

„I'D RATHER BE DEAD THEN NOT TRAVEL”

All seven continents touched - Kilimanjaro climbed - cycled across America - camping in the Antarctic - hiking in Nepal - and a heart attack

Mark Chalabala suffers from heart problems, as does his father, who died at the age of 52.

Unlike his father, Mark waits for nothing. That's why he travels the world and enjoys every day as if it were his last.

At the age of fifty, Mark survived a heart attack. Because he was able to check off his "bucket list" ¹ even before the heart attack, today he is working on his second "Bucket list". The doctors advise him against traveling, but he can not keep his hands off it.

Because of his heart attack and inherited heart problems, he is not sure if he will live to be 60.

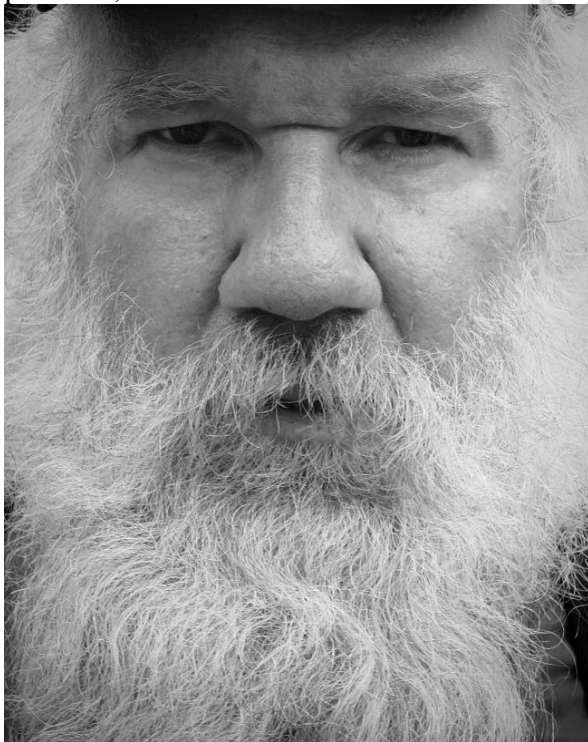


Figure 1: Chalabala's eyes have seen a lot.

Mark Chalabala

Seoul Korea. 3 pm. At the computer in a hotel. 4 double beds and 4 red lockers in the room. Restaurant around the corner.

Mark Chalabala. American. Hometown Chicago. 52 years old. Big man with a white beard.

The interview Begins.

Mark Chalabala travels the world. Alone.

What drives him? Will he never be lonely? How can he finance that?

Mark lives modestly, travels the continents, experiences adventures and returns to report.

Tomorrow, he will fly to Jeju Island for 60 US dollars, where he will be cycling for a few

¹ "Bucket list" is a list of places or activities that you want to experience before you die

days. Jeju Island is actually a honeymoon destination. There is also a cycle path that leads around the island in three to four days. "This is his plan for the next few days.

But first he goes into a so-called Cat Café, where you can drink coffee and pet cats at the same time. Mark tells that he is often found there because he misses his own cat at home "The Dude". He says, "The only thing I have to worry about, is who's going to watch my cat when I'm gone."

Because most Americans go to college, they have big debts afterwards. They usually work for many years to settle these debts.

Mark was also a college student. Today without debts; how did he manage that?

Mark has a credit card, but never buys on credit. He earns the money before he spends it. He explains that this is also the difference between him and other Americans. In this way, he can pack and travel when and where he wants, without worrying about debt. Only in this way can a life with so many trips work. He works in America until he has enough money together. Then he goes as far as the money may carry him

The fact is that 64% of Americans never leave the country in their lives. And Mark is already on his third round-the-world trip.

And so...

He tells how one of his work colleagues reacted to his two-year trip around the world. His colleague wanted to know how long he was going to leave, with Mark explaining that he would not like the answer; "If I told you the number, first you wanna be upset, then you wanna think that I'm lying to you ... So I'd rather not tell you. I'm just going away. "When Mark answered with 104, the colleague wanted to know; 104-what? "104 weeks. I'm leaving America for 104 weeks. "

Because many of his employees have never heard of such a globetrotter, Mark has already given a lecture for his work colleagues, in which he explained how he can travel so much.

Save Money - Evaluate Travel Destinations - Plan Expenses - With Easy Air Tickets Around The World - Find Cheap Accommodations.

