

This speech is about an organisation that raises awareness of climate change. It discusses how and why it all started, how they travel and the people involved plus what they hope to achieve.

Back in the early 90s, Dario the mountaineer, noticed that his office, the mountains, were melting away and decided to study climate change on all seven continents.

Dario met his wife Sabine in a climbing course and asked her to join the expedition. For their honeymoon they walked from Switzerland to Spain which is 2600km. That is about as far as Melbourne to Rockhampton. This took them 5 months.

The Top to Top expedition started in 2002 in Switzerland and there - they climbed up onto the highest peak in each Canton. A Canton is like the states here in Australia but Switzerland has 26. It took them 4 months and all this on foot and skies! Once completed, they cycled to Croatia, which is a country on the Mediterranean, where their boat Pachamama was waiting for them. An important part of the expedition is visiting schools and getting the children involved -after all - they are the future keepers of the environment. During these presentations scientific facts and climate solutions are explained in an easy to understand manner. The main message that Dario and Sabine deliver is to keep the environment clean, respect it and ACT NOW! Top to Top also encourages enjoying nature through sport but also giving something back to nature. With that - they mean that every little change helps!

It has taken them 7 years to come to Australia! The reason it took them that long is because they travel by either muscle or wind power only and therefore are travelling in complete harmony with nature. So far they have travelled to the Caribbean, Chile, Patagonia which is the southernmost tip of South America, the Galapagos and Easter

Islands, Pacific Islands and Australia. They have seen firsthand the impact that Global Warming has on some of the low lying islands. People have lost their homes and had to move to other islands which now become crowded.

On their way to Antarctica their boat got hit by a floating container and damaged their rudder. It made it very unstable and it was a miracle they made it back to Chile! The damage was that big it took them one year to repair Pachamama. While the boat was being fixed they also made a lot of improvements to it. They installed solar panels and wind turbines. This helps them to produce their own electricity while sailing which helps them conserve petrol. Also while being in Chile they became first time parents to their daughter and one year later their son was born. Both the children learned to walk on the boat and love being on deck.

Together with my mum and sister we joined them in climbing Mt Kosciusko back in December. We met them in Jindabyne and cycled up the mountain. It was very hard but also rewarding to stand on the highest peak of Australia. We did it in stages staying overnight in tents and in a Mountain hut. Dario was very impressed to find such a clean mountain top!

Their next climb is Mt Everest and they are already planning for it. Dario, Sabine and the children will sail to India and use their bikes to get to the base camp of Everest. The base camp is at 6000m altitude which is three times as high as Mt Kosciusko! Then they still have to overcome another 2000m to get to the peak! I hope they make it safely back!

Dario and Sabine have collected many good examples from normal people like your mum and dad that help reduce green house gases which are one of the reasons for Global warming. One such example

is storing your fridge-food in the pantry in winter and use the fridge as a shelf. Of course this is only possible where the winters are very cold. The fridge is turned off for half the year and therefore conserves energy.

Dario and Sabine think it will take them another 7 years to complete the expedition. They still have to travel to Antarctica, Alaska and Africa. As they travel and more people hear and start believing that our planet is changing the more successful the expedition will be. Their main aim is to move as many people as possible towards solidarity for the people affected by climate change. Their expedition can be followed online on www.toptotop.org. My life has already been impacted by meeting them. I now enjoy, rather than complain about my daily walk or cycle to and from school because I know I do my bit to preserve our wonderful planet! Together just imagine what we can do!



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