



The 'Bluewater Classic', otherwise known as Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, attracts some of the most iconic names in sailing.
Photo: Carlo Borlenghi

last year. Multi-ocean challenge Vendée Globe is completed solo, non-stop and without any assistance, making the race an extreme test of endurance. Before entering, sailors must ask themselves how long they can be tested for, and how much time they can spend in the extremities on their own.

Starting and ending in Les Sables d'Olonne in France, sailors go from west to east, traversing the capes of Good Hope, Leeuwin and the Horn. Dangerous crossings abound in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

The obstacles are vast, from the southwesterly storms between Les Sables d'Olonne and Cape Finisterre. Other difficulties include the long Indian Ocean, a "shadowy zone" of low light, dangerous seas and winds, large icebergs and "growlers", blocks of ice that can weigh 30 or 40 tonnes, in the Pacific, and the *pamperos* (gales), blowing off the Argentinian coast. Strenuous, time consuming, and a test of patience and fortitude, sailors get an average of five hours sleep every day during the three-month challenge. Beginning in 1989, 13 skippers joined the first race, deemed to comprise a "marvellous range of mad yachtsman aboard their strange craft" by that year's winner Titouan Lamazou.

For the upcoming edition of the race, the

eighth Vendée Globe to take place from 2016, experienced skippers have lined up to see who can withstand hard times on the high seas. Race organisers are no doubt hoping that this edition will be as scintillating as the last one, with François Gabart and Armel Le Cléac'h fighting a long-standing duel across all the oceans in 78 days, in the end only separated by three hours.



The America's Cup has global popularity.