He legitimizes the simple plane tickets by saying that it would be much cheaper if you only book in one direction and situational. In this way you can stay a little more flexible. Mark himself does not know yet when exactly he will go to Malaysia or India.

Originally, there was still a hike in Nepal, which was canceled but relatively spontaneously from the plan. He preferred to spend a few more days in Mongolia at an Eagle Festival.

So unplanned into the world - is it really that unplanned?

"104 weeks. I'm leaving America for 104 weeks"

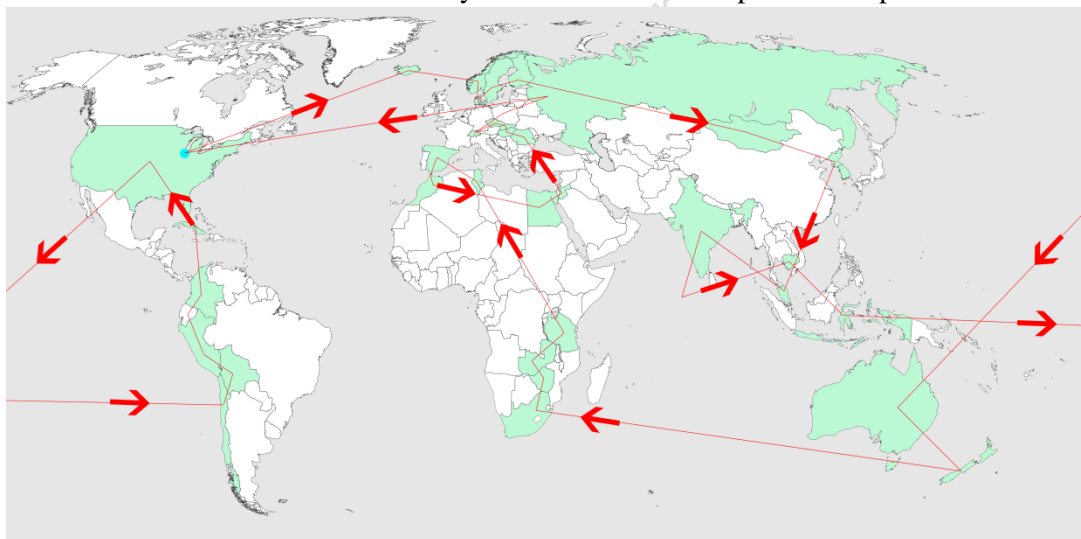
For Mark, the 2-year trip around the world, which started on 31 May 2016, is not the first one in the world

In 2011, he had completed a 9-month world tour through all seven continents.

With student budget around the world

He accomplished the first world trip of 87,000 kilometers over nine months with a budget of only 35,000 US dollars.

Because he booked the last trip around the world with all flights in advance, he had no leeway in terms of the time spent in one place.



35,000 US dollars This time he does it differently. His goal is to link as many cheap countries as possible.

Figure 2: Twice around the Earth in 24 months

He would like to visit these countries in his 2-year world tour.

A full program!

His current journey is no longer planned and he can spontaneously adapt his journey. That's why he spends several extra days in Mongolia at the Adler Festival instead of going hiking in Nepal.

In Mongolia he got many tips from other tourists. Together with a local guide, he created his individual travel program.

In the Gobi Desert he rode camels and in the central part of Mongolia horses. In the north of Mongolia he visited nomadic reindeer herders and photographed the Gold Eagle Festival in Ulgi.

Photography as an incentive

Mark is not a trained photographer. Bringing images“home“ is a major part of why he travels. Photography inspires him. The goal is “50 Good Ones“ from every country. Shooting up to 500 images daily, this is a very selective selection.

It is amazing how relaxed he faces a possible (data) loss of images. With him, the memory, the experience, the atmosphere still counts the most, because nobody could take that away from him. But he does back up all images.

“It’s like a bookmark for my life.”

Mark's friends always show keen interest in his adventures abroad. His game goes like this: at a restaurant visit, the operating staff is asked to name any country. So he tells stories for a whole meal. "I've either been there, done that, or know somebody who has a great story about that country.”

Figure 3: Solfar sculpture from Reykjavik, Iceland



Figure 4: Adler Festival in Mongolia

„There is a vast difference between a guy who owns a camera and a photographer”



Figure 5: Akraberg Lighthouse, Faroese Islands

„You can't recreate that time, that moment, that exposure², 'cause that is a fraction of a second in time that cannot be duplicated.”

