

AGAINST THE CURRENT: CARINA BRUWER COMPLETES GRUELLING 17 KM DURBAN–UMHLANGA OCEAN CROSSING

South African marathon swimmer battles adverse currents, rough seas and marine stings to complete the crossing in 4 hours and 45 minutes, raising R48,000 and counting for marine conservation.

DURBAN, 27 OCTOBER 2026 – Record-holding marathon swimmer Carina Bruwer successfully completed a challenging 17-kilometre ocean crossing from Durban to Umhlanga on Monday, 26 October, finishing in 4 hours and 45 minutes after battling strong currents, increasingly difficult sea conditions and painful stings from jellyfish and other marine organisms.

The swim, presented by logistics group [GoReefers](#) as part of its See It All campaign, has so far raised R48,000 for the South African Association for Marine Biological Research ([SAAMBR](#)), with donations continuing to come in.

Originally planned from Umhlanga to Durban to take advantage of the prevailing south-flowing ocean current, the crossing was reversed following an assessment of the weather and sea forecasts. With strong southerly winds predicted, the team opted to swim north with the wind rather than south against it, despite knowing this would mean swimming against the current.

The combination of wind-driven chop and opposing current created turbulent, unpredictable conditions, which deteriorated as the swim progressed.

“That was a tough one,” says Bruwer. “We made the decision to swim north based on the wind forecast, knowing that it would mean working against the ocean current. What we encountered was messy, unpredictable water that became increasingly difficult as the swim progressed. Add to that the constant stings from jellyfish and other tiny marine creatures, and it was certainly a test of endurance. But that’s marathon swimming. You keep putting one arm in front of the other, and eventually you get there.”

ESTABLISHING A NEW MARATHON-SWIMMING CHALLENGE

Although a handful of swimmers have completed the route previously, Bruwer’s crossing was officially observed and documented, establishing a formally ratified swim between Durban and Umhlanga.

Bruwer hopes the crossing will help establish the route as a recognised marathon-swimming challenge and encourage more swimmers to experience this stretch of the KwaZulu-Natal coastline.

“There’s something special about setting off from one coastal town and arriving at another, having crossed that distance entirely through the ocean,” she says. “I’d love to see this become an established swim that attracts athletes from around the country and beyond.”

R48,000 RAISED – AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO MUCH MORE

The campaign supports SAAMBR, which has spent 75 years advancing marine conservation through scientific research, animal rescue and rehabilitation, and environmental education.

Its work includes rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing endangered sea turtles, many of which arrive injured, ill or severely weakened. Through specialist veterinary care and dedicated rehabilitation, these animals are given a second chance at life in the ocean.

Equally important is SAAMBR's work with children, many of whom have never had the opportunity to explore and understand the marine environment, despite growing up near the coast.

Just R200 can give ten children access to an educational ocean experience – an opportunity that might otherwise be beyond their reach. For some, that single experience could be transformative: sparking a lifelong interest in marine life, inspiring future careers in conservation or nurturing young ambassadors who will help protect our oceans for generations to come.

At that rate, the R48,000 raised so far could provide these experiences for as many as 2,400 children.

“We’ve raised R48,000 so far, which is wonderful, and I’m enormously grateful to everyone who has contributed. But I’d love to do more,” says Bruwer. “When you think that just R200 could open a child’s eyes to a world they’ve never experienced, or help support the rescue and rehabilitation of an endangered turtle, it’s incredibly motivating. We can’t know which child might become a future marine scientist or conservationist because of an experience like this. But we do know that without these opportunities, that spark might never happen.”

For Bruwer, the cause is deeply personal.

“I’ve spent twenty years swimming in oceans around the world. They’ve given me extraordinary experiences, but they’ve also made me acutely aware of how much we stand to lose if we don’t protect them. Marine animals and ecosystems don’t have a voice in the decisions that affect their future. As someone whose life has been shaped by the ocean, I feel a responsibility to use whatever platform I have to help make that voice heard.”

GOREEFERS PUTS ITS WEIGHT BEHIND MARINE CONSERVATION

GoReefers underwrote the entire operation, including the escort vessel, crew, independent observation and livestream production, ensuring that 100% of public donations go directly to SAAMBR.

The company also pledged R1,000 for every kilometre completed, bringing its distance-based contribution to R17,000.

The swim formed part of GoReefers’ See It All campaign and coincided with its annual conference in Durban, where Bruwer was scheduled to deliver her keynote, *The Art of Turning the Tide*, shortly after completing the crossing.

GoReefers CEO Delena Engelbrecht says the initiative reflects the company’s commitment to making a meaningful contribution beyond its core business.

“At GoReefers, See It All is about looking beyond the obvious and recognising the opportunities we have to make a difference. The ocean is fundamental to our industry, but our responsibility to it goes beyond the movement of goods. We wanted to use this event to support the incredible work SAAMBR is doing, and Carina’s determination out there was an inspiration to all of us. We’re proud to have made this swim possible, and we hope the wider logistics community will join us in taking the fundraising even further.”

Bruwer also paid tribute to the team behind the crossing.

“People see one swimmer in the water, but an undertaking like this is only possible because of the extraordinary work happening around you. From the crew on the boat and the people managing the livestream to everyone coordinating logistics, supporting the campaign and making donations, this was a genuine team effort. I’m enormously grateful to everyone who helped make it happen.”

THE SWIM IS OVER. THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE ISN’T.

The fundraising campaign remains open, and individuals and businesses are encouraged to contribute.

Donate	backabuddy.co.za/campaign/swim-20-km-save-sea-turtles-inspire-kids
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Pictures	Download the image folder (Dropbox)
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Watch the swim	youtube.com/live/FWJrVxWjsuE
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Raw footage	Footage from the day (Google Drive)
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More information	carinabruwer.com/durban-umhlanga-swim
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ABOUT CARINA BRUWER

Carina Bruwer is one of South Africa’s most accomplished open-water marathon swimmers, having completed iconic crossings including the English Channel, Strait of Gibraltar and False Bay. Her pioneering achievements include becoming the first person to swim across Walker Bay, being the only swimmer to have rounded both the northernmost and southernmost points of Africa, and becoming the only person to complete the 21 km Triple Country Swim from France through Monaco to Italy.

Earlier this year, she completed another crossing of False Bay, swimming approximately 34 kilometres in 9 hours and 48 minutes, twenty years after her first successful crossing in 2006.

Beyond swimming, Bruwer is an internationally recognised keynote speaker, professional musician and technology entrepreneur. She is the founder of [Gigster](#), an AI-powered platform for the events and entertainment industry, which won the technology category at the 2026 Womandla Women in STEAM Awards.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS

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