A NEW ANTARCTIC SEASON BEGINS FOR PRINCESS ELISABETH ANTARCTICA



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As the ill-fated year 2020 rolls to an end, the new Antarctic Season begins for the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica Research Station.

> It is a testament to the dedication of the crew and the research teams, that they are not daunted by what they are ca
> do. Despite the difficult months that we, collectively as inhabitants of Planet Earth, have lived through following t
> of the pandemic and with the confinements in Europe and throughout the World, there is a certain resolve and dete
> Alain Hubert and his team contemplate the coming season.
>
> The first team is currently in quarantine in Cape Town, following the DROMLAN (Dronning Maud Land Air Net
> Sanitary Protocol, having arrived under special permit issued by the South African Department of Home Affairs. C
> currently in low-level lockdown (Level 1) and life has returned to something approaching a semblance of normal.
> masks. However, the restrictions on foreign arrivals are still in place, and it took the coordinated efforts of the Bel
> and the South African National Antarctic Program, in support of the applications of the team, to finally help obtain
> passers needed to board flights.

The quarantine requires that all the participants should be in self-isolation for a period of two weeks after arrival in
Two PCR tests are conducted after arrival, one at Day 5 and one at Day 12. The team is accompanied by the statio
Martin Leitl, who will be responsible for the first rotation, and who is carrying out the tests. Dr Jacques Richon wi
second rotation. The Belgian Antarctic Research Expedition has obtained its own PCR testing equipment, which h
to test either for the SARS COV-2 virus or a range of other viruses including mutations of the COVID-19 virus ca
pandemic. This has allowed the team to put in place a pro-active strategy for testing giving rapid results and permi
flexibility in the management of the self-isolation.

The team is currently staying in the foothills of Table Mountain National Park and has been given the liberty to ex
in the fresh air by taking walks around the national park. This has contributed to team morale while maintaining th
physical condition of the Expedition.

The Cape Town Operations Team is managing the cargo preparations, procurement and quarantine support for the
they have to cook for themselves, and are not allowed to have contact with others.

The Ilyushin 76 which will take the team to the Antarctic and which will assure a medevac standby during the wh
in Cape Town while the flight crew carries out the same quarantine procedures, under the management of the Anta
Company International (ALCI). The DC3 ski-equipped planes which will assure the final leg are also in quarantin
Arenas, from where they will make their way to Novo Air Base when the weather window opens in the coming da

The amount of preparation required for this year's Expedition is significantly more than for a "normal" season, an
will be made to assure that the virus does not reach the Antarctic.

Once at the station, the crew will carry out essential work to protect the infrastructure of the station, while the rese
out maintenance on the monitoring instruments and will install some new devices.

The enforced quarantine hase provided the time to prepare for the season using Zoom and Skype meetings with co
Belgium to prepare strategies and work on new aspects such as computer modelling of the Air Handling Units. Th
reflection has created a fresh dynamic as creativity has blossomed. More on this soon.