



Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Competitors set for 71st edition of the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race

London, 5 April 2019 – More than 650 competitors will take part in the annual Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race this Easter, organisers of the world's toughest non-stop canoe race confirmed today.

The field includes many overseas entries with canoeists this year coming from Australia, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the US. The 125 mile race, often described as 'the canoeist's Everest' is one of the world's toughest endurance events and sees competitors racing from Devizes in rural Wiltshire to Westminster Bridge in Central London over the Easter weekend.

There are five classes in the race, Senior Doubles, Senior Singles, Junior Doubles, Veteran/Junior and a non-competitive Endeavour Class.

Only the senior doubles is non-stop and it attracts entrants ranging from international athletes to the Armed Forces. Every year hundreds of amateur canoeists attempt the race but around one-third fail to finish, often defeated by the sheer effort of paddling for around 24 hours and portaging kit-laden boats around 77 locks on the Kennet & Avon canal and the Thames.

Among the favourites for the Senior Doubles title this year are past winners Keith Moule and Tom Sharpe from Chelmsford and Richmond Canoe Clubs.

The course record of 15 hours 34 minutes was set 40 years ago in 1979 by Tim Cornish and Brian Greenham of Reading Canoe Club. Breaking the record depends on high levels of flow and although last year's race was curtailed at Reading on safety grounds following heavy rain and near flood-level conditions on the Thames, a late Easter this year makes such conditions less likely, according to the race organisers.

"This year's race represents unfinished business for many of last year's competitors," said Race Director Gareth Scragg. "We are delighted with the high number of entries and expect to see some hard-fought competition across the board."

Competitors must time their departure from Devizes on Easter Saturday (20 April) to reach Teddington Lock in time for the early morning tide the following day. The first entrants in the non-stop race reach Westminster early on Easter Sunday. Competitors carry tracking devices and boats can be followed at online at www.dwrace.co.uk

About the Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race

The annual Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race is the world's longest non-stop canoe race. Frequently referred to simply as DW, the race starts in Devizes, Wiltshire, and follows the Kennet & Avon Canal to join the Thames at Reading. The finish is in the heart of London at Westminster Bridge. Covering the 125-mile distance in kayaks or canoes, DW is one of the toughest endurance events in the world and is open to anyone with the necessary determination and commitment to train for it.

DW takes place over the Easter Weekend every year. More than 500 volunteers and organisations, including the Canal and Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and the Port of London Authority, give their support to DW either directly or indirectly.

The non-stop Senior Doubles event starts at 7am on Easter Saturday, 20 April. Completing the non-stop race is a colossal achievement. Most paddlers will take about 24 hours to complete the course, not stopping to eat, sleep or rest.

Alternatively, the race can be tackled in 4 stages starting on Easter Friday and finishing on Easter Monday. Competitors in the stages races (Junior Doubles, Senior Singles, Veteran/Junior, and Endeavour) leave Devizes on Good Friday, 19 April, from 7am.

The race started as a wager in a pub in 1948. Seventy years on, it has grown into a firm fixture in the world's canoeing calendar that is open to all comers. Previous competitors include Olympic rowing medalists James Cracknell, Ben Hunt-Davis, and Guin Batten, the explorer and adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, TV presenter Steve Backshall and his wife, Olympic rower Helen Glover, and the first British woman to summit Everest, Rebecca Stephens. All rate this as one of the toughest events for mind and body.

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You can follow DW on Facebook ([Facebook.com/DWcanoerace](https://www.facebook.com/DWcanoerace)) and on Twitter ([Twitter.com/DWcanoerace](https://twitter.com/DWcanoerace))

The event website is www.dwrace.co.uk

High-resolution images can be provided on request.