



Judy Fitzpatrick / AP  
British sailor Anthony Smith, right, captains the An-Tiki, a 40-foot sail-powered raft, as the vessel arrived in Philipsburg, St. Maarten, on Wednesday.

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PHILIPSBURG, St. Maarten — An 85-year-old British sailor who dreamed of crossing the Atlantic on a raft as a young boy has completed the journey in 66 days with three friends.

The 2,800-mile crossing to this Caribbean island, led by Anthony Smith of London, took about two months and was generally smooth except for damage to two rudders on the large, sail-powered raft.

"Some people say it was mad," he told The Associated Press when he arrived in St. Maarten Wednesday. "But it wasn't mad. What else do you do when you get on in years?"

The jovial crew said they wanted to raise awareness about the environment and to prove the elderly are capable of embarking on adventures that are mistakenly considered dangerous.

They also aimed to raise money for the British nonprofit group WaterAid, which provides potable water to impoverished communities.



Judy Fitzpatrick / AP

The crew of the An-Tiki included John Russell, David Hildred, captain Anthony Smith and Andrew Bainbridge.

A stroke of bad luck paid for the trip, courtesy of Smith, who was hit by a van and broke his hip.

"I got some compensation money," he said. "So what do you blow the compensation money on? You blow it on a raft."

The crew departed from the Canary Islands after bad weather delayed their trip for about a month.

### **Fresh bread**

Smith delivered a farewell speech — in nearly impeccable Spanish — to a crowd gathered on the dock and then waved goodbye.

The raft, named "An-Tiki" after [Thor Heyerdahl's famous Kon-Tiki raft](#), was loaded with food including oranges, avocados, potatoes, cabbages and a pumpkin. Once the store-bought bread was consumed, sailing master David Hildred began making it from scratch in a small oven.

Hildred, a civil engineer who lives in the British Virgin Islands, also was summoned to help fix the rudders that broke three days into the trip.

The raft was built with four water supply pipes nearly 40 feet long, and 14 cross pipes.

Seven pipes held the crew's fresh water supply.

"Water strikes at the very heart of need," Smith told [the U.K.'s Press Association news agency](#). "To voyage almost 3,000 miles upon the salty kind makes us intensely aware of places in the world that are without adequate supplies."

The raft also had a nearly 40-foot long mast and a 400-square-foot sail. Twin rudders provided the steering, along with centerboards and two oars.

The raft traveled at an average speed of 4 knots, with the crew taking turns to keep watch when they were not reading or playing cards.

"I think all of us enjoyed our night watches when it was just oneself for company," Smith said. "Not an awful lot to see, but it was great."

### **'Mutiny'**

A whale played alongside the raft one day, and a school of mahi-mahi followed the raft almost the entire journey, said crew member John Russell, 61, of Britain.

"The wildlife was just fantastic," he said. "There is nothing to be scared of. We were all old men."

Halfway across the Atlantic, Smith celebrated his 85th birthday with a chocolate cake that his doctor, Andrew Bainbridge, cooked on board.

The crew intended to end their trip in the Bahamas, but strong winds and currents forced them to the Dutch Caribbean island of St. Maarten.

"Yes, of course it's a success," Smith said with a smile. "How many people do you know who have rafted across the Atlantic? ... The word mutiny was only spoken about two or three times a day."