

Swimming Alcatraz

What makes Alcatraz a challenging swim are the choppy water and the navigation required. In swimming Alcatraz you will be swimming across the current, like swimming across a river. That means that if you head from point A and aim for point B, you will end up at point C (well past point B). Thus, navigating your course is extremely critical. Expected time is 35 minutes to 1 ¼ hours.

Prerequisites:

- can swim 1 mile nonstop in open water fairly comfortably
- have experience in choppy water
- are comfortable sighting and can swim in a fairly straight line

To plan and prepare we suggest:

Commit to at least 2 months of the following:

- swim at least three times a week (at least a mile each time); ideally one of these swims is in the open water (under choppy conditions is ideal)
- have practiced sighting in the open water; in particular, practiced swimming across the current

If you are new to swimming and open water swimming, here is what your training plan might look like:

Week #	
1	3 pool swims – 20 minutes each (800 yards each)
2	2 pool swims – 30 minutes each (1500 yards each) 1 open water swim – 15 min
3	2 pool swims – 40 minutes each (2000 yards each) 1 open water swim – 20 min
4	REST WEEK 2 pool swims – 30 minutes each (1500 yards each) 1 open water swim – 20 min
5	2 pool swims – 40 minutes each (1800 yards each) 1 open water swim – 20 min
6	2 pool swims – 45 minutes each (2000 yards each) 1 open water swim – 30 min
7	2 pool swims – 45 minutes each (2000 yards each) 1 open water swim – 40 min
8	TAPER WEEK WITH SWIM AT THE END OF THE WEEK 2 pool swims – 25 minutes each (1200 yards each) 1 open water swim – 20 min

Pool Workouts:

Here are some suggested workouts to use to follow the training plan outlined above. A great thing to do is print each workout out, stick it in a ziplock baggie, and take it to the pool with you. Where DRILL is written, please see the list of drills suggested at the end of the workouts. Definitions of terms and distances also follow at the end.

Week 1:**3 swims****20 minutes each (~800 yards each)****SAMPLE SWIM****Warmup**

8 X 25 yards drill / rest 15 seconds after each 25
 2 X 25 yards Side Kick
 2 X 25 yards Arm Side Kick
 2 X 25 yards Side Kick
 2 X 25 yards Pause Swimming

Main Set

10 X 50 yards / rest 30 seconds between each 50

Warm down

2 X 25 yards easy / 15 seconds rest between each length

Week 2:**2 pool swims****30 minutes each (~1500 yards each)****SAMPLE SWIM****Warmup**

4 X 25 yards easy swimming / rest 15 seconds after each 25

8 X 25 yards drill / rest 15 seconds after each 25
 2 X 25 yards Side Kick
 2 X 25 yards Arm Side Kick
 2 X 25 yards Pause Swimming
 2 X 25 yards Swim

Main Set

6 X 50 yards, 65% effort
rest 15 seconds between each 50

Rest one minute

6 X 50 yards, 75% effort
rest 20 seconds between each 50

Rest one minute

6 X 50 yards, 85% effort
rest 30 seconds between each 50

Warm down

4 X 25 yards easy / 15 seconds rest between each length

Week 3 and Week 5:

2 pool swims

40 minutes each (~1800 yards each)

SAMPLE SWIM

Warmup

100 yards swim / rest 30 seconds
100 yards Side Kick / rest 30 seconds
100 yards Pause Swimming / rest 30 seconds
100 yards swim / rest 30 seconds

Main Set

6 X 50 yards / rest 45 seconds after each 50
easy freestyle, count your strokes and try to keep the number consistent with each length

3 X 100 medium-hard pace / rest 60 seconds

3 X 50 easy, count your strokes and keep N consistent / rest 45 seconds after each 50

3 X 100 medium-hard pace / rest 60 seconds

3 X 50 easy, count your strokes and keep N consistent / rest 45 seconds after each 50

Warmdown

4 X 50 yards easy swim / rest 60 seconds after each 50

Week 4 = REST WEEK

2 pool swims

30 minutes each (~1500 yards each)

SAMPLE SWIM

Warmup

12 X 25 yards / rest 5 seconds after each length

Main Set

6 X 50 yards, 65% effort
rest 15 seconds between each 50

rest one minute

5 X 50 yards, 75% effort

rest 15 seconds between each 50

rest one minute

4 X 50 yards, 85% effort
rest 15 seconds between each 50

rest one minute

3 X 50 yards, 95% effort
rest 15 seconds between each 50

Warm down

12 X 25 yards / rest 5 seconds after each length

Week 6 and Week 7:

2 pool swims

45 minutes each (~2000 yards each)

SAMPLE SWIM

Warmup

50 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds
100 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds
150 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds

Warmup set

4 X 50 yards descending speed (each 50 gets faster and faster) / 15 seconds rest after each 50
FOUR TIMES THROUGH. Get your times for each 50 and make sure they are dropping.

50 yards easy, kicking as little as possible

4 X 25 yards medium/hard / rest 10 seconds after each 25

50 yards easy, kicking as little as possible

Main set

9 X 100 yards

First three, rest 30 seconds in between each 100

Middle three, rest 20 seconds in between each 100

Last three, rest 10 seconds in between each 100

Warm down

150 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds
100 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds
50 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds

Week 8 = TAPER WEEK + SWIM

2 pool swims

25 minutes each (~1200 yards each)

SAMPLE SWIM

Warmup

4 X 50 yards / rest for 20 seconds in between
 The first two – easy, breathing every 3 arm strokes
 The last two – swim with relaxed, loose, floppy arms

Main Set

3 X 200 yards
 First 200 = 65% effort
 Second 200 = 75% effort
 Third 200 = 85% effort
 Rest for one minute after each 200

50 yards easy – kicking on your back

4 X 50 BUILD UP to sprint within each 50 / 30 seconds rest in between each 50

Warm down

6 X 25 yards easy swim / rest 30 seconds after each length

DEFINITIONS AND DRILLS

One Mile = 1650 Yards = 64 lengths of a (standard, 25-yard) pool or 32 laps

"25" = 1 length of the pool

"50" = 1 lap (down and back)

"100" = 2 laps

Rest – time you will take in between each distance. Example: if the "set" calls for 4 X 25 yards / 10 seconds rest after each 25, this DOES NOT MEAN that you swim 100 yards nonstop. It means that you stop for 10 seconds after each length of the pool, and you will cover 4 lengths of the pool in the process.

Drills

Side Kick -- kick on one side with one arm out in front of you under the water. That extended arm should hang at a downward angle, relaxed. Stand up to breathe and repeat. This drill will make you more comfortable being on your side, thus encouraging body rotation.

Arm Side Kick -- while kicking on your side, one arm extended under the water, drag the other arm, the "recovering" arm, forward, until it reaches the same height forward as the top of your head and then put back down at your side. Stand to breathe. This drill develops front-quadrant arm timing.

Pause Swimming -- while kicking on your side, drag the "recovering" arm forward, until it reaches the same height forward as the top of your head. Pause in that position while kicking.

Then make a stroke, roll your body all the way around to the other side (180 degree turn) and repeat. Repeat as many times as possible and then stand to breathe or take a regular breath. This drill encourages body rotation and front-quadrant arm timing.

Descending – each distance in the set gets faster and faster. Ex., if you do 4 "50s" descending, the first 50 is the slowest, and the last 50 is the fastest

Buildup – the pace of the swim within each distance increases. Ex., if you do 4 "25s" buildup, each 25 starts out slowly and gradually gets faster, and you do that 4 times.

Stroke Count – N – the number of arm strokes taken in one length