“The Odyssey we should all be following”: Tiger man reaches halfway in epic 1,000-mile walk

Monday 27 July, 2026

On the eve of World Tiger Day, the above quote from a well-known British headmaster is not far off the mark. After 500 gruelling miles walking across Britain with a nine-foot tiger strapped to his back, wildlife guide, photographer and conservationist Paul Goldstein will reach the halfway point of his extraordinary 1,000-mile walk for tigers in Southend-on-Sea on Tuesday 28 July.

Joining Mr Goldstein for the 25-mile stage from Maldon to Southend is his long-time friend and BBC wildlife presenter Michaela Strachan.

Ms Strachan said: “I’m doing this to support one of my more eccentric friends (I have a few). Paul may be slightly bonkers, but he is passionate, determined, and inspirational, and has fought to be a voice for the voiceless raising hundreds of thousands for tiger conservation: educating and inspiring people with every step of his crazy challenge. I have huge admiration for that.”

The pair will set off at 8.00am from The Moot Hall, Maldon, before arriving at Southend Central Station approximately eight to ten hours later, depending on conditions and Paul's many aches and strains.

On arrival, members of the 25-strong Welwyn Garden City Male Voice Choir will welcome them with The Proclaimers' I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles), celebrating the halfway point of an arduous 42-day, 1,000-mile journey from Anglesey to Land's End, with Mr Goldstein walking the equivalent of a marathon every day. For those keeping count, the challenge has already covered well over one million steps.

The 2 Legs for 4 challenge, supported by Norfolk conservation charity Explorers Against Extinction, aims to raise £50,000 for two frontline conservation projects protecting tigers and the communities that live alongside them.

Having already raised more than £13,000, together with a further £10,000 in matched funding, organisers hope to surpass £25,000 as Mr Goldstein reaches Southend.

Throughout the challenge, the 63-year-old has carried a 13kg tiger, measuring nine feet from top to tail, based on a photograph he took of a wild Bengal tigress in India in 2005. The tiger has accompanied Paul on fifty marathons, including the toughest, the Everest Marathon, and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, but this 1,000-mile walk is by far their greatest challenge together.

Mr Goldstein said: ‘Over the past three weeks thousands of people have stopped to ask "Why?" It is a simple answer: we are not winning the battle with endangered species. There are more tigers in backwater US apartments than there are in the wild. There are also plenty of body parts in unspeakable wet markets in China as well as plenty of these striped cats kept in ghastly SE Asian holding facilities. It is easy to be sanctimoniously rage-filled from behind a keyboard, perhaps harder to literally get some skin in this parlous game. This brings money, awareness and pragmatic solutions to a scandalous problem which should not exist.”

Mr Goldstein began his journey in Holyhead, Anglesey, on 7 July during the summer heatwave. Since then he has overcome a chest infection, negotiated overgrown footpaths with ferocious brambles, coped with unreliable mobile signal in some of the country's most remote areas and tried the patience of many of his loyal support team. His legs are heavily strapped, he has to stop to stretch his aching lower back, and each lunchtime a bowl of iced water offers welcome relief for his battered feet before he sets off again.

The tiger has not escaped unscathed either. After being mauled by a dog on the Norfolk coast, its creator, Liz Putland, was called upon to carry out emergency repairs to its ears and tail.

The support along the route, together with the donations, has been keeping Mr Goldstein going. He said: “People stop and offer drinks, ice creams, cake, yesterday Prosecco, money, lifts! (refused) and vocal encouragement. Messages have been scrawled in the sand with money pinned down by pebbles, people squeal to a stop and when they hear why I’m doing this, their largesse is often overwhelming. It makes such a difference, particularly as the conditions have been so ferociously hot. They often say ‘you must be hurting?’ I am. But consider this: I’m far better off than a poor tiger incarcerated in some hideous Chinese holding facility, with a tiny play area with nothing to look forward to

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except a lifetime of performing for ogling tourists. Angry…? You should be. I am, ever since, almost thirty years ago, I found that my first wild tiger, a huge male, was poached, it's body adorning these morally derelict ghoulish menageries."

The halfway milestone comes just one day before World Tiger Day (29 July), when conservation organisations around the world highlight the urgent need to protect one of the planet's most iconic and endangered species. Although tiger numbers have recovered in several countries thanks to decades of conservation effort, habitat loss, poaching and human-wildlife conflict continue to threaten their long-term future.

Every pound raised will help support practical conservation projects protecting one of the world's most endangered big cats.

The £50,000 target will fund:

• Solar lighting for villages and forest camps around Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in India, helping reduce conflict between people and tigers while improving safety for local communities.

• A landmark camera-trap study in Bhutan, documenting mountain mammal diversity across the only connected landscape on Earth where wild tigers and snow leopards are known to coexist.

Following Tuesday's milestone, Paul will travel to Alaska to lead a long-planned wildlife expedition before returning to Southend on 20 August to resume the challenge. He is due to complete the remaining 500 miles at Land's End on 12 September.

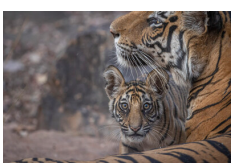
Follow Paul's progress live, donate or join him for part of the journey at 2legsfor4.co.uk.









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