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Outdoor life: Wes Moule

For every kilometre he treks dropping in food to other walkers, Wes Moule donates \$1 to cancer care. As a professional trekker who walked 1220km last summer, those dollars add up fast.

WORDS ANGELA CASE PHOTOS ADAM HOLBROOK

Wes Moule has found a unique way to turn his passion for the Tasmanian wilderness into a career. The professional food dropper is responsible for carrying supplies into remote locations, handing them off to expedition groups, and then trekking back into civilisation.

Wes combines his love of Tasmania’s wilderness with another passion: raising money for cancer care. Five years ago, Wes was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. In September 2010, the cancer went into remission. When he began trekking again in October, Wes wanted to express his gratitude to the Holman

Clinic in Launceston, where he received his treatment. He pledged to donate one dollar to the clinic for every kilometre walked during the summer season. Wes’s mission attracted the attention of companies such as Macpac, Tas Ethical and World Expeditions, who agreed to match his donations. A few private and anonymous donors have also stepped up to add to Wes’s \$1220 contribution.

Wes said he’s particularly thankful to Tasmanian Expeditions for welcoming him back to work. “They had faith in me, instead of finding a replacement while I went through chemo,” he says.

Wes, 43, has worked for the company

as a subcontractor for six years, walking an average of 2000 to 3000km each summer. That’s a lot of solitary trekking, but he has never felt alone in his life.

“There’s just so much going on around you,” he says. “In fact, I feel more comfortable in that world, so to speak, than I do in this one out here.”

Wes admits walking up to 25km a day with 44kg of product on his back is not everyone’s idea of a good time, but working solo has its perks. Wes does about half of his trekking at night using head torches, allowing him to avoid changing daytime weather conditions and see another side of Tasmania’s wilderness.

“You’re out there with all the nocturnal animals and the full moon,” he says. “That’s a wonderful thing, to go over the Cradle Plateau with your snowshoes on and a full moon with white snow.”

Wes’s job has its share of inconveniences as well. His biggest natural challenge is crossing swollen rivers after massive rainstorms.

“In a lot of cases you just have to wait until the river subsides, but I can’t really do that,” he explains. “I have to keep pushing on to meet the group at a designated time.” That’s when Wes turns to alternative solutions, such as walking upriver and rigging up a rope system to transport himself and his gear across the river.

Getting lost is one thing Wes doesn’t worry too much about. After six summers, he is pretty familiar with the regions tracks.

“I’ve gone into the Arm River track well over a hundred journeys now, so I kind of know every rock and blade of grass,” he says.

Wes has walked more than 12000km for his job, and he doesn’t plan to stop anytime soon. In fact, he’ll be hitting the tracks for cancer treatment again next summer.

“I love my job so much. I wish I would’ve started it when I was 30, not 38. So yeah, I’ll go as long as my body can take it,” he says.

