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Food and Fuel: "We are working on the basis of 80 daily rations each – as there is no chance we can spend more days down there – of approx. 1kg each and 0.4 l of fuel per day." (click images to enlarge)
courtesy Stephanie & Jérémie Gicquel, SOURCE

French married couple and Norwegian adventurer for South Pole crossing: ExWeb interview with couple

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(By Correne Coetzer, updated Oct 23, 11:20 EDT) Last year, US married couple, Chris and Marty Fagan skied the Messner Route to the South Pole unassisted (no resupplies) in 48 days. The Fagans are avid long distance runners and this year another married couple who are avid long distance runners, Stéphanie and Jérémie Gicquel, are taking on the Messner route (890 km) from the Ronne-Filchner Ice Shelf. The French couple though aims to ski beyond the Pole and traverse to Hercules Inlet (1130 km). They will receive resupplies and will be accompanied by Norwegian Greenland guide Are Johansen from *Borge Ousland Polar Exploration*. [Ed note: updated Oct 23, 11:20 EDT - Correction, the Norwegian guide will not be guiding as such, as posted previously, but will accompany the couple as a team member].



"Training for this expedition is not easy – as it is difficult to find time for training. Most of the time we had to prepare this expedition was used indeed for making this possible to happen, from financing to logistics."
courtesy Stephanie & Jérémie Gicquel, SOURCE

Are Johansen leaves for Punta Arenas today to start working on the preparations there while Stéphanie and Jérémie will leave France for Punta on October 31. ExWeb caught up with the French couple at home.

ExplorersWeb: *Where did the idea of this expedition come from?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: We first discussed the idea of doing such an expedition in Antarctica some years ago, when we had the chance to spend a few days around the Antarctic Peninsula. This place is so special and unique that both of us wanted to discover more and go down south, down to the South Pole one day.

We like challenges and we love Polar Regions – so rude and so beautiful, so strong though we know how fragile and sensitive these places can be.

We started to think about doing a traverse passing the Geographic South Pole. It seemed almost impossible at that time, as even being on the starting line down there, is a logistics and financial challenge, not to mention the physical challenge ahead, but we like challenges, especially when we are told that it is not possible to succeed.

That is just the way we are and how this idea becomes a common goal to achieve.

ExplorersWeb: *What route will you take?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: The initial plan was to ski from Axel Heiberg Glacier to the South Pole and then to Hercules Inlet. To cut down a little the budget, we changed this route to start at Messner, ski to the South Pole and then back to Hercules Inlet. To our knowledge, this route has never been achieved by ski only, all the way, and this is what we would like to achieve.

ExplorersWeb: *What challenges do you prepare for on this route?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: Challenges are multiple. Like anywhere in Antarctica we will have to face extreme cold, especially on the plateau, and sun radiation. Storms and white-out are also very likely as we start early in the season and are planning to reach our goal late in the season.



"We are long distance runners – from marathons to ultra-trails up to 180 km." Image: The couple running the North Pole marathon at Borneo Ice Camp.
courtesy Stephanie & Jérémie Gicquel, SOURCE

On the way down to the South Pole from Messner start, we should have front left wind and then back wind between the South Pole and Hercules Inlet.

Sastrugi there will be... hopefully not too many!

Two or three areas with crevasses have been identified along this route based on previous expeditions' reports over the past years.

Then it is a very long route to ski all the way – a little bit more than 2,000 km – so part of the challenge is also for the body to be able to take in as many calories as needed for the long run.

ExplorersWeb: *Do you have a South Pole mentor? If yes, who and what valuable advice did you get?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: We are inspired by many South Pole – and more generally Polar Regions – explorers, and we had the chance to get advice from almost all them, whether through Skype calls, face to face meeting or on the ice.

Advice we notably got from Borge Ousland, Dixie Dansercoer, Eric McNair-Landry, Ran Fienness, Lars Ebbesen, Tarka l'Herpinère, Jean-Louis Etienne, Ghislain Bardout and Emmanuelle Périé, Olivier Pitras and many others experienced polar explorers.

