

Lee set to tackle final peak in challenge of a lifetime



TORQUAY-BORN mountaineer Lee Farmer is about to embark on the final leg of a lifelong quest to summit the highest peaks of all seven continents.

The former Torquay Boys' Grammar School student (*pictured*) is packing his bags for a four-week expedition to climb the 6,194 metre peak of Denali, the highest mountain in North America.

And he will celebrate his 39th birthday on June 11 with a view of the summit as he sets up camp part way through the climb.

Lee, a former 11th Torbay Sea Scout and now based in West Berkshire, has already climbed Aconcagua in South America, Kilimanjaro in Africa, Everest in Asia, Vinson in Antarctica, Elbrus in Europe and Kosciusko in Australia.

The climb could be the most dangerous yet because of the extreme cold weather conditions.

More than 100 climbers have died trying to reach the summit.

Lee said: "It's going to be an incredibly hard task because it's very dangerous, and we are all having to carry a lot of gear, with

our climbing equipment, tents, medicines, food and a gallon of fuel each, for our gas stoves. We could be dragging up to 100kg of equipment each.

"We're going to be burning at least 6,000 calories a day, so we'll be taking very high calorie nutrition. About the only thing we won't need will be a fridge to put it in."

The snow-packed peak, which was previously known as Mount McKinley, sits in the heart of Alaska, rising more than 20,000 feet above sea level.

Ambition

It is subject to phenomenally cold conditions with winds of 100mph often enveloping its upper flanks in winter months. Temperatures of -40°C are typical.

Lee already achieved a life-long ambition when he became only the 180th Briton to summit Everest two years ago.

He said that is often regarded by experienced climbers as 'good training' for Denali, so notorious is the Alaskan mountain's toll on life.

Lee said: "This place is even

colder than Antarctica, primarily because of the strength of the wind, so I'm taking my warmest and most robust gear.

"It has a high death toll, and most of them occur when descending. Travel on the lower glaciers is made difficult by melting snow bridges over crevasses, and by heavy snowfall and increased avalanche danger."

Lee is climbing with five experienced mountaineers. They will be roped together during the climb and will use satellite navigation equipment to ensure they do not stray off the route up the western side.

The adventure begins on June 6 with a plane flight to Anchorage.

It will still take between two and three weeks to complete the expedition.

There is a four-day window scheduled for the final summit attempt.

You can track the Lee's progress by following him on Twitter: @Summitprince and a blog www.2011denali.com