NEWS LESSON

What Keeps a Man Walking Home for 28 Years?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What is the longest journey you would willingly make on foot?
2. Would you enjoy travelling without a fixed return date?
3. What would you miss most on a very long journey?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**undertaking**	☐	A	a big, serious task that someone decides to do
2	**negotiated**	☐	B	used up all of someone's time or energy
3	**mechanised**	☐	C	connected with politics between countries
4	**geopolitical**	☐	D	a person who travels on foot
5	**hospitality**	☐	E	refusing to change your mind or give up
6	**pedestrian**	☐	F	found a way through something difficult
7	**consumed**	☐	G	kind and generous treatment of guests or visitors
8	**stubborn**	☐	H	moved or powered by a machine

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

After almost three decades on foot, Karl Bushby is finally close to home. But what does a man do when the journey that defined his life comes to an end?

1 When Karl Bushby emerged from the English Channel at Dover on 5 October, he had already walked, and occasionally swum, a route that had consumed almost three decades of his life. He was back on British soil, but not quite home. Hull, where his extraordinary undertaking began as an idea, still lay roughly 400 kilometres away. It was an almost absurdly small distance after everything that had preceded it.

2 The Goliath Expedition began on 1 November 1998 in Punta Arenas, southern Chile. Bushby, a former British paratrooper, intended to travel through the Americas, cross into Siberia and return to England across Eurasia. His rules were uncompromising: no mechanised transport to advance along the route and no return home until he had completed it under his own power. He envisaged a 12-year challenge. In practice, geographical hazards proved only one part of the ordeal.

3 The route carried him through Patagonia, the Andes and the Darién Gap, the dangerous stretch of jungle between Colombia and Panama. In 2006, Bushby and fellow adventurer Dimitri Kieffer negotiated the shifting ice of the Bering Strait to reach Russia. Instead of celebrating a successful crossing, they ran afoul of immigration authorities and were detained. The incident foreshadowed years in which consular complications, restrictive borders and a shortage of funds would set progress back more effectively than bad weather ever could. Walking, it turned out, was the straightforward part; persuading officials to let him carry on walking was not.

4 The pandemic and subsequent geopolitical tensions compounded those difficulties. Having made his way across parts of Asia, Bushby confronted the formidable barrier of the Caspian Sea. In 2024 he crossed it by swimming, assisted by a support team, before continuing through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Even the final approach to Britain demanded improvisation. Unable to secure permission for a pedestrian passage through the Channel Tunnel, he ended up swimming the Channel instead.

5 There is a temptation to treat the expedition as a triumph of stubborn determination and leave it at that. Yet its human costs resist such a tidy conclusion. Bushby has been absent for much of his son's life and has given up relationships, stability and countless ordinary family occasions. Along the way, though, strangers in isolated places repeatedly gave him shelter, food and help, often with little expectation of anything in return. Much of that hospitality came from people with very little to spare.

6 The public celebration of extraordinary endurance can gloss over a more difficult question: what happens when the pursuit of a goal becomes a person's identity? Bushby has spent nearly all his adult life moving towards a destination that was always both literal and symbolic. Completing the final miles may require less physical stamina than the previous thousands, but the transition from expedition to everyday life offers no marked trail. For a man who has spent 28 years trying to get home, staying there could prove the most unfamiliar adventure.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer implies that officials were harder for Bushby to deal with than the terrain. T F NG
2. Bushby swam the Caspian Sea before the pandemic began. T F NG
3. Bushby's son has criticised his father's decision to keep walking. T F NG
4. The writer suggests the end of the walk may be harder personally than physically. T F NG
5. The writer presents the expedition as a straightforward success with no real costs. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

compounded **detained** **envisaged** **formidable** **ordeal** **predicament** **relinquished** **stamina**

1. The delays were _____ when the shipping line cancelled its only crossing that month.
2. The journalists were put through an exhausting _____ at the border that lasted nine hours.
3. The activists were _____ for hours at the airport because their papers were incomplete.
4. When she started the company, she _____ a small team of five, not hundreds of employees.
5. The team faced the _____ task of rebuilding the bridge before winter.
6. Running a marathon in desert heat demands extraordinary _____ .

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The first border incident _____ years of legal and bureaucratic difficulty. (SHADOW)
2. Even a well-planned expedition may demand _____ when permits are refused. (IMPROVISE)
3. Visa _____ often cost travellers more time than bad weather does. (COMPLICATE)
4. Ultra-runners are admired for their physical _____ rather than their speed. (ENDURE)
5. For many hikers, reaching the summit is more _____ than practical. (SYMBOL)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At this level the verb often carries the main meaning and the small word changes it. Compare fall through with fall apart.

backed	brushed	fell	played	pressed	ruled	wound

1. Officials _____ aside the explorers' objections without reading them.
2. The ministry _____ out any chance of a special permit.
3. The organisers _____ down the dangers so that sponsors would not withdraw.
4. Their plan to cross the border _____ through when the permit was refused.
5. Despite the storm, the crew _____ on and reached the village by dark.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. When does sticking to a plan become harder to admire?
2. Would you rather finish a huge challenge or enjoy every stage of it?
3. What could make arriving home feel strange after years away?

9 Role-play: a very long trip

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the traveller

You want to leave your job and walk across a whole country. You will be away for a year. Explain why it matters to you and answer your friend's worries.

Student B · the friend

You are worried about your friend's plan. Ask about money, safety and family. Try to agree on a plan, or a shorter trip.

Useful phrases

I've always wanted to do something like this.
What if you run out of money?
I'd miss my family, but I can't give up now.
Have you thought about the risks?
We could split the trip into two parts.
That's a fair point, I hadn't thought of that.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a plan, and who gave way?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 F · 3 H · 4 C · 5 G · 6 D · 7 B · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 compounded · 2 ordeal · 3 detained · 4 envisaged · 5 formidable · 6 stamina

6 Word forms

1 foreshadowed · 2 improvisation · 3 complications · 4 endurance · 5 symbolic

7 Language focus

1 brushed · 2 ruled · 3 played · 4 fell · 5 pressed

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