

# Roald Amundsen

Born: 16<sup>th</sup> July 1872, Borge, Norway  
Died: 18<sup>th</sup> June 1928 (Aged 55)



On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, 1872, Roald Amundsen was born in Borge, Norway and was named Roald Englebregt Gravning Amundsen. He had three brothers and lived with his parents. When he was 14, his father passed away leaving him and his brothers in the care of his mother. His dream had always been to explore the world, but he studied medicine as this was his mother's dream for him. When she passed away, he left school and moved to pursue his personal dream.

Roald managed to acquire various positions as a crewmate on various expeditions traveling to the Arctic. This includes a journey where he sailed as first mate on the Belgica in a Belgian expedition to the Antarctic in 1897. He learned a great deal about exploring and surviving such as eating seal meat will help to cure scurvy due to its high levels of Vitamin C and animal skin is a better insulator than woolen coats. He also learned the importance of preparation, due to a difficult winter, he had had to endure and the importance of the crew maintaining their high spirits, especially during the long winter days.

In 1903, he sailed on the Gjoa with a crew of only six men with the goal of sailing through the Northwest Passage and around the northern side of Canada. In August of 1905, he completed the passage, the first to have completed this journey, and stopped at Cape Colborne. Here the journey halted due to ice, but in August 1906 they set sail again before concluding in Alaska in late August.

Amundsen had a thirst for exploration from this and set his sights on reaching the North Pole with his ship, the Fram. The Fram was a ship specially built for ice travel, it had a round bottom and its width was one-third of its length. This design was done with the idea that it would be able to withstand the pressure of the ice crushing the ship and would stand strong, rather than crumble as other ships did.

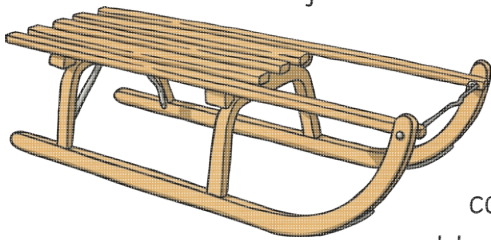
When Amundsen heard that Robert Peary had reached the North Pole, he

continued his preparations but set his sights on reaching the South Pole rather than the North Pole. He told no one of his new goals, except for his brother.

They departed Norway in June 1910 with enough supplies for 2 years and 100 sled dogs. They sailed to the Bay of Whales, Antarctica, arriving on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, 1911. Amundsen used his Arctic knowledge and began to prepare in great detail. This took the time from their arrival in January till April that same year. They deposited food supplies along their trail for their start and finish of the journey, they prepared their equipment and set themselves into routines that would help keep morale high.

He set up base 100kms closer to the pole than the base of an English explorer, Robert Falcon Scott, who was also challenging to be the first to reach the South Pole.

By the time they were ready the men, sleds, and dogs were prepared. They were aware of the weather, knowing that at any point they may have to turn back should the weather turn too extreme.



Finally, they set out in early spring with eight men on sleds, pulled by 86 dogs, but their fears came true and due to the weather turning much colder than expected they were forced to return to their

base.

Their second attempt involved five men, Roald Amundsen, Olav Olavson Bjaaland, Hilmer Hanssen, Sverre H. Hassel, and Oscar Wisting, traveling on five sleds, each being pulled by 13 dogs. They progressed well, they fed their dogs seal meat and blubber that they had packed and they rationed their own food to keep them going each day. As the food supplies dwindled they made the decision to make the final push to the pole. They endured poor weather, bad snow conditions, and blizzards.

On December the 14<sup>th</sup> 1911, the party arrived, at the South Pole, the first party to reach it. While here they recorded scientific data which would prove useful later. They had been concerned that Scott may have beaten them, so they built their tent, put a letter inside it and on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December began traveling back to camp, safely arriving 39 days later with the five men but only 11 dogs. It had taken 99 days for the expedition with a distance of 2897Kms traveled.

When the Fram was leaving the Antarctic heading to Norway they met the



ship of Douglas Mawson in, an explorer heading on an Australasian Antarctic Expedition. Here they gifted Douglas their 11 dogs and continued their journey back to Norway.

His success in reaching the South Pole first was tainted by accusations of his ungentlemanly behaviour as he had conducted his “race to the south pole” without any notice of intention. Furthering these accusations, the knowledge that Amundsen’s crew all arrived home safely while Scott’s crew all perished on their journey.

Amundsen used the money he earned from his South Pole expedition to continue to explore the Arctic. He established a shipping business and purchased a new ship, the Maud, which he used to try and complete his original plan of traveling across the North Pole. He was forced, however, to abandon this plan and resorted to flying to the North Pole.

In 1925, with explorer Lincoln Ellsworth, he flew and landed within 250kms of the North Pole. They both dropped their countries flags onto the North Pole as they flew over it in their airship. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1928, while searching for the survivors of an airship crash in the Arctic Amundsen plane crashed too and he died as a result of the crash.

