

Press Folder



Ocean Fours - Team Holland

Northern-Atlantic Crossing 2005

New York - Scilly Isles - Rotterdam

The Challenge

Rowing home from New York USA to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Across the North Atlantic Ocean, facing wind, weather and waves. Covering a total distance of 6350 Kilometers.



May 2005, four former students from the Erasmus University Rotterdam will start their challenge against the elements of the North Atlantic Ocean. They will attempt to break a long standing world record; from New York to the Scilly Islands just off the Southwest coast of Cornwall in the UK in less than 55 days. A record that dates back to 1896! They will then continue to row on to their home city Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Covering a total distance of 6350 Km.

Their crossing of the Atlantic will be unsupported until they reach the Scilly Islands, the world record leg of their journey. Upon arrival at the Scillies they will take new supplies and equipment on board and proceed with the last leg to Rotterdam.

Among the supplies and equipment on board they carry 56 days of freeze dried food, a water desalinator to make fresh water, a gas stove and a bucket acting as the toilet. The Vopak Victory is 11,1 meters (36 feet) long and 1,80 meters (6 feet) wide. The crew members first met in university and are experienced rowers. Each have temporarily given up their occupations (medical doctor, project-manager and accountant) in pursuit of this challenge.



The boat is named after our title sponsor Vopak who together with Port of Rotterdam, the National Postcode Lottery, forty sub sponsors plus close to a hundred individual contributors have helped make this possible by funding 220.000 Euros.

After the race, the boat will be sold and the estimated proceeds of 30.000 Euros will be donated to the Dutch Cancer Foundation.

The record attempt is officially supported and timed by the ocean Rowing Society. This society provides advice and assistance to ocean rowers world wide.

In their combined ambition to achieve something remarkable and enrich themselves, these four guys have chosen the Northern Atlantic Ocean as their field of endeavor.

The Crew

The Crew, their motivation and what they have been doing during the preparation for this immense project and what they are doing on board during the crossing.

Gijs Groeneveld,



'The world gives us great opportunities. Fantastic to use these opportunities to find the physical- and psychological borders of myself'

Gijs holds a Masters degree in Business Administration. Born 23rd November, 1978. On board of the Vopak Victory Gijs is responsible for Communications.

Robert Hoeve



'In this world where everything is possible, to achieve something which will ask determination and self-discipline'

Robert Hoeve, Accountant for Deloitte. Born 29th September 1977. Robert is the captain by unanimous decision and is looking forward to this adventure!

Jaap Koomen



'The biggest test for my person and the team in the struggle with the elements'

Jaap Koomen, Projectmanager with Boer & Croon Young Executives. Born 1st July 1974. Jaap is the Navigator and will be in daily contact with our weather router, Lee Bruce, to plan the daily course.

Maarten Staarink



'To put myself in a once-in-a-life-time adventure'

Maarten Staarink, Medical Doctor, born 4th June 1977. Maarten is the ships doctor and will look after the physical health and fitness of the crew. Upon his return he is hoping to start his training as a surgeon.

Max Kloosterman



'It is fascinating and fun to work with this great group of ambitious and talented people' It has taken me far beyond what I ever dreamt of doing as a coach.

Max is a consultant with Accenture. Born 8th April 1974. Starting out as their rowing coach early 2003, he will be their shore manager during the crossing.

The Boat



Building the Vopak Victory started on 15th June 2004 and she was painted in a record breaking 2 weeks. The boat was fitted and finished at the beginning of October.



She is self righting and has been designed for a oceancrossing in heavy weather. There are two cabins. The rear cabin, used for sleeping, cooking, eating and navigation, can accommodate 3 people sleeping and one keeping watch while seated. The layout of the rear cabin is as economical as possible. Every piece of equipment has its place and is carefully stored. The sleeping compartments are a tight fit so that the crew can sleep comfortably without being tossed around.

