

Coxswain's Guide

Sulkava Grand Rowing Festival on Lake Saimaa

Disclaimer

This guide is an adapted and expanded training manual for international coxswains. It is based on Finnish coxswain training material and event-specific practices. Rules, safety requirements, route details, equipment standards, and procedures may change. Always verify current instructions from the official event organizer, rowing club, or governing body.

Introduction

Welcome to the Sulkava Grand Rowing Festival on Lake Saimaa. This guide supports international coxswains by explaining the fundamentals of church boat rowing, crew coordination, rowing technique, commands, and safety.

1. Church Boat and the Role of the Coxswain

A church boat is a long traditional rowing boat designed for large crews. The coxswain is responsible for steering, commands, rhythm, and safety.

2. Crew Positions and Stroke Pair

Each rower has an assigned seat and oar. The stroke pair sets the rhythm for the entire crew.

3. Oars and Oar Handling

Correct oar handling ensures efficiency and stability. The blade should enter and exit the water smoothly.

4. Phases of the Rowing Stroke

Each stroke includes catch, drive, finish, and recovery, performed in unison.

5. Coxswain Commands

Commands must be clear, consistent, and audible.

6. Steering and Boat Control

Steering should be smooth and anticipatory, especially in wind and waves.

7. Starting Procedures

Starts require calm preparation and balanced positioning.

8. Rowing in Different Conditions

Weather and water conditions affect rowing and must be anticipated.



9. Safety and Risk Management

Safety is the coxswain's primary responsibility.

10. Landing and Docking

Approach shorelines slowly and with clear instructions.

11. Emergency Situations

In emergencies, act decisively and maintain calm leadership.

12. Conduct During the Event

Participants must follow event rules and respect officials and other crews.

Authorship and Rights

Based on "Kirkkoveneperämiehen peruskurssi harrastajalle" by Vesa Tuomi. Expanded and adapted for the Sulkava Grand Rowing Festival.

Sulkavan Suursoudut / Sulkava Grand Rowing Festival on Lake Saimaa
January 2026

