

NEWS



Arctic Canada
PICTURE CREDIT: Claudio von Planta



Cycling across Antarctica the ultimate goal for Kate.

Outdoor caught up with Kate Leeming for a quick chat before she departed on a Finke River cycle adventure. Kate's embarking on a number of what she describes as 'preparatory adventures' to build the fortitude she feels will be necessary during her quest to cycle across Antarctic via the South Pole.

Outdoor: You've embarked on a number of big adventures, when did you start thinking that you'd like to do these type of epic-scaled expedition-style quests? I mean, was the seed of ambition planted early or was your ambition always there?

KL: I was certainly inspired by the stories of my pioneering ancestors, such as that of my great, great uncle, William Snell who was the second person to cycle across the Nullarbor, when he rode from Menzies in the Western Australian goldfields to Melbourne, in order to propose to his childhood sweetheart. After she accepted, he put her on a boat bound for Fremantle and cycled all the way back again. My great grandfather, George Waters

Leeming, after whom the Perth suburb was named, surveyed an area south of the Swan River, a lot of land around Northam and in the far north of the Kimberley region. There is a Mt Leeming near Kalumburu — a small mound though it is!

Then there was my mother's father, Cyril Jenner, who fought on the Western Front in World War 1, survived and then battled to make ends meet on a soldier settlement farm in marginal country in WA. I was inspired by, and have a great respect for all pioneers and early explorers, especially the Australian and Antarctic explorers, but I never could have imagined what I could achieve on a bike.

I didn't have the confidence to explore by bicycle until I first travelled to the UK, initially playing hockey for my university, and after, did a

small trip in Ireland. Then I planned a much more extensive journey in France and Spain, and that is where I discovered my passion and started to understand what could be done travelling by bicycle.

When I was planning my first major journey across Russia, I met British polar explorer Robert Swan OBE, the first person to have walked to both the North and South poles. It was Robert who taught me that there could be far more value to what I was doing than simply riding a bike. The Trans-Siberian Cycle Expedition, as I called it, was not only the first bicycle crossing of the new Russia, from St Petersburg to Vladivostok by a woman, I also raised funds to benefit the 800,000 children affected by the Chernobyl disaster, an issue close to my heart.

Arctic Canada.
Kate leaving
Shingle Point.
PICTURE CREDIT:
Claudio von Planta



At Kap Tobin, the most southerly point of
Liverpool Land, Northeast Greenland.
PICTURE SUPPLIED



Hurry Fjord, Northeast Greenland.
PICTURE SUPPLIED



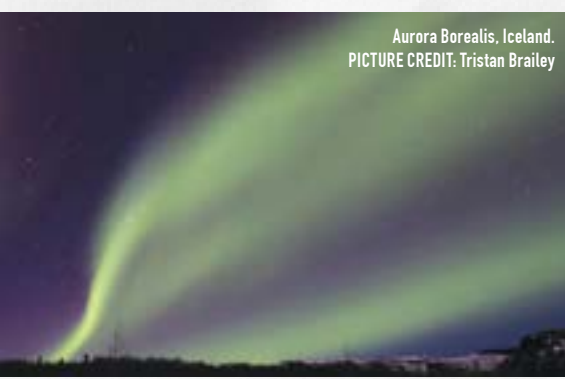
NEWS



In California's Baja Divide, south.
PICTURE CREDIT: Chris Pennington



California's Baja Divide, north.
PICTURE CREDIT: Chris Pennington



Aurora Borealis, Iceland.
PICTURE CREDIT: Tristan Brailey

Outdoor: After several completed expeditions, has the strength of your ambition wavered or diminished?

KL: Each expedition becomes a part of who I am, and these journeys serve to open my eyes to what is really possible; to positively influence the next vision. With experience, I seem to be able to raise my sights, not only to achieve the physical side of a challenging, original journey, but also I am equally ambitious and motivated to use my skills and opportunities to make a difference to the people and places I visit and the issues I care about. I have learned that it is a great privilege to be able to undertake my projects and I am endeavouring to maximise the opportunities created from them.

