

Tom's National Three Peaks Challenge

The Original Story

Many of my "close friends" had mentioned my **growing waistline and failing fitness**. What better way than to ease their fears than by walking the National Three Peaks challenge. Three mountains - one day - no problem!

So, accompanied by some really fit people, the race is on to see **whether my waistline gives way before my muscles and feet do**. 11/12 July 2009 is D Day. D standing for deprivation of sleep - as we have to complete the event without a break.



To add a little charity I asked that colleagues might consider **sponsoring** me in respect of **Life Bridging Works** - a charity that close friends have helped with in Uganda providing educational training to under-privileged school children.

Updates

5 June: Everyone now getting the jitters as less than 4 weeks to go. Waistline bigger and weight up - considered alcohol fast for all of 5 seconds. Decided instead to change the fat into muscle. As they say "I believe in Miracles"

17 June: Impressed with everyone's generous giving and interest in the event and helping those in Uganda - particularly in the current economic climate. With the recent sunny weather have been debating wearing shorts for the "stroll" - then read a past report where they said most of the year round Ben Nevis is snow capped and they needed crampons and ice axes. HELP!!!

23 June: We got the OS maps to plan out the routes over the weekend. I got the Snowdon route as it is the simplest!! **Mental Note:** remember to hold the map the right way up and also get a GPS back-up.

27 June: Trial walk in the Surrey Hills - three times up and down in the searing heat! Thought that I would chose sandals as it was so hot. Definitely a mistake - blisters on both feet. Could this be a heaven sent excuse to get out of the walk? Not a chance says Nick, Kath and Helen.

1 July: Yesterday could go down in history. In my efforts to get fit I refused alcohol twice!! Someone said to me "Tom - you're a loss adjuster - you must have a drink." Orange juice it was! In the evening some serious hill training - serious meaning I did put on my walking boots instead of sandals - so I looked the part anyway. **Only 10 days to go and counting...** before we journey to Scotland.

3 July: Two of our group, Kath and Helen, are competing in a triathlon over this weekend. All the best to them but it seems a rather severe way of training for the 3 Peaks Challenge. Nick and I decided instead to walk up our local hill last evening- 20

minutes and we were finished. Much more civilized! The heat has been searing - over 30 degrees centigrade - hope that it cools down for next weekend.

5 July: Tried to decide what clothing and equipment to take. Decided against taking the stretcher as it needs four people to carry it - and I could not multi-task laying down and carrying! Over the weekend attended family BBQ and had to have a beer in honour of my birthday. Only real exercise was diving on a wreck called Pentrych - fabulous visibility. Caught a lobster and that went on the barbie. Great taste - shame about the cholesterol. Still the walk should sort that out. **Only 5 days to go.... think that I would rather be diving.**



6 July: Just thought that I would focus a little on the Charity "**Life Bridging Works**". What I like about them is the "**hand up**" rather than "**hand out**" mentality. They say that ...providing children with education is giving them a hand up out of their current situation, enabling them to have a brighter future and a fuller life. Activities... are designed to be self sustaining. I have not been to Uganda personally, just neighbouring Kenya (similar problems but no war), but I have seen how a little help goes a long way. The smiles that those kids have, despite their poverty, is worth cherishing. To enable them to have access to education might just make the world a slightly better place.

8 July: Had another practice walk last night with Helen and a friend. Just a couple of hills but it was "bucketing". Looking at the weather forecast for Saturday - **rain, rain and more rain** on all three peaks. As they say "every cloud has a silver lining" and I now have a foretaste of the delights that await me!.

9 July: Probably my last update before the event. First can I thank you all for your kind interest and excellent sponsorship. **Not sure if I will hit the revised target but there are always some last minute friends...** . Tomorrow we leave at 6am to drive to Scotland via Bristol (where we pick up Alex our driver). **The Last Supper** will be held at a local hostelry and we might have to have one glass of wine or a malt! Then early to bed for an early rise - 5.30am to breakfast, drive to the mountain base and a 7am start. 24 hours later we hope to be at the base of Snowdon - safely, all together, without blisters, shot knees or pulled muscles having climbed all three mountains and survived the cramps while journeying between them. **Happy Days!!**

The Event

First the good news - **we made it !!!** All three mountains and even Alex our driver joining the "walkers" for the last Peak. So congratulations to us Kath, Helen, Nick, Alex and Tom - which we duly celebrated with a bottle of champagne at the base of Snowdon.

The Detail:



Ben Nevis - 7.30am start. Bright sunshine, very hot, no rain (quite unusual) and enjoyable. Good walking pace and we did the ascent and return in 5.5 hours. Just about on schedule. **Fantastic scenery.**

Scarfell Pike - 7.45pm start. Cloud at the top, developed into extreme rainfall with strong gusts of wind enough to blow you off the mountain, lost all visibility, walking with torches. **Fairly treacherous conditions.** We were the last party to make it to the top and four organised groups that we met on the way down had to turn back. One helicopter rescue. Back to base 15 minutes after midnight, drenched and tired. Total walking time a very good 4.5 hours for the conditions.



Snowdon - Arrived too late to make it within the target 24 hours "base to base" but "peak to peak" still achievable. Weather cloudy, damp but not raining at base level. Cloud beginning to rise as we climbed the Miners track to the Pyg track. **Tired legs and bodies with lack of sleep** and pace dropping but rain kept off. As we reached the peak, within "peak to peak" target, the cloud broke to give us a momentary glimpse of the wonderful view. We took it as a "well

done" blessing from Heaven. Hot coffee from the newly opened mountain cafe refreshed us and we then decided to take the longer, but less arduous route down the Llanberis Pass - five miles down. 5 hours total walking.

And so we ended this rather gruelling trek - together, safely, tired, aching but having conquered three mountains in three countries without break, revoking all self doubt, triumphing over adverse conditions and in my case **gaining a slight, possibly temporary, weight loss!!**

This has been a once in a lifetime experience - my legs are telling me that I am never doing it again!!!

TOM

