



## German adventurer crosses U.S. to Belfast

*Reaches the Atlantic at the public landing*

By [Daniel Dunkle](#)

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BELFAST — Detlev Henschel stands outside his camper at the Belfast public landing wearing a lei and a broad grin. He greets visitors with a bone-crushing handshake and in a thick accent explains that his is a “bloody German name.”

If his recent adventure, walking from Santa Monica, Calif., to Belfast, Maine, much of it along famed Route 66, has sapped any of his excitement, it doesn't show.

Henschel travels the world with his girlfriend Katrin Frommhold and writes German language travel and adventure books that are filled not only with written accounts of his exploits, but with color photographs and detailed maps. He also produces documentaries and runs a Web site, [www.detlev-henschel.com](http://www.detlev-henschel.com).

Henschel, 49, is from Bremen, Germany. He arrived at the Belfast Harbor Master's Office Monday after 170 days of walking across America. His trip started March 17. He estimates that he has walked 3,778 miles, and he plans to continue his trek to Newfoundland so he can say he has crossed the entire continent.

He said the most beautiful part of the trip was walking the old Spanish trail through the Mojave Desert. He also followed the Santa Fe Trail.

Henschel said he decided to walk, rather than ride across America, to give him more time to take in the country and see that there are 280 million people who are not "Desperate Housewives," "Ally McBeal," "Sex and the City" or Paris Hilton. He said he wanted to meet the real Americans



Detlev Henschel and Katrin Frommhold enjoy their day in Belfast Monday after crossing the U.S. from California. Henschel, a travel writer, walked across the entire country. [DANIEL DUNKLE](#)

"The ones that made America great," he said.

He originally wanted to go across the country on a donkey, he said, but that would cost more money. He also said he didn't know at first if people would shoot him for bringing a donkey through America's cities, but said he has since found out that it would have been all right if he'd had the funds.

Henschel was interested in following in the footsteps of the pioneers and he spoke of how they must have suffered.

He walked and Katrin drove the camper. In places where the road was in disrepair, she would leave him to do his walking and plan to meet him later, maintaining contact via walkie-talkies.

He was surprised at the number of places in America where he did not have cell service or Internet.

Henschel was disappointed in the Grand Canyon because it has become a tourist attraction. He described it as being like Disney World, and to get away from the crowds explored some of the smaller canyons nearby.

He also spent time in the National Forest "listening to the wolves howling," he said.

As a German native, he was not used to a country where guns are prevalent, but said he is not against guns. In fact, after running a safari company in Africa, he believes in having guns to defend himself.

He said Americans turned out to be very friendly and laughingly pointed out that he has no bullet holes or arrows sticking out of his back after walking across the whole country.

One of his misadventures was almost being hit by a "twister" three miles away in Moscow, Kansas. His RV park was almost evacuated.

In New Hampshire, he noticed bear tracks and scat and became concerned.

"I had a bad experience with bears," he said.

He proceeded to tell the story of kayaking across a lake in Russia where he saw as many as seven grizzly bears. One chased him and circled the cabin where he was staying all night.

"This bloody bastard was after me," he said.

He contacted Katrin back in Germany during the ordeal via satellite phone and said, "this is it." He didn't think he was going to make it. He had to make a run for his kayak the next day.

Henschel jokes that he had yelled at the bear in an attempt to scare it off.

"He didn't understand English," Henschel said with a grin. "My Russian is bad, you know?"

He said he was scared for 45 days straight on that trip.

"It was the worst experience of my life," he said.

He avoided the bears of New Hampshire, only to be attacked by someone's dogs in Maine. He

responds to the reporter's sympathy with a laugh and says, "Poor them," about the dogs.

"I'm good at that," he said, explaining that he fought them off with his walking stick.

During his trip, he said he was struck by the poverty he saw in America. He spoke of people hunting to feed their families.

He also saw the nation's lighter side. He said mowing the lawn seems to be a sport in America based on the amount of effort and pride that surrounds the chore. He spoke of seeing perfectly mowed lawns with junked cars in the middle of them.

America is only his latest conquest. Henschel has walked through Japan and the Australian outback, where he claims he was the first in more than 100 years to reach some aborigine tribes.

He has worked other jobs in big business, but said three years ago he sold everything in Germany and began his new career, which has taken him to Siberia, Africa, Australia, Japan and other countries.

He noted that he had a Safari business in Africa.

Henschel has lived in Sweden, Hawaii, Japan, Africa and Greece. He speaks of Africa with strong affection, taken with the beauty of the continent.

He does not regret quitting his job and hitting the road. He said his old friends in the business world are all rich and divorced and unhappy and many are developing health problems.

Henschel said that is not the life for him. Instead, he describes himself as Ronin, a Samurai with no master, an outlaw.

"Life is good," he said.

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