

Debbie and Joshua

Journey's end in sight?



▲ **Debbie Bliss has done it** – she completed the walk of the Great Wall of China with a group of 33 walkers accompanied by two people from Great Ormond Street Hospital, a doctor and two members of Discover Adventure the company that organised their trip with the hospital.

Debbie's now back in Tenerife and looking forward to a rest and a break from the last few years of vigorous fundraising, though she's not quite finished yet (and those who know Debbie will doubt that she will be able to resist

the lure of good causes for long). She popped into the office of *Island Connections* to tell us about the incredible journey and give us an update on Joshua, her son's half brother who suffers from leukemia, and whose illness and harrowing treatment has been followed and supported by so many in the Island.

Debbie said that the trip to China was interesting from the outset. "It was great meeting a whole bunch of 'like minded' people from all walks of life. We chatted and got to know about each other on our long journey to China", which

was just as well, as once they arrived there it was on with the walk.

"The first walk I would say was the hardest, not only because we were tired, but due to the huge steps with no continuity needed to get a rhythm going. We only walked for around three kilometres, but that took almost two and a half hours. However, though it was hard it was a very rewarding start to the walk.

"The first night we stayed in a lovely hotel, something we did not expect but it did spoil us. After that the accommodation became a

Debbie warms up with the group before setting off on another day's walk

part of the challenge as did the food and sanitary conditions! We had a regimented routine daily of getting up early,

Some days the group were accompanied by a Chinese woman with a fridge on her back selling water and soft drinks



placing our bags in the lorry, breakfast (Chinese food or fried eggs and if we were lucky some salad) and then a transfer to the walk site by coach or straight out on foot depending on which village we were in. Often we were walking up either a huge amount of steps or what was virtually a cliff side to get to the wall. We walked a part of the wall where there were no

other tourists. We would spend time walking the Great Wall between four and six hours before climbing back down. On a couple of occasions we were allowed down the easy route, once by tobogan and the other via a zip wire. Now that was great fun."

However, even though they were often following paths unused by other tourists, the hardy group weren't



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