

Pairs SUP Crossing – our thoughts, experiences & recommendations

The Paris SUP Crossing has established itself as an iconic race and a perfect end to the year

First thing we would say is don't be put off by the Race tag..... while not for beginners it can be completed by any competent paddler capable of paddling 10km and indeed there are 800+ participants there of all ages & abilities (just make sure you enter the leisure category rather than the elite – more of that later)

Our normal plan is to book the flights as soon as they are released, get ourselves a hotel close to the boat show – these are normally booked in the spring, long before entries open – if we are luck & get a spot in the race great, if not then we have a weekend in Paris just before Christmas – win win!!

Entering – unlike the early years of the event it is way over subscribed so places are now allocated via a ballot. Entries open normally mid-September, you apply online then once the ballot closes wait for the email to arrive to let you know if you were successful or not (you can check online too for a list of those accepted & those on the waiting list).

If you are one of the lucky ones you have a period of about 10 days to confirm you wish to proceed, pay the entry fee & gloat ☺

Do not worry if you are on the waiting list – many do not confirm in time or drop out so all is not lost – just keep your fingers crossed & check the website + your emails regularly

There are options to hire a board over there for the event to make travel cheaper & easier – when travelling with our own boards we always seemed to find ourselves trying to get through Paris by public transport in rush hour having said that – its all an adventure & the trains, metro & trams are very user friendly



We have always made a long weekend out of the event – flying out on the Friday morning & back on the Monday Evening giving plenty of time for sightseeing, eating/drinking & mooching about the boat show. Having done the touristy bits in the first few years we now find ourselves drawn more to the suburbs & love to wander around discovering small local shops/cafes etc.

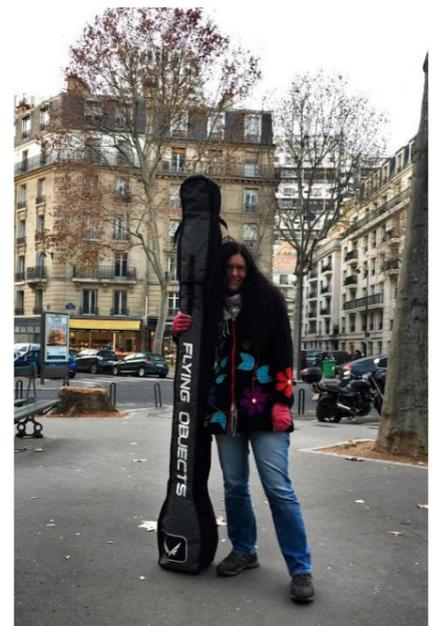
Our schedule normally goes a bit like this –

Friday morning fly to Paris – jump on the RER train from the airport to the city, swap to the metro or a tram to the hotel

Friday lunchtime/afternoon - Check in, dump the kit, get freshened up & head out to get a taste of the local area... and by taste I mean food. French food has a bit of a reputation for being all fancy & expensive – once

you are away from the tourist hotspots this is simply not true (apps like TripAdvisor are really helpful too since you can filter result by price range, food type, customer rating, location etc.)

Friday evening – head into the city for a night time wander around the sights (remember its December so everything is lit up & atmospheric). Normally we end up seeking out some street food or local back street eatery before a reasonably early night



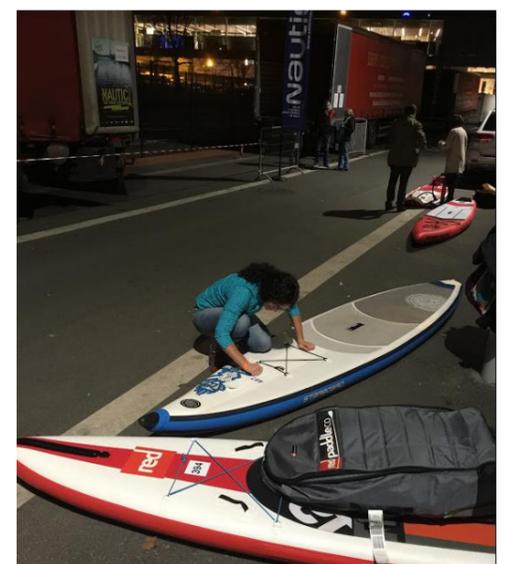
Saturday – Take our boards over to the boat show (we choose hotels close by for convenience) and get registered, picking up our race top, timing chip etc. the boards are then blown up, numbers stuck on before being loaded onto trucks ready to be taken to the start early Sunday morning

