

TOP ELECTRONICS FOR HOSTILE CONDITIONS

Skip Novak, *Pelagic Australis*.



Raymarine ambassador Skip Novak, skipper of Pelagic Australis, is best known for his participation in an amazing four Whitbread Round the World Yacht Races since 1977. Skippering the Independent Endeavour in 1979, he won the Parmelia Race from Plymouth to Freemantle and he skippered Simon Le Bon's Drum in the 1985/86 Whitbread Race resulting in a more than respectable 3rd place. Wishing to combine his mountaineering skills, gained in New Zealand and the Alps and expeditions to East Africa, Sikkim, Nepal, Patagonia, South Georgia and Antarctica, with his love of sailing, Skip built the expedition yacht Pelagic in Southampton in 1987 and has since spent fifteen seasons in Antarctic waters.

In 1993 and again in 1996 he and Pelagic were featured in one hour programs for ESPN which were aired worldwide.

During the last ten years he has also returned to top level ocean racing on large multihulls. In 1997 with great success he navigated the French catamaran Explorer to a sailing record in the Transpac Race from Los Angeles to Honolulu, taking 5 days and 9 hours. In 1998 he co-skippered Explorer again, this time with Bruno Peyron, breaking the sailing record from Yokohama to San Francisco in 14 days and 17 hours. From January to March 2001 he co-skippered the 33m French catamaran Innovation Explorer to second place in the exciting millennium non-stop, no limits circumnavigation, The Race.

In 2002/2003 Skip project-managed the construction of his new Pelagic Australis, a 23m (74ft) purpose built expedition vessel for high latitude sailing in order to augment the charter operations of the original Pelagic.



Skip has weathered many different voyages onboard Pelagic Australis and tells us why he chose Raymarine to kit out his boats: "Since her launch in Durban, South Africa, in September 2003, the 74' aluminium expedition sailing vessel Pelagic Australis has logged over 80,000 miles – about the equivalent of three times around the world!

Offering expeditions for tourists or logistic support for special custom projects such as documentary or wildlife film making, mountaineering, diving and kayak expeditions and even a Middle East peace building initiative, Pelagic Australis specialises in high latitude destinations. Our sojourn has included four complete North South transits of the Atlantic Ocean from 65 degrees South to 80 degrees North, plus two runs from Chile to South Africa and back.

During our four Southern seasons to date, we have visited the Antarctic Peninsula eight times, made four voyages to the island of South Georgia and completed many cruises around Tierra del Fuego including Cape Horn.

In the North we circumnavigated Spitsbergen in 2004 and cruised the West coast of Greenland and arctic Canada in the summer of 2005 with an attempt on the North West Passage.

When I partnered with Raymarine in 2002 during the fit-out phase of design, I had high standards and knew exactly what I wanted. I emphasised our relentless schedule in the years forward and explained the fundamental necessity for a reliable, accurate, low maintenance system that was not service dependent. I would be operating in some of the world's most hostile conditions so I chose a complete electronics package which included; ST60 instruments, ST7001 autopilot, RL80 radar/chartplotter (important as we find ourselves in uncharted areas, so the radar gives us the distance details, and the visibility that is required), Ray215E VHF radio, DSM250 sounder and RayTech navigation software."

Raymarine have recently provided Skip with the latest marine electronics developments to upgrade his current installation, including an E Series multifunction display, 10kW open array radar and an AIS250 receiver.

"Of course, everybody talks about reliability, but many marine suppliers today take that onboard as having reliable service centres dotted around the world. Raymarine certainly have these - fine and dandy, but what I was looking for was as near as possible a 'serviceless' situation!



Getting any professional help while on site in high latitude venues would be virtually impossible so we needed trouble free systems that could get us through habitual heavy weather, frequent periods of bad visibility and give us the ability to navigate as safely as possible in uncharted waters.

We have sailed in conditions that range from 60 knots of wind, through to freezing conditions, in snow storms, fog and zero visibility. Happily, we have had incredible life out of these original instruments, needing only a few display changes and upgrades on software from time to time.

Even the mast head unit is original, and for anyone who has experienced a North East blizzard on the Antarctic Peninsula or the katabatic winds that we are forced to live with off the coast of South Georgia as a matter of routine, this is indeed an accolade!

Raymarine is welcome to come and take a look at my electronics anytime, but so far I have not had the need to go and see anyone about them as they've been so reliable!"

For more info about Skip's adventures and chartering opportunities visit: www.pelagic.co.uk

