

3 peaks, 3 countries, 24 hours. Is it possible?...

The drive up to Scotland on Saturday gave us a good feeling. Blue skies could be seen and the sun was even out at times. If things remained this way it would make the perfect conditions for the attempt. Not too hot but rain free. Ideal.

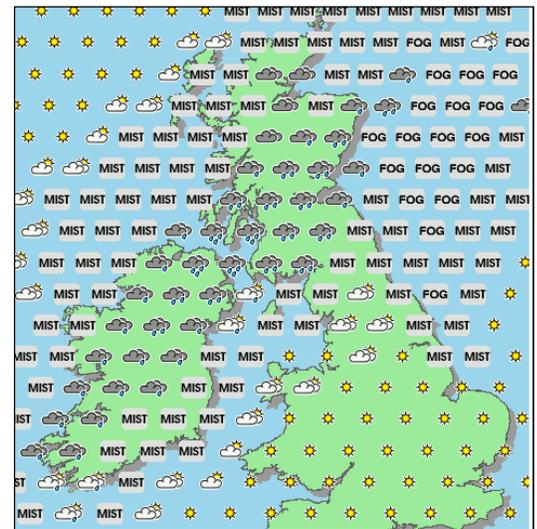
That good feeling took a blow when the weather forecast was updated. An angled band of dark clouds appeared on the map of the just west of Scotland. The wind direction? East. Not so ideal. But still, the weather forecast isn't always correct, right? We remained hopeful.

Sunday 22nd,

Highland, Scotland.

15.00: We arrive at the base of Ben Nevis in plenty of time for the 5pm departure. The aim is to be back down by 10pm, so we can drive to

With the wind blowing east, this band of rain followed our route precisely from Scotland right down to Wales



Scafell during the night, and start the Scafell ascent as dawn breaks at around 4am. Then if all goes smoothly, we'll be up and down Snowdon by 5pm. 24hours. Sorted. That's the theory anyway...



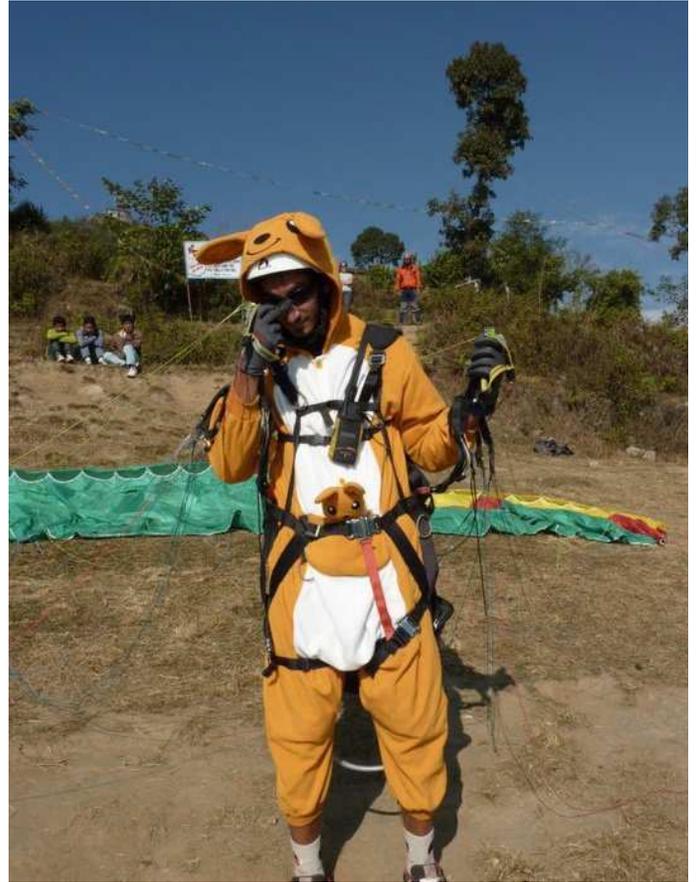
Snacks are brought out in their bucket load by the support team. Gary, Lizzy and Vicky have done a top job in getting more than enough energy food that will be so essential in the next few hours. There are also lots of delicious home baked snacks to nibble on so we can have as much energy as possible ready for the ascent.

