

**Relive the original adventure of these two guys
(Audun Tholfson and Timo Palo)
who have drawn a new polar itinerary**



Photo Copyright : Expedition website

[Here are the daily blogs as both men have published them while progressing on the field of their adventure.](#)

[They have started their journey on 21 April and have ended the trip on 5 July 2012.](#)

[07/05/2012 We Made it !](#)

HELLO EVERYONE !

We are finally here! We are back at home!

Sorry for the little silence since Katre last time posted about our arrival. We really needed those couple days to get ourselves somehow back in the everyday routine. That's not easy at all, neither physically nor mentally. Some recovery time has been certainly needed after for such a long stay away. All those PIN codes, bills and passwords - you need a time to find them and get used again.

First of all we want to thank all of you who you have been with us in thoughts and words! The messages what were received from you via Iridium phone had a lot of spiritual strength that made us believe more into success, even when there were hard times. We felt us not alone at all!

Great thanks we say to our colleagues and friends here in Longyearbyen who organized very warm welcome event and surprised us that way. Yet we were not sending out position report

last days for purpose and were trying to make our own surprise. After all we think that it was actually nicer that way. We got two major things we missed - pizza and warm shower!

And then last but not the least - all our sponsors, persons supporting and being behind this project with their great enthusiasm - we are very grateful to you! Without your support this trip would not have been happen.

Now we start to digest the real scale of the journey we have done. If you live out there, you are part of all of that and you take one day in time - simple life. But now we have time to look back with a more like eagle view and see how the whole image starts to come together. I cannot really describe my feelings. Just would not be able to find right words. These are beyond of the description. A dream what was long time carried in heart is finally made real. And after all these hesitations, 3 years of postponing, exhaustive preparations and little hope with the rather bad sea ice season. I can tell you honestly we both scared a pretty much. There were many moments before the trip and during the trip when we felt that this not going to work out. Only thing you can do at these moments is to keep going and somehow keep hope alive. We had the luck on our side at this time. I think I have never before scared so much about my own decision than it was now in April when I started to think that there must come a seasonal change into sea ice conditions, which would still favor our plan. That was high risk indeed as I had no glue if this is going to work out or not. I just tried to look confident enough to Audun as it was pretty much same with him. The winter 2012 in the Arctic Ocean Barents sea region was just so unpromising. But we both also felt that it must be now or never as we finally needed to go on with our life and other plans.

What we have done on these two days now after landing? Mostly eating and sleeping:) A little cleaning was necessary too of course. We're gaining back some more body weight as we already have done since depots recoveries. But body still keeps behave as there might come crisis and hard times. We could eat so much that feel totally filled up and yet after couple hours we feel that would like to have a meal again. That takes some time to fully recover. Otherwise we are in good health and physical shape is not bad if tiredness will be gone. We have been pushed hardly last weeks and our daily schedule and sleep hours have also been messed up which means little recovery needed here too.

We try now to keep you updated with some fresh material posting it on homepage. It takes some time to go through all this material. But we are going to work on it. So keep in touch and updated!

All we can say for now is that we did some rough distance measuring and got approximately 1600 kilometers during the 72 days. About 400 kilometers of that belongs to paddling.

Posted by Timo

[07/02/2012 At final leg](#)

Put the champagne in cooler! We are at final leg - homefjord started today early morning.

Timo

[06/27/2012 Not much any more](#)

Yesterday (26.06.) 16 hours long and quite hard gorge crossing. Today (27.06.) 18h and 51km kayaking on the Wijdefjorden.

[06/24/2012 Home island](#)

Today (24.06.) morning we crossed over Hinlopen Strait! Now on the home island!

When crossing the Hinlopen Strait we met the sister-ship of Stockholm: cruise-ship Origo.

After a bit of searching (we gave a signal by radio), they saw our two tiny kayaks on the sea.

It was very nice meeting, down to kayaks we were served a cup of tea with sandwich :) This taste of civilisation was very great! Thank you very much, Origo crew!

