

# The great catamaran race returns

The Around French Island Catamaran Challenge, presented by the Cowes Yacht Club returns in March 2023.

After the success of last year's event, the race is back, bigger and better.

One of the biggest catamaran races in the country, the \$10,000 prize pool (over three divisions) with an overall line honours prize and some novelty prizes, is sure to attract competitors from across Victoria and interstate.

The event is scheduled to start at 11am on March 25 and spots are limited to 75 boats.

Registrations are now open, so anyone wanting to compete is advised to get in early, as places are expected to fill quickly.

It is a tough event averaging four to five hours (depending upon conditions) which will test the skills and endurance of all crews and boats.

GPS data from previous races has shown most boats that completed the race sailed roughly 100kms.

## Support

Australian Air Safaris are back for their second year as the major sponsor of the event, which is run by the Cowes Yacht Club.

The hard work of club members is complemented by support from sponsors including Isle of Wight Hotel, Moda, CLF, Phillip Island RSL, Ronstan, Westernport Water, Purple Hen, Bendigo Bank, Bass Coast Shire Council and NRMA Parks and Resorts.

The idea for the amazing race revamp came about as club members were discussing how the impact of Covid was taking the fun



Australian Air Safaris' founder Tony Kirkhope. As the event's major sponsor, Australian Air Safaris is providing the \$10,000 prize pool for this year's Around French Island Catamaran Challenge.

out of life.

Founder/owner of Australian Air Safaris Tony Kirkhope, who has holidayed for years in Cowes and whose family were founding members of the yacht club, suggested doing something about it, and hit on the idea of supersizing the club's most interesting event.

"Tony said he'd support a bigger event with prize money if the club would all pitch in and make it a national event," said David Arnold from the Cowes Yacht Club.

"Tony had a vision that this event that had been run on a small scale could be developed into the biggest off the beach catamaran race in Australia with the right promotion

and significant prize money.

"He could see how businesses had been impacted by Covid on the island, and he felt creating a big event could give back to the community."

David said Tony's enthusiasm and support for the event was a key part of its success.

"Tony has been an active member of the club in the many activities from the early days of intensive water skiing now to the focus on sailing and he has regularly skippered one of the rescue boats that shadow the Around French Island fleet over the last decades.

"Australian Air Safaris is again providing \$10,000 all of which

will be distributed as prize money across the winners and place getters of the divisions."

Tony is looking forward to this year's race superseding the excitement of the 2022 event.

"This great Catamaran Race was bigger than ever last year and Australian Air Safaris is supporting the great event this year, to put it on the map as the race the best catamaran sailors in Australia want to race in and win."

The portal to enter the Around French Island Catamaran Challenge for 2023 is now active: [www.cowesyachtclub.com/events/159623/](http://www.cowesyachtclub.com/events/159623/)

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The 2023 Around French Island Catamaran Challenge is scheduled to start at 11am on March 25. Photo: John Stapleton, Stapo Photography.

## Race details

The 2023 Around French Island Catamaran Challenge is scheduled to start at 11am on March 25, with the option for a resail on March 26 if conditions require.

The race starts and finishes at the Cowes Yacht Club, with a 70km course circumnavigating French Island.

Race conditions and rules are conducted under the guidance of Australia Sailing through the Racing Rules of Sailing. All boats must comply with AS Safety requirements for "Off the beach sailing" and are subject to audit on the day of the race. The latest Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions are available on the Cowes Yacht Club AFI site: [www.cowesyachtclub.com/sailing/around-french-island/](http://www.cowesyachtclub.com/sailing/around-french-island/)

Organisers describe the event as a marathon and said the course tests not only each entrant's skill level, but also their endurance.

The race will expose boats and crews to many and varied weather conditions.

Combined with winds coming over French Island causing varying wind direction and strengths, Westernport is subject to varying water depths; and the tidal movement causes variable tide flow directions and speeds.

The Cowes Yacht Club website provides the most up to date information and news about the race. Anyone wanting to register is advised to do so as soon as possible, as spaces are limited to 75. Please note, this is a gruelling event and novice sailors or unseaworthy boats may present safety issues for participants and organisers.

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NOTICE OF RACE AND SAILING INSTRUCTIONS GO TO [COWESYACHTCLUB.COM/AFI](http://COWESYACHTCLUB.COM/AFI)

## Around French Island Catamaran Challenge 2023

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## Midweek bowls

Great day for bowls, especially considering the short-day last week.

Twenty-four of our bowlers turned up at San Remo for the last day of the year. The green was difficult to master (to say the least), lightning fast at the start of the day and slowly reverting to normal over the course of the day.

A few "donations" towards the RCH were the order of the day, guess we will never learn and will continue to send down wrong bias bowls.

As usual laughter was prevalent across the green with lots of happy bowlers.

The lunch break was enjoyed by everyone with quite a lot of our group receiving wins in today's special raffle.

A special thank you to Gwen both for her great work in the kitchen and cleaning up at the end of the day, and also for her beautiful homemade pikelets with jam and cream.

Also thank you to Mark behind the bar. Winners on 36 points were John Nicholson (S), Gillian Harper (3), Frank D'Unienville (2), Peter McWilliams and Linsay Russell (L).

Runners up on 34 points were Mark Andre-

atta (S), Sue Stansfield (3), Robyn Dahl (2) and Peter Thorley (L).

Best One Game with 21 points were Michael Dady (S), Phil Wright (3), Michael Saunders (2) and Cheryl Floyd (L).

After the day's competitions we were the lucky recipients of some light snacks to end the day and as a celebration of the year past as well as Christmas fast approaching, it was much appreciated by the players.

At this point we would like to thank Peter and Pauline for their hard work throughout the year. They put so much effort into keeping our Thursday club going.

Before we sign off for the year, we should mention that the next game is in three weeks from now on January 5 at Koo Wee Rup.

So, to everyone who is part of our family of bowlers, thank you for the support throughout the year and we hope you have a wonderful Christmas with family and/or friends, as well as a very good New Year.

We hope to see you all at Koo Wee Rup next year.

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