I also understand that my capacity to achieve the physical won't last forever, so I am trying to be discerning with the projects I choose and to develop a legacy, especially with regard to education.

Outdoor: Your career choice, and academic efforts so far, suggest you have an earnest desire to help people

become better. Is this something you strive to do during your expeditions? By this I mean setting yourself as an example from which others may derive inspiration?

KL: Being a role model, especially for women and girls, is an important aspect of my work. One of the greatest motivations and biggest pleasures I receive from my expeditions is when I discover the actions that others have taken, inspired by my activities. I don't necessarily mean for others to jump on a bike and cycle across a continent, more that they explore to discover their own passions and take action about issues they care about. I also would like those who are inspired to see the big picture, to understand better how they fit into the world and consider how their local actions fit into the global community.

Outdoor: What sort of obstacles does one face during one of these long, relentless expeditions?

KL: Built into the longer expeditions is the expectation to be adaptable. I always have an



Here and below: Visiting the International School of Iceland.
PICTURE CREDIT: Tristan Brailey



overall mission and a timeframe (usually set by a tight budget, the seasons, various commitments and what I believe I am capable of), but the hardest part is to make it happen in the first place. The organisation, and particularly finding the funding when I am trying to create something original and challenging, is always the most difficult. To do that, I have to believe in the missions and be realistic about what is achievable.

During the expedition, there are always times when I am challenged physically and mentally. Then, when I am forced to question what I am doing, I find it is essential that I can revert back to a tangible purpose behind what I am doing. If I believe in the mission and it is from the heart, and I am buoyed by the support I have from followers and sponsors, whom I would never want to let down, then I can always find a way through the difficult times.

Outdoor: Is the adventure itself the easy part?

KL: Pulling off the adventure is what I am best at; knowing how to pace myself and mitigate risks to be able to repeat the effort day after day, week after week and month after month is perhaps my strongest suit. That is the bottom line from which I can build my ideas and develop the bigger picture.

I think of my projects like a work of art; I begin with an idea and create a vision, which is like starting with a blank canvas and sketching out the scene. To research and organise the project is like forming the outlines and introducing the shading. To perform the journey is to add the details and colours. And finally, once the expedition is completed successfully, to have the ability to analyse and document the story and sell it, is like framing and presenting the work of art for all to see.

Outdoor: How will your just completed Finke River expedition help you realise your ultimate goal to be the first person to cycle across Antarctica via the South Pole?

KL: Cycling on sandy surfaces requires similar skills to cycling over snow. Both surfaces are soft, variable and difficult to read. I constantly have to focus on the surface just ahead of my front wheel to be prepared to adapt my balance with each pedal stroke. The techniques are similar; to keep the bike in a smaller gear than I normally would to give the option to power out of a soft or unstable spot if necessary. Good core strength is



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NEWS



Kate Leeming's challenge has been named Breaking the Cycle, South Pole. PICTURE CREDIT: Phil Coates



Tackling the terrain of Iceland. PICTURE CREDIT: Tristan Brailey

essential. Cycling over sand or snow for long periods of time requires the same mental approach and the same intense focus. I cannot worry about maintaining a certain average speed, more I just have to find a steady rhythm and keep the pedals turning.

Outdoor: How did you decide on the idea to be the first to cycle across Antarctica?

KL: Antarctica has always been a place I've been intrigued by, especially by the achievements of the polar explorers of the heroic age. Visiting the Antarctic continent in the early 1900s would be like us travelling to Mars. Antarctica is also very relevant to the world — it's the driver of the global climate system; a harsh frozen continent that is most susceptible to the burning of fossil fuels and thereby increasing the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. It is the last great wilderness and needs to be protected.

Outdoor: What are the immediate challenges you face in achieving this goal?

