

Another perilous exploit by world walker

A courageous ex-soldier from Yorkshire forging a 36,000-mile trail around the world is preparing for the most treacherous part of the unprecedented 11-year expedition – a race against the clock across a frozen sea – but his father says he is up to the challenge. He has only a small window of opportunity before the ice melts. Dave Mark reports.

Karl Bushby sometimes wishes he was a man who just had a mountain to climb – or perhaps a desert to cross.

For such things are a trifle to a man who over the course of a decade and change will complete a Herculean feat of endurance and bravery.

He is six years into an 11-year expedition around the world on foot. The journey crosses four continents, 25 countries, a frozen sea, six deserts, seven mountain ranges and 36,000 miles. It has involved him navigating some of the most dangerous territory in the world, braving his fair share of brigands and villains and coping with extremes of temperature and intense isolation.

He is only halfway home and yet already he has endured obstacles and triumphs that could have come from the pen of a Hollywood screenwriter.

And as he winters in [Alaska](#), far from his family in Hull, the former soldier knows that all will have been for nothing if he fails in his next challenge.

He is preparing for a potentially deadly scramble across a frozen sea, a race against the clock that will see him swimming through icy pools and leaping creaking chasms as he crosses a land bridge in sub-zero conditions. He has only a slim window of opportunity before it melts, and he begins the challenge within weeks.

His father, Keith Bushby, overseeing an expedition that will receive even more international acclaim when the first drafts of Karl's travel journals are published next year, says his son is up to the challenge.

He said: "It's been no picnic so far but this is the hard part. Karl knows it could be life or death. He arrived too late in the year to make the crossing last time so he's had to winter in [Alaska](#). At least that's given him some time to try out the new equipment he's going to need and recharge his batteries a little.

"We're under no illusions about just how difficult this is. The Bering Strait is just a stretch of ice that doesn't last very long and can split apart at any moment. There will be places where he has no choice but to swim and then run on.

"He's already proven just how dedicated he is to this, but clearly this is a fairly daunting task. He has a lot of support and if anybody can do it, it's Karl. He has to get through this. The expedition wouldn't have lived up to what he set out to do if he has to be dropped off somewhere to carry on the journey. He has to walk the whole way. "

An important part of this preparation has been meeting other adventurers who have experience of the Bering Strait. He will attempt the crossing with Dimitri Kieffer, an endurance racer of great experience whom he met on the trail last winter.

Mr Bushby still has thousands of miles to travel before he makes it through the Channel Tunnel and into the arms of his family some time around 2010.

His journey began in Chile, near the southern tip of South America. Last year his family appealed to the British Government for help in an immigration battle that has seen him separated from the woman who helped steer a path through a potentially deadly part of the Colombian jungle.

In the inhospitable environment of Columbia's Darien Gap he met Catalina Estrada.

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The Gap is a stretch of jungle, full of armed guerillas that was branded impassable. Mr Bushby, who had already faced knife-wielding bandits and robbers in the heart of South America, was warned he would not survive there but with the help of Catalina, a local civil engineer, plotted a course through the Gap that brought him out the other side. They fell in love and are now engaged.

But officials have blocked the couple's attempts to spend time together at key stages along the journey and impassioned pleas to British Ministers to intercede has not changed the situation, His fiance has even visited Hull to help further the case, but her visa requests to join Mr Bushby in other countries have been turned down.

He served in the Parachute Regiment for 11 years but left the Army in 1998 to follow his dream.

n The Bering Strait is a sea between Cape Dezhnev, Russia, the eastmost point of the Asian continent, and Cape Prince of Wales, the westernmost point of the American continent. It is about 85km (58 miles) wide and 100 to 165 ft deep and connects the Chukchi Sea – part of the [Arctic Ocean](#) – in the north with the Bering Sea – part of the Pacific Ocean – in the south.

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