At the beginning of the International Polar Year in March 2007, a massive international collaborative research effort is to be launched in the Polar Regions. To be a part of this event, which occurs only every 50 years, from February 2007 Alain Hubert and Dixie Dansercoer will attempt a new style of Polar Expedition - a crossing of the Arctic from Siberia to Greenland. This feat, linking land to land, Siberian peoples to the Inuit people, Russia to Greenland, has never before been attempted.

The crossing will begin in the Severnaya Zemlya archipelago in the Russian Arctic, and will pass, via the North Pole, to the northernmost point of Greenland, from where it will continue southwards across the ice cap to Narsarsuaq, at the southernmost tip of Greenland.

The planned route arching over the Arctic Ocean and Greenland is approximately 4900 km.

The Challenge

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Arctic Climate Change

In keeping with the previous polar expeditions organised by Alain Hubert, this traverse will serve to focus attention on research in the high latitudes, with particular emphasis on the Arctic at a time when the international scientific community is putting together an integrated Arctic Ocean Observing System to study the early signs of a global change on this critical region.

Alain Hubert and Dixie Dansercoer will be travelling through the Arctic for four months, and will be well placed to participate in the observation activities being coordinated around this time. The Arctic Ocean is the ideal place on Earth to see the signs of early warming. The Arctic ice pack in particular has been significantly diminished in thickness over the last decade. The true extent of the loss of ice has yet to be ascertained. The Greenland ice cap is also experiencing accelerated change.

As they have undertaken to carry out various observation and monitoring tasks (including measuring the thickness of the ice along the route), Alain and Dixie will be able to participate in an international research effort, while experiencing at first-hand the progressive and ineluctable decline in the pack ice.

Learning through Adventure

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Until now, major crossings of the Arctic began from Cape Arktishewski in Siberia, and end at Ellesmere Island, a distance of approximately 1,700 kilometres. The trajectory envisaged by Alain Hubert is significantly longer, ending at the southernmost tip of Greenland: approximately 4,300 km. A comparable feat has never been undertaken before in the Arctic.

The expedition will start in February 2007, and is expected to last until June 2007. The team will be on the ice, leaving from the Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago (at N80°30' E), and will (if all goes according to plan) arrive at Narssarssuaq (N60° W) one hundred and ten days later.

The Expedition

Progress will be maintained following the classic practises for the Arctic ice pack. Each team member will be pulling a sledge, which, initially, will weigh about 130 kilos. The sledges have a certain singularity in that they have been conceived of and developed by Alain Hubert and his team to withstand the shocks that are a part of moving over a chaotic glacial environment. The sledges will also serve as amphibious craft, able to cross open water, of which there is an ever-increasing incidence.

Expedition materials, Polar equipment, food and other items have been subjected to careful scrutiny and refined to meet daily needs. The expedition will encounter numerous difficulties along the route: not least in the cold, compounded by the wind chill; the instability of the ice, massive compression ridges, open water, which increasingly punctuates the route as global warming continues. To this add the internal fear of falling into the freezing water, days of bad weather and white out.

The Science

During the expedition, Alain Hubert will contribute to different scientific studies:

- For the European Space Agency (ESA) he will provide a snow-cover profile over a section of 1,700 km of sea ice in order to validate measurements made by the Envisat satellite. The satellite can take wide swathe images of ice cover on both land and sea. Validation of satellite data will go some way towards helping to address gaps in knowledge which prevent us from finding the rate of loss of polar ice cover, and conclusive proof of diminishing ice mass balances, which could significantly accelerate the process of global warming.

- For the validation of CLIO (Coupled large-scale Ice Ocean) mathematical model, which has been used since 1985 to simulate drift patterns in the arctic ice by researchers from the Georges Lemaître Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics, Louvain la Neuve (Belgium), he will carry out scientific observations on the characteristics of the ice (thickness, type, concentration, areas of compression, etc.)

- For the AARI (Arctic and Antarctic Russian Institute) in St Petersburg (Russia), he will carry out additional observation of the ice, with special attention being paid to the measurement of the daily drift of the ice pack.
Outreach

The expedition “LIVE” via www.antarctica.org

Using sophisticated satellite communication technologies, Alain Hubert and Dixie Dansercoer will be in permanent contact with the Expedition Headquarters in Brussels.

www.antarctica.org, adventure web site of the International Polar Foundation, will follow the day to day advance of the two explorers, keeping the public informed on-line about the progress of the team.

The site will publish photos and short films taken during the expedition, as well as live interviews with Alain and Dixie from the middle of the Arctic.

Since it was launched in November 1997, the site www.antarctica.org has been very successful with more than two million hits per month registered during expeditions.

“Education is a continuous, life-long process”

Alain Hubert

In the context of the European Clim@tic project, the International Polar Foundation is participating in an educational initiative which reaches more than 220 000 school children in nine different countries.

This expedition will participate in the activities planned under the project and interact directly with schools, addressing complex themes such as sustainable development, and the consequences of warming of the Arctic and its likely impact on the future climate of the Earth.

Dixie Dansercoer

44 years old. By training an interpreter & translator. Worked for 13 years for Sabena, the Belgian national airlines. Manager of Circles, public speaker and good-will Ambassador for UNICEF.

1987: Belgian windsurfing champion in the wave-riding discipline.

1991-99: Many trekking expeditions over the World including some classical climbing, such as Mount Fuji and Mount Kenya, NE and SW faces.


2002: Attempted traverse of the Arctic Ocean from Siberia to Canada. with Alain Hubert. 69 days in autonomy.

2005: Attempt to cross the Bering Strait (with Troy Henkels). from Alaska to Siberia.
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www.ultimate-earth.com - www.antarctica.org
www.polarfoundation.org - www.educapoles.org