

International Norms for Escort Boats and Crew

# of swims surveyed	Various Marathon Swims	Country	distance in km	Required Power boat	Required Sail Boat	Required Zodiac	Required 2nd Zodiac	Average # of Boats	Kayak	(optional) 2nd Kayak	# of Crew	average # of Crew	Comments
1	1	Catalina Channel	USA	34	1				1	1	7	7.0	often done with 1 or 2 kayaks
2	2	Maui Channel	USA	16	1						8	4.0	warm water, but can be rough
3	1	Cadiz Freedom Swim	South Africa	8			1				4	4.0	52F / 11C, 129 solo swimmers in race
4	1	Tampa Bay Marathon Swim	USA	38	1				1		5	5.0	one larger boat and one kayak, held as a race
5	7	Manhattan Island Marathon Swim	USA	47	1				1	1	45	6.4	one larger boat and 1-2 kayaks, held as a race
6	2	Strait of Gibraltar	Spain	14	1						8	4.0	relatively short, but can be rough
7	810	English Channel	England	34	1						5624	6.9	up to 12 crew & 1 small support craft is allowed
8	93	Circumnavigation of the Isle of Jersey	England	66	1						558	6.0	one 18 foot vessel, with outboard engine
9	17	Isle of Jersey to France	England	27	1						102	6.0	one 18 foot vessel, with outboard engine
10	1	Santa Barbara Channel	USA	38	1						7	7.0	colder than Catalina Channel
11	1	Lake Zurich	Switzerland	27	1						6	6.0	held as a race
12	1	Circumnavigation of Valentia	Ireland	27	1						6	6.0	relatively cold swim
13	1	Cork to Cobh	Ireland	16	1						6	6.0	relatively cold swim
14	2	Rottneest Channel Swim	Australia	20	1				1		10	5.0	very large race: 192 solo, 1652 relay teams
15	2	Melbourne Swim	Australia	11	1				1		8	4.0	close to shore
16	1	Lake Tahoe Crossing	USA	35	1						6	6.0	swum at altitude
943					15	0	1	0	1	5/16	2/16	6.8	
								total boats			total crew		
1	Lake Ontario Crossing	Canada	50	1	1	1	1	4	optional			22	

This survey was undertaken to try and determine what the international norm is for the optimal number of boats and crew used in marathon swimming around the world, also that the results and conclusion would be used to establish a new rules for Lake Ontario Crossings that are consistent with the rest of the global marathon swimming community.

Currently Solo Swims Ontario requires 1 - 30+ foot powerboat, 1 - 30+ foot sailboat, 2 – 15+ foot zodiacs/ribs, kayaks are optional... as well as the crew for these vessels which can often be over 20 people.

The common denominator for all swims anywhere in the world safety and is the top priority and yet there seems to be large discrepancy between the SSO requirement and those used for every other major swim in the world. Based on the nearly 1,000 swims or escorts documented in this survey there seems to be a clear consensus as to the international norm. While it is important to note that all the swims have specific differences, as some are longer or colder or rougher than others, some are races while others are solos and some are in lakes and some in oceans, they all have more in common with each other than they have differences.

The number of swims surveyed is dominated by the number of English Channel swim, however this is also representative of number of swims done in the EC each year relative to most other swims in the world. This is also why the EC rules are typically used as a baseline for most other swims, as they have the most tried and tested experience and methods.

943 samples is a statistically valid study, however there is no doubt that there could still be endless debate about the nuances of the survey, as with any study. Nonetheless, some general and consistent conclusions can be drawn from the results:

- 1) the norm for virtually all swims is one large power boat.
- 2) the statistical average number of crew is 6.8 people, this usually includes: 1 pilot, 1 first mate, 1 official observer, 2-3 swimmer's crew, optional 1 - 2 kayakers = about 6 - 8 people. In no race or solo swim would a crew of 20+ people be allowed, as is the case under the 4 boat requirement for SSO regulated swims. As the comments unanimously stated, this is due to the safety issues that this causes for the swimmer.
- 3) based on the survey and on the comments provided, having a back-up zodiac/rib may add to the safety without causing additional logistical problems or safety issues, despite the fact that 1 boat is the norm.
- 4) it is not uncommon to have 1 or 2 kayaks to help escort, but they typically are not essential and would depend on the specific swim and conditions.
- 5) the comments unanimously state that having four boats does not make the swim four times as safe, but does quadruples the chances of accidents, oversights, crew sickness, mechanical failure and general logistical confusion that could either cause safety issues for the swimmer or cause other problems that could lead to the cancellation of the swim.
- 6) there is no swim in the world, other than in Lake Ontario, are 4 boats required, regardless of the conditions.

Conclusion: based on the survey results and commentary from some of the most knowledgeable swimmers and pilots in the world, it is strongly recommended that the boating requirement for Lake Ontario Crossings be changed to one large power boat and possibly one zodiac.