There are differences in the way each one gets prepared to face challenges offered by Polar Regions, and especially by Antarctica. Each advice is so valuable as it is all about details in Antarctica!

ExplorersWeb: *What training/preparation have you been doing for this expedition?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: Training for this expedition is not easy – as it is difficult to find time for training. Most of the time we had to prepare this expedition was used indeed for making this possible to happen, from financing to logistics. The first challenge is to be on the starting line! Even though then only starts the real thing...

We are long distance runners – from marathons to ultra-trails up to 180 km. This background is interesting for this expedition. We added specific training, like crossfit and stretching, and of course pulling tires.

ExplorersWeb: *Will you have resupplies?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: Yes, at the South Pole and Thiels Corner, with possibly a third one in between.

ExplorersWeb: *How much food and fuel will you take? (Days?) More or less, what do you have on your menu?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: We are working on the basis of 80 daily rations each – as there is no chance we can spend more days down there – of approx. 1kg each and 0.4 l of fuel per day.

The menu is built out so as to start with app. 4,000 cal/day over the first ten days to then go up to app. 5,500 cal/day. Big breakfast mostly with porridge – and nice hot coffee! Then various things to eat every hour at each short break (chocolate, nuts, cereals, etc.) and we shall get more variation for dinner. Menu is globally structured with 15% protein, 35-40% fat and 45-50% carb.

ExplorersWeb: *Why do you two make a good team?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: Maybe because we have been a team for a long time now – we met at school and got married six years ago.

Because we have been through various challenges together, each of us knows his/her strengths and weaknesses and, most importantly, knows about the other's strengths and weaknesses. There is therefore a lot of understanding between us without talking.

We are also pretty much complementary.

ExplorersWeb: *Tell us about your charity and connection with schools?*

Stéphanie & Jérémie: Beyond the physical and mental challenge of this expedition across Antarctica, the goal is to share this experience in three different main ways:

Throughout the preparation and progression of the expedition, we are raising fund for the Charity Association Petits Princes, which goal is to make dreams of diseased children come true. And it is actually possible to join – virtually – the expedition for one or several kilometers by making a donation to this charity through our donation page: <http://www.alvarum.com/acrossantarctica2014>.

With the help of Kyriakos Kaziras, professional photographer, we view this expedition as an opportunity to prepare a photo and video reportage. We would like to share the expedition and show, through a visual and sound immersion into the expedition, the importance of protecting Antarctica and more generally Polar Regions.

We are in contact, before, during and after the expedition with high school students. Our goal is to make them sensitive, through an experimental approach, to the specificities of Polar Regions and to the values we would like to emphasize with this project: surpassing oneself, showing solidarity and sharing experiences.

It is possible to have more information and to follow the expedition ACROSS ANTARCTICA 2014. Expedition websites: <http://runners-to-the-pole.com/> <http://acrossantarctica2014.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/runnerstothepole>

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- Gateway port Cape Town, South Africa: 70° 46'37"S, 011° 49'26"E
- Gateway port Punta Arenas, Chile, South America: To ALE/ANI base camp, Union Glacier 79° 45'S, 083° 14'W
- Hercules Inlet is located at 80°S near Union Glacier, 1130 km from the Geographic South Pole. The Ronne-Filchner Ice Shelf (Messner) start is 890 km in a straight line from the Pole. The bottom of the Leverett Glacier, at the Ross Ice Shelf, is located at about 85°S, a distance of 550 km from the Geographic South Pole. Axel Heiberg Glacier start is also located at the Ross Ice Shelf and 535 km in a straight line from the South Pole.
- 1 nautical mile (nm) = 1.852 km
1 nm = 1.151 miles
1 knot = 1.852 km/h
1 degree of Latitude is 110 km / 60 nm / 70 miles
Sastrugi are hard snow bumps and can be as high as 10 feet
A nunatak is a top of a mountain visible above the snow surface.
- South Pole of Inaccessibility 2011-12 position: S82°06.696, E055°01.951
Geographic South Pole: 90 degrees South

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