



America's Cup

Views from Valencia



VALENCIA
32ND AMERICA'S
CUP

The 32nd America's Cup has been run and won, with the effervescent Spanish city that played host to the world's premier sail contest claiming the ultimate spoils...

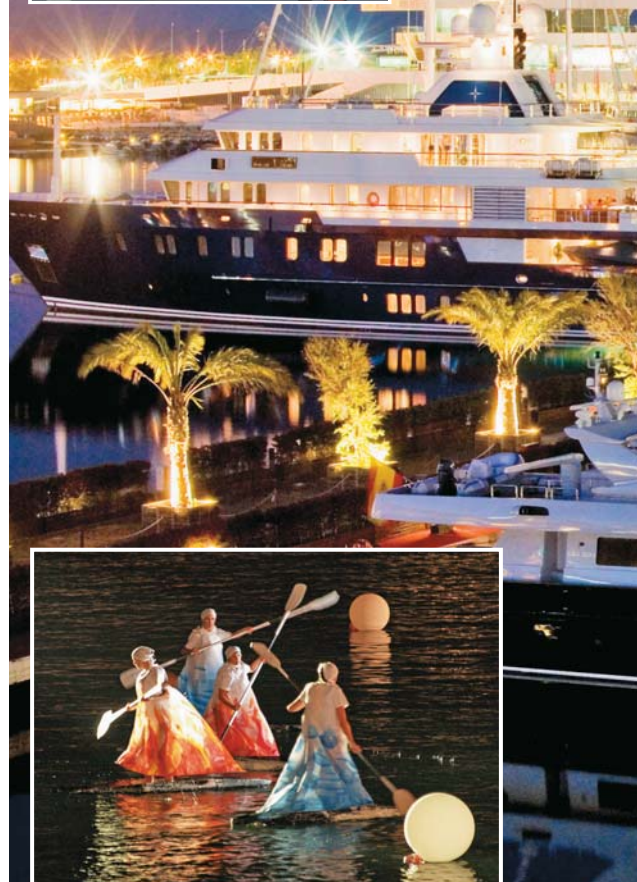
Valencia, or Valenzia as the supporters of Emirates Team New Zealand preferred to mispronounce the host city of the 32nd America's Cup, is enjoying a renaissance. The southern Spanish port is attracting a new breed of visitor since being selected in 2003 to host the most sought-after trophy in yachting.

The nautical set, together with locals and tourists, flocked to Spain's third largest city, which was completely transformed by the organisers to host the event.

Land was reclaimed, team bases constructed along the southern and northern sides of the port, together with the creation of super yacht facilities and a 600-berth marina. A deep water channel allowed competitors to reach the northern race course in a mere 15 minutes.

Australian yachting legend, Sir James Hardy was suitably impressed with the transformation of this once unused waterfront precinct into one of the finest purpose-built sailing arenas.

By Lulu Roseman



"Fremantle in 1987 was the start of each team having their own bases, so I am thrilled with the development in Valencia to stage this event. This idea has reached the heights of Formula One or golf, and I love the fact that the Cup has grown to these standards as a great sporting classic," he said.

The Spanish are renowned for their fun-loving ways and the Valencians have made partying an art form.

Most nights in port during racing, a spectacular lighting display was projected onto the incredible *Veles e Vents* building, designed by award-winning British architect, David Chipperfield.



Invited guests lounged or dined on the top level, where the 360-degree views extend to the race course and beach beyond. There is also a restaurant, two bars and a Louis Vuitton store on the levels below.

Nearby, and painted a distinctive shade of red, is the outdoor waterfront *Estrella Damm Lounge*. Nicknamed the 'Sailors Bar', this is where many of the crews took the opportunity to mingle with their supporters over a few cold beers. After a hard day on the water, this was the coolest place to chill out, mingle or take in some tunes.

In total, there are over 23 bars and restaurants to choose from. During the Cup

competition, the place buzzed with accents from all over the world as people soaked up the atmosphere.

ACTION APLENTY

While sailing has been conducted here for the last few years, it was during the Louis Vuitton final in late May between Italian team, *Luna Rossa* and *Emirates Team New Zealand*, that the regatta started to get serious, with the winner earning the right to challenge the defender, *Alinghi*.

And during the America's Cup Match, a fleet of more than 800 support boats made its way out to the course to witness the action, of which

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there was plenty. What ensued was some of the most exciting and closest match racing in Cup history. Not since *Australia II* came from behind to beat Dennis Connor's *Liberty 4-3* in 1983, has there been such a closely fought series.

