



# FAQ

## HOW LONG IS THE SWIM?

The shortest line from Red Strand Beach past the Galley Head to The Warren beach is slightly less than 10km so to ensure a measured 10km distance we will introduce a number of marker buoys that the swimmer must swim around. As this is a coastal swim and very dependant on tide and wind direction it may be necessary to adjust the start time and the swim direction (Red Strand to Galley Head to The Warren or visa-versa). Also due to the currents, wind and tidal ranges, swimmers could cover a tracked distance of 10km to 12km during the swim. Swimmers should factor this into their training plans. (Note: exact buoy locations may vary on the day or be adjusted to suit the conditions on the day)

## DO I HAVE TO BE A VERY STRONG SWIMMER TO ENTER?

The Galley Head Swim is certainly a challenging swim and you will need to be an experienced swimmer to complete the entire course solo. A less experienced swimmer may choose to complete the swim as part of a Relay team. If you can swim 2 km in open water in a time of under 50 minutes, then you can enter as a Relay Swimmer. If you can swim 4 km in open water in a time of under 90 minutes, then you can enter as a Solo Swimmer. These guidelines are for your own safety and we encourage you to ensure you can comply. If you are not able to achieve the minimum pace on the day the GHS Safety Officer may request you exit the water to your boat on safety grounds.

## ARE THERE CUT-OFF TIMES DURING THE SWIM?

The total cut off time to finish the swim is 5 hours. The intermediate cut-off points for the swim are as follows: o Half-way marker Buoy 1 (at approx 5km) – Swimmers must reach this buoy in less than 2.5 hours.

Swimmers must reach the cut-off point by the designated time to be allowed to continue on the swim. Safety requirements in place for the swim dictate that swimmers will be required to leave the water if the cut-off points are not reached by the designated times. Swimmers will be required to withdraw from the swim whenever a swimmer shows signs of hypothermia, extreme tiredness, dehydration, is swimming at an extremely slow pace or has any abnormal symptoms or injuries which prevent them from swimming normally. The Race Director's and Safety Officer's decision is final and needs to be respected by all.

## **WHAT OPTIONS ARE THERE FOR A SHORTER DISTANCE SWIM?**

One of the aims of the Galley Head Swim is to motivate people of all swimming abilities to get active and enjoy the experience of open-water swimming in a safe environment. A relay team (2 – 4 swimmers) may be a suitable option for you. It also helps to have 1 or 2 stronger swimmers on your relay team that can swim a longer/rougher section of the swim. You should take time to train and prepare properly for the event. In addition, each swimmer has their own support boat alongside them should you wish to take a rest during your swim. As this is a charity swim event, you can take a rest at any time and let another swimmer from your team take over. However, to minimise the number of transitions and to reduce the effects of cold, we recommend that each relay swimmer plans to swim for at least one hour.

## **IF I ENTER A RELAY TEAM, CAN I SUBSTITUTE A DIFFERENT SWIMMER AT A LATER DATE?**

Yes – relay team member names may be changed with the prior approval of the Galley Head Swim committee. This will be possible through the Eventbrite registration up to a final date to be confirmed. In the meantime you may email with your relay team name, the name of the new swimmer and the team member they are replacing so that we can update your registration. The new relay team member will have to confirm they are capable of swimming 2km in less than 50 minutes and also sign a waiver form.

## **WHAT ARE THE MINIMUM AGE LIMITS FOR SWIMMERS?**

Safety rules in place for the swim require that the minimum age for all swimmers (Solo and Relay) is 18 years on the day of the swim.

## IS THE RACE BEING TIMED?

Although the Galley Head Swim is a charity event (and not a race), the swim will be timed, from start line to finish line. The results will be posted online on the Results section of the Galley Head Swim website after the event.

## WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR RELAY TEAMS?

The Relay team captain applies on Eventbrite on behalf of their team. The team captain enters their own personal details and the names and ages of their team members (2- 4 swimmers max per team plus contact details and other information). Applications are then reviewed by the Galley Head Swim committee and you will be contacted directly if additional information is required. If there are no queries on your application, teams are then offered a slot on the swim on a first come first served basis.

## IS THERE AN APPLICATION FEE?

As it is a charity swim event, **we ask solo swimmers to raise €500 and relay teams to raise €1000 for our chosen charity(s)** – [Marymount University Hospital & Hospice](#) and [West Cork Underwater Search and Rescue](#)

We do ask for a €100 application fee for solo swimmer and €200 application fee for relay teams when registering on Eventbrite (payable online via credit card on registration).

This money goes towards your fund-raising target. This fee is non-refundable and will be donated to charity(s).

## ARE SWIM TOW FLOATS MANDATORY?

Yes – due to increased safety requirements, tow floats are mandatory for ALL swimmers (solo and relay) for the initial section of the swim from the start until you meet your support boat (approx 500m from shore). After the swimmer meets their support boat, we recommend that swimmers

continue to swim with the tow float, but it is not a requirement for the remainder of the swim.

