

Donna Lange - South American Stopover ahead

ETA 7th or 8th January!

Donna is having a fantastic run across the South Pacific Ocean to Cape Horn! She left New Zealand on 21 Nov 2006 and after 42 days at sea is now at 52° 52S 82°56W, less than 600 miles from the Horn, in her 28ft Southern Cross, *Inspired Insanity*. She's following a course through the Roaring Forties and revelling in relatively benign conditions for this stretch of ocean. The sea state has never been more than 15ft and the maximum wind speed recorded was 50knots. Her best 24 hour run has been 144 nautical miles and the lowest temperature has been 41°F/5°C.



"...most days the sun shines at some point as the fronts go by within 6 -12 hours and the clear air behind brings sunshine. It does warm things up coming through the plastic dodger windows, out of the wind. The conditions are truly optimal. I couldn't ask for better."

The hardest thing to deal with is the cold - *"It is now getting so the cabin is chilly, even in my bunk. The only place I am really warm, toes and hands and all is tucked into bed. I am not writing as much or playing music, rather settling down to some of the books on board, eating too many sweets! Whenever I go on deck for sail changes, I get all my wet weather gear on and try to stay as long as I can, until my hands are just too cold. I am still finding it difficult to find a solution for my hands - anything that gets wet and stays wet against my hands becomes too cold within an hour. I am ever so grateful that the steering vane (www.caphorn.com) is doing her job so well."*

When Donna set off from the US in Nov 2005 on her solo circumnavigation, she intended on making only one stopover in New Zealand. But with the 'death' of her alternator on Dec 17 a decision was made to put in a pit-stop in Ushuaia. The alternator's job is to feed power to the batteries when the engine is running and although she has a wind generator which also does this, when she hits patches of no wind - particularly crossing the Equator and areas in the South Atlantic - she'll have no means of generating power. This would mean no communications or weather information and more importantly she could get to a point where she couldn't start the engine.

Ushuaia, in Tierra del Fuego, is the southernmost Argentinian town and the staging post for cruise ships going down to the Antarctic. Sandwiched between a range of snow capped mountains of the Cordillera Darwin to the north and the Beagle Canal to the south, it is an ideal place for Donna to stop. Club Nautico on the waterfront is the base for a community of very experienced cruisers. Many are Antarctic veterans and cross the Drake Passage regularly with clients, others are live-a-boards who seek the challenges and rewards of high latitude sailing. Their boats are tough and many are equipped with work benches and every conceivable tool you can think of. Xaxero (www.xaxero.com), who are sponsoring Donna with weather-fax software and a satellite interface on her laptop, have a base in Ushuaia and will very kindly greet her on arrival and assist with repairs.



Club Nautico, Ushuaia

"It will be about 70nm west off my path to go down the Beagle Canal, a detour I am told is just breathtaking and will be well worth the experience. Few places in the world harbour such veteran sailors and camaraderie as those found in Patagonia."

W The Beagle Canal looking north from Isla Navarino, Chile. Ushuaia is in the very far left of the picture in Argentina **E**





The **Cape Horn** area is scattered with numerous desolate islands and in fact the infamous Cape itself, lying at 55°58S 67°17W, is in truth the southernmost point of Isla Hornos.

Rising 400m out of the sea, the Cape and the top of the Antarctic Peninsula form a chicane for the Southern Ocean to pass through. Forced to squeeze between these two 'book ends' the ocean is thrown into turmoil - add screaming westerly winds, freezing temperatures and its remote location and you have the ingredients for its fearsome reputation.



Cape Horn from the West, as Donna might see it



The Horn - on a good day!

But for all its bad press, **Cape Horn** and the surrounding islands are wildly beautiful. Their desolate, untamed nature reaches deep within the soul touching our primeval heritage.

It is life at its most breathtaking.

Life in the raw - majestic and intensely spiritual.

STOP PRESS FROM DONNA on Jan 3rd 2007

"The full effects of the storm system hit yesterday afternoon with 45-50kn of wind gusting and squalling. Truly as much wind as I have ever seen. The sea state did co-operate, as the system moved quickly keeping the swell from building above 15' and it stayed very rolling, not breaking for longer periods. I had only one knock down this morn and that was as my point of sail came around to a beam reach and the seas were still 15ft. Winds are settling now. I have put the mainsail back up as it was down all night sailing on only a small jib. The sun is shining, temp rising a bit from it's low of 41°F/5°C last night. We are a wet lot, my little ship and I but all safe and sound. resting now."

May Donna have fair winds to ease her passage down towards the Horn, round and up into the Beagle Canal.