

Juan de Fuca swim #WithMS4MS

Swimmer

Name: Susan Simmons

Age on swim date: 53

Nationality: Canadian

Resides: Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Swim

Values: Susan is a swimmer with Multiple Sclerosis who believes that staying fit is a great way for some to manage the disease. She swam to raise awareness about the disease as well as funds for a Multiple Sclerosis Wellness Centre on Vancouver Island. The swim has been titled #WithMS4MS.

Body of Water:

Strait of Juan de Fuca, Canada/USA

The Strait of Juan de Fuca (officially named Juan de Fuca Strait in Canada) is a large body of water about 95 miles (153 km) long that is the Salish Sea's outlet to the Pacific Ocean. The international boundary between Canada and the United States runs down the center of the Strait.

The USGS defines the Strait of Juan de Fuca as a channel. It extends east from the Pacific Ocean between Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and the Olympic Peninsula, Washington, to Haro Strait, San Juan Channel, Rosario Strait, and Puget Sound. The Pacific Ocean boundary is formed by a line between Cape Flattery and Tatoosh Island, Washington, and Carmanah Point (Vancouver Island), British Columbia. Its northern boundary follows the shoreline of Vancouver Island from Carmanah Point to Gonzales Point, then follows a continuous line east to Seabird Point (Discovery Island), British Columbia, Cattle Point (San Juan Island), Washington, Iceberg Point (Lopez Island), Point Colville (Lopez Island), and then to Rosario Head (Fidalgo Island). The eastern boundary runs south from Rosario Head across Deception Pass to Whidbey Island, then along the western coast of Whidbey Island to Point Partridge, then across Admiralty Inlet to Point Wilson (Quimper Peninsula). The northern coast of the Olympic Peninsula forms the southern boundary of the strait.[2] In the eastern entrance to the Strait, the Race Rocks Archipelago is located in the high current zone halfway between Port Angeles, Washington, and Victoria, BC.

Like the rest of the Salish Sea and surrounding regions, the climate of the Strait is disputed, with the Köppen system classifying it as Mediterranean, but most regional climatologists preferring oceanic. While the climate is mostly oceanic in nature, the dry summers result in the Mediterranean classification in the Köppen system. Rainfall ranges from over 100 inches (250 cm) (temperate rainforest) conditions at the west end to as little as 16 inches (41 cm) at the east end, near Sequim.

Because it is exposed to the generally westerly winds and waves of the Pacific, seas and weather in Juan de Fuca Strait are, on average, rougher than in the more protected waters inland, thereby resulting in a number of small-craft advisories.

In March 2008, the Chemainus First Nation proposed renaming the strait the "Salish Sea", an idea that reportedly met with approval by British Columbia's Aboriginal Relations Minister Mike de Jong, who pledged to put it before the B.C. cabinet for discussion. Making Salish Sea official required a formal application to the Geographical Names Board of Canada. A parallel American movement promoting the name had a different definition, combining of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound as well as the Strait of Georgia and related waters under the more general name Salish Sea. This latter definition was made official in 2009 by geographic boards of Canada and the United States.

In October 2009, the Washington State Board of Geographic Names approved the Salish Sea toponym, not to replace the names of the Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound, and Strait of Juan de Fuca, but instead as a collective term for all three.[10] The British Columbia Geographical Names Office passed a resolution only recommending that the name be adopted by the Geographical Names Board of Canada, should its US counterpart approve the name-change. The United States Board on Geographic Names approved the name on November 12, 2009.

Date: July 31, 2017

Start: 07:15:00 (PST)

Finish: 17:16:00 (PST)

Swim Duration: 10 hours 6 minutes. Actual distance completed 33 km (20.5 miles)

Historical Claims: The route chosen is the longer or 'Traditional' route approximately 29.45 km (18.3 miles). Use of the traditional departure point of Port Angeles is no longer permitted. The new departure point is Dungeness Spit near Sequim. This changed the distance to 31.94km (19.85 miles).

