



**MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY**  
**News Release**

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*Tourism is Everybody's Business!*

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**XTERRA SAIPAN CHAMPIONSHIP ON MARCH 18, 2017**

**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – Expect a tightly contested race in XTERRA Saipan Championship's 16th edition with former winners coming back and other big name pros competing for the first time to earn the bragging rights of clinching the Crown Jewel of the world's toughest off-road triathlon event.

XTERRA Saipan, organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority, is the first leg of the nine stops of the Asia-Pacific Tour. The race is set on March 18, 2017, beginning with a 1.5-kilometer swim off the waters of Micro Beach, followed by a punishing 30K bike ride up and down the off-road hills, and a 12K epic run going through the tropical rainforest, past World War II relics, and inside secret caves. Registration is open until March 16, 2017, at [www.xterrasaipan.org](http://www.xterrasaipan.org).

"We're looking forward to welcoming all athletes from the Marianas and abroad for another great race on March 18," said MVA Managing Director Christopher A. Concepcion.

An exciting subplot of this year's edition is the anticipated face-off between Australian pros Ben Allen and Brodie Gardner, who are both returning to again test their skills in one of the most technical layouts of XTERRA's Global Tour events.

Gardner was last year's winner in his XTERRA Saipan debut, conquering the course even with less than an hour sleep making his victory more interesting. The Sunshine Coast, Queensland resident was supposed to arrive on Thursday, two days before the actual race, but encountered some problems with his papers but still managed to make it to Saipan. He arrived at 1:30 a.m., less than five hours before the race starts, and was among the competitors at the starting line at 6am but still managed to finish the entire course in 2:52:46, more than one minute ahead of Japan's Takahiro Ogasawara, who is also expected to make a run for the men's crown.

Allen, meanwhile, skipped last year's race together with his fiancée Jacqui Slack of Great Britain due to limited travel funds. He will return this year to reclaim the men's pro title that he won four consecutive years from 2012 to 2015, tying two-time Olympian Olivier Marceau's record streak from 2004 to 2007.

Yuichi Hosoda and Akihiko Maeda would join Ogasawara that would competing in the Men's Pro Elite along with Austrians Markus Benesch and Dominik Wychera, Russian Aleksandr Dorovskikh, American Will Kelsay, the Philippines' Joe Miller, and Bradley Weiss of South Africa.

Carina Wasle of Austria was among the first who confirmed of competing in the women's division where she hopes to defend the crown she has won twice in the last three years.

Canada's Mike Vine (men's) and California native Jamie Whitmore (women's) won the inaugural event in 2002 with the latter reigning for two more years before being dethroned by Switzerland's Renata Bucher, who went on to win a record seven times including six straight from 2005 to 2010.

Whitmore is best remembered for clinching the 2004 World Championships aside from claiming 37 titles in various races around the world and winning her battle against cancer, where she received an ESPY for Best Female Athlete with a Disability in 2014. She was also enshrined on the XTERRA Hall of Fame in 2012.



File photo of the 2015 XTERRA Saipan Championship in the Marianas. The 2017 XTERRA Saipan Championship will be held on March 18, 2017.

The Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are a chain of idyllic islands in the West Pacific, offering a friendly, fun and exciting vacation in paradise. They are an excellent destination for families, adventure and sports-minded travelers, as well as business people looking for a tropical haven. Adventurous travelers from Asia, Australia, Europe, North and South America and elsewhere looking for new travel discoveries will find them in the Mariana Islands, just three hours travel from most cities in Japan, and four to five from other parts of Asia and Australia. The Northern Marianas are served daily from Tokyo-Narita in Japan by Delta Air Lines with seasonal flights by Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, Jin Air and Eastar Jet provide direct flights from Seoul-Incheon, and Asiana also provides service from Busan. From China, direct flight service from Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong to Saipan are available. Philippine Airlines provides nonstop service from Manila to Saipan and connects with many cities in China and Southeast Asia. United Airlines has daily flight connections from six cities in Japan to Saipan with one stop. United States mainland connections can be made to Saipan via Tokyo-Narita, Seoul-Incheon or Guam. Visitors from Russia and Taiwan usually arrive via Seoul, Tokyo or Manila. Interisland travel is provided by United Express (Cape Air) and Star Marianas Air. For more information on the Marianas, visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).

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