



Running vacation: Try a triathlon in Montauk, N.Y.

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Photo: Montauk Point Lighthouse-US Coast Guard

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NEW YORK, July 24, 2013 — Want to race and vacation in one spot? Try the Montauk Point Lighthouse Sprint Triathlon in Montauk, N.Y.

Montauk is a quintessential Northeast summer vacation destination that evokes the breeziness of Cape Cod, the remoteness of Maine and the party vibe of the Jersey Shore.

Montauk sits at the very tip of Long Island surrounded by Block Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. As one of East Hampton's five official hamlets, Montauk is just a 20-minute drive from the village of East Hampton proper. But Montauk feels much further than that from the rest of the tony Hamptons scene with its laid back surf vibe and sport fisherman's paradise.

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Montauk Point Lighthouse Sprint Triathlon

For scenery, you can't beat the Montauk Point Lighthouse Sprint Triathlon, which takes place every July. The race is a point-to-point course that serves as a fundraiser for the Montauk Point Lighthouse, a National Historic Landmark and the oldest lighthouse in New York state, dating to 1796.

Starting with a half-mile swim in Block Island Sound, a 14-mile bike course that tours triathletes around Lake Montauk and a 3.1-mile run through the tree-lined Camp Hero State Park, the triathlon course puts Montauk's natural beauty on full display. Pair that with a finish beside the lighthouse at the top of Turtle Hill overlooking the sea, and you have a challenging triathlon course with a showstopper of a finish.

The race is well-organized after 18 years of putting on the event. Athletes pick up bibs on their choice of four days in four different towns including New York City and Montauk. Race communication e-mails are thorough and the triathlon starts promptly on time.

As a fundraiser with a 550-participant cap, the event and website are no-frills. Triathletes do without course maps, finisher medals and other amenities often found at larger events. But not to worry. The finisher's tee is a surprisingly soft cotton and the post-race festivities include a continental breakfast with Danishes, muffins, watermelon slices, plums, bananas, sweet potato chips, and an assortment of juices and water.

The race proves a little tricky logistically as a point-to-point course. This necessitates two different transition zones: one from the swim to the bike and another from the bike to the run. This means triathletes stop at Transition 2 to drop off their running gear early in the morning before

driving back to Transition 1 to park and prepare for the start at the swim. From the parking area, athletes have a half-mile walk or bike to the transition zone, then another half-mile walk to the swim start.

After the race, runners have the option of taking a shuttle bus or biking six miles back to Transition 1 to pick up their gear.

The Swim

The point-to-point half-mile swim features an in-water start in the waters of Block Island Sound. Swimmers make their way to a start buoy offshore while a race official with a bullhorn counts down minutes to each wave — broken down by gender and age — before blasting the starting horn. Swimmers can expect a current to work against, making the race longer than the usual swim finish times.

Lifeguards on paddleboards and kayaks line the swim, and the exit from the water is well marked with two flags leading into the transition zone. The run into the transition zone is very short and includes one of the most thoughtful touches of the entire race — a plastic kiddie pool filled with water to rinse sand off your feet.

The Bike

Like many triathlons, the 14-mile bike course is open to traffic during the race. But police officers direct traffic and cyclists, especially at all potentially dangerous intersections.

Riders do without mile markers on the point-to-point bike course that takes cyclists from Gin Beach on the North Shore around Lake Montauk to the west and finally to the easternmost point of Long Island at the base of the Montauk Point Lighthouse.

The first portion of the bike course around Lake Montauk is largely flat. The back end of the course heading toward the lighthouse features small rolling hills and one very steep, but short climb. Riders climb from sea level to 168 feet to the base of the Montauk Point Lighthouse.

The Run

The out-and-back 3.1-mile run through Camp Hero State Park begins and finishes in the shadow of the Montauk Point Lighthouse. The run course starts with a small flight of stairs from the transition zone to a road above. It quickly flattens out before undulating through a few small, short rolling hills.

The run course has two water stops, placed so that runners can hit each one twice. And unlike the bike course, the run has mile markers along with almost constant shade from a forest of lushly green trees.

The finish line for the run portion of the triathlon and the race as a whole is up a steep hill leading to the lighthouse of honor. Once at the top, runners are treated to a spectacular view out over the sea and the pride of knowing they just finished a triathlon.

Race It

The 18th edition of the race took place on July 21, 2013. Registration for the 2014 Montauk Point Lighthouse Sprint Triathlon will open on January 1, 2014.

Karla Bruning is host of [On The Run](#), New York Road Runners' show about running. She has finished six marathons, three triathlons and trains with the New York Harriers. Follow Karla at [RunKarlaRun.com](#), [The Washington Times Communities](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter@KBruning](#).