Here is a list of those who have previously successfully completed the route.

1. Bert Thomas – 8 July 1955 (11 hours 10 minutes)
2. Cliff Lumsdon – 17 August 1956 (11 hours 35 minutes)
3. Amy Hiland – 18 August 1956 (10 hours 51 minutes)
4. Ben Laughren – 18 August 1956 (10 hours 17 minutes)
5. Marilyn Bell – 23 August 1956 (10 hours 38 minutes)
6. Vicki Keith – 10 August 1989 (14 hours, butterfly)

Route Details

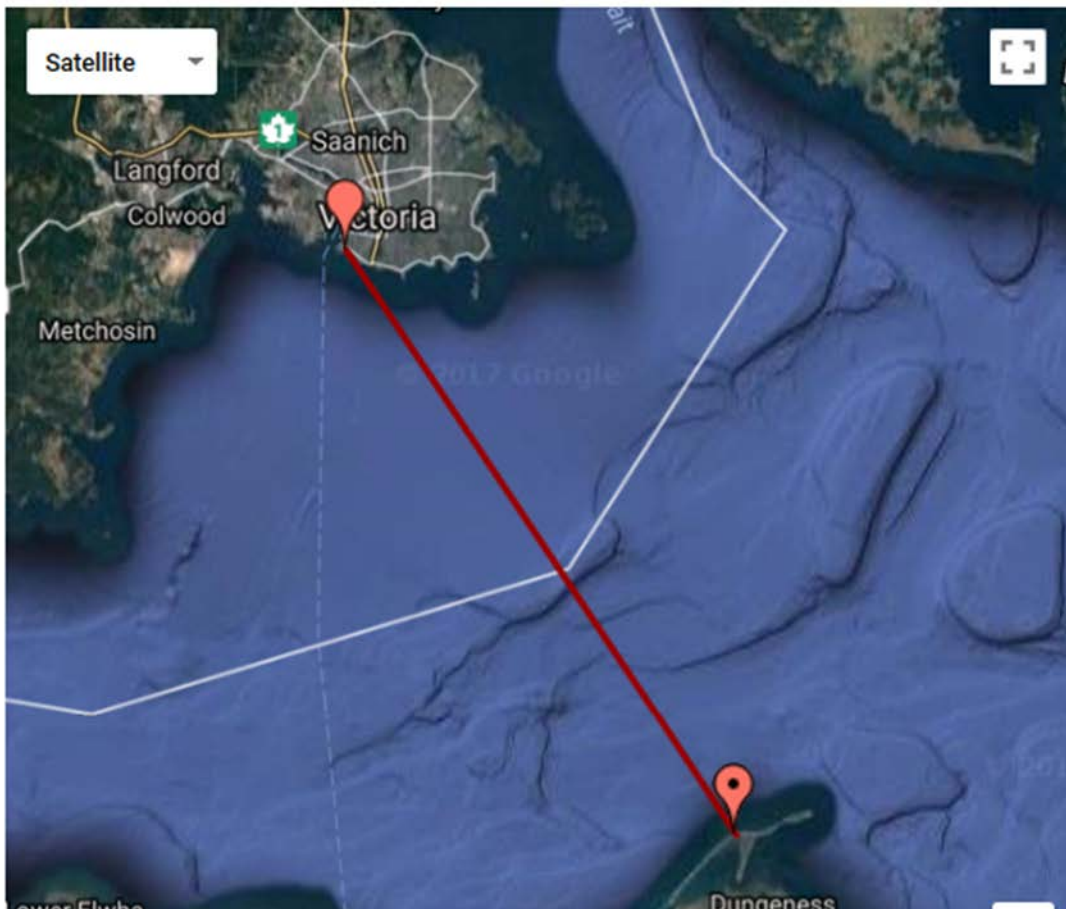
Route Description:

- A. *Launch Point:* The swimmer will enter the water along the north side of the Dungeness Spit in the state of Washington, USA
- B. *Course to Follow:* The Captain of the primary escort sail boat will set a direct course for Ogden Point, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada..

