

• FRANZ JOSEF LAND EXPEDITION



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Franz_Josef_Land.12

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«The 2007 Expedition to Franz Josef Land»

A new, great adventure has come to a successful end: on May 1, 2007 Thomas Ulrich and the Norwegian Borge Ousland set off from the North Pole for the 2007 Expedition to Franz Josef Land.

Their first aim of the great expedition south was to get on skis to the 86° 4' degree of latitude – the northernmost point Fridtjof Nansen and Hjalmar Johansen had reached on March 14, 1895 on their legendary expedition to the Arctic. This time, however, Thomas Ulrich and Borge Ousland did not only pursue athletic goals – to make it to the group of islands of Franz Josef Land on skis and in kayaks, cross them and then sail on to Norway – but also to pay homage to Nansen.

On May 19 Ulrich and Ousland crossed the 86° 4' degree of latitude, on June 14, the 45th day of their expedition, they reached the island of Eva-Liv in the northeast of Franz Josef Land, and on July 24, the 85th day, they finally got to Cape Flora, the southwesternmost point of the group of islands. All in all they had covered 1400 km, either on foot, on skis or in kayaks, without ever having met another human being and only with the material they had taken with them from the start. But on their way the two adventurers had come across a number of polar bears. The main problem, however, was, as they had presumed, the areas of crevassed pack-ice which were difficult to surmount. Especially before arriving at Franz Josef Land Ulrich and Ousland had been

moving in very precarious and trying conditions for days. The crossing of the archipelago was a great adventure in itself in the course of which the team – well accustomed to working together – came across traces of former travellers to the Arctic as well as fascinating basalt rocks with huge colonies of birds that, after the long first weeks, suddenly brightened up the expedition.

On August 13 the Norwegian sailing vessel „Athene“ took them on board at Cape Flora, and on August 21 they reached the North Cape in Norway where their adventure ended success-

fully on the 113rd day. The report on this eventful expedition can be looked up under www.thepole.ch (text and pictures). After the failure of „Arctic Solo“ the previous year Thomas Ulrich was somehow reluctant to supply information about the next adventure in order to avoid a possible confrontation with certain media. During the expedition a blog was put online , and now, after his success, Thomas Ulrich will make use of it in reports and possibly in a film and a book.

Christine Kopp

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