

ATLANTIC OCEAN EXPEDITION

Crossing the Ocean on a Reed Sailing Boat



In July 2007, Sabrina Lorenz set sail across the Atlantic with ten others and Wings WorldQuest Flag #3 to prove that intercontinental trade was possible in prehistoric times. Expedition leader Dominique Görlitz invited Sabrina, an experienced scientific scuba diver, and Andrea Müller to be the two women to sail aboard the Abora III, a reed boat similar to those used in predynastic Egypt. Long before Columbus or the Vikings voyaged to the New World, growing evidence indicates that people regularly crossed the Atlantic. Cave drawings from the Magdalene Old Stone Age cultures in France and Spain attest to advanced nautical knowledge.

Top: Sabrina holds WWQ Flag #3 on the Abora III in Liberty Harbor, New Jersey. Photo: Milbry Polk

Above: Drawings from 12,000 BCE in "Cueva del Castillo" in Spain suggest people had advanced nautical knowledge. Photo: <http://www.abora3.com>

BUILDING AND PROVISIONING AN ANCIENT REPLICA

Amaya natives, who make reed boats on Lake Titicaca, constructed the hull of the Abora III in Bolivia. When it arrived in New Jersey, Sabrina helped build the mast, two cabins, deck, and navigation facilities using only ancient techniques – wood roped together and held fast with innumerable knots. And taking a cue from the cave paintings, the craft was outfitted with a series of rudders, which allowed greater dexterity in steering. Dominique asked Sabrina to assemble enough food for eleven people to last 60 days at sea. On July 11, the Abora III set sail from New York Harbor with strong winds to the east.



The Abora III under full sail

SURVIVAL AND DISCOVERY ABOARD A REED VESSEL

After making 330 miles in the first four days, the wind stopped and the Abora III

slowly drifted on the current. Passing the continental shelf Sabrina spotted whales, dolphins, ocean turtles, and manta rays in the turquoise waters. Then, the Abora III ran into a series of bad storms, weathering 5-meter, white-crested waves in winds of 22 miles per hour. Throughout, the crew stood three shifts around the clock.

Heading into hurricane season the Abora III was severely tested. On August 11, the wind whipped the waves into an unusual frenzy. The crew had to cut the sail to save the mast. High waves crashed over the boat and washed away anything unattached, including water and food. After three weeks weathering two more major storms and round-the-clock repairs, the Abora III was still 500 miles from its halfway point. Water washed the deck continuously, the cabin had shifted to the port side, and the steering mechanism broke. When a section of the raft was lost during a night storm, a convoy ship was called to rescue the bedraggled crew, who, on September 5, waved good-bye to their battered raft.

Although Sabrina and the crew did not make it across, they demonstrated that similar reed craft could have crossed the ocean, enabling contact between people in Europe and North America. The experience revealed that ancient seafarers depended more upon the currents than the wind to propel these types of boats.

ABOUT SABRINA LORENZ

Sabrina, a 26-year old archaeometry graduate student from Dresden, Germany, says that she is “drawn to the ocean because of its many secrets yet to be discovered.” Sabrina said this journey was “the biggest adventure in my life” and looks forward to working with Dominique and his international team on the Abora IV.



WHO

Sabrina Lorenz

WHAT

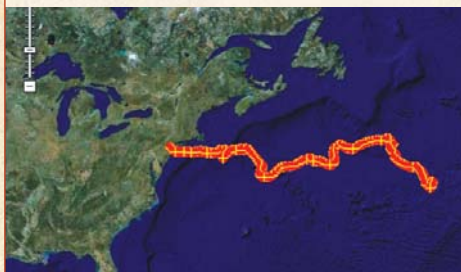
Construct and sail a reed boat across the Atlantic Ocean

WHERE

East from Liberty Harbor, New Jersey towards the Azores

WHY

To test whether ancient sailors could cross oceans on reed boats



The Abora's seven-week route, showing where the expedition halted halfway across the Atlantic

The Abora III is left alone in the Atlantic after the crew is rescued.

