

Dynamic duo walk the wall

A WESTCOUNTRY couple are believed to be the first people in the world to have walked the full length of the Great Wall of China unaided.

Katie Cooper and Tarka L'Herpiniere, from Clayhidon, Devon, achieved the 3,000-mile feat in six months, battling extreme temperatures and suffering illness and exhaustion.

They walked for 167 days, carrying 66lb (30kg) on their backs, and between them lost six stone.

The couple started their expedition in the Yumenguan Pass in the Gobi Desert on October 1 last year.

The journey took them through sandstone gorges at 9,000ft with only a

rope for safety, and dropped down to 7,000ft as they trekked through mountains north of Beijing.

They had to brave temperatures between 40C (104F) to -35C (-31F) before reaching the mountains of North Korea at 3,000ft, where the wall ends.

The gruelling journey was made even more difficult by a turbulent start when Katie (27) had to go to hospital after she collapsed during the first week from gastroenteritis and dehydration from the 40C (104F) heat.

Tarka (25) had to leave her and run

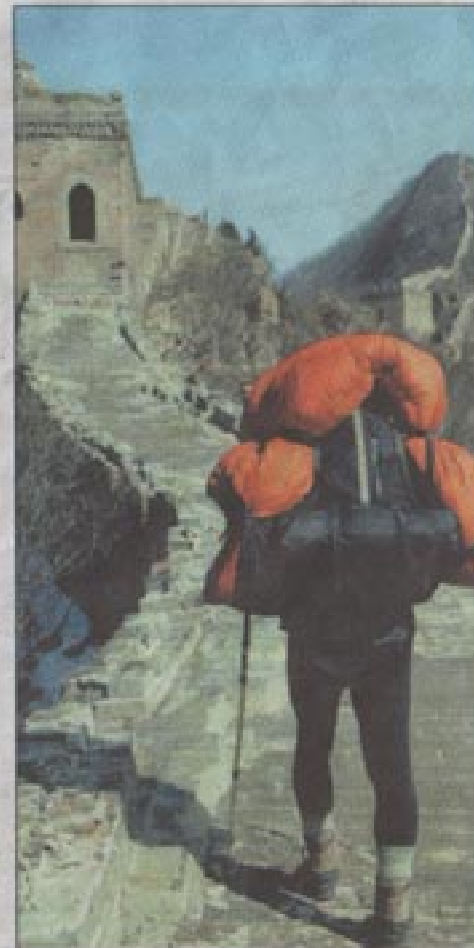
for ten miles across the Gobi desert before he was able to flag down a Chinese bus.

After travelling for 107 days, Katie had to be admitted to hospital again after suffering spinal compression from the weight of the backpack. She carried on after three days' rest.

Tarka, who runs expedition company Primal Journey, said the trek was a 'unique challenge'.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: Westcountry couple Katie Cooper and Tarka L'Herpiniere are believed to be the first people in the world to have walked the full length of the Great Wall of China unaided over 167 days, battling the elements and exhaustion. The pair were raising funds for young persons' charity, the Make a Wish Foundation



WATCH YOUR STEP: The trekkers negotiate a tricky path along the Great Wall of China during their six-month expedition that saw them cover 3,000 miles in extreme temperatures

