

Disabled Spanish athletes reach South Pole: report

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Three disabled athletes from Spain have reached the South Pole unassisted by animals or machines, in what a Spanish newspaper said Sunday was a world first.

The three, Jesus Noriega, Eric Villalon and Xavier Valbuena, accompanied by two guides, arrived at the world's most southerly point after a 12-day journey across Antarctica in January, El Pais reported.

The expedition was aimed at showing that nothing is impossible for those with disabilities. But it also had a scientific objective, to collect samples from the polar ice over the 250-kilometre (400-mile) route.

Villalon, a paralympic skier, is practically blind, while Valbuena lost one leg in a motorcycle accident and Noriega was born without his right hand.

Enduring temperatures of minus 40 C and strong winds, they crossed the ice pulling sleds of around 60 kilogrammes (130 pounds).

It is the first time that disabled people have reached the South Pole without help from animals or machines, El Pais.

The expedition was financed by a foundation set up by the Spanish bank La Caixa and by the government of Spain's eastern region of Catalonia.

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