

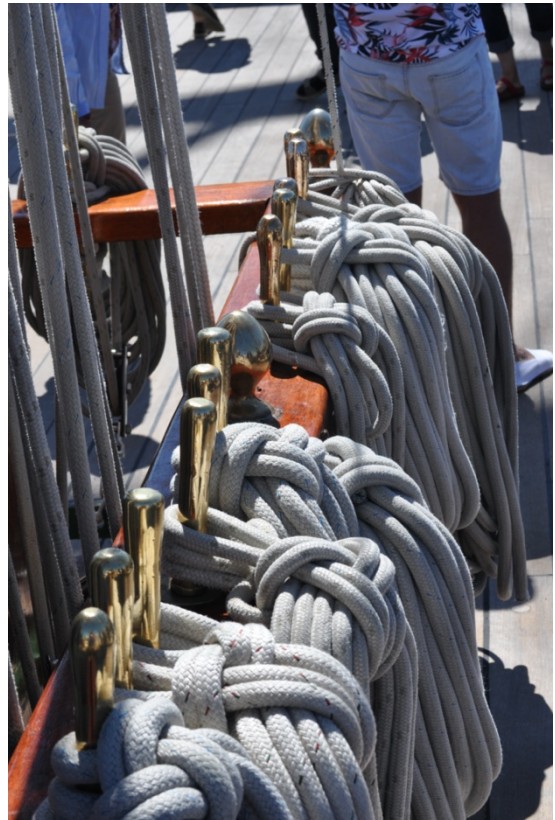
Brittany maritime festivals

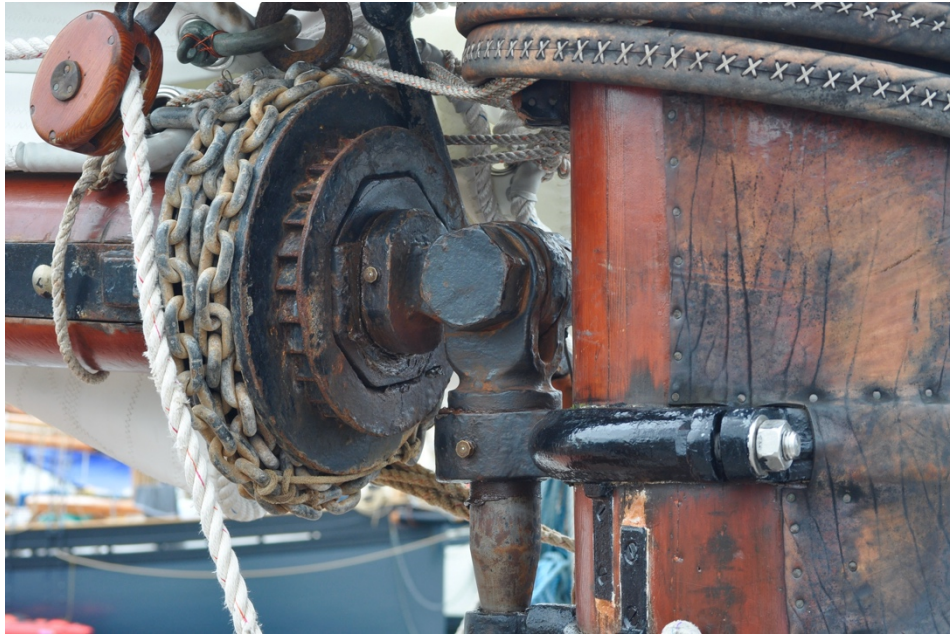
By Kim Klaka October 2016



Most of you will have heard of the marvellous Australian Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart. It is held on odd-numbered years (the next one is in 2017), but what's to be done in even-numbered years to keep wooden boat enthusiasts entertained? The Sydney Classic & Wooden Boat Festival is a good option, but I decided instead to go to

the other side of the world and visit two French maritime festivals – Brest 2016, followed by the Douarnenez classic wooden boat festival 25 miles down the coast.





Whilst the Sydney festival has a cosy 100 boats and the Tasmanian festival hosts an impressive 500 boats and 200,000 visitors, the Brest festival is just unbelievably huge. 1,050 boats from 19 countries, 9,000 sailors, 1,500 musicians and 700,000 visitors make it the biggest maritime festival in the world. It is impossible to see everything displayed along the 9km of quayside in the six days of festival, but that is not for lack of trying.



The boats range from tiny 2m coracles to sail training ships over 100m long. There must have been at least 20 large square rigged ships, hundreds of traditional wooden work boats, and a few high tech racing yachts thrown in for good measure. One of the most impressive sights was to see four of Eric Tabarly's famous yachts - Pen Duick, Pen Duick 3, Pen Duick 5 and Pen Duick 6 - all out sailing at the same time.



The Douarnenez festival on the other side of the bay is a far more intimate and less formal affair, with only 100,000 visitors. It still had 1,000 boats, almost all of them wooden and almost all sailing craft.



Musicians were everywhere, from full concert stages to workboat foredecks, via cake stalls and sardine shops. Restaurants line the quayside offering a full view of proceedings over a bucket of mussels and a glass of muscadet.

If you are heading to Europe for winter 2018, add Douarnenez to your itinerary!



Practical information

The Brest festival is held every four years, so the next one is in 2020. The Douarnenez festival is held every two years, so the next one is in 2018. On years when they coincide, Douarnenez follows directly after Brest, with many of the Brest boats sailing across the bay from one event to the next. Both festivals are held in July.

Getting to Brest is quite easy; it is about 5 hours by train or 90 minutes by air from Paris, or if you happen to be in the UK, there are flights from Southampton and Birmingham, and also a ferry to Roscoff, about 2 hours away by train. Getting to Douarnenez is not difficult either, with regular trains from Paris to Quimper (5 hours) then a 40 minute coach ride to the fishing port. It is also easy to get from the Brest festival to the Douarnenez one, about 90 minutes by coach. Better still, you could sail there!

Given the huge numbers of visitors to the Brest festival, and the small size of Douarnenez (about 15,000 population), it is wise to book your accommodation early.

Whilst it is always an advantage to have a basic grasp of the local language, most people at both festivals spoke English. There is the added linguistic twist that most of the place-names are Breton, the signposts are bilingual (French and Breton) and the local French accent is a far cry from what you heard from your high school French teacher.

For more information go to:

www.brest2016.fr

<http://www.brittanytourism.com/to-see-to-do/events/brittany-s-main-events/temps-fete-festival-douarnenez-19-24-july-2016> and

<http://www.tempsfete.com>

(the first two sites are in English and French, the last one is in French only)