



Andrew Taylor, Jules Howliston and Andrew Knight braved snow, wind and sharp rocks.



The Three Peaks

Fancy climbing the three highest mountains in the UK in 24 hours? Three vegan adventurers did. **Words by Andrew Knight**



From 1:02pm on the 2nd May to 12:27pm on the 3rd May 2009, our all-vegan team completed the famous UK Three Peaks Challenge. We successfully climbed the highest mountains in Wales (Mt Snowdon), England (Scafell Pike) and Scotland (Ben Nevis) in less than 24 hours, passing some stunning lakes, a beautiful sunset and some of Scotland's most beautiful wilderness scenery. We walked, ran and limped some 25 miles (40 km), climbed around 10,000 feet (3,050 m) and drove nearly 500 miles between the three countries, averaging less than two hours sleep!

We started our challenge at the base of Mt Snowdon. This gateway to Wales' highest peak resembled rush hour in the London underground, and at 1:02 pm on the 2nd of May, full of enthusiasm, we joined what appeared to be most of Wales in a race for the summit. After that we set off to Scafell Pike, which we began to climb at 8:20 pm. The last sane climbers appeared to be leaving with the light, casting concerned looks in our direction as they hurried by. We got to the bitterly cold summit cairn but after the obligatory photo and check of the thermometer, which confirmed our literally frozen status, we began our return as rapidly as we could and reached our vehicle just after midnight, departing five minutes later for Scotland. We set off up Ben Nevis in light drizzle, at 5:38 am. Once again we ascended into cloud, but we were shocked to discover deepening snow, accompanied by an intermittent but rising blizzard, as we climbed higher. A fully roped party of climbers descending past us, festooned with snow and ice, should have given us pause for thought, but we'd come too far to turn back. When we reached the summit we were shocked to see

that the ruined stone huts from the ancient summit metrological observation station were more than half buried under the snow, even though it was May. We finished our challenge at 12:27 pm on the 3rd of May, in 23 hours 25 minutes.

We minimised our environmental impacts by using mountain paths, and purchasing a resource conservation portfolio at www.carbonneutral.co.uk (no sponsorship funds were used).

All of us are members of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association, which means that as well as being naturally skilled at doing extremely silly things, we are committed vegans, and therefore enjoy certain important advantages over meat-eating mountaineers, such as higher antioxidant status, which speeds exercise recovery. The vegan guarana tablets also helped, as did the super-comfy vegan boots, energising vegan cheese and flapjacks, supplied by kindly sponsors. Non-vegan food or equipment was banned.

Although the free vegan food was admittedly a major motivation, the main reason for climbing these mountains was to raise money for Animals Count, a UK political party for people and animals. Our team raised around £1,300, which helped Animals Count contest the EU elections in June 2009. This was the first time a UK political party for animals has contested these elections. By doing so, Animals Count aimed to increase the consideration given to animal issues by all political parties and the final election results were very encouraging. ■

The Extreme Vegan Sporting Association showcases vegan fitness through novel means of risking life and limb! Visit: www.vegan3peaks.info and www.extremevegansports.org