Following a review of safety and due to the increased number of swimmers and boat traffic at the start, the GHS organising committee has mandated the use of swim tow floats for the start. This is consistent with many open water swims in the UK and more recently in Ireland. A tow float is a bright orange inflatable airbag with a leash and strap

which is secured around a swimmer's waist. It floats behind the swimmer making them more visible to other water users. The SWIM TOW-FLOAT will also assist your boat in locating you at the start of the swim.

The TOW-FLOAT will also keep you visible to your boat captain and support crew during the swim.

Note: If you turn up at the swim start without a SWIM TOW-FLOAT, then you will not be allowed to enter the water.

## **DO I NEED TO HAVE A BOAT TO ACCOMPANY ME ON THE SWIM?**

Yes – for safety reasons and for the provision of food and drinks each solo swimmer and relay team must have their own boat to accompany them on the swim.

Once you register for the swim on Eventbrite, you will have until TBC to have your boat captain register their boat with the Galley Head Swim Committee

Skipper Registration will be completed on a separate Eventbrite ticket which will be sent to all skippers.

Boat confirmation must contain the following information about the boat that is accompanying you across for the swim:

1. Captains Name, telephone number and email address.
2. Boat captain must be competent in driving the boat.
3. Confirmation of type of boat (Recommended a 5 M RIB with a 50 HP engine.)
4. Confirmation of VHF radio on board and lifejackets for all crew [Mandatory for communication and safety]

If you do not register your boat details with us by TBC, we will no longer be able to guarantee you a place on the swim.

## **WHAT TYPE OF BOAT IS REQUIRED?**

Due to the potential sea conditions we recommend a 5 metre RIB with a minimum 50HP engine (or equivalent). The RIB has worked well in other similar swims due to being lower in the water allowing the (relay) swimmer to exit the water onto the boat and for easier communication with the swimmer during the swim. This is particularly important for relay team swimmers where there will be multiple entries and exits during the swim. If your boat is not a RIB, then you should confirm with your boat captain if they will have a

ladder or equivalent on their boat to allow swimmers to exit the water. Boat manoeuvrability is also important when guiding the swimmer across the bay and to ensure that the boat captain can always see their swimmer.

Note that for safety reasons, jet skis, lake boats OR other boats that are NOT used regularly in the ocean are NOT approved for use on the Galley Head Swim.

The boat captain needs to be competent in all sea conditions and have a VHF radio on board. PFD's (lifejackets) are mandatory for all crew and relay team swimmers (waiting their turn to swim on the boat).

In addition to the fuel required to support the swimmer from Red Strand to the Warren The boat captain needs to ensure enough fuel is onboard for the journey from his/her launch site to the race site and back again.

Note: If you are unsure if your boat is suitable, then please email with your boat details and a photo. We will review your boat and let you know if it is permitted to be used on the Galley Head Swim.

## **WHAT IF I CANNOT LOCATE A BOAT TO ACCOMPANY ME ON THE SWIM?**

As a boat is mandatory for each swimmer / relay team, you will not be able to participate if you do not have a boat to accompany you. The swim is run with the support of the maritime community and as all boat captains are volunteers, we are unable to provide contact details of local boat captains to swimmers.

## **CAN I SWIM WITH A KAYAK?**

No – kayakers are not allowed (except to assist during the Start and Finish section of the swim). This swim is one of the longest open water swims in the country and it is at some points 4km from shore. Conditions on the course can change rapidly. For safety reasons, each swimmer must have a (power) boat with them at all times.

## **WHERE SHOULD THE BOAT BE RELATIVE TO THE SWIMMER?**

Many swimmers breathe only to one side, so if you breathe to your left you would naturally prefer the boat to be on your left side each time you come up for air. Obviously individual preference for those who breathe both sides subject to the paragraph below for windy conditions. (Note: having the boat in front of the swimmer is of no benefit to the

swimmer and only leads to continual correction of swim direction – also leads to a taste of fuel in the water for the swimmer)

With open water swimming, the sea and wind conditions need also to be taken into account. For the safety of the swimmer in windy conditions the boat **MUST** always be on the leeward side of the swimmer so as to avoid the boat being blown on to the swimmer.

This means if there is an offshore wind the order should be Land-Swimmer-Boat. If there is an onshore wind the order should be Land-Boat-Swimmer.

## **AS A SWIMMER WHAT DO I NEED ON THE BOAT??**

Depending on whether you are a Solo swimmer or a Relay swimmer you may need to have a feeding plan which you need to communicate to your boat crew. During a long endurance swim, swimmers take on nourishment in different ways. Some take energy gels, take energy drinks, make up their own smoothies and some even use baby food pouches. Every swimmer is different and will require different amounts at different intervals. As a swimmer you need to work out what suits you best during your training swims (don't let the Galley Head Swim be the time when you try anything new – not food, goggles or wetsuit). It is a good idea to plan your feeding stops (boat must be in neutral) and have more than you will require on board the boat. As this is a charity swim the swimmer can hold the edge of the boat while taking on food. Warm drinks in small quantities after feeding can be good too but you need to trial this before the day.

