



TALISKER WHISKY ATLANTIC CHALLENGE

Dutch winner and British World Record

On December 14 of last year, the 28 rowing boats that took part in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge set off from San Sebastián de La Gomera.

Three boats were manned by five rowers, 13 by a quartet and two by a trio. Five couples took the challenge in doubles and another five even set off alone on the great journey.

From San Sebastián de La Gomera, they crossed the Atlantic to the Nelsons Dockyard in Antigua. In between were more than 3,000 nautical miles, over which the crews suffered lack of sleep, rowing to exhaustion, plus the fight against wind and waves. In addition to this there is the close proximity to others in the narrowest of spaces for some and the confrontation with oneself and loneliness on a vast ocean for others. This rowing regatta is considered to be the toughest in the world.

Nevertheless, the winner this year was the Dutch Atlantic Four quartet from the Netherlands. All four, Marcel Ates, Erik Koning, David De Bruijn

and Bart Adema, are experienced rowers who have participated in numerous competitions in Europe. For instance, in 2014 they took part in the crazy river race Zhigulevskaya Krugosvetka which is a 145 km non-stop contest on the River Volga in Russia. When David and Erik were interviewed by a local Russian newspaper on their arrival, they said rather jokingly "The next adventure is across the Atlantic". At the time, they had no idea that they would actually take up the challenge, let alone win it. Yet, after 34 days, 12 hours and nine minutes, they were the first participants to reach the finish line in Antigua. They dedicated their victory to helping children with cancer. Congratulations!

Beside the winners there was another message to cheer. The Nauti Buoys crew of five, Matthieu Poudevigne, Paul Heerema, Hector Strickland, Rory Ormiston and Nicholas Rakowski from Great Britain, set a new world record for the fives which is now 36 days, 19 hours and nine minutes,



↑ The lucky winners - Four strong boys from the Netherlands beat the Atlantic Ocean

a new record that sets goals for the 2019 race that need to be broken. The four Brits rowed for Cancer Research. They are grateful they did so well, and wanted to make a difference via the contest for all those who are not so fortunate. "It was a real challenge ahead of us, but we mastered it with friendship, humour and courage. They followed the African motto: "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ■

ACTIVE TOURISM

New hiking and cycling guide

The Island Council in La Gomera, led by President Casimiro Curbelo, and María Isabel Méndez, Councillor for Tourism, presented their new hiking and cycling guide to the island in mid-January.

The guide, which is available in Spanish, English, German and French, is intended to support the tourist offer and



↑ Casimiro Curbelo and María Isabel Méndez recently presented the latest hiking and cycling guide



↑ Hiking through La Gomera's enchanting nature is for many the best holiday activity

be a further service for visitors to enrich their stay on the island. Many holidaymakers who choose La Gomera use their time there for hiking or cycling tours. Last year the island welcomed around 730,000 tourists. The new hiking map shows a total of 59 trails, including 18 that cross the Garajonay National Park. A further 41 paths are linear or circular, with var-

ying degrees of difficulty. For the first time, two of the main GR-131 and GR-132 routes that cross the island are included. Hikers can find out about hotels, rural accommodation and holiday homes along the way, which can be used as destinations if they choose to cross the island. Seven routes are designated for cyclists, covering a total of 80 kilometres, of which

the longest route from Epina to Llano de Alcalá is over 25 kilometres, and the shortest, from Juego de Bolas to the Mirador de Abrante, is only 1.7 kilometres long.

Visitors can also download a complementary app to the map which provides additional information. It indicates the nearest bus stops or warns if roads are not in good condition, such as after heavy rainfall. A communication system is also integrated, enabling hikers, for example, to report safety deficiencies or anomalies when on the move. Geolocalisation and photos make these weak points easy to find, assess and correct. "This is a further step towards greater safety and effective maintenance of these spaces," stated Méndez. Another app, called Alert4you, will be available in February and will warn of approaching storms and bad weather. ■



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