

News

**On green mission to sail round the world and climb the highest peaks, couple have 3 kids along the way**



REPORT: TEH JEN LEE  
jenlee@sph.com.sg



**ALL ABOARD:** (From left) Andri, Mr Schworer, Noe, Mrs Schworer and Salina on their eco-friendly yacht. (Inset) The couple at the trip's start in Geneva.

PICTURES: TEH JEN LEE TOP TO TOP

# Meet the modern-day SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON (aka Schworer)

IMAGINE starting a family while on a global expedition over seven seas to the highest mountains of the seven continents.

When Swiss couple Dario Schworer and Sabine Schworer-Amman first set off on their Top To Top journey in 2002 onboard their 15m yacht, they were not planning to have children because they thought the trip would be completed in four years.

They soon realised that the expedition, which relies solely on human and natural power, would take many more years due to bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

For example, there was a year of repairs in Chile when their boat, which has 11 solar panels and two wind turbines, collided with a shipping container in 2004.

That was when they decided to take the plunge into parenthood.

As Mr Schworer, 41, puts it: "We couldn't go anywhere, so there was plenty of time to make babies."

Today, Mr Schworer, a qualified outdoor

activity guide and climate change expert on the Alps, and his wife, who worked as a nurse and is a certified diver, are the proud parents of a girl and two boys - Salina, 4, Andri, 3, and baby Noe, 3 months.

Having children meant planning the sailing route carefully to accommodate the necessary hospital visits and ultrasound scans.

The first two children were born in a hospital in Chile as they had stayed there after the boat was repaired.

The third was almost born on board the yacht. They managed to get to a hospital in Darwin, Australia, when the labour took longer than expected, said Mrs Schworer-Amman, 33.

But all the extra planning was worth it. She said: "Having children was the best

decision we made because the children opened a lot of doors for us. People used to think we were so different from them, but really we're the same.

"We have to change nappies like everyone else."

Getting closer to people and exchanging experiences are at the heart of the expedition, which is under the patronage of the United



**HIGH RISE:** The Otemma Glacier in Switzerland. The kids won't climb mountains that are too high.

Nations Environment Programme and the Swiss government, and sponsored by companies like Victorinox and SGS. A third of the budget is financed by the Schworers themselves.

Through presentations to schools, clubs and organisations all over the world, the Schworers have been sharing about the beauty of nature as well as the environmentally compatible practices they have learnt from the communities they visited.

At each of their destinations, the couple and other expedition team members have done clean-ups with local volunteers. So far, they have collected a total of 15 tonnes of waste.

The team sailed into Singapore on 8 Nov and while berthed at Raffles Marina for the next two weeks, the members will host students from schools like Singapore Polytechnic and the Swiss School.

The expedition members have been to Mont Blanc in Europe, Aconcagua in South America and Mount Kosciuszko in Australia.

They are midway through the expedition and expect another seven years of travelling.

### Kids on harness

One of the biggest challenges they face is keeping the children safe, especially when they are sailing.

To prevent them from going overboard in rough seas, they wear a harness that's hooked

up to a safety line.

The children don't go up mountain peaks that are too high. For example, when they head to Mount Everest, which is their next destination, the young ones will stay at base camp.

Another challenge is having to say goodbye to the friends that they make in different countries. But with Internet phone services like Skype, they have been able to stay in touch.

It does help that the children can make new friends easily.

"For example, at a swimming pool, Salina can befriend the children there in three minutes flat," said her mother with a smile.

"You would be surprised how adaptable children are. Many people think they can't accomplish much after they start a family, but that's not true."

At present, Salina is being home-schooled with a US-based education programme that comes complete with stationery, books and instruction manual for parents.

This is the plan for all the children until the expedition ends.

Mr Schworer said: "There is no TV on the boat, so the children read a lot. We involve them in decision-making and they learn skills like sailing, so this expedition is a good 'school' for them."

For more information and live updates, go to [www.toptotop.org](http://www.toptotop.org)



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