



reflecting,' he says. 'On my life in general, as well as on what had happened in the few days before. But I also lived in the moment – it was like watching my very own 360-degree National Geographic Channel. And, of course, I talked to lots of people. Plus I had a 160gb iPod full of music and got through it all several times.'

## Finishing kick

Tony arrived back in Dublin Port on September 13, 2014 for the start of a six-week circumnavigation of Ireland that would culminate on the Dublin Marathon finish line. His mother, brother and sister and their families were there to greet him, along with friends and supporters. 'It was incredibly emotional,' he says. 'There were lots of tears. Mam had had 24 chemotherapy sessions by that point and we feared she may not survive the next six weeks.' During his 1,000-mile 'lap' of Ireland, many runners came out to join him, telling him how much he had inspired them. 'I have always thought words like 'inspire' and 'motivate' are used too loosely, but am truly humbled to have played a part in helping people,' he says. Others confided how running had helped save them from their own problems, like alcoholism and depression.

Despite it being a moment Tony had dreamed about for more than 20 years, he admits that the final miles were, in many ways, anticlimactic. 'It was surreal,' he says. 'I was finally exorcising my monster.' His last footstep on the marathon line was calculated to be exactly 50,000km. 'Not a metre more,' he says. 'As a friend said to me, that would just be showing off!'

The physical recovery is taking some time. A physiotherapist commented that he could not understand how Tony was still standing after what he'd put his body through. 'If I was a horse, I'd have been shot by now – several times!' he jokes.

Tony's mother saw him achieve his dream, but, sadly, she passed away a few months later. He marked the occasion by running the North Pole Marathon. 'My mam was buried the day before we flew out, and my run was dedicated to her – the strongest woman I've ever known,' he says.

He is taking a break from running now, still having regular physiotherapy and walking with a slight limp. He's also writing a book about his experiences and doing talks and motivational speaking. In January, Ireland's *Outsider* magazine named him its Person of the Year 2014 in recognition of his achievement.

Now that it's all over, has he finally found peace? 'I guess I'm more content now,' he says. 'But I miss life on the road in some ways. It's been hard to adjust back to a normal life.' Any regrets? 'Absolutely not. You have to live your dreams before they become demons.'



**BULGARIA**  
While he was camping, Tony was questioned by drunken border patrol cops.

**TURKEY** Tony was given permission to run across the non-pedestrian Bosphorus Bridge, which separates Asia and Europe.



**CZECH REPUBLIC**  
(Brno) Tony returned to the track where he set his world 48-hour indoor track record.



**MYANMAR**  
'I played *Walk On*, the banned U2 song dedicated to Aung Sang Suu Kyi, to the police who escorted me. They didn't know what it was about!'

**THAILAND** (Bangkok)  
'The police chief was a runner and took the day off to run into Bangkok with me. I got lots of great support from running clubs in Thailand.'



**AUSTRALIA**  
(Darwin) Tony set a new record for running south to north through Australia (nine and a half weeks), finishing here. Adding Tasmania, his total time to cover Australia was 11 weeks, another record.

**ALICE SPRINGS**  
'I spent my 56th birthday in Alice Springs. I had to run an average of 68km per day for three weeks to get there. I was a guest of the Alice Springs running club, who greeted me with an entry to their 6km handicap race – I finished second!'

FROM  
ARGENTINA