

Donna Lange is Homeward Bound!

At 20:00 UTC (17:00 local) on 25th Jan 2007 Donna set sail from Ushuaia on the Beagle Canal in her diminutive 28 footer, *Inspired Insanity*, on the final leg of her solo circumnavigation. Her destination is Rhode Island, 7684 nautical miles away. It could take her close to 100 days. Donna calculated this by reading the miles off the GPS and adding 20 to 25% which gives a total of 10,000 nautical miles.

Her two week stopover was filled with new friendships and kindness from everyone she met, in particular Jonathan Selby and his partner Roxanna Diaz. Donna had met Jonathan in New Zealand when his company, Xaxero Marine Software Engineering Ltd www.xaxero.com, came on board as sponsors of her weather-fax software and satellite interface with SkyEye. *"I can't thank Jonathan and Luis Soltero of Global Marine Net www.globalmarinenet.com enough for providing the software and equipment to allow me to share my experience and vision with others."*

Jonathan and Roxanna went out of their way to make her stay in Ushuaia as comfortable and enjoyable as possible, their hospitality knew no bounds. From the moment that they themselves sailed down the Beagle Canal to Puerto Williams to welcome Donna, they smoothed her way with officials and authorities, gave her warm dinners in their flat, picked up the pieces when her website crashed from overloading and introduced her to many wonderful, new friends. *"Roxanna is a gem of a woman. She has built an amazing yacht service company on her own, becoming a focal point for the yachting community as well as aviation support for groups going to Antarctica. www.ushuaialogistics.com is now a growing business."*

Donna was amongst kindred spirits during her stopover, adventurous people who have a wealth of incredible stories to tell between them. *"We shared such a common thread of determination and desire to be on the sea."* For R and R she enjoyed late night jamming sessions with musicians from many countries - Mike de Hoog, Laura, Maria Julia and Carlos and hiked up into the mountains with Keri and Greg off the expedition yacht Northanger (www.northanger.org) where she was *"overtaken by the beauty, the flowers, the blowing snow, tumbling creeks and falls, huge glaciers and caves of ice.... just magnificent."*

As for *Inspired Insanity* *"I put a better grade of oil in her for the colder climates - a gift from a Swedish single-hander. Antonio, an American, rebuilt the alternator and Ken on MV Pelagic helped with the engine, sowow!"*

"It's incredibly windy here with continual gales and snow in the hills. It only pauses for a few hours before another front comes barreling through. My MTI Adventure Wear gear has really come in handy with the wind and cold and dinghy rides in 40+ knots of wind. A big thank you to Gustavo and all at Afasym Yacht Club for my stay there in the warm!"

Donna's involvement with Ken Barnes's rescue generated considerable interest in the American press and she gave live interviews for National Public Radio (NPR) and ABC TV, as well as receiving coverage in the written press. The overloading to her website, www.donnalange.com and the desire of many strangers to send her donations, precipitated the creation of another site by Jonathan Selby, www.donnalange.org. This will form the basis of a charitable works site hosting benefit organizations and future projects by Donna, as well as carrying her vessel tracking for this final leg. *"The new site is designed by Global Marine Network and I'm very excited to see this underway."*



Leaving Ushuaia
Roxanna Diaz, Ushuaia Logistics

What of the Future?

For many years Donna has been looking beyond herself for causes which she can focus her energies on, *".... in fact this journey has been alot about needing to know for myself what is happiness, what is true, so I can invest my passion in helping others. I hope the website www.donnalange.org will become an educational forum to connect us all to understanding what is going on to ensure the health of the seas, the earth and her people and what we can do to help. One thing I have found in these last years is that if I put my whole heart into what I believe and work hard at it, then I can make things happen."*

But I am anxious too, to get back to sea, to my writing and warmer climes although it's hard to pull away from such new friends. If it wasn't for the pleasure of the company of the sea and her entourage, the desire to move forward with the next stage of my journey and my wonderful family and friends waiting at home, it would be more difficult to leave. It is such a magical place.... "

Donna puts the finishing touches to her boat before setting off on the final leg home.

