



I am fortunate to live near the La Jolla Cove, one of the most excellent training areas in the world for long distance open water swimming. The La Jolla Cove Swim Club provides support and camaraderie for all who gather there, whether it's a recreational swimmer venturing out to the ¼ mile buoy or a swimmer in training for a channel swim. We are able to swim year 'round here, as the ocean temperature rarely drops below 55F during the winter months and usually rises to 60F in the early spring. After my ocean swims I treat myself to a hot shower at the La Jolla Athletic Club, conveniently located just across the street from the Cove.

My pool training is done with Swim Smarter La Jolla Masters at the Coggan Family Aquatic Complex, located on the La Jolla High School campus. Under the guidance of head coach Dan Peck I have worked on my stroke technique, making my swimming more efficient. My speed and strength have improved as well, from doing the quality interval workouts provided by Dan and his coaching staff.

I really started training for my double English Channel swim last summer, when I began doing a second pool workout three or four times a week in addition to my regular daily workouts. Then one day a week I added a third workout - this one in the ocean, right after my two pool workouts. By slowly "raising the bar", so to speak, I have made it possible to train at the level I need to now to prepare for my double English Channel swim.

One of the things that supports my swimming the most is my yoga practice, which includes daily meditation. From that practice I have learned to quiet my mind and keep my thoughts positive. When I am in the middle of a channel swim yoga has helped me to be really present in my body and to focus my attention on my swim one stroke at a time. Marathon swimming gives me an excellent opportunity to practice present moment awareness. My yoga practice has become the cornerstone of my training

for channel swims as well as a very valuable tool for navigating life.

Last October I began swimming an average of 20 miles a week, both in the pool and the ocean with an occasional recovery week when it was needed and some time off due to travel, illness or just life. The wildfires we had here in San Diego put all training on hold for almost two weeks, as there was so much smoke in the air it was unsafe to exercise.

Now it's early April and I have begun to increase my training - swimming between 20 and 30 miles a week, again both in the pool and the ocean. When I swim in the ocean I swim laps from the Cove across our little bay to the lifeguard tower at La Jolla Shores. It's one mile each way, so each round trip gives me two miles. On weekends I've been doing 6 - 8 miles at a time and that will be increasing sharply now that the ocean temperature is hovering at 60F. On weekday mornings I swim 2 - 4 miles at the Cove and then swim the noon workout with Swim Smarter La Jolla Masters, giving me another 2 ½ - 3 miles. And yes, I do take one day off a week for recovery. One of the most important things to remember when training at this level is to listen to your body. If you're getting messages that say you need an extra day off - then take it!

Stay tuned to this page for updates on my training - I'll be increasing my swimming mileage through the end of June and then tapering back in July to rest and recover to be ready for my big swim in August!

July Training Update: I never knew I could swim so much and still be OK. Starting in late April, I organized my training into cycles of increased mileage and recovery, giving me a chance for a little breather in between the weekends that were all about my long swims on both Saturday and Sunday. On the weekends I would swim anywhere from 4 to 5 miles during a recovery week and up to 24 miles on a high mileage week. In between, on the weekdays, I continued my routine of swimming in the ocean first and then following it with a high-intensity workout at the pool.

Over time I've come to prefer swimming by myself in the ocean - but I'm not really alone. Frequent dolphin sightings (some up really close!) and an occasional turtle sighting made many of my swims extra special. As the summer progressed, my weekend swims in the ocean got more interesting. Dodging herds of tourists and weekend enthusiasts in rented kayaks became a challenge as I swam back and forth between the Cove and the Shores. Bat rays would swim beneath me and schools of different kinds of fish were there to look at. By May, the ocean temperature had risen to 67F so staying in the ocean for hours at a time hardly seemed like "training", especially on a beautiful, sunny day. Our usual June gloom set in right on schedule, but even with the overcast sky my training swims felt more like fun than work.

Now it's July and time for my long awaited taper. I will be coming down the ladder, so to speak, with my training mileage. This way I will be rested and ready for my big swim both ways across the English Channel. I've heard it said that it's not the end result, but the process of achieving a goal that holds the gifts and the lessons. This would surely be true of channel swimming. It's so much more than just the swim. If you want to know how fast you swim, you go to the pool where conditions are relatively consistent. If you want to have an awesome adventure where there are lots of wild cards at play, then do a channel swim. So, here we go!

*Anne Cleveland*