

Below are a few tips or suggestions which may help in preparation for the Chicago Shoreline marathon:

1. The race is 24-25 miles in length, depending on your exact route. There are stops at 4 beaches along the way. Three of these beaches are protected by large walls/breakwaters that offer protection from south winds and waves. Because we will race from south to north, the beaches are not visible until you are nearly even with them. There will be large balloons anchored near the check in tables at the beach stops, and you may be able to see these rising over the jetty. But don't rely entirely on seeing the balloons. The best backup is to use a gps unit taped to your boat.

Set your gps screen to show total mileage and make sure that it's zero at the start. The beach stops are then as follows:

63rd street beach	= 6.3 miles
12 th street beach	= 12.3 miles
North Ave beach	= 16.8 miles
Montrose Ave beach	= 21.0 miles
Finish line	= 24.4 miles

Put a strip of duct tape next to the gps and on it write the mileage for each of the beach stops in permanent ink. This way, you won't need to remember the numbers. Keep in mind that when you round the jetties, you will have 0.1-0.3 miles to the check-in tables. In other words, you should expect to see 6.0 miles on the gps when you are rounding the jetty for the first stop at 63rd street beach. Also, these mileages will vary slightly from what you will see on your gps because of slight variations in your paddling route. So, use them as pretty close estimates of where the stops will be.

It is worthwhile to study the race course on Google earth from the start at Calumet harbor to north of Montrose Ave beach just to get an idea of what to expect. Calumet harbor has a large break wall out to sea and is located just south of a water filtration plant (the water filtration plant has a "hat shaped" break wall just off shore).

Notice that on the first leg, from Calumet Harbor to 63rd Street beach, you will be the further off shore than anywhere else during the race. Notice the "hat shaped" break wall just off shore of the water filtration plant that you must stay away from as per Homeland Security rules. Notice that there is not much along the shore in the way of marinas. Look at the 63rd street beach jetty and how it hides the beach until you round it.

From 63rd street beach to 12th St. Beach/Shedd aquarium, the shore is mainly concrete wall, so there may be lots of rebound waves. You can see and aim for the dome of the Shedd aquarium. The beach stop here (just before the dome) was once protected by a wood wall and you can see the remnant submerged pilings underwater. You can probably make it over them without any issues - even with an under stern rudder from what I'm told, but just to be safe, go through the meter-wide openings either at the far south or north ends, right up next to the concrete wall.

From Shedd aquarium to North Ave, expect to see lots of motor boat traffic. Look at all the marinas along the shore and all the boats that anchored in there on the map. Notice that your route to the tip of Navy pier is between an inner break wall and an outer break wall, so depending

on wind conditions, the water should be flatter in here, but with more boat waves and rebound waves. Watch for boats entering /exiting through the lock that connects with the Chicago River just before Navy pier. Go out and around Navy pier - smile for all the tourists - and look for the white or yellow buoys that "guard" the downtown water filtration plant. Stay outside these buoys. You'll also see an opening in the break wall straight ahead. Do not go through that opening. Instead, you'll follow the buoys (keeping them on your left) and aim for the opening between the break wall and the shore. Since the water in here is fairly protected, be cognizant of speed boats, jet skiers, water skiers, etc. This area is called "the playpen". After you pass through the opening between the shore and the break wall, you've got a short distance to go until you hit the next beach stop at North Ave beach. This area can have very confused water because of the vertical concrete shore and the break wall. This area between the playpen and North Ave beach is also a popular area for locals to show off their speed boats to those on shore, so be visible and assume that power boaters don't see you or don't know that you've got right of way. This is Chicago - and Vinny and his main squeeze really might take their 40 ft cigarette boat right up next to you to check you out and give you a thumbs up - and leave you in a huge wake. This is also where police boats were pretty aggressive in "watching over" the paddlers in 2007. Notice also that North Ave. beach is protected by a jetty, so you can't see the sand until you round the corner. Expect the beach to be pretty crowded if it's a nice day.

From North Ave beach to Montrose Ave beach, notice all the marinas along the shore on the map. Look for possibly heavy boat traffic in here and remember that boats coming from the marinas might seem to appear out of nowhere and proceed to full-throttle it straight off shore as soon as they get out of the no wake zones. Police protection in here was good in 2007.

From Montrose Ave beach to the finish should be straight forward. The shore is mainly sand beach, so the water should be predictable. Look for one or two sea kayakers with Day-Glo orange hats. As you pass them, they will likely confirm to you the distance to the finish. There are lots of other smaller jetties along the shore, and the finish balloon might not be that easy to see from far away. Therefore, it's probably better to stay closer to shore along this leg. Look for the finish to be about 3.4 miles from the Montrose Ave beach stop, so whatever number you see displayed at that stop, add 3.4 to it and expect the finish to be about there.

2. Water conditions may vary tremendously during the course because of the variation in both the shore structure and outer protecting break walls. Expect to have flatter water rounding Navy pier, lots of motor boat waves, confused waves in other areas, and predictable wind waves in still other areas. The last leg of the race, from Montrose Ave beach to the finish line will likely have the least confused water because the shore is mostly beach. Motorboat traffic should be least (minimal).

Meter out your energy so that you will be ready to handle possibly much rougher water on the later legs of the race, if this is the case on race day.

If you are deciding whether to bring your tippier boat or your more stable boat, bring both (if you can), or just the more stable one. The CSM registration allows you to register a 'back-up' boat so there is no last minute class-changing paperwork on race day. In the 2007 race, there was a NNE wind of 5-10 knots. Waves were 0-1 ft in some areas, 1-3 ft in most areas, and 2-4 ft and confused in several areas. Even with light winds, the course is not safe for an ICF K1, or any boat with a large open cockpit.

3. Safety - Expect the best, prepare for the worst. If you should capsize, be prepared to do a solo rescue in the above conditions. For example, in the 2007 race, several paddlers performed multiple solo capsize recoveries in 2-4 ft waves. Most finished the course, though some pulled out after the first or second leg. When you are in the water next to your boat in 1-3 or 2-4 ft waves, you may not be visible to other paddlers or even to smaller motor boats. This gets back to the previous paragraph - paddle a boat in which your risk of capsize is minimal and in which your ability to do a fast solo capsize recovery is solid.

4. You can get by with bare feet while paddling because the beach stops have truly amazing sand. The beaches also have a very low gradient, i.e. it's shallow a long ways out. So, expect to paddle to about 20 yards from the shore, at which point it will be too shallow to continue. You'll then have to run your boat up to the water's edge, check-in at the table, then run your boat out 20-30 yards into the water, hop in, and go.

5. Expect water temperatures between 60 and 68 degrees F. It will be brisk but probably not cold.

6. Use the beach stops to eat and drink as it's accomplished more quickly and easily on land than on the water.

7. Surfski paddlers are required to use a body to boat leash. A leash that quickly attaches/detaches will be most convenient at the beach stops.

8. Expect there to be fishermen at the ends of all the beach jetties and along lots of areas of the concrete walls along the shore. Stay far enough out that you don't risk getting a rusty hook in the eyeball.