



ICF photographs



A group of intrepid paddlers kayaked for eight successive days, overcoming a series of obstacles, to mark the centenary of Czech sporting legend Emerich Rath's epic journey to Paris.

In 1924 Rath paddled for 360 kilometres to the French capital to promote canoeing that was introduced as a demonstration sport at the Olympics that year.

One hundred years later and with the Olympics returning to Paris, a Czech family decided to repeat this challenge in Rath's honour.

Tomas Palouda, chairman of Czech canoe club SK Vltava Cesky Krumlov, his son, Mikolas, and daughter, Karolina, were joined by Ondrej Koska, who is from the Czech village of Broumov where Rath lived.

Palouda is also the father of Anezka Paloudova, competing in sprint at Paris 2024.

Setting off on July 27th in Vaurois, located in the French region of Burgundy-Franche-Comté, the Czech group completed 60km of paddling for eight hours each day in their bid to reach the centre of Paris by August 3rd.

During the journey the quartet encountered changeable weather conditions, navigated fallen tree branches and slept in tents along the banks of the River Seine.

They were also stopped by French authorities just 7km short of Port Debilly, near the Eiffel Tower, before walking the rest of the way carrying their kayaks.

'It was very hard work,' said Tomas.

'We were surprised that it was so difficult.

'There were a lot of trees across the river so it was difficult to find a way.

'Many times we had to carry out the boat and go around and put it back on the water and do the same after another 100 metres.

'We went from the small creek to the big river like we have in Paris with great buildings and supermarkets around us.

'There are some rules where it is not possible for small boats going into Paris so we had to walk the rest.'

Karolina said it was the 'hardest thing in my life' and was amazed how Rath had completed such a challenge 100 years ago.

'We started on the small river in the jungle with nature and animals and now we are in Paris, the biggest city in France,' said Karolina.

'I was thinking how Emerich Rath could do this 100 years ago.

'It had to be more difficult but I am so proud, not just for me but also my father, brother and Ondrej.

'We did a great job.'

Ondrej said he was proud to have represented the birthplace of Rath, a man who competed for Austria at two Olympic Games, participating in the marathon at both London 1908 and Stockholm 1912.

Rath was an incredible sporting allrounder, competing in sports including athletics, boxing, canoeing, ice hockey and field hockey, speed skating, wrestling, football, rugby, swimming, ski jumping, mountaineering and Alpine skiing.

'When the town heard about this project they said they would like to have an ambassador on this trip so I saw the advertisement, answered it and they chose me,' said Ondrej.

'I had never been on this kind of boat before but it was a nice experience and I am happy that I tried this adventure.

'I am exhausted; my arms are falling off.

'I think that Emerich would be really surprised and happy about it as it is a really Emerich Rath thing to do, just pick a sport, a boat, and jump on it.

'He would be really proud of us.'

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Trips

Four members of the 83 day Arctic Cowboys kayak journey from Pond Inlet in 2023 were arrested in Cambridge Bay and 45 charges each brought against them. These included being in a restricted area of Sirmilik National Park and of having a firearm in a bird sanctuary. However, when the case came to court the 180 charges were withdrawn.

Freya Hoffmeister paused the northern loop of her circuit of North America at Kugaaruk in Canada on Aug 18th because of ice problems and switched to her southern loop, which she stopped as planned on Dec 3rd in Tampico, Mexico. She will continue from here in February or March and return to the northern loop in the summer, paddling north from New York to Labrador. This next leg should run from May to September and, unusually, she has been seeking two paddlers to accompany her. Her vast distances covered around the world so far have usually been solo.

French American Cyril Derreumaux is attempting a 4,800km Atlantic crossing this winter, leaving the Canary Islands on Dec 19th, aiming for Martinique. Previously he paddled the Pacific from California to Hawaii in 91 days. His 7m boat weighs 360kg loaded and has foot as well as hand paddles, the journey expected to take 80 to 90 days.

Ireland has been circumnavigated solo in 123 days by Ariel Gazarian. The 28 year old is a sea kayak guide in Washington's San Juan Islands.

A team of four, led by Ash Dykes of Colwyn, have paddled inflatable kayaks 610km along the full length of the Coppename River in Suriname to the Atlantic Ocean. During the 37 day journey through Amazon rainforest they met no people at all, interesting, as one of their objectives was to study the effects of humans on wildlife. They encountered a wide range of animal and fish species which could have caused them significant problems and suffered food deprivation, intake sometimes being little more than 10% of calories used. They suspect they may have been the first people to reach the source of the river. As a diversion they climbed Julianatop, Suriname's highest peak at 1,280m.

Compulsory PUK licences profitable for CRT

At the CRT Annual Meeting the subject of PUK's compulsory canal licences was raised, CRT being paid £300,000 last year. They said 'We know that many members don't use our navigations, so we gain from it being an all inclusive payment that offsets the lower amount paid per member.' In other words, CRT make more money than if only canoeists requiring licences paid the full cost.

Reporting wildlife crime

Following the discovery of the bodies of four cygnets, apparently shot, on the Wyrley & Essington Canal, CRT have asked canal users to report any suspected wildlife crimes to West Midlands police or any wildlife in distress to the RSPCA. Canoeists often arrive quietly at locations where other members of the public would be more conspicuous.

Environment Agency
UKHSA
Walsall and Sandwell councils
WM Police
WM Fire
WMAS
Canal and Rivers Trust
Severn Trent Water

Following a serious chemical spill into a canal at Walsall the EA website listed out people they consulted. Considering the CRT own and operate the canal, what does it say about EA relationships with CRT that they should be last but one on the list consulted?