



Media Tipsheet

Anticipation Grows in Advance of First-Ever IRONMAN World Championship in Greater Zion

St. George, Utah – February 28, 2022 – Excitement abounds as [Greater Zion](#) prepares to host the 2021 IRONMAN World Championship on May 7, 2022. Known as the longest running and most distinguished endurance event in the world, this will be the first time the race has been held outside of Hawaii. As the international field of athletes prepares to travel to the destination, new restaurants and distinctive activities and attractions open to meet travelers' needs.

The world's top endurance athletes are preparing for a return to championship level racing with the [2021 IRONMAN World Championship](#). Due to challenges presented by Covid-19, this will mark the first time since 2019 the prestigious global event has taken place. The 2020 iteration of the race was cancelled altogether and the 2021 race was postponed and relocated from Kona, Hawaii to Greater Zion. Heralded as possibly "the biggest event in Utah since the 2002 Winter Olympics" by Jeff Robbins, CEO of the Utah Sports Commission, nearly 3,500 competitors from more than 100 countries are expected to compete.

Impressive Professional Field Shaping Up

The professional athletes who have qualified for the 2021 IRONMAN World Championship include a number of well-known competitors. Colorado's Sam Long who was recently named a "mover and shaker to watch" in the sport by *Triathlete Magazine* is among the pros who qualified to compete. *Triathlete* predicted that spectators should get ready to see Long, who placed second in the 2021 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, on many more podiums. One of three triplets born prematurely, doctors predicted Long and his siblings may lag behind. Now the 6-foot-4-inch-tall athlete, nicknamed "the big unit" is one to watch this May in St. George.

Salt-Lake-City-based Skye Moench is also expected to compete at the professional level in the event happening in her home state of Utah. Moench suffered a traumatic bike crash in 2019 that left her with a shattered elbow and thumb. After multiple surgeries and physical therapy, Moench originally hoped to return to racing in 2020 when a global pandemic stepped in to sideline her again. Finally in 2021, Moench roared back with impressive IRONMAN finishes in Texas and Oklahoma, and finished sixth at the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship last September in St. George.

At least two Olympic athletes, Norway's Kristian Blummenfelt and Gustav Iden, are also expected to be among the competitors. Blummenfelt claimed the gold medal for triathlon in Tokyo in 2021 with an impressive one-kilometer full sprint to the finish. His teammate Iden finished eighth on the Olympic stage, saying afterwards that he felt he hadn't arrived at the games in peak form. Iden fought back with a new training regimen to take home the Championship in the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship in St. George a few months later. Now the two countrymen will once again face off on an international stage for the title.

Inspiring Competitors

Any athlete who chooses to complete the grueling IRONMAN course is inspiring, but competitors like Utah's Kyle Brown take admiration to another level. In 2021, the 51-year-old Brown noticed something was off as he was training for an upcoming triathlon. With his speech in decline and muscles beginning to twitch, Brown was diagnosed with an aggressive form of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or ALS, known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and given months to live. Determined to seize the day, Brown developed a list of experiences he wanted to have and completing an IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship was at the top of the list.

In September 2021, Brown reached his goal when he competed in the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship in St. George. His story in that race, along with others, is highlighted extensively in the OutsideTV film, IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship. Now Brown is taking it one step further, training for a full IRONMAN and he is expected to compete in the IRONMAN World Championship in May.

Gearing up for IRONMAN

Competitors are gearing up, literally, for the first-ever IRONMAN World Championship to take place outside of Hawaii. The dramatic red rock scenery of Greater Zion won't be the only difference in the events, as athletes prepare to tackle weather and water temperature variances as well. While the Kona courses are known to challenge athletes with extreme heat, Greater Zion may offer more temperate conditions, including an estimated 62-degree water temperature at Sand Hollow State Park, where the 2.4-mile swim takes place. Performance wetsuit brand, Deboer has stepped up to the meet the changes head on with the introduction of the new Floh 2.0 wetsuit, specifically designed for the IRONMAN in St. George. The innovative new suit provides exceptional movement in water temperatures as low as 55 degrees. World Championship favorites, Blummenfelt and Iden are expected to sport the new wetsuit during the competition as they seek a win.

IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship

The excitement will continue when Greater Zion plays host to the 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship October 28-29. Previously scheduled to be hosted in New Zealand, the international event was relocated to Greater Zion after the destination successfully hosted the 2021 iteration of the event. More than 6,000 athletes, representing 110 countries are expected to compete in the half-distance triathlon. The event will mark the third world championship event hosted by Greater Zion in 13 months, a feat without precedent in IRONMAN history.

New Dining, Star Gazing, Hiking Permits, Expected Dark Sky Designation & More

New Restaurant, Bakery, Gift Shop & Theater Open in Springdale

The historic Bumbleberry Inn in Springdale will debut a new onsite restaurant, bakery gift shop and theater in March. The 50-year-old property was damaged in a fire in 2020 that spared the Inn, but destroyed a building that housed the former restaurant and theater. The new facility will offer an expanded gift shop as well as a 200-seat, state-of-the-art, multipurpose theater for concerts, performances and parties. To highlight the national park views, the new restaurant will offer expanded outdoor seating in conjunction with the Inn's trademark bumbleberry pie, homemade fudge and ice cream.

New Permit Process for Angels Landing Hike

Beginning on April 1, 2022, permits will be required to hike portions of Angels Landing in Zion National Park. The pilot program was put in place by The National Park Service to protect the trail, known as one of the most popular in the park. Visitors can receive a permit by entering one of four seasonal lotteries,

selecting several preferences for dates and times, or a different lottery the day before their planned hike. It will cost \$6 to enter any of the lotteries and successful permit holders will pay a \$3 per person fee. The permit is only required for the one-half-mile, chained section of Angels Landing. Visitors are still able to hike the West Rim Trail from the trailhead at the Grotto to the spectacular viewpoints at Scout Lookout without a permit. Additionally, visitors can continue along the West Rim Trail beyond Scout Lookout for more remarkable views of Zion.

Stargazing Zion Offers Guided Night Sky Exploration

Discover the star-filled skies of Greater Zion with tours from the new Stargazing Zion. During the tours, certified Dark Sky astronomers will guide guests as they gaze at the Milky Way, distant galaxies and the occasional meteor shower from a field adjacent to Zion National Park, a newly dedicated International Dark Sky Park. Stargazing Zion provides each guest with their own zero gravity lounger, a blanket, a set of Celestron binoculars and access to state-of-the-art telescopes as well as deep-sky imagery to take home after the tour.

Springdale Readies for Dark Sky Designation

The town of Springdale, known as the gateway to Zion National Park, is expected to be named a Dark Sky Community by the International Dark Sky Association in 2022. Springdale began preparing for the designation in 2009 by passing lighting ordinances to protect the night sky. If successful, Springdale will be the third community in Utah to receive the prestigious designation.

Transportation Tips: Flight & Bike Options

Dandy Tandems Opens in St. George

This spring, Dandy Tandems is set to open in St. George offering tandem bikes, beach cruisers, scooters and more. The shop will be the first, and only, location to offer tandem bike rentals in Greater Zion. The location will offer easy access to some of the most popular bike trails in the area, providing a convenient way to get the whole family out exploring.

Daily Non-Stop Flights from Dallas/Ft. Worth to St. George Regional Airport Resume

American Airlines will resume its popular, daily non-stop flight service from Dallas/Ft. Worth International Airport (DFW) to St. George Regional Airport (SGU). With the addition of the service, more than 220 destinations now offer travelers a gateway to adventure in Greater Zion through 900 daily departures. The service is offered seasonally, with daily service resuming in March.

For more information on Greater Zion events, lodging options, cuisine, travel tools and more, please visit GreaterZion.com.

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Visit the Greater Zion [media asset](#) portal for high resolution, downloadable images and video of the destination.

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