



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

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*Tourism is Everybody's Business!*

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MVA MANAGING DIRECTOR

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**JAPAN OLYMPIC MEDALIST TO JOIN FLIPPER RACE**

**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – Race organizers have announced that Ai Shibata, a Japanese Olympic gold medalist in the Athens 2004 Olympics, will join the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Saipan International Open Water Flipper Race Tournament this Saturday (June 23). Also, ferries will depart Smiling Cove Marina to Managaha promptly at 4:45 a.m. on Saturday, earlier than previously announced.

Shibata will support over 30 other participants from Japan who have registered for the event. Participants will have a final opportunity to register this Friday (June 22) from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the American Memorial Park amphitheater.

The race features a 1.5 km swim around Managaha, the most popular site for visitors to Saipan. This unique race requires swimmers to use wetsuits and fins. Snorkels and life jackets are also allowed. Competition age divisions are: 19-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60-and-up. Those age 18 and under will be entered into the Junior Division.

The race will begin at 6:30 a.m., followed by an island-style breakfast and awards ceremony on the white sand beaches of Managaha.

“Due to some scheduling conflicts, the ferries will depart on Saturday at 4:45 a.m. We encourage participants to register early for logistical planning purposes, no later than Friday,” said MVA Community Projects Manager Martin Duenas.

The cost is \$25 for Northern Mariana Is. Residents with valid I.D. Participants must be in good health with snorkeling or diving experience.

The event is also sponsored by the Community Sports Center Foundation of Japan.

For more information or to register, contact the MVA at 1.670.664.3210, or visit the Events Calendar at [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).

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 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 from Asia and Australia. The Northern Marianas are served from Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka in Japan by Delta Air Lines and Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana provides direct flights from Seoul and Busan. For more information visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).

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