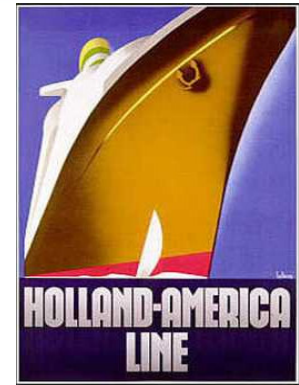
The front cabin is used for storage of food, clothing and medicine. Further it contains a water desalinator capable of producing over 15 litres of fresh water per hour, the batteries and a bilge pump to empty the cabin in case of a flood. The front cabin also situates the toilet and in case of emergency can accommodate one person sleeping although it is not the most comfortable ride. The batteries are fed by the solar panels on the front and rear cabins.

On deck there are four watertight compartments. One is used as a wet cell and will store the sea anchor and lines, the other three are dry cells. Two of them store 56 days of food rations and another houses the back up gasoline generator as well as the rowing seats and foot boards if these are not in use. Spare oars are carried on the side of the boat.

To assure the crew safety there is a host of communication and safety equipment on board:

- VHF/DSC: short range radio for contacting other ships in the area.
- Iridium satellite phone: for all voice communication with the shore team and family
- Inmarsat mini C: email communication via satellite. Primarily to get weather information from our weather router Lee Bruce and to send updates to shore.
- EPIRB: Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon, distress beacon that is activated manually or automatically in case of distress. Upon activation anywhere in the world a rescue operation will be initiated. This is done under the SOLAS convention.
- Argos beacon: Global positioning indicating radio beacon automatically passing on our position to shore twenty times a day. The Argos beacon can also be activated to operate as a distress signal similar to the EPIRB system.
- Sea-Me, Active Radar Responder: Radar reflector that actively sends back a signal transmitted by a nearby ship's radar. It will make the boat appear on their radar and as a much bigger ship than the Vopak Victory actually is.
- Life raft, survival suits and life vests: in case of the need to abandon ship the Vopak Victory carries all required equipment and a grab bag with all the essentials.

The Route



For over 132 years Rotterdam has been the home port for the Holland-America Line.



The Holland-America Line was founded in 1873 and started as a scheduled service between Rotterdam and New York. On the journey to New York the ships carried people, most of them hoping for a better future overseas. Passage to New York wasn't a luxury cruise to any standard; passengers slept on overcrowded wooden floors. On the way back the ships carried commodities such as grain, rice and tobacco.

The four former students from Erasmus University Rotterdam are going to follow this second part the route of the original Holland-America Line. This route will take them from New York to Rotterdam past the Scilly Isles, an original stopover for the Holland-America Line as well.

Helped by the North Atlantic Gulf stream current and the prevailing winds on this route the crew are expecting to reach the Scilly Isles in less than 55 days. From there they will continue through the English Channel to end this unique journey in Rotterdam, home town of the Ocean Fours by the end of July, beginning of August.

Should they succeed to cover the distance between New York and the Scilly Isles in less than 55 days they will have set a new world record on the North-Atlantic Ocean.

1896



Frank Samuelson and George Harbo, two Norwegian immigrants and fishermen rowed their eighteen foot skiff 'The Fox' in 55 days from New York to the Scilly Islands. These ocean rowing pioneers ended their trip in Le Havre. Apart from the 10.000 Dollar reward for the first successful crossing they hoped to make their fortunes giving lectures. However, all they ended up with were two medals and both returned to fishing. George Harbo died in 1908 and Frank Samuelson in 1946. Their 55 day record of has yet to be broken.

Among rowers to successfully complete a North Atlantic Crossing were Sir John Ridgway with Sir Chay Blyth, Tom McLean, Gerard d'Aboville, and recently successful: Maud Fontenoy.



Contacts & Information

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Charities

An initiative to benefit

**DUTCH
CANCER
SOCIETY**



Dutch Cancer Foundation

The proceeds from the sale of the boat will go to the Dutch Cancer Society



World Wildlife Fund

For every 1000 km rowed the WWF will receive 10.000 Euro from the net proceeds of the Postcode Lottery with a maximum of 63.000 Euro. Should the Ocean Fours break the 55 day record the WWF will receive another 37.000 Euro. The WWF will use the funds to support the sea turtle project.

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