



Welcome aboard Around North America



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March 1, 2009

Expedition members are currently en route to New York.

« Southern Star » left Fort Lauderdale on February 24, right on schedule. The regularity with which the polar sailing boat is going its way since the beginning of the expedition is exemplary. The crew is fully aware that now is not the time to slacken concentration. The journey to Tromsø is still a long one.

The Florida stopover marks the end of the expedition's passage through warm areas. From now on, Around North America members are heading back to temperate climates. As of March 1, the loch indicated 17,061 nautical miles.

Stopovers

Much to the crew's surprise, entire islands have disappeared from the map this side of the Caribbeans, off the shore of Nicaragua and Honduras. These low coral islands must have been wiped off the map following the passage of a hurricane. The topics rise of the water level, coral reefs and violent meteorological phenomena are at the center of the interviews lead this past month during the Roatan and Florida stopovers.

The passage of the expedition through Roatan had us realize the fragility of coral reefs all over the planet. Indeed, the people we interviewed allowed us to widen the debate from the local to the global level. In forty years, 80% of coral reefs have disappeared. Specialists now call 'oasis' the areas where coral is not turning white. This phenomon is directly linked to the rise of sea water temperature.



The government of Honduras is counting on the highly touristic « Bay Islands » to provide for the principal financial needs of the country. The stakes are high. It is important to note that the island of Roatan is known for its scuba diving spots, its principal tourist attraction. It is therefore very surprising to see that the willingness to protect the coastal area is not stronger. However, very competent individuals, knowledgeable and very much implicated, are on site and involved so that the voice of reason may be heard. Through the years, they have reached some results, because the government of Honduras is making extra efforts to conserve this eldorado. A more stringent policy regarding the control of construction projects would be nonetheless necessary.





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In Florida, the rise of water level was also much on everyone's mind. Meetings with NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) experts permitted us to better understand what's at stake. The administration, however, does not take a position on the anthropic aspect of climate change with respect to the outbreak of high-strength hurricanes. Experts in CO² dissolved in the oceans are studying the isotopes issuing from fossil fuels and those issuing from biomass and are able to trace rather precisely the part played by industrial activity in the acidification of the oceans.



The New York stopover will broach the political aspects and promises to be fascinating. Meetings at the U.N. and at the New York Stockmarket are already programmed.

Media and festivals

Documentary number 1 « Vive le réchauffement/Long live global warming » will be presented at the Paris Polar Film Festival on Sunday, March 8 at 3 p.m. (Cinéma Grand Action - 5, rue des Ecoles 75005 Paris).

It will also be presented at the 20th Rencontres Cinéma - Nature, March 26 to 29, 2009 in Dompierre-sur-Besbre (03).

Documentary number 2 « Un monde givré » will be presented during Polar Nights on Saturday, March 14 from 11:30 p.m. (Les Nuits Polaires de Paris - Institut Océanographique - 195, rue Saint Jacques 75005 Paris).

Ushuaïa Magazine features a 6-page article on the expedition in its April 2009 issue (out mid-March).



Around North America's team

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