
South Pole team due home today

Weather delays meant local trekkers spent Christmas in Antarctica

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A team of area adventurers is expected back home today after completing a 200-kilometre trek to the South Pole two weeks ago.

Peter Turkstra, Fred Losani and Steve Stipsits had been trapped in a tent city in Patriot Hills on the Antarctic continent since they were flown there by Twin Otter from the Pole on Dec. 21.

They weren't able to complete the next leg of their journey to Punta Arenas, Chile, because high winds and bad weather prevented planes from landing in the hills.

But in their latest Internet missive yesterday, the jubilant team members announced they were on their way home after an absence of about a month.

They had reached the South Pole on Dec. 15 but were stranded there for six days before the Twin Otter picked them up.

"The team has finally left Patriot Hills and are currently en route home from Chile," they stated.

Despite being pinned down in one of the most inhospitable parts of the world, the local adventurers appeared to have spent a pleasant Christmas with about 85 other extreme sportspeople from around the globe.

Patriot Hills, not far from the South Pole, is a staging point for mountaineers, extreme skiers and trekkers pushing their limits at the bottom of the world.

"We celebrated and toasted our friends and families back home," the local businessmen wrote.

"The people we have met in Patriot Hills have been a wonderful group of unique individuals who have a sense of wonder and adventure that take them to the most interesting places in the world," they added.

The threesome got their first taste of Arctic adventure in April, 2006, when they hopscotched over the treacherous patch of pack ice to the North Pole.

They are now among an elite core of fewer than a hundred people to have skied to the top and bottom of the world.

During the two expeditions, they raised about a million dollars in pledges for needy children.

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