

# Love knows no limits

Marlborough's Sophie Stevens and Pete Oswald have climbed a few mountains, but their summiting of Mt Tapuae-O-Uenuku, after cycling from Blenheim, will be their most memorable, writes **Brenda Webb**.



After the gruelling hike to the summit of Mt Tapuae-O-Uenuku, Pete Oswald dropped on one knee – to propose to long-time girlfriend Sophie Stevens.

“It would have been a very awkward walk down if she’d said no,” says the professional skier and media producer.

Sophie and Pete’s decision to bike 66km there and back from their Blenheim home was to emulate Sir Edmund Hillary’s 1944 feat. It almost didn’t happen when Pete’s front fork broke as they turned into Awatere Valley Rd, but undeterred, they returned home to repair it and set off again.

Sophie and Pete spend much of their lives in remote locations, preferably in the mountains carving out a niche lifestyle based around their joint love of skiing. The thrill-seekers have had plenty of adventures in their eight years together, including biking round Sri Lanka, ski-touring in Iceland and Norway, and planting trees in Madagascar – the latter for their blossoming business Little Difference ([www.littledifference.org](http://www.littledifference.org)).

Pete, a former competitive free-skier, did the first ski descent off the south face of Queenstown’s 2245m Mt Aurum, has climbed and skied off 3033m Mt Aspiring and climbed Italy’s 4061m

Above: The elated couple on the summit of Mt Tapuae-O-Uenuku. Left: Pete grew up on the family farm in the Awatere.

#### OPPOSITE PAGE:

1. On the road - the adventure couple on their bikes
2. Sophie on the tough climb up
3. Sophie makes her way down carefully in the dark
4. Pete Oswald and Sophie Stevens with Mt Tapuae-O-Uenuku in the background
5. Relaxing back at their Fairhall home after the epic climb



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**PETE OSWALD**

“It was pretty steep,” says Sophie. “You go from 600m to 2885m so there is a lot of vertical in one day – it was pretty hard.”

The pair summited at 1.45pm, whereupon Pete fumbled in his pocket for his grandmother’s diamond-and-sapphire ring, then popped the question. The walk down was euphoric until it got dark and fatigue kicked in. “I was so tired I couldn’t talk,” says Pete.

Once back home they re-read Sir Ed’s autobiography and comforted themselves that the similar expedition ‘nearly killed’ Ed, who didn’t make it to the top on that occasion. “I don’t think I ever spent a harder weekend,” he wrote in *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win*.

The couple’s adventure lifestyle is based around filming missions worldwide, mostly for sponsors such as Icebreaker and Torpedo 7. Pete has been hooked on skiing since he started at Rainbow as a child.

He and Sophie now fund their lifestyle through filming their activities and running Little Difference, producing and selling cards, calendars, notebooks and posters drawn by Sophie. For each product sold they plant a tree in Madagascar.

Their life philosophy is to be part of the solution, not the problem, and to leave everything better than they found it.

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