

FAQ

Mainstream Last First

What is the significance of your trip?

The most important aspect of the trip is that we're doing something that has never been done before because it could never have been done before. Climate Change has made it possible. Through the support of our sponsors, Mainstream Renewable Power, we can convey an incredibly poignant message of climate change directly through the actions of our expedition, we can convey an incredibly poignant message of climate change directly through the actions of our expedition. The fact that it's an epic adventure in one of the remotest and harshest environments of the planet just makes it that much more compelling.

What distance will you travel each day (approx)? What does that work out to per member?

Good days maybe 100 km. Bad days 0 km. Average probably 40-50 km per day.

How many hours per day will the team row? How will you schedule rowing shifts?

We will try to row 24 hr/day when we can, rotating shifts of 4hrs on/off and 2 hrs on/off between the 4 members of the team. Only 2 people row at a given time so we can move continuously.

Is this a voyage into the unknown?

It's a voyage not so much into the unknown but rather into a new Arctic world. People live where we're going and they travel there too but no one has done what we're proposing to do.

When was the last time an Arctic / NW Passage expedition such as this was conducted and by whom?

Franklin and his crew died trying in the 1845-7. Many others died too. Roald Amundsen succeeded at the first traverse between 1903-06, taking three years to do it. The Canadian Ice Breaker the St. Roche, housed at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, made the second successful crossing of the passage between 1940-42. A handful of people have sailed it in recent years (mostly under motor) and a handful of people have kayaked it over several seasons. No one has traversed it solely under human power in one season. No one has come close.

What can you tell me about the specially commissioned boat?

Most ocean rowing boats would have a traditional "V shaped" hull, our hull is much more flatter to better cope with ice conditions. The boat has been heavily reinforced for strength with multiple layers of fibre glass and Kevlar and weighs about 1,000 pounds and with supplies and rowers, about double that amount. The aft cabin can house all 4 rowers if needed and the boat will self right if it capsizes. The boat, which features two steering systems has been designed and built by Robin Thacker.

What is the approximate window of 'melted ice' time in which you will be able to row this summer?

Three months maximum.

Will you be using satellite images to help navigate through the passage?

We will be navigating from satellite images that have been processed by the Canadian Ice Service and then sent to us as maps of the ice locations and anticipated movement.

What do you foresee being your biggest challenge?

Wind and ice without question

What are some of the painstaking preparations for this trip?

The boat is the most challenging aspect. No one has ever done this so it's really starting from scratch. Finding a corporate sponsor has also been a huge challenge and we are delighted to have found such an incredible sponsor in Mainstream Renewable Power, which is a global wind and solar company leading the transition to renewable energy.

Will you have a GPS and will you be tracked by the Coast Guard?

We will have a GPS. We will inform the Coast Guard of all our movements and intentions.

How will you navigate safely?

Through ice forecasts, weather forecasts and good common sense brought on by years of experience.

How will the event be captured while you're on the row and can audiences 'message' you?

People can message us and we will reply. We will upload daily blogs and images and hopefully small video files.

What is the weather expected to be like? How will you prepare for this?

All sorts of weather from potential cyclones (seen last year) to lots of gale force winds and ice moving around in the soup. We will see big seas, choppy seas and lots of difficulty. The water is near 0C so our survival time in it would be more minutes than hours.

How does Mainstream's partnership with you relate to this epic journey?

Mainstream is a visionary renewable energy company – and they are leading the transition to wind and solar power around the world – which is going to have a huge impact on reducing climate change. That is why they are supporting this expedition.

How fast is the ice shrinking per day in the NW Passage and how does it compare to years past?

The ice has shrunk enormously. See the image on our Facebook account and you'll see it is half of what it was 30 years ago.

Weight loss is an inevitable part of such an extreme challenge. How many calories a day will you need to consume to conduct this row without losing weight during the expedition?

We will burn 4,000 to 5,000 calories and probably will lose 10 lb or more on the journey.

What will you miss most while on this trip?

Kevin: My kids and wife

Paul: My family and my two nephews

What tunes will you groove to while rowing?

Kevin: everything from Johnny Cash to Paul Oakenfold

Paul: a big mix from U2, Coldplay, AC DC to Christie Moore, The Dubliners, Mumford & Sons and a whole lot more

What are the anticipated temperature lows and highs?

Maximum high on the journey could be in the high teens, max low of the journey will probably be -15C

What kind of wildlife might you see while on the trip?

Polar bear, muskox, grizzly bear, wolf, caribou, arctic fox, arctic hare, beluga whale, bowhead whale, narwhal, seal, walrus...probably more too.

What kind of data will you be collecting for scientists? How unique is the data, has it ever been collected before? How will your research / measurements be conducted?

We will be using a CTD that collects information in the ocean including conductivity, temperature and depth as well as a host of other items. It is truly valuable data collection in an area that has seen little in-depth research.

Is this journey truly "a first"? I recall reading about other expeditions in the Arctic region and am not clear on how this is different. Is it the route specifically?

The route is not different but the way we're doing it and the time we're proposing doing it in are very unique indeed.

How do you prepare for emergencies?

We have immersion suits, an emergency raft, emergency beacons and a pair of shotguns but most importantly, we have a healthy dose of hubris to keep us out of situations where we're require the emergency gear.

Do you always sleep on board or on land as well?

We will sleep on the boat most of the time but will head on to land on occasion to explore and to avoid nasty weather.

Which communities do you plan to visit and do you plan to meet Inuit?

We start in Inuvik, will pass through Tuktoyaktuk, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven (maybe) and Pond Inlet (our finish). We anticipate interacting with Inuit communities along our route.

What kind of food and supplies will you be packing on your trip?

We have a desalination plant on board, which will take sea water and filter it to make fresh water. We have freeze-dried food, so all the food will be made by adding boiling water and waiting 10 minutes. It is not great, but... we plan to bring around 80 days of food, and we are expecting to collect some food along the way. The comforts of home are not going to be there: we don't have a washroom, we don't have a shower, but these are the sacrifices you make for an expedition like this.

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About Mainstream Renewable Power

Mainstream Renewable Power is the lead sponsor of this expedition. Mainstream is a global renewable energy company with over 19GW in development worldwide. The company is leading the transition to sustainability by providing clean renewable power to a range of world-wide projects. For more information, please visit: <http://www.mainstreamrp.com/>