



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

1 October 2026

Power to the imagination!

Rainy Thursday, happy Thursday! On this very special day given over to informal gatherings in the playful spirit championed by the Nioulargue, the enthusiasm of the crews signed up for Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez triumphed over the damp conditions and elusive breeze. All bets were on amongst the various challenges laid down between competitors in the Club 55 Yacht Cup, which saw *Hallowe'en* pitted against *Mariella*.

Having survived a lot worse, some 18 centenarians set sail on a high-speed chase, which was as magnificent as their venerable age. Meantime, around twenty crews prepared for this evening's parade through the town in fancy dress, in what is yet another eagerly awaited event synonymous with all power to the imagination.

18 fighting fit centenarians

The secret to eternal life for these eighteen boats seems to come down to finding passionate owners who truly relish their heritage and the fact that they are but custodians of these historical treasures.

And so it was that eighteen centenarians answered the call from the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez which, in association with the Gstaad Yacht Club, organised the Centenary Trophy for the 15th consecutive year.

The key advantage of this high-speed chase is that the winner is plain for all to see as it is the first across the finishing line since the starts are staggered according to each of their ratings. As such, the lovely little Epoque Gaffer *Lulu*, measuring just 11.50 m in length, was first out of the starting blocks this morning. The 29-metre Fife design, *Sumurun*, reported to be the fastest according to the measurement calculated by the Centre International de la Méditerranée, set sail 43 minutes later! Meantime, we note the presence of the four P Classes and the 101-year-old *Leonore*, last year's winner and newcomer to this hallowed club of sprightly centenarians.

On the 9-mile sprint, the gaff cutter *Kismet* moved up into the top spot ahead of another Fife design, *Tuiga*, skippered by Pierre Casiraghi, vice-president of the Yacht Club de Monaco and winner of the Admiral's Cup 2025 with a team flying the YCM's flag. Naturally, the further along the racetrack they got, the more those with high ratings were favoured. However, at the finish right in front of the Village des Voiles, it was Sir Richard Matthews's *Kismet*, winner of the Centenary Trophy in 2022, which secured victory.

She's the fourth yacht to have her name etched onto the cup twice, after *Olympian* (2014 and 2021), *Oriole* (2015 and 2023), and *Thilly XV* (2017 and 2018)

Club55 Yacht Cup: Hallowe'en forever

A centenarian herself this year, *Hallowe'en* celebrated her birthday in style by challenging the defender of the Club 55 Yacht Cup, *Mariella*, the Mylne design yawl. These two Tradition yachts have been trading places on the leader board since Tuesday, and this latest Challenge was a wonderful little nod to the regatta they've been embroiled in within the Big Boat category. "What better way to round off the season than with Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez and this Challenge, which concludes with a friendly lunch at the Club 55?" said the New Zealand captain and owner of *Hallowe'en*, Inigo Strez, this morning in the mahogany saloon of his Fife design. Delighted by the prospect of this encounter, Inigo has been *Hallowe'en*'s custodian for some 18 years now and he is also the captain and helmsman, which is quite a rarity on a yacht of this size. His victory today against *Mariella* rewards a lifelong passion.

Challenges, or the art of improvisation

The history of Les Voiles dictates that Thursday is traditionally dedicated to Challenges. Each competitor may challenge whoever they wish (should the challenge be accepted!) and the Race Committee positioned at the Portalet mark is available throughout the day to give them the starting signal and approve the finishes. Dockside yesterday, the crews set about arranging their informal, good-natured matches. In this way, *Pacha*, a Camper and Nicholson Marconi Classic from Bonifacio laid down the gauntlet to *Quatre quarts*, a Modern yacht from the same island. Thibault, the skipper of *Pacha* and organiser of the Corsica Classic, also invited the pretty Vaton design *Mister Fips* from Marseille and *Eileen 1938*, which he refers to as “the most beautiful Epoque Marconi,” to join them.

Beautiful as *Eileen 1938* may be, the same was true of the trio of three-masted schooners parading around the Gulf of St Tropez this morning. *Atlantic* was sailing alongside not one but two surprise guests: *Créole*, the 1927 Charles Nicholson design, and *Adix*, the Arthur Holgate design, a replica dating back to 1984. Flying some 4,500 m2 of sail area, the photos were both historic and epic.

The Maxis challenge the wind

Today also saw the Maxis from classes 2, 3 and 4 doing battle in a series of windward-leewards. The committee chaired by Yvon Poutriquet had planned to send the Maxi 1s along the 28-mile coastal course to Escalet and then Cavalaire today. Meanwhile, the 3 J Class yachts stuck to the format they’d been created for, namely round the cans races. With each of them boasting one bullet apiece in this very hotly contested regatta, today was all about gaining the advantage. Yesterday’s friendly match demonstrated that none of these giants are immune to glitches. Indeed, following the broken hook on *Svea* on Tuesday, *Hanuman* split her genoa in two on a gybe...!

Today, after a long wait in the bay, the committee finally decided to cancel the day’s racing at 2:30 pm due to the lack of breeze. As such, it will be game on for a rematch in the sunshine tomorrow.

3 questions to Stephan Kandler

Just back from the second Preliminary Regatta of the America’s Cup contested on AC40s in Naples, which saw the Frenchies finish third, Stephan Kandler popped by to see Les Voiles and pay a visit to the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, the supporting club for the Défi Orient Express

What is the boss of the French Challenge doing in St Tropez midway through preparations for the America’s Cup?!

I came from Naples, which is virtually a neighbour! It’s going to be our second campaign with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez as the official yacht club, because the America’s Cup is a challenge among yacht clubs first and foremost. Its president, Pierre Roinson, really believed in us three years ago whilst we were kind of the competition’s underdogs and we are very grateful for the trust he has shown in us. As such, paying our club a visit during Les Voiles has real meaning behind it. On top of that, the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez is a very powerful representative of France’s might in this highly international competition, which is a source of pride for every one of us.

This is particularly true given how familiar you are with the event having participated here before?

I came to compete at Les Voiles in the 1980s, when it was known as the Nioulargue. The first time was aboard the family’s First 51. Since then, we’ve raced on an ILC 40 and lots more besides. It was the early days of the Kandler family on the racetrack. What’s great here is that in five minutes, you cross paths with former crewmates, friends and well-known faces. I had the chance to visit the Club 55 today, which I haven’t done in over 30 years, so it was quite something...

Going back to Naples, despite a few blips the results were good, culminating with a fine third place...

It was certainly pretty full-on aboard the AC40s! A capsized on the first day, another whilst we were leading the race, but we finished third behind the two favourites, Luna Rossa and New-Zealand. My main takeaway is that we posted a very solid performance at the end of the competition, winning three out of the five races. What you have to remember is our ability to get on the scoreboard and always be in the leading group. It’s given us a real confidence boost and it’s shown the other challenges that we’re one to watch. It’s good news for the team too as they’ve given their all throughout September. We’re midway through our move from Lorient to Naples with a big 3,000 m2 base in build, and there were Sail GP regattas at the same time, plus this preliminary regatta in Naples...

So where are things at with the French AC 75?

She arrived in Naples last week, she's in her yard where she'll be prepared, and we should start sailing her in a fortnight's time. We'd planned to hit the water in early October, so we're bang on track and we'll be the first team to sail their AC 75 on the waters off Naples around 19 October, which is an important step forward. Teams which get an early start generally perform well and I hope it will be a good omen.

2026 Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez Schedule

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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www.societe-nautique-saint-tropez.fr

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