



Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – Saturday 27 September to Sunday 5 October 2025

Tuesday 30 September 2025

One hundred years of naval architecture

At the stroke of 10 this morning in bright sunshine, the kilted crewman on *Elena of London* breathed life into his bagpipes to signal the Tradition yachts' departure from the port of St Tropez. Split into 9 classes, the 81 classic yachts, with the schooner *Atlantic* taking the role of flagship, took to the stage in Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, preceded the day before by the Modern and Maxi yachts. Once again, the entire history of naval architecture paraded in front of the Village atop the Jean Réveille jetty. A genuine feast for the eyes!

A journey through time and space

A huge fan of the Nioulargue, Eric Tabarly used to say that wandering along the quayside in St Tropez during the event was like "strolling through the pages of a book on maritime history." It is a sentiment that still resonated at teatime at the Portalet Tower, where the ferocious race starts among the Modern fleet were followed by a great swathe of Tradition yachts.

An epic journey in time and space, from New York with the P Class yachts, to Fairlie in Scotland where the three generations of Fife designs were born, on to Sydney and Auckland with the 12mRs match racing across the line as they did in their heyday (Perth, 1987!)

It is also an opportunity to catch a glimpse of some newcomers like *Cariad*, the large Arthur Payne gaff ketch (36 m), salute the new centenarian *Leonora*, an Anker designed Q Class and rejoice at the return of the elegant *Sumurun* (35-metre Fife), now owned by Jean-Pierre Dréau, and the formidable *Spartan* (22 m Herreshoff).

The highlight of the on-the-water extravaganza was at 1:30 pm when the Race Committee launched the last start procedure of the day, that of the Big Boats competing for the Rolex Trophy. Though the only sloop of this exceptional 10-boat fleet, *Cambria*, quickly snatched the lead, the sight of *Atlantic* fully powered up level with the committee boat as the starting gun fired, will remain an iconic moment in the history of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

Maxi GPs: All-out racing!

Measuring 70 to 72 feet, the Maxi GPs make up a top-flight quintet, which virtually competes in elapsed time since there is precious little separating them in terms of rating. The most senior member of this category, *Jethou* has not aged a jot since 2012 thanks to the fabulous upkeep

by her owner Sir Peter Ogden. This black beauty designed by Judel Vrolijk has a medium rating but is guaranteed to be dangerous.

Vesper and *Jolt* boast the highest ratings. The former, skippered by Jim Schwartz, pocketed a win in the first race at Les Voiles, whilst Peter Harrison's Botin design *Jolt* was champion of last year's large Maxi class, part of the GP fleet. This pair owe less than 3 minutes per hour of racing to Peter Dubens' *North Star* and *Django X*, the new Wally Rocket 71 only launched this year and the recent winner of the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

Built last year at King Marine in Valencia, this 21.40 m Maxi is actually quite the gamble. 2 metres shorter and 2 tonnes lighter, some might say that she's the spoilsport of the category. She compensates for her lightweight design through the use of 2.7-tonne ballast tanks on each side. "The boat is very at ease downwind and on a reach, confirms Vasco Vascotto, the on-board tactician. To win a race though, you have to be able to survive on a beat!" To achieve this balance, special attention has gone into the way 2,700 litres of water is transferred from one side of the boat to the other in 6 to 7 seconds flat. Filled in upward of 8 to 9 knots of true wind and not necessarily at full capacity, the ballast tanks play a controlling role. Vasco compares them to "a crew member out on the trapeze who plays around with the length of their cable!" Using them does make tactics rather complicated though, especially when choosing which side to leave the leeward gate (which ballast tank to fill at the end of the downwind tack?) and the timing of the rounding to avoid having to drag around too much weight and finding yourself fully powered up on a beat.

Modern yachts: The initial hierarchy

After two days of racing which have seen the light airs reshuffle the cards and irrefutable victory go to *Vesper* today, Zen has consolidated her place at the top of the leaderboard among the big IRC boats and the medal battle is tantalisingly close in IRC 1 between *Zappy S*, *Andante 4* and *Arya*. In the other classes, *Give Me Five* (IRC2), *Pride* (IRC3) and *Mikala* (IRC4) are in the top spots this evening.

It is worth noting that a minimum of four races must be run on these boats in order to scratch the worst result from the overall ranking.

One day, one boat: *Atlantic*, history in the making

A replica of the schooner that set the 1905 transatlantic record in the hands of Charlie Barr and his 50 crewmen, *Atlantic* was built of steel between 2007 and 2010 at Van der Graaf (Rotterdam) for Dutchman Ed Kastelein. Amazingly, she had never participated at Les Voiles until now. "At the instigation of our guests, who thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of the races last year, it was decided *Atlantic* should take part," explains Fosse Fortuin, captain of the 65-metre yacht since 2018, who previously worked alongside Steve McLaren on *Elena of London*. To prepare for her racing debut, having changed owner last year, the boat was delivered to the Talsma yard in Holland. Given a new livery and generator, *Atlantic* also had all her rigging removed. The shrouds were upgraded, along with any suspect parts of the steel mast, plus she had a new suit of flatter sails made for her at Zaoli in San Remo, including an enormous 820 m² gennaker! This new sail wardrobe has raised *Atlantic*'s game considerably, especially in breezy conditions where the schooner is able to consistently post an average speed of 16 to 17 knots with just her lower sails, resulting in an amazingly smooth yet safe ride," enthuses Fosse.

For Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, *Atlantic*'s captain has rallied together some reinforcements with none other than Italian sailmaker Beppe Zaoli and a slew of Dutch sailors. "They've come from the Talsma yard and they have racked up a lot of experience sailing large classic yachts in tight spaces. They are giants in their field and their assistance is invaluable!" gushes Fosse.

With an LOA of 65 metres, the start phases require the utmost attention from the 30 members of the crew as they try to locate 'the clearest zone possible' for powering up the 300 tonnes of boat powered by 1,750 m² of sail area split between ten sails. To step things up a gear with what Fosse calls a 'Hollywood sail area', a spinnaker and several 'fisherman' sails must be hoisted to fly a whopping 2,600 m² of sail on this icon of yachting.

Once she has finished performing at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, *Atlantic* will head to the Caribbean for Antigua Sailing Week before returning to Scotland in 2026 and then setting a course for the Mediterranean again, where she may well compete at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez again! "The new owner is very enthusiastic," says Fosse Fortuin. "2027 should see us making for the Pacific, with a schedule that includes French Polynesia, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, before a return journey via South Africa and Brazil..."

2025 VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ PROGRAMME

Wednesday, October 1: Racing for Modern and Classic yachts, including the Rolex Trophy.

Day off for Maxis

Thursday, October 2: Club 55 Cup, Wally Rocket 51 Match Race, Gstaad YC Centenary Trophy (Pursuit race), Challenge Day for Modern and Classic yachts, racing for Maxis

Friday, October 3: Racing for Maxi, Modern and Classic yachts, including the Rolex Trophy

Saturday, October 4: Racing for Maxi, Modern and Classic yachts, including the Rolex Trophy, Prize giving for Maxis

Sunday, October 5: Prize giving for Modern and Classic yachts, including the Rolex Trophy

The full programme for Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez is available online at

<https://www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr/en/presentation/program>

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