

## > Thinking big

Tony wasn't always a runner. In fact, he preferred two wheels until he was in his 30s. And it was a solo cycling trip around the world in 1978 that left him with a love of self-powered travel. 'I gradually drifted out of cycling and into marathon running and then, when I moved to Colorado for a few years, ultra running,' he says. 'I realised the longer the event, the more competitive I became.'

Even before he set off on his world run, Tony had amassed several impressive running achievements. As well as winning many big races, he broke the distance records for 24 and 48 hours on a treadmill in 2003. He still holds the 48-hour record, having regained it in 2008 with 405km, and in 2007 he set both the new 48-hour indoor and 48-hour track records of 426km and 401km, respectively.

Such feats of endurance helped prepare him not just physically but also mentally for the challenge ahead. 'I relied a lot on the coping strategies I mastered during my competitive days as an ultra runner on my world run,' Tony says. 'I seem to have been blessed with good mental strength.'

However, the sheer logistics of organising and executing the trip presented a huge challenge. Although the idea had been incubating for many

years, Tony only had from July – when he received his redundancy cheque – to October to put everything in place. 'I got in contact with a lot of people who had walked or cycled on transcontinental or world trips, and got tips from travel books and forums,' he says.

He often ran with just the essentials, carrying a small backpack that weighed around 2kg. 'I always kept my logbook on me, and a summer sleeping bag, but no tent,' he says. 'I'd have another kilo's worth of stuff in my pockets.' But many places necessitated running with his jogging stroller, which he called 'Nirvana'. 'In the winter, in the US and Canada,

## I DRIFTED INTO ULTRA RUNNING'

### RUNNING THE NUMBERS

50

Pairs of shoes he got through

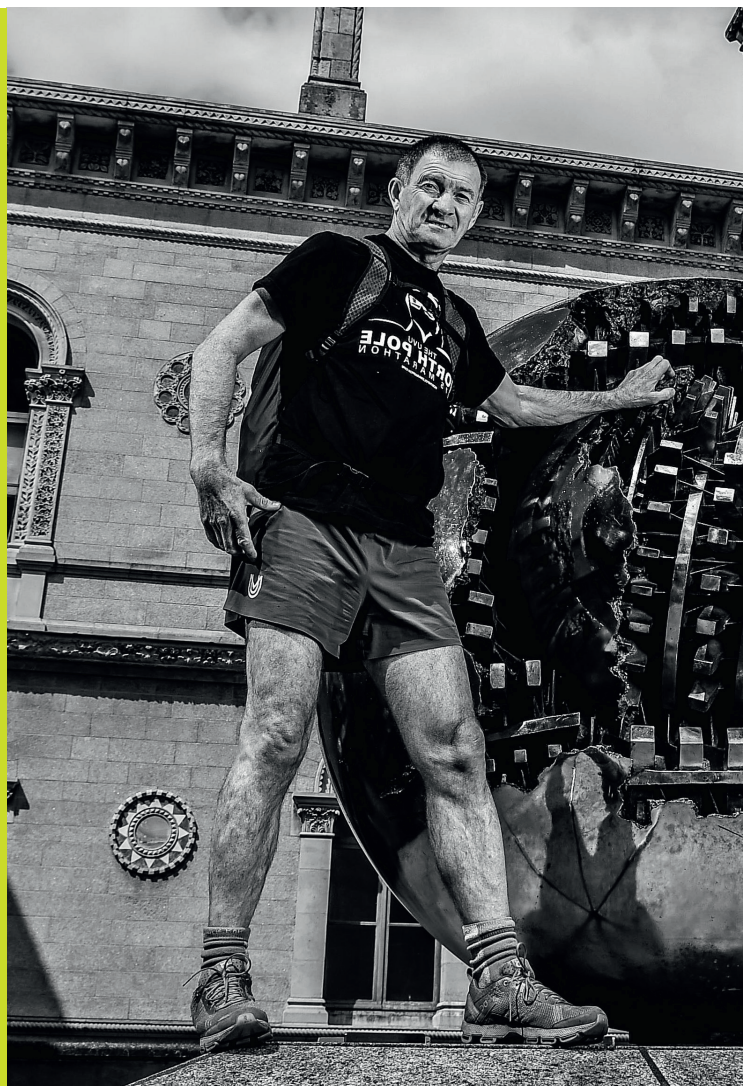
102

Longest distance (in kilometres) run in 24 hours

41

Countries visited

Tony with a slightly smaller globe, Pomodoro's Sphere Within Sphere at Trinity College, Dublin



I carried extra clothing, a tent and a warm sleeping bag in there.'

The constantly varying weather and terrain challenges meant he had to keep devising new methods of transporting his belongings. 'In South America I used a 'heavy bag' system. I had a 20kg sports bag, which I sent ahead on buses – usually around 1,000km – and it would be kept in the baggage area of the bus company. They would hold it for a month and I'd change my equipment as necessary for the next 1,000km, then send it on ahead again. I had my next pair of shoes, spare socks, sunscreen, a backup of my photos and a spare ATM card in there. That way, if I was mugged, I had a copy of my photos and was only a bus ride away from an ATM card.'

Getting new running shoes was a perpetual problem. 'I had to find an address to get them delivered to, and often used sites like Couch Surfers, which lists people who will host travellers in their home,' Tony explains. 'But, understandably, many people weren't keen on having a package delivered to