- C. *Landing Spot*: Once the swimmer approaches the Canadian shores the decision will be made whether the landing will be the beach next to the breakwater at Ogden Point or continue to the Victoria Harbour and land in front of the Milestone Restaurant.

Total swim distance:

Point 1:	<input type="text" value="48.175617"/>	,	<input type="text" value="-123.145967"/>	Distance:	31.94 km (to 4 SF ²)
Point 2:	<input type="text" value="48.415033"/>	,	<input type="text" value="-123.384417"/>	Initial bearing:	326° 33' 37"
				Final bearing:	326° 22' 56"
				Midpoint:	48° 17' 43" N, 123° 15' 54" W



Start: North shore of Dungeness Spit, near Sequim, Washington, USA (48 10.537N, 123 08.758W).

Finish: Ogden Point, Victoria, BC Canada (48 24.902 N, 123 23.065 W).

Support Personnel

Primary Escort:

Name: SYNAPSE

Type: 34' Beneteau, Sail boat

Registration: BC2213125

MMSI 31602337

Crew

Captain: Gordon Higgins

Swim Director/Lead Observer/Chief Safety: MJ vanBergen

Primary Medic/Secondary Observer: Shawn Stalker

Social Media/Secondary Medic/Secondary Observer: Melissa Anderson

Kayak Escort:

Paddler:

Claire Skillen

Pam Loadman

Runabout Escort:

Crew:

Matt Piechnik

Ray Este

Planning Documents

To review the planning document please [click here](#)

Rules and Conduct

Swim Category: unassisted marathon swim

Equipment Used:

1. Bathing suit
2. Swim cap
3. Googles
4. Shaker cup for feeding

Rules Followed:

1. The swimmer will enter the water from dry land under our own power.
 2. The swimmer will attach safety lights to our head and our back during darkness.
 3. The swimmer will be escorted by support kayakers and/or canoeists (1 to 2 depending on the conditions) throughout the swim.
 4. Throughout the swim the swimmer will not intentionally touch the boat, a person or any device that may assist us with floating or moving forward. We will touch the bottom of the lake at the start and finish only.
 5. The swimmer will not draft off any support vessel (behind or on bow wake).
 6. The support team will hand the swimmer requested items in a manner that does not aid in resting or forward progress. The primary escort boat will utilize shaker bottles attached by rope to supply the swimmer with liquids.
 7. No person may purposely touch the swimmer for the entire swim.
 8. A motorized medical/safety boat follow the swimmer at a safe distance throughout the swim.
 9. The swimmer will have an independent observers. They will have the authority to call the swim if an infraction is made.
 10. Observer reports will be available after the swim is complete.
 11. Other swimmers may jump in the water at various times; they will not swim within a meter of the swimmer ensuring they are not able to swim on their draft.
 12. At the end of the swim the swimmer will exit the water under their own power and shall pass the water line.
 13. The official time of the swim shall stop upon fully clearing the water.
 14. GPS tracking will be used and data points recorded throughout the swim.
- **Exceptions to Standard Rules:**
 - None
 - **Feeding:**
 - every 30 minutes.

Summary of Weather Conditions & Tides

- **Wind Speed:** Winds fluctuated between 3 and 8 knots for the first 2 hours and then settled in around 4 knots till 13:45 for the remainder of the swim it fluctuated between 6-7 knots with a brief peak of 10.2 knots around 13:30. The winds were quite calm for the approach to the beach at Ogden Point.
- **Water Temperature:** The temperature was 11.3C at the start of the swim and slowly rose to 13 at 15:00. The water at the end of the swim was 13.2C
- **Air Temperature:** The temperature was 12.6C at the start of the swim and rose to 20 at 11:00 then leveled off to 18 for the remainder of the swim.
- **Swells: approx:** 2 ft height waves. 5-6 ft slow swells, quite far apart at the beginning of the swim. About 1 ½ hrs into the swim waves and swells were reducing. By the third hour there were almost no waves at all and the swells were almost none existent. The remainder of the swim was almost flat calm.
- **Skies:** Completely Clear. Not a cloud in the Sky

Astronomy

- **Sunrise:** 0547

- **Sunset:** 2051
- **Length of Day:** 15h03m

GPS Tracks

To view detailed GPS tracking log [click here](#)

To view detailed Spot tracking log [click here](#).

