



BARCELONA

PADDLE RACE

2023

10TH EDITION | DEC 16—17

14 KM DOWNWIND
BARCELONA >> BADALONA





BARCELONA PADDLE RACE 2023

2023 will be the Barcelona Paddle Race's grand anniversary with its 10th edition coming to the shores of Barcelona this December. Since its inception in 2012, it has become a benchmark event for downwind racing in Catalonia, with an ever increasing number of participants. As of last year, it is part of the International Canoe Federation's competition calendar. It is a unique event in ocean racing, being the only one that takes place along the shores of a major city, where participants can take in the views of the fantastic Barcelona architecture and skyline from the sea.

With its urban setting, the event also provides opportunity to introduce and popularise ocean racing and sea canoeing to new audiences. For many spectators, it will be for the first time that they see a surfski or outrigger canoe. While Spain has a long history and excellent track record in flatwater canoeing, competitive sea canoeing is a relatively new but dynamically growing scene, including the port cities of Catalonia.





BARCELONA AS DESTINATION

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest appeal of the race is the location itself. In the last couple of decades, Barcelona has transformed into one of the best coastal cities in the Mediterranean to set out onto the water and enjoy the sea with over ten sandy beaches and more than three active recreational ports for activities such as sailing, coastal rowing, and now paddle sports.

Cruising along the coast of Barcelona offers a unique way to enjoy the urban architecture and skyline with the city's iconic structures like the triple chimneys of the Sant Adria power plant, the scyscrapers of Poblenou like the Mapfre tower, its 'twin', the Hotel Arts Barcelona, the conical Torre Glories, all the way to the southernmost tip of Barcelona with the W Hotel, and of course, rising above them in the background are the Sagrada Familia, and the hills of Tibidabo and Montjuic. And after a refreshing day of paddling at sea, one can walk along the seaside promenade or discover new places while wandering the narrow streets of the old town.



RACE PROGRAM

EVENT DATE

DECEMBER 16-17, 2023

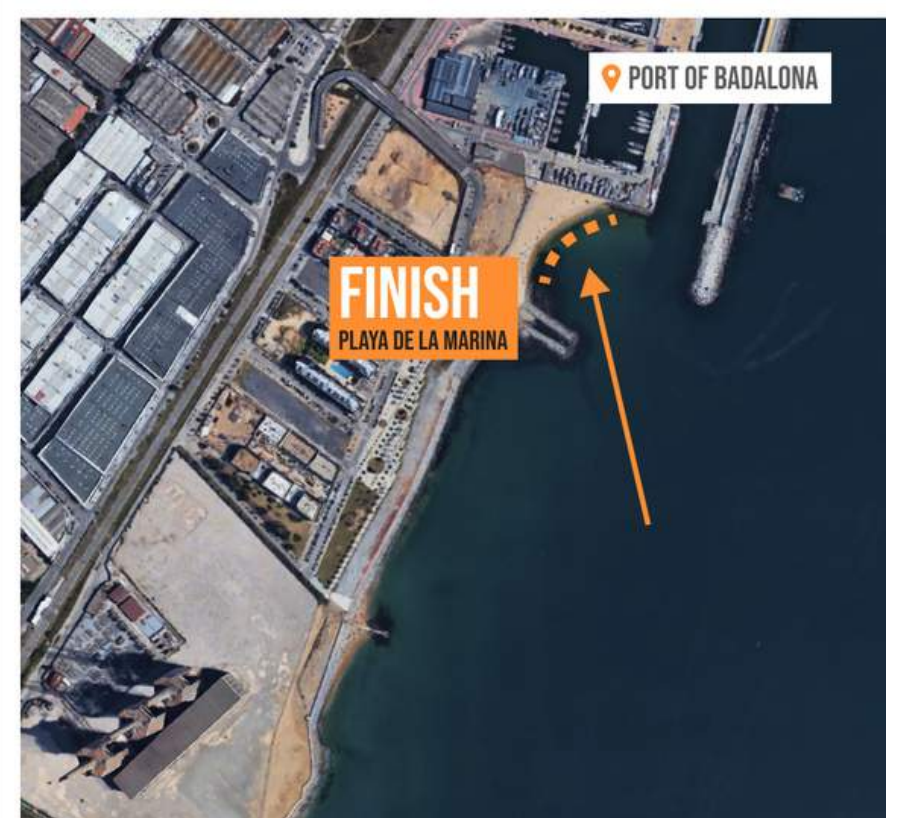
RACE DISTANCE

14 KM

RACE CATEGORIES

SURFSKI & OUTRIGGER

The 14 km main route will be between Playa Somorrostro (Port Olímpic) and Playa de la Marina (Port of Badalona) for all surfski and outrigger categories. An additional shorter course is arranged for participants in traditional sea kayaks, an honorary category to respect the origins of the race.



