

TOUR DU LEMAN A L'AVIRON

THE TOUR DU LEMAN A L'AVIRON, AN OUTSTANDING CHALLENGE

The Tour du Léman à l'Aviron rowing racing event is an international competition of endurance organised at the end of September by the rowing section of the Société Nautique de Geneve (SNG). The starting command is given on Saturday morning at eight o'clock from the north pier of Port Noir. The first Tour du Lac took place in 1972, year of the centennials of the organising club. Thanks to in particular the loyalty of its participants coming mainly from Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy but also from Great-Britain, the Netherlands, Hungary, Russia and even from the United States of America, the appreciation it has generated, the beauty of the landscape and the enthusiasm of all the volunteers participating in the organisation, the Tour du Léman à l'Aviron, which was originally intended as a single event, has become an international annual event, that some have not hesitated to qualify as « *Königin der Regatten* », well appreciated by long distance rowing lovers. Some have participated more than ten times, others fifteen and one competitor even more than twenty times.

The Tour du Léman à l'Aviron consists in rowing all the way round the Lake of Geneva clockwise non-stop and without extraneous assistance, departing from, and returning to Geneva after having passed by all the control marks. It is governed by the downloadable rules, the purpose of which is to ensure fair and equitable racing conditions.

This famous competition represents, **with its 160 km course, the longest non-stop rowing event in the world, taking place on a lake**. Besides, has it not been qualified by certain specialists of the "*heimliche Weltmeisterschaft*" of long distance regattas? The duration of the race varies according to weather conditions, the equipment of the boat and the level of the crewmembers **between 12 and 17 hours**. The record of the Tour has been set by the team of *RGM RC Hamm/Karlsruher Rheinklub Alemannia/Mainzer RV/Stuttgart-Cannstatter RC* at 11 hours 43 minutes and 30 seconds in 2011, as for the record of a sweep boat team it is held by *Ludwigshafener Ruderverein v. 1878/Mulheimer Ruderverein* in 12 hours and 53 minutes, in the Women Elite Category the record is held by *Dresdner Ruder-Club 1902 e. V. (Frauenpower)* in 14 hours and 55 seconds; the best time in the Masters category has been achieved by *RC Hamm/RC Nürtingen/Stuttgart-Cannstatter RC/Ulmer RC Donau* 12 hours 26 minutes and 31 seconds, the one for a Mixed Crew by *RGM Karlsruher Ruder-Verein Wiking v. 1879 e. V./Mainzer Ruder-Verein e.V.* in 12 hours 11 minutes and 45 seconds and the one for a Novice Crew by *Heidelberg Ruderklub von 1872 e.V.* in 12 hours 26 minutes and 40 seconds.

The Tour is a real human challenge because, beyond the physical performance, each crew must show solidarity and resistance to be able to reach its objectives.

This event is open only to rowing boats capable of facing the weather conditions of the Lake of Geneva, such as wind and waves, and which are intended for **four rowers and a coxswain**, equipped either for sweep oars or sculling oars. As a rule, the participants use "*yolettes*". During the Tour, the five crewmembers can alternatively row and cox.

The participants are divided into **various classes**: Men Elite and Women Elite, Masters (the average age of the team is at least 40 and the youngest member must have reached the age of 35 at least the year preceding the Tour), Mixed (crew in which at least two members are women) and according to entries, novices (crew with at least 4 rowers who have already participated in a maximum of three 3 Tours, excluding the year of the Tour in consideration) Sweep Boats, Juniors (the youngest crew member must have reached the age of 16 before or on the date of the Tour and the oldest one must not have attained the age of 19 during the year of the Tour). Composite crews made of members from various clubs are eligible to compete.

To participate to this event, the entry form must be accurately filled out and signed and must be received by the organiser before August 31 of the year of the Tour. In addition, each crew shall have paid its entry fee and conveyed the Declaration Waiver duly signed by each competitor at the latest the evening before the start of the race.

