

Antonio de la Rosa will return to the Northwest Passage in July 2027

Back in Spain, the explorer reviews his first attempt: figures, acknowledged mistakes and a redesigned board

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Antonio de la Rosa is back in Spain, safe and well, following the rescue that on 2 August interrupted his solo, unsupported crossing of the Northwest Passage. On Sunday 9 August, in a live broadcast on Instagram, the explorer delivered a full review of that first attempt and confirmed the essential point: the expedition is not cancelled, it is postponed. His return is scheduled for July 2027.

The broadcast, which will also be published on YouTube, covered the preparation phase, the paddling days, the logistical mistakes De la Rosa acknowledges without qualification, and the exact sequence of events that led to the rescue. He also detailed the technical modifications he will make to his craft before the next attempt.

"I am convinced the Sunova exploration board can cross the Northwest Passage, and I hope to prove it next year."

— Antonio de la Rosa

A first attempt with solid paddling figures

The expedition began on 18 July from Pond Inlet. By his own assessment, De la Rosa arrived in the Arctic in excellent physical and mental condition, and the days when conditions allowed him on the water bear this out: two days of 64 kilometres, two more of 52 and three of around 40. Carrying roughly 100 kilograms of load on the board, his cruising speed ranged between 5.5 and 5.6 kilometres per hour, peaking at 8 km/h with favourable wind. On the longest days he paddled for twelve hours with barely twenty minutes of actual stops.

The effort, he explains, proved sustainable: in aerobic terms comparable to a very long, easy-paced bike ride. He needed anti-inflammatories only during the first three or four days, and notes that his nutrition worked better than on his South Pole crossing, with a greater share of nuts and dried fruit.

"When I finished those 64 kilometres, I felt I could have done another 50."

— Antonio de la Rosa

The logistics chain: the mistakes the explorer owns

De la Rosa devotes a substantial part of his review to pre-departure logistics, which he identifies as the weakest link of the first attempt. He arrived in Ottawa on 10 July with excess equipment: two boards and several additional packages. So much so that Alfonso d'Ors, of Posovisual — the production company covering the preparations — returned to Spain carrying 30 kilograms of his gear.

The four days available in Ottawa proved insufficient to prepare all the food, particularly because supplies are barely obtainable at the starting point. Institutional commitments added further pressure. On 14 July he travelled north to the Arctic.

The board did not arrive in time and had to be shipped as cargo, the only option given the size of the aircraft operating in the region. The crate reached Pond Inlet damaged after multiple transfers, and with it went a dry bag containing two spare fins and four acoustic bear deterrents. In an Inuit community in the Canadian Arctic there is no way to replace such equipment: park rangers lent him two acoustic deterrents, but the explorer began the crossing with a single fin.

“You cannot go on an expedition like this carrying things just in case. I have to leave Madrid with exactly the equipment I am going to use out there.”

— Antonio de la Rosa

The day he should not have entered the water

After several days of mild temperatures, the explorer admits he grew complacent about his drysuit. At around 11 degrees, and with the heat generated by the effort, he ended up paddling without it. On day 11 he fell into the water without the suit and had to return to shore, costing him two days of progress.

Those two days proved decisive: they meant a weather front reached him earlier than expected. De la Rosa crossed Admiralty Inlet — the bay on whose shore Arctic Bay sits — and reached the vicinity of Cape Crauford with the sea already running high. His plan was to round the cape the following day and turn west with a favourable wind.

It did not work out that way. At the tip of Cape Crauford, shallow water and a rocky bottom turned that favourable wind into a chaotic scenario: capsizes, dense fog, low temperatures and strong wind. Here the explorer identifies a specific, avoidable mistake: he was not carrying nautical charts. He had GPS and all the mapping downloaded, but not the bathymetric information that would have warned him how shallow the area was.

“That day I should have stayed calmly ashore and waited three, four or five days. That lesson is learned.”

— Antonio de la Rosa

The storm took the board

He managed to get out of the water between cliffs, very close to a cabin he had already located on his maps. He carried all his equipment up onto the edge of the shore-fast ice — the ice that builds up in winter and remains wedged several metres above the beach, against a wall some ten metres high — convinced it would be safe there. Safety equipment and clothing he took up to the cabin, reachable only after a six- or seven-metre scramble that made hauling the board up impossible.

The storm arrived the following day, with winds of 100 kilometres per hour. When he went down to the shore two days later to repair the fin and prepare the board, intending to head for Arctic Bay some 100 kilometres away, nothing was left: no board, no bags, no food. The sea had taken it all.

“The sea swallowed almost everything except the safety equipment.”

— Antonio de la Rosa

A rescue without an SOS: the most deliberate decision

From that point the situation was clearly defined: food for a couple of days, stretchable to four or five, and no way of leaving under his own power from a place with no land access. But no immediate danger either: he was well and sheltered in the cabin.

That distinction shaped his most deliberate decision. De la Rosa, a firefighter by profession with long-standing ties to rescue teams, chose not to activate the SOS. He knows a distress signal triggers an immediate protocol in which rescuers take on high risk, because there is no communication with the person and their actual condition is unknown.

Instead, he contacted his team so a rescue protocol could be activated without urgency. Communication was channelled through the Spanish Embassy in Canada, and the Canadian Coast Guard decided to send a large

vessel with an estimated arrival of 48 hours. The explorer accepted that timeframe without reservation.

