

FP5KE
St. Pierre & Miquelon
September 2025
by F6KOP

Report by DL3GA, GDXF #81

The target for the 2025 F6KOP expedition was set to St. Pierre & Miquelon (FP). This was a sort of jubilee because the F6KOP team has organized expeditions for 25 years. Back in 1988, chief organizer Patrick, F2DX, lived there on work appointment for three years, signing FP5DX.. Today's only active resident ham radio op there is Jean-Christophe, FP5AC. His support was the foundation to mount an activity of the magnitude realized by the F6KOP team nowadays. In the months before departure, the F6KOP team spent countless hours to prepare every details of the equipment as carefully as possible. Eventually we had almost one ton of equipment in 40 bags! Thanks to all who donated their time and enthusiasm for the success of the expedition. During this time of preparations, the operator team frequently received dossiers to keep everyone up to date.

September 13, sixteen operators gathered at Charles-de-Gaulle airport in Paris to start the trip next day. This was going to be the biggest team ever to activate FP. Westjet Airlines took us to St. John's in Canada and Air Saint Pierre to our final destination. Here, Murphy left a first mark in this story because the entire oversize and overweight luggage remained in Canada. In other words: We had no antennas, and no amplifiers. But back to our trip again. Final destination? Not exactly. Our goal was Ile aux Marins, a smaller island near St. Pierre. Jean-Christophe, FP5AC, joined us at the airport and we were taken the short distance to the harbor. We boarded the shuttle ship to Ile aux Marins. We had chartered the ship for this trip because the regular schedule didn't meet our needs. There we unloaded our bags and put them on a small tractor with trailer. We took a ten minute walk to the Marie-Ange house, our final destination.

The house offers enough space to accommodate us and our shack, and it is surrounded by enough open space for numerous antennas. There is a 15 kW Diesel generator which was considered to be enough to supply our stations. However Murphy provided another surprise here. We found that the generator was configured to deliver only one phase to charge a solar battery when needed. This meant 5 kW instead of the expected 15 kW. We started the assembly of the radio stations but we went to sleep as it got dark. The late baggage was promised to arrive next day, but we had some time to explore the small island. Ile aux Marins has a fishing history and the buildings include a church, cemetery, town hall, fire fighters and more. However, the island is more like a museum today. Many info boards inform about the purpose and history of buildings. There are also some private houses but they are not permanently inhabited. The little ship shuttles between St Pierre and Ile aux Marins up to five times per day, and it finally brought our missing luggage. We started working on the antennas instantly. Philippe F8EFU had placed labels where antennas were supposed to be erected, and he supervised our work, but soon it became clear that we would never finish all of them before it got dark. Moreover, the generator situation was unsolved and so it was decided that we would not start operating this



night. We resumed antenna work next morning and added one by one to the farm. FP5AC found a spare generator on the island. Its owner was on a trip far away and agreed that we may use it. Moreover, an electrician came from St. Pierre and tried to reconfigure the big Diesel generator. With these improvements, all stations were able to hit the airwaves this afternoon of September 16.

Over 5400 QSOs were made before the UTC day ended and much more than 10000 QSOs daily were added from now on. We had a total of eight HF stations with amplifiers. There were two CW and two SSB stations running a 24h schedule, plus four more stations operating RTTY, FT8 and FT4 and occasionally in CW or SSB. The antenna farm included ground plane verticals for 160m, 80m, 60m, 40m, and 30m, two hex beams for 20...10m and VDAs for 10m, 15m, 17m and 20m. A Beverage antenna was designed to help with reception of low band signals from Europe, but in fact it was also working for North America and even in some very noisy situations on the high bands. More than one kilometer of coax cable was laid out between the antennas and the shack. The two hex beams were equipped with combiners, so several stations could share these antennas. Finally, we had some exotic equipment with us. Our well-known QO-100 station was there, but it turned out that the satellite was not reachable because it was slightly below the horizon. Even with a portable setup at the highest point of the island, we couldn't hear it. For the first time on a F6KOP expedition, a 2m long yagi was used for EME contacts when the moon path was fortunate. F4FET achieved 56 QSOs here. And finally a handheld multi-band yagi could be used to work passing low-orbit satellites. 118 QSOs resulted this way.

Life started to normalize with time. We served our radio shifts, optimized or repaired antennas, fixed food and cleaned the dishes. There is no food supply on the island, so we had a daily support delivery with supermarket goods. The island's only restaurant is usually closed at this time of the year, but the owner agreed to prepare a daily dinner for us (thanks Christophe!). We had many visitors during our stay. Press and television came to produce articles and reports, and even a live broadcast. Several hiking groups and school classes stopped by to learn about ham radio. Members of the St. Pierre gendarmerie came to meet their colleagues, our team members F2DX and F8EFU.

One key ability for a DXpedition to run more than 100k QSOs from a semi-rare location like St. Pierre & Miquelon is that two modes run simultaneously on the upper bands. We were able to do this because we had two hex beams with combiners plus VDAs. These antenna types with different polarization plus adequate distance between them allowed operation in two modes with only slight interference. Hence we passed the 100k QSO mark on the eighth day of operation. In total, we finished with over 131000 QSOs after less than ten days.

Just a few days before our departure, the ferry trip from St. Pierre to St. John's in Newfoundland was canceled. To avoid a shortened operation, we chartered an extra flight with Air Saint Pierre. This was an expensive solution, but at least our entire baggage was with us this time. It meant that we had a long stopover at St. John's, from the morning to midnight. We used this time to visit Signal Hill, the historic monument where Marconi once achieved the first transatlantic radio contacts. Chris VO1CH and Frank VO1HP showed us the site with the club station VO1AA. We were even invited to run some QSOs here. Don't miss this if you are in the area.





The FP5AC team (left to right): Xavier F5NTZ, Jean-Christophe FP5AC, Diego F4HAU, Olivier HB9GWJ, Patrick F2DX, Misho F8GGV, Jean-Michel F4DLM, Frank F4AJQ, Vincent F4BKV, Eric ON7RN, John F5VHQ, Damien F4AZF, Philippe F8EFU, Andreas DL3GA, Guillaume F4FET, Jean-Luc F1ULQ, David F8AAN.

F2DX created a video about our expedition, available at <https://youtu.be/t3DOw2gdB1Y>