

DOUARNENEZ BAY
WEATHER & SAILING CONDITIONS BY B.SIMON

Though there is no need to highlight the attributes of the Bay of Douarnenez to Dragon Sailors already familiar with it, some basic information is offered here for newcomers to this magnificent sailing area:

The Bay has a wide opening to the West 16 km wide and 20 km deep. It is surrounded by:

- The Crozon peninsula and Cape de la Chevre on the North (alt. 80 - 130m)
- Cape Sizun to the South (alt. 50 - 100m)
- To the East overlooking Douarnenez are hillsides, to the NE (Menez-Hom 330m) and to the SE (280m)

Apart from Westerly winds, the sailing in the bay is always subject to coastal interferences. It is therefore important to consult the information contained in the charts referred to.

THE SEA

The wide opening on the West gives rise to an Atlantic swell, which at times can trigger unforgettable surfing rides.

Winds from NW to SW can blow at an angle with this swell further posing a challenge to good helmsmanship. Moreover, with the wind in the NW to E there is sufficient fetch to generate a substantial cross-sea.

CURRENTS

Depending on the tidal coefficient of the day, the current in the bay can reach 0.5 knots. But their current is relatively homogeneous in the sailing area, and therefore must mostly be taken into account in sailing the lay lines.

WIND

The Grand Prix Petit Navire will take place at a time when the general force and direction of the wind is subject to frequent changes. There are several possibilities:

Anti-cyclone:

The presence of a high will result in good weather conditions (hot and sunny), a synoptic wind from the NE and/or a thermal wind.

A- Synoptic wind NE to E

This land breeze will produce a short sea in the sailing area. It rises due to the existence of wind corridors created by the surrounding relief (hillsides, valleys, and beaches - refer to IGN cards) which in turn will have considerable effect on the direction and intensity of the wind. Note: a weak synoptic wind in the East would be advantageous in establishing a thermal breeze.

B- Thermal Breeze

If the synoptic wind is weak (especially if it is terrestrial), or non-existent, a thermal breeze will settle providing that there is sufficient difference in temperature between land and sea.

The thermal breeze will typically establish itself towards the end of the morning between 180 and 200 degs and then veer picking up and stabilising between 300 and 315 degs. in the middle of the afternoon. Note that this pattern is rarely steady and the wind will frequently and abruptly back.

Other possibilities:

- when the thermal breeze is blowing between 220 and 270 deg, there is a 'classic' effect around capes Jument and Leydé, which at certain times require boats to sail on a starboard tack.
- with the breeze between 300 and 315 degs, the influence of cape de la Chevre will be predominant. Note the presence of gusts favouring the starboard tack on the right of the sailing area.

Unsettled weather

Typified by the frequency of squalls. The passage of weather systems around the Brittany coast can be characterised by three distinct phases.

A- Warm front:

A S to SW wind under a low rainy sky within the sailing area. A South Westerly is a land breeze unstable in direction and intensity with wind corridors relative to the coastline. (*Refer to IGN charts*)

B- Cold front:

Indicated by the wind veering to the NW, the sky clearing with the passage of squalls. The clouds when passing causing short yet considerable changes to the force and direction of the wind.

C- Between the passage of weather systems:

The wind settles in a general Westerly direction with slow changes which may be exploited not forgetting the effects around capes de la Jument and Leydé. Also worth noting is the possibility of cumulus and cumulonimbus wich should also be usefully exploited.

Consult the following :

Relief : Cartes IGN 0419ET, 0418ET et 0518ET.

Cartes marines : Carte SHOM de la Baie de Douarnenez (6088 P)

Carte de courant : « courants de marée de la côte ouest de Bretagne : de Goulven à Penmarc'h » SHOM

Weather information :

Site de Météo France : <http://www.meteo.fr/>

Carte météo du jour et champ de vent : <http://www.sail-online.fr/>

P.S : A weather map and a forecast will be shown every morning at the « Maison du Nautisme »