

Keep On Climbing

Cairns hairdresser Craig Roberts is proving to the world he is much more than a cut and colour man by taking on one of the world's most difficult summits in Antarctica later this year.

WORDS BY STEPHANIE BAUER



There is a lot more to Craig Roberts than meets the eye. He is not simply a hairdresser. In fact, he is an environmental activist who later this year is planning to take on Vinson Massif in Antarctica with close friend Jay Finucane. The Vinson Massif is no easy feat. It is located 5104 metres above sea level and it is the highest peak in Antarctica.

Although Craig and Jay have both had an interest in mountain climbing for some time, Craig admits the idea for this expedition did come out of left field. "Jay and I have been mountaineering in some of the earth's most beautiful and pristine environments," he says. "Over

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time we have unfortunately witnessed first hand the effects of global warming and climate change."

Craig believes this has led to a feeling of responsibility to ensure people are made aware of what their current unsustainable practices are doing to the fragile planet and its ecosystems. Both Craig and Jay plan to use their journey as a way to highlight to the broader community the stunning beauty of Antarctica and the vital importance of preserving this pristine environment. "As an individual you really can make a difference on climate change."

It was a chance meeting with Robert Swan, the first person to walk both the North and the South Pole, that led Craig and Jay down this path. "Robert has dedicated

his life to protecting Antarctica," Craig says. "Until I spoke to Robert I had no idea Mount Vinson even existed. When we heard about it we knew we wanted to get involved."

Several months later, Jay and Craig's plan to tackle Mount Vinson had snowballed. The price of the entire expedition is \$120,000. It is \$34,000 per person just to utilise the base camp. So far they have raised \$80,000 and their efforts are continuing. "We could not have hoped to achieve something like this without all of the local support," Craig says.

Although the task of raising such a large amount of money has been difficult, Craig believes it will be nothing in comparison to what awaits them in Antarctica. "Coming from 30 degrees Celsius in Cairns and heading into minus 45 degrees Celsius in Antarctica will be a bit of a culture shock," he laughs. Both Craig and Jay have been trying to train in colder temperatures to prepare themselves for what awaits them. "I feel a bit like the Jamaican bobsled team."

Craig estimates the 130 kilometre expedition will take between seven and 10 days. "The most difficult part will be the unknown weather conditions we will be facing. The whole thing will just blow my brains. I think it will take a while to get my head around things when we arrive. Everything you do in a climate like Antarctica is incredibly hard," Craig says. "It might take you two hours in the morning just to get dressed. Through all this I have to remember to keep a clear head as it will not be easy." **CL**



Photography by
Doug Drummond



FACT FILE

Craig has previously climbed mountains in New Zealand, although he has not tackled a challenge the size of Mount Vinson before. For more information on his quest or to learn more about the situation in Antarctica visit www.keepitcool.info.