



PORTRAIT

Arved Fuchs

The first man to reach both the North Pole and the South Pole by foot in a single year, German explorer Arved Fuchs earned the nickname “Ice Fox” through his many Arctic expeditions by sailboat, kayak, skis, and dogsled. He has written numerous books, lectured about his extreme and spectacular journeys, and is outspoken on issues surrounding climate change and global warming.

People spend time in the outdoors for all sorts of reasons—for the thrill, to be close to nature, to save the world. What is it that drives you all the way to the ends of the earth?

I always loved being in the great outdoors. Cut free from the shackles of modern technology, just nature, pure. Of course there is the thrill of adventure, and the physical challenges. But I have also always been curious. To be in nature and experience all that it has to offer.

How did your upbringing affect your relationship to the outdoors today?

I grew up in a small village in Schleswig Holstein (the northernmost state in Germany). I was constantly outdoors. We didn't have a television when I was a child but a house full of books. And many of them were about adventurers and explorers like James Cook and Roald Amundsen. Reading about them as a boy was inspiring, and I swore to myself that one day, I would be just like them. I always kept my goal ahead of me and never let the doubts of others get in the way. Doing what I do now is a dream come true.

Extreme travel into snow and ice—what equipment is necessary to meet the particular challenges in such an environment?

I wouldn't focus on the equipment per se. Every trip is different. Of course a sleeping bag and protective clothes. But what is needed really depends on what you are prepared to do, and what you can do. A lot of people

think that they'll be prepared if they have the most, and the most expensive gear, but it's not true. You have to ask yourself: “What can I do, where are my bounds?” I've seen beginners completely overdressed for the Arctic, and then they find themselves sweating and then freezing as a result. Thorough research and intensive preparation for one's trip and destination are essential.

What pieces of outdoor gear do you never leave your house without?

I don't need a survival kit when I'm at home! I look at these things pragmatically: it depends on the task at hand. If I'm out on the weekend for a quick sail or kayaking, I'll probably have a small pocketknife with me, a lighter, and some matches. But not if I'm going to the opera with my wife. Or to the airport, for that matter—they won't let me carry those on to the airplane!

What does the work-life balance look like for a professional adventurer?

I don't separate work and fun in the traditional sense—I have the great luck to be able to make a living from my hobby. An expedition is not simply done when I return from a trip. There is a lot of following up to do—evaluating the trip, then preparing lectures—and then for the next trips there is a lot of planning to do, from bureaucracy and financing to organizing the right equipment, to getting in shape for the trip and getting the team together. In general I try to do one or two expeditions per year. It depends on how long each one is.

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