



Top Races for 23 TRIATHLETE TYPES

*Soma Triathlon, the best race
for fair-weather athletes.*

With thousands of notable races to choose from—many occurring simultaneously on a single weekend—how can an athlete carve out the best possible calendar to suit his specific wants and needs? Through an array of research techniques—our own reader survey, advice from industry insiders, queries sent to a pack of professionals and assessment of our own race experiences—we’ve compiled a collection of worthy events which serve to satisfy a wide variety of triathletes. Here are our top recommendations for 2011.

BY HOLLY BENNETT



1

The Kona Hopeful

Ironman China

May 22, 2011, Jixian, China

With 50 qualifying slots and no more than 900 projected participants, the odds of qualifying for Kona at Ironman China are tipped in your favor. 2011's race moves to a new fast-course venue and a temperate date in May, making race conditions more agreeable than ever. Sure, it's a long haul to China, but that won't deter those folks obsessed with earning a spot on the Kona start list.

2

The Budget-Conscious Athlete

Scheels High Cliff Triathlon, June 18, 2011, Sherwood, Wis.

An \$85 early bird entry fee for a USAT-sanctioned half-iron-distance event is almost unheard of these



days. Add to that a tightly run event featuring immediate chip-timed results, unique awards, free training clinics and technical race tees—along with a sensationally scenic venue overlooking Wisconsin's Lake Winnebago—and you've found the Scheels High Cliff Half Triathlon. The icing on the budget-conscious cake comes from race producer Midwest Sports Events' bulk-buy discount program, wherein a commitment to any five or more MSE events earns a free race entry.



3

The Family-Focused Athlete

Rev3 Quassy and Rev3 Cedar Point, June 4-5, 2011, Middlebury, Conn., Sept. 11, 2011, Sandusky, Ohio

The Rev3 races clearly live up to their billing as family-friendly events. Both the Quassy and Cedar Point venues are actual amusement parks, and athletes receive discounted park entry with their registration. With a weekend filled with family fun activities—past events have included an adventure race, an obstacle course and a T-shirt tie-dye booth—it's no wonder one reader's son kept asking, "When can we come back?"

ANDREW LOEHMAN; JOHN MCCOOPER/PHOTOGRAPHY; DAN HICKOK



THE PROS' PICKS

Mirinda Carfrae: Ironman World Championship and Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship

Luke McKenzie: Noosa Triathlon Multi Sport Festival

4 The Beginner

Tri the Parks Series, Various 2011 dates throughout Georgia

The six-race Tri the Parks Series offers up a full palette of events: Olympic and sprint triathlons, duathlons, aquabikes and even an aquathlon. The series caters to newcomers, with safety a top priority, small wave starts, a rich relay division and superb on-course support. Race directors estimate that up to 35 percent of participants are newbies; the rest are returning athletes relishing the low entry fees and rollicking good fun.



5 The Romantic

Triathlon at Pacific Grove, Sept. 9-11, 2011, Pacific Grove, Calif.

Can it get any more romantic than racing together around Lovers Point? The answer is yes, if you and your sweetheart take advantage of the many attractions the Monterey Peninsula has to offer. Spend the morning competing on the spectator-friendly Olympic- or sprint-distance course, then hit up a Cannery Row restaurant, visit the mate-for-life penguins at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, cruise the cliff-strewn coastal highway to Big Sur and bunk down at a bed and breakfast in nearby Carmel-by-the-Sea.



6 The Single Athlete

Nautica New York City Triathlon, Aug. 7, 2011, New York City

The sheer numbers at any big city triathlon make it a best bet if you're an athlete on the prowl. But one reader confided that New York City holds a special magnetism, as several of her friends met their soon-to-be significant others at the Nautica event. Perhaps it has something to do with the Jamaica Underwear Run, held the Friday evening before each year's race. What better opportunity to size up the playing field and secure a date for a hot summer night in the city?



The Rock & Roller

TriRock Series, Various 2011 dates nationwide

Expanding on the popularity and success of their Rock & Roll Marathon sister series, the newly

launched TriRock races merge music with multisport. When the tunes literally rise out of the water on the swim course (via a live band positioned on a catamaran) you know you're in for beat-thumping treats and rock-star treatment throughout the day.

©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SEBATEL_CHRIS BERNACCHI/BRIGHTROOM.COM; RYAN BETHKE

Chris Legh: Wildflower Long Course and Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship

Paul Matthews: Boulder Peak Triathlon and Noosa Triathlon

Matt Reed: St. Anthony's Triathlon and Ironman 70.3 California



8 The Eco-Conscious Athlete

USA Triathlon Age Group National Championship, Aug. 20, 2011, Burlington, Vt.

USAT has worked hard to green their championship events, adopting the Athletes for a Fit Planet's Pledge of Sustainability. Environmental initiatives will be in full force at the 2011 event in eco-chic Burlington. Notable practices include the use of 125-gallon bulk water coolers on course and



reusable bottles at the finish line, recycling of all possible waste, an athlete carpool program, carbon offsets available for purchase, paperless race communications and registration, eco-friendly goodie bags and race T-shirts made from recycled fabric.