² By "exposure" is meant in this context the exposure time. It refers to photography.



Figure 6: Photo from Norway (Lofoten)

Loneliness?

Mark has thousands of photos. He travels alone, but rarely feels lonely on his travels

Loneliness he knows more at home. When he looks at his pictures, he becomes thoughtful that he is mostly alone in the pictures.

How can one endure this loneliness? And ... - is not that boring too?

Mark says that he was often alone in his childhood. He spent a lot of time with his family in a holiday home. Even at the age of nine, he ventured alone several miles away from home. He went several times; but in the end he always found his way home. Maybe this was the basis for his self-confidence which allows him a very roughly planned travel agenda?

He travels alone, but he is never bored. On the contrary. How does it feel to be such a traveler? Such days without duties are perfect days for him. Nevertheless, he asks himself: "What can I do to make this day *[even]* better?"

On days without responsibilities, Mark may not know what he wants to do, but above all he'll do what makes him happy. What makes him happy is, for example, to visit tourist attractions atypical local attractions and take a lot of pictures. He says all this without ever giving me the impression of selfishness or recklessness. Rather, I get a picture of self-responsibility and respect for his fellow human beings and always mischievous irony.

**Mark Chalabala
kehrt nach
Amerika zurück,
um das Land
wieder verlassen
zu können**

Heart attack

At the age of fifty, Mark suffered a heart attack that drastically changed his way of life.

Until then, he still believed in the classic dream of family, home and a steady job. His father pushed his dreams into retirement - which he never reached. Mark definitely did not want to commit that mistake. After the heart attack, Mark shifted his "goal posts" to include a lot more travel.

Immediately after the heart attack, the doctors recommended a pacemaker. However, Mark initially renounced this in consideration of his travel plans because the the shoulder straps from his backpack would grate against the pacemaker.

It was not until about two years later that there were thinner pacemakers that could be moved out from under the straps, and Mark agreed to be "wired up".

Finances

How can you afford so much without a job?

The secret is the expenses. The average tourist spends 150 US dollars per night in Korea. Mark, on the other hand, finds accommodation where he can sleep for US \$ 10 per night.

His budget for the current two-year trip is \$ 53,000. He was able to save this amount in various works in three years. At times, he worked on several projects in parallel, often 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. After about three years, he was able to tackle his next world trip.

The lion's share of his income comes as an Excel programmer. As a former business student, he knows what his job is worth and earns as a freelance consultant with it good money.

Incidentally, he trades on Ebay with antique photographs. He also wrote a book about early photography.

Nevertheless, Mark saves money everywhere. The most extreme is winter. He heats his house to only

10 ° Celsius. Accordingly, he wears the winter through his winter jacket in the house to stay warm. "Every penny that I do not spend on the house, is a penny I can spend on travel."

„Every penny that I don't spend heating the house, is a penny I can spend on travel"

Mark only returns to America to earn money so that he can travel again afterwards. "I come back to go away again."

Are there 120 countries left?

The occasion for his first trip around the world and "Bucket list" were to seek answers to questions he had. During the first trip around the world, he was secretly hoping that this would "cure" his travel addiction, and he could somehow return to "normal".

However, the desire to travel took him much more than before. Three years later he went on another word tour. Nevertheless, every day he hopes to rest “tomorrow“. Although the travel spirit lives on in him, the body may soon start to give out and slow his traveling ways.

After this trip around the world, Mark will have traveled around 80 countries.

Let's see if, after the current adventure, he has enough of traveling, or if it grabs him and he will get fancy some of the remaining 120 countries. We are curious.

³ Jack Fischl. URL:

<https://mic.com/articles/28780/why-64-of-americans-have-never-left-the-us#.2VyA9JhW> (28.10.2016)

Grafik von Marks Reise:

<https://www.weltkarte.com/welt/weltatlas/weltkarte-blank-vektorgrafik.htm>

Fotos von Mark Chalabala

Anzahl Wörter: 1'930

BienThere.com Interview



Figure 7: Market in Kota Bharu, Malaysia



Figure 8: Youth Hostel in Lofoten



Figure 9: Central Mongolia



Figure 10: Prayer wheels, Central Mongolia