

ADVENTURE

Projects

At the top

WHERE: Mt Everest, Nepal
WHEN: May 2010



IT'S 5.19 a.m. on 23 May, an estimated -40°C , and the sun has just come over the Tibetan horizon as AG adventurer Peter Wells steps onto the summit of Mt Everest (below). "The conditions look very clear in the photo but it was so cold," Peter says. "I had battled to keep my toes from freezing the whole nine-hour climb from Camp 4 to the summit." Climbing with a team of four other Australians — Darren Robertson, Stephen Bock, Sandy Hoby and Brad Jackson — who, amazingly, all made it to the summit, Peter had hoped to make history by providing live coverage of the climb for the first time, but technical difficulties prevented it. He took the photo at right on his descent, just below Camp 1 at about 6000 m in altitude. An experienced mountaineer, Peter is one of many adventurers currently sponsored by the Australian Geographic Society. They test boundaries in the air, underground, over water and on land.



LEFT AND MIDDLE: COURTESY OF PETER WELLS; PARADISE: COURTESY KARL GURNICK



Crocs, rays and flooded kayaks

WHERE: Cairns to Papua New Guinea
WHEN: March–July 2010

UP UNTIL the end of 2009, Karl Gurnick, from Calliope in north-east Queensland, had never even been in a sea kayak. Now he's paddled 600 km solo across the Torres Strait to Papua New Guinea, as part of a journey from Cairns that began with a 2400 km bike ride, and finished with a 96 km slog along the Kokoda Track. The 102-day 'self-propelled' adventure, which finished in July, had a fair share of excitement: encounters with large crocs, getting overturned 5 km offshore and, worst of all, standing on a stingray. "It was my second day in Papua New Guinea, and I'd just spent seven days crossing Torres Strait," the 27-year-old says. "I was paddling and the water got pretty shallow, so I had to get out and push my boat. The barb went straight through my shoe into the side of my foot. I sat down on my boat for about 20 minutes, just working out what the hell to do, because I knew there was another village about 10 km ahead upstream, but I decided to paddle further downstream to a village I'd already passed. I couldn't walk on it for two days. It was a good welcome to Papua New Guinea, that's for sure."

Karl, who works as a plumber's labourer, is dreaming of his next adventure: a paddle from Cairns to Townsville, and then maybe something much bigger. "I just have a huge passion for the outdoors and pushing the limits and challenging myself," he says.