



## VIKING VOYAGE 1000

Nearly 1000 years ago the intrepid Viking sailor Leif Eriksson set his sights on lands far west, sailing 1800 miles from Greenland to Newfoundland and establishing the first contact between Europeans and native North Americans.\* Eriksson named the settlement he founded “Vinland” because of the wild grapes that reportedly grew there. For the 300 years following Eriksson’s voyage, the Vikings returned repeatedly to Vinland to harvest timber. As skilled as these far-flung Norsemen were at warfare, ongoing battles with native Americans prevented the Vikings from establishing a permanent settlement.

Eriksson’s voyage remains a remarkable achievement, not least because he accomplished his feat using the most basic medieval navigational tools: the sun and the stars. To commemorate this historic event, W. Hodding Carter and a crew of nine will attempt to sail an exact replica of Eriksson’s ship from western Greenland along the Vikings’ original route. If they reach L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, the site of the only confirmed Viking settlement in North America, theirs will be the first knarr, an authentic Viking ship, to do so in 600 years.

Some have tried to sail this route in a motor-powered boat, and some have sailed part of the route in an authentic Viking ship, but no one has successfully replicated Eriksson’s original voyage in a wind- and man-powered vessel. That includes Carter who attempted the journey last summer with eleven other men. Six weeks into the voyage, Carter and crew had to return to Greenland after their ship’s rudder sustained extensive damage in the waters between Greenland and Baffin Island.

“I was disappointed having to stop the expedition so abruptly, but I think the challenge of the whole project, and also the excitement, lies in failing and then fixing the problem and going on. We got ourselves into something a little bit above our heads but that’s what made it worth doing,” Carter explains. “Now we know that we can handle ourselves really well in emergencies, and we’re more comfortable with our level of skill, and we’re ready to try it again.”

For Carter, the expedition is the realization of a childhood dream. Originally inspired by a fifth grade text, *The Vikings* by Elizabeth Janeway – a captivating account of Leif Eriksson’s adventures – Carter’s fantasies were further fueled by the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ “discovery” of America in 1992. To propel Viking Voyage 1000 into reality, he created the New Vinland Foundation, a non-profit entity devoted to educating the public about Viking achievements in North America, Greenland, and Iceland. Lands’

*\*Though all inhabitants of Scandinavia at this time are normally referred to as “Vikings,” the Vikings were actually Scandinavian warriors. Other inhabitants of the area, including some of the crew on Eriksson’s boat and some of the sailors who made subsequent voyages to North America, were simply Norse homesteaders.*

*Viking Voyage 1000 is made possible through the sponsorship of Lands’ End Direct Merchants.*

End Direct Merchants, the sole sponsor of Viking Voyage 1000, is enabling the New Vinland Foundation to fulfill its goals.

“It’s important to me to demystify historic milestones and show people the underbelly of adventuring, what it really took for the Vikings to get to North America – the misery and the setbacks and the hardships and the real joy of small accomplishments, like navigating a difficult harbor in fog or finally getting a knot tied correctly – and that a series of small events can tie together to make something big happen,” Carter says.

This summer Carter and crew will again sail the knarr he named Snorri after the first Viking child born in the new land. Master boat builder Robert Stevens of Hermit Island, Maine constructed Snorri, an open-deck boat 54 feet long, 16 feet wide and 6 feet deep from oak, pine, tamarack and locust woods and fastened it with iron rivets. Equipped with only a square canvas sail, Snorri is propelled by wind or oars.

Over the winter, Carter and Stevens consulted with a naval architect from Maine and a naval archeologist from England to address the knarr’s rudder problems. Come June, during sea trials off the coast of Greenland, they’ll test three models: the original, repaired rudder, plus a version of the existing rudder incorporating changes suggested by the archeologist and a new rudder that is as broad but deeper than the original. In addition, the rudder framing has been significantly reinforced.

