



SEA HISTORY for kids

Sailing Solo

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, who is interviewed on pages 10–12 of this issue, is a famous sailboat racer, most famous for **solo, or single-handed, ocean racing**—meaning he is alone on his boat. In 1969 he won the first solo 'round-the-world non-stop race in his wooden 32-foot sailboat, named *Suhaili*. Sailing at an average of 4.3 knots (nautical miles per hour), it took him 312 days! That's a very long time to be all by yourself on a small boat without making a single stop along the way. Today, there are several highly competitive single-handed races crossing oceans and going around the world. Sailors in these modern races have high-tech boats and equipment and can do it much faster than Knox-Johnston was able to go. Last January, Francis Joyon broke the record for the fastest single-handed circumnavigation, completing his voyage in 57 days!



Joshua Slocum, on the deck of Spray during his solo circumnavigation, was the first to sail around the world alone.

There are sailing and adventure organizations and memorials named in his honor—there's even a Slocum River in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. One of Sir Robin Knox-Johnston's fellow competitors in that 1968–69 'round-the-world race was a French sailor named Bernard Moitessier. In that race, Moitessier sailed in a boat named *Joshua*, in honor of Captain Slocum.



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Robin Knox-Johnston at the end of a long solo voyage.

Of course, Knox-Johnston was not the first person to sail alone around the world. A sea captain named **Joshua Slocum** was the first. In 1898, he completed a circumnavigation in a 37-foot boat named *Spray*. His voyage took him more than 3 years to complete! Of course, he was not racing anyone and a speedy return was not important to him. Slocum became very famous after completing his world voyage because, after he returned home, he wrote a book about his experience that became a best-seller. ***Sailing Alone Around the World*** is still in print today and is considered a great adventure story, in case you are looking for a good book to read.

Slocum's feat has inspired many people to seek out adventure at sea and ashore.

Slocum sailed around the world in a wooden sailboat, the Spray, in the late 1890s.

