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Everest veteran aims for volcano next

David Lim will go solo in his second attempt to scale the world's highest volcano

By Liza Lin

COLD winds and sweltering temperatures are some of the extreme conditions that await mountaineer David Lim, 40, as he prepares to embark on his next expedition.



DRIVEN BY PASSION: Mr Lim, who is paralysed below his right knee, will attempt to scale Ojos Del Salado aided by a custom-made shoe insert. He has been using a hypoxicator to prepare for lower oxygen content during his climb. -- WONG KWAI CHOW

Next month, Mr Lim, who is paralysed below his right knee, will attempt to become the first Asian to scale Ojos Del Salado, the world's highest volcano which lies on the border between Argentina and Chile.

Although a veteran of 50 climbs and expeditions, Mr Lim said because this expedition is a solo effort, it 'may prove to be my biggest challenge yet'.

He said: 'When climbing alone, you have to manage your mind, body and emotional state on your own and adopt a very resourceful mental state.'

However, he is undaunted.

'The bigger the risk, the bigger the effort, but the bigger the satisfaction,' he added.

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An avid mountaineer, Mr Lim has led two Mount Everest expeditions, one in 1998 and another in 2001. The second was after he was stricken with Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a rare nerve disorder which left him paralysed initially from the neck down.

Despite doctors' predictions that he would never climb again, the gutsy adventurer bounced back to head the 2001 Everest mission and has gone on 14 other missions since 1998.

Mr Lim said his family had discouraged him from continuing with the climb alone, after his climbing partner injured her knee and was unable to join him.

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However, his passion for climbing drove him to continue.

He said: 'I'm just too set on this. I've invested too much time into it. There's always a time for something, you have to seize the opportunity.'

His fascination with the active volcano began in 1997 when he saw a photo of it.

He had tried to climb it from the Chilean side in 2001 but bad weather kept him from reaching the summit.

This time, he will ascend from the trickier Argentinian border. To get there, he will have to trek two days across the arid Atacama desert, the driest desert in the world.

He said he did stabilisation exercises, climbed staircases and ran at least four times a week to prepare for the 21-day trip.

A custom-made shoe insert for his right leg will help him in his climb.

He has also used a hypoxicator for an hour a day for the past two weeks, to ensure his body adapts well to the reduced oxygen level at high altitudes.

While he is optimistic about reaching the top, he said: 'I don't define success by reaching the summit. To me, the journey's the most important part.'

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