START PLAYA SOMORROSTRO

The start will be at 12:00 midday from Playa Somorrostro, a protected sandy beach just outside of Port Olímpic. The race start will be in the Sella/Le Mans style: participants will line up 5 meters behind their boats on the shore. The first leg of the route is southbound where participants will first need to reach the southern tip of the seawall of Port Vell, and then paddle 4 km inwards to sea till the first buoy, making sure they go around it before turning north.

FINISH PORT OF BADALONA

With the towering triple chimneys of the Sant Adria power plant as your guide, it will be easy to plot a course for the Port of Badalona. The finish line will be on the sandy beach of Playa de la Marina, just where the wall of the port begins. With favourable winds (the S-SE garbí), the entire northbound section of the race should be one uninterrupted downwind. To clock your timing, you must report at the judges' table after arriving. Volunteers will help securely carry your boat to shore.



RACE HISTORY

The first edition of the Barcelona Paddle Race was held in December 2012, with a relatively small group of participants, lovers of the sea competing in surfskis and traditional kayaks. While sea kayaking had a small presence, it was more in the context of a leisure activity being used to explore the Catalonia coastline. It was not known as a competitive sport, and when the surfskis started to arrive, many paddlers switched over to these faster crafts built to ride the waves. Naturally, a desire to measure up against in each other in the thrill of a competition followed.

Except for the pandemic hiatus, the Barcelona Paddle Race has been organised every year since 2012 and will celebrate its 10th anniversary with this year's event! Its host and organiser, Barcelona Caiac (Club Piragüismo Barcelona), is the only club in Barcelona that specialises in surfski and outrigger canoe and it has been pioneering downwind paddling in the area for over a decade.

Last year's event proved to be a milestone in the race's history. Not only did it attract a record number of participants, with many coming from France, Scandinavia, and Italy, but it also got included in the official ICF competition calendar as an international canoe ocean racing event.

Listed on the official race calendar of the International Canoe Federation.

All major international events from sprint kayaking and slalom to surfski & outrigger ocean racing are recognized and listed under the ICF banner and the Barcelona Paddle Race now forms part of this family.



SURFSKI

A surfski is a type of kayak with their modern versions looking very similar to olympic sprint kayaks in length and build, however the cockpit is open for easy remount in case of capsizing and includes a self-bailer to drain out water. The length of the boat is usually 5–6 meters and the widest point of the otherwise very narrow boat is 40–50 cm at the cockpit. Foot pedals that connect to the rudder at the back make it possible to quickly adjust direction and smoothly maneuver among the waves.

Surfski has its origins in the lifesaving movement: it was invented as a craft that's easy to launch, can be propelled using a double-blade kayak paddle and break through the surf, and reach swimmers in distress quickly. The first records are from 1912, from Port Macquarie in Australia where during the next couple of decades it grew in popularity and soon got adopted by lifesaving clubs all over Australia and consequently in South Africa.

By the 1950s, surfski paddling had become a main event at lifesaving competitions. While the original short-distance version of the race, a sprint that involves breaking through the surf and riding back on the waves, is still a part of major surfski competitions, the main event is now long-distance downwind paddling in open water conditions that started as a proof of endurance and fitness for experienced lifesavers. By the 1970s, the boat designs had also diverged with the original type (spec surfski) remaining for lifesaving competitions and the modern-day surfski designed for long-distance races.

The largest ocean paddling events are the 50 km Molokai Challenge in Hawaii where paddlesurfing & outrigger canoeing has a long tradition, the Shaw & Partners WA Race Week in Australia, and as of 2013, the ICF World Championship for surfski paddling under the name canoe ocean racing with the 2021 edition being held in Lanzarote, Spain.

