

# Drake Passage and “The Impossible Row” project

July 31, 2020

Recently a team of six men crossed the Drake Passage

## “The Impossible Row” project

- In a first, **six rowers from four countries on December 25 crossed the Drake Passage**, in just under two weeks after pushing off from the southern tip of South America.
- According to Guinness World Records, the row represents, among other firsts, the first row on the Southern Ocean, the first row across the Drake Passage and the first row to the Antarctic continent.
- The six men team rowed for 12 days, 1 hour and 45 minutes, making it the first completely human-powered crossing of the passage.
- **The project was dubbed “The Impossible Row”**, for which the team departed from Cape Horn in Chile on December 13 and arrived at Primavera Base on San Martin Land on the Antarctic Peninsula on December 25.

## About Drake Passage

- It is located between Cape Horn at the tip of South America and the Antarctic Peninsula
- It is a passage **named after Sir Francis Drake, who was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe**
- Though bearing the name of the famous English seaman and global circumnavigator Sir Francis Drake, **the passage was first traversed in 1616 by a Flemish expedition led by Willem Schouten.**
- The Drake Passage defines the **zone of climatic transition separating the cool, humid, subpolar conditions of Tierra del Fuego and the frigid, polar**

## **regions of Antarctica**

- According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the passage has an **average depth of about 11,000 feet, with deeper regions going up to over 15,600 feet** near the northern and southern boundaries.
- This **Passage is considered one of the roughest waterways in the world** because here, layers of cold seawater from the south and warm seawater from the north collide to form powerful eddies, which when combined with strong winds and storms can be treacherous for those attempting to navigate it.
- The waters of the Drake Passage are **rich in plankton, particularly the shrimplike crustaceans called krill**. Such organisms define the essential food source for blue and fin whales, squid, emperor penguins, and crab eater seals. Antarctic cods are the most common fish.
- The passage is also **narrowest stretch in the Southern Ocean and spans approximately 800 km between the southern tip of South America and the northern tip of the West Antarctic Peninsula**
- The Drake Passage also played an important part in the trade of the 19th and early 20th centuries before the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914.

