

# Fiennes Antarctic winter crossing bid a trip into 'unknown'

January 6 2013

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Explorers Sir Ranulph Fiennes (L) and Anton Bowring talk to journalists on January 6, 2013 in Cape Town. Fiennes is leading a team of explorers willing to succeed in the last great polar challenge: crossing Antarctica during the winter.

Adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes on Sunday said his bid for the world's first Antarctic winter crossing, with no option of rescue, was a trip into the unknown despite his multiple record expeditions.

Known as the world's greatest living explorer, Fiennes will depart

Monday for the coldest place on earth after crossing the Antarctic unsupported, both polar ice caps and is the [oldest person](#) to have climbed [Mount Everest](#).

The six member team will leave Cape Town on Monday in a bid to make the more than 2,000 mile (nearly 4,000 kilometres) trip across [Antarctica](#) where the furthest winter journey has been only 60 miles in the early 20th century.

"We've been doing expeditions for a total of 40 years. We've broken a great number of world records. In Antarctica we've got two huge records, one in 1979 and one in 1992 but they are all in summer," Fiennes, 68, told AFP.

"So we aren't any more expert than anybody else at winter travel. There is no past history of [winter](#) travel in Antarctica apart from the 60 mile journey. So we are into the unknown."

The Antarctic has the earth's lowest recorded temperature of nearly minus 90 degrees Celsius (-130 degree Fahrenheit) and levels of around minus 70 are expected during the six-month crossing which will be mostly in darkness.

The expedition will sail from Cape Town on Monday and dock in the Antarctic later this month where a six-member team will prepare to leave in March with no option of rescue once on the ice unlike in other expeditions.

"This is the first time once we've gone out, all the aeroplanes, all the ships from Antarctica disappear for eight months and we're on our own and then you're in a situation where you would die," said Fiennes.

"That is why we have to try and take with us a whole year of supplies

and a doctor and everything else like that, which makes it the biggest, heaviest expedition that we've ever been involved with rather than just man against the element."

The group will be led by two [skiers](#) carrying crevasse-detecting ground-penetrating radars and followed by two tractors pulling sledge-mounted, converted containers with the rest of the team, equipment, fuel and food.

"Anybody who leaves the vehicle and it goes out on skis has to accept the fact that if things go wrong, they will die like people did 100 years ago," said Fiennes on the eve of departure.

The team, which will be trying to raise \$10 million for the Seeing is Believing blindness charity, have tested their clothing and equipment to minus 58 Celsius in the United Kingdom and minus 45 in Sweden.

"The pundits, the clever people who know about Antarctica, are looking at this and thinking you know it might just be a bit crazy. So we will see," said co-leader Anton Bowring.

"I think we've worked at it for five years, we reckon we've just about covered all the possible problems."

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