Message forwarded by Katre

06/23/2012 Strong winds in Franklinsundet and plenty of foods

21.06.-22.06. nighttime we kayaked over Franklinsundet (from Lågøya to Storsteinhalvøya). It is a narrow - 8 km strait but opened to the ocean. That's why winds can rise easily and quickly. At that time situation for us turned to strong winds. We got two meters high waves and headwind, it was tough going, 2-3hours very strong efforts to do.

Finally we were soaked and almost frozen. This forced us to remain in camp although initially we wanted to reach to Kinnvika. After some restful sleep hours we had very nice, sunny and windless weather. In the evening (22.06.), after kayaking 32 km we reached to Kinnvika.

Here we found our Depot1. It was very big surprise, cause we had an information that this depot was destroyed. But red-colored box appeared to the eye from a distance! This depot was brought here three years ago and supplemented with some foods two years ago. The box was inside a musty, and of course, many foods out of date (best before 2009 and 2010), but most of them are edible state. Now we have plenty of foods.

Some days ago we had a plan to go through the Lamfjord, by now we have decided to go along the Wijdefjorden. But today, 23th of June we try to across the Hinlopenstrait.

06/21/2012 On Lagøya

19th of June early morning we started kayaking over the strait (Nordkappsundet): from Phippsøya (Seven Islands) to Chermsideøya. Before leaving we got a big surprise: a cruise-ship Stockholm entering into the bay. As we had lack of food Audun contacted with captain by radio. Very huge thanks to the Stockholm crew and to their expeditionleader Andrias. They gave to us apples, Coca-Cola, a bucket of oats flakes, kilo of butter, crispbread and caviar. This was like a Christmas present: so much good and tasty and delightful things.

But moving from Seven Islands over the strait to Nordaustlandet... This was the most critical and longest sea overshoot on our way back home. For kayaking we waited appropriate weather, especially good wind conditions. Furthermore, the tide and drifting packice had to be taken into account. The tides moved the ice from one place to the other; drifting pack-ice wanted to close our way to Nordaustlandet. We had the luck at that time again and after 5 hours we landed on Chermsideøya.

After that we kayaked along the coast of Nordaustlandet to the west. It was almost wind silence and we wanted to use this good weather as much as we had force. Kayaking over the fjords we had to consider local wind that blows from the fjord. These strong winds may be very strong and come unexpectedly. Fortunately, we did not hit anything like that.

We got quite long day, 40 km and at the end of day we were absolutely tired.

Now, in the 21st of June we are on Lågøya. We try to kayak over the strait and move to the south, to Kinnvik. On Lågøya we had another depot. It was left for us by Audun's good friend, well-known wildlife photographer Florian Schulz (see his photos www.visionsofthewild.com). Florian was sailing here by yacht Arctic 2 and left for us sausage, mayonnaise, kilo of sugar. What a good feeling is to eat sweet porridge! He put into depot butter also - all kind of fat is very useful for us now.

It is difficult to describe this gratitude we feel. Many thanks to Stockholm crew and to Florian for the help and caring.

On our way to Longyearbyen we have another critical strait: Hinlopenstrait. There are strong winds and strong currents. We need good luck and good wind conditions for kayaking over it.

06/17/2012 Safe on shore

Yesterday noon Timo and Audun landed at Trollodden, Phippsøya, Norway (Seven Islands). Arriving from 90 deg N in good health. Resting after 54 days, 1039 km.

06/15/2012 They see the land

13th of June was the first day when Timo and Audun saw the land: the coast of Nordaustland and Sjuøyane (Seven Islands). Although it was far, of course it gave a big amount of energy for their tired bodies.

After that they have done very hard work and very long days. Today, 15th of June at 4 p.m. they ended 23-hours working day. From 5pm to 10 pm (five hours) was for resting and sleeping. At that time they drifted about 3km towards islands, thank you wind (from NE) and Arctic ice drift :).

