

History of Dog Sledding

Here's a look at the history of dog sledding and how it has helped shape society.

Dogs have always been an important part of society, and that is perhaps truer in the arctic than anywhere else in the world. Their thick fur and padded paws made them well-designed to survive and thrive in the cold and snow. Because of this, dogs have had a huge hand in helping shape life in the far north. One of the most iconic ways people have worked with dogs to establish life in the Arctic Circle is dog sledding.

First Dog Sleds

Although dog sledding may have existed before, the oldest archeological evidence of this mode of transportation has been dated to around 1,000 A.D. As far as archeologists can tell, dog sledding was invented by the native and Inuit people in the northern parts of modern Canada, and it then rapidly spread throughout the continent. Early dog sleds didn't look exactly like dog sleds today. Instead of a large sled led by many dogs, it was usually just a single dog pulling minimal cargo - usually firewood and other supplies. As time went on, however, the power of using multiple dogs became more appealing. Larger loads could be carried over longer distances when the effort was distributed over more animals. Even so, dog-sled teams were much smaller than they are today, usually consisting of between two to six dogs per sled.

Around the World

It didn't take long for colonists to recognize the value and power of using dogs during winter, and European settlers quickly began incorporating sled dogs into their lives. The French Canadian military actually used dog teams during the Seven Year's War. They were particularly useful because they were less expensive than horses, but were equally (and often more) equipped to handle large loads and freezing weather..

Racing

There has likely always been a casual sport aspect to dog sledding, but the first formal race occurred in 1850. In 1908, the first dog-sled race took place in Nome, Alaska. This route would become famous a little over a decade later, when

Leonhard Seppala, a Norwegian native, delivered diphtheria medicine to the struggling town. This journey has become a well-known part of American history, and a statue of the lead dog, Balto, stands in New York City to commemorate this heroic act.

The Iditarod is the most famous dog sled race in the U.S. The first glimpses of the modern Iditarod were seen in 1967, when dog sledders at the time tried to create a race that would maintain interest in dog sledding in the face of modern alternatives like snowmobiles. The first few races were well-attended, and then interest waned. The creators planned a new trail through Alaska- this one longer, more intense and stretching all the way from Anchorage to Nome. The first winner took three weeks to make the entire journey in 1973.

1. What made dogs well-designed to thrive in cold and snow?
2. When does the oldest archaeological evidence of dogsledding date to?
3. Who invented dogsledding?
4. What is the most famous dogsled race in the US?

Go to <https://iditarod.com>

Click on dog care, then click on "Leaders in Dog Care"

Write 3 facts that are interesting, that you can find while navigating this section.

They must be interesting, be prepared to explain to me why they are.