

TONY MANGAN

had a dream.
Not a casual,
'I wish I
could...'/one

day I might...' sort of dream, but one so all-consuming he describes it as an 'insatiable monster' that ate away at him for over 20 years. That dream was to run around the world. And on October 25, 2010, having been made redundant from his construction job, Tony, then 53, seized his moment and set off from his hometown of Dublin to do just that.

His starting point was the finish line of the city's marathon. 'Running the marathon was my warm-up,' he jokes. 'I didn't count the mileage towards my world-run distance, I did it because I wanted to start and finish at exactly the same point – the marathon finish line.' So, just as thousands of other runners were pressing 'stop' on their watches, Tony was pressing 'start', embarking on a journey that was to span four years, 50,000km, 41 countries and five continents.

His 'World Run' complies with guidelines set by the World Runners' Association (WRA) and has since been verified as the longest ever achieved (well exceeding the minimum required distance of 26,000km). Tony has also been recognised by the WRA as the oldest person to run around the world.

So what drove him to attempt such a feat? 'I love travelling and making connections with people and I've found slow methods of travel to be the best possible way,' he explains. 'It's a wondrous position to be in when a country gently unfolds before you and its people look at you with a 'question mark' on their faces.'

Tony's route took in some of the world's most dangerous and least visited places, as well as some of its toughest terrain – from the heights of the Andes to the Australian outback and the desolate Patagonian desert. In Mexico, a special task force accompanied him for 2,000km, while in Myanmar he was given just 28 days to cover 1,425km before he had to leave the country, travelling with a police escort and sleeping in police stations. But on the whole his experience has strengthened his belief in the basic goodness of human nature. 'The people of the world are wonderful,' he says. 'I was overwhelmed by the kindnesses I received.'