And now they are doing their last hard effort: it is 25km to Seven Islands. Timo and Audun haven't very much time for that, cause wind is turning to the south somewhere at midnight and to the west tomorrow afternoon (16.06.). This wind direction is not favorable to their progress at all. Let's hope that polar bears sleep today night also and Timo-Audun can move without any incident.

But in general, terrain is very tricky and polar bears are everywhere. Expedition food is almost at the end. Hope that the depot2 (on the Seven islands) is OK and polar bears haven't eaten it.

06/12/2012 Beautiful Arctic

Yesterday they had very nice weather, it was sunny and warm. Very beautiful terrain also. They kayaked through the area of low ice concentration: quite open water with little icesheets. It was completely different world. They saw many seabirds flying above them, some whales spraying the water, a walrus lying on the ice. One polar bear, but he/she wasn't interested in Timo and Audun.

Below is the image of Aqua satellite (12th June). They are somewhere there (red circle). For landing they choose Cape Platen or seven islands (depot2). It depends on wind and ice drift direction in the following days.

06/11/2012 Hungry polar bear

Some days ago they had scary situation. Timo and Audun met one polar bear who doesn't act like usually. Probably he was very-very hungry. At first this bear moved around them, watching and sniffing. He slowly approached, appeared and disappeared from different places again and again. Hide himself behind floating ice and swam in the water. Timo and Audun were on a block of ice and tried to keep an eye on him. On one moment they didn't saw the polar bear any more. And after waiting for some time they thought that the king of Arctic turned to his own way.

But bear was back. Suddenly he attacked them jumping out of the wather on the iceblock where Timo-Audun werestanding. Distance between them was only 3 meters. It was huge luck that they were able to react so quickly. Revolver shot scared the bear away. It was pretty shocking situation; they felt how it is to be a prey and how unexpectedly polar bear may act. On the same day they saw another polar bear but this individual was timid. Next day, in the morning they found very large bear footsteps around the tent also.

Air temperature is 0°C and snow is very wet: feet are wet and boots are waterlogged.

Weather is cloudy and humid in most days. Terrain... In the icefield there are some large iceblocks (10-15km) and many little ones, many leads of open water (not too wide). They are skiing and kayaking by turns.

There was strong wind and icedrift from the West at the weekend. This pushed them back to the east.

06/08/2012 Stronger icedrift to the West

Timo and Audun are very grateful for all kind of support. Each good word, supportive and encouraging message gives them energy and will to go on.

They are having very difficult and critical moments now. Drift to the West is strong. Probably they have to give up Karl XII Island plan (because the west drift).

Last day they were on the way 15 hours and gathered 30km.

06/05/2012 Young and bold polar bear

Being and moving in the white world it may cause problems with eyes. So Timo had it. It is OK now.

He has problems with one ski boot also: it isn't waterproof anymore and toes are now constantly wet. But generally weather and terrain conditions are wet also. We had polar bear visit. It happened some days ago. We ate our dinner in the tent and suddenly strange noise came outside. We moved out quickly saw a polar bear standing about 2 m from tent. He was young and quite bold animal. Will continue...

05/30/2012 The storm has changed icemap

Yesterday, 29th of May Timo and Audun were also in tent waiting for better weather. The storm is pushing them in a very right direction: to the south. The storm has changed icemap near the Svalbard very much. Compare this icechart (29th of May) to the previous one (25th of May)!

05/28/2012 Still in the storm

Latitude: 84° 25' N
Longitude: 34° E
Temp: -2C

05/27/2012 Track-Map 27th of May

27.05.
Latitude. 84° 27' 7" N
Longitude: 35° 6' 58" E
Yesterday they had a stormy day: no distance progress on that day.

05/19/2012: Overview of some of the problems

Location:
85° 58' 23" N
36° 31' 8" E
Today already -5° C, it getting wet...
Overview of problems :) All of one ski binding screws have broken, we replaced them with spare parts. Almost all the tent poles are broken: we repaired them. Defective material?