16.00: It starts raining. We all keep our fingers crossed that the Met Office has made a mistake, though it's looking increasingly like they've got their predictions spot on!

16.10: It starts pouring. The rain lashing down on the gazebo where everyone is huddled amplifies the sound of the drops making it hard to hear the final safety briefing.

16.20: The more it rains the more nervous we become, and those nerves were already playing mind games with us as we started to realise the task was soon to start! The cloud that engulfs the Ben is lowering. Visibility will be poor.

16.30: The big reveal! There is one last surprise for the group! Guy had many adventures with his Kigu suit and wore it during many extreme occasions! He wore it diving, paragliding, being chased by Komodo Dragons, and even just casually in busy city centre's. It almost became symbolic of Guy's post university travels. Everyone looked forward to seeing his next photo of the Kigu suit in some unusual place!



Not long into the ascent up the Ben. Visibility is still good at this point – it didn't last long!

The Kigu suit was to make yet another appearance in an unusual place. At the top of 3 of the highest mountains in the UK! Because the 3 Peaks isn't challenge enough...!

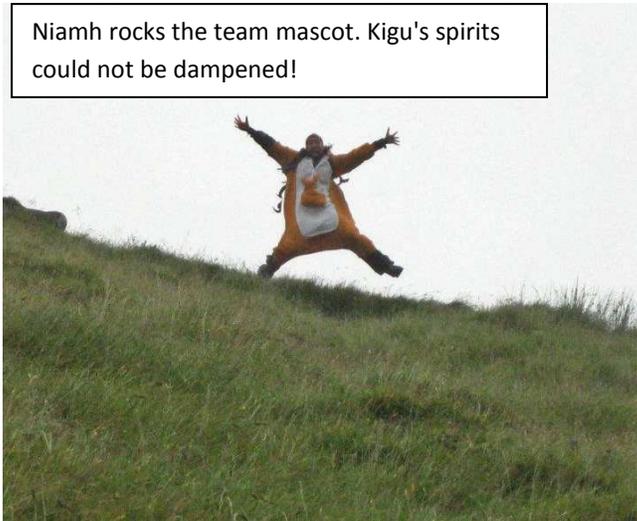
17.00: And we're off! It's good to get going, and good to turn that nervous anticipation into miles under the feet. ...or maybe we'd just eaten too much sugar.

20.00: We reach the top! Somehow! We are the highest people on land in the UK! Visibility is all but zero - it was difficult to see more than a few meters ahead in

places. 70mph gusts blowing head on had made progress slow on the ascent, and make things very cold when you're not moving. Sadly it's too windy for a photo of with the Guy's Trust banner but impressively everyone makes it up to the top. But there's not time to hang around, back down we go.



Niamh rocks the team mascot. Kigu's spirits could not be dampened!



22.15: The first few people make it back to the delicious wholesome stew courtesy of Mrs Twist that had been defrosting in the car. The support crew does a top job in warming us up again after the horrendous weather chilling us to our foundations. All this despite the wind being so bad at times that the flame from the stove had blown out despite wind breaks surrounding it. Tea, coffee, hot chocolate, rehydration drinks all on the menu. And of course - more home baked goodies.



Half way up the Ben and conditions were set to deteriorate



Mazza B and the rest of the Support crew tirelessly working to get kettles boiled, and stews bubbling in the strong winds (which frequently blew the stoves out).

22.30: The last of the walkers return. Unfortunately a repeated injury has come back to haunt one of us. Fortunately the niggle came only a few kms from the base and he was able to hobble back safely. In the past 5 hours the river Nevis has risen from its usual low volume base flow to a brown torrent threatening to burst its banks.

