Ken Hutt to make Mount Everest paraglide attempt to raise money for polio awareness

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Ken Hutt, 61, says he took to mountaineering and gliding to fill a void during his retirement.*(ABC Illawarra: Tim Fernandez)*
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A retiree from New South Wales will attempt to become the oldest person to paraglide from near the summit of Mount Everest.

Key points:

- Ken Hutt will use oxygen during the climb and will be supported by an expedition team of 10 others
- The former police rescue officer is using the trip to raise funds for Rotary to help eradicate polio
- Only one other person is known to have successfully completed the glide from the mountain in Nepal

Ken Hutt plans to scale the world's highest mountain in March before launching himself from its icy peak.

The 61-year-old said he made the decision after successfully conquering a glide from Cho Oyu in Tibet six years ago.

"After flying from an 8,200-metre mountain, what else do you do? You've got to go higher, so Everest is the one," Mr Hutt said.

"The intention is to glide from as near to the summit as conditions will allow and fly back down to a town called Gorak Shep, which is the nearest village to Everest base camp.

"I guarantee this is going to be the last mountain climb, because I'm 61, back in training again, and finding it harder and harder to get up those hills."

Ken Hutt says he wants to go higher after paragliding from Cho Oyu in Tibet six years ago.*(Supplied: Ken Hutt)*

Not 'an adrenaline rush seeker'

Mr Hutt will use oxygen during the climb and will be supported by an expedition team of 10 others.

Only one other person, a local Sherpa, is known to have successfully completed a glide from near the summit of Everest.

"Most people aren't successful on Everest, so I'm probably a little bit optimistic," Mr Hutt said.

"But there's no point climbing a mountain unless you're optimistic and unless you're going to give it a good shot."

The former police rescue officer, who lives at Berry on the NSW south coast, said he took to mountaineering and gliding to fill a void during his retirement.

"Some people will look at this and think you're just a crazy guy, an adrenaline rush seeker, and that's just not the case at all."

Ken Hutt paraglides regularly at Stanwell Tops in NSW's Illawarra region.*(ABC Illawarra: Ainslie Drewitt Smith)*

Attempt could be deadly

Paraglider trainer Mark Mitsos said there were considerable risks involved with gliding from high altitude and if the weather conditions were not suitable, the attempt could be deadly.

"In Australia, we've got lots of visual cues: you've got the terrain you've got the clouds you've got the ocean to tell you what the wind's doing, you've got the hill that you're flying near, you've got the people that you're flying with," Mr Mitsos said.

"In the mountains, it's white, it's high altitude, sometimes you can't see the ground, there could be cloud cover, it's cheese and chalk.

"On Everest, you're so high up, and the air is really thin, whereas here, we've got thick maritime air and everything happens very slowly and predictably."

'End polio now'

Mr Hutt's trip will also raise money for Rotary's campaign to eradicate polio around the world.

The highly infectious viral disease can cause paralysis and largely affects children under the age of five in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Mr Hutt paraglides regularly at Stanwell Tops in NSW Illawarra region using his signature red parachute emblazoned with "End Polio Now".

"Ken's passion for polio is amazing. To be able to combine the three loves of his life is sensational," fellow paraglider and Rotarian Anthony Sandenberg said.

"It's one thing to go to Everest base camp and Everest base camp is a walk in the park compared with what he's doing.

"This is something I couldn't and wouldn't want to do. It's huge."

Mr Hutt is awaiting approval from the Nepalese Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, to continue with the dangerous expedition.