

Aloha Antarctica – The first German Ski-Expedition through the Antarctic started on November, 1st 2008 – on paths yet to discover.

Aloha – by the sound of this word you imagine white beaches in your mind's eye and flimsily dressed beauties swaying their hips to the sound of soft music. You feel the warm breeze on your face and a cool cocktail in your hand. No other word would take your imagination further away from ice, temperatures down below 50 degrees Fahrenheit and extreme physical exertions. "Not necessarily", says Armin Wirth. "It all depends on your attitude." Well, the 36-year-old man from Reutlingen, Germany, should know best, since the beaches of Hawaii are just as familiar to him as the glaciers of the Arctic North are. There he has worked as a guide for many years, for example leading the expedition of a well known German TV host. Already back then he learned by experience that exertion leads to suffering only when the oposos resists it. "If you only perceive the present moment as it is, without judging, you won't suffer", he claims.

In the following three months, Armin and his longtime friend Dieter Staudinger (32), a Canadian citizen born in Austria, will surely have many opportunities to encounter this phenomenon in its different occurrences.

The night of November, 1st, they flew with an Iljushin out of Capetown's spring temperatures to the Russian station "Novo". Due to icy storms, they had to stay there for four days, before they could fly to the German station "Neumayer". Finally, on Thursday, November 6th, they could start their journey from the Ekstom ice shelf to the South Pole and then further to their destination Patriot Hills on the west coast of the Antarctic. That means more than 2,000 miles on ski, pulling a sled of 265 lbs, having to master up to 10,000 ft. of altitude difference. It means being alone with each other for 88 days under extreme circumstances. And they certainly should not be late, because on January, 27th 2009 the last flight goes out from Patriot Hills. To miss it would mean waiting for a long time – the antarctic winter lasts six months.

Aloha Antarctica is the first German Ski-Expedition to the South Pole. The first German at the South Pole has been Arved Fuchs in 1989, who traveled together with Reinhold Messner under Italian flag. But being the first German or the first Austrian at the South Pole wouldn't have interested Armin and Dieter anyway. Neither do they want to break speed records or present themselves as especially tough guys. "Halfway to the Pole, a deposit of fuel and food was left for us and we will also use kites whenever it is possible, in order to get faster.", says Dieter. "Otherwise it would not be possible to manage the distance in 88 days."

But why do they do this to themselves then instead of sipping Mai Tais in Honolulu? Both of them want to experience this extraordinary landscape and the thrill of walking a completely unknown path (nobody knows the landscape after the 74th. degree of southern latitude, even satellites cannot discern a difference in this endless white). Even without hunting for records, there are enough dangers ahead that offer thrills: Ice crevasses that can be as deep as 350 ft., high speed storms up to more than 60 miles an hour and white-outs, where you cannot find your tent even if you are standing right next to it. But Armin and Dieter are also hoping to see em-

peror penguins in their natural habitat and unique miracles of nature like the “diamond dust”, a ground-level cloud of tiny ice crystals in which the sun’s light is broken apart into thousands of rainbows.

But the most of all they want to face themselves. In everyday life, you can always avoid unwelcome feelings and distract yourself with books, TV, the internet and all other offers of the entertainment industry. But in the stillness and clarity of the Antarctic, for most of the day, there is nothing but your own thoughts, feelings and the simple things of daily survival. “We not only want to explore the wonders of the Antarctic with this expedition, but also our inner wonders and challenges”, says Dieter. “We want to know who we really are and that can be found out best when you are isolated somewhere in nature with little external influences.” Armin adds: “Which sometimes means digging through your inner temptation and see what you find.”

More Information on the Aloha Antarctica Expedition can be found on www.aloha-antarctica.com, where Armin Wirth and Dieter Staudinger write regularly about their experiences in their “iceblog”.

There are also photos and films available for further reports, both about Armin and Dieter preparing for the expedition (with skikes and truck tires instead of sleds) and of the first days on the move, when cameraman Lars Bastian is with them. He is expected to be back in Germany by November 10th. There are limited opportunities for members of the associated press to conduct interviews with the team members via satellite phone during the expedition.

All inquiries must be directed to the Expedition Manager Thomas Kommer.
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