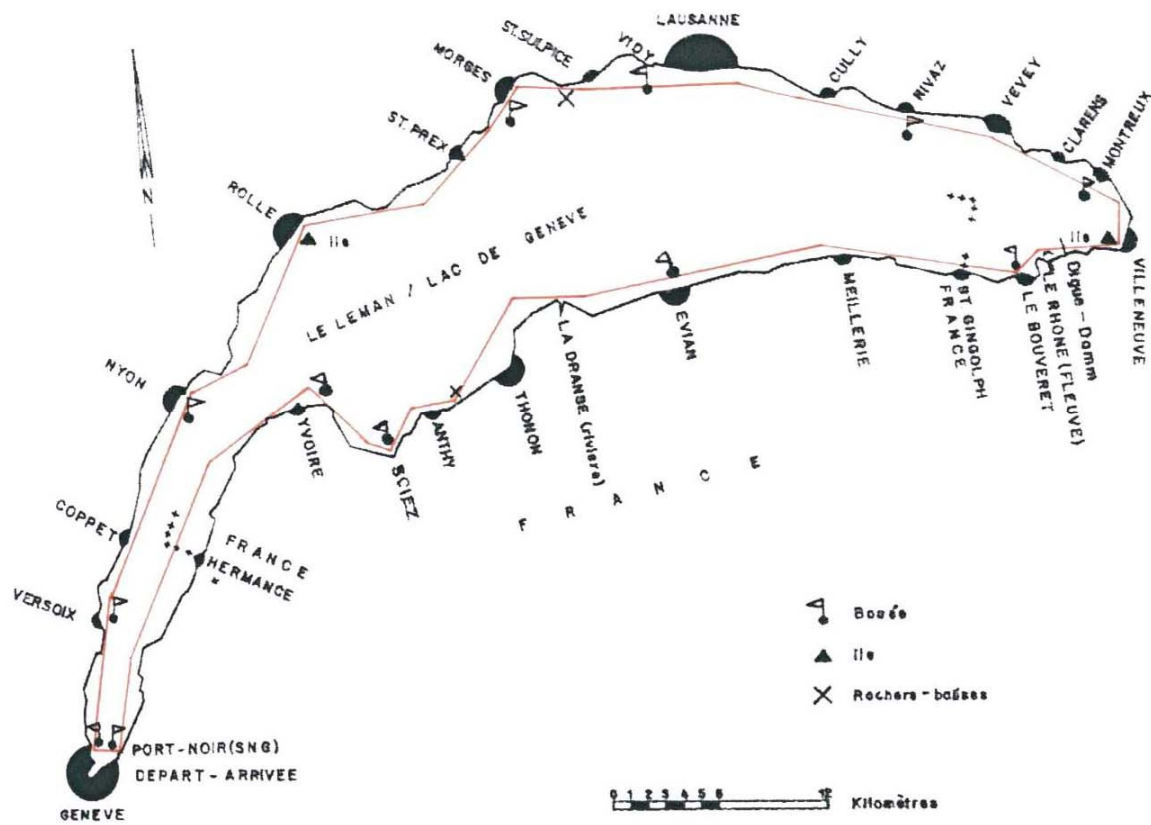
Because of the danger linked to this event and the physical efforts required to perform the Tour, the participants must, before being authorised to start the race, imperatively be able to swim at least 500 m, have reached the age of 16, be in good physical condition, present no counter-indications to the rowing activity on a competitive level, have undergone the type of training which is compatible with the requirements of the Tour and have the proper safety equipment such as life jackets, scoops etc. as well as sufficient food and drinks and eventually, the necessary visas to be authorised to enter the territories of the Swiss Confederation and/or the French Republic.

For safety reasons and though this shall be the individual duty of each participant, the organiser monitors, as far as possible, the teams on water with a fleet of motor boats and on land by a bus service. Moreover, the course is buoyed with more than ten control marks that each team must reach and where each passage is registered. Finally and for security reasons, it is specified that, under penalty of being excluded from the race, the control mark of Lausanne-Vidy (approx. 50 km) must be reached within less than six hours and thirty minutes and the control mark of Le Bouveret (approx. 85 km) in less than nine hours and with a time difference not exceeding three hours with the first team.

For those participants who so desire, dormitories can be put at their disposal in the shelters of the civil defence for the nights of Friday and Saturday.

After the prize giving ceremony, this exceptional sporting event ends on Sunday at noon around a convivial dinner during which the participants happy to have reached their objective share their experience and emotions and, as if bitten by the rowing bug, can't await for the next edition of the Tour.

Experiment this extraordinarily challenging event and don't hesitate to register for the next edition of the Tour !



The Crews along the UN premises

Photo A. Danon