

ARE YOU READY TO GO WILD?

I grew up on a farm in the middle of nowhere – well, it was the middle of nowhere to everyone else. To me it was a world full of limitless adventure. My brother and I and our friends played out later than we should have, we climbed trees we weren't supposed to and made up games as we went along. I will be eternally grateful and in awe of my parents. They taught me to see the fun and opportunity in every situation, encouraged me to get muddy and told me never to allow fear to stand in my way.



I've always liked being outdoors more than I liked being indoors, and I've never liked being told I can't do something. I am no runner, but I've run an ultra-marathon through the Namib Desert. I am no kayaker, but I've kayaked down the Amazon, one of the biggest rivers in the world. I am certainly no high-wire walker and never will be, yet I walked a wire between the towers of Battersea Power Station.



I am very lucky that as a television presenter, I've been a part of some massive adventures in the world's wildest places. I've always been accompanied by an experienced support team and often my adventures have been for charity or to raise awareness about a cause. I know I will never be as accomplished as the adventurers I admire, but they inspire me to think and dream big. I've written this book because I want to share what I've learned: anything is possible if you put your mind to it and try.

Adventures aren't things that happen to other people, they are just your stories in waiting. I want you to get out there and find them. Going wild doesn't have to mean visiting remote or faraway places. You can find adventures everywhere: from your back garden to your local park and at the nearest river or beach. In each chapter, I've given you ideas for different wild or extremely wild adventures and where to find them. There are also stories about real-life wild girls whose amazing feats push me to take on new challenges. I hope they inspire you too.

The most important thing of all is to believe in yourself and be proud of what you achieve. Remember that every challenge is relative and no achievement is more impressive than another. Never let someone tell you that you can't do something, and don't let other people's concerns stop you from trying. Keep moving forwards, embrace the fear, find the positive in every situation and see how far you get. It really doesn't matter if you fail or fall, because as someone once said, you might fly instead.

Have fun, stay safe and
unleash your inner wild girl!

Heather Snelton

ADVENTURES in the SNOW



WILD WORLD

Antarctica is the coldest, windiest and driest continent on Earth. The coldest temperature ever recorded was -89°C , and because the air is so cold, it never rains.

I love when it snows. My brother and I used to have epic snowball fights that would last for hours, or go sledging on anything we could find. We would stay outside until we were so cold we could hardly feel our toes.

Given how much I loved messing about in the snow, it wasn't really a surprise that I got into skiing. I was lucky enough to go on a school trip and that's when I got the bug for it. Flying down a snowy mountain is a hard feeling to beat. However, I never expected that one day I would travel with a camera crew 500 miles across Antarctica to get to the South Pole, skiing, kite-skiing and cycling across the ice in temperatures of -48°C .

I was taking on the challenge for charity and it was going to be shown on television, so I wanted to push myself to the limit. The aim of my challenge was to be the first person to cycle to the South Pole, which still sounds bonkers. Bikes and snow aren't meant to mix and no one thought that I would be able to cycle through such tough conditions. Yet I believe that if you put your mind to it, anything is possible.

I knew little about Antarctica other than it was at the very bottom of the world. And I knew adventurers, with far more experience than me, had died trying to reach the South Pole. It would take months of planning and training, and the challenge involved a huge support team who were far more experienced in this brutal and dangerous environment than I was. My lungs and limbs needed to be at their best and I was going to have to push my body and my mind to the absolute limit. What I would learn during the experience was humbling – both about myself and this incredible wilderness that we need to preserve and protect.

If I can go from playing in the snow at home to getting all the way to the South Pole, so can you. Follow my journey and then find out how you can have your own adventures in the snow – from your back garden to beyond.



Adventures in ANTARCTICA



CHALLENGE: To be the first person to use a bike as part of an expedition to the South Pole. As well as travelling on a custom-made bike, I would cover the distance by skiing and kite-skiing.



