



Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – Saturday 26 September to Sunday 4 October 2026
30 September 2026

Les Voiles synonymous with sport and sharing

Wednesday marks the midway point in this year's edition of Les Voiles in the picturesque town of St Tropez in the south of France. The Modern and Tradition yachts were back out on the racecourse today, each category validating another race in some brisk conditions, whilst the Maxis enjoyed some time out. Just two of the latter group were out on the water today, *Tilakkhana II* (the 35-metre Wallycento) pitted against *Balthasar* (the 22-metre Maxi GP) for the traditional Club 55 Maxi Yacht Cup. A friendly challenge, like the one laid down by the three J Classes, it embodies the Corinthian spirit so cherished by Patrice de Colmont, creator of the Nioulargue, who passed away last year and whose presence is still a powerful force in this 28th edition of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

Modern yachts: The initial standings

With three races contested, we're beginning to get an idea about the standings in the IRC fleet, though it has to be said that every hotly disputed start comes with the risk of making a mistake and shaking up the scoreboard. Such is the case for *Knutte* and *Albator 3*, which both overshot the start this morning and incurred a five-point penalty with no possibility of making amends in line with the Sailing Instructions: "It acts as a strong deterrent normally as we can ill afford having competitors turning back on themselves to recross the line and we can't have multiple starts given the number of categories we have to get through each morning," explains Georges Korhel, the Principal Race Officer.

In IRC 0, *Spirit of Lorina* scored the bullet today ahead of *Daguet 5*, which was first across the line but was not spared by her rating (3 minutes per hour of racing between the two boats). Making their debut this season, the crew led by Jean-Pierre Barjon and Marcelo Pica on this fairly old TP52, a 2012 Botin design, has clearly got to grips with their steed and is a regular at the front of the fleet. *Spirit of Lorina* is currently vying for supremacy in the overall ranking after three races, with some stiff opposition from the German team on *Knutte*. Up for grabs is none other than the BMW Trophy.

In IRC1, the Farr 45 *Favorit* secured victory today but the match for the podium looks set to be between four boats so far: *Lisa R*, *Pretexte 2*, *Zappys* and *Searcher 2*. In IRC2, *J Wow* is continuing to enjoy a near perfect competition in wind conditions which really suit the powerful Johnstone design. In IRC 3, the Jayson family's Swan 44 *Pride* excelled today, the reigning champion taking her first win in this edition. Finally, in IRC 4, *Iskareen* regained the speed she demonstrated on Monday and proved that the Swan 391 is very much in contention for outright victory.

In IRC classes 1 to 4, the livelier conditions which prevailed on Tuesday and Wednesday, have largely favoured the cruiser-racers. Tomorrow's Challenge Day means that the pressure is off everyone tomorrow, before a return to the racetrack for two more races on Friday and Saturday.

Tradition yachts: The old beauties

Like yesterday, honours for the finest start this Wednesday went to the Big Boats grouped together within the Grand Tradition category. These eleven majestic 22 to 56-metre yachts all hark back to the golden age of yachting. Their very presence makes them its standard bearers, as evidenced by the timeless *Tuiga*, missing last year but back in action in 2026 with Jimmy Spithill at the helm, who always posts an inspiring performance and finished the day in second place. *Elena Of London* and *Viveka* managed to hold their own

like yesterday, whilst *Atlantic* carefully set sail a little astern of the fleet with her 65-metre LOA weighing in at 300 tonnes.

