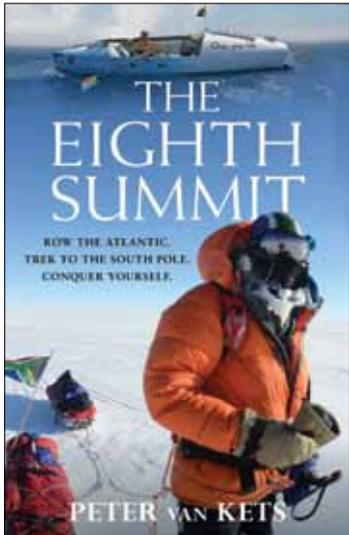


Burnet Media

ADVANCE INFORMATION SHEET

THE EIGHTH SUMMIT by Peter van Kets



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AUTHOR Peter van Kets
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THE BOOK

IN SHORT: A motivational memoir that recounts and takes inspiration from three epic expeditions undertaken by adventurer Peter van Kets: winning the Woodvale Atlantic Rowing Race in 2008, rowing the Atlantic single-handed in 2010, and trekking unsupported to the South Pole in 2012.

EXTENDED BLURB: The word “adventure” is deeply entrenched in the soul of man. Nations have been built, wars have been won and discoveries have been made all in the name of adventure. The great challenge of the modern age is the Seven Summits: scaling the highest peak on all seven continents – but **The Eighth Summit** is about inspiring the human spirit.

In his memoir, Peter van Kets takes readers on three of his greatest expeditions – incredible, unsupported adventures across the Atlantic in rowing boats and across the icy high plateau of Antarctica on foot and sled – with the goal of lifting their spirits and motivating them in whatever they do.

As a passionate speaker and conservationist, Peter does all he can to inspire people and change their lives, and he has addressed thousands of people since being awarded SA OutThere Adventurer of the Year in 2011. Typical topics of discussion are vision, planning, team work, strategy, conflict management, working in a dynamic environment, self-discipline and perseverance. **The Eighth Summit** is his story.