A wander around the boat show takes up a few hours, catching up with friends & exhibitors as well as lusting after some of the boats, boards etc. on display. This always takes longer than planned as you bump into more & more people you know

Afternoon is a relaxed wander along the river bank towards the city where the coffee stops soon turn into wine stops, sat at pavement bars watching the world go by

By late afternoon/ early evening plans will have been made with friends to

meet up & head out that evening for a pre-race feed – the logical place to meet is at the mandatory race briefing back in the boat show (it lasts about an hour & if you want a seat make sure you are there early)



Once fed & watered its time for bed but do make sure that you get all your paddling kit sorted out first – it's an early start on the Sunday



Sunday morning – A quick walk to the boat show, shoving down a croissant on the way. There are a line of coaches there waiting to take you to the start – don't be late, they will go without you!

Still dark, after a 20 minute drive you arrive at the start area. The lorries will have already been unloaded & the boards set out in number order, find your board (many are in small piles of 3-4 boards) and take it to any empty bit of the quayside you can find



We prefer to be as close to the water as possible so that once given permission we can be among the first to launch (with 800+ boards getting on the water it can get a bit crazy!)

Paddle upstream, find yourself some clear water & wait for the start. The pros have priority & take up position on the front of the start line – you can tuck in behind them if you are keen, bring up the rear if you are nervous or simply get swept along in the middle & soak it all up



The first few years we did it we started last.... not at the back but absolutely last. It was satisfying seeing how many we would pass over the next 10km or so

Last year I went for a good start but no matter where you choose be ready to have your balance tested – 800+ paddlers & the wash/chop bouncing back off the river walls makes it like a washing machine, especially if you have a headwind so its wind against current. Worry not, as the fleet start to spread out a bit it calms down & the views soon take your mind off it



Soon after the start it will start to get light and after passing under more than a few bridges (each with spectators cheering you on) you will find yourself at the islands on which stand the magnificent Notre Dame (time for a quick selfie!)



Once past the islands you carry on but must stick to the right bank (the pros do a lap of the islands) and the sun will start to be coming up as you pass the Eiffel Tower... (Selfie time again)

With so many on the water you will always be paddling next to people of a similar ability & speed, there is plenty of chatting & the time (& kilometres) fly by and the finish arch looms into view

Back on shore the lorries will be there again & your board bags lined up (again in number order) pack your kit up & load it back on to be taken back to the boat



show. The coaches are also ready & waiting

A large (& varied) buffet lunch is provided before round 2 commences – if you placed well in the main race you get the chance to compete against the best of the best in the indoor pool

More catching up in the show then after dropping the boards back off at the hotel, quick shower & change we head off into the city to spend the afternoon/evening around the Christmas markets

Monday – a bit of sightseeing, lazy lunch, back to the hotel to collect the boards & off to the airport for the flight home



Things to think about (in no particular order)

A hotel near the show will be convenient for getting back & forth to registration, briefing & in the morning. A hotel near the start gives you a bit of a lie in on race day (but not much)

Before you book the hotel check what time the Metro starts running on the Sunday morning otherwise it's either a long walk or a taxi trip (remember you will have your paddle with you)

If you have a go pro on your board – check the settings – it would be a shame to do the whole 10km with your head chopped off!!

There are no toilets available from leaving the show in the morning till you get back there after the finish

Travel cards – we have found it works out cheaper to get the train from/to the airport on a separate ticket then get a 3 day travelcard for the central zones (the airports are zone 5)