05/06/2012 : Two weeks have passed

Last about 5 days we have had a bit better terrain. Some days we gathered 20 km. In these two weeks we had 2 stormy weathers also: no visibility outside, we sat in the tent waiting for better weather conditions. After the stormdays ice is much better for skiing and pulling kayaks. Seems that ice is younger and bit thinner now. No more such high iceridges: near the Pole there were many of them, several meters high and it was very time consuming to cross. We met some leads of open water also. In most cases we found bridges to get over them (over one lead we kayaked).
Timo and Audun

04/24/2012 / How we got to the North Pole - our starting point

22nd April Barneo base was very kindly and friendly to us. We met there with youth expedition organized by Matvei and Dmitri Šparo (Dmitri Šparo visited Estonia last september). The Barneo base distance from the geographic North Pole was about 112 km, so we needed to get to the Pole somehow. Barneo-crew was very thoughtful and they organized a flight to the Pole by helicopter. We "landed" 11 km from pole and these last kilometers to North we skied. It was quite difficult experience: wind was strong and ice surface was very uneven with much ridged ice. Kayaks are very heavy also (130-140 kg). In such conditions we moved on very slowly: 3 km a day. At night ice drifted us back 2 km - we were not very happy of that.

To get to pole point we decided to do a long skiing-day. Some kilometers we skied pulling kayaks behind us and for last 5 km we left kayaks and skied without them.

Temperature is here -25C

From now on we are moving to south and are hoping that transpolar ice drift is with us.

04/21/2012 / The Journey begins

It has been for a while since last post. Time has been rushing and many many things needed to be done.

It would take a long to tell all about what happened. But after serious logistical and gear setbacks (one package got lost and two others got stuck in customs Oslo) we have found work around solutions and replacements. No way, we give up now:) The flight takes off today morning at 9am in local time. We will first fly to Barneo ice camp and then will see how it goes on.

Arctic season becomes over and last adventurers leave soon. There will be only two guys left on the vast frozen ocean, among polar bears. We need to find our own way back home and we will find it!

Hopefully next posts will be here weekly published. Our Iridium phone also transmits GPS signal so that this can be followed daily.

We hope that luck now turns to our side! Let the journey begin!

04/03/2012 / Reunion in Svalbard

Hello,

We are back together in Longyearbyen (main settlement in Spitsbergen)! Timo arrived with a flight on 29th of March. Meanwhile kayaks have been arrived too. Now we can better join the forces for the final push of preparations.

Russians are here, but there hasn't been yet any flight up to the Barneo ice camp. They stay stand by here and Antonov is parked at the ariport. But the first flight should go in very next days.

We do same time some modification with our kayaks and test out our gear. Just had a small skiing with our custom made strengthen core skies by Fischer. They feel good! Though we have used to have longer skies with better gliding properties before, then for the Arctic Ocean trip we need short well maneuverable skies with good grip, to be able better handle 120kg kayaks in pressure ridges. It gonna be skiwalk anyway. So it was bit weird to ski with them now in normal conditions in mountains - way too much friction:)

We experience some lower temperatures now. It is rather normal here in April. Thermometer notch can easily drop down to -20 deg C. Yet, the winter has been abnormally warm and the fjords are ice-free. Many places, where people have used to cross by snowmobiles, are now all open. The worst happened for beautiful two-masted Dutch schooner Noorderlicht, which frozen into ice is used to stay every winter in Templefjord, acting as a camp for tour operator Basecamp clients. There was very few ice in fjord this year and it broke up now, released ship before the top of the season would have started.

We follow the ice maps and satellite images every day and can see some improvements happening in the key zone, what is the northern coastal area of Nordaustlandet island, where our depot is out. Whether these improvements are enough and would continue, is very hard to say. The fact is that there has been very unfavorable season for us and making the decision is a hard case. This gonna be really last minute decision.

We have already more or less fixed the plan B, or in other words what we are going to do if cannot do the North Pole trip this year. It's still early say it out but the test trip also seems to come something unique...

We will keep you informed!