

Competing with Carmageddon II

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Although officials are urging people to "play local," thousands of L.A. triathlon participants will be snaking through the region.

When the organizers of the [Herbalife Triathlon Los Angeles](#) found out that [Carmageddon II](#) was going to coincide with their race date, "our reaction was probably unprintable," jokes Jan Fambro.

"We had settled on this date 11 months ago," says Fambro, who is handling media relations for the annual event, in which competitors will swim, bike and run from Venice Beach to Downtown Los Angeles on Sunday morning.

"It had gone through the city, the county, the whole approval process. We had looked at other events happening in L.A. and checked with sponsors. This event is the second-to-last event of a [national, 7-race series](#), and the championship is scheduled for October 7. We have about 2,500 competitors coming in from 28 states and 11 countries—and then the announcement came out this summer."

By that time, however, the triathlon date was locked in, says Fambro. "These were the cards that we had been dealt and we had no choice but to pick 'em up and play."

That attitude is being echoed around the county this weekend, as a massive freeway improvement project reprises the shutdown of the 405 between the 10 and the 101. The last Carmageddon, as it was dubbed, was [wildly successful](#), despite the fact that L.A. had to spend the weekend without the use of the nation's most heavily traveled stretch of freeway.

But this time the situation is considerably more complicated. Carmageddon II is falling during the full swing of autumn, not during the summer when schools were out and much of L.A. was on vacation. The weekend will have a

lot more going on than just one Westside freeway closure: The [Dodgers](#) will be playing the Rockies. Placido Domingo will be [singing “The Two Foscari”](#) at the Los Angeles Opera. The Hollywood Bowl will have [The Go-Gos](#) on Saturday and [Wilco](#) on Sunday.

West Hollywood is expecting 25,000 people to meet Deepak Chopra and Rocco Dispirito at its [annual outdoor book fair](#). The [Getty Villa in Malibu](#) will be open. And then there’s [Los Angeles International Airport](#) , which is expecting 172,000 passengers, 66,000 vehicles and about 20,000 employees to come in and out.

Still, of all the diversions that have been forced to belatedly incorporate Carmageddon II into their planning, the triathlon has had the most ironic set of challenges. While the rest of Southern California is [being urged to stay home](#) and [steer clear of the roads](#) on Sunday, the thousands of triathletes and their fans will be out in full force on the pavement, crisscrossing Los Angeles from the shore to Staples Center, first in the water, then on bicycles and finally on foot via a 6-mile loop Downtown.

On top of that, the bike course will be shutting down sections of surface streets for part of the morning, closing Venice Boulevard from the beach to the 10, Fairfax Boulevard from the 10 to Olympic Boulevard and Olympic to Staples Center. All streets should be open by noon.

Fambro says factoring Carmageddon II into the triathlon was a scramble, but not as difficult as it might have been. For one thing, she noted, [the course](#)—which hasn’t changed in three years—falls outside the [area immediately impacted by the closure](#). The finish line, where most of the action is, will be downtown, far from the 405 at LA Live.

“The reality is, it mainly affects those people who are coming from the San Fernando Valley and parts further west,” she says. Participants making that trek are being advised to allow extra time and to use Pacific Coast Highway as an alternate route down to Venice before the starting gun is fired for the first wave of triathletes at 7:15 am.

Still, the moment the Carmageddon II date was announced, she says, the triathlon organizers began meeting weekly with Los Angeles police and transportation officials, and sending out regular [transportation updates and reminders](#) to race participants. A [bike-friendly shuttle](#) for both spectators and triathletes was set up to run all day between Downtown and Venice, and extra [hotel discounts](#) were lined up near the start and finish lines for triathletes who preferred to make a “stay-cation” of it.

“Our staff has been very positive about the coordination,” says Fambro. “I’ve heard nothing but good stories coming out of those departmental meetings.”

And, she predicts, the extra challenge will probably add spice to the competition.

“This is going to be one of those great triathlete stories,” she jokes, “about how they came to L.A. on the legendary weekend of Carmageddon II.”

To get to the Triathlon—or other popular events around town this weekend—via public transportation, check out these [helpful tips](#) from Metro’s blog [The Source](#).

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