

Nothing stops paralysed French skier

HILDERINE SCHRÖDER

HE whips across the water effortlessly, negotiating every obstacle on the cable ski course successfully, but it is only when you look closely at the video footage that you realise Bastien Perret is paralysed from the waist down.

Sitting in the living room of his newly found friend Christo Mostert's parents, whom he met on the international website Couch Surfing, Bastien's greeting handshake is firm.

Couch Surfing is a volunteer-based worldwide network connecting travellers with members of local communities who offer free accommodation and/or advice.

Frenchman Bastien (32), or Bastos as he is better known, was in Worcester on a fleeting South African visit which forms part of a six-month solo world tour which kicked off in Cape Town earlier this month. The purpose was to try out various cable skiing destinations around the globe. But his visit to South Africa didn't only involve cable skiing at the Blue Rock Dam in Somerset West, however, Bastos says.

He spent some time at an association for the physically disabled in Cape Town where he showed a number of videos from his earlier adventures, showing that disabled people can still take part in adventure sports.

He also had his first ever taste of snoek fishing, managing to steal his catch inches from the nose of an opportunistic seal.

After a visit to Cape Point he was slightly disappointed that there were no special tariffs

for people with disabilities who had no choice other than to use the funicular. However, he still enjoyed the experience very much, adding that, although accessibility to many places in South Africa isn't as good as that in France, South Africans seem to go out of their way to assist people in wheelchairs.

His visit to Worcester, he explains, came after a slight injury he picked up early in his journey. "My parents' house is bigger and more comfortable for Bastos' recuperation, so we decided to come here," Christo says.

So what exactly does he think about South Africa? Bastos gives a crooked smile, trying to find the right English words, before he describes South Africa as a beautiful, atmospheric country with warm people.

Of course he also tried a few local delicacies, biltong amongst others. "It (the biltong) is very nice", he says, "but I'm more one for sweet things".

That might explain why he liked traditional "melktert" and "pampoenkoekies" so much, along with rooibos tea. "I also tried bobotie, but it's not as good as French food," he jokes.

And yes, he did learn a few Afrikaans words while here: "dankie", "asseblief", "goed" and "gesondheid" he laughs, while trying to twist his tongue around some of the more difficult syllables.

Although he broke his back in a kite surfing accident in 2005, he was never about to start feeling



Bastien (Bastos) Perret in action on his adapted skis, while cable skiing at the Blue Rock Dam in Somerset West. Photo: Supplied

sorry for himself. "My dream was to start kite surfing on my own again," Bastos, who was also an avid rugby player "when he was young" – as he puts it – says. This he did soon after, using an adapted seat which is attached to his skis.

The aim of the world tour is to show other people

with disabilities what they could also do and that life needn't come to an end to those who become disabled. "The Bastos before my accident is still the Bastos I am now."

○ Follow Bastos' adventurous journey on www.magicbastos.com.

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