



Dr Dario Schwoerer (above right), founder of TOPTOTOP Global Climate Expedition, who aims to scale the tallest mountains in the world, and undergrad Christopher Ngoi (above left and left), who joined him on a trek across the Alps. The Swiss adventurer with two of his three children (below), who travel with him. PHOTOS: JOYCE FANG, COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER NGOI

# Tops in eco solutions

A student won a global climate solution award to join a Swiss adventurer to go to the Alps

huang huifen

Undergrad Christopher Ngoi was in top form in the Swiss Alps in August this year. Scaling the 4,200m-high Briethorn mountain was among the highlights for the 20-year student during a three-week expedition with Swiss adventurer Dario Schwoerer. Ngoi was among seven winners of the inaugural TOPTOTOP Global Climate Solution Award from non-profit group TOPTOTOP, a brainchild of Dr Schwoerer. "It was such a fresh and adrenaline-pumping experience. When I reached the summit of the Briethorn mountain, the view of the clear blue sky and snow-capped mountains was simply breathtaking," said Ngoi who had never done mountain-climbing previously.

The first-year accountancy student at Nanyang Technological University also abseiled down a crevasse to observe the snow formation and trekked the paths of retreated glaciers. Ngoi sailed and cycled on an electric bike during various legs of the expedition to visit solar, wind and hydroelectric power plants, rubbed shoulders with scientists and visited Zermatt, a village where all cars run on electricity. The award, which received 400 submissions, required students to submit an essay and poster on climate-change solutions. Seven winners, one from each continent, were selected to join Dr Schwoerer and his family on the expedition sponsored by the Swiss government (Swissnex) and Swiss firms SGS and Victorinox. During the trip, they gathered the best climate-change solutions and produced a documentary and a powerpoint presentation. TOPTOTOP was founded in 2002 by Dr Schwoerer, 42, a trained climatologist, and his wife Sabine, a nurse, 34. They made it their mission to scale the highest peak in each of the seven continents in the most eco-friendly way possible.

They travel on a 15m yacht which runs on solar power and wind, and cycle in the countries they visit, educating students about climate change in schools and conducting clean-ups with volunteers. They travel with their three children - Salina, five, Andri, three, and Noe, 14 months. The expedition, which is expected to end in 2016, has already had the Schwoerers scaling five summits, including Mount Blanc in France, Mount Kosciuszko in Australia and Mount Everest in Nepal. "We need young people to think of solutions for our planet," said Dr Schwoerer who was in Singapore to share his experiences at the Clean Energy Expo Asia 2010 last week. For the next TOPTOTOP award in 2012, he plans to double the number of winners to two from each continent. But Asia itself will have six winners with two each from India, Asia and South-east Asia. "It's nice to have so many participants learning about the best climate change solutions. I will also ask the past winners to join in the second expedition," said Dr Schwoerer. [hhuang@sph.com.sg](mailto:hhuang@sph.com.sg)

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



## Singapore 'can do without cars'

It is possible for an urbanised city such as Singapore to explore eco-tourism, says Swiss adventurer Dario Schwoerer. "Just invest in good public transport systems that are well connected such that there is no need for tourists to rent a car or take a taxi," he says. "Singapore is not very big, so it is possible to become an outstanding city with no cars. When the only modes of transport are public transport and push bikes, you can imagine how quiet Singapore will be." Referring to some villages in Switzerland which have done away with cars, he says: "The atmosphere is completely different and nice." The 42-year-old was in town to share his experiences in the TOPTOTOP expedition which has seen him scale five peaks and sailed 70,000km on board his solar and wind-powered sailboat since 2002 with his wife. Along the way, they started a family of three. Daughter Salina, five, and son Andri, three, were born in Chile. Noe, 14 months old, was born in Darwin, Australia. A fourth child is due next year, with the birth planned to take place in Singapore. "We have friends here and the hospital systems are one of the best in the world. My wife will be relaxed knowing that she is in good hands," says Dr Schwoerer. He is also okay with the fact that his four-year goal to scale the highest summits in the seven continents has not been achieved. They started out in 2002. The journey is more important than accomplishing the ambitious itinerary. And that is the simple eco-friendly travel tip he gives to others too. "Stop thinking that you have to see everything. Instead, take time to feel the environment, talk to the locals and make friends rather than rush from one tourist spot to another. You may have taken many pictures, but you missed out the whole picture of the place. "Travel slowly in peace. When you do that, you ultimately save the environment because you are not taking cars or planes to rush from one city to another. It is less stressful too," he says.

(TASB1)

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