23.10: No time to hang around - we're off again. Gazebo and stoves packed away, dripping bodies dried, warm dry clothes snuggled into. Considering the howling wind and incessant rain it's not a bad turn around time! Quick work people!



Monday 23rd,

Cumbria, England.

04.50: We are woken from our light, uncomfortable sleeps by the news that we are nearly at Wasdale Head at the foot of Scafell Pike. While this may sound like good news, for the walkers it is not. It is the signal that the comfort of our warm clothes has come to an end. It's time to get suited and booted ready for our next ascent. With the rain whipping down in torrents this is not a pleasant thought. The mental game is a hard one to win, but as it gets lighter and we round the top of Wast Water we realise we have all but no choice. It's what we signed up for!...though we had hoped that we could count on mid July to provide us with slightly better weather! Biting the bullet, the wet thermal trousers go on, and wet boots are tied.

The ridiculously sloped path inevitably claimed one of our number. Ankle - gone!



05.20: Off we go! The rain hasn't stopped. It seems the Met Office were spot on with their predictions. This doesn't bode well for Snowdon either. But this is the mountain we have to concentrate on now. The support crew have braved the rain to quickly get the kettle boiling for some porridge and tea, filling the stomachs ready for another assault on the tallest mountain in a country. Is 5am too early for a Marsbar & Kendal Mint Cake?



Don't be fooled, it's not a little beck, it's the path!

08.00: We reach the blustery summit of the mountain. Once again, visibility is zero. There must be a nice view out there somewhere, it's not going to offer us its delights today! Scafell Pike is the smallest of the mountains, but by no means easiest! If there is a plus side to all the rain delaying us, it's that we didn't have to start in the dark. But the paths going up Scafell weren't the well worn and even paths of the other peaks. Much of it was loose scree which was hard going on the knees and ankles. Unfortunately not all the walkers have made it this far. Various joint problems mean it would be very unwise and unsafe for them to continue on the uneven path. A small group of them had to face the disappointment of returning to the minibus early, hopefully not beating themselves up too much over their decision. In the circumstances no matter how determined they were the sacrifice of not completing the Pike was the best decision not only for themselves, but for the group.



Enjoying the weather at the top of Scarfell Pike

09.15: One of the more experienced members of the group slipped off one of the wet uneven rocks and crunched his ankle. Not knowing whether it was a sprain, or a break was irrelevant. Whatever the diagnosis, the pain was evident. Fortunately with some 'mild' post watershed language he was determined and resolved enough to grit his teeth, borrow some walking poles, and hobble back down hill. Not an easy task.



Happy faces!



...not so happy faces!

09.45: The small beck that we crossed on the ascent is no longer a small beck. Fortunately there were enough heavier people to assist the lighter walkers across. The tallest on the mountain was 6ft 4. It came up to just below his knee. The smallest on the mountain was 5ft 4. ...things like this aren't so easy when you're that size!



Snapping the team at the river crossing on the way up. Just a trickle on the ascent, which became a torrent on the way down!

10.15: We arrive back at the minibus. The rain is abating slightly. Hopefully this bodes well for Snowdon. More hot drinks and the excitement of the ration pack lucky dip! It's breakfast time but feels like the evening. Chili Con Carne at 10am? Win!

Everyone returns safe and sound, though not in the best condition. There are some doubts as to whether people will make it up Snowdon.



11.00: The closure of a bridge creates quite a detour - any hopes of getting back on track for the 24 hour attempt are completely destroyed.

Snowdonia, Wales.

16.00: The weather is looking surprisingly fine in Wales. There is hope! Unfortunately we get a phone call from Vicky and Tony Joseph, Guys parents. They are at Pen-y-Pass as the foot of Snowdon. Despite the good weather in the low lying areas, up in the peaks things are a completely different story! They have spoken to many retreating hikers returning from the mountain, some who have made it to the summit, and some who haven't. They have spoken to the Park Warden. And they had spoken between themselves. The feeling was unanimous; they were very against us starting such a serious ascent at a time of 5pm earliest. In such poor conditions we may just have made it up and down in time, but should anything go wrong we would be stuck high up an exposed mountain drenched from the rain and with 80mph gusts (according to the Warden). For safety reasons alone, on paper the decision was easy. When you're so determined to accomplish something though, it's not so easy. Particularly for the walkers who had been organising the event so professionally and in so much detail for the past many months.

