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New horizons for the Jacques Vabre 2009: Costa Rica bound!

For this 9th edition, the Transat Jacques Vabre 2009 is heading for Costa Rica in Central America. The double-handed transatlantic race, of which the start will be given in Le Havre, France, on 7th November for the monohulls and 8th November for the multihulls, is thus heading towards a brand new Coffee destination, which follows the great shipping route.

The Caribbean Sea as the final home straight with the goal of Costa Rica

After four editions bound for Columbia, then four more with the destination of Brazil, the Transat Jacques Vabre fleet will now be making for Puerto Limon, the gateway to Costa Rica on the Caribbean coast.

Puerto Limón, otherwise known simply as Limón, is the capital of the region of the same name. A natural paradise situated at the centre of the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, this region is made up of a mixture of dense tropical forests, imposing mountains and heavenly beaches. The most abundant region of Limón is doubtless the Tortuguero National Park, an immense lakeside expanse composed of natural channels, which is also the green turtles' preferred spot for laying their eggs.

In 1852, the port of Limón was developed into a commercial port for transporting the coffee produced in the Central Valley of San José. As such it went on to become a key port in Costa Rica's economic life, as well as being the finest example of the region's meeting of cultures over the course of history.

In 1872 the first Afro-Caribbeans arrived to help construct the railway. This brought about the start of immigration, which gives this region such a varied ethnic and cultural character.

Quotes:

Roxana Pinto, Ambassador of Costa Rica in France *“I am delighted to learn that the Transat Jacques Vabre will this year be going from Le Havre to Limón, a port on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. It’s a voyage which commemorates a route which has linked Costa Rica and France since 1852, when the port of Limón was developed into a commercial port and the precious coffee grains from Costa Rica were transported exclusively via this route. This competition will be proof of the friendship between our two countries, as well as being a voyage to the perpetual summer of the tropics, the lush countryside and the scorching sandy beaches that Christopher Columbus saw for the very first time in September 1502.”*

Bruno Luisetti: CEO of Kraft Foods France: *“After 8 fabulous editions packed with emotion and human adventure, we have chosen to offer the Transat Jacques Vabre a new sea route. We got the feeling from the sailors that they were keen to venture along a new trajectory and hence a new challenge. As a result the Transat Jacques Vabre had a duty to find a new destination which was emblematic both in terms of coffee as well as sustainable development, so as to carry on the approach initiated during the last edition. Costa Rica appeared to us to be the most pertinent destination, both on a sporting level as well as a discovery level, with this being a major country on a global scale in terms of terms of biodiversity.”*

Agnès Firmin – Le Bodo, Deputy Mayor of Le Havre, in charge of sport, watersports, tourism and the coastline: *“The change in destination is a new adventure for everyone; a new beginning of sorts. Costa Rica is a country that is highly geared around sustainable development, which is also a cherished value in the Town of Le Havre, or indeed a priority. Besides this Le Havre had little in common with Costa Rica so this will enable us to forge links with them, especially on a tourist level, which represents a new challenge for us.”*

Pierre Bojic, Managing Director of Pen Duick: *“In the tradition of Jacques Vabre and Pen Duick, the discovery of the coffee world continues. After Columbia and Brazil, Jacques Vabre is inviting you to discover Costa Rica. This new destination for the Transat Jacques Vabre would seem to me to be a maritime destination which is entirely consistent with our shared objective of public awareness about the topic of sustainable development and protection of the environment. Costa Rica is a country which has the most long-standing and mightiest commitment towards protecting and preserving the environment. In addition it’s an extremely welcoming country whose Caribbean coastline is still preserved. I’m convinced that the Town of Le Havre, which has made sustainable development a priority over the coming years, will find some points on which they agree with this new partner.”*

Two starts, two courses

There will be two boat categories taking the start: monohulls and multihulls. As per usual, there will be two starts and two courses. The monohulls (60 foot Imoca and the Class 40) will leave the port of Le Havre on 7th November with the start given at 1400

hours. As for the multihulls (Orma 60 footers and Open 50 Class), they will take the startline the following day, on Sunday 8th November, and will also set off at 1400 hours.

The battle will commence the minute they leave Le Havre. Once they're out of the English Channel, an express Atlantic crossing will await them, at the end of which the two fleets will both have a different compulsory passage point: the monohulls will leave the Dominican Republic to starboard, whilst the multihulls will leave Barbados to starboard. This amounts to a 4,730 mile course for the monohulls and a 5,005 mile course for the multihulls.

As such the sailors will no longer cross the equator, which means they won't have to negotiate the Doldrums. On the other hand, they will face a dilemma: choosing between the northern route and the 'southern expressway', or that of the longer but more comfortable tradewind route.

As passionate as ever

Since its creation in 1993 and after what already amounts to 8 editions, the Transat Jacques Vabre has continued to make progress on every level. Whether it be in terms of participants (with 62 participants in 2007, compared with 36 in 2005), public infatuation or even the quality of the media plan, the race is as passionate as ever. With a country as authentic as Costa Rica as a new destination, the sailors, partners and organisers of the Transat Jacques Vabre await 2009 with bated breath...