



## Dec 14, 1911 Amundsen and his men reach the South Pole.

"I may say that this is the greatest factor -- the way in which the expedition is equipped -- the way in which every difficulty is foreseen, and precautions taken for meeting or avoiding it. Victory awaits him who has everything in order -- luck, people call it. Defeat is certain for him who has neglected to take the necessary precautions in time; this is called bad luck."

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Tried, tested and sorted by item weight the Amundsen way a hundred years later.



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Sebastian Copeland: "The first and more obvious challenge will be climbing up the glacier with an estimated 400 pounds of gear each, since we are traveling unassisted for an estimated 90 days." courtesy Sebastian Copeland



Sebastian Copeland and Eric McNair-Landry after their kite ski distance world record in 2010. courtesy Sebastian Copeland

## 4000 km across Antarctica - Sebastian Copeland's 5 survival tips and 2 rules of perseverance

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Posted: Oct 27, 2011 02:50 am EDT

(By Correne Coetzer) In the spirit of Scott and Amundsen's teams, this year's South Pole centenary teams venture into unknown terrain, opening new routes and dare to be bold in their expeditions. One of these teams is that of Sebastian Copeland and Eric McNair-Landry.

Heading out from Cape Town, South Africa, to Novolazarevskaya on Antarctica, they will first follow the footsteps of Eric's father, veteran polar explorer Paul Landry, and then venture into unknown terrain; traveling altogether 4000km; with kites and without resupplies.

Copeland shares 5 survival tips, the Rules for Perseverance and his favorite clothes with ExplorersWeb.

**ExplorersWeb:** What about kite skiing attracts you?

**Sebastian:** Kite skiing is efficient. On the surface, when the conditions are good and the wind is up, it is exhilarating and fun. You move fast and the adrenalin is kicking.

But more often, the wind is light and it can be a struggle just to keep the kite up in the air. Even when it is a lot of work, it beats the hell out of walking.

And you are covering so much more ground. I am

convinced that had today's kites existed in Nansen's day, dogs would not have figured as prominently in the history of ice sheet crossings.

**ExplorersWeb:** What are your top five survival tips for and expedition like this?

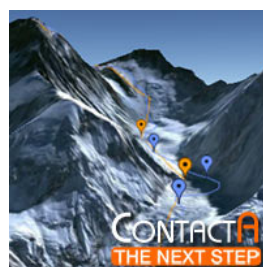
**Sebastian:**  
1. Plan well. 80% of an expedition is accomplished before you set foot on the ice. Don't rush it and ask a lot of questions.

2. Train and shake down one trip with your partner to test your systems and your skills. Greenland was a good testing ground for us. Eric and I crossed it from South to North last year in preparation of this trip.

3. Extremities are always at risk in very cold environments. Customize your boot and glove systems and narrow down a face system that will work in extended cold periods. A bad frost bite is not good for the moral, or for the trip; let alone for your digits!

4. In a bad wind storm, build a wall to protect your tent. Eric built an ice cave below it when we got pinned down with hurricane strength winds for seven straight days on Greenland. We didn't end up needing it - but it was duly noted. I would do that in the future, just in case!

5. Test everything and be redundant. Things are always



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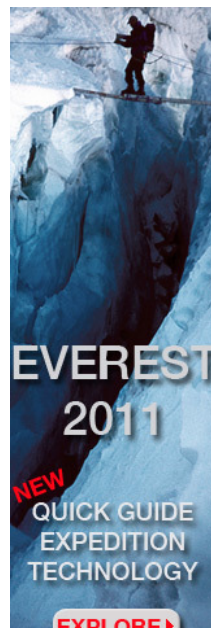
"This is a long route, almost 4000 kilometers. We leave on the first TAC flight in and plan for the last ALE flight out. One of the challenges will be to reach our destination within those dates." courtesy Sebastian Copeland



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"Warming the air reduces the risk of cold injury to the mouth, which I have had in the past from sucking the cold air day after day through the mouth when you nose is constricted."

courtesy Sebastian Copeland

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good until they go wrong. Generally, there isn't much time to deal with a crisis. That is not the time you want to be doing too much thinking.

**ExplorersWeb:** *What are your favorite pieces of gear? Why?*

**Sebastian:** I made custom frames to wind for the long kite lines. I asked Ozone, our kite sponsor, to custom make 75 meters of straight lines for the Yakuzas which is really the bread and butter kite for this type of trip.

Problem is the long lines take forever to wrap around the handles. The frame lock onto the kite's handles extending the wrapping length to about a foot and a half.