Handwritten Observer Log

To view the handwritten observer's log [click here](#)

Photos & Video

Swim start: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSMH7x9I8-8>

Gentle swells: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOmqIRuPifk>

Where's Susan?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnzStB0vRh0>

Border crossing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwEzhkzILGQ>

Approaching Ogden Point: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wE7B9mpqt-Y>

Finish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REAdwKqpW0g>

Please visit <http://withms4ms.com/> for more pictures and videos

Swimmer Narrative Report

Juan de Fuca Strait was not something I ever thought I would do. But after the MS Society of Canada closed the the country's only gym and physiotherapy centre in Victoria, BC leaving 100s without service, it was a swim I felt I had to do - withMS4MS.

There are many ways one can go about swimming across the strait. I chose to swim as close as possible to the 29.5 kilometre historic route from the 1950's - the one swum by America's Bert Thomas and Amy Hiland, and Canada's Cliff Lumsdon, Ben Laughren and Marilyn Bell. The route later swum by Vicki Keith in the 1980s. I chose to swim the strait unassisted, with nothing more than a swimsuit, cap and goggles.



No swim is possible without the support of a crew. I was fortunate to have a crew of volunteers who had donated both time and expertise. My pilot, Gordon Higgins, who also donated his sailboat, has sailed this particular water way for over 40 years. MJ VanBergen, who has crewed for me on a number of swims and trained as one of several observers on Vancouver Island, was the swim director and lead observer. Claire Skillen and Pam Loadman, both expert paddlers, signed up for kayak support. Ray Este and Matt Piechnik provided small craft support in the event emergency evacuation was needed and Shaun Stalker and Melissa Anderson would provide medical support and expertise. Melissa also provided updates on the swim through multi-media.

My swim started in the traditional territory of the Klallam Nation (Coast Salish People) from Dungeness Spit in Washington State. It was 7:15 AM. The sun was out, the air was warm, and there was a gentle breeze. It was a bit of a walk before the water was deep enough to swim and the sea floor littered with rocks and pebbles. I stumbled and fell down to the water. I remember feeling a sense of relief as it was not as cold as I expected. I learned much later that day when I exited the water that it was just over 11C.

I swam through a bit of a kelp forest until I reached Claire, who would be paddling a kayak beside me for the swim and then later, Gordon's sailboat. It wasn't long before I lost sight of the bottom of the sea. I settled in between the sailboat and kayak and swam through gentle swells.

Every 30 minutes MJ would flag me down to stop and eat and drink. I have been working at the ideal feeding program for a few years now, and think I finally found it. I would not eat for the first hour to hour and a half as my stomach is often a bit queasy on a swim and I typically start my day with a healthy smoothy so am not hungry. After the first hour, for food, I would switch back and forth between gel packs that have been watered down and a piece of a protein bar. I would also have an a work-out drink or electrolytes. Digestive biscuits, canteloupe, bananas, chocolate bars, tea and water would always be available should I want them.

I was worried about the amount of time it can take my kayak support to provide my drink and food as well as the back and forth spent between the lead boat and support boat picking up food so switched up how feedings would work as well. On this swim all liquids with the exception of emergency tea were provided by the sailboat. Two bottles were tossed in the water each stop, one with a workout drink and the other with gel and water. My kayaker carried a large peaked deck bag on their hull filled with bars and biscuits, and a small thermos with tea. I was able to request what I needed as I needed it.

A few hours into the swim I could feel my tummy acting up. It was likely caused by a combination of nerves and the gentle swells. I used the digestive biscuits to help settle it. So happy that it worked as I have a bit of a reputation for feeding the fish.



