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Swiss sweep Mount Everest



Climbing is a family affair with the Schwörers (Courtesy)

The Swiss have always liked to act as a role model when it comes to order, cleanliness and a low carbon footprint.

However, not many would go as far as Dario and Sabine Schwörer, who are travelling to the seven continents to climb the seven highest peaks of the world by bike, foot, sailboat – and with their three small children in tow.

In the process they are hoping to draw attention to the dangers of climate change.

“When we first set out to climb the Seven Summits by natural means only, we thought we could do it in four years,” Dario told swissinfo.ch just before he left

Kathmandu for his attempt to climb and clean Mount Everest.

Little did the couple know how long it would take when they embarked on their incredible journey in 2002.

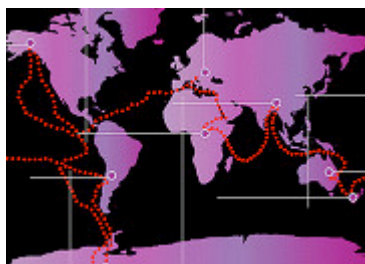
“Sometimes I am still amazed how far we have come and we certainly could not have done it without all the support from friends, family and our sponsors,” Sabine said.

The Schwörers, including their two sons, Andri (3) and Noe (eight months) and daughter Salina (5), have arrived in the Everest region in Nepal from where Dario and his friend Alexander are attempting to reach the highest point in the world.

Getting to the summit is not their ultimate goal though.

“We are here to clean the mountain and the area around it. Seven trekkers helped us pick up trash from the Everest Base Camp trail. We collected a lot of things, and we even found remains of a helicopter,” Dario said.

The two climbers and their Sherpas are planning to accumulate more rubbish at the four high camps on Mount Everest.



Seven Summits (Courtesy)



Pregnant

Sabine has been climbing, biking and walking during all her pregnancies and the farthest she has biked was in South America, where she cycled nearly 3,000km when she was eight months pregnant with Salina.

"When we first started our trip, we were not planning to have babies. But when we hit a container in the southern Pacific a few years ago, we were stuck in South America and had time to make babies," Dario remembered with a smile.

Looking after three children has changed Sabine's role a little bit and having been an active part all through the expedition, Dario's bid to climb Everest seems to be one of the biggest challenges for her.

"Dario and I have been together for eight years and waiting for someone you love is very difficult," Sabine said in Kumjung, a Sherpa village she has made her home for the duration of Dario's expedition.

"The first few days here were tough as I don't speak the language of the people and there is nobody to talk to."

Lofty heights

Before Sabine settled down in a guesthouse in Kumjung, which lies at an altitude of about 3,900m, the family trekked all the way to the lofty heights of Everest base camp – something that did not only earn them admiration with an eight-months-old boy in tow.

"I nearly turned back due to the many comments from other trekkers. I could not really enjoy the hike as a lot of people were giving me grief for taking our small children up to 5,350m."

However, being a nurse, Sabine had done a lot of research on the effects of high altitude on small children. She was in constant contact with a high altitude doctor back in Switzerland.

"The other people did not know how much research we did, but I was still very worried and extremely happy to descend again after one night," she said.

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Dario Schwörer

Sharing experience

When the family is not at sea, trekking or picking up rubbish, the Schwörers are sharing their experiences with school children all over the world.

So far, they have visited 45,000 students in 47 countries and inspiring children to protect the planet will continue to be their main mission.

"We want to focus on young people and show them how human beings can adapt to nature. Of course, the forces are not always easy to deal with and that is why our journey has taken a lot longer than initially planned."

Both Sabine and Dario agree that their children have changed their way of travelling - for the better. "Our children have made us 'normal' people and we have stopped being this amazing couple on this incredible journey.

"The locals see that I have to change nappies as well and that often creates the first bond with people," Sabine said.

Expo

After the expedition to Mount Everest, the family will travel to Shanghai where they are invited to do a presentation at the World Exhibition, and they have already mapped out several schools they will visit on the way.

They will then bike back to Kolkata, where they will jump on their boat and sail to Africa in a bid to climb Kilimanjaro.

"I guess by then the children will be old enough to climb the highest mountain of Africa, and it would be great to do it as a family," they both agreed.

Despite disseminating their essential message about climate change, the most important thing for the Schwörers is the happiness and education of their children.

Salina has received school education in several countries, and is currently visiting the Hillary School in Kumjung for a couple of hours per day.

"We are expecting to take another seven years to finish our project, but if we notice that our children are unhappy, we will immediately change our plans and settle back down in Switzerland," Dario said.

Even after having led such a diverse but also unsettled life for the past eight years, neither of the Schwörers is worried about setting up home again.

"We have so many plans for the future, which will prevent us from getting bored. And in a way we are looking forward not to be living out of a bag anymore for a while," they both said.

If their journey goes according to plan, they will have visited dozens of more countries, sailed around 70,000 nautical miles, cycled 18,000 kilometres and climbed 400,000 metres in altitude.

And all this, to raise awareness of the dangers of climate change.

Billi Bierling in Kathmandu, [swissinfo.ch](http://www.swissinfo.ch)

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OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other than cleaning Mount Everest of rubbish, Dario's team is currently trying to bring down the body of Uwe Gianni Goltz, who died on his way down from the summit of Mount Everest two years ago.

The body of Goltz, who climbed without supplementary oxygen, was found near the South Col at 8,000m and several Sherpas have brought him down to Camp 2 at 6,400m.

Gerold Biner, a pilot of Air Zermatt, is on stand-by to pick up Goltz's body at Camp 2 at 6,400m, however, the winds are currently too strong for the helicopter to land at this altitude.

THE SCHWÖRERS

Dario Schwörer, a geographer and mountain guide, and his wife Sabine, a nurse as well as trained mountain guide, began the Top to Top expedition in 2002 when they set out by foot from Geneva to climb the highest points in all of Switzerland's 26 cantons.

This was the trial of the expedition and when they saw that it was possible, they decided to do the Seven Summits by natural means only.

When they first set out on their journey, they thought it would take them about four years. They are now expecting the whole project to take about 15 years.

So far, they have succeeded in reaching the top of Europe's Mount Blanc, South America's Aconcagua, and Australia's Kosciusko.

LINKS

[Air Zermatt](#)

[TOPtoTOP Global Climate Expedition](#)

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