

Dear Jester family,

After many weeks of hard work we are delighted to be able to announce the basic details for the next three Jester Challenges. These are:

The Jester 51/8 Challenge 2021 (replacing the usual JBC)

The Jester Azores Challenge 2021 (with variations on the usual JAC)

The Jester Challenge 2022

There are still one or two final details to be ironed out, and the Azores situation is still evolving, but we are confident that Jesters can now make firm plans and commitments based on the following outlines:

The Jester 51/8 Challenge 2021

With Baltimore Pirates' Week cancelled, and Ireland still reluctant to accept visiting yachts, we decided to create a one-off Challenge that, while giving yachts a good sail in open sea, would keep the fleet more or less in UK waters, and obviate any need for Covid-related testing and so on. We had originally thought about a Jester Fastnet Challenge but decided that under the circumstances this would be bringing boats too close to the Irish coast for comfort. The Irish have not yet been told, but for a few days in June the Fastnet Rock is being moved well out into the Celtic Sea, to 51N 8W. This is an extremely convenient waypoint, as it is equidistant from Plymouth (if Bishop's Rock is left to starboard), Pwllheli and also Cardiff, should any Jesters want to start from there. The basics of this Challenge are:

1. Start date either 12th or 13th June, still to be decided depending on numbers and arrangements for pre-race Skippers' dinners.
2. Starts from Plymouth, Pwllheli and Cardiff.
3. Yachts from Plymouth (leaving Bishop's Rock to starboard) and Cardiff leave the 51N 8W waypoint to starboard; yachts from Pwllheli leave it to port.
4. Once round the waypoint, yachts head to the finish at Milford Haven. The finishing line is a line due east of St Anne's Head on 51 41'N.

Some consideration was given to having the Isles of Scilly as a finishing destination, but we felt it was better to have somewhere with good access at all states of the tide and with a good choice of safe anchorages once the finishing line is crossed. There are also two marinas within the harbour and we are currently working on a suitable rallying point for the fleet.

The Jester Azores Challenge 2021

Yes – the Azores is on! We really did not expect to be able to say this, but the situation is rapidly evolving in our favour, and we now see no reason not to go to the Azores this year. However, as things are at the moment, it will not be quite the usual Azores Challenge. Currently only two harbours are open as ports of entry to the Azores – Ponta Delgada and Horta. We see Horta as a more Jester-type place than Ponta Delgada and have been in contact with the marina manager, Armando, and also with Duncan Keys of Mid Atlantic Yacht Services, who has been incredibly helpful with his local knowledge and contacts. Horta is happy to welcome us but cannot guarantee berths for all yachts. That in itself is not a deterrent for us, as the current outline plan is:

1. Start date 21st June from Plymouth.
2. Initial destination Horta. However, depending on numbers of participants, we may have to split the fleet and send half to Ponta Delgada.
3. Finishing line 39N, between 26W and 29W, thereby giving no advantage to either destination, should we have to split the fleet. It will also give yachts more choice and freedom as to how they approach Horta.
4. Once arrived, yachts will be required under current rules to remain at anchor while a Covid test is administered. Once a negative test has been confirmed, yachts are then free to come alongside and also move freely about the islands, subject to further tests after another six and twelve days.
5. Given that Horta can only allow short stays for entry, health check and essential revictualling, the idea is that once entry and health formalities have been completed, Jesters then make for Praia da Vitoria. The same goes for Ponta Delgada, if we have to use it as a port of entry too.
6. However, we are currently in discussion with the Port Captain and marina at Praia da Vitoria, to see whether they might make a special dispensation to allow the Jester fleet to use Praia as a port of entry. This is a very long shot but worth trying. The marina has said that they are happy to welcome us if they get the required authorisations, which they have applied for. There is also a possibility that between now and the beginning of July, Praia da Vitoria might be opened as a port of entry anyway.

So the basic idea is that the fleet ends up at Praia da Vitoria, but (currently) via a couple of days at anchor in Horta and/or possibly Ponta Delgada.

Full details on the current Azores rules for foreign yachts are to be found here:

<https://www.noonsite.com/place/azores/formalities/#biosecurity-section>

As regards compliance with any Covid rules, whether for leaving or arriving back in the UK, or the Azores, this is the sole and total responsibility of each skipper, as per the Jester ethos. There is still some uncertainty about the precise requirements at the UK end, especially as the rules seem to be geared almost exclusively towards travel by air. As we get nearer the time we will do our best to keep skippers informed, but the Jester Helm cannot take any responsibility for individual skipper decisions or actions.

Jester Challenge 2022

As you probably will have heard, the OSTAR was once again cancelled this year and put back until next year, causing a potential clash with the JC 2022. We have been liaising with Norm Bailey at the Newport Yacht Club and also the OSTAR committee at the Royal Western Yacht Club. We are delighted to be able to announce, following these deliberations, that the Newport Yacht Club is happy to host both events next year. As ever we are incredibly grateful for their flexibility and hospitality. Norm is as keen as ever to welcome Jesters to Newport.

It has been decided that the Jester Challenge 2022 will start on Sunday 8th May 2022, one week before the OSTAR. Catch us if you can!

Entries are now open, to be made via the Contact page on the Jester website.

Our understanding at the moment is that the OSTAR will revert to its previous four-year cycle ie 2024/28/32 and so on. This will re-establish the two-year gap between OSTARs and JC's.

All of this effectively means that from 2022, assuming no further Covid problems, we will be back to the normal sequence of Jester events.

As a lot of the final decision-making regarding this year's events revolves around numbers of participants, we would be extremely grateful if all those who have expressed an intention to sail could confirm or withdraw their participation as soon as possible, preferably within the next week. This can be done by replying to this email.

We will of course continue to monitor the situation and will bring you up to date with any developments. We also hope to get firm final details out as soon as possible.

With best wishes

The Jester Helm