

# SAIL GP

# SAN FRANCISCO

## WHERE DID THE WHALE GO?

---

### BACKGROUND:

I became interested in Sail GP a couple of years ago. I have always had an interest in the America's Cup, which is a sailing race held



every four years. The American team held a winning streak for 132 years, including Ted Turner (Mouth of the South) winning it in 1977. The Australians won the Cup in 1983 to break the American streak, and Dennis Conner won the cup back in 1987. Through the years I followed the race on T.V. During a business trip to San Francisco in 2013, I had the opportunity to see a couple of America's Cup races between Oracle

Team USA (Golden Gate Yacht Club) and the challenger Emirates Team New Zealand (Royal New Zealand Yacht Club). Oracle Team USA won the Cup that year. Unfortunately, in 2017, the Golden Gate Yacht Club and the city of San Francisco could not agree on San Francisco as the venue for defending the Cup, so the Cup's defense moved to Bermuda. The Americans lost the Cup to New Zealand, and the venue shifted to Auckland, New Zealand. As a result, the opportunity to watch the America's Cup in San Francisco was not a possibility in the near future.

Fortunately, SailGP was officially launched in London on October 3, 2018, and the first season took place in 2019. Larry Ellison and

Russell Coutts, who won two America's Cup together in Valencia, Spain and San Francisco, are the founders of Sail GP. Teams in SailGP have the best sailors in the sport. The SailGP teams for 2022 are Australia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, and United States.

So, when I learned that SailGP had scheduled a race in San Francisco, we decided to go. Below is a narrative of our trip to San Francisco to watch the race.

## FISHERMAN WHARF DISTRICT



We stayed in Fisherman's Wharf, which is a historic district in San Francisco. Fisherman's Wharf, originally known as Meigg's Wharf, was once the main port of entry to San Francisco. The wharf used to be the sea capital of the city where Sicilian immigrants fished the bay for fish and Dungeness crab and sold them at the Wharf. In previous visits to the city, Fisherman's wharf was always packed with people, and we had lot of good meals at the

local restaurants. We were surprised to see how deserted it was. Streets that typically have cars and pedestrians competing for space were near empty. Some of the restaurants were closed on Friday night. Much to our surprise, Alioto's Restaurant, which opened for business in 1908, was permanently closed. On Saturday night, there were more people, but not close to what we had seen in the past.

We ate at couple of restaurants that were still recovering from the shutdowns. [Boudins Sourdough](#) had moved from a building to a standalone building in one of the parking lots. We also had dinner one evening at



[The Franciscan](#). Both evenings, we spent some time in the Hotel bar. Many patrons were watching NCAA basketball tournament, as the Elite 8 was being played at Chase Center just a few miles from the Wharf. As we were sitting in the bar, we heard a loud rumble. As we looked out the window, there were at least 100 motorcycles coming down the street on a slight downward incline, and some of the motorcycles jumped onto the sidewalks. It was like a scene from a movie.

## RACES

We had tickets to watch the races from the San Francisco Bay on a cruise ship operated by the [Red and White Fleet](#). We had to queue up 90 minutes before the boat departed. The ship was very nice, as it had food and drinks with three stories of viewing. The top deck was open with benches. We ended up in the middle deck, which was enclosed with plenty of seating.



The bottom deck had seating, a food station, and a drink station. It was a mad dash once we were let into the ship, as people were jockeying for either drinks or seats. Once the ship was loaded, we started to sail to the viewing area for the race, which was by the Golden Gate Yacht Club. The atmosphere on the ship was very



festive, and people were having a good time. This was a

great opportunity for sight-seeing: Passengers took in the spectacular view of the city, Golden Gate bridge, Tiburon, and Sausalito. We cruised by Angel Island and Alcatraz Island.

Sail GP boats and helicopters were buzzing in the bay. The closer we got to the viewing area; we could feel the excitement building. There were five races held over the two days that would determine the three teams that would compete in the Grand Final race. Four races were held on Day 1, and one race was held on Day 2. The Grand Final race was held immediately after the Day 2 race. The winner of the Grand Final race would receive prize money of \$1 million and be crowned the 2022 GP Champion. As only the top three teams move forward to the Grand Final race, each race was very competitive, and the teams gave everything.



Sail GP boats, Golden Gate and Marin Headlands



SailGP Boats

The races were exciting, and the competitors sailed close to each other. The boats were very fast and came close to the viewing boat we were on. The crowd loved every time the competitors buzzed by us. Two crashes occurred over the two days. Spain SailGP and USA SailGP crashed into each other; France SailGP and New Zealand SailGP also collided. Spain Sail GP was penalized six points for the



crash, and New Zealand SailGP was penalized four points. USA SailGP had to forfeit a race so they could repair their boat. Even with that setback, USA SailGP made the Grand Final race with Australia SailGP and Japan Sail GP.

As we were watching the Grand Final, we noticed that the race was abandoned. As we were trying to figure out what happened, the announcer on the boat announced the race had to be abandoned because a whale had entered the racecourse. The US Coast Guard crews

searched for the whale so they could escort it west of the Golden Gate Bridge and out of the racecourse.



The rules state that, if a whale is spotted on the racecourse, the race must be delayed for 30 minutes from the last time the whale was sighted. The question of the day was **"where did the whale go?"** When the race was restarted, Australia SailGP won the SailGP Championship and the \$1 million prize money. Japan SailGP was second, and US SailGP was third.



Australia SailGP 2022 Champions

## FINAL THOUGHTS

We thoroughly enjoyed watching the races and plan on attending more SailGP events.