



Seven summits

No excuses

By DAVID STEWART

CRAMPONS: Adventurer Shane Pophfer at his Charmhaven home with the footwear of choice for serious mountain climbing. Picture by Aaron Brown.

The guide suggested that if the party pushed on, instead of making camp, they could reach the summit in maybe four days. Always looking for new ways to extend themselves, Pophfer and Wise reached the summit in a record three days. "Then when we came down from the mountain, we came down in the dark, and nobody does that," Pophfer said. "A lot of people didn't believe that we could do it that quickly."

But the trek was no walk in the park. Pophfer lost 6kg during the journey, and admits that he and Wise were not properly prepared. "When we were training for Kilimanjaro, I thought I'd have to be muscular. But that was of no use. You needed to be aerobically fit, and you needed to be athletic," he said.

PUSHING IT: Pophfer with a member of the local climbing party who scaled Kilimanjaro in a record three days. Treks to the top of the mountain usually take between five and eight days.



was inadequate for dealing with the extreme temperature variations at the foot and top of the mountain. It was one of several mistakes they made. But important lessons were well learned.

"This time, my preparation for Aconcagua and Elbrus has involved doing a lot more breathing training to get my lungs working harder," Pophfer said. The pair has also reviewed the clothing and equipment that they'll need.

Stay young

As an avid kayak paddler, cyclist, surfer and jogger, Pophfer is a walking advertisement for leading an active life.

The single father of three is enthusiastic about health and fitness, but his real passion – and the message that he most wants to share – is to challenge the boundaries of daily routine, and embrace a sense of adventure.

"Go exploring. Push yourself," he said. "When we're kids, we're curious and we like to explore. But as we get older – especially blokes – we get into a routine with the mortgage and the family or whatever, and we lose that sense of adventure," he said.

"Not everyone is going to be able to climb Mount Everest. But everyone has an Everest in their lives. It might be about losing weight, changing jobs, or walking away from a toxic relationship. Whatever it is, push yourself to make the change you need to make. Life is short."

Pophfer's motto for the Seven Summits adventure is 'No excuses'.



MAJESTIC: Clouds shroud the snow capped peak of Mount Kilimanjaro in this picture taken by Shane Pophfer during his climb in 2008.

Follow the Seven Summits adventure

Coasting readers can follow the pair's progress on the mountains at www.darrenwise.com.au. The pair is also raising funds for The Children's Hospital at Westmead, and Enough is Enough (the anti-violence organisation). Go to www.everydayhero.com.au/corporatemonk to donate. Pophfer said the pair's adventures were fully self-funded, and that 100 per cent of donations would go to the charities. An employee at Doyalson-Wyee RSL Club, Pophfer said the pair would take an Australian RSL flag to each of the summits, to commemorate fallen ex-service personnel.



KINDRED SPIRITS: Shane Pophfer (left) and Darren Wise enjoying the high life atop Kilimanjaro.

CENTRAL Coast adventurer has embarked on an extraordinary mission to scale the world's seven highest mountains.

Shane Pophfer, 42, of Charmhaven, will partner his mate Darren Wise, of Sydney, on the six-year quest which would culminate atop Mount Everest in 2014.

In 2008, the pair crossed Kosciusko (Australia) and Kilimanjaro (Tanzania) off their to-do list.

This month they plan to conquer Aconcagua (Argentina) and Elbrus (Russia). The climbs will be made back-to-back over just five weeks, and the pair is bracing for winds of more than 150kmh, temperatures as low as minus 30 degrees, and a climbing speed of just 100m per hour.

Vinson (Antarctica), Denali (Alaska) and Everest (Nepal) will complete their odyssey over seven continents.

Pophfer and Wise are both former paratroopers with the 3rd Royal Australian Regiment, Australia's elite airborne infantry battalion.

It's where they met, and where they honed the mental toughness and physical fitness that is underpinning their assault on the summits. Their sense of adventure, however, was instilled long before they enlisted. It comes from a childhood spent jumping off the tallest trees and bridges, and pushing their skateboards and bikes to the limit.

Kilimanjaro in a hurry

After a 21-hour flight to Africa, Pophfer and Wise met up with their guide, a porter and cook, and set off at lunchtime for an ascent which typically takes visiting climbers between five and eight days to complete.

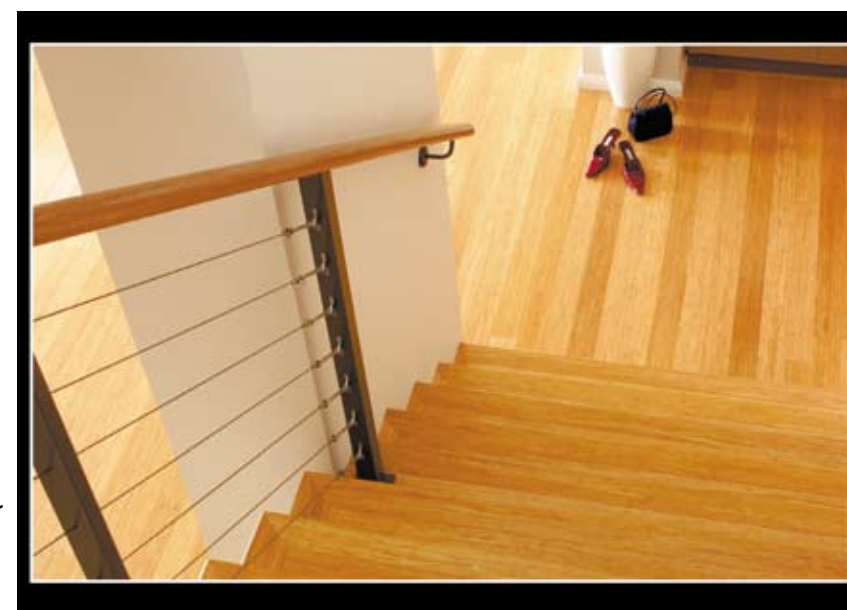
They were less than a day into the journey when the local guide soon realised that Pophfer and Wise were the real deal.

"We were carrying our own 20kg packs, and we'd trained for it, so we were fit and coping well," Pophfer said.

So when the guide asked the two strong Aussies if they were up for a challenge, they didn't need to be asked twice.



FUEL STOP: Pancakes, honey toast, bananas and biscuits were among the key items on the menu.



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