16.15: The groups' decision still wasn't unanimous. Some wanted to continue - understandably so. Some wanted to call it a day, and start again *very* early the next morning - understandably so. The Josephs had made clear what they hoped our decision would be, and by reminding us of the other reason we were taking on this challenge made our decision clear. The 3 peaks weren't just about climbing the 3 highest peaks in 3 countries of the UK. It was about getting together and spending time with each other, a group of people united by the loss of a great friend, even if they didn't know each other. Had the walkers continued their non-stop attempt, there would have been no time to socialise that evening. The BBQ meat would have been eaten cold late late into the evening, by exhausted hikers who would be in no state to socialise.

Some blue sky at the barn at the foot of Snowdon



The challenge had turned from 3 peaks in 24hrs to tackling each mountain individually, trying to maintain as fast a pace as safe, to turning into a case doing whatever it took to keep people safe in the environment with fatigue and painful joints setting in, even if that did mean not everyone completed all three peaks. The weather was so bad that the day before we reached the summit of Scafell Pike, the Mountain Rescue were called out to an incident on the mountainside. The incident involved a 3 Peaks climber who set off 24 hours before we did and who was struggling in similar conditions. Considering those conditions, everyone did a great job in making the sensible decisions to keep us safe. This was made all the more impressive with such a large group of people, personal sacrifices had to be made to keep everyone safe at all times. Remember, less than three there never should be!



Playing round with camera at night

An emotional speech was given by Guys father Tony, and left us in no doubt that not making the attempt that night was the right decision. Tony called the event a 'bitter sweet' experience which for them was (along with their new dog Nigel), therapeutic.

Those words rang true for all of us too. Various people all brought together for the same cause had provided us with (especially in hindsight when viewed with rose tinted spectacles) a great experience with some brilliant memories. A bitter sweet experience, and for us all to have a meet up with mutual friends to share memories was indeed therapeutic.

This is not just a BBQ, this is an Award winning succulent array of finest locally sourced Welsh meats.

Tues 24th

Snowdonia, Wales

03.50: A night time assault is executed on Snowdon. The short drive to the base of the mountain is undertaken and we don our head torches.

On Monday evening the Josephs and 2 of their friends joined us in the Barn at the foot of Snowdon for a wonderful BBQ. Despite the low cloud still engulfing Snowdon, the rain had stopped. We were allowed respite from the relentless down pour, and allowed some peace to remember the good times we had shared with Guy in a group that can understand each others loss.