9

The Landscape Lover

Aurlandsfjellet Xtreme Triathlon, Aug. 13, 2011, Aurland, Norway

A new race for 2011, and limited to 150 lucky participants, the half-iron-distance

Aurlandsfjellet Xtreme Triathlon promises to serve up postcard-come-to-life panoramic vistas. Cycling through the majestic fjords of Norway and running the area's steep and scenic valley—logging a combined climbing total of more than 13,000 feet—is a challenge reserved for only the most robust among us. But surely any race-induced pain will be numbed by the beauty that abounds in this pastoral paradise.

10



The After-Party-Goer

Ironman World Championship 70.3, Sept. 11, 2011, Lake Las Vegas, Nev.

Even though the Ironman World Championship in Kona and the Xterra World Championship in Maui both boast legendary after-parties, there's little doubt that the new Ironman World Championship 70.3 venue of Las Vegas will top them all. There's nothing quite like a group of otherwise intensely focused athletes, finally unfettered at season's end. A built-in Vegas bonus? The happening hot spots are ample and open 24/7—with no VIP party passes required.

DON MULLIGAN/BRIGHTROOM.COM; ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/BAIAZ; NILS NILSEN



Leanda Cave: Ironman Arizona and Garmin Alpen-Triathlon

Tim O'Donnell: Ironman 70.3 St. Croix and Immenstadt Triathlon

Julie Dibens: Wildflower Long Course



11

The Philanthropist

San Diego Triathlon Challenge, Oct. 23, 2011, La Jolla, Calif.

The San Diego Triathlon Challenge, and the accompanying 4.5-hour spin-a-thon and 5K fitness walk, is an event like no other. Celebrating the unstoppable spirit and abilities of individuals on the Challenged Athletes Foundation roster, more than 125 challenged athletes participate alongside 550 able-bodied triathletes, celebrities and pros. The event raises more than \$850,000 annually for CAF, and everyone involved is infused with a whopping dose of contagious inspiration.

12

The Team Player

American Triple-T, May 20-22, 2011, Portsmouth, Ohio, Oct. 14-16, 2011, White Lake, N.C.

If relay-teaming is your style, you haven't truly raced until you've tried the American Triple T format. Over a three-day weekend, athletes complete a sprint (Friday afternoon), two Olympic (Saturday morning and afternoon) and one half-iron distance (Sunday morning) courses. Races No. 1 and No. 2 two can be completed at an individual pace, but No. 3 and No. 4 must be finished together. If you and your partner survive the arduous effort unscathed, and manage to avoid team-spirit sabotage, you're guaranteed to share an amazing bond for life.



13

The Swag Hound

Rev3 Costa Rica, Feb. 19-20, 2011

Every race in the Rev3 series has a reputation for loading athletes up with a cool, quality swag bag. Racers receive two custom shirts, a hat or visor, sweet sponsor goodies and, where applicable, amusement park discounts. But participants in the new Rev3 Costa Rica event will be especially fortunate, taking home a unique (and as of now under-wraps) item honoring the exotic locale, in addition to the traditional Rev3 haul.



14

The Foodie

Xterra Sardinia, May 29, 2011, Orsei, Sardinia, Italy

A hungry athlete's haven, Sardinia features a host of hearty cuisine: locally raised meat, freshly baked bread, abundant pasta and the island's gastronomic specialty, pecorino cheese yielded from Sardinian sheep. The food is fabulous and bountiful at the various race functions, plus dozens of quaint trattorias and ristoranti dot the surrounding area, with strong and flavorful Sardinian wine accompanying every meal. The scenery is equally amazing around this Italian coastal isle, with steep marble mountains, fertile valleys and idyllic olive orchards aplenty.



Laura Tingle: Ironman 70.3 Augusta and Ironman Canada

Linsey Corbin: Ironman World Championship and Ironman 70.3 Pucon

Melanie McQuaid: Vineman Ironman 70.3 and Xterra Sardinia

15 The Fair-Weather Athlete

Soma Triathlon, Oct. 23, 2011, Tempe, Ariz.

As evidenced by the number of pros who call Arizona home, the desert landscape provides near perfect training grounds—at the right time of year. Late October is as good as it gets, with an average air temperature of 73 degrees, average rainfall a mere .85 inches and water temperature in Tempe Town Lake in the mid-70s. As



many as 1,800 athletes flock to the Soma Triathlon to take advantage of the moderate, dry climate and the chance to race one of the nation's largest independent half-iron-distance events, which parallels portions of the Ironman Arizona course.



