
Journey to the South Pole

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The Hamilton Spectator

A group of Hamilton adventurers has embarked on an epic journey to one of the most desolate and inhospitable places on earth, the South Pole. The same men travelled to the other end of the world two years ago, reaching the North Pole after a two-week trek. Paul Legall sets the stage for the current trip while Jon Wells recounts the journey to the North Pole.

FOR INTERACTIVE content, including an updated route map and features on equipment, food, personnel and the project, go to [Journey to the South Pole](#).

A group of Hamilton adventurers will be walking in the shadow of legendary polar explorer Ernest Shackleton this week when they launch their high-tech assault on the South Pole.

A Twin Otter plane will pick up the four-man team at a tent city near the Heritage Range in the Antarctic and deposit them on the Beardmore Glacier about 160 kilometres from the bottom of the world.

They will start their two-week trek close to where Shackleton and his team hoisted the Union Jack on Jan. 9, 1909, marking the furthest south anybody had gone until then.

Peter Turkstra, 43, of Hamilton, will be challenging the South Pole with Steve Stipsits, Fred Losani and Mark MacLennan. After leaving Hamilton on Nov. 29, they flew to Punta Arenas in Chile where they took a Russian cargo plane 1,700 kilometres south to the tent city.

"No way are we comparing ourselves with Mr. Shackleton," said Turkstra, who caught the "polar bug" 2 1/2 years ago when he skied to the North Pole with Losani and Stipsits.

"But it's a good historical place to start the trip."

Despite two attempts, Shackleton never reached the bottom of the world. Raoul Amundsen and his crew were the first to get there on Dec. 14, 1911, where they lifted the Norwegian flag.

In his second expedition between 1914 and 1916, Shackleton's ship Endurance was crushed in the pack ice, leaving his crew marooned on Elephant Island at the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula for 22 months.

Shackleton and five crew members sailed 1,280 kilometres in a small life boat to a whaling station for help and rescued all the shipwrecked men.

His exploits are celebrated in the biography, *The Endurance*.

MacLennan, 48, will be carrying the book for inspiration as he treks across formidable glacier known to early explorers as the "Devil's Ballroom" where the temperature could reach minus-50 C and gale force winds aren't uncommon.

For additional inspiration he's uploaded a 1910 recording of Shackleton talking about his 1909 expedition.

Having conquered the North Pole, Stipsits is looking forward to reaching the other end of the world. He expects a totally different set of challenges on the polar plateau, which is a large desert of ice and snow with no animal or plant life.

Travelling at 10,000 feet above sea level, he expects to be gulping for air until he gets used to the rarified atmosphere. As he drags his sled through the undulating wind-sculpted landscape, he'll have to dodge crevasses, which are often concealed under snow bridges. In some areas, he'll encounter a dry, granular, sand-like snow that will create extra drag on his sled.

But the group is determined to succeed where Shackleton failed, reaching the bottom of the world around Dec. 18.

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