

CIRCUMNAVIGATION WARS

With reference to your Adventurers of the Year [December 2006/January 2007], Colin Angus and Julie Wafaei, who completed a two-year, human-powered circumnavigation of the world, you should be aware that the recognition and article are based upon a false claim.

The rules of Guinness World Records state that for a legitimate circumnavigation by human power the Equator must be crossed at least once. According to a statement made by Norris McWhirter, the founding editor of Guinness, circumnavigators must also "pass through two points antipodean to each other" (i.e., a pair of locations opposite on a globe).

Since Angus and Wafaei's route neither crossed into the Southern Hemisphere nor reached a pair of antipodal points, they did not accomplish a true circumnavigation. More accurately, they traveled around the Northern Hemisphere by human power. Angus based his claim on inappropriate guidelines from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) for around-the-world flights by "Class A: Free Balloons" and "Class B: Airships." A recent FAI statement confirms: "The FAI takes no position regarding rules for surface circumnavigations."

Right now there are two known expeditions attempting to do this legitimately: Erden Eruç's Around-n-Over (www.around-n-over.org) and my journey, Expedition 360 (www.expedition360.com). It is vital to uphold standards in order to avoid diluting the circumnavigation concept for present and future circumnavigators.

Jason Lewis
Expedition 360
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I am writing in response to ADVENTURE's story on Colin Angus and Julie Wafaei. I know



Angus well. I traveled as his expedition partner across North America and the Bering Sea until March 2005, when we parted ways in Siberia. One reason I left is because Angus insisted that we hire gas-guzzling vehicles in the Arctic, while I lobbied for dogsled support or other zero-emissions options. But more important, it appeared to me that Angus was planning to deceive the world by calling the endeavor a "circumnavigation."

Angus's definition—"A journey around the planet of at least 22,859 miles (the length of the Tropic of Cancer), which intersects all meridians in the same direction and ends at the point of departure"—is absurd. That means an explorer could, for example, circle the North Pole, then rack up the remaining mileage on every back road in Scandinavia and still claim a global circumnavigation.

Simply, the shortest possible true circumnavigation is an equator. For a circumnavigation to be greater or equal to this minimum, it must cross antipodes. Do that and you can

wander freely around the world. It will be a circumnavigation, and then some.

Angus and Wafaei never crossed antipodes; they never even crossed the Equator. To be legitimate, they would've had to cycle south to Tierra del Fuego, which is opposite to a point that Angus (and I) crossed in Siberia.

Meanwhile, a true circumnavigator, Jason Lewis, used a pedal-boat to cross the Atlantic and Pacific and has been using other forms of human power the rest of the way. The adventure community will lose credibility if you fail to honor Lewis, the man who backs his claim with more than a decade of challenge in both hemispheres.

Tim Harvey
Galiano Island, British Columbia

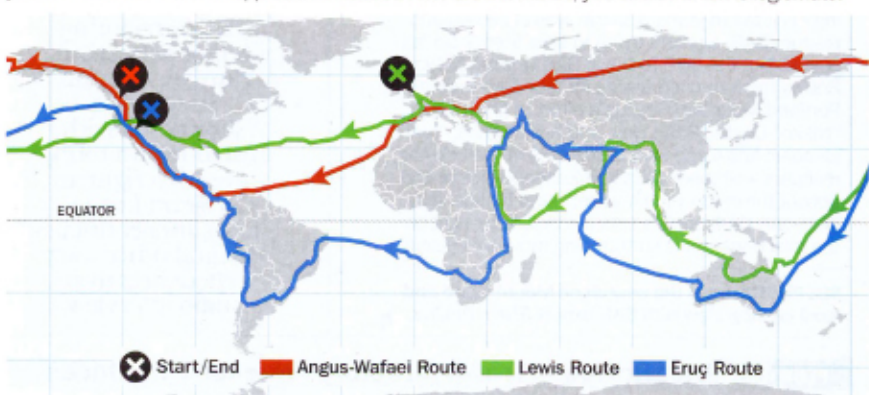
By the strictest definition, a perfect circumnavigation of the Earth would trace a circle of 24,901 miles by precisely following a path along the Equator. Geographic realities make it impossible to follow this arrow-straight route. When our Expedition Canada started out, two sets of guidelines had been developed that established realistic parameters. The first was the nautical definition described by the International Sailing Federation. This requires that a vessel start and finish at the same port, cross all meridians and the Equator, and travel at least 21,600 nautical miles. Our journey was not exclusively maritime; it was a land-and-sea route that traveled more closely to a perfect circle. For that trip the only guidelines that applied were those of the FAI, which governs air travel. These state that circumnavigators need to travel at least 16,777 miles, cross all meridians, and begin and end at the same point. Expedition Canada accomplished these goals and traveled a total of 26,000 miles.

It wasn't until seven months after our expedition that Guinness issued official guidelines for a contiguous human-powered circumnavigation (the organization showed no interest when I contacted them during our trip). At the time of our departure, Guinness had, however, awarded records to other feats that abided by FAI guidelines, most notably a Concorde jet in 1995 for the fastest global circumnavigation. I don't see how anyone could argue that a human-powered circumnavigation should follow more stringent guidelines than those required of an airplane.

Colin Angus
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Around the World, Three Ways

What constitutes a true human-powered circumnavigation? Three expeditions—with three very different paths—contend that their approach is correct. Here are the routes; you decide which is legitimate.



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