

Re: Straight to Mars?

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In article <4193615d\$0\$450\$a726171b@news.hal-pc.org>,

Jon S. Berndt <jsb.at.hal-pc-dot.org> wrote:

>I agree and am aware of the earth analogues to a Mars space flight. However,
>there are some major differences that can't be discounted which I believe
>make them quite different. How many people are based at typical Antarctic
>stations? For a hypothetical Mars station? From what I recall seeing,
>Antarctic stations are little communities under protective cover.

Antarctic stations vary widely in size, depending on how many people are needed to do the particular job that station is doing. Some of them are quite small, only a handful of people and very limited resources. (Note that the winter population is often rather smaller than the summer one.)

>They are well supplied before night falls with an abundance of food.

As a Mars expedition would be.

>The outside environment is frigid, but the air is breathable, at
>atmospheric pressure...

This is a detail, not anything fundamental. An unprotected human outside in an Antarctic winter has an expected survival time not much longer than he would have on Mars. In either place, you need the right protections to survive.

>and they are surrounded by fresh water.

Only given abundant energy to melt it. Eating snow does not work well.

>They can communicate
>interactively with friends and family (no time delay)...

Only if there's a satellite in the right place. Antarctica does *not* (last I heard) have continuous satellite coverage. Note that GSO comsats are below the horizon for most of Antarctica.

Even what satellite coverage they do have is quite a recent thing. It wasn't that long ago that interactive communications were essentially

unavailable there.

And remember that interactive long-distance communication wasn't available *anywhere* on Earth until around the beginning of the 20th century. The absence of interactive communication is something people have coped with for a long time.

>are on the same planet...

Of abstract interest only.

*>and can be evacuated come daylight by any number of aircraft
>(redundant sources of evacuation).*

At the smaller and more distant stations, the options can be surprisingly few.

*>I appreciate the comparisons made with historical analogues. I hope that we
>make the journey to Mars at some point in the near future. My point was (is)
>that the psychological effects of separation from family (friends ...
>people) and even separation from the planet where everyone else is for
>perhaps years poses some possibly serious problems to be overcome.*

And my point is that this problem is being *VASTLY* exaggerated by people who see horrible hardships in anything that departs even slightly from the Western urban lifestyle of the early 21st century. "But, but, there *might* be a bogeyman under the bed!"

There is no bogeyman under the bed. There is ample experience with long separations and limited communication in dangerous environments, in many cases involving conditions *far* harsher than anything likely to be experienced by a Mars expedition. Are there psychological issues? Yes, actually, there are. But there is a wealth of past and even *current* experience on how to deal with them successfully.

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"Think outside the box -- the box isn't our friend."
-- George Herbert

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