

Pass It On®...

To-do list: Ride Bike 8,000 Miles to Mt. Everest. Climb to the top. Bike Home.

Goran Kropp had a wild idea: Push the human body to its limits to see how far it could go. It took him to the top of Mt. Everest, without oxygen. Alone. And he did it after bicycling to Nepal from Sweden, hauling all his gear.

When an object becomes the epitome of accomplishment, it enters the English lexicon as a symbol, with usage beyond the literal. Mt. Everest is such an object, the means to express the most difficult achievement in your life. Opening your own business becomes your Everest. Surviving cancer, your Everest.

For some, the symbol is literally the object: climbing Mt. Everest. For Goran Kropp, merely climbing the mountain wasn't enough. He resolved to begin his journey with an 8,000-mile bike ride, make the climb, then bike home. And while climbers generally use oxygen to make it to the final summit, Kropp challenged himself to go old school: no oxygen.

As a small boy, Kropp's father took him up Norway's highest mountain. The thin air filled his lungs, the view amazed him, and the ascent itself became a lifelong pursuit: Keep climbing. In a span of five years, he climbed some of the most challenging peaks in the world, from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to South America, Pakistan and the French Alps. He endured frostbite, customs setbacks in Iran, injured climbing partners who had to be helped off the mountain, and rescue expeditions for stranded climbers. While training in the French Alps for the Nepalese mountain Cho Oyu, Kropp's climbing partner, Mats Dahlin, was struck by a falling rock and killed. Kropp decided to climb in honor of his friend. He drove his Range Rover from France to Nepal and climbed Cho Oyu solo, placing his friend's ice axe on the top, facing toward Everest.

In 1996, with the memory of a close friend's death and a long list of obstacles overcome, Kropp packed up a specially designed bicycle with 238 pounds of gear and food. He pedaled the 8,000 miles from Stockholm to Nepal and began his ascent.

Kropp made it all the way to the South Summit, only 100 meters from the top, but decided to turn back rather than risk a descent in the dark. While at base camp, a blizzard enveloped the peak, and eight climbers died, making it the deadliest season ever on the mountain. Kropp stayed and helped ferry medicine and supplies to base camp.

Three weeks later, Kropp attacked the mountain, his literal Everest, this time successfully summitting without oxygen. But his journey wasn't over. He packed his belongings onto his bicycle and pedaled back to Sweden.

"To do the same thing that someone else has done before, you already know from the start that it's possible to do," Kropp writes. "But when people tell me that it's impossible, I feel the strength to do it even more."

Climb Your Everest...PassItOn.com

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