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**Final 2018 GCT participants and playing schedules (for Paris and Leuven)**

The Grand Chess Tour (GCT) is pleased to release the names of the nine (9) players that have signed full GCT Tour contracts for the 2018 GCT Tour.

1. GM Viswanathan Anand (IND)
2. GM Levon Aronian (ARM)
3. GM Fabiano Caruana (USA)
4. GM Alexander Grischuk (RUS)
5. GM Sergey Karjakin (RUS)
6. GM Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (AZE)
7. GM Hikaru Nakamura (USA)
8. GM Wesley So (USA)
9. GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (FRA)

World Champion Magnus Carlsen and Ex-World Champion Vladimir Kramnik declined their full tour invitations and the GCT Advisory Board decided to extend a full tour invitation to GM Sergey Karjakin who was next in line based on the URS™ rating list.

The last place in each tournament will be filled by event level wildcards and two wildcard invitations have been extended and accepted to date:

1. GM Vladimir Kramnik accepted a wildcard invitation for the 2018 Paris GCT Rapid & Blitz; and
2. GM Anish Giri accepted a wildcard invitation for the 2018 YNM Leuven Rapid & Blitz.

The playing dates for the 2018 Grand Chess Tour events in Paris and Leuven have also been finalised and will be as follows:

<b>Activities</b>	<b>YNM Leuven</b>	<b>Paris GCT</b>
Rapid Games 1 - 3	Tuesday June 12	Wednesday June 20
Rapid Games 4 - 6	Wednesday June 13	Thursday June 21
Rapid Games 7 - 9	Thursday June 14	Friday June 22
Blitz Games 1 - 9	Friday June 15	Saturday June 23
Blitz Games 10 - 18	Saturday June 16	Sunday June 24

An expanded children's chess day will be held as part of the YNM Leuven tournament on Monday June 11 while the traditional corporate day in Paris will take place on Monday June 25.

The YNM Leuven tournament will be held at the traditional City Hall of Leuven which has hosted the event from its inception. The players and tournament officials will be accommodated at The Fourth Hotel which is an ultimate luxury hotel located within the historic Grote Markt square. The official tournament hotel also provides the players with access to the Tafelrond restaurant which is ranked amongst the very best restaurants in Belgium.

The Paris GCT tournament will also utilise the same venue and all tournament games will be played at the same CANAL+ Espace Lumière studio which provided the spectacular setting for the 2017 edition. The Paris tournament will again be broadcast on CANAL+ television with daily highlights aired for their French language audience.

The wild-cards for the 2018 St Louis Rapid & Blitz tournament and for the 2018 Sinquefield Cup have yet to be selected and will be announced later in the year.

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**About the URS™** (<http://universrating.com>)

The Universal Rating System (URS™), is a revolutionary new sport's rating system designed to assess the relative strength of participants across a wide variety of competitor vs competitor sports or games. The URS™ was developed as the result of a collaborative research project funded by the Grand Chess Tour, the Kasparov Chess Foundation and the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. The system is the product of detailed research conducted over more than two years by some of the world's leading experts in methods of rating chess players.

**About the Grand Chess Tour** (<http://grandchesstour.org>)

The Grand Chess Tour is a circuit of international events, each demonstrating the highest level of organization for the world's best players. The Tour was created in partnership between the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (Sinquefield Cup) and Chess Promotions, Ltd. (London Chess Classic). The legendary Garry Kasparov, one of the world's greatest ambassadors for chess, inspired the Grand Chess Tour and helped solidify the partnership between the organizers.