

Trekking for Tots



Peter Bocquet, along with Cisco colleague and friend Grainger Wallis, completed a seven-day, 155-mile (250 km) walk across the Gobi Desert to benefit a children's health foundation in Singapore.

It started one night with a few beers and an idea, followed by a dare. And the next morning, after neither one blinked, Cisco Singapore colleagues and friends Peter Bocquet and Grainger Wallis sealed the deal to do a seven-day, 155-mile (250 km) marathon march across China's Gobi Desert.

Although they signed on to discover the boundaries of their endurance, they were spurred on by the financial and emotional support of individuals, including many Cisco employees.

Bocquet and Wallis enlisted sponsors and donated the money they raised from completing the 2007 event to a children's health foundation in Singapore.

For a Higher Purpose

Over the past four years, Bocquet, business development manager in the Telepresence Systems Business Unit (TSBU) responsible for the Asia Pacific Theater, has become a globe-trekking marathoner and fundraiser for children's health issues. A competitor who has more grit than grace, he contends that, "It's painful to watch me run. I'm slow and I don't enjoy it."

Bocquet got started in 2002 when he tackled a half-marathon around the Great Wall of China and raised about \$8,000 to help buy a motorized wheelchair for a friend's son who had muscular dystrophy.

His next big event was the Gobi marathon that he completed with Wallis. It is part of the 4 Deserts Race organized by the adventure company RacingThePlanet. In addition to Gobi, 4 Deserts participants plunge across Antarctica, the Sahara in Egypt, and the Atacama Desert in Chile.

Perhaps sensing that there are far more blisters to experience in life, Bocquet took on his second desert race—the Atacama Crossing—in March 2008. Wallis, who is operations manager, AsiaPac Channels, stayed home to tackle a much more comfortable adventure: his wedding.

Bocquet says he signed on for Atacama to relive the best parts of the Gobi event: the physical challenge, getting to know people from around the world, and experiencing a new culture. He also wanted to gather donations for a particular cause that touches his heart—helping children who have cancer. He chose to race for the Kids with Cancer Foundation based in Australia, his home country.

Once again, Cisco colleagues opened their hearts and wallets to him.

"The emotional and financial support of the Cisco family really helps you in those dark moments, when your alarm clock goes off at half-past four and you really don't want to get out of bed and go train," says Bocquet. "You realize others are on the journey with you."

Passion, Pride, and Perseverance

Atacama was much harder than Gobi, Bocquet says. Altitudes never dipped below 10,000 feet (3,050 m). One day, after trekking for 29 hours straight and covering nearly 47 miles (76 km), Bocquet reached the last checkpoint at 1 a.m. The race volunteer took one look at him and told him to sleep for a couple of hours.

"I must have looked really bad, and that's when I thought I'd probably found the boundary of what I'm made of," he says. He carried on and completed the race, raising more than \$6,000 in donations.

His manager, Shaik Kaleem, who is director of business development for TSBU, says Bocquet shows passion and pride in whatever he does inside and outside of work. "And he's not shy—he's Australian," Kaleem adds.

Bocquet inspired Air Vongxayasy, controller in CA Finance in Singapore, to launch the Singapore Run Club to encourage employees to stay fit and have fun by participating in charity races. Vongxayasy also plans to participate in his first marathon series: the Singapore to Summit event, with marathons stretching from sea level to the base camp of Mount Everest.

As for Bocquet, well, what's one more desert crossing when you've done two? Come November, he'll be one of only 25 participants in the 4 Deserts Antarctica event, dubbed "The Last Desert."

And Wallis? "I think he'll probably do Atacama next year," Bocquet says. "I've seen that look in his eye."