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In February/March 2010, the team of 'Wings over Greenland'
will hit the ice again for a new edition of the winter road movie :

THE ELEMENTS - EXPEDITION



Wind, Fire and Ice

A kite-ski crossing of Iceland !

02-03 2010



Itinerary and philosophy of the expedition :

The project can be resumed as follows:

- An autonomous kite-ski crossing of Iceland :
 - of approximately 400 km
 - from the north east (Öxarfjörður) to the south (Skogar) of the country
 - starting and ending as close as reasonably possible to the coast
- An original and incredibly beautiful, but at the same time extremely complex and delicate itinerary :
 - The route starts in the north east following a long fold in the hilly terrain scattered with many small volcanos and delimited by the vast and chaotic lava-field of Odðhraun.
 - In the following section we are going to cross a significant part of the Vatnajökull, an icecap the size of Corsica respected for its rude climate and stormy weather. But the major challenge is going to be to find our way between the craters of collapse in the ice and the crevasses aligned on a system of faults connecting the underground volcanos of Grimsvötn (alt. 1725 m), Gjálp and Bárðabunga..
 - We are then going to head to the interior highlands following either the Tugnaa river or the frozen lake Langisjor to reach what is going to be the key part of the crossing: the complicated range of mountains around the caldera of Torfajökull.
 - Finally, the last challenge will be the crossing of the Myrdalsjökull Icecap (alt. 1500 m) covering the capricious volcano Katla to reach Skogar and the south coast of the isle.



In conclusion, if the major commitment of our Greenland crossing was relying on our ability to cover large distances efficiently every day, the challenge of the planned Iceland crossing will be an entirely different one : we are going to ascent and ski the slopes of the Icecaps and we will have to deal with complicated relief, random weather changes and a beautiful but treacherous route scattered with stumbling stones of all sorts.

During the planned expedition we will once more concede to the temptation to use the kites to their best, to cover the approximately 400 km as fast and efficient as the conditions and our constitution allow.

Because of its complexity, we can only hope to cover the planned route entirely by kite and ski, if the weather and snow conditions are favourable. A crucial part of the expedition is thus an extended preparation work to define the ideal route in detail along with a number of variants, alternatives and exits. Among the difficulties encountered by previous skiing expeditions, we would like to mention lasting storms and extreme cold alternating with rainy episodes, thawing and temporary swelling of otherwise frozen rivers. Add headwinds and navigating the kites in difficult terrain and confined spaces for our case.

As this initial phase is crucial for our project, we currently endeavour to contact competent local people as for example mountain rescue teams and meteorologists to understand :

- the aerology, i.e. the dominating weather and wind systems along with the long term statistics of weather stations close to the planned route.
- The zones of crevasse and volcanic activity, mainly on the Vatnajökull, but also on the Myrdalsjökull Icecaps and the routes usually used by the icelandic guides and rescue services on these two icecaps.

As the success of the project is ruled by the weather and snow conditions of the moment and as the route is comparatively 'short' given the potential of the kites can properly be exploited, we plan to

- monitor the snow conditions and the weather systems in order to head to Iceland as soon as the climatic conditions are favourable
- to wait there for the best weather window, in order to get as far as possible in a fast dash, to minimize delays further inland.



The team

Having rided together in Noway and Greenland Since 2007, we know to exploit each others strengths while trying to respect our weaknesses.



Cornelius Strohm

- age 36. German. Scientist.
- regular practice of alpinism, ski mountaineering (federal diploma) and kite-skiing in the Alps
- ski expedition in Spitsbergen, connecting Ny Alesund and Longyearbyen through the inland, including the ascent of the two highest summits.
- many extended ski touring trips in the Alps and ski pulka trips in Sweden, Norway and Iceland
- specials signs: fine kiter: *'el maestro'* when the wind drops below 15 km/h...

Michael Charavin

- age 39. French. Hiking guide, polar guide, photographer.
- Totals about 500 days of polar skiing expeditions. Many trips to Norway, Spitsbergen and Greenland. Long crossing of the scandinavian Alps (1700 km) in year 2000.
- Other remarkable destinations and accomplishments : 18 months in Antarctica (Archipel de Kerguelen). Bicycle crossing of the Andes, 8000 km in autonomy in some of the most desolate places of South America. Guarding a yacht frozen in at the east coast of Spitsbergen during the polar night.
- Regular practice of ski mountaineering, long trips on foot and with sea kayaks at places ranging from Alaska over the Amazonas to Sub-antarctica islands.
- special signs: *'Beringer addict'*. Enjoys kiting in rough conditions, hates the calm days...

To this spectrum of experiences we now add the acomplished south north kite-ski crossing of Greenland icecap, 2250 km from Narsaq to Qaanaaq in 31 days together with Thierry Puyfoulhoux. Please have a look at :

the website : <http://kitegreenland.canalblog.com/>.

the clip : http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7yg1v_wingsovergreenland_sport

Equipment

If the success of the project relies before all on our field experience and our ability to deal with unfavourable conditions, the choice of the right equipment, in particular of the kites remains capital.

The set of kites should:

- cover an enormous wind range from 8 up to 40 knots (15 - 70 km/h).
- be performant while still easy to use, flexible and fast to set up.

Our needs and preferences. Still – the conditions we are going to meet in Iceland are going to be very different from what we have encountered in Greenland: The aerology of Iceland is often extreme, spatially irregular and rapidly changing.

Our choice of kites should reflect the need of flexibility and performance and still warrant safe operation in turbulent conditions, over huge wind ranges from under- to strongly over-powered kiting in confined spaces.

For the pulks tracted by the kiterers we are going to stick with the approach we adopted since 2007 : 'Snowsled' pulks coupled together in a catamaran configuration for stability, connected to the kiterers harness with a shock-damped line that is adjustable in length depending on the terrain we cross.

