

Norwegian man, 70, will travel from Manhattan to England in rowboat

Some might think he's a little dinghy.

But Stein Hoff doesn't care. The 70-year-old Norwegian is determined to row from lower Manhattan to England in a 24-foot boat named the Fox II.

Hoff plans to depart from Battery Park Sunday — and to make the three-month transatlantic journey without any passengers or chase boats.

"I don't want any help," he declared Friday. "I don't want to step on land or on (to) other boats."

"I'd never get anyone to come out with me anyway," he joked. "Who'd want to be out there for three whole months?"

Hoff, a Norwegian who works as a cardiologist back home, hopes to recreate the 1896 journey of Norwegian-Americans George Harbo and Gabriel Samuelsen, the first people to row across an ocean.

"Ninety-nine percent of people in Norway think I'm out of my mind," he said. "You Americans get all excited."

Scheduled to end in Britain's Isles of Scilly, the journey is sponsored by Ripley's Believe It or Not. The planning took four years.



Stein Hoff, 70, shows off his rowboat.

Hoff's boat will be stuffed with dehydrated apricots, potato chips, bread, snacks and 110 zip-locked daily rations packed by his wife.

Each daily package includes cereal, nuts, flapjacks, fruitcake, chocolate and cheese.

He's also bringing some rice and 60 eggs covered in Vaseline that he'll cook with a propane-powered camping stove.

"I put Vaseline on them, they keep longer that way," he explained. "I need 4,000 calories a day otherwise I'll start to lose weight."

He'll drink English breakfast tea each morning and

chamomile each night.

"You know, real tough guy stuff," he laughed.

Hoff will have fishing lines too, but doesn't like to use them.



The cabin and storage section of Hoff's boat — and where he will sleep amid the arduous journey.

"When I'm at sea, because I move so slowly, I usually make friends with the fish and the birds," he said. "I feed them."

A desalination kit will convert seawater into drinking water, but Hoff hopes his wife will pack him some wine, too.

The adventurer said he expects to row 12 to 15 hours a day along the Trade Winds Route, a path known for its favorable gusts.

"It's pathetic," he said of how slowly he will move. "If I can do 40 miles a day, I'd be very happy."

He's in great shape for 70, and says he has been training with a rowing machine.

"Sore hands and sore bums are part of the game," he said.

If he gets in trouble, Hoff said he'll call for help with a satellite phone charged via solar panels. He also has an inflatable life raft.

For fun, Hoff is taking a laptop and an MP3 player stocked with music from the Beatles, Elvis Presley and Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg.

If he gets really bored, he'll watch "Titanic," he joked.

He's looking forward to relaxing at sea, soaking up the sun during his off hours.

"Most of my fun will be in recovering," he said.

He will sleep on a mattress pad in the boat's small cabin.

Hoff said his family — including his wife of 48 years, three children and five grandkids — supports him, despite concerns for his safety.

"They're a little worried," he admitted. "My wife is nervous. She hopes this is my last trip."

"I'll be very happy to see him on the other side," wife Diana, 72, said Friday. "This is the roughest route. It's absolutely the slowest way to cross the ocean."

Hoff's main worries involve hurricane swells and sea traffic. The wake from a large ship could be enough to topple his boat, he said.

Other than that, he's very optimistic.

His sturdy vessel was built in 2009 and since then he's carved the deck out a bit deeper, so he has more room for storage and leg room. The craft has made two similar transatlantic trips under previous owners, he said.

Hoff already holds a Guinness world record for being the first person to take a rowboat from continental Europe to South America. That 2002 trip, from Portugal to Guiana, took him 97 days.

Hoff also rowed from the Canary Islands to Barbados in 1997 with a partner. That journey, he said, took 69 days.

The public can track Hoff's whereabouts [on the Ripley's website](#).



Hoff tests his oars.



Hoff is taking the journey to recreate an 1896 journey by two Norwegian-Americans.



Hoff shows off a book detailing the 1896 journey to which his trip is an homage.