

Roz Savage

Rowing for Change



Learn about the sport of ocean rowing and why Roz Savage, feeling trapped in her "typical Western lifestyle", decided to take on the world's oceans in her rowboat and work for environmental change.

Met Roz Savage: she's a British ocean rower, author, and environmental campaigner who uses her trans-oceanic rowing voyages to motivate others to take action on environmental issues and to face their own life challenges.

Roz began ocean rowing in 2005. As much a psychological as it is a physical challenge, ocean rowing is arguably one of the most extreme sports that exists. Rowers have to endure long periods at sea, braving the ocean's dangers without any help in close range. The challenge is especially acute for solo rowers who are held in especially high esteem within the sport, going without human contact for weeks at a time.

Roz's life was not always this adventurous. For eleven years she worked as a management consultant in London, what she refers to as a "typical Western lifestyle" – a nice, comfortable office job in a nice, comfortable city. Roz wanted more out of life. She wanted to be a true adventurer. "There came a time when my convictions became more important than my comfort," she said.

In 2005, she embarked upon a new life by deciding to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

For 103 days she rowed, communicating with the outside world by satellite phone connected to a laptop. The food she ate had to be long-lasting, uncrushable, light, compact, and full of calories, so her seafaring diet consisted of wholefood nut and seed bars, dried fruits, and occasionally freeze-dried expedition meals. Amazingly, her water intake came straight from the ocean! Her Spectra watermaker actually converts saltwater into freshwater by forcing it through a series of increasingly fine filters. "I also took 75 liters of freshwater which serves a double purpose as emergency supplies and ballast to help keep my boat upright," Roz explained. Roz's boat, The Brocade is 23 feet long and 6 feet wide, made to withstand the fiercest weather that the ocean has to offer.

Mishaps are common occurrences when faring the high seas. "On the Atlantic, my phone stopped working 24 days before the end of my journey so I lost all communications with dry land," Roz said. "Strangely, though, I loved it. Not many people have the opportunity to experience such complete isolation, peace and quiet. It was a privilege."

Another problem with going



solo is the issue of sleeping. Roz explained that while sleeping, she sets the rudder to keep the boat on course and leaves a light on so ships can see her. Other than that, all she can do is say a bedtime prayer and hope for the best. “The boat drifts where she will,” she says, “but I plan my route carefully to take advantage of winds and currents, so about 80 percent of the time she drifts in the right(ish) direction. So long as I keep heading more or less west and/or south, I’m happy.”

Her unlikely transformation from office worker to ocean rower has attracted wide-reaching attention. She uses her celebrity to raise awareness about pressing environmental issues including climate change, plastic pollution, and trash dumping in the Pacific. “I’m a self-proclaimed environmentalist,” asserts Roz. “I plan on being around for a long time, and when I’m ninety years old, I want to be happy and healthy; and it’s very difficult to be happy on a planet that is wracked with famine and drought...where we’ve poisoned the earth and the sea and the air.”

In 2008, Roz began yet another epic effort to row solo again – this time across the Pacific Ocean. Her adventure consisted of three stages, each with its own environmental message. In summer 2008, Roz became the first woman in history to row solo from California to Hawaii. During her 2,700-mile journey, lasting 99 days, she

encouraged people to cut back on their usage of disposable plastic bottles, cups and bags, thereby reducing the amount of plastic that ends up in the ocean. Her daily activities and environmental messages could be followed on her blog through the “Epictracker” website.

Her journey then took her from Hawaii to Tuvalu, and this time she targeted climate change through her Pull Together initiative, which aims to inspire people to take action on CO2 levels by walking more and driving less. Calling upon her supporters around the world to “Pull Together”, Roz challenged them to match the 10,000 oar strokes she does each day on the ocean by walking 10,000 steps a day. The third and final stage from Kiribati to Australia began in April 2010. If successful, Roz will be the first woman in history to row solo across the entire Pacific Ocean.

Roz’s life transformation gives her a unique outlook on life. Her story reminds us to ask ourselves: Are we doing what we really love in life? According to Roz, life is about taking responsibility. “Each of us has the power to determine our own lives and to be happy,” she said. “For so much of my life, I wanted something else to make me happy. I thought if I had the right house, or the right car, or the right man in my life then I could be happy...but I realized I needed to create my own future. I couldn’t just wait passively for happiness to come and find me.”

Roz also reminds us of the



power of tiny actions. Many feel that individual actions alone aren't enough to make a positive environmental impact. "Sure, changing your light bulb isn't going to change the world," said Roz. And yet, she reminds us that today we find ourselves in the midst of this global environmental crisis as a result of a collection of small decisions made over time. "Anything that we do spreads ripples. Other people will see if you're in the supermarket line and you pull out your reusable grocery bag," she affirms. "Maybe if we all start doing this, we can make it socially unacceptable to say yes to plastic in the checkout line." For Roz, it's all in our individual attitudes. "That attitude – that awareness that leads you to change the light bulb or take your reusable coffee mug, that is what could change the world."

Roz has been named one of the Top 5 Adventure Twitterers by Outside Magazine and one of the Top 20 Great British Adventurers by the Telegraph Newspaper in the UK. She was also recently honored as a Climate Hero by the United Nations Environment Program. Roz is a published author and an inspirational speaker. In the fall of 2010, she'll be launching a series of walks across Europe to continue to spread her message and encourage action on climate change leading up to the UN Global Summit on Climate Change.

Roz's most recent environmental project is a website called Eco Heroes, where

everyday acts of environmental heroism (as simple as refusing a plastic carrier bag) can be tracked and celebrated.

Read the article and listen to it online:

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