16 The City Slicker

Virgin Active Health Clubs London Triathlon, July 30-31, 2011, London, United Kingdom

In a nod to the 2012 Olympic venue, and in honor of the U.K.'s multiple triathlon world champions, why not hop a flight to London and soak in the city sights during the swim, bike and run? The course passes by a variety of landmarks, including Big Ben, the Tower Bridge and the London Eye, and caters to athletes of all levels, from beginner to elite. You're sure to find plenty of pubs worth visiting once the day's activities are complete, and with 13,000 fellow athletes (it's the largest triathlon in the world) you're guaranteed to be in good company.



17 The Forever 21

Wildflower Triathlon, April 29-May 1, 2011, Lake San Antonio, Calif.

With its frat party-like festival of camping, revelry and—oh yeah—racing, the Wildflower Triathlons Festival wins this category hands down. Known for its brutal courses and hot, dry conditions, made tolerable by the entertainment of drunk, oftentimes naked, but always good-humored volunteers from nearby college Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, the event is a must-do on any triathlete's bucket list.



Amanda Balding: Ironman 70.3 St. Croix and Ironman Brazil

Chrissie Wellington: Ironman World Championship and Challenge Roth

T.J. Tollakson: Vineman Ironman 70.3 and Hell of the West Triathlon



18 **The Under-the-Radar Iron-Distance Athlete**

Full Vineman, July 30, 2011, Windsor, Calif.

If you want to go the distance but feel overwhelmed by M-dot fury, the Full Vineman is the perfect race for you. With a sound history (it's the oldest independent iron-distance event in the continental U.S.) and a slim field (2010's race saw 700 entrants), Vineman emphasizes individual attention and a low-key vibe in the midst of a charming—and no less challenging—wine-country course.

19 **The Strong Swimmer**

Aquaman Even Up Kingdom Triathlon, Aug. 6, 2011, Derby, Vt.

While Escape from Alcatraz is generally considered the ultimate swimmer's race, the Aquaman Even Up Kingdom Triathlon is a swim-fest of epic proportions. The event, buttressed by the rallying cry, "Swimmers of the world unite and fight for an Even Up Aquaman Triathlon," features a 3.5-mile swim, followed by a mere 30-mile ride and a traditional half marathon run. The reason? Athletes are meant to spend roughly equal lengths of time racing each of the three disciplines.



20 **The Strong Cyclist**

Alpe d'Huez Triathlon, July 26-28, 2011, Oisans, France

You'd be hard-pressed to find a race more suited to cycling virtuosos than the Alpe d'Huez Triathlon. Cycling the legendary climb made famous by the Tour de France is certainly a dream come true for Lycra lovers. It's not for the faint of heart or leg, however—three-time Ironman world champion Chrissie Wellington labels the race "sheer masochism," and loves it for precisely that reason.

ASPHOTO.COM



Shonny Vanlandingham: Xterra Richmond and Xterra Brazil

Michellie Jones: Escape from Alcatraz and Ironman 70.3 Philippines

Belinda Granger: Challenge Roth and Laguna Phuket Triathlon

Luke Bell: Ironman New Zealand

21 **The Strong Runner**

Ironman St. George, May 7, 2011, St. George, Utah

While Wildflower has long been a contender in this category, with its brutally hilly trail run and predictably hot and dusty conditions, the newly launched Ironman St. George instantly gained fame as having the toughest Ironman run on the circuit. Just looking at the online course profile is intimidating enough, much less traversing the steeply sloped loop two times through. One strong-running competitor in the inaugural 2010 event called the course “pure evil” on her way to a hard-earned Ironman PR.



22 **The Intrepid Traveler**

Xterra Saipan, March 12, 2011, Saipan, CNMI

On a tiny island (46.5 square miles) on the far side of the globe lies Xterra’s “crown jewel” course in Saipan. The race starts on the same beach where Marines attacked during 1944’s Battle of Saipan. The bike course traverses nearly every inch of rugged island terrain, peaking on top of Mount Tapotchau (elevation 1,545 feet). A 12K trail run takes competitors through thick jungle, past World War II relics and into secret caves. Three-time Xterra world champ Julie Dibens dubs Saipan “one tough-ass race, well worth the trip to one of the most beautiful islands in the world.”



23 **The Luxury Traveler**

Laguna Phuket Triathlon, Nov. 27, 2011, and Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship, December 2011, Laguna Phuket, Thailand

Whether you prefer the WTC’s Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship or the classic (and shorter) Laguna Phuket Triathlon, it’s hard not to choose Laguna Phuket, Thailand, as our No. 1 luxury race destination. Pros and age-grouppers alike laud the amazing beaches and lush accommodations of this idyllic island locale. The renowned Banyan Tree ranks as a favorite resort, and while far from cheap, the digs are so indulgent you might be in danger of missing your race morning alarm. 📌

NILSNILSEN: ©STOCKPHOTO.COM/ADISA



Craig Alexander: Ironman World Championship and Ironman 70.3 St. Croix

Tyler Butterfield: Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon

Torsten Abel: Ironman World Championship and TriGrandPrix Basque Country