

# Assistance at sea

**A tiny, battered sailing boat floats next to a gigantic passenger-cargo ship. The mast of the boat is broken. No other vessels, let alone land, are in sight on the open sea. Soon, fuel and a typical Thursday dessert will be transferred to the sailing boat with the help of a rope. What is going on exactly?**

**S**ailing the world's seas can lead to all sorts of events, including unexpected encounters. The luck of Ari Käsäkoski, a Finnish Global Solo Challenge sailor, turned when he met Finnlines' newest ro-pax vessel, *Finncanopus*, in the Indian Ocean. Käsäkoski needed fuel and supplies. A rapid operation was promptly initiated on *Finncanopus*.

## Ari Käsäkoski, Finnlines, and the Global Solo Challenge

The Global Solo Challenge, with Finnlines as one of the event's partners, started in October 2023 in Spain. Ari Käsäkoski's boat was a single-masted Class 40 *Fuji*, transported on board Finnlines' *Finneco II* ro-ro from Kotka to Bilbao in the autumn of last year. It was in September 2023 when Ari met Finnlines' Cargo Superintendent Timo Vanhala, whom he reached out to in time of need. Ari's original goal was to sail around the world in 130-150 days.

## In dire straits – and with the wrong bunker

On 22 December 2023, the solo sailor Ari Käsäkoski encountered rough weather with his *Fuji* sailing boat. The boat's mast broke, but luckily, the skipper survived the crash without any acute emergency.

Alone at sea, one must be resourceful. Käsäkoski constructed what is known as an emergency rig, allowing him to (somewhat) use the remaining intact sails. In addition, he received marine diesel fuel from a Japanese fishing vessel, which, however, was not exactly the best fuel for the engine of the *Fuji* sailing boat, and Käsäkoski was in need of regular diesel. But where could one find diesel in the middle of the Indian Ocean? Other vessels were rarely seen on the horizon.

## 'Operation Pancake'

The most incredible part of the encounter between *Finncanopus* and the *Fuji* sailing boat was pure chance. *Finncanopus* wasn't even originally supposed to be in this part of the world! Additionally, distances at sea are vast. Something about the scale of the oceans is illustrated by Käsäkoski's accident location in December, which was one thousand nautical miles, or nearly two thousand kilometres, from Madagascar and thirteen hundred nautical miles from Cape Town. Support teams or the nearest port were far, far away.

Käsäkoski had been struggling at sea for about 20 days with a damaged boat and the wrong type of fuel. While considering his options, Käsäkoski saw a news item about *Finncanopus*' route, which led him to immediately contact Timo Vanhala at Finnlines, whom he had met before. The wheels started turning. Of course, *Finncanopus* would help!

The ferry, on her way to Durban in South Africa, was able to assist. Practically, the meeting route did not even slow down the journey



Ari Käsäkoski's hardy Class 40 *Fuji* sailing boat photographed from *Finncanopus*. Photo: Finnlines



After the accident that occurred in December 2023, Käsäkoski managed to get the broken mast on board. Photo: Finnlines



During the assistance mission, *Finncanopus*' Captain Jyrki Repo was in contact with Ari Käsäkoski via VHF radio. Photo: Finnlines



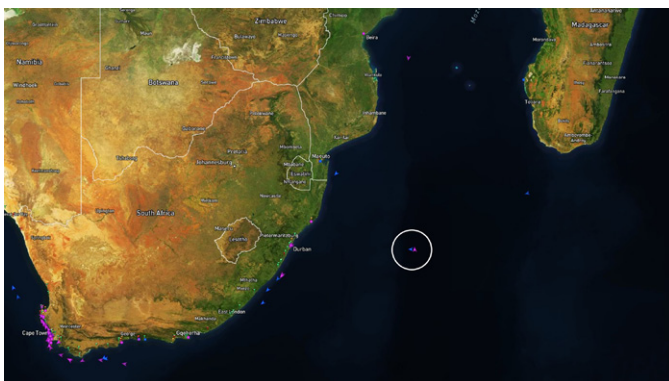
Let's not forget the provisions! In the mess, Chef Peter Palander made sandwich snacks for sailor Ari Käsäkoski and also packed some fresh pancakes to take along. Photo: Finnlines



From deck three, through the pilot door, Deckhand Hardi Tiits had the honour of being the executor of the operation. Supplies and fuel were transferred to Ari's boat using sling cloths. Photo: Finnlines



The operation was completed, and *Finncanopus* continued her journey towards Durban, a port city on the east coast of South Africa. Photo: Ari Käsäkoski



The meeting point of *Finncanopus* and the *Fuji* sailing boat (circled area). Photo: MarineTraffic



The fuel and kitchen greetings were successfully transferred from *Finncanopus* to the *Fuji* sailing boat with the help of ropes and floatation canisters. Photo: Ari Käsäkoski



In September 2023, Ari Käsäkoski's (on the right) *Fuji* boat was taken for transport by Finnlines. In the picture taken at the Port of Kotka, shaking hands with Finnlines' Cargo Superintendent Timo Vanhala. Photo: Finnlines

of our Superstar. The desired diesel was available on *Finncanopus*, and in addition, a food package was prepared in the mess. Since it was Thursday, the menu included pea soup and pancakes.

### A million thanks

After the encounter, it was time for *Finncanopus* to continue her journey towards Durban. Ari Käsäkoski stayed on his *Fuji* boat to examine his assistance package. Later, we heard Ari's message about the operation: "*Finncanopus*' Captain Jyrki Repo manoeuvred around *Fuji* to smooth out the waves and stopped on the windward side so I could approach the pilot door. There was still considerable current from bow to stern, and the occasional swell made the approach challenging. After a few attempts, I safely got close enough, and a throwing line was sent to *Fuji*. After a quick tightening, cans began to be lowered into the throwing line with Jyrki keeping *Finncanopus* in slow motion, sideways towards the wind."

"After lowering the cans," Käsäkoski continued, "I moved to a safe distance, reeled in the line, and started lifting the cans. *Finncanopus* also lowered kitchen souvenirs in floating cans attached to a rope, which I later picked up. The surprise from the ship's galley contained fresh pancakes, sweets, and an assortment of delicious breads, which made up the tastiest dinner of the trip. A million thanks to Finnlines and the skilled crew of *Finncanopus*, the galley, and the Captain!"

The operation was successful in every way. *Fuji* could continue towards Durban powered by clean diesel while Käsäkoski – by delicious food.



The story was first shared by Finnlines on the company's blog. Go to [finnlines.com/blog](https://finnlines.com/blog) to check out other stories, too, including *Finncanopus*' journey towards the Baltic.