By Jonathan Selby



The first stage of Donna's journey was a tough sail east along the Beagle Canal. A lovely sunrise on the morning of the 26th was small compensation for the winds which taunted her all day. *"I have to say it has been miserable, continually changing sails to keep the speed up. Every ten minutes the wind changed 180°. When the sails did finally set, I went below to check the charts and laid my head on the pillow with the alarm set for 15 minutes. I was suddenly woken with a clang and bang to discover that I had slept through the alarm and 30 minutes had passed - long enough for the wind to send the boat round in circles and drive her onto the shore. I was being shoved up against the rocks by the rising tide and surrounded by a bed of massive long seaweed."* Fortunately the incredible kelp beds, which are infamous in the area, had saved the day, slowing the boat as she came towards the shore and Donna was able to slid off backwards, start her up and move off unscathed *"with a tear of relief and exhaustion, fear..."*

About an hour after this drama she was visited by a pod of black and white dolphins which drew nearer as she played tunes on her whistle. The water was so clear she could see the detail of their colouring and as they swam to the surface they each rolled their head to one side and look straight into her eyes. *"This was magic! This has never happened to me before."*

"I am now thinking how different this next leg will be from the last. I had painted a vision of a more relaxed leg and the truth is it will be wrought with low winds, variables, squalls and probably the ever search for the magical 'trade winds' that have eluded me the world round. No more 120 mile days for a while. No Southern Ocean current to bring me along. Yes, there are currents but not so steady."

Two days after leaving Donna was visited by some seals. *"It was so still that I was able to hear a slight splash out of place, jumped to deck and there were three or so seals swimming past from bow to stern. I grabbed for my whistle and played them some tunes but they continued on. They rise to the surface like dolphins but then stop, toss their nose in the air, shake like a puppy coming out of a pond, and then roll back under the water."*

On the third day at 11pm, which is near dark in those latitudes, the radar reflector came down in winds of 20 knots from NNW. The wire had chafed through. Luckily Frankie from the Milford Cruising Club in Auckland saved the day with his webbing mast ladder! It worked brilliantly allowing Donna to climb the mast. *"It isn't easy, but much safer. I can get up the mast and even bask in the sights from above, without fear of the deep dive down."*

Donna has just come through another amazing storm and her own words capture the experience perfectly -

"The southern ocean seems to be holding on to me for some reason. I can't get away. I am beat. I feel trampled too. 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 endlessly take this abuse? Especially when I know she has already beaten for months to wind in the past. The dodger is hurting. The wind just tore the last of the seams holding the frame to the cloth, which is really 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 also is shredded. The wind was wild. Once the last fury began, the seas turned to monster chop and I had to turn downwind. It meant sailing back into the front but the front was moving faster than me. I had no choice. The boat would explode if she had to keep hitting the sea that hard. I reduced sail just enough to keep steerage. I tried to rest, but though I lay down, I was just thrown too hard to sleep at all. My back was a mess. Shooting pains of sciatica. No way to be comfortable. To get up and try to move around was to be thrown around. Finally, well after dawn, the winds clocked to SW and the seas began to even out, though still 15ft+, winds gusting to 30+ knots. I went on deck and raised the main, changing the sail pattern to suit downwind sailing, finally on course. The sun shining, although wind still 25 knots I go below for a rest."

*"So many thanks to Neil Van Gundy, who voluntarily does an incredible job of keeping my website updated and to all who keep in touch. MANY GRANDEST THANKS!
To my team, working away to keep me safe and you informed. Also to my Mom!"*



Posts from Donna's log are now appearing on www.pnn.com (a news network based in the US)

Leaving Ushuaia and heading east down the Beagle Canal

by Jonathan Selby and Roxanna Diaz, Ushuaia Logistics

