

# Ordinary people – extraordinary adventures

## the adventurer

This edition's intrepid adventurer's set himself a monster mission in South East Asia



Indonesian explorer: Dan Quinn

**“My challenge is a bit like Indonesia’s answer to climbing all the Munros,” says 29-year-old Dan Quinn.**

**“Apart from some of these peaks are so remote they don’t even have names and require two-week jungle treks in incredibly remote areas with only vague trails, if any at all.”**

Dan’s been living in Jakarta for the past couple of years teaching English, but it’s what he does in his spare time that’s caught our eye. Indonesia has 222 peaks with 1,000m topographic prominence, called Ribus, and Dan’s attempting to climb 100 of them.

“It’s proving quite a challenge!” he says. “A hundred seemed like a figure that might just be achievable. Fifty would be quite straightforward as there are plenty near airports or

large cities. But there’s very little information available for approximately half of the Ribus and others require rock-climbing skills or jungle treks. I’ve completed 35 but I’ve attempted about 50 altogether.

“The most dangerous was probably getting lost in a thunderstorm on Gunung Sawal in West Java,” he continues. “People rarely climb the mountain as it’s dense tropical forest. I was alone and there are leopards living there. I followed a river downstream and eventually made it back to the nearest village just after dark. My hands were cut to pieces! I’ve also had a few nasty experiences involving sulphur gases in active volcano craters.”

But tough usually means rewarding and that’s certainly true here. “Some of the sunsets and sunrises I’ve witnessed on the highest peaks

in Java have been spectacular. And Tambora on Sumbawa Island’s an amazing place. In 1815, the volcano erupted causing some of the worst devastation in modern history, much worse than Krakatau (mis-spelt ‘Krakatoa’, also in Indonesia). Now at Mount Tambora there’s a vast crater that’s over six kilometres in diameter. It’s great to camp on the edge of it and think about what happened in that spot less than 200 years ago.”

Dan, who’s originally from Lancaster, is no stranger to bagging peaks – before he left the UK he’d climbed 606 of the Marilyn’s (hills or mountains with a prominence of over 150m). And in Indonesia he’s not only climbing mountains, he’s documenting them too. He and his colleague Andy have set up GunungBagging.com, a website that lists all of

Indonesia's peaks, both volcanic and non-volcanic, in order of topographic prominence. It also offers GPS tracks, photographs and comments from hikers who've been there already.

"We were surprised that nobody had done either an objective list of Indonesian peaks or comprehensive hiking website for Indonesia," Dan says. "There were a few websites in Indonesian but they generally tended to focus on the obvious mountains and volcanoes. We want to help people find out about less well-known peaks too."

So why should everyone come Ribu-bagging? "The hiking opportunities across the Indonesian archipelago are vast and varied, depending on people's interests and budgets. You could climb five volcanoes in Java in a week or spend a month trekking through remote jungles in Kalimantan. Navigating can be very difficult though as there are rarely any signs, so a guide's essential. Don't be surprised to see your guide climbing in bare feet with nothing other than a packet of clove cigarettes for stamina!

"Hiking's very popular with Indonesia students and on Independence Day you'll probably meet several hundred locals with acoustic guitars and instant noodles at the top of any major peak," Dan continues. "And I'm serious when I say that Jakarta's a much safer place than London and the people of Indonesia are a lot more welcoming."

So if he's on 35 Ribus after two years, when does he think he'll manage 100? And what then?

"I'd like complete the 100 by 2015 so I can try to lead a more normal existence. But I have a feeling it's going to take longer than that as it gets harder and harder to find accessible new peaks. Or that I'll increase the number to 150 or something!" ■

See Dan and Andy's website at [www.gunungbagging.com](http://www.gunungbagging.com).

## Mission statement

**The mission:** To climb 100 'Ribus' – peaks with a prominence of over 1,000m in Indonesia

**The adventurer:** English teacher Dan Quinn, 29, from Lancaster

**Number completed so far:** 35

**Expected finish date:** 2015!

**Dan's health 'n' safety rule:** Check the status of the volcano you're about to climb before you set off

**Website:** [www.gunungbagging.com](http://www.gunungbagging.com)



Java's highest: misty Mount Semeru, 3,676m