

Manhattan

In Diana Nyad's first memoir, 1978's *Other Shores*, she acknowledges two of the six women who preceded her around Manhattan. By 1981, she was claiming to be the first. A 2011 CNN investigation prompted her to stop, but she was back at it less than a year later.

Ida Elionsky's time was a very respectable 11 hours, 35 minutes. There were others who made the swim . . . Diane Struble plunged into the Battery waters on August 15, 1959, and reached her original starting point in 11 hours, 21 minutes.

– 1978, *Other Shores*, [p. 57](#)

Digging through the library, [Nyad] discovered 11 men had done it – and decided to be the first woman.

– 1981, [Journal Herald](#)

I had gone down to the swank West Side Boat Basin and paraded around, announcing my goal to be the first woman ever to do this feat.

– 2004, KCRW's *The Score*, [complete episode](#) | [clip](#)

In 1975, I found that not only had Gertrude Ederle never swum around Manhattan, no other woman had done it either . . . I was determined to be the first.

– 2007, KCRW's *The Score*, [complete episode](#) | [clip](#)

I was the first woman to swim around Manhattan Island.

– [“Walking Funny with Diana Nyad,”](#) (2009)
[“Diana Nyad's Extreme Dream”](#) (2010 - [clip](#))

In July 2010, Steven Munatones posts “Ida Elinosky [sic] Rounded New York First In 1916”:

In response to recent press reports about Diana Nyad surrounding her upcoming Cuba swim in August, the NYC Swim provided the following historical information about swims around Manhattan Island.

The first woman to successful[ly] complete a non-stop circumnavigation was Ida Elinosky in 1916 who did it in 11 hours and 35 minutes - not Diana in 1975.

...

NYC Swim posted a warm wish to Diana, "*With so many accomplishments to her credit, Diana's record needs no embellishment. We welcome her return to the sport and the increased visibility she brings to marathon swimming.*"

– [archived](#) - scroll down

**I am quite frankly stunned to hear now
that this title is probably not mine to claim.**

– June 2011, "[History Rewritten....to my GREAT Surprise!](#)" (archived)

Diana decided to try swimming around Manhattan. This had been done a few decades earlier by men but never by a woman.

– May 2012, [Elle magazine](#)

I was the first woman to swim around Manhattan Island.

– 2015, *Find a Way*, [p. 66](#)

Before Cuba, way back in 1975, the swim that made my heart race was Manhattan. I was the first woman to circle the island.

– 2016, [Facebook](#)

It's Never Too Late To Blame Someone Else

Nyad on Facebook, Oct 6, 2025 ([archived](#)):

I was misinformed by some NY press back at the time about being the first woman. I have reached out to the families of the women who swam Manhattan before me, to apologize, and they were each of them extremely gracious. I asked the publisher of my memoir to reprint and take that line out. I broke the speed record for both men and women that day but was not the first woman.

I'm in contact with two of the family members. Nyad hadn't spoken with either of them by the time she posted the above reply. She spoke with one sometime in the following days. The other told me that she had "not heard a word from Diana, though that would have been nice."

More examples of Nyad claiming to be first: [Diana: A Documentary](#) (July 2012); [Beachbody Summit](#) (2014); [Limitless Pursuits](#) (2015); [Facebook](#) (2015); [Mondays at the Mission](#) (2016).



Ida Elionsky (1916)

Image: courtesy of [Joanna Langfield](#).



Mille Gade (1921)

Image: [Vejle Amts Folkeblad](#).



Lottie Schoemmell (1926)

Image: [City of Toronto Archives](#)



Lillian Garrick (1929)

Image: c. 1944, courtesy of Denis Dunann



Anne Benoit (1930)

Image: [City of Toronto Archives](#)



Diane Struble (1959)

Image: [Times Union](#)

Above: The six women whose accomplishments Diana Nyad spent decades trying to erase. For details and clickable links see "[Manhattan \(1975\).](#)"

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