



MAINTAINING COMMS VIA PHONE, EMAIL, TEXT AND INTERNET WHILE SAILING SOLO

The Challenge

To maintain communications with an onshore support team and have continuous access to phone, email, text and internet while sailing solo on a circumnavigation of Australia.

The Solution

Pivotel provided Lisa with a range of mobile satellite communication systems to ensure she could maintain contact with her onshore support crew at all times via phone, text and email, access weather forecasts and update her blog and social media channels throughout her voyage.

“ Getting updates from your team helps keep you focussed and makes you feel like you’re not alone. ”

- Lisa Blair
Solo Sailor

The Logistical Challenge

Lisa Blair is the first woman to sail solo around Antarctica and planned to become the first woman to sail solo, unassisted and non-stop around Australia. Her remarkable feats require meticulous planning, mental strength and reliable communication systems at all times.

“From a mental health point of view, eight weeks at sea on your own is very difficult to do,” says Lisa. “Being able to have a quick phone call with your family or friends when you’re travelling through such isolated locations really helped keep me going through some of the toughest days of the challenge.”

For Lisa, it is vital to have two independent communications systems, so in if anything goes wrong with one, she can still maintain contact with her support crew. “For me, it’s always important to have a redundancy system, because things break, and it’s a harsh environment. It gives my family comfort and it gives me comfort,” she says.

The Hardware



Inmarsat Fleet One
on the Inmarsat Network -

- Supports basic telephony functions and SMS
- Data connectivity up to 100 kbps
- Simple to install and operate
- Location monitoring

RedPort Optimizer
Suits Iridium, Inmarsat and Thuraya -

- Makes satellite data easy, with the devices you already own
- Optimizer broadcasts your satellite data as a Wi-Fi hotspot
- Access email, web, weather and chat services

Iridium 9555 and GO!
on the Iridium Network -

- Voice, SMS, email, apps*, voicemail and more
- External antenna options for vessel installation

*Iridium GO! only.

The Logistical Solution

Lisa relied on a range of satellite technology supplied by Pivotel. This allowed her to keep in touch with family and friends as well as her onshore team, meaning she could raise an alarm should she sustain any injuries, complications with her boat, or find herself in trouble while at sea.

The technology supplied included the Inmarsat Fleet One maritime solution which enabled Lisa to make calls, send emails, check weather forecasts, update her social media accounts and post to her daily blog.

The Inmarsat Fleet One terminal was paired with a RedPort Optimizer, a device that is new to the Australian market and provides data compression technology, which results in significant improvements in speed and cost savings for satellite data users. “The Optimizer compresses emails, so you can send more data at a lower bandwidth and lower cost,” she says.

Also supplied were a pair of Iridium satellite devices, the first an Iridium GO! that was paired with Pivotel’s recently launched Unlimited Data plan. The Iridium GO! provides satellite connectivity for mobile devices where cellular networks are not available. It can be used for calls, SMS, email, weather forecasts and a whole lot more. The second was an Iridium satellite phone for Lisa’s ‘grab and go gag’, on standby in the event Lisa was forced to abandon her boat in an emergency.

“I had my grab bag on board the boat rigged and ready to go in any abandon ship scenario, right next to the flares box and EPIRB (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon),” says Lisa. “If I was in a life-raft I could take that grab bag with me to be in touch with my support team and rescue centre. The EPIRB will activate a rescue, but I would be able to give on-going updates. You can give them full details rather than them having no understanding what the scenario is.”

The Outcome

Lisa successfully completed her solo circumnavigation of Australia non-stop and unassisted, becoming the first woman to do so, and her communications systems proved vital to the success of her mission.

“We had two completely independent systems using two separate satellite networks. If one has issues the other is still fully functioning,” says Lisa. “Getting updates from your team helps keep you focussed and makes you feel like you’re not alone. I could send and receive emails and photos, text messages, and phone calls to onshore support with the same convenience you could have in the modern world, and without it being expensive.”

Lisa set two world records on her journey. “I’m the first woman to circumnavigate Australia solo, non-stop and unassisted, and I established a new mono-hull speed record around Australia of 58 days. It took two weeks longer than planned because I had bad weather all the way round. You plan for the worst and hope for the best.”

Despite the rigours of long-distance solo sailing, Lisa is already planning her next adventure. “As brutal as it is out there, there’s a part of you that loves it. It strips back the rush of the modern world. That lifestyle, as hard as it can be, it’s still an amazing journey to go on every time.”

Now she’s hoping to circumnavigate Antarctica again and has her eye on beating the men’s speed record. “I de-masted on the Antarctica circumnavigation off the coast of Africa. I was able to set a world record but I did it with one stop (for repairs). I want to do it non-stop and I want to challenge the men’s record.”

About Lisa Blair

In 2018, Lisa Blair announced her latest adventure, to become the first woman to sail solo, non-stop and unassisted around Australia.

The Australian is no stranger to such a challenge and holds the record for the first woman to sail solo around Antarctica, as well as competing in a number of high profile sailing events.