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After 46 days, Hayes reaches Arctic Ocean

Expedition survives 'most dangerous day'

The going gets bruising in rough weather and over rugged terrain as Greenland kite-ski adventure enters its final 800km phase

Leah Oatway

DUBAI // After a long night slipping and sliding over a broken glacier, Adrian Hayes and his fellow explorers, Devon McDiarmid and Derek Crowe, completed the south-north leg of their trans-Greenland expedition, becoming only the second team in history to do so without support or resupplies.

Earlier, 36 hours of some of the worst weather they have faced since leaving for the world's second largest ice sheet in May had brought the trio to the end of the Greenland ice cap and the start of the glacier leading down to the J P Kocks Fjord and the Arctic Ocean.

At that point they eched their sleds, and on Friday night set off on phase four of the five-phase project – 32km with backpacks and skis, down to the sea ice and back again.

Hayes said it was "undoubtedly the most tricky and dangerous day of our expedition by far". The round trip took them 10 hours.

"To put it most aptly, we saw at first hand the effects of the melting Greenland ice cap – falling and wading up to the waist through glacial meltwater all night," he wrote on the team's blog.

"We got soaked – legs and arms; boots, gloves and clothing swim-

ming in water. Skis came off, got trapped under the ice and one of mine got swept down a fast flowing deep stream. Thankfully we caught it before it disappeared under the ice, which would have been an utter catastrophe."

The experienced polar adventurers had to cross heavily crevassed terrain to reach the sea edge on day 46 of their journey, where they said the glacier and sea ice melted into "one jumbled, horizontal crevasse-ridden mess".

They had also been prepared to

The 32km round trip to the sea ice and back took 10 hours

encounter polar bears, which tend to live along the coastal area when there is open water and access to food, but saw none.

"Unless a mentally deranged becomes walking up a frozen fjord and 17km up a steep glacier looking for seals, we won't see any until the end of the expedition," Hayes joked. "After 32km and 10 hours through the night of the hardest terrain one can expect to travel on, it's just as well."

Sharing their thoughts on completing the fourth phase of their adventure, McDiarmid said: "Wow. That all I could think. How lucky I am to be here and witness this forgotten land. It looks like this place has been frozen and set aside for the future."

Crowe added: "The journey from the heights of the ice cap to the sea at J P Kocks Fjord has been like travelling in time from the ice age to the much warmer present and future."

Writing about the last stage of the journey over the icecap, Hayes said they had experienced "whiteouts suffered the strongest winds of the expedition so far and some fall lost a GPS reader and been dragged by their kites."

"Devon got to test his Nuteas helmet to full effect when he was dragged and run over by his sled. And Derek was lifted 20ft [6m] into the air when his overturned sled caused his overpowered kite to launch skywards. He landed successfully but we got separated for over an hour in heavy blowing snow."

Hayes, who has lived in Dubai for almost 10 years, is keen to use the expedition to highlight the need for sustainable living. The only tear before them to complete an unsu-



Adrian Hayes celebrates at the Arctic Ocean. Courtesy Adrian Hayes

ported full south to north crossing of Greenland consisted of two Norwegian explorers. In 1992, Rune Gjeldnes and Torry Larsen parachuted on to the southern tip of the icecap and reached Cape Morris Jesup at Greenland's most northerly point after 86 days and 2,928km. There is also, so far, the longest ski trek in history.

However, when Hayes and his companions reach their pickup point in Qanaaq, north-west Greenland – which is 800km south-west of their present position – they will have made history as the longest unsupported Arctic expedition, having kite-skied 3,500km along an untraversed route.

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Day 46
Distance travelled 2,965km
Distance to go 535km

Follow the progress of the team with The National, the expedition's official media partner, which will carry exclusive weekly reports and interviews with Adrian Hayes and his teammates. Our online coverage includes an interactive map, a daily blog, audio interviews, video footage and photographs.
www.thenational.ae/greenland