Another advantage is that after weeks of use the twists in the lines can turn into a giant knotted mess - last you want when it is cold and obviously cannot untangle with mitt on. This reduces that problem as well.

I wear a fishnet mesh top as a very first layer. This is a trick I learned from Keith Heger at the North Pole. It may look like a Village People's get up, but it creates pocket of warm air and prevents the smart wool from sticking to the skin if you're sweating.

Also, I just received some [Cold Avengers](#) which I am eager to try. They fit over the mouth like a Darth Vader mask and purport to warm the air before it reaches your mouth, while at the same time diverting the steam to protect goggles or glasses from fogging up. Sounds exciting. In this environment, once a goggle fogs up, it's done for the day, just about.

Warming the air reduces the risk of cold injury to the mouth, which I have had in the past from sucking the cold air day after day through the mouth when you nose is constricted.

My clothing partner Napapijri has once again customized the outerwear for us with greatly designed and warm prima loft fill. The jackets are burly with lots of pockets. Very warm but still flexible. They look really cool.

Finally, Revo, who is also a sponsor, made some custom vented polarized glasses for this trip treated with a fogging compound. I look forward to trying those.

**ExplorersWeb:** *Kiting is very hard on the knees and you want to do it for a few thousand kilometers. Do you have any protection for your knees?*

**Sebastian:** I haven't found a great deal of protection for the knees, I'm afraid. No doubt this takes it's toll after weeks of rattling around on the hard ice.

My boots are customized with orthopedics, a layer of Alpaca wool and I wear prima loft Lorpen socks all of which contribute to dampening the feet and some of the bounce.

But it doesn't really spare the beating. As I am pushing 50, this is definitely one of the least pleasant aspects of kiting for long distances.

**ExplorersWeb:** *What are the challenges of this route?*

**Sebastian:** The first and more obvious challenge will be climbing up the glacier with an estimated 400 pounds of gear each, since we are traveling unassisted for an estimated 90 days.

Going uphill with this kind of wait is like pulling a house. Once we reach an appropriate wind line, kiting removes that challenge - so long as there is wind!

The section linking the Pole of Inaccessibility to the South Pole has never been traveled before, and promises to be very light on winds high on the plateau. I anticipate long stretches where the wind will be too marginal or nonexistent and we will have to pull, possibly for weeks at a time; this of course with the heavy loads in tow.

This is a long route, almost 4000 kilometers. We leave on the first TAC flight in and plan for the last ALE flight out. One of the challenges will be to reach our destination within those dates.



1. Edurne Pasaban  
14 8000'ers
  2. Cecilie & Ryan  
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**ExplorersWeb:** *How will you keep yourself motivated during this long expedition?*

You know the rules of Perseverance?

Rule #1 Take one step.

Rule #2 If you can't take a second step, refer to rule #1.

**ExplorersWeb:** *What are you looking forward to?*

**Sebastian:** The soft bed when I return! And some great footage. I will be filming again, and plan for another documentary chronicling the mission - something like my North Pole film *Into The Cold* but to the south this time!

**ExplorersWeb:** *Anything else?*

**Sebastian:** My friends at Climate Partner will be off setting the emissions on this trip, and I plan to have one tree planted for each kilometer traveled. This should be around 4000!

*Eric McNair-Landry (26) and Sebastian Copeland (47) aim to open a new route crossing the continent from East to West via the South Pole of Inaccessibility. They will start at Novo Base and head for the POI, then kite to the Geographic South Pole and end at Hercules Inlet or a distance of about 4,000 kilometers. The team flies to Antarctica from Cape Town on November 2. They will receive no resupplies.*

*In June 2010 Canadian Eric McNair-Landry and American/French Sebastian Copeland bagged the kite-ski distance world record by kite skiing 595km in 24 hours on Greenland.*

*Copeland is an accomplished filmmaker and McNair-Landry is known for his expeditions with his sister Sarah; skiing across ice fields, kite-bugging in deserts and canoeing along rivers.*

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ExWeb interview with Jon Turk: "Whatever you do, it's going to be hard, so prepare to endure"  
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ExWeb interview with Alex Hibbert, "If we thought we had bad luck on the east coast then we had a shock on the west coast!"  
ExplorersWeb interview with Anand Swaroop, "The Indian Army were dreaming of spicy Indian food all the way to the South Pole"  
Kite buggies preparing for Greenland, designer Eric "MTwater" talked to ExplorersWeb  
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ExWeb interview with Alex Hibbert about Greenland speed ski attempt in August

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