

From walking along the entire Amazon River to skiing to the South Pole, check out some of the 21st century's most amazing adventurers!

Amazing adventurers!

Have you ever dreamt of climbing Mount Everest or walking to the South Pole? If so, you're not alone. Every year, thousands of people try to climb the world's highest mountains or walk across continents. Unlike the explorers of the past who used maps and compasses, today's adventurers travel with modern technology like GPS and satellite phones. Many adventurers are nature lovers who use their travels to help raise awareness about a range of environmental issues, while others are keen to help people in need and raise money for charities. Let's take a look at some of the 21st century's greatest adventurers.

Amazon adventurer

Ed Stafford from the UK is the first person to walk the length of the Amazon River. He started by a small stream in the Andes mountains of Peru and arrived at the river's mouth in Brazil, two years and four months later, having walked 6,000 kilometres.

The Amazon rainforest is home to poisonous snakes, crocodiles and jaguars, so Ed was in constant danger. Luckily, he survived with nothing worse than a few thousand mosquito and ant bites. On his trip, Ed had to find food to eat every day. A lot of the time, the fruit, nuts and fish he ate were hard to find and he often felt weak and exhausted.

Ed's walk would have been impossible without technology. He used a radio to ask the people of the rainforest for food and permission to cross their land. Many of them came to meet him and helped guide him through the most difficult terrain. As he walked Ed wrote a blog, recording his day-to-day experiences. He used the media interest in his trip to protest about the destruction of the rainforest and raise money for environmental and children's charities in Brazil and Peru.

A mountain climber

Over 4,000 climbers, aged from thirteen to eighty, have been to the top of Everest. Though climbing high mountains in freezing conditions and violent storms is still extremely dangerous, the world's best climbers now look for new challenges.

Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner from Austria fell in love with mountain climbing as a teenager. When she left school, she worked as a nurse, but kept climbing in her free time. Having climbed Everest, she decided to climb all fourteen of the world's 8,000-metre peaks. To increase the challenge, Gerlinde climbs without using oxygen tanks. This is risky as low oxygen levels at the top of high mountains can affect brain and body functioning. Gerlinde uses her fame as a climber to support a charity for poor children and orphans in Nepal.

Hungry for adventure

Not content with one amazing trip, some of today's adventurers go from challenge to challenge. Meagan McGrath from Canada has climbed the highest mountain on each continent, ridden a bike across Canada and run a long-distance race in the Sahara Desert in 45°C heat. But perhaps her most remarkable journey was a skiing trip to the South Pole. On the first day, she fell into a glacier and had to be rescued. Many of us would have given up at that point, but Meagan decided to carry on. She reached the South Pole forty

days later, having pulled a sledge with a tent and all her food behind her through freezing conditions and ice storms.

Erik Weihenmayer from the United States is another multi-adventurer. He's ridden a bike through the deserts of Morocco, kayaked through the Grand Canyon and climbed Everest. Amazingly, Erik has been blind since the age of 13. Apart from his travels, he tries to encourage people with disabilities to live active lives and takes groups of young blind people on climbing expeditions.

Where next?

Despite new technologies, crossing continents and climbing mountains still has many risks. Preparation and fitness training are absolutely essential, but if you have a sense of adventure, there are endless possibilities and still hundreds of unclimbed peaks in the Andes and Himalayas.

Robin Newton