



the Bering strait odyssey 2005

Dixie Dansercoer

Introduction

The crossing of the Bering Strait between Alaska and Russia will be attempted during the months of February and March 2005. A world premier feat will be added to the first traverse with a double-back crossing to Alaska, with the planned arrival as the original point of departure.

The exact point of departure will be determined after in-depth research regarding ice-thickness, predominant wind direction and reigning currents. The expedition, although contingent on these and other natural factors, will be executed in the swiftest way possible using a combination of intelligent strategies, continuous meteorological updates and meticulous preparation.

The expedition members will utilize the fusion of manpower together with a specially designed power-kite system in order to pull their sledges in autonomy. On a journey which will cross the mythic International Date Line, the team members are prepared to face possible and probable dangers such as moving blocks of ice, possible falls in the water, and the presence of the polar bear.

Ideally, Dixie Dansercoer and Troy Henkels hope to avoid the Arctic Circle, situated at a mere 50 kilometres north of the Bering Strait.

However with shifting meteorological conditions, the game of adventure must allow for and indeed welcome the unexpected.

For example, typical ice movements will carry the expedition north into the Arctic Ocean at speeds up to 4 km/hr, but Mother Nature can decide anything!

According to wind direction and strength, a second crossing by gas balloon is also planned.



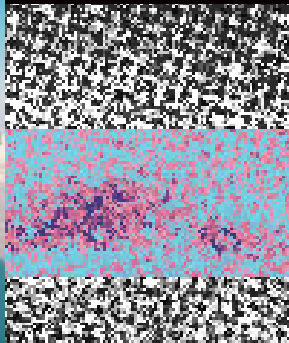
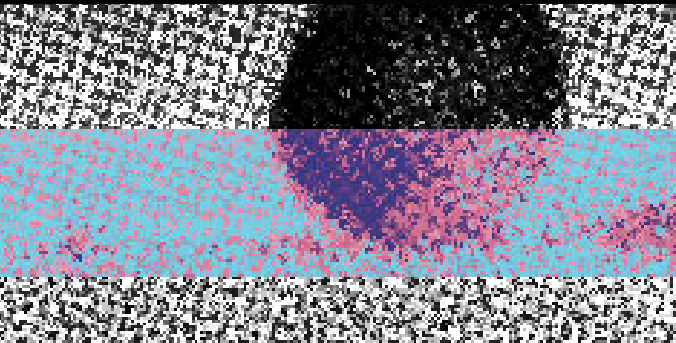
Frigid Air

Ballooning in the Arctic requires intricate preparation and anticipation, much more organisation in comparison to a leisurely outing in the earth's less harsh regions. While Arctic air travel is dependant on unique wind intensities and direction, it is the inevitable touchdown on a frozen ocean (often filled with compression zones and precarious stretches of open water) which presents a technically challenging story.

Emergency scenarios must be envisioned to encompass survival techniques applicable to anyone wanting a communion with polar deserts of ice and snow.

Ideally, expert balloonists Philippe De Cock and Ronny Vanhavere will transport Dixie and Troy as passengers in their inflatable craft following the completion of the Bering Strait Traverse. Together the four adventurers will follow approximately the same route that Dixie and Troy covered on foot. West to East or East to West, Mother Nature will decide...

The "Belgica" will be the first balloon to have crossed the Bering Strait.





Expedition's Purpose

The expedition members wish to honour the courageous efforts of a myriad of humans throughout history who have dared to attempt the impossible. The spirit of adventure, and the opportunity to accomplish what no one has done before, combine to make a powerful motivation for someone with a deep love of the polar regions. The ability to unite two continents in such a way gives an extra dimension to the otherwise sportive and daring adventure.



UNICEF Belgium

It is with utmost respect that Dixie Dansercoer, one of Belgium's eight ambassadors for UNICEF, would like to bring attention to this organization via the Bering Strait Odyssey 2005. Through this expedition Dixie wishes to heighten awareness for UNICEF's projects which assist children worldwide.

heads and shoulders

Expedition members

Ground

- 1) **Dixie Dansercoer**
Kafmaasberg 4
B-3040 Huldenberg, Belgium
Expedition leader
- 2) **Troy Henkels**
P.O. Box 772434
Eagle River, Alaska 99577-2434 USA
Expeditioner

Communications and Press Relations in Alaska

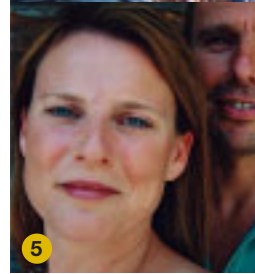
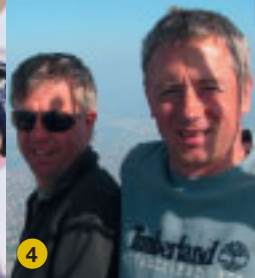
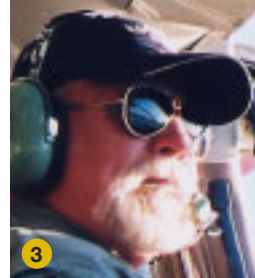
- 5) **Julie Brown**
Kafmaasberg 4
B-3040 Huldenberg, Belgium
Communications coordinator

Air

- 3) **Art Mortvedt**
90 Polar Road – Box 86
Manley Hot Springs, Alaska 99756 USA
Airplane pilot
- 4) **Philippe De Cock and Ronny Vanhavere**
Oude Heerweg Heide 86
B-9250 Waasmunster, Belgium
Balloonist

Russian Relations Officer

- 6) **Victor Serov**
Vicaar, Marata 24a
191040 St. Petersburg, Russia





the first arctic explorers



Old World-New World

Scientists have proven that the earliest movements of people into the New World were by way of the Bering Strait at least 15,000 years ago. However, we do not know how continuous or sporadic this movement from the Old World was.

