

Donna Lange crosses her outbound track!

March 2nd 2007

"Last night I crossed over my outbound track. Officially I have circumnavigated the world in the southern hemisphere....."

Congratulations Donna!

Donna was in the same place, roughly 15°S and 29°W, almost 14 months ago when she sailed the first leg from Rhode Island to New Zealand. Then she had over 3 and a half months of very tough sailing ahead. Now she's on the homeward leg and at the crossover was 605 miles south of the Equator and 4422nm from Rhode Island and home!

It's been a tough haul up from Cape Horn, where she had a two week stop over to effect engine repairs and sight-see. The South Atlantic waters and weather off Argentina and Brazil have been very tricky, not like the steady and more predictable conditions of the Southern Ocean.



Donna left the Southern Ocean during the first week of Feb in a storm and the going was really tough -

"The southern ocean seems to be holding on to me. I can't get away. I am beat. I feel trampled. The sea conditions were just incredible. I was sailing off cliffs of water, hitting the ocean with such force, it was as if a bomb went off. How can this boat take this abuse endlessly? Especially when I know she has already beaten to windward for months in the past. The dodger is 'hurting'. The wind just tore the last of the seams holding the cloth to the frame, which is also on its last legs - original for the boat. I'll stitch it back together over the next few days with the old genny. The steering vane flag is also shredded. The wind has been wild."

Moving into the South Atlantic she noticed the changes around her almost immediately. *"I realized that there were no albatrosses swooping in the sky. I will miss them. The storm petrels and silvery terns still play in the breezes and there is a new bird, more brown and white, lithe and pretty, appearing on the waves. The familiar world of The South Atlantic Ocean is ahead. A new season. I feel deep wells of gratitude toward the flows of the Southern Ocean for sharing with me a life experience that has changed me so. I have met a wealth of kindred spirits in her community and I will miss them, yet have them in my heart. I am blessed above all imagination. Thank you Southern Sea."*

Paying her respects to Neptune, she tossed a toast of red wine over the side, giving thanks for a safe voyage on the Southern Ocean and asking for a pleasant crossing of the South Atlantic.

Challenges on this final leg have included a dramatic night with bilge pump problems that nearly sank her! Fortunately Donna is extremely practical and very persistent and through the dark night hours she struggled away with an errant bilge pump, triumphing before disaster! She's had to effect repairs to various blocks on deck and patch a 12ft long tear on the genny - over 8 hours of stitching into the night. She's been up the mast to reset the jib halyard. *"I was swaying like crazy and having to stop to just hold on as I proceeded. I wedged myself between the mast and the backstay to set 2 hands free. I made attempt after attempt to snake it through, but it was getting lost inside..... and then I managed to lose the wire from my grip. It fell slowly to the ocean. I felt a lurching of my stomach. I threw up I had to reposition myself over and over again to let the blood run back into my arms as I was holding on for dear life."* Donna doesn't give up easily as you may have gathered, so was successful in the end!

The weather and sea conditions in the South Atlantic have certainly challenged her - *"...big squalls, South Atlantic style are 30 knot gusts of wind that blast into the lulls. In the Southern Ocean, squalls would kick up 10+ knots of extra wind, but here they are the terror of the sea. They can contain lightning and waterspouts - more dynamic features given the warmth at sea level and the ice cold of the higher elevation clouds."*

Her steady climb northwards has brought the joy of warmth and the opportunities to wash and swim! *"I had an amazing bath, tons of warm sea water poured over my head, soap and good smelling stuff. I am so ready to be human again. Though I'm only a few weeks out of Ushuaia, the cold and closed in conditions have taken their toll. I took a bit of a rest on deck and had no trouble getting lost in the brilliance of the dancing fairies - huge sparklings on pale blue water with spy waves bobbing about. Also, a swim! And yes, I had on a tether when I jumped off the boat for a wonderful swim. It's always a strange feeling at first to be in such an infinite pool but swimming is one of the pleasures of being becalmed."*

The return of a sailing heroine!

Donna's triumphant return to Bristol, Rhode Island is being professionally orchestrated by Will Barbeau in the States. A raft of exciting festivities are being planned for Saturday 21 April and will be a spectacle not to be missed. For information please contact Will <wbarb@cox.net>

You can still follow Donna's progress on www.donnalange.com or www.donnalange.org