

Adventure!



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Adventurers Kevin Vallely and Frank Wolf
are taking a run at Indonesia's volcanoes

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**ADVENTURE
RACING
special!**



Photo illustration by Dave Rigler — The Province



Gerry Kahnmann — The Province
Frank Wolf (left) and Kevin Vallely, train in North Vancouver for their Indonesian adventure that will take them up 13 volcanoes.

From the forest to the fire

A pair of adventure racers abandon B.C.'s cool mountain trails for Java's volcanoes

By Jason Proctor
Staff Reporter

Heat, parasites, political uprisings and molten lava — an extreme outback trek through the middle of Java offers the modern adventurer any number of possible deaths.

Traffic is the one that most concerns Frank Wolf and Kevin Vallely. Forget machete-wielding guerrillas and brain-burrowing worms — nothing puts a quick end to a mountain-biker quite as efficiently as a third-world bus on a narrow lane.

"The road is one of the most dangerous parts of the trip," says Wolf. "Bikers are just flotsam to be pegged off by buses on the way. It's a good, chaotic, anarchist island, where anything can happen."

Which is precisely what the two hope for when they begin a month-long adventure on Java on Saturday. In an expedition they're calling Chasing the Dragon, Wolf, 31, and Vallely, 36, plan to bike among 13 of the Indonesian island's active volcanoes, pausing at each to run — yes, run — to the summit.

From the time they land in Jakarta,

they'll bike a total of 1,000 kilometres. Each volcano is at least 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) high, meaning Vallely and Wolf will have climbed more than 40 kilometres before they retire to Thailand for a much needed three-week vacation with their girlfriends at the end of the trek.

"It's going to be a travel adventure as much as it will be a feat," says Wolf. "You're doing something no one else has done. It's like the old discoverers but every patch of the earth has already been discovered. So we're doing things at a different level."

Wolf and Vallely are part of a pack of Lower Mainland adventurers gaining reputations for themselves through endurance-testing self-propelled challenges set in sometimes exotic, always rugged terrain.

The dream is to make a living. The reality is a bank account permanently set in the red.

A freelance architect, Vallely quit a full-time job several years ago to pursue a life of adventure. In addition to local extreme races, he participated in the Iditarod Impossible last year, running, biking and skiing across Alaska.



— AP
Mount Merapi in central Java spews lava and toxic gases in an eruption in 1998. Six thousand residents evacuated the area around the mountain, which is on Vallely and Wolf's itinerary.

Wolf, a clerk at Mountain Equipment Co-op with a degree in history, already has paddled a canoe across Canada and sea-kayaked the coasts of Thailand and Malaysia. He was in Southeast Asia when he got the idea for this latest trek.

The friends met during the annual Knee-Knacker endurance run across the North Shore mountains from Horseshoe Bay to Deep Cove. Each found the other was the only runner who could keep pace. From that point, a solid —

and rather masochistic — friendship developed.

The pair, who live and train in North Vancouver's Lynn Valley, have managed to find sponsors for their gear but getting funds is a different story. Both write and photograph, and Wolf has published stories from his adventures in a number of magazines.

Their heroes are men like Antarctic pioneers Ernest Shackleton and Roald Amundsen; men who braved the elements and risked or lost their lives con-

quering parts of the world unknown to humankind.

But dreaming the impossible dream isn't easy in gear-heavy, over-explored 2001. So athletes like Wolf and Vallely add twists: Running the West Coast Trail in 10 hours, sprinting up volcanoes, or cycling 2,000 kilometres across Alaska in the footsteps of turn-of-the-century goldminer Ed Wesson — as they plan to this winter.

"It's the intensity that brings out something special," says Vallely. Wolf agrees: "It can definitely be cultural but we also enjoy nature. You have to figure out something neat to do in these wild places."

The friends aren't strictly into pain — they plan to spend as much time as possible on their latest expedition meeting some of Java's natives. They'll eat spicy local specialties such as nasi goreng and gado-gado, and, although they have a plan, they are willing to bend to the elements. This is, after all, supposed to be an adventure.

"It can lead you anywhere," says Wolf. "You can plan a great adventure and you may get something. Or something completely different may happen. Either way, it's a great experience."

Follow the expedition online at <http://mypage.direct.ca/g/graywolf/>

Enter to win!



Maybe joggling to the tops of volcanoes isn't your thing. That's OK. But if you could do one expedition anywhere in the world, which nobody else has tried, what would it be?

Send your ideas to us via e-mail at adventure@pacificpress.southam.ca and we'll publish a selection of them in a future edition.

Whoever comes up with the coolest expedition wins a copy of *Extreme Adventure* (above), a book of spectacular photos by Montreal's Martin Paquette and Carlo Zaglia of France, that chronicles the sport of adventure racing around the world. Deadline for entries is Friday, Sept. 14 at noon.