

The Italian Evel Knievel

Andrea Di Camillo (July 08, 2008)



Evel Knievel is to jaw-dropping stunts with his motorcycle as Tom Perry is to outrageous feats with no shoes. Forty-eight year old athlete Antonio Peretti (Tom Perry) of the Veneto region, daredevil extraordinaire, now wants to scale the active volcano Stromboli barefoot for charity tomorrow. Replacing the usual curious spectators will be a circling helicopter ensuring his safety and filming him when he attempts this daring and dangerous exploit

[Evel Knievel](#) [2]'s spirit lives on in Antonio Peretti. Just like the late Evel Knievel, who was originally born as Robert Craig Knievel, Italy's own [Antonio Peretti](#) [3] has adopted a pseudonym as Tom Perry, also known as "l'uomo a piedi nudi" ("barefooted man") or "l'alpinista scalzo" ("barefooted mountain climber"). Perry has even been known to dabble in motorcycle stunts earlier in his career too! As his namesakes and taglines suggest, he is determined to scale the toughest and most dangerous mountains and volcanoes the world has to offer him, all without his shoes on.

He has recently decided to tackle [Stromboli](#) [4], an active volcano on the Aeolian islands off the coast of Sicily, and descend its over 3,031 foot peak while barefoot. The peak he's set to descend is known to Italians as the "Sciara del Fuoco" ("Fiery Slope"), since it's the path where lava flows and then slowly hardens over time. Frighteningly enough, no man has ever set foot (even with shoes on)



on this dangerous peak, since its slope reaches a steep and harrowing incline of 50 degrees in some spots.

Wanting to scale Stromboli did not come out of the blue for Perry: he has previously scaled mountains and volcanoes barefoot around the globe at [Mount Fuji](#) [5] in Japan, [Mount Kilimanjaro](#) [6] in Africa, the [Himalayas](#) [7], and others in Bolivia, Ecuador, Egypt, and Mexico. His most daring climb of all was last year when he scaled [Mount Etna](#) [8] in Sicily—while it was erupting! Perry got his original calling to climb mountains without his shoes on several years ago in the summer of 2002, when he took off his hiking shoes spur of the moment and bolted down a mountain in Vicenza near his hometown. For Perry, it's more than just running willy-nilly up and down mountains and dangerous volcanoes, it's a type of spiritual renewal for him—when he climbs, he says on his website, "I am spiritually reborn, I become a receptor where the Earth transfers all its energies to me." He continues, "It's an unimaginable and truly pure sensation; I become another person."

All of his crazy escapades are not just for his own entertainment or spiritual enrichment: he has raised money for environmental causes and collaborated with many organizations for the promotion of peace and for the betterment of mankind, as exemplified by his recent meeting with the Dalai Lama. Since his popularity has soared with each climb he successfully completes, he has been the subject of many documentaries and publications, thereby increasing his fame to raise even more money for the causes he strongly believes in.

And so the noble Tom Perry continues to stride for a greater good in this world... barefoot, of course.

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