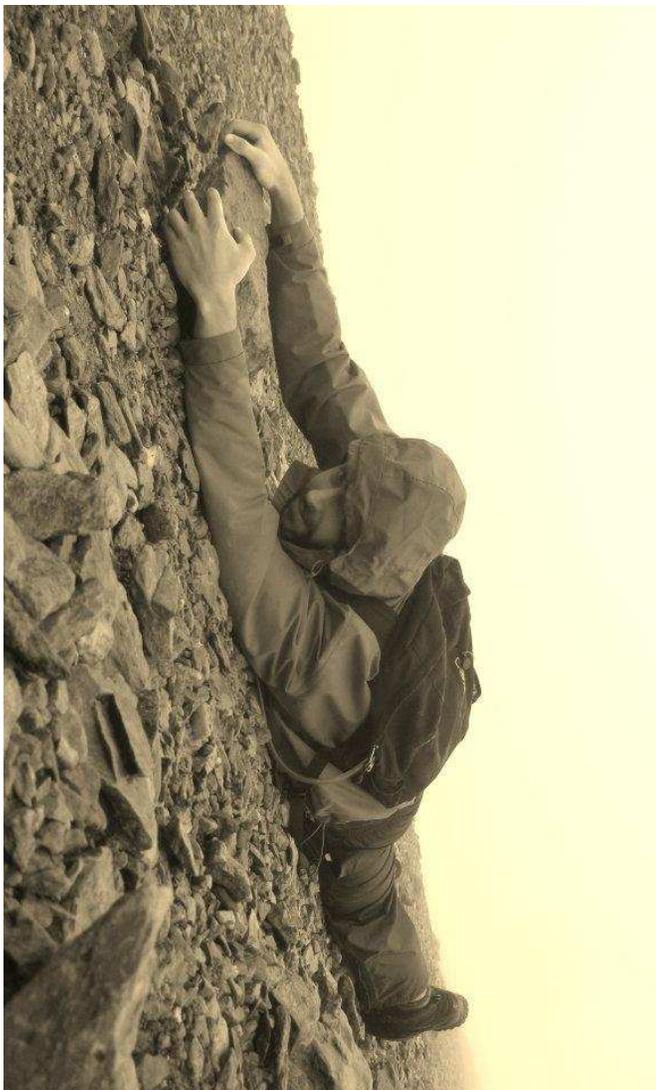




04.05: Dawn starts to break. It's windy, but there is no rain!



Grabbing only a couple of hours much needed sleep before setting off again in the darkness



The paths are much nicer on Snowdon than Scafell. But Will opts for the difficult route...

07.00: We make it to the summit. It's windy, but there is some visibility at last! We can finally see the view from our point of elevation! Despite our previous ascents of 2 large mountains in the past 38 hours this is the first time we have been offered this luxury! Unfortunately we've forgotten the Guys Trust banner!



A view at last! It's surprising how much of a motivational booster something like this can be! We could actually appreciate where we were and where we'd come from! As it turns out, Snowdon is pretty high up!

Ed taking on the role of mascot up last of the slopes. Not easy when you're already exhausted with it being so water logged and catching in the blustery winds.

09.30: Relief! It's all over! We make it back down to the barn and celebrate with a morning beer! Proud and exhausted, the 3 Peaks for Pepe challenge is complete!

It has been way more of a challenge than a pleasant day 3 peaks in 24 hours ever could be! The mental games of motivating yourself shivering in the back of a minibus in wet shoes and soggy thermals was just as difficult as the physical beating our bodies received in the harsh conditions dealt.

This is what we had to put up with while everyone else in the UK was enjoying the Sunshine! Go team!



The majority of support and walkers – though some absences were noted due to being in A&E waiting for X-Rays!

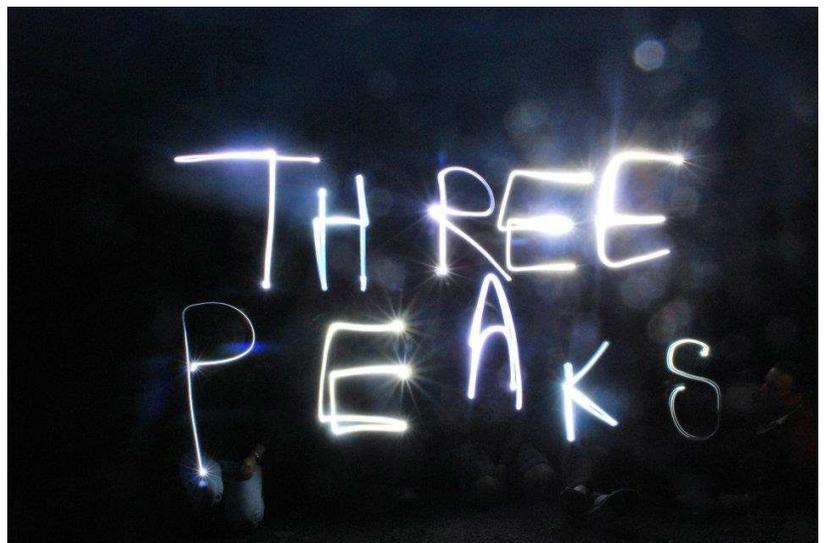


So...3 Peaks in 3 countries in 3 hours. Is it possible?

