

14th February 2012. Stratford College, Rathgar, Dublin 6

Around Ireland on Stilts

Jake Regan, 5th Year

Hi, my name is Jake Regan, and I'm here to talk to you about my journey- one man's struggle against will power, the elements and some less than forgiving terrain- the circumnavigation of Ireland, on stilts.

Now firstly, the main difficulty in accomplishing this feat was my complete lack of competency in the area of stilt-walking. Naturally, before I took on the task I enrolled in a rigorous training course, given by the most highly esteemed stilt-walker in the country- Mr. Jonathan Buschemy. He is a true master, and after two weeks of intensive, non-stop preparation under his guidance, I was walking like a pro.

Next, I had to plan a route to take the whole way around the country, preferably steering clear of main roads and high cliff-drops. This was easy enough thanks to the help of the wonderment of modern technology simply known as "Google Earth". The Internet also allowed me to book accommodation for each night.

It wasn't long before I set off on my riveting quest. The next morning I arose at the crack of dawn to a breakfast of red bull and bananas, and I was on my way.

The first thing I noticed, while gracefully stumbling across the Tallaght bypass, was the disconcerting looks I got from idle passers by. I consider it a travesty that people should be so incredulous at the sight of a teenager step over large crevices and casually stroll alongside a main road, sporting a pair of stilts.

The second thing I had not considered was the painstaking slowness of my progression. It is very difficult to cover large distances with any degree of efficiency while using such an awkward method of transport as stilts. When I had travelled a grand total of eight miles on the first day, not even reaching my B&B, booked an optimistic 30 miles away, I decided to set up camp for the night in my makeshift emergency tent. It was with a grim sense of satisfaction and premature achievement that I slept that night, outside Centra in Rathmines. And I knew that in the morning, things would begin to look up and I would be another step closer to completing my somewhat unorthodox journey.

When I awoke the next morning, to my dismay, my legs were red raw from irritation and my thigh muscles burned with an ungodly pain. Furthermore, somebody had stolen my stilts. Discontent, to say the least, I caught the 15 bus home and went to bed.

There are many valuable lessons to be learned from my truncated adventure. Looking back now, I do wish I had persevered, how sweet would my victory be, had I felt the brisk wind sweep my face as I poddled along the Cliffs of Moher, or how I would have dominated the Giant's Causeway...

Now my life is filled with bitterness and regret. Yesterday I saw a young child practicing stilt walking on the street... I pushed him over. He went right down, like a punctured blimp. If there is but one piece of advice to take away from my outlandish adventure, let it be this: No matter how ridiculous or seemingly impossible your goals may be, never hesitate to make your best attempt, and see it through to the end, as I wish I had when I was young and full of hope and aspirations. Do not, under any circumstances, allow yourself to become like me.

Thank you.