



Swims kicked off extra early

BRIGHTON TRIPLE CROWN

Why do one race when you can do three, asks **Simon Griffiths**



This was my third consecutive year taking part in Brighton Paddle Round the Pier. I keep going back because I like the swim and then I get to spend the rest of the day in Brighton, mostly on the beach.

Previously, I've done the 2.5km swim, which starts to the east of Palace Pier, heads out to sea, turns right past Palace Pier and then the skeletal ruins

of the old West Pier before landing at the beach in front of the Paddle Round the Pier Festival village. It's a fun, point-to-point swim and I'd have happily gone back to do it again, except that for 2019 Brighton Triathlon Club created something new – The Triple Crown.

The Paddle Round the Pier Festival has long offered two swims: the 2.5km and a 1.5km swim run by SwimTrek. It

was previously possible to do both, but it wasn't a 'thing'.

This year, Brighton Triathlon Club took over the organisation of the 1.5km swim, while Swim Trek remained involved as the event sponsor. In addition, they added an Ironman distance 3.8km swim, sponsored by Sea Lanes, and offered the opportunity to do all three in a Triple Crown challenge, with a total distance of 7.8km.

To fit everything in and accommodate the tides, proceedings kicked off extra early. Registration for the 2.5km swim opened at 5:30am to the backdrop of thumping dance music from the still-open night clubs. Triple Crown swimmers joined people just doing one or two of the swims and were included in the rankings, but were not eligible for prizes in the individual swims. The volunteers, full of good cheer despite the early start, made everything friendly and easy. Once changed, we dumped our bags in a van for transport to the finish and made our way to the start. As the beach is pebbly, we were allowed to keep our flip flops until the last minute, and these were transported separately and neatly laid out for us at the finish.

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CALM CONDITIONS

For the third year running we were blessed with calm conditions, which made the course easy to follow. The route is marked out by a series of red pyramid-shaped buoys with a yellow buoy to show the final turn point back to the beach and finish. One word of warning – a few swimmers over-shot this turn buoy, adding several hundred metres to their swim, so pay attention.

While 2.5k swimmers collected their goody bags, Triple Crown swimmers now had to register for the 1.5k, eat and rest. Luckily, the coffee van in the event village opened just in time!

In Brighton, the incoming tide creates a current running west to east parallel to the beach, and this changes direction on the ebb. Last year, the 1.5k started on the west side of the old West Pier and finished at the same point as the 2.5k swim. This year, because of

the tide times and current directions, we swam it in reverse. We then walked back to register for the final challenge, the 3.8km.

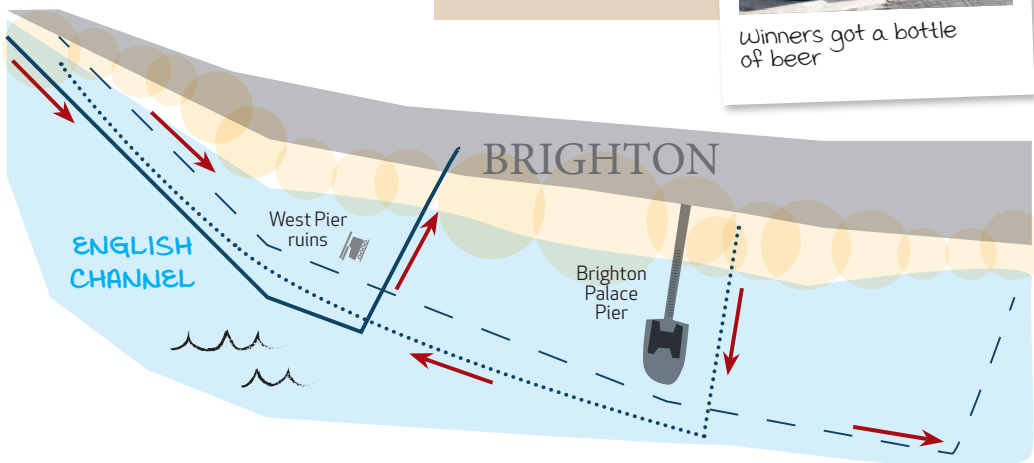
FAST AND BUMPY

This one started at midday, giving us enough time for more snacks and coffee. Part of the challenge was eating enough to refuel but not so much you make yourself feel sick. I recommend coffee and flapjacks.

The third swim was very different: fast because of the current but bumpy, as the waves had really picked up. It took us from the event village to the site of Sea Lanes, which will from next year host a new 25m training pool on the beach. We flew (almost literally)

past the two piers and almost as far as the marina before turning left and heading to shore. I estimate the current saved us at least 10 minutes, and it was so strong you had to swim at an angle to stay straight when swimming across it back to the beach.

What a great place to finish a swim! Sea Lanes might not yet have its pool, but it does have a bar and food hut. Our bags had been delivered, so all we had to do now was change, relax, refuel and rehydrate. Oh, and race winners won a bottle of beer. ☺



Swimmers flew past the two piers

SWIM DETAILS

Name: Paddle Round the Pier / Triple Crown

Location: Brighton, Sussex, England

Water type: Sea

Distances: 1.5, 2.5 and (or) 3.8km

Temperature: 16 to 18 degrees

Wetsuits: optional with separate results & prizes

Find out more: paddleroundthepier.com



Winners got a bottle of beer