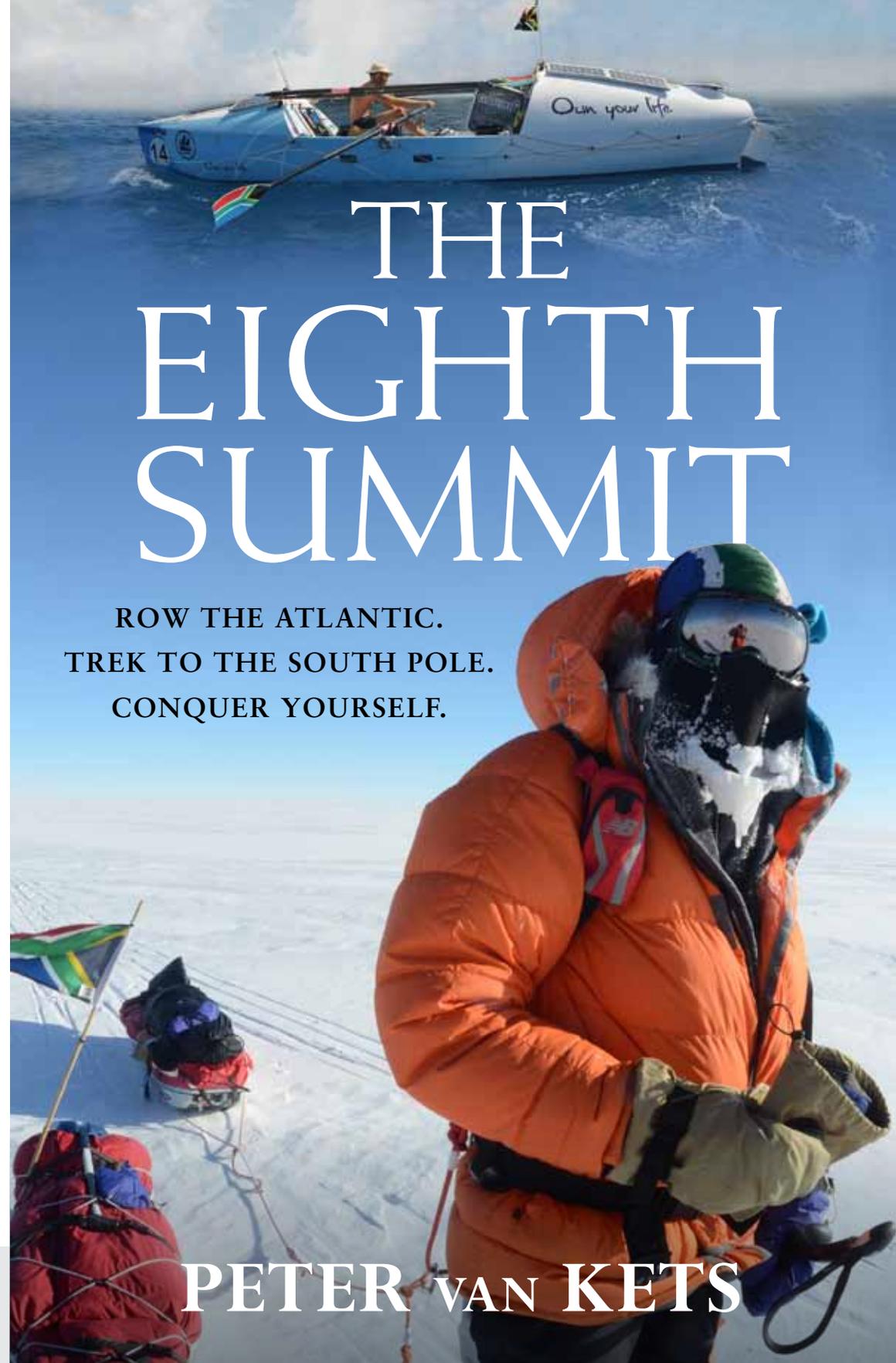
THE AUTHOR



Peter van Kets is one of the world's top professional endurance adventurers, a conservationist and an international keynote/inspirational speaker. He has been involved in numerous expeditions around the world.

FEATURE POINTS

- Appeals to readers who enjoy adventure and the outdoors; i.e. most South Africans;
- Incorporates key leadership lessons from the author's local and international motivational-speaking career;
- Author has large social media following and marketing reach;
- Author profile to increase further with expedition to the North Pole scheduled, to be filmed by the Discovery channel.



THE EIGHTH SUMMIT

ROW THE ATLANTIC.
TREK TO THE SOUTH POLE.
CONQUER YOURSELF.

PETER VAN KETS

INTRODUCTION

*“It is not the mountain we conquer
but ourselves.”*
– Sir Edmund Hillary

Imagine a scene.

You are in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean in a 21-foot rowing boat. Just you. There are at least 2,700 kilometres of water stretching into the distance on all sides and you could not be more alone.

You have not seen another human being in weeks. You are tired. Your hands are calloused and raw. Your bottom has developed pressure sores on both sides. You have salt sores right where the sun doesn't shine. And, to top it all, you're in a storm with your parachute anchor deployed, a desperate measure to stabilise your puny vessel amid massive ocean swells and battering winds.

It's raining hard and waves are breaking over the boat. You are being tossed around like a cork in a rapid. You are doing your best to lie still in your cabin, which is the size of a coffin – or maybe just a bit bigger. Either way, it feels very much like a coffin to you right now, and the ocean depths beneath you may well be your grave. You really don't know whether you will survive this storm or if the Atlantic will refuse to spit you out on the other side.

Then you notice the laminated print-outs stuck to the roof of the

cabin. Some are messages from your wife, and pictures of her and your beautiful daughter; others are motivational quotes. One of them catches your attention and it gets you thinking.

“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.”