The gaff topsails were not part of today's sail wardrobe and several of the Marconi rigs had put in a reef or rolled up some of their sail area to remain in control in the E'ly breeze gusting in excess of 15 knots at times around midday. "Yesterday, we set sail under light genoa as there was less breeze in the bay, but later on we had to hang on in there as things got a bit lively and the boat's structure was really put to the test!" confirmed Guillaume Wattinne, owner of *Svanevit* this morning. This 1939 8mR was designed by the Swedish naval architect Tore Holm, the man who created *Svea* two years earlier. In fact, Guillaume was preparing to pay a visit to the crew of the J Class to present them with a biography of the architect, a master craftsman who was typical of the age and, not content with designing, also built his boats in the family yard and was a brilliant helmsman on the racing circuit to boot. *Svanevit* is one of three 8mRs competing in the Classique Marconi category, where the Q class *Leonore* (Anker design) is topping the leader board ahead of another 8mR *Carron 2*, which has already earned the accolade of world champion of the series multiple times.

Among the P Class yachts, yesterday's fearsome battle resulted in victory for *Chips*, which finished just 7 seconds ahead of *Joyant* in corrected time. The crews' commitment at the marks speaks volumes about their eagerness to snaffle the prestigious Rolex Trophy and *Olympian* cannot afford to make any mistakes after her disqualification yesterday whilst she was leading the way. However, the green P Class still has everything to play for, having nailed the win today in dazzling fashion, carrying a great combination of sails from the get-go under full mainsail and J2, whilst the other P Classes had one reef in the mainsail and began to labour in the dying breeze at the finish.

Finally, a word about the IORs, where it goes without saying that *Il Moro di Venezia* was absolutely supreme in 2025, albeit as a virtual loner. This year though, she is really going to have her work cut out against the One Tonners, which are half the size and are owed... 15 minutes per hour of racing. The class of 2026 boasts seven craft, the lowest rating being the charming *Tarantella*, built of polyester with a timber rubbing strake, the Nautor yard's first racer-cruiser. This 1966 11-metre Sparkman and Stephens design kickstarted the Swan series built in Finland beside a sea that freezes over for four months of the year. Made of sterner stuff than most, the company remains in Pietarsaari to this day, despite the temperature challenges of carbon construction and some of the highest labour rates in the world!

Club 55 Maxi Yacht Cup

The Wallycento *TilakkanaII* helmed by Pascale Decaux, won the first of the Club 55 Cups today, pitted against the Maxi GP *Balthasar*. A friendly match run in elapsed time, free of any handicap calculations, just the way Patrice de Colmont wanted when he created the Nioulargue in 1981.

Indeed, the boss of the famous Club 55 likely thought that regatta racing was too serious a matter to be left to racers, as he was not a competitive man, preferring instead tiny bivouacs dotted about the islands aboard *Cocotte*, the little mahogany sports dinghy built by Matonnat, which he sailed on as a child. However, he did love the sea, beautiful boats and those who sailed them. The master of improvisation as well as a shrewd manager, an extraordinary storyteller as well as a great listener, a host to the stars as well as a friend to writer, farmer and environmentalist Pierre Rabhi, whose produce he used himself in the kitchens of the Club 55, Patrice de Colmont was a true one-off who managed to retain a light touch and a sense of boldness in his vision to organise and grow this week-long festival of racing, the likes of which exist nowhere else on earth. He continued to host the crews competing in Wednesday and Thursday's challenge days in line with a tradition that began with the Swan 44 *Pride* and the 12mR *Ikra* in 1981.

Having passed away after a short but cruel illness on 11 October 2025, this 28th edition of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez is the first 'without Patrice' and yet his spirit lives on.

2026 Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez Schedule

Thursday, October 1: Club 55 Cup, Gstaad Yacht Club des Centenaires Trophy (staggered starts), Challenge Day for the Moderns and Classics, Wallynano37 Challenge

Races for the Maxis

Friday, October 2: Races for the Maxis, Moderns, and Classics, including the Rolex Trophy

Saturday, October 3: Races for the Maxis, Moderns, and Classics, including the Rolex Trophy. Prize-giving for the Maxis, including the Edmond de Rothschild Trophy

Presentation of the Rolex Trophy

Sunday, October 4: Prize-giving for the Moderns and Classics, including the BMW Trophy and special trophies

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