I never wanted to know what time it was and I definitely didn't want to know the water temperature. I had asked my crew that they not ask me if I was warm enough, or cold. I needed to put the temperature completely out of my head as it was my greatest fear and biggest risk on this swim. I did however want to know when I reached the American/Canadian border which was about half way through the swim. At some time around 11:30 I stopped to

feed and was happy to hear I had crossed the border. Melissa had me give a shout out on Facebook to friends and followers at home!

I carried on swimming at a steady pace. I filled my mind with thoughts of people who I know who have Multiple Sclerosis. I thought about what their life is like not having a centre. I thought about how strong they are, how they get up every day, some of them barely able to move, all of the obstacles they face, and yet they are still getting out in the world. Just prior to my swim a few friends with MS, Margaret, Dave (who has Parkinson's) and Diane came to see my last ocean swim at Willows Beach. I thought a lot about them. I thought about what my swim means to them. Margaret and Dave both have challenges walking yet they both found a way to meet me at the beach that day, and I knew they would both be waiting on the shore for me. I used my thoughts of the community to fuel me and move me forward. My swim was for them.



Not soon after we crossed the border did Matt, Ray and Shawn join us. I had planned the swim so I would have certain things to look forward to along the way. Ray, my partner of over 25 years was my cookies at the half way mark. I am not quite sure what happened but I heard through the grape vine that Shawn went for a swim in the middle of the strait while transferring from the small motor craft to the sailboat. This is something I will have fun teasing her about for some time to come.

One of the nice things about swimming the strait is the mountain ranges on either side. You can see Port Angeles and Dungeness Spit from Victoria, and you can see Victoria from Port Angeles and Dungeness spit. It was really neat to watch things come into focus as we got closer to Victoria. I was able to make out some of the larger city buildings for quite some time.

We had planned 3 potential exits for the swim. The first was Clover Point, not too far from where Marilyn Bell landed in the 50's, the second Ogden Point and the 3rd the inner harbour. My hope was the inner harbour as I was wanted to get as much exposure as I could for the MS community and a new MS Centre we are working on creating.



It would add about 3-4 km to the swim but I wanted land there if I could about 5-6 km from shore I could make out the breakwater at Ogden Point and could see

Brotchie - a marker on the water just outside of the harbour where outrigger paddlers go around. I knew we were drawing near. Gordon altered the course slightly to set me up to ride the tied into the harbour. Unfortunately I got caught in a current and was spinning like a hamster on a water-wheel for about an hour. Although I could not see the current I was fully aware of what was happening as I am very familiar with the landmarks. It was discouraging as I was fighting hard to get in.

I asked my crew if they could adjust the course and get me in. We opted to head for Ogden Point. As we made our way across the water I saw a kayaker in the distance. As she neared I could hear her. It was my friend Pam, my next cookie. Pam was meant to be with us for the day but had to work. She had promised that she would paddle in with me for the final bit of the swim. I was so thrilled she was there. Pam is a physiotherapist who often helps people with MS. She had spent the day treating as many people as she could and told them of the swim.

I will never forget her words as she approached Claire and I - "Susan Simmons, what are you doing here? I had to leave work early for you! Do you know what time it is?" I had no idea what she meant as I still hadn't asked the crew what time it was, nor did they tell me.

It's always the last part of a swim, or paddle for that matter, that seems the longest. You see things getting closer, but are they? I was a bit pooped from my hamster wheel swim so stopped every 500 meters or so to drink or snack for the last few kilometers. As Pam and Claire guided me closer to shore I could hear people cheering. I started to cry. We did it - me and my crew had made it across! I pulled myself together and continued to swim to shore. I remember the point when I saw bottom. It was a beautiful site. When it was shallow enough I stood-up and walked up onto shore of the Songhees Nation traditional territory at Ogden point. It was 5:21 PM - 10 hours and 6 minutes after I first entered the water.

#withMS4MS