

VAKE 2010

“The longest, hardest and toughest snowkite race in the world”

15 – 18. April 2010

www.vake.no

Varanger Arctic Kite Enduro 2010 is the name. In the wild and scenic parts of northern Norway you race against other teams. During three days of racing you will cross the Varanger plateau. All the equipment you need to stay out these days, you have to bring with you all the time. The pictures and story is from the VAKE 2009. The race was held for the first time in 2009. This was a test with a limited amount of teams to check if it was possible to arrange a long distance snow kite race in Varanger. It was a huge success and the race will be arranged in full scale in 2010. Hopefully this story will bring you to Varanger in april.



Klemet, passing a checkpoint at high speed. It is mandatory to sign in on the checkpoints. The race is 200 km on the map. The actual distance you kite will be significant longer. Many different solutions with the pulk . Klemet is using a double Paris, side by side, and a long rope with an elastic rubber band on, as the pull system. Each team consist of two persons, this is for safety.



The small city of Berlevåg, well east of Northcape, is the host for the first start. Every morning it is a mass start. We arrived by Hurtigruta from Kirkenes. A huge snow blizzard postponed the start and made it impossible to start from Berlevaeg this day. In 2010 the race will be one day longer so we have the possibility to stay put on one place for an extra day.



The teams put their gear into the local bus. To get lift into the mountains and skip the first leg. Due to column run on the roads we have to hurry up. We stayed one night at Berlevåg Bed and Breakfast. A small and very cozy place. North of Berlevaeg is the Barents Sea and the Northpole.....!



The teams are setting up their tents at Kongsfjord Mountain. The snow blizzard is forecasted to increase towards the night. In the pulks you have to bring with you tent, sleeping bag, food, safety equipment and ekstra clothes. Use a sleeping bag that can keep you warm even if the temperature drops down to -20 celcius.



A beatiful morning after a rather rough night. Todays stage is going over the mountains in the horizon. 55 km in one direction, two checkpoint to pass and the finish line just outside the city of Vadsoe. Everey day it is a mass start. The actual distance the teams covered this day was 70-90 km.



Just seconds before the race is on. Lots of different kites and skisails. You are allowed to use whatever kite or skisail you want.

You have to decide what kite and size you will bring with you. Most of the racers had two or three kites in their pulk. It is also very smart to bring with you a skisail to use in very difficult terrain or conditions.



Some of the areas that the race is passing through. Epic nature. In areas like this you would like to stay forever.....



One of the checkpoints. Local dog sled teams travel up into the mountains. Some of them travel a day in advance to get far enough into the plateau. How you navigate and set up the route, is up to the individual team to decide. The mandatory parts are the start, checkpoints and the finish line.



Whiteout.... You have no references at all. During Vake 2009 the weather was shifting very fast. You have to be very careful, follow your planned route and check the gps often. Small canyons, 3-8 meters deep, don't show on the map. Some teams stayed in this conditions for several hours. Suddenly it cleared and they discovered a another team just 200 m in front of them. Be sure to how to use your gps. A gps is also mandatory equipment.



A steep canyon make it imposible to cross with kite. One team is packing the kites into the pulk and making a “pulkrace” down to the bottom of the canyon. 30 min climb to get up on the other side. Very rough and hard terrain to cross. In some areas you had to kite over the stones. The skiis didn’t look pretty after this. If the weather suddenly gets realy bad, you may have to put up your tent and wait for the weather to improve.



A short stop for one of the teams to make a gps check. He has his gps strapped on the arm so he can see it easily while he is kiting. Something to drink and eat during the day is very important. Helmet is mandantory and it is also smart to have a back protection.



One of the teams is passing a checkpoint and planning the next leg. He is also using a double Paris pulk with an elastic rubber band close to the pulk. This race is an adventure, the ultimate snowkite competition, but you have to know what you are doing. Snowboards are not allowed unless you bring with you a pair of ski on the pulk. If the wind fades during the race, you must be prepared to start to do some cross country skiing. The race is still on, even if the wind stops.



Our camp the second night. The sponsor, Rica Hotel in Vadsoe, surprised us with a huge tent, chef to make burgers and beer. Of course nobody had time to get out and smile to the photographer.



A competitor waiting for his team mate. He is a couple of 100 meters behind. It is very important to stay together. Find a good friend as a team mate, you are not allowed to start in one man team. If you lose sight of each other it can be very difficult to locate each other again. You can reach 50 km/h without problems.

Some teams also used small vhf radios to communicate while kiting.



Six hours of kiting this day, 5 hours since they spotted any other teams, but 15 min later the next team arrived.

The winning team used a total of 14 hours of kiting, and 2 hours of cross country skiing/climbing for the whole race. The second team was only 20 min behind in total.



On a beautiful farm just outside Vadsoe, called Sirkkas place, the party and prize ceremony were arranged. The Swiss/Dutch team is getting their prize and congratulations from Racemaster. They did an impressive effort in unfamiliar surroundings.

To take part in this race you have to document your skills. This is not the place to learn snowkiting. Send an email to bjorn.breivik@varanger-bredband.no He is in charge of the race.

You have to send an application to Bjorn before the 12. February if you want to take part in the race. If you don't have the skills your application to take part in the race may be rejected.

It is not expensive travel to Varanger either. Be early and you will find cheap airline tickets. The cheapest way is to take the plane from Oslo/Gardermoen and direct to Kirkenes. It is either SAS or Norwegian that have direct flights to Kirkenes. From Kirkenes you take the bus down to the harbor and from there you take Hurtigruta to Berlevaeg. Tickets for the boat trip can be bought when entering Hurtigruta.

When you sadly must leave Varanger, take the bus from Vadsoe to Kirkenes, and then the plane to Oslo/Gardermoen.

See you?

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