

Kepa Acero will surf an Antarctic wave during the Pakea Bizkaia Expedition

- ***Freesurfer Kepa Acero, on board Pakea Bizkaia, will try to surf a wave in the Antarctic Ocean. If he succeeds, he will be the first European surfing in this inhospitable continent, and there is no record of doing it on a sailing expedition.***
- ***Acero will join in Ushuaia Pakea Bizkaia crew, who is now preparing his jump to the Antarctic Peninsula. They will leave Ushuaia on January the 4th and expect to arrive on the 8th.***
- ***The low temperatures and the “unpredictable winds surpassing 60 knots (110km/h)” in Cape Horn, the Drake Passage storms and the icebergs are the biggest concerns of the Pakea Bizkaia captain, Unai Basurko.***
- ***The Antarctic is home to 90% of the ice and 80% of the fresh water of the planet; its average temperature is -17°C and registers winds between 100 and 200 km/h. The water temperature oscillates between 2 and 5°C.***

Freesurfer Kepa Acero will be on board Pakea Bizkaia in Ushuaia (Argentina) next January 4. In this way, both projects will join sharing their main values: sustainability, care and respect for the environment; social responsibility and participation; solidarity; sport practice and education in values for the children.

In case he succeeds, Kepa Acero will be the first European surfing a wave in the frozen continent. In 2000, two Americans enlisted in an expedition with the only objective of surfing Antarctic waves, “but they arrived on a motor boat. Ours is the first one on a sailing boat”, says Acero. However, Kepa Acero is not looking for the trace of other expeditions, “I will just look for new places, pure new waves where nobody has surfed before”.

Pakea Bizkaia is about to enter in the most determinant phase of its expedition: the navigation from Ushuaia (the most southern area of the American continent) to the Antarctic Peninsula. The crossing itself – the cross through Cape Horn and the always difficult Drake Passage-, the icebergs and the growlers floating in the frozen waters, and the climate of this continent in the South Pole are the challenges which the eight crew members will have to face.

During these two weeks they are going to stay in the frozen continent, Kepa Acero will look for the moment and the adequate wave to achieve his goal. This Basque surfer knows very well the Pakea Bizkaia project. “I have followed Unai during all his way and he has been an inspiration for my projects. I also know him personally, and apart from what fascinating it is going to Antarctica, I am especially excited about sharing this experience with him”, says Acero.

This is the fourth wave inside his “5 Waves” project, whose spirit is to search and explore pure new waves in five seas of the planet. After his experiences in Indonesia, Andamán (India) and Angola, he will face the challenge of surfing in Antarctica.

Acero chose this wave because “Antarctica is one of the most remote places on Earth, and, despite of the difficulty in finding a good wave, it really motivates me to reach such an inaccessible place. Besides, I have been too many years trying to board in Pakea Bizkaia, and in this occasion our objectives are the same”.

The extreme temperatures and the strong winds do not defeat his eagerness. “The water is between 2 and 5 grades, but I will wear an especial wetsuit for low temperatures with wool isolation. You can stay in water for an hour and a half but in constant movement, otherwise you can get frozen”.

Drake Passage, “one of the most complicated spots to sail in the world”

Pakea Bizkaia captain, Unai Basurko, lists the difficulties in this crossing that will last four of five days from Ushuaia until they dock in the Antarctic Peninsula. “The promptness with which the forecast changes, the strong winds in all latitudes, the presence of ice and the lack of appropriate places giving us a good shelter”, resumes the captain of the vessel.

During the crossing, they will have to pass through the Drake Passage, “one of the most complicated spots to sail in the world”, remembers Basurko. “The fronts and the storms every short period of time originate strong winds, and the tides surrounding Antarctica grow every mile” explains.

Once they arrive to the Antarctic Peninsula, says the captain, “conditions use to be more quiet than the ones in Cape Horn and Drake Passage latitudes, but we will face cold temperatures, unpredictable winds, and what always means an extra difficulty: the presence of icebergs and growlers floating”. These growlers fall from the big icebergs and are more difficult to detect with radars or satellite pictures. Even though, they will have the help of the Argentine and Chilean Army to foresee them as good as is possible. In any case, the prevention measure must be “reduce to a minimum the speed and watch the bow of the boat”.

Inside the boat, to avoid the cold the most important thing is to wear “adequate clothes, have a diet rich on legumes, soups, potatoes... and a dynamic system of guards to avoid the excessive exposure of the crew members” explains Basurko.

The technological equipment and the help of the Argentine Army will help a lot to make this a safe navigation. “We have updated forecasts every 12 hours through radio and satellite. On the top of that, I have met the Argentine Army and Irizar captains to establish an adequate plan of navigation”. However, Basurko notices that “in spite of the advances in time, it keeps on being a very wild, tough and inhospitable area”.

The third expedition of Pakea Bizkaia will achieve this way its goal, after being in Canary Islands, Cape Vert, crossing the Atlantic and bordering the coast of Argentina. During its way they have shared their educational project and the Basque culture wherever they have been. They have contacted the Basque Diaspora in Argentina and have compiled information, images and videos which will be very useful for the production of the educational material. All this with the only objective of motivating the environmental respect in the society in general and in the younger in particular.

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