

## Is it irresponsible of parents to let their child of fourteen sail alone around the world

By Mieka Loubser

A fourteen year old girl, alone on a yacht, not just for a few hours, no, Laura Dekker will be sailing alone around the world. Would you allow this if you were her parents? What are the **for it** and **against it** arguments, let us find out.

### The For It argument:

Dutch sailor Laura Dekker is fourteen years old. She is trying to break the record for the youngest person to sail alone around the world. Laura has a lot of experience around boats, as she has been raised on yachts most of her life. This is a dream and goal of hers, as she quotes, "My parents always knew it was a dream of mine to do this." Now she is reaching for her dream and pursuing it, as her parents have finally agreed to let her go. By doing this, even if she doesn't break the record, she will gain valuable experience in a) planning to reach your goal b) dealing with unforeseen circumstances, c) taking responsibility and knowing that everything depends on you – and you alone, d) dealing with setbacks and disappointments e) and having her self-esteem boosted by knowing that she had the courage to do something this big. All of these life lessons will come in handy in future whenever life throws a challenge at her. But what did I mean when I said, "as her parents finally agreed to let her go?" This question takes us to

### The Against It argument:

Laura's parents are divorced. Her father has custody over her and he has been supporting her from the start. Just remember most fathers have a soft spot for their daughters. Her mother, however, wasn't easy to convince, neither was the Dutch court and child protection services. For over a year the legal battle went on, but in the end Laura won and convinced her mom and the court that she could do it. But is this journey safe? A few months ago sixteen year old Abby Sunderland had to be rescued during her own around the world attempt. Laura will be sailing through the Gulf of Aden, commonly known as "Pirate Alley". She is going to be alone on the yacht and she is just fourteen, it will be easy for them to overcome her. Is she emotionally ready? The loneliness and

disappointments that may be part of the journey can get her down and do emotional damage that may take a long time to repair. And what about her parents, especially her father? Did they think this through or are they maybe more interested in fame and publicity for their daughter and themselves? I will now leave this to you to decide, are you **For It or Against It?** Thank you for listening.