– Mohammed Ali

I don't have to imagine this scene; I can vividly recall it. It was 2010, and I was participating in the Woodvale Atlantic Rowing Race, an unsupported rowing race that covers nearly 5,500 kilometres from the Canary Islands in the east to Antigua Island in the west. The storm in question lasted *six days*...

The moment described above was, of course, one of great doubt for me – but it was eventually one of great clarity.

Can we really overcome the impossible? Really? Anybody? How do we surmount great obstacles when the odds seem so heavily stacked against us? How do we achieve feats – in all areas of life – when the likelihood of success seems so distant?

I found the answer to all those questions in that moment in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

My chosen career is “adventurer”. To date my three greatest feats are rowing the Woodvale Atlantic race twice and trekking to the South Pole.

I completed my first Atlantic crossing in 2007 and early 2008 with a friend, Bill Godfrey. Bill and I rowed in shifts: one-and-a-half hours on and one-and-a-half hours off, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 50 days and 12 hours. There was not one second on that boat that one of us wasn't rowing except for Christmas day when we both took half an

hour off to eat our Christmas lunch together and to make a satellite call back home to our wives. We endured four radical storms during the race. The final one lasted for four days and we rowed across the finish line as it ended, thoroughly trashed and looking like undernourished prisoners of war. Emerging from the storm and crossing the calm lagoon to the jetty where we were greeted by hundreds of spectators, including South African friends and family who'd flown all the way to support us, was one of the greatest highs of my life. We had endured incredible hardship in the pursuit of our dream, which was to not only row across the Atlantic, but to defy all odds and win the race – which we did! On the quayside that evening I promised Kim, my beautiful and long-suffering wife, that I would never do that again...

In 2010 I did it again. This time, however, I was on my own. I rowed in shifts of one-and-a-half hours on and one-and-a-half hours off, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – for 76 days. The obvious difference second time around was that whenever I went off shift there was no Bill to take over. One of my biggest challenges was keeping the boat headed in the right direction as much as I could while I rested. Harder than you'd think.

It's difficult to compare the two rows, but a feature that distinguished the second one from the first was the incredible weather. There was that one monster storm – which endowed me with a real sense of my frailty and smallness in the greater scheme of things – but it was just the one. As hard and lonely as the row was, it was also a beautiful life-changing experience.

In December 2011 I took part in a very different type of event. I joined up with Braam Malherbe – known for running the entire length of the Great Wall of China; all 4,300 kilometres of it – and together we formed a two-man South African team to take part in the Amundsen-Scott Centenary race to the South Pole. First came the 120-kilometre acclimatisation trek, then the 768-kilometre race proper. Together, they formed an epic 888-kilometre polar odyssey. The Amundsen-Scott is, in my opinion, the toughest endurance event on the planet, not because of its length, but because it is relentlessly dangerous. If you aren't alert enough and quick enough to fix it, just one small mistake at any time during the race can result in the loss of fingers, toes, facial

extremities and even your life. In the end, we spent six weeks in the Antarctic wilderness, testing our physical and mental limits, so that we could complete the race.

And yet, for all the painful miles I have travelled and the hardships I've endured, I'm really just a normal person. I was never a great athlete at school. I didn't win any races or captain any teams. I am tall and skinny, and when people meet me they often cannot believe that I have rowed across an ocean (twice!) or trekked 500 miles to the South Pole.

When I signed up to do the race across the Atlantic with Bill, I had never rowed a stroke in my life before. When Braam and I got together to race across Antarctica the coldest temperature I'd experienced was -16°C and I had never cross-country skied – let alone skied at -45°C while pulling a 100-kilogram sled. People would often tell me I was boxing above my weight. Some thought – and told us – that what we were trying to achieve was impossible and that we were doomed to failure. They were wrong. Bill and I won our race across the Atlantic and Braam and I made it all the way to the South Pole, one of only three teams to do so from seven that started.

Although I need to be physically fit and strong to do what I do, the key to success is always what happens inside my head. Your body is an incredible thing. It can get used to almost anything and it can go on forever. It's your mind that stops you, that gives up long before your body does.

