

Shackleton Crossing - ASG44

Voyage Dates: Feb 28th to March 18 2012

Report: Tarn Pilkington

Date: 12/03/2012

Leader: Tarn Pilkington (New Zealand)

Assistant Guide: Kevin Nicholas (New Zealand)

Team Members: (5 total)

John Evans (USA), Michelle Evans (USA), Knut Engedal (Norway), Jouke Anema(NLD), Brian Mcleish(UK), One applicant (Karl Mueller) was denied participation based on ability after training on the Peninsula.

Overview:

Dates:

8 Mar - Arrive King Haakon and travel to Crean Camp

9 Mar - Crean Camp to Fortuna Bay and overnight on ship.

10 Mar - Fortuna Bay to Stromness.

Another successful crossing undertaken during an improving weather period and excellent glacier conditions.

Route Description:

We arrived at King Hakkon Bay on 8th March at 6am, departed the beach at 7:15am, and travelled to the standard Crean glacier campsite in 7 hours. The weather was thick cloud and fog requiring navigation until the Tridents were reached. Conditions on the Murray snowfield were good with a small section of crevasses adjacent the "isthmus knoll" opposite waypoint 996. (It is better to pass this section closer to the isthmus, or north of waypoint 996.)

The descent from the tridents to the Crean was straightforward using the second pass south of the standard pass. This time we travelled directly down from the pass and were on the flats in 25 minutes. This is by far the easiest route to descend and should be passable most years. It can easily be scoped from the top all the way to the camp site. Winds were slight for most of the day and tents were erected in near calm conditions. Snow and rain showers came through intermittently all night.

On the 9th Mar we started out at 6:30am and encountered a very crevasse free Crean Glacier. We used a slight variant on previous years by walking to the north into a large basin NW below the Nunatak. This area has very few crevasses being a compression zone and allows for very direct travel. We completed the 7.5 kms from Crean Camp to east of the Nunatak in 3.5 hours.

The Fortuna had less crevasses than 2011 allowing a fairly direct route NE towards waypoint Y. There were no problems negotiating the icefall at the northern end of the sub glacier above Fortuna bay. (Refer waypoints Yb and X).

We spent the night aboard *Polar Pioneer* in Fortuna Bay and on the 10th Mar completed the crossing to Stromness.

Gritviken was visited the following day with the obligatory toast to Shackelton held at his grave site.

Client and equipment screening:

The clients for the SG crossing were all capable of the trip and this year commented that it was easier than they had expected.

For the most part the equipment clients brought along was satisfactory and a thorough gear check was undertaken early in the voyage. We changed out four sets of crampons as the clients were a light alloy or an incorrect fit.

We were fortunate enough to get out on four occasions to train and screen the participants on the Peninsula section. At Vernadsky ice climbing, ice axe and crampon use was covered. At Almirante Brown we ran a short three hour session on glacier travel and holding a crevasse fall. We also managed an ascent of Cuverville Island and a three hour walk on Deception island. The sixth participant Karl Mueller, was deemed to have insufficient skills, fitness and overall ability and was told he could not come on the crossing.

Tents were erected on the ships back deck as a training exercise.

Vetting client applications also remains crucial in the success of this expedition. The process for this year's crossing included a personal phone call between the Technical Adviser and most applicants. This helped ensure that actual experience and currency on resumes were valid.

Cooking /Food:

Enough food was taken for four days as per the permit requirements. This included double serve dehydrated meals brought from NZ for all participants for two nights, and a double serve to share for the third night (17 total). Sandwiches and snack food was taken from the ship with chocolate bars purchased in Ushuaia.

Water was running on the glacier surface at regular intervals on the Crean and Fortuna Glaciers up to 500 metres

Navigation:

We used the 1:100,000 BAS Map - NZTM Zone 24 with Magnetic declination of seven degrees. I have set one of the ship Garmin GPS's with my waypoints. (Saved as "SHACK" and clearly marked.) Check the climbing resources folder on the Ship.) I also carried printouts from Google earth at a scale of approximately 1:25,000 with the way points graphed on them. One was carried on the traverse and the other was posted on the office whiteboard with GPS coordinates for all waypoints.

Emergency Procedures:

Procedures are being drafted by the technical advisor.

Insurance:

All participants should have a rescue and evacuation insurance. All policies should be checked by the Aurora office. Contact numbers for all individual insurance providers should be kept aboard the ship by the AEL.

Tarn Pilkington
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