CROSS-COUNTRY SKI

68 miles



KITE-SKI

329 miles



BIKE

103 miles

DAYS

20 days



DISTANCE

500 miles averaging 25 miles per day

AVERAGE WIND SPEED

80mph

TEMPERATURE

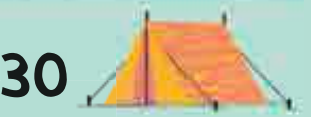
-48°C



My Trip in NUMBERS

30

nights camping on ice



50

rations of dehydrated food consumed

15

metres of medical tape used on feet



1 wash (with sock and bucket of water)

1 change of underwear



1 Guinness World Record for fastest 100km by kite-ski

500

total miles travelled



TRAINING and PREPARATION

Imagine a cold-weather adventurer. Are you thinking of big men with snowy beards trudging through the ice? Roald Amundsen, Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton all survived extreme hardship in their attempts to reach the South Pole (Scott and his men died on the return journey). As I trained for this adventure, I discovered that cold-weather survival is about more than just physical strength. I'm not very tall, I don't have massive muscles and I hope I don't have a beard! But I'm determined, and in that environment mental resilience is important.

I only had six months to prepare, but I was lucky to have three inspirational polar adventurers to show me the ropes. Conrad Dickinson taught me so much about cold-weather survival. Sarah McNair-Landry showed me how to kite-ski. And accompanying me on my adventure was my team-mate, the Norwegian kite-skier and explorer Niklas Norman.

To get used to the extreme cold, I trained in Iceland, New Zealand and Norway. I knew it was going to be impossible to bike the whole distance, so to be confident I had three methods of transport: biking, cross-country skiing and kite-skiing.

As well as being at peak physical fitness, I had to prepare myself mentally. The challenge had so many unknowns. What happened if the bikes didn't work? Or if I got ill? I quickly learned to block out everything other than the training goal in front of me that day.

1 BIKING

I was determined to travel by bike as much as possible. My custom-made bike had wide tyres and thick treads to grip the ice.

Training: I cycled in a wind tunnel to get used to the Antarctic blasts. I practised riding on the beach, because the Antarctic snow is so dry it is more like sand than snow. I got some strange looks!



2 CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Cross-country skiing is an efficient way to cross the ice.

Training: I built up my strength and fitness by running and lifting weights. I also tied a tyre around my waist with rope and dragged it around a field in practice for pulling the heavy sledge.



3 KITE-SKIING

You can travel at speed and cover huge distances by using a kite to pull your skis. It's exhilarating, but hurts if you fall.

Training: I had to learn to position and control the kite in the wind. I started with a small training kite before moving to a full-size one for top speeds.



THE SHOCK OF THE COLD



As part of my training, I swallowed an edible thermometer which sent my internal temperature to a computer. I was then tied to a chair and dunked in 10°C water. I stayed in the water until I was so cold, I couldn't spell my own name and was in the early stages of hypothermia. Then I was put in a hot bath to bring my body temperature back up. However, the thermometer showed that my temperature was still falling, despite the fact I felt warmer. It was an important lesson that it was essential to keep my core body temperature above 36°C at all times. I was going to discover that was easier said than done in the freezing cold winds of Antarctica!



KIT LIST

In the cold, your kit is essential to your survival. I learned that the smallest things make a big difference and you have to know your equipment inside out. These are some of the most important things I took with me.

DOWN JACKET

Feels like wearing the warmest duvet ever.



BALACLAVA

It made me look like a bank robber, but it protected my face from the wind, so it was worth it.

GLOVES

They were the size of oven gloves, because my fingers needed all the protection they could get.



SKI BOOTS

Not comfortable to wear for days on end.



Why take a knife, fork and spoon, if I could take one piece of kit that does all three things?



FUEL & STOVE

To melt snow for water to drink and to reheat our dried food sachets.

SUNCREAM & SUNGLASSES

The sun is fierce and its glare on white snow can be blinding.



160 CHOCOLATE BARS

Important as they are high in energy. After breaking the bars into individual squares (so I could eat them in my giant gloves), I was totally over chocolate.



BOIL-IN-THE-BAG MEALS

These freeze-dried sachets are nutritious, easy to use (boil up with melted snow), light to carry and don't go off. Sadly, they aren't very tasty!



SLEDGE

To carry all our equipment. It was very important we didn't take any unnecessary weight, which would slow us down. Still each sledge weighed 82kg, about the weight of a kangaroo.



SMALL SHOVEL

When I had to dig myself out of a drift or create a toilet.



TENT SLIPPERS

My one luxury item which meant I didn't have to wear boots inside the tent.



Home for this adventure!

PLASTIC SANDWICH BAGS

Essential post-toilet accessories (more on this later).



THERMALS

My thermal base layers were EVERYTHING. Merino wool is the best. It kept me toasty and didn't get stinky.