



Islander March 2009 Technology Update

Free weather, DRM free music, sats and trains

Excellent Free Internet Weather Service PassageWeather.Com

I am embarrassed to say, as a regular sailor and fervent technology nerd, that I have only just come across one of the best weather forecast systems I have ever seen, namely www.PassageWeather.com. I wouldn't use this website for checking out the local weather in the Bay of Palma prior to racing our J80 each weekend (instead I use www.windguru.com), and nor would I use it to check out the weather prospects for a bbq in the mountains (try www.imn.es for that). However, as the name suggests, this site is perfect for passage planning, which most of our clients and many of you readers do for a living.

There are a number of extraordinary features to this service; it's very simple to use, it gives worldwide cover using reliable quality data and models, it's free and it's been put together by a local yachtsman, Bill Reilly, who is based right here in Mallorca.

Bill has over 200,000 nautical miles under his belt on ocean-going sailing yachts since 1979, including 13 trans-Atlantic crossings, the 1985/86 Whitbread Round-the-World Race, and he has sailed on every ocean apart from the Arctic, so he is in a good position to know exactly what sort of weather information yachts require.

PassageWeather.com specialises in Sailing Weather Forecasts. It provides 7-day Wind and Wave Forecasts to help sailors with their passage planning and weather routing. Before and during deliveries, ocean races, regattas, cruises, and all other types of offshore passages, they have your whole route covered. Their sailing weather forecasts are created using weather data provided by the US National Weather Service (**NWS**), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (**NOAA**), and the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (**NCEP**).

Their **Surface Wind, Surface Pressure, Visibility, Precipitation** and **Cloud Cover** charts are derived from the GFS (Global Forecast System) model. These are run four times daily, with forecast output up to approximately 7 days.

The **Wave Height & Direction** charts are derived from the WW3 (WaveWatch III) model and are updated 4 times a day with a forecast output up to 7 days ahead, apart for the Med and Black Seas, which is derived from the WAM4 wave model run by the Cyprus Oceanography Center, and is run once a day with a forecast output only up to 4.5 days ahead.

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The **Gulf Stream Velocity and Direction** plus **Sea Surface Temperature** are also provided by PassageWeather.com.

PassageWeather.com also lists specific areas for all the big regattas throughout the year. It was fascinating to watch the weather using the system during the first Caribbean 600 race from and to Antigua a couple of weeks ago from some thousands of miles away.

Try it. It's free, and I can guarantee that once you've tried it and seen your first animated forecast download in less than a minute, you'll be hooked.

Vodafone to offer DRM-free Music

Vodafone has announced deals with three of the four largest record companies which will enable it to offer Digital Rights Management (DRM)-free music to subscribers, irrespective of device. Universal, Sony and EMI have signed up, whilst *Reuters* reports that the world's largest mobile operator by revenue is also in talks with Warner. "The new deals are the first of their kind for a mobile network operator, enabling dual delivery of DRM-free music to a wide range of mobile phones and PCs with no need to sideload or synchronise," said Vodafone in a statement. "With over a million tracks available from every music genre, for the first time customers will be able to play and enjoy music bought from these three labels via the Vodafone Music store without any limit to the type of device, provided they belong to the customer." DRM-free services will be available in Germany, Italy, UK, Spain and New Zealand by the summer, and Vodafone's other global markets "in due course."

Recent media reports have also linked Nokia with a similar move for its music store and Comes With Music package. All four big music companies recently agreed a deal with Apple. *Reuters* notes that the music industry has relied on DRM as the cornerstone in its fight against illegal downloading but the labels are now offering tracks without the restrictive protection in a bid to drive digital sales. In some regions of the world music sales via mobile are already outstripping other digital formats, as well as traditional formats such as CDs.

Inmarsat Mobile Broadband Service goes Global

The era of global coverage for mobile broadband communications has arrived, following completion of Inmarsat's network-optimising satellite repositioning programme.



The new global I-4 satellite network went live when broadband services were successfully transferred to the Inmarsat-4 (I-4) F1 spacecraft at 20:00 UTC on Tuesday, 24th February.

The new global I-4 satellite regions are:

- **I-4 Americas** - from 98 degrees West
- **I-4 EMEA** - from 25 degrees East
- **I-4 Asia-Pacific** - from 143.5 degrees East.

The restoration of services on the I-4 F1 brings Inmarsat's satellite repositioning programme to a successful conclusion.

New VSAT satellite for north Atlantic ocean coverage

Shortly after the re-positioning and activation of the final satellite in Inmarsat's Global Mobile Broadband program, a new VSAT satellite was launched, on 1st March, that will provide north Atlantic Ocean VSAT coverage for a number of service providers, including our recommended service provider MTN.

Telstar 11N is a powerful Ku-band satellite built for Telesat, the world's fourth largest fixed satellite services operator. Telstar 11N will connect three continents: North America, Western Europe and Africa. In addition, its unique Atlantic Ocean beam will support growing demand for mobile broadband from maritime and aeronautical markets. The reach of Telstar 11N across the Atlantic will meet the needs of commercial and government customers seeking solutions for IP networking and transport of video content. The satellite will be equipped with 39 active Ku-band transponders, a portion of which can be switched to meet changing market demand over the satellite's 15-year design life.

VSAT Operator Training course

In the first week of May we will be running the first ever VSAT Operator Training Course designed for Captains or Electronic Technical Officers (ETOs). The course will run for three days and will take place in our new training facility in Portals Nous. Numbers are restricted so book early.

Roger Horner of E3 Systems

For further information on any of the above, please contact us.

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