“What mattered most to me was that nobody should risk their life coming to rescue me. It made no difference to me whether I got out in 12 hours, 24, 48 or four days.”

— Antonio de la Rosa

Exactly forty-eight hours later the icebreaker CCGS Des Groseilliers arrived, on a day of dense fog. The operation was resolved using the ship's onboard helicopter, with no need for an inflatable to approach, and De la Rosa was flown directly to Arctic Bay airport, where local police received him and accompanied him to the hotel. In his assessment it was a clean rescue in which nobody took unnecessary risks. His return journey to Spain was completed in 48 hours.

Territory, wildlife and ice

Much of the first attempt took place within Sirmilik National Park, which comprises Bylot Island and the northwestern sector of Baffin, a bird sanctuary where access with firearms is strictly prohibited. Park rangers granted him a special permit to transit and camp in certain areas of southern and western Bylot.

Inside the reserve, birdlife was, in his words, extraordinary, with a striking contrast on leaving it, where birds were barely visible. He recorded narwhals over entire days, seals almost daily during the early stage, and two polar bears at close range. Neither encounter required the use of his shotgun, which he regards as an absolute last resort: his first line of deterrence is acoustic deterrents, a whistle and a flare system. One bear watched him from the shore with complete indifference; the other moved off in the opposite direction the moment it saw him. He sighted no whales.

As for ice, 2026 was atypical. In the strait between Pond Inlet and Bylot Island, where in other years there is abundant pack ice and floating ice at that time of the season, unusually strong winds pushed the ice into the bays and made his start easier: he encountered virtually no ice. At the opposite end, sailing vessels attempting the passage eastward from Alaska were still blocked in early August, with no access yet to Cambridge Bay.

Why a stand-up paddleboard

De la Rosa also answers those who argue the Northwest Passage is unfeasible by paddleboard, or even by kayak. His argument is one of autonomy: the crossing demands food for a minimum of 40 days, some 40 kilograms in provisions alone, on top of all remaining equipment. A touring kayak cannot take that volume, and a packraft is too slow. The board, being an open craft, can carry it.

“I have seen first-hand how difficult that place is, but I trust my ability and my knowledge to complete this expedition.”

— Antonio de la Rosa

Modifications planned for 2027

Retractable fin. With the board loaded — some 35 kilograms of craft plus 80 or 90 of equipment — paddling without a fin is essentially unworkable: the board becomes uncontrollable and forces the paddler to cover twice the distance. The goal is a fin housed in a box, retractable, that folds away on contact with the bottom and can be raised at will, working much like a kayak rudder.

Load securing. During capsizes, the eight to ten dry bags shifted to one side and made righting the board extremely difficult. The solution is to reduce them to three or four large bags secured with double straps, similar to those he uses on his expedition sled.

Seated paddling position. In headwinds or severe conditions it becomes necessary to paddle seated, using a kayak paddle. The seat he carried was poorly adapted; the craft will be modified for that use.

Deck protection. Beam waves could ship up to 50 litres of water, slow to drain through the scuppers. He will add a component covering his feet when paddling standing up.

Logistics and navigation. Leaving Madrid with exactly the equipment he will use, allowing more time on the ground, and carrying nautical charts. Total weight, he concedes, is unlikely to drop below 90 kilograms.

Next steps

Over the coming days the explorer will present the modifications to his craft and publish material on the wildlife he recorded, particularly the birdlife of Sirmilik National Park. In parallel, the equipment replacement phase begins — the sea took almost all of it — along with the search for funding for the new attempt, planned for July 2027. The full live broadcast will remain available on the expedition's official channels.

Acknowledgements

Antonio de la Rosa expressly thanked the Spanish Embassy in Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard, the Arctic Bay police and the Parks Canada rangers, who lent him acoustic deterrents and granted the transit and overnight permits within Sirmilik. He also thanked Posovisual for its coverage of the preparations and the start of the expedition.

The expedition's communications coordination extends that acknowledgement to **West Hansen** — National Geographic Explorer and Chairman of the Texas Chapter of The Explorers Club — who during the rescue window clearly and decisively offered the assistance of a local contact in Arctic Bay.

Technical summary	
Explorer status	● Back in Spain, safe and well · Expedition postponed
Announcement	9 August 2026 · Instagram live broadcast
New planned date	July 2027
First attempt · start	18 July 2026 · Pond Inlet, Nunavut (Canada)
Interruption	2 August 2026 · Day 16 · Cape Crauford area, Borden Peninsula
Rescue	Canadian Coast Guard · icebreaker CCGS Des Groseilliers + onboard helicopter → Arctic Bay (Ikpiarjuk)
Best days	2 days of 64 km · 2 of 52 km · 3 of around 40 km
Cruising speed	5.5 – 5.6 km/h loaded · up to 8 km/h in favourable conditions
Longest day	12 hours paddling with roughly 20 minutes of actual stops
Equipment lost	Board, dry bags and food · only the safety equipment was preserved
Wildlife recorded	2 polar bears · narwhals · seals · birdlife of Sirmilik National Park
Planned modifications	Retractable fin · new load securing · seated paddling position · deck protection