While internationally the scene is still dominated by Australia and South Africa, it is a dynamically growing discipline in Spain, with many elite paddlers switching over from flatwater kayaking and bringing back results, not to mention that a whole new generation of young athletes are now growing up with this sport.



OUTRIGGER CANOE

Outrigger canoes originate in Polynesia where their larger sailboat versions were used to populate the Pacific Ocean islands from New Zealand to Tahiti, Hawaii, and even as far as Rapanui. The smaller crafts manned by 6-paddlers using a single-blade canoe paddle are a symbol of Polynesian culture and their deep-rooted connection to the sea. They have been used for island-hopping, fishing and competitive racing during festivals for thousands of years.

Originally crafted from a single piece of wood, strong and durable, the modern-day canoes are using contemporary materials such as fiberglass or carbon-fiber for lightness and speed. Outrigger canoes (va'a or waka) are easily recognizable due to their 'ama', the side-piece attached to the main craft to increase its stability in bumpy waters and make it possible to ride large oceanic waves.

The single most important event in outrigger canoe racing is the The Hawaiki Nui Va'a, organised each year in French Polynesia, connecting the islands of Huahine, Raiatea, Taha'a, and Bora Bora over a 129 km course of frenzied paddling in three days on three stages, without change of crews. The Hawaiki Nui Va'a is for the toughest teams of 6-person crafts who train year-round for the event. Barcelona Caiac is proud to be able to offer one such traditional craft, brought over from Tahiti, for training and racing purposes.

The smaller one-manned crafts called OC1 or va'a, depending on whether it has a built-in rudder or not, are still the longest boats in their category, often with over 6 m in length, surpassing surfskis. Hugely popular in Hawaii, the California coast, Brazil and other coastal Latin-American countries, not to mention mainland France where it has been introduced by the Polynesian population, outrigger canoeing has a still nascent scene in Spain, but they have a growing presence in Spanish championships and have always formed a part of the Barcelona Paddle Race.

For first-time paddlers or even as a means of regular training, the 6-person outrigger canoe provides an excellent opportunity, due to its added stability, to venture out to the waters in a group setting and admire the Barcelona skyline from a different angle.



TRADITIONAL SEA KAYAK

The traditional sea kayak is a modality that allows you to enjoy the sea and integrate into it. The coast of Barcelona offers an impressive setting, and paddling along it offers a unique perspective onto the town, its beaches, and its ecosystem. With their sturdy but maneuverable structure, a traditional sea kayak or touring kayak can be launched from almost anywhere, the sandy beaches of Barcelona or Maresme, the coves of Costa Brava, or directly from the sheltered harbor of the Port of Badalona where you can take courses in how to master the art of traditional sea kayaking.

Sea kayaking is an outdoor sport that can be practiced all year round, is suitable for all ages, it improves physical fitness, corrects postural defects and is even valid for recovering from physical trauma. Equally important is its psychological aspect as it transmits peace and tranquility to the practitioner, in a natural environment.

A traditional sea kayak originates in the northern latitudes where the Inuit populations of Greenland and Canada have been using these watertight crafts made with a wooden or whalebone frames for over 4,000 years for hunting and fishing. In a traditional kayak, the cockpit is tightly sealed with the paddler sitting in it so that the water doesn't enter. Apart from knowing how to expertly maneuver the kayak with special paddle strokes, how to navigate the waves and learning about currents and coastal typography, a true paddler would also know what to do when conditions get rough: doing the Greenland roll means the kayaker will do a full 360° roll to submerge under the water surface then pop themselves back into an upright position with the use of their paddle.

To celebrate the Barcelona Paddle Race's origins in traditional sea kayaking, the category is included in the competition in an honorary manner. Participants will launch at the same time as the other groups, but the race course is shortened as they will head directly north along the coastline till they reach Badalona. With this shorter course, they should arrive at the finish line just in time to witness the final sprint of the surfski participants.






BARCELONA CAIAC

The race is being organized by Barcelona Caiac, a watersports club for traditional kayak, surfski, and outrigger canoe. You can visit us in the Port of Badalona all-year round to train on the water, take courses in paddling technique, or to rent and try out new surfski and outrigger models by Vajda and AllWave.

WHERE TO FIND US

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