

Ten Triathlons Worth Training For

Here are 10 of the coolest, most challenging triathlons in the United States. Trust us: They're fully worth the blood, sweat, and tears.



by Kristin Luna



XTERRA World Championship

Kapalua, Maui, HI – October

xterraplanet.com

The name says it all: Maui's prestigious XTERRA World Championship off-road competition tests your self-discipline in a spectacular setting. With a one-mile rough-water [swim](#), an 18.89-mile mountain bike ride, and a 5.9-mile trail run through pineapple fields and forests, it's anything but easy. And at \$500 to enter, it's also anything but cheap.

Pacific Grove, CA – May

tricalifornia.com

Some call it “the Woodstock of tris” and for good reason: Athletes camp out in the California wilderness and groove to live [music](#) before and after the big race. There are three competitions to enter over the course of two days: Long Course, Mountain Bike, and Olympic. But it's more

about camaraderie than toughing out the competition at Wildflower. You'll cruise through the hilly coastal terrain of the Pacific Coast Highway while soaking up the beauty of the Pacific as you lope along.

Wilkesboro, NC – June

setupevents.com

Those who don't like ocean swims will delight in a dip in a clean, placid reservoir that's protected by a dam and virtually wind-free. Then comes the hard part. As you hop on your [bike](#), you'll immediately climb a steep hill toward the dam, but the inclines don't stop there. There are various monster hills throughout the bike and run portions of the race, which is likely why many triathletes call Bandits Challenge one of the toughest races out there. Just think of it as character-building.

San Francisco, CA – June

escapefromalcatraztriathlon.com

It may have been a matter of life or death for the inmates who once tried to flee this infamous island prison, but each year 2,000 triathletes willingly make the plunge into the bay's cold waters to complete this taxing tri that's been a celebrated event in Northern California for the past 33 years. While San Francisco is never very warm, it's also just mild enough to make for killer competition weather.

Coeur d'Alene, ID – June

ironman.com

Idaho's most beloved resort town is now also the site of one of the most popular Ironman competitions in the Northwest. And with great volunteer support, a challenging course, excellent pre- and post-race activities, a quaint downtown, and the family-friendly nature of the entire weekend, it's not hard to see why.

New York, NY – August

nyctri.com

Experience the pulse of the Big Apple alongside 3,000 other triathletes with this summertime, citywide, Olympic-distance tri that starts with a swim in the Hudson River, continues with a bike ride along the West Side Highway, and concludes with a run through Central Park.

Louisville, KY – August

ironman.com

A rolling swim in the Ohio River marks the start of this Ironman race, which ventures out into the undulating hills and pastures of the Bluegrass State's lush countryside. The 26.2-mile run covers flat terrain—another prime PR course—that passes Churchill Downs and ends at Louisville's iconic 4th Street Live. And if the nearby [Bourbon Trail](#) isn't an incentive to cross the finish line, nothing is.

Freeport, ME – September

lobstermantri.com

Set along a bay, this cold ocean swim will shock your senses into action. The rolling terrain of the bike course runs along the coastline of Freeport and into Brunswick before the run takes you through the quaint village of South Freeport and eventually back to Windsor Park. And if you're cursing yourself for entering, just remember the pot of gold at the end of the sweaty rainbow: a delicious and re-energizing lobsterbake.

Kiawah, SC – September

kiawahresort.com

Brand new in 2013, the South Carolina tri takes athletes into the ocean for a swim along the gorgeous Atlantic coastline, then in and out of nature. (The barrier island is a hotbed for wildlife like sea turtles, deer, and various species of birds.) After you've crossed the finish line, celebrate by checking into the Kiawah Island Golf Resort, one of the more prestigious resorts in the country, and unwinding in the Sanctuary Spa with an Athletic Recovery Massage (or a kayak trip on the marsh and a round of golf if you're not too spent).

- See more at: <http://www.mensfitness.com/training/endurance/ten-triathlons-worth-training-for/slide/9#sthash.aUCy79BK.dpuf>