Yes, it most definitely is. Other groups in the past have been successful. But this was not the weekend for it. With all the planning and support you can give, the weather in a British summer is something that just can't be relied upon.

Were we defeated? On the surface, perhaps. Though one may argue that defeated is the wrong word. The ultimate prize may have evaded us and we didn't make it in 24 hours. But in reality this may not have been your typical 3 peaks attempt, but the weather governed that this was not your typical 3 peaks challenge! The 3 peaks have been conquered, and they have been conquered safely considering the environment but with no less pain (probably even more!) and endurance involved!

Then if you look deeper than just the challenge and look into the reason we were all there, so much more has been gained. Guy cared for many people, and many people cared for Guy. This was the first time some of those people had met, and for other old friends it was their first meeting since the funeral and memorial service. A chance to spend some proper time with each other and be reminded how great life really is and how important it is to embrace all aspects of it. Even the aspects that leave you mentally drained with painful knees, swollen ankles and blistered feet....



Even though the 3 Peaks weren't completed in the 24 hours we were aiming for, we hope that you understand some of the pain we went through and experiences we had!

Your donations are hugely appreciated, not just by the 3 Peaks team, but by everyone involved in Guys Trust.

The majority of people attempting the 3 Peaks had connections through Guys years at Newcastle University. Some were course mates, some were flat mates, some were club/society mates, some were just people who met Guy out and about and soon became mates.

"What a great weekend!! Although the challenge did not play out how we imagined a fantastic group of people all united in the memory of a great friend. Every single group member had their own part to play in the organisation of the event and we couldn't have done it without all the help and support we received. As organisers we tried our hardest to plan for every eventuality but the one thing we had no control over was the weather. It was mentioned that it would be Guy's sense of humour to be up there somewhere cranking up the weather controls! What a fitting tribute to an amazing friend." – 3 Peaks for Pepe Organisers (Gary, Lizzy, Vicky)

"After possibly the worst weather to climb mountains in in the history of climbing mountains we are done. Not in 24hrs due to weather, some unfortunate injuries and a stream becoming a barely passable river, but the 3 peaks are well and truly climbed. it was all worth it to raise money for a fantastic cause and to keep a friends memory alive." - Hannah Millward-Hopkins

"We did it! 3 peaks completed, not in 24 hours, but it in 70mph winds, torrential rain, no visibility, little sleep and white water crossings with great friends - as a tribute to a true adventurer." - Deborah Greenaway

Message from Guys Parents:

Somehow this photo doesn't seem quite appropriate! But is the last one we have of the three of us together, taken in June 2011, when we spent four days on a live-aboard dive boat in Indonesia with Guy.

I only learned to dive because of Guy, because I wanted to be able to understand and to share a part of his life that I wouldn't otherwise have been able to do. It seems that many people have done things they wouldn't have done because of Guy - and I guess climbing the Three Peaks in the most appalling weather may be one of them!

I'm not going to use this space to tell you what an amazing guy Guy was. I'm biased of course. But the fact that so many of his friends are doing so many extraordinary things to remember him and to raise money for Guy's Trust , is in itself testament to his personality and the effect he seemed to have on people. A 'huge light' may have gone out, but its reflection shines on in all of you, his wonderful and crazy friends who carried a kangaroo suit to the top of a mountain in torrential rain to remember him.

Tony and I just want to say the biggest thank you to you all for your energy, enthusiasm, commitment and support. We want you all to know how much what you have just done means to us and to Lauren and Alex, Guy's sisters. Losing Guy has been so hard but connecting with all of you has made it just that little bit easier.

Same time, same place, next year.....? We'll be there!

Vicky Joseph

