

Open Water Swimming: How to get started in the Cork, Fermoy and Kinsale areas:

For beginners (or lacking experience or confidence in the open water)

we advise you to “connect” with large pods of swimmers at Myrtleville and Sandycove Island. There are other smaller pods swimming in Fermoy, East Cork and Inniscara.

Please read these safety messages:

Myrtleville: <http://myrtlevilleswimmers.com/routes-and-safety/>

Sandycove: <http://sandycoveswimmers.com/swim-safe/>

Most swimmers in these locations do not pay to join a club. Swim times are published at:

Myrtleville: <http://myrtlevilleswimmers.com/about/>

Sandycove: <http://sandycoveswimmers.com/calendar/#SandycoveSchedule>

CAUTION: These are mostly experienced open water swimmers. For the most part they do NOT run special help sessions for beginners – or provide lifeguards. DO NOT simply try and head out with an experienced gang of open water swimmers - hoping for the best.

You need to build up your swimming experience and confidence FIRST before you start joining in for long open water swims. If you can't swim well – get better in a pool FIRST. Many local pools offer coaching > get some. If you can't swim 20 laps in your local pool, comfortably, then the jump to open water swimming is not a safe move.

If you are comfortable in the pool there are several ways to get comfortable in the open water:

Coaching - Diarmuid Herlihy <wilowd@gofree.indigo.ie> runs a paid program with an emphasis on getting you confident in the open water. Eilis Burns <swim.eilis@gmail.com> runs a pool program with open water induction in the summers.

Also try Paschal Horgan <paschalhorgan@eircom.net>. He is involved in a group which trains swimmers to complete the 2,000 meter long 'Vibes & Scribes' Lee Swim 2014.

The more common approach is to go to a calm, gently sloping beach and slowly and safely build up your experience and confidence. The beach should have lifeguards and pick a time near either high or low water to avoid the complication of a tide.

The key is then, over several sessions, to build up. Your first swim might be 5 minutes along the beach (with water never more than 1 meter deep) to get used to having no lane lines or painted line on the bottom to follow. The second swim might be 15 minutes in water of 1.5 meters deep. The third swim might be 20 minutes in water 2+ meters deep – but still very close to the shore.

Once you reach this level of comfort, you can start to mix in the various elements like waves, other people to avoid and water too deep to stand.

COLD WATER:

In Ireland the added complication is typically cold water. Ideally, you will gain your confidence without being cold.

Get your open water confidence while in Spain on holiday

Purchase a swimming wetsuit (There are many kinds and many price points. Your arms must be able to move – so avoid windsurfing wetsuits. A loose fitting wetsuit will not keep you warm)

Wait until June/July and find a warm(ish) Irish lake

Many swimmers will go without the wetsuit and get started in Ireland – please get your initial confidence between June and October when the waters are warmer.

Then as your confidence increases you can SAFELY start to push some of the other boundaries in open water swimming.

Swim in a group – without the comfort and safety of a lifeguard present

Swim with a current (either a river or a tide) – make sure others in your group are experienced and advise you in advance

Swim off a slipway, set of stairs or rocky shore – without the comfort of a “walk-in” and “walk-out” gently sloping sandy beach