

Woman to begin Antarctic crossing, awaits weather

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In this photo taken on Sept. 24, 2010 provided by the Kaspersky ONE Trans-antarctic Expedition, British adventurer Felicity Aston skis across Iceland during a pre-expedition training trip. Aston plans to ski by herself across the Antarctica, all the way to the other side of the frozen continent. If she manages to complete this journey of more than 1,000 miles (1,700 kilometers) in late January, she'll become the first human person to cross Antarctica alone under her own power. She would also set a record for the longest solo polar expedition by a woman, at about 70 days. A charter flight from Chile will take her to a base in Antarctica on Friday Nov. 18, 2011. (AP Photo/Kaspersky ONE Trans-antarctic Expedition/Kaspersky Lab)

(AP) -- A 33-year-old British adventurer preparing for a historic solo crossing of Antarctica was waiting at a base camp for the weather to improve on Sunday in order to begin her long journey on skis.

Felicity Aston said she has been doing more than physical training to

ready herself for the expedition.

"I've also been speaking to a sports psychologist about the mental aspect of it because so much of this is about where your head's at rather than your muscles and your [physical fitness](#)," Aston told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from the base camp at Union Glacier.

She aims to become the first person to cross Antarctica alone using only [muscle power](#). If she manages to complete the journey in late January as planned, she would also set a record for the longest solo polar expedition by a woman, at about 70 days.

"Unfortunately the weather hasn't been kind to us so far," Aston said.

At the base camp, she said, "it's blue sky. It's quite warm relatively for Antarctica, but unfortunately the weather on the other side of the continent isn't good enough to fly, apparently."

"So we're sitting here waiting for the weather to improve," she said.

Aston has been to Antarctica before but said she is particularly thrilled that she will be climbing solo through the Transantarctic Mountains and onto the continent's vast central plateau.

"Being out there and effectively having Antarctica to myself - or it will feel like that - appeals to me," she said. "And just the completeness of it, you know, to ski from one side of Antarctica to the other and to find out what it's like to be out there on my own."

The ordeal she faces will be similar to that endured by Boerge Ousland of Norway, who made a 64-day trip across the continent in 1997. But he harnessed Antarctica's fierce winds by strapping himself to a parachute-like sail when they blew in his favor. On those days he could ski as far as

140 miles while towing a sled carrying about 400 pounds (nearly 900 kilograms) of supplies. At other times, his speed dropped to about 2 mph (3 kph) as he struggled through crevasse-laced terrain, he said.

"It was physically and mentally tiring. I crossed snow bridges not knowing if they would hold my weight. I had to go slowly and very carefully," he said.

Aston's previous travel adventures have included skiing across the Canadian Arctic and crossing the Greenland ice sheet. But this is her first solo expedition.

"I'm looking forward to finding out what it will be like to go that length of time without seeing anyone," she said. "There's a definite appeal to just getting going and how simple life becomes when all you have to worry about is eating, sleeping and skiing."

She needed to pack the bare essentials because she will be pulling her supplies behind her. Her food rations include porridge, freeze-dried dinners and plenty of chocolate, which in all she said will add up to more than 4,000 calories each day.

"There's a lot of chocolate involved in this. It's great," she said with a laugh. "I get to eat chocolate all day and I still manage to lose weight, so that's a bonus from my point of view."

More information: Aston's expedition site:

<http://www.kasperskyonetransantarcticexpedition.com>

Aston's Twitter site for tweets during her journey:

[http://www.twitter.com/felicity\(underscore\)aston](http://www.twitter.com/felicity(underscore)aston)

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