

**Eco-travellers have a lot to teach**

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There are many things that you can do to raise awareness about climate change but few are as challenging as Dario and Sabine Schwoerer's epic eco-adventure.

The couple set off from their native Switzerland in 2002 to travel over the seven seas and scale the seven highest summits using only natural energy sources.

On the way they have had two children - Salina, 4, and Andri, 2 - and Sabine is now pregnant with a third child.

"I used my Swiss army knife to cut the umbilical cord for both my children," Dario says.

And after sailing 30,000 nautical miles, climbing 3 mountains and cycling 11,000 kilometres the couple glided their 15-metre yacht Pachamama - Incan for "Mother Earth" - into Mooloolaba on Monday.

The boat uses 11 solar panels and two wind turbines to give it an almost imperceptible energy footprint.

Dario and Sabine's mission is to promote environmental awareness and spread the message that climate change will affect everyone.

Under the patronage of the United Nations Environment Program they have visited hundreds of schools and universities around the world to share their knowledge and inspire more than 35,000 students with tales of their amazing adventure and how they achieved it without using fossil fuels.

"But we are not extreme environmentalists," Dario says.

"We are just a sportsman and sportswoman who enjoy nature.

"Our message is to enjoy nature and give something back."

So far they have climbed Europe's Mont Blanc, South America's Aconcagua and Australia's Mount Kosciusko.

An attempt on Antarctica's Mount Vinson was foiled by pack ice and a close encounter with a floating shipping container that left the Pachamama in dry dock for a year in Chile.

But the pair is undeterred and has rescheduled Mount Vinson's icy summit to the final leg of the journey.

Everest, Mount McKinley, Kilimanjaro and Mount Vinson also await and Dario expects another seven years will be needed to finish the expedition.

Another mishap threatened to slow the Schwoerer's progress when the boat's rudder was damaged while taking part in the Sydney to Hobart race. But while forced to dock for repairs at the Gold Coast, the family made good use of the downtime to head north-west and visit schools in the Barcaldine area.

"I guess home is not just Switzerland now but Chile where our two children were born," Dario says.

"And perhaps Australia too when our third child will be born soon.

"Australia is an amazing country. We were a bit afraid before we came here because of all the dangerous snakes and spiders but now we know that is not a problem.

"And Australians are very hospitable too.

"When cycling around we have had many invitations to stay with people and have never had to use our tent."

Schools and organisations interested in the free United Nations Environment Program seminar can book via [dario@toptop.org](mailto:dario@toptop.org) or visit the expedition website at [toptop.org](http://toptop.org).



Andri, Dario, Salina and Sabine atop Mount Kosciusko in 2008. Photo: Contributed

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