



# GET SET... GLOW!

Liz Lowe watches Vobster Quay light up for its ever-popular Glow Swim

**A**s dusk turns to darkness, swimmers disrobe by blazing firepits. The lakeside begins to glow as lights are placed in tow floats and secured to swim hats. 170 swimmers have gathered at Vobster Quay for the annual Glow Swim – an event so popular that tickets sold out in under ten minutes this year.

“It’s a magical evening,” says event organiser Richard Smith. “It brings together the whole swimming community in a unique way – it’s a sensory and social swimming experience like no other.”

This is the eighth Glow Swim. When it launched in 2013, it was the only event of its kind and was attended by Outdoor Swimmer’s Simon Griffiths. Like many events, it wasn’t possible last year.

It’s still light when we arrive, but dusk is swiftly followed by darkness. As all swimmers know, getting ready and faffing around pre-swim is at least half the fun. Glow-in-the-dark face paints come out along with plenty of creative lighting options (organisers encouraged participants to invest in reusable lights rather than single-use glow sticks, although these were available). There’s a lot of laughter and posing for pictures before the safety briefing takes place and it’s time to take the plunge.

Safety is robust, and Richard believes that to be part of the event’s appeal. “It’s done in a very safe way. We have a really good safety support team in the water,” he says.

As swimmers begin to drop in to the deep, dark water of the lake, they



remind me of lanterns floating into the night. "It's like a multicoloured trail of fireflies," says Richard. His safety crew, on paddleboards and in kayaks, arguably have the best view as a procession of glowing swimmers spreads across the water.

The swim course follows Vobster's usual 750-metre route. Marked by illuminated buoys, it covers much of the lake's perimeter and skirts the diving area. Swimmers are able to do up to four laps, although few do more than two and many just savour one.

The atmosphere in the water is very chilled, although thankfully the water isn't. It's late September and water temperature is somewhere between 17 and 18 degrees – still warm enough that we can take our time. We enjoy a relaxed, chatty swim and notice most swimmers opt for heads-up breaststroke, needing no reminder that it isn't a race.

As a venue, Vobster has wide appeal and attracts a range of swimmers from triathletes to hardy, year-round dippers. Tonight, the whole spectrum is represented with everyone clearly here for the fun of it. The event's vibe was different this year and felt more relaxed, Richard comments afterwards. "There was a lot of chatting and giggling," he says.

The post-swim atmosphere is jubilant. "I absolutely loved it," one swimmer says, adding that getting membership to Vobster was one of the best decisions she's ever made.

Swimmer Tracy Hager, a Vobster regular, is attending the event for the first time. "It was our first time with the masses, but we did a few night swims last autumn and thought it was so magical," she says. "Communing in and out of the water with so many lovely swimmers is always life affirming."



Images: Sally Hooper

## MORE INFO

[vobster.com](http://vobster.com)

For more night swimming tips see October issue of *Outdoor Swimmer*.

After the swim, Soul Dough Pizza, Vobster's burger van and The Horse Box bar all help swimmers refuel. The £30 ticket price includes a high-visibility swim cap, a fleece-lined Glow Swim beanie, an optional glow stick and a slice of pizza. The buzzing lakeside is full of smiling swimmers, cosy in their new hats, chatting about their experience.

With the increase in popularity of outdoor swimming and a growing appetite for everyday adventures, more people are drawn to night swims. Vobster already has additional evening events planned, with live music and a shared feast for swimmers to enjoy after a dip.

The Glow Swim was scheduled to coincide with the full moon. Although the moon didn't break through the clouds to make an appearance, the swimmers brought more than enough glow to go around. 🌕