We know, for example, that pottery from the west side of the Bering Strait was making its way into the New World around 3000 years ago.

The first Arctic Explorers

To people who come from temperate countries of forests and plains, the Arctic appears to be an empty land of rock, gravel and ice, where nothing grows and life would seem impossible. But to hunting folk who have developed the skills and knowledge necessary to survive in the far north, the Arctic environment provides a productive homeland. Its wealth is in its animals.

Large numbers of caribou, seals and other local wildlife gather in dense seasonal concentrations, which make them easy to find and hunt. Migratory birds flock northwards to the summer tundra, taking advantage of the lack of predators and the food supplies stimulated by 24 hours of sunlight.

The Arctic was the last large region of the habitable world to be occupied by humans.

The ancestors of Native American passed through the Western Arctic near the end of the last ice age, as they expanded from Asia to America.

However, their descendants never developed ways of life that allowed them to live throughout the year far to the north of the forests.

Hunting peoples of north-eastern Siberia seem to have been the first to master the Arctic environment.

About 5 000 years ago (maybe even 10,000 years ago), some of these people crossed the Bering Strait from Siberia to what is now Alaska.

The crossing was probably made on winter ice, which forms a dangerous and unstable bridge between Asia and America.

Over a period of several generations, they expanded across Arctic North America and became the first to explore this huge region of the northern world. Approximately 4000 years ago, their descendants had spread-out to occupy all of Arctic North America, as far north as Greenland and as far south as Labrador.

Archaeologists call these peoples Palaeo-Eskimos, a name that means "Old Eskimos." In Inuit traditions, they are known as "Tunit."

For over 3000 years, in isolation from the rest of the world, they developed a unique and intriguing way of life.



the Bering strait odyssey FAQ's

1: How far is the planned traverse?

The shortest distance between Alaska and Russia is just under 100 kilometres. However, strong ocean currents can easily double, triple, or quadruple the distance. The crossing by balloon will also be at the mercy of wind and weather patterns. All of these uncertainties add-up to an adventure in the true sense of the word.

2: Has anyone completed this double crossing before?

The first successful single crossing on foot was accomplished by the Russian Dmitry Shparo in 1998. Together with his two sons, Shparo succeeded in the traverse after 4 failed attempts. Their actual distance of traverse was 280 kilometres. Since that time, seven more attempts were made, but all were unsuccessful. The double crossing remains an unaccomplished, and is believed to be a never before attempted goal. A balloon crossing has not been undertaken so far.

3: How much time is needed to complete the journey?

From March 15th onwards, there is a minimum of eight hours of daylight, allowing sufficient time to progress over the ice. The expedition will allow one month to traverse the Strait. After that, the condition of the pack-ice will slowly deteriorate.

4: What are the typical weather conditions expected?

Travel over the ice will be in typical polar style, with temperatures ranging between – 15°C to – 40°C. The expedition will be in close contact with the headquarters in Wales, Alaska in order to use the weather forecasts and satellite images in our favour.

5: What are the inherent risks of the expedition?

Risks, accepted as necessary conditions for any polar travel, will include ocean currents, leads (open water), frostbite, storms, polar bears and ... our own ambition?

6: Is the ice pack around the North Pole really disappearing?

Yes, recent scientific evidence proves that the layer of ice covering the Arctic Ocean is diminishing in depth and circumference at an alarming rate! The Polar expeditions of the future will have to play with new and different rules. More importantly: humanity needs to act before all polar wildlife will be extinct!

7: How different will this expedition be from the other polar expeditions?

Since we will be operating beneath the Arctic Circle, it is clear that the presence of water will be more pronounced. Therefore this expedition will be more amphibious, swifter and fickle than typical polar expeditions. Call it adventure at its best!

8: Any new developments on the equipment level?

The confrontation with the frigid open water must be welcomed. Thus, a fall in the ocean must be countered with specially made dry-suits. The tent will be engineered to offer flotation. The sledges must become true paddle-craft. Like always, a serious review of every single piece of equipment is an absolute must to comply with higher ambitions.

9: Why choose for the cold, the risks, physical discomforts,?

“Why ask why? Is passion not enough?”

10: What are the chances for success?

Believing is succeeding!

For more expedition information please contact:



Dixie & Julie Dansercoer

e-mail: circles@pandora.be

+ 32 (0)2 688 37 62

www.circles.cc