

In the wake of the Belgica

Dixie Dansercoer and a team of passionate explorers following the steps of Adrien de Gerlache

Antwerp, 14 September 2007 - In celebration of the 110th anniversary of the Belgica expedition, Dixie Dansercoer and a team of passionate polar explorers, intend to repeat Adrien de Gerlache's historic expedition to the Antarctic. Today, the Euronav Belgica crew is preparing to set sail from Antwerp to reach Antarctica in the winter of 2007-2008. Whilst in the Antarctic, Dixie and his team will not only follow step by step the route taken by Adrien de Gerlache, but also climb previously unexplored and unnamed mountains and gather ecological and meteorological data to compare the Antarctic today with 110 years ago. By testifying about this experience, the expedition members feel they can play an educational and awareness raising role, in particular with young people.

The Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration

This story starts 110 years ago, on the 16th August 1897. Adrien Victor Joseph de Gerlache (lieutenant in the Royal Belgian Navy) and his multinational crew of Belgian, Romanian, Polish, Norwegian, Russian and American members set sail from Antwerp to Antarctica. It was the first scientific and most cosmopolitan expedition of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration. Two of its members subsequently became world famous: second officer Roald Amundsen the first person to reach the South Pole in 1911 and Doctor Frederick Cook who claimed to have reached the North Pole in 1908.

The initial expedition carried out groundbreaking work including gathering valuable meteorological, geological and cartographical data and information regarding unknown species, Antarctic fauna and ice phenomena. This expedition was a giant step in exploration of the still undiscovered South Land, as Antarctica was then known. The journey faced many obstacles. On 28 February 1898, after having sailed for a month in what later would be named the "de Gerlache Strait", the Belgica became trapped in the ice and stayed there for 13 months. As a consequence, Adrien de Gerlache and his crew were the first ever to overwinter in Antarctica which allowed them to thoroughly record a wealth of scientific evidence and data that was never reported before.

The New Age of Antarctic exploration

Today, an expedition team of experienced polar explorers is going to follow the route that was taken by Adrien de Gerlache, 110 years ago. The expedition will be led by Dixie Dansercoer, one of the most famous Belgian polar expeditioners. Laurent Dick, Troy Henkels, Pieterjan Kempynck, all men with a special link to polar expeditions, will join him in this project. Experienced sailors Michel Tordoir and Andre Mechelynck will be the

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skippers on board. As part of the educational mission of the expedition and to assist in sailing, a young cadet from the Bulgarian Naval Academy, Rumen Grozev, was selected to join the expedition as a first mate. Young cadets were also selected from France and Belgium to join the crew as second mates at strategic points in the journey to Antarctica. The expedition will be assisted by Belgian meteorologists including Marc De Keyser, who will keep the crew updated on weather conditions and help guide the boat on its journey.

The expedition is a tribute to a rich Belgian tradition and legacy in shipping and exploring: place-names like Antwerp Island, Liège Island, Ghent Island, Brabant Island, Belgae and Flanders Bay illustrate Belgium's long-lasting commitment and involvement in Antarctic exploration. One of the aims of the expedition is to revisit the sites of the original 20 landings and compare findings from 1897 with how the region has evolved today. The expedition also wants to demonstrate best in class behaviour on sustainable exploration of the region. The team will carry out research based on a list provided by WWF, featuring research about reducing numbers of penguins, adelies, gentoos and macaronis. One very important operation, will be comparing today's ice masses with the ice mass that was meticulously recorded during Adrien de Gerlache's initial expedition.

Itinerary of the current expedition

On 15 September, the crew sets sail from Antwerp to the Canary Islands where they'll arrive at the end of September. From that point, a second mate from the Antwerp Marine Academy, Frans Doomen, will come on board. The boat will continue its route with Michel Tordoir, the first mate, Rumen Grozev, and Frans Doomen, second mate, to reach Rio de Janeiro in November. In Rio a talented young cadet from the French "Ecole de la Marine Marchande", Bénédicte Le Vourch will come on board and will assist Michel and the two other mates in sailing the tough part to Ushuaia. From that point on André Mechelynck and the full crew will set out for Antarctica where the itinerary will follow the 110 years old route in the wake of the Belgica including the 20 landings.

The "*In The Wake Of The Belgica*"-expedition is solely sponsored by Euronav.

Today's expedition is made possible through the sponsorship of Belgian shipping company Euronav, who are providing operational support. Euronav CEO, Paddy Rodgers, explained why the expedition fits with the company's own sense of purpose: "At Euronav, we have a strong belief in self improvement and we endeavour to set new and better ways of working. By sponsoring this expedition, we express our support for a pioneering spirit and a belief in the power of inspiration to effect change. We also state our desire to take responsibility for our working environment – the ocean – and motivating our staff, families and friends in the process."

The expedition progress and more information are to be found on:

www.inthewakeofthebelgica.com

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About Dixie Dansercoer

Since the mid-eighties, Dixie Dansercoer has undertaken numerous expeditions and challenges with their groundbreaking character, both in terms of innovation and from a technical viewpoint, at the centre. His crossing of the entire Antarctic continent on foot - together with Alain Hubert - as well as the Ultimate Arctic Expedition and the Bering Strait Odyssey, are patent illustrations of this. Together with polar travel, his ascents of Mont Blanc, Mount Kenya, Mount Fuji and Mount Everest have fundamentally changed his philosophy and his general attitude toward life. Managing challenges is therefore not new to him.

About Euronav

Euronav is one of the world's leading independent tanker companies engaged in the ocean transportation of crude oil and petroleum products. Being a leader in its market, Euronav has a strong commitment towards safety and the environment. The company is compliant with the International Safety Management Code (ISM) requirements, which assure a high level of safety and environmental protection policies and practices. Furthermore it has achieved the ISO standard 14001. The ISO 14001 Standard is a voluntary standard for Environmental Management Systems.

Currently the average age of Euronav's fleet is 5 years. Euronav is working towards compliance with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) guideline on Ship Recycling Resolution A.962 (23), to be able to provide Green Passports for its vessels (documents that should follow the entire life of a vessel, beginning with its construction). To optimize the security of personnel and environment, all ships are constructed with a double-hull.

Euronav works towards minimising the impact of its business on the environment. This is achieved by: working with suppliers to reduce plastic packaging by requesting a minimum of unnecessary packaging, compacting rubbish prior to discharging the rubbish ashore, discharging of all sludge and slops to specialised shore side facilities, applying coatings with a high cost silicon paint that improves propulsion efficiency and reduces both carbon and paint emissions.