It will also be a good idea to have a set of warm clothes onboard the boat in case you do have to leave the water in an emergency due to the cold. You will need to arrange pick up/drop off of food supplies and clothing with your boat captain – remember boats will not be launching or landing at the start/finish beaches they will most likely launch in Union Hall further west along the coast.

## **WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FOR BOAT CAPTAINS AND CREW?**

- Boat Skipper and Crew must attend the mandatory briefing which will be held prior to the swim. Boat Captains and swimmers will be notified via email.
- The owner/skipper is responsible for warranting the safety of the boat for this race.

Type of boat most suitable is a 5 M Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) with a 50HP engine. The min boat size is 4 M and the Max boat size allowed is 10 M o One swimmer in the water per boat.

Proper marine communications (VHF Marine Band Radios) MUST be available on each boat. The VHF channel for the day will be provided at the safety briefing. VHF radio will be the primary method of communication and will be used to contact the safety boats and medical personnel if required during the day. A

mobile phone is also required on board as a secondary means of communication.

## **DO I NEED INSURANCE FOR THE EVENT?**

Insurance is recommended for each boat. We strongly recommend that all participants (swimmers, skippers and support crew) are adequately insured for the risks present on the day of the event. Please see below information on the risks in taking part in this open water swim.

Swimmers, boat captains and crew members participate in the event entirely at their own risk. Galley Head Swim its Officers, Committee, Swim Officers, Swim Committee and volunteers will not accept any liability for material damage or personal injury or death sustained in conjunction with, prior to, during, or after the race.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS IN OPEN WATER LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING**

The Galley Head Swim is a 10-12km OPEN WATER SWIM from Red Strand around the Galley Head to The Warren beach in West Cork. It is a cold water (12oC – 16oC) sea swim that can take between 2½ hours to 5 hours to complete. Please bear in mind that this is an arduous physical undertaking involving cold water swimming with long exposure to the elements over a long distance. All swimmers must be capable of this length and intensity of exercise and will be required to confirm their endurance capability and will be required to sign a waiver form which will be emailed to you prior to the event.

## **ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RISKS OF OPEN WATER SWIMMING**

Open water swimming is inherently dangerous. Open water swimmers have been injured and killed. For example, swimmers have been hit by boats and kayaks. Jellyfish and other marine animals have injured swimmers. Swimmers have been injured by objects in

the water, both floating and fixed. There may be health hazards associated with pollution in the water. Weather conditions can change quickly. Currents have swept swimmers off course. The waters are cold with water temperatures typically ranging between 12 and 16 degrees Celsius. Swift currents and cold water have precipitated drowning, heart attacks, and hypothermia. These are just some of the hazards and dangers of OPEN WATER SWIMMING.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE RACE IS CANCELLED DUE TO BAD WEATHER OR UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES?**

Due to the nature of outdoor swimming, the Galley Head Swim may be cancelled/postponed prior to or on the day of the event due to unforeseen circumstances such as bad weather. The start time and direction of the swim may also be changed if the forecast is more favourable earlier or later in the day. A sea area forecast of Force 5 (>28km/h) or greater winds will put the swim at risk of going ahead. One or more of the following may result in the swim being postponed/cancelled.

1. Winds (Force 5) of more than 16 knots (>28km/h). Some wind directions have a greater impact on wave height than others.
2. Wave height of > 1.5m
3. Visibility of less than 1 km
4. Jellyfish (stinger) swarm
5. Electrical storm
6. Other reasons that the safety officer and committee decide can cause undue risk to the participants and boat crew.

A Met Eireann 'Small Craft Warning' (Force 6 winds – minimum of 22 knots mean speed) for Galley Head will result in the swim being postponed/cancelled.

A review of the sea area forecast will be made at 10.00pm on Thursday evening before the swim. Updates will also be provided at the swim briefing on Friday evening prior to the swim. If there is a risk that the swim will have to be postponed/cancelled, updates will be posted to the Galley Head Swim website and Facebook pages and will be sent via the email address you have provided on your registration form. Please ensure that you provide a correct email address when completing your registration form.

Should the event be cancelled, a provisional backup date for the swim is on the following day – Sunday (should the forecast be more favourable). However, not all of the volunteer boat captains may be available on the backup date and the swim may have to be postponed to a later date in August.



The Galley Head Swim committee will not be liable for any travel or accommodation costs incurred.

## **WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION ABOUT FUNDRAISING?**

If you would like [SPONSORSHIP CARDS](#) or assistance in getting your fundraising started, please email [galleyheadswim@gmail.com](mailto:galleyheadswim@gmail.com)

It may however be preferable to set up your own fundraising webpage using a website such as gofundme - <https://ie.gofundme.com/>

We suggest linking your GoFundMe account to your own account for ease of transfer of funds (based on our experience for previous participants where some issues have arisen) and then transferring all funds raised to the Galley Head Swim bank account :

Account Name: Galley Head Swim

Bank: AIB Clonakilty

IBAN: IE44AIBK93605715393058

Please let us know if you have any issues.