and an abundance of medical personnel.

## BEST TRIATHLON FESTIVAL



### WILDFLOWER TRIATHLON FESTIVAL LAKE SAN ANTONIO, CALIF.

Race Director: Terry Davis  
Date: May 1-3, 2009  
Tricalifornia.com

One of largest races in the world, the Wildflower Triathlon takes place at Lake San Antonio. Nestled in the hills of Monterey County, Calif., the Thursday through Sunday list of activities includes half-Iron and Olympic-distance races along with a sprint mountain bike race.

With only a handful of hotels in the immediate area, most athletes choose to camp, making all activities within walking distance. Once the swim finishes, the boat dock opens to free swimming. Dozens of dogs also gather at the dock to practice their open-water entries.

A schedule of clinics and presentations features pre-race talks by professional athletes such as Scott Tinley, Chris McCormack and Samantha McGlone. Notable companies and product manufacturers provide pre-race clinics on swimming, transitions and technique. There's also a children's stage featuring entertainment, an array of food vendors and more than 100 vendors selling various products.

Jayne Furman

Chris Phillips

# ONE OF A KIND RACES

## BEST FAMILY-FRIENDLY RACE



### MUSSELMAN TRIATHLON GENEVA, N.Y.

Race Director: Jeff Henderson  
Date: July 18-19, 2009  
Musselmantri.com

This weekend-long event takes place every summer in upstate New York. The entire event is designed with every member of the family in mind, offering accommodations for families at a reasonable cost. The Athletes Village—dormitories and townhouses at nearby Hobart and Smith College—are set aside for athletes and their families. The units include kitchens, laundry facilities and workout rooms for \$35 per night.

The sprint race takes place on Saturday and the half-Ironman on Sunday, allowing one parent to compete each day. The MusselKids race takes place toward the end of the half-distance race and is scheduled to finish just before the awards ceremony, so both parents and kids can attend the ceremony. A large splash park is also located about 100 yards from the finish line.

During down-time (if that's possible), families can visit the Waterloo mall, camp and hike in the Finger Lakes State Forest or wander the Seneca Lake Wine Trail. Another theme park is located one hour away.

## BEST EXPO

### CHICAGO TRIATHLON CHICAGO

Race Director: Trudy Wakeman  
Date: Aug. 30, 2009  
Chicagotriathlon.com

With more than 150 vendors and 200 booths, the Chicago triathlon expo provides an array of multisport gear and equipment for every taste. Over 20,000 people attend the two-day expo. Last year, participants were able to browse through racks of clothing, wetsuits and shoes, as well as check out bikes and cars, taste veggie drinks, get health screenings, meet professional athletes and attend course talks throughout the day. Hunter Kemper and Andy Potts have been there in past years for autograph signings.

Packet pick-up takes place at the expo, requiring all athletes participating in the Olympic- and sprint-distance races to attend. While many triathlons don't require athletes to attend the expo, event organizers purposefully direct athletes from registration in one hall to another hall where they receive their T-shirt and goody bag, allowing athletes to mingle and adding excitement to the event.

## BEST POST-RACE FEAST

### CRAWFISHMAN TRIATHLON COVINGTON, LA.

Race Director: Mark Salvetti  
Date: May 3, 2009  
Crawfishman.net

In typical Louisiana style, the Crawfishman offers race participants, volunteers and families a down-home southern feast after the Olympic-distance race. This past year's food included red beans, rice, pull-pork sandwiches, frozen margaritas, beer and cookies. Race director Mark Salvetti says that the cookies they serve are a serious matter for the sponsor, who issues a somewhat "scientific" report each year about the top choice. The menu changes each year and has included crawfish stew in the past.

Conceived in 1983, the post-race feast takes place on private land by a nearby lake. Many people stay through the day to relax and enjoy the food, music and volleyball.

Jan Reppin

## BEST DESTINATION RACE



### ESCAPE TO BERMUDA TRIATHLON BERMUDA

Race Director: Neil de Ste Croix  
November 2009 (date TBD)  
Escapetobermudatriathlon.com

If you are looking for a paradise vacation with delightful weather, warm, turquoise water and scenic views coupled with a highly technical course, the Escape to Bermuda may be your ideal destination.

Don't count on the Olympic-distance course being quite as easygoing as the lifestyle on this sub-tropical island. Competition is tough, with a star-studded pro field that has included Chris McCormack, Matt Reed, Sarah Groff and Becky Lavelle. A high-speed ferry delivers athletes to the swim start at the west end of the island. The 24-mile bike takes riders through the entire span of the country followed by a brutally hilly six-mile run through the historic town center in the island's capitol of Hamilton.

This destination race vacation isn't cheap, but Bermuda offers an array of luxury hotels and an abundance of pools, spas, water sports and island tours to help you escape from the stresses of everyday life.

Rich Cruise