

## Shackleton Crossing - ASG37

27 February - 18 March 2010

Report : Tarn Pilkington

Date : 15/03/2010

Leader : Tashi Tenzing

Assistant Guide : Tarn Pilkington

### Team Members

Ian Arthur, Joe O'dea, Simon Grimes, Graham Allfrey, Marie Dison, Ralph Pliner, Ron Van Oers.

### Overview

Crossing completed on the 6th, 7th and 8th of March 2010.

A very successful trip undertaken in relatively good weather with all participants managing the expedition well. One applicant was not allowed to start due to inadequate footwear and physical ability (Dot Cato). The only real departure from the original plan was that the entire voyage was done in reverse due to poor weather in the Drake Passage. South Georgia was therefore reached on Day 7 4/03/2010 .

### Route Description

The entire route to Stromness is approximately 50kms long . The first two days are of eight to ten hours duration and are relatively straight forward glacier travel with one moderate 80 to 100 m snow slope on the western side of the Tridents where lowering, J-lining or other techniques may be required to get clients to lower angle slopes above the Crean Glacier. Snowstakes and icescrews may be required for this section. We traveled on two sixty metre ropes at 10 metres spacings.

At this time of year there was alot of hard ice exposed especially on the Crean and Fortuna glaciers. We had very few issues with crevasses and could travel relatively direct most of the time.

I have completed a Navigation plan with GPS waypoints to compliment earlier plans. We had good visibility so were therefore able to travel in very straight legs for the entire route. This plan is accompanied by digital pictures I took on route with waypoints marked for reference.

The last day from Fortuna to Stromness is three hours in duration from the western shore and climbs over a pass into Stromness Bay. I did not mark these locations but a previous navigation plan has some waypoints . The rest of the clients join the expeditioners on this leg so progress is generally slower. It is key to mover right from the saddle when descending into Stromness as there is a waterfall with steep terrain below the pass. The descent is on a cairned route with one short steep gravel section to wet grassy terraces. Most clients would be capable of this walk unless they were seriously unfit. The

expeditioners did not walk around Fortuna Bay and were instead picked up by Zodiac and transferred to the ship for the second night.

The camping site we used on the Crean is in a very exposed position and has one large boulder (1M) which gives some shelter for cooking only. There was no snow at this location so cutting blocks or building snow walls was not possible. Small scattered rocks are available for anchoring the tents but we also used ice screws. Other alternate camp sites could be closer to the western slopes of the Tridents where more snow was available but this is also an exposed site. Water was running on the glacier surface at the camp site but was unavailable for the majority of the route.

Having seen the Tridents in good weather I would probably use the passes to the south as they seem less steep and exposed than our route. Crevasses did not seem to be a problem on any of the Trident passes but this may have been due to better than average snow cover.

#### Clients and equipment

The clients for the SG crossing were well selected and capable of the trip although all were physically extended due to the length of each days walking and the sometimes windy wet weather. We declined one previously accepted climber after final assessment on board the ship given her age and physical capabilities.

For the most part the equipment clients brought along was satisfactory and a gear check undertaken on Day 4 only brought one pair of boots into serious question. Fortunately these belonged to Dot which made our job easier of excluding her from the trip.

Vetting client applications also remains crucial in the success of this expedition and a qualified person should undertake this by reviewing applications well ahead of departure dates. Application should include sound experience in alpine trekking, mountaineering with a strong physical ability and recent training.

#### Pre- trip training

It is highly important that the clients are given training exercises on snow and instructed in techniques that will be required for the crossing . (Glacier travel, holding a fall, abseiling etc). Tents should also be erected either on board or ashore for the same purpose .

#### Expedition equipment

I have inventoried all the SG crossing camping equipment and it is well marked and seperated from the other camping gear in the front hold. This equipment should only be used for the crossing.

#### Tents

Three new Mountain Hardwear Trango tents were purchased and were excellent for three per tent. A tent repair kit with sleeves should be taken.

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#### Cooking /Food

We used two Doite gas cookers with gas cannisters. Food such as sandwiches, snacks and a pre-cooked meal, was prepared on the ship.

#### Sat Phone

Sat phone essential for communicating with the ship to arrange timings or possible plan changes.

#### Tarn Pilkington

IFMGA Mountain and Ski Guide

15/03/2010