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# Jeanne Socrates Sails The World Solo Once Again

By [Claire Potak](#)

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Photo: Jeanne Socrates

**In September 2019, 77-year-old Jeanne Socrates became the oldest person to sail around the world nonstop alone. Her journey began on October 3, 2018, and ended on September 7, 2019. (Previously, the record was held by Minoru Saito, who was 71 when he completed a nonstop circumnavigation in 2005.)**

**This wasn't her first big trip, however. Back in 2013, she sailed around the globe and became the oldest woman ever to do so solo, nonstop and unassisted (Guinness World Record). She's certainly proven she doesn't need anyone else (or even an engine!) to successfully circumnavigate.**



**Photo: Jeanne Socrates, MarineTraffic.com**

**Jeanne first took up sailing in 1990 and then started cruising in 1997 after she and her husband both retired. Together they sailed around Europe, the Caribbean and the east coast of the USA and Canada. Her husband passed away in 2003, but Jeanne continued sailing on her own despite it being more of a daunting task without a partner.**

**Her first solo sail around the world was in 2007-2008, and her first nonstop attempt was in 2009. She persevered, didn't give up, and in 2013 she became a part of sailing history.**

Jeanne's most recent trip was spent in a 11.5m (38 ft) boat called [Nereida](#). Although she used [weather information](#) available by email to help her try to avoid the worst of the bad weather conditions, she still encountered three cyclones and several storms. Among the many things that failed were the boom support, mainsail and big headsail and the solar panels were lost overboard in a storm. These setbacks slowed her down but fortunately didn't hinder her from completing the trip. According to Jeanne,

*For several years of solo sailing around the world, the use of [AIS](#) has been a vital safety factor for me. It has enabled me to keep an eye on any shipping well before it got too close.*

*By showing me the names of vessels and time & distance of their likely closest approach, it has kept me safe since I have been able to radio any ship of concern to make sure my boat had been spotted by them so we could stay clear of each other.*

*[MarineTraffic](#) gave welcome support via an onshore radio friend when fishing fleets ahead of me caused me a major problem in the Pacific.*

Arriving back in [Victoria](#), Canada, not only were friends waiting at the harbour but hundreds of cheering spectators as well.

During the trip, she has said that the SSB radio was her lifeline and primary communication tool. In addition, she kept [a website blog](#) during her journey and people were able to write to her, wish her well, and tell her what an inspiration she is. These positive messages kept her going and further fuelled her already optimistic spirit.

The last entry of her blog was written on the day of her arrival, and it encompasses her joy of being back home.

*“More boats came along to welcome us as the day progressed – it was lovely to see so many familiar faces after so long away. But the wind was determinedly light and mostly from almost dead astern, making it difficult getting to the line. I seemed to be gybing the mainsail again and again... But eventually, just before 5pm, the wind came up a touch more and we were able to get closer and closer – finally crossing to a cacophony of horns and cheering...I couldn't stop smiling and was delighted to see so many lining the harbour walls and docks...Thank you all so much for waiting around for so long and giving us such a wonderful welcome back!”*

Since Jeanne completed her trip last September, 81-year-old Bill Hatfield from Australia has also sailed around the world solo, nonstop and unassisted. He returned

**home to the Gold Coast in February of this year after 8 months at sea, becoming the oldest person to circumnavigate solo and nonstop.**

**However, they went in opposite directions on their journey and they hold a few different records. Jeanne remains the oldest person to have sailed solo, nonstop and unassisted around the world via the Southern Ocean's Five Great Capes. And, she's the first (and, to date, still the only) woman to have sailed solo, nonstop and unassisted around the world from North America.**

**Both Jeanne and Bill attempted the global trek multiple times before finally being successful. The strength and determination shown by these two individuals is undeniably impressive and inspirational.**

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