As last summer’s experiences demonstrated, the voyage will be fraught with potential hazards. The average water temperature in July and August is 40F degrees and an individual could die from hypothermia in ten minutes after falling into the water. The air temperature in both southern Greenland and Newfoundland averages 50F. Wind chill will make the damp sea air feel many degrees colder. Ice pack and ice flow will not only determine the exact course of the knarr’s route, but may prevent the boat from following its charted course. “This trip is more difficult for us than it was for Leif Eriksson because it was warmer in the eleventh century and there wasn’t so much ice,” Carter notes.

Additionally, much of the coastline in Greenland, Baffin Island and Labrador remains uncharted. The crew will again attempt to navigate as the Vikings did by using the skies and other natural “tools,” but the boat also contain charts, a sextant, a global positioning satellite system, compasses, and a single sideband radio, most of which will only be used in case of emergency.

Then there is the “rustic” charm of life on the knarr itself. For the eight to ten weeks it will take Carter and company to complete the voyage, the crew will be living outdoors: the knarr is an open-deck ship with nothing to protect them from inclement weather. Though they’ll be equipped with special rubber immersion suits in case of emergency, the crew will normally wear several layers of regular clothing underneath a waterproof coverall. Meals will include a variety of high-energy foods like dried fruits, meats and grains as well as fresh fish caught by the crew and lichen and wild plants gathered on beaches (a traditional Viking food).

Obviously it takes a special kind of person to tackle such a trip, and Carter’s

prerequisites for crew members, in addition to sailing skills, are a willingness to work as a part of a team and a sense of humor. Eight of the original crew will return for this year's voyage. Many of the crew are expert sailors. In addition to Carter, who serves as the expedition leader (though the captain will be in charge of the boat in any matters regarding sailing and safety), the crew includes a former Outward Bound instructor skilled in emergency medicine and several "jacks of all trades" who will pitch in wherever necessary.

The voyage will begin in Nuuk on the southwest coast of Greenland, 300 miles up the coast from last summer's launching point at Brattahlid. As soon as the ice pack along Baffin Island has broken up enough to enable travel, the voyage will commence. Carter hopes to set sail before the middle of July in order to finish his adventure before the end of September and the beginning of hurricane season.

Traveling from Nuuk, the knarr will either head straight to Baffin Island or 200 miles up the western coast of Greenland to Sisimiut. There are three major ports, many more small ports and a large number of protected fjords along this route. From Sisimiut, the knarr will sail 200 miles across the Davis Strait to Baffin Island, then down the coast of the island 300 miles. Baffin Island features no ports on its outer coastline. The last 750 miles of the journey will take the knarr down the Labrador coast, past five or six ports of call, to the northern tip of Newfoundland.

The crew will spend an average of every other day on land, camping and meeting with Greenlandic and Canadian Inuit and hiking on eskers – tall, narrow ridges of sand and gravel created by glaciers – in search of caribou, reindeer, wolves, bear and moose. The Vikings themselves stopped at many of these places, often for days at a time, in search of food and other provisions. Several of the ports Carter and his team will visit contain remnants of Viking encampments. "There is as much adventure on land as there is in the water on this journey," says Carter. "I want to make sure we capture the entire essence of the Viking voyage to Vinland."

As they did last summer, this year tens of thousands of people all over the globe will be able to track Snorri's progress via [www.beyond.landsend.com](http://www.beyond.landsend.com), which will be a part of Lands' End's new adventure web site, Beyond Lands' End. "The most eye-opening part of the project for me has been the response from people on the Web to what we were doing. At first I thought of this whole trip as our experience alone, but then I realized, as people started checking in with us every day online, that this expedition was an adventure for us to share," says Carter.

In addition to information on Viking history, boat building, the crew and the sea trials, the site will chronicle the expedition with journal entries from Carter and other crew members, much the same way seamen recorded their voyages in journals and log books for centuries. Carter is working on a book about the expedition slated to be published by Ballantine in late 1999.

Once the voyage has been completed, the New Vinland Foundation will donate the knarr to the Department of Canadian Heritage to enable the boat to remain in the national park at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland as part of the exhibit housing the original Viking settlement.