Alinghi won the first race and the Kiwis promptly leveled the scoreboard the following day. The third race was the most exhilarating of the series to date, when *NZL 92* snatched a thrilling win as they closed on the finish line. Significant lead changes occurred three times in light breeze and a sea lumpy from a swell left from an overnight storm.

But any jubilation *Emirates Team New Zealand* felt about leading the series 2-1 was short-lived when the Swiss evened the score the following day.

In the fifth race, the Kiwis won the start and converted that early advantage into a 12-second lead at the windward mark. But on the run, *SUI 100* made up fast ground, just two lengths behind *NZL 92*. Then disaster struck for the *Emirates* squad, as their spinnaker burst. A replacement appeared to be ready, but when it was hoisted, it was clear it wasn't rigged properly. It took a full three minutes to get the boat settled at full pace again and by then, *Alinghi* had taken the lead it would never surrender.

After snatching the sixth race by the tiniest of margins, the tally stood at 4-2 in *Alinghi's* favour.

The seventh race was postponed due to lack of wind and tension was high when racing resumed after the lay day.

In one of the most dramatic races in the Cup's history, the Kiwis were ordered to do a full penalty turn on the last leg after failing to allow enough race room while performing a dial-down. This cost them the lead although the Swiss were barely able to hold on and cross the line for a photo-finish, winning the race by just one second and hoisting the Cup for a second time.

"Valencia has been a perfect venue for this first America's Cup in Europe. Surely *Team New Zealand* helped, but I don't think anyone can remember a more exciting match," beamed Ernesto Bertarelli, *Alinghi* President and member of the afterguard.

Grant Dalton, Head of Syndicate, *Emirates Team New Zealand* said that while his team had done a great job, it had been a long four years.

"We didn't come here to take part, we came to win and we haven't done that. So now we





have to regroup and see what the future holds. We have been focused on the present and now we just need a bit of time," he said.

"The New Zealand fans have been absolutely marvellous. So supportive, both here and in New Zealand, and I take my hat off to them."

VIBRANT VALENCIA

Valencia is a vibrant city where ruins from the past, dating back as far as 138BC, combine harmoniously with some of the most modern, avant-garde buildings to be built in the new millennium.

Nothing reflects this more than the City of Arts and Sciences (*Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias*), a huge cultural complex designed by Valencian architect, Santiago Calatrava.

This futuristic complex houses the *L'Hemisfèric Cinema-Planetarium*; the Palace of the Arts, devoted to promoting and publicising art, the Príncipe Felipe Science Museum; and the Universal Oceanographic Park.

Because of its location, Valencia is the Spanish gateway to the Mediterranean and has a special

The 2007 America's Cup featured some of the most exciting racing in cup history.

charm. The laid-back lifestyle is a huge part of its unique appeal, together with approximately 300 days of sunshine each year. Everyone enjoys the outdoor lifestyle here, with both locals and visitors whizzing around everywhere on bicycles.

The food in Valencia is amazing and the town is positively bursting with restaurants and tapas bars. Paella, the famous Spanish rice dish, was invented here and is a feature of most restaurants.




Dine *al fresco* along the picturesque beachfront, where many serve this local staple with a choice of seafood, lobster or chicken. One popular choice is *La Pepica*, founded in 1898, and a regular haunt of Ernest Hemingway, Spanish royalty and the glamorous '50s Hollywood set.

Visit the beautiful covered central market, *Mercado Central*, one of the finest in Europe and where a vast array of local produce is on sale.

Check out *Plaza de la Reina*, in the historic centre of the city, where pubs, cafes and restaurants nestle around a pretty square brimming with flowers. Nearby, shopping is well catered for, with both international and local designer labels well represented.

For those who crave nightlife, *Barrio del Carmen* is a maze of little streets brimming with boutiques, restaurants, bars and shops by day. But by night it turns into a thriving hotspot bursting with great chill-out bars and intimate clubs. The after-hours clubs are perfectly suited to those who love to dance till dawn.



While a venue for the 33rd running of the America's Cup hasn't been announced as we go to press, the good people of Valencia are hopeful that their vibrant city will be at the top of the list. Certainly, it will be the favourite for many attendees at this year's Cup. Viva Valencia! 

After a photo finish the Swiss team emerged victorious.

Photography: Carlo Borlenghi, Carlos Lujan, Francesco Ferri, Stefano Catini, Th. Martinez.
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