I experienced a classic example of this during both Atlantic crossings. I was always at my lowest point around 4am. The graveyard shift. I would be absolutely exhausted, slumped over my oars and thinking there was no way I could endure another 24 hours like the previous 24. I would have to really hang in during that shift. But I knew I had two things to look forward to that would motivate me during the darkest hours. The first was my breakfast, which was not the usual freeze-dried food but actual cereal. And the second, most importantly, was the five-minute satellite phone call home to my wife Kim. I would spend the majority of that 4am shift planning my conversation.

Now here's the point. After feeling like I could never survive another day like the previous one, I would speak to Kim, the sun would come up and I would have breakfast. The next shift – in daylight, only one-

and-a-half hours later – was completely different and I would feel like a new person.

So what's the difference between the last shift, when I think I can go on no longer, and the next one, when I am rowing like a beast again? Physically nothing. The sun has come up, I have made my call home and I have had breakfast, that's all. The change has happened in my head.

I have always marvelled at the nature of the human spirit and at human endeavours. What is it that allows us to endure great hardship in the pursuit of attaining (or not attaining) our seemingly impossible dreams? What am I able to achieve with my life? Do I have limits and, if any, what are they?

The incredible stories of survival and endurance that have been told by explorers such as Ernest Shackleton, Robert Scott and Sir Ranulph Fiennes have always fascinated me. Human endeavour has progressed because of the likes of Columbus and Cook and Livingstone, men who have inspired nations. In recent years South African adventurers such as Mike Horn and Riaan Manser have delivered their own amazing feats. Horn has circumnavigated the equator without the use of motors, climbed the Seven Summits, been to both Poles and beyond. Manser is famed for cycling the entire coastline of Africa, some 37,000 kilometres, a journey that took more than two years.

But modern explorers are not as acclaimed as those famous names from the past and, perhaps as a result of this, I believe that men (and women) have forgotten that we have been created with a deep need for adventure, that it is woven deep into our souls, and that the histories of many countries are built on the spirit of exploration. Our modern, stressed (yet physically comfortable) lifestyles have led to a diminishing appetite for physical risk. We no longer see our lives as a grand adventure. But there are great lessons to be learned in pushing ourselves, physically and mentally, to the edge.

It's this spirit of adventure that drives me in my life. It's what makes me feel alive and what keeps my family vibrant and happy. The very basic core of my living spirit is the passion for adventure, for new experiences. There is no greater joy for me than to have an endlessly

changing horizon; for each day to have a new and different sun.

The conclusion that I have come to, having undertaken dozens of endurance adventure expeditions over the years and tested every limit in my body, is that we are able to achieve anything we want – dare I say, “the impossible”. It is a conclusion that I held in such sharp relief in that moment in the Atlantic storm in my little rowing boat. There are, however, terms and conditions that apply and they are what create the stumbling blocks for us in life. And more often than not these stumbling blocks, these obstacles, are overcome (or not) inside our heads.

Before the start of every expedition, the thing that energises me the most is the mental test I will have to endure. Will I be able to handle the physical pain, the separation from my beautiful wife and daughter, the loneliness, the fear, the relentlessness of the journey? Will I be able to do all this while operating in a subconscious state?

Yes.

The answer is yes because it has to be. But it is also yes because I know how to make it so. In the course of my adventures I have learned many valuable lessons and in so doing have created a process for my life. It is this process that allows me to dream, to act on my dreams and to achieve them successfully and with significance.

The great dream for many mountaineers is to climb the seven highest mountains across the world's seven continents – to conquer the Seven Summits, a remarkable feat. There is, however, one more summit that must be conquered to get there: the Eighth Summit, the personal summit. In other words, you and what happens inside your head.

And so *The Eighth Summit* has very little to do with mountaineering or rock climbing. Rather, it is about the internal expeditions we must all undertake to achieve our goals. This is the essence of what I want to share because I truly believe that if we can master what's happening inside our heads, we can master ourselves – and, in so doing, achieve anything. Then the impossible will, as Mohammed Ali knew, become nothing.