

News



Intrepid explorer has done it all

EXPLORER Mike Horn has achieved many out-of-this-world records.

In 1997, he navigated the entire length of the Amazon River using just a bodyboard.

Two years later, he circumnavigated the globe following the equator, totally alone and without any form of motorised transport.

In 2002, Mr Horn did something similar, circumnavigating the icy Arctic Circle without motorised transport and while pulling a sledge laden with 180kg of equipment and food.

He was the first man to do so.

In spite of these achievements, Mr Horn remains exceedingly humble.

"I'm not really great," the 45-year-old South African said, as he talked about his passion for adventure at the Pangaea Expeditions photo exhibition at the Mercedes-Benz Center last Friday.

Nothing has ever held him back, he told The New Paper. Not even after he suffered a venomous snake

REPORTS: CHIN XIU YI
chinxy@sph.com.sg

HE WAS elated when he won a chance to join celebrated explorer Mike Horn on his renowned Pangaea Expedition.

And he got exactly what he thought he would: An adventure, and more.

He explored glaciers and went trekking and hiking up to 5,000m above sea level, in the mountain ranges of Pakistan.

Mr Basil Tan, 21, an accounting undergraduate, who spent the whole of June last year in Pakistan, found the experience life-changing.

The young man spoke of how he had to draw on his inner strength and willpower to hike 5,000m to the Pakistani peaks of Concordia, despite an ankle injury.

He was supposed to proceed on a seven-hour journey from there, towards the expedition's base camp.

After one hour, however, he simply could not continue.

Said Mr Tan: "I had reached my limit. I've been pushing for the entire time, since the start of the trek."



EXPLORERS: (Above) Mr Basil Tan (right) with Mr Mike Horn during the Himalayas expedition last year. (Top) The 35m PANGAEA sail boat.

PICTURES COURTESY OF MIKE HORN AND MERCEDES-BENZ

founded by Mr Horn, which aims to help youngsters better appreciate nature through exploring, learning

bite during his expedition across South America.

Or after losing the tips of three fingers and part of his thumb to frostbite in a North Pole expedition.

The intrepid explorer added: "It's about what you learn about yourself, how you can enrich yourself, how you can share that knowledge with the younger people. That's why I do what I do."

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Said Mr Tan: "I had reached my limit. I've been pushing for the entire time, since the start of the trek."

He recalled how he broke down when the team had to continue without him.

Hardships aside, the expedition was one of self-discovery, Mr Tan stressed.

Launched in late 2008, Pangaea is a project spearheaded by Mr Horn to enhance respect for the environment among young people.

During the expedition, 144 young environmental campaigners from all over the world are chosen to join Mr Horn and his team for short stints, exploring the most exotic places the planet has to offer.

The best thing: They do not have to fork out a single cent as the expeditions are fully sponsored by Mercedes-Benz.

Mr Tan and six other Singaporeans had beaten hundreds of other applicants worldwide to earn themselves a place.

They are part of the Young Explorers Programme

Young S'poreans
go on a journey of

SELF-DISCOVERY



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founded by Mr Horn, which aims to help youngsters better appreciate nature through exploring, learning and acting.

While youngsters can apply to join the Pangaea Expedition three times a year, only 16 from the world over will be chosen each time for selection camps held in Switzerland.

During the 10-day camps, participants must pass a fitness test, do exercises like uphill runs and mountain biking, and take part in video-making and photography workshops.

Finale

The finale of the camps is the Pangaea Raid, a two-day race that requires participants to reach coordinates on a map either by hiking or mountain biking.

Tasks like kayaking and the flying fox also have to be completed along the way.

After the 10 days, only eight participants will get to go on the actual Pangaea Expeditions.

Miss Nicolette Meyer, 18, was another Singaporean who made the cut.

Miss Meyer, who recently graduated from the United World College of South East Asia, said it was a dream come true.

The aspiring environmental scientist gushed: "I specifically wanted to go to Mongolia as this has been one of my greatest dreams since young."

"As a horse lover, Mongolia is one of the most rewarding places to visit."

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The intrepid explorer added: "It's about what you learn about yourself, how you can enrich yourself, how you can share that knowledge with the younger people. That's why I do what I do."

Through a combination of his love for the environment and working with youngsters, the Young Explorers Programme (YEP) was born, allowing young people from all over the world go on expeditions with Mr Horn.

Indeed, one of the highlights of her trip was being able to gallop across the sprawling plains of the Gobi Desert in August last year.

"It was such an exhilarating feeling, riding as fast as possible with the spectacular scenery all around us," Miss Meyer said.

But it wasn't all fun and games.

During the expedition, both Singaporeans also conducted scientific studies.

While Miss Meyer carried out soil, water and vegetation sampling to learn about desertification, Mr Tan photographed glaciers to determine the effect of global warming.

These expeditions made a big impact on the young explorers.

Said Miss Meyer: "The Mongolia expedition brought my passion for the environment to a whole different level."

"Seeing the beauty of our planet when climbing the sand dunes or hiking in the Gobi Desert, I realise that our planet is worth preserving for future generations."

They make the cut to go on expedition with famed explorer