KL: Now that I have completed four polar training expeditions and facilitated the development of the first all-wheel-drive fat bike, with tyres that provide maximum flotation, I believe I am ready to make a successful journey across the continent via the South Pole. The immediate challenge — and key issue holding me back — is finding the funding.

Outdoor: How do you imagine the cycle will go? Have you started visualising what it will be like? What do you imagine the physical challenges and dangers to be?

KL: To make a successful crossing of the Antarctic continent by bicycle will take the culmination of all my experience as an expedition cyclist; my mental and physical strength. As long as I listen to my body be well-prepared and implement what I have learned over the last five years, I am confident that I can do it. But at the same time, I take nothing for granted. Antarctica will ask big questions of my character and resolve and I will have to dig deep, but I am quietly confident, that once I reach the start line, I will be able to reach the finish line.

There are dangers — crevasses and exposure to extreme cold being the main threats — but mitigating the risks are the main game and with my meticulous preparation and the support of such an experienced team, I'm sure we will meet and overcome any challenge that presents. **0**



Long shadows on Canadian Arctic snow. PICTURE CREDIT: Claudio von Planta

"To make a successful crossing of the Antarctic continent by bicycle will take the culmination of all my experience as an expedition cyclist; my mental and physical strength"



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Mycena interrupta.
PICTURE CREDIT: Arwen Dyer

Outdoor clothing giant adds weight to Tarkine.

Outdoor recently caught up with Patagonia's Vice President Rick Ridgeway about his efforts to protect a significant Australian ecosystem.

Outdoor clothing giant Patagonia has joined forces with the Bob Brown Foundation to give Tasmania's Tarkine region World Heritage protection status and return it to Aboriginal ownership.

Last month Patagonia's Vice President Rick Ridgeway, a renowned mountaineer and adventurer, came to Australia to throw his weight behind the campaign.

The battle for the Tarkine has been ongoing. In 2013, the Australian Heritage Council found it to be of outstanding heritage value and recommended it be entered on the National Heritage List. However, the Bob Brown Foundation says the Australian Government failed to list the full recommended area.

The Foundation says the Aboriginal heritage coastline still suffers severe damage from offroad vehicles. It says the Tarkine remains a stronghold for the Earth's largest living marsupial carnivore, the Tasmanian Devil, and is prime habitat for

giant wedge-tailed eagles, white goshawks, quolls, wombats and platypuses.

Patagonia has now joined forces with the Foundation, launching a new film to raise global awareness of the destructive impact of the mining and logging industries, and prepared a petition calling for signatures from around the globe to deliver to the Tasmanian State Premier Will Hodgman and the Australian Federal Government.

Ridgeway says Patagonia is deeply committed to supporting environmental causes and the Tarkine has, "significant global importance because of its unique ecosystem, which deserves support from the threats facing it from clear felling and mining, and continued practice of offroad vehicles, especially along [the] coast".

"I remember squatting on beach next to Bob Brown and examining types of shells and abalones and imagining people living on that coastline. Experiencing the uniqueness of whole



Rick Ridgeway and Bob Brown.
PICTURE SUPPLIED



The stunning Tarkine Coast.
PICTURE CREDIT: Paul Hoelen



Exploring the protected Tarkine.
PICTURE CREDIT: Pete Harmsen



Tarkine rainforest track.
PICTURE CREDIT: Alice Hansen

eco-system has been a valuable experience for me personally," he says.

"Who are we to go in with chainsaws and take down this deep history of our planet? Those trees are being clear felled, burnt and sprayed with chemicals to kill any other living organism ... and to see that ... we should be embarrassed at our behaviour."

He says the main opposition is coming from logging and mining, and it's vitally important to work out how to transition those people.

"We are taking a multi-pronged approach. We've produced a film in hopes of getting support of citizens of Tasmania and we want to engage the political community to get more support for this. We also want to support Bob Brown's proposal to build a hiking track across the Tarkine."

He says they also need to identify other stakeholders who can be involved in a partnership to protect the area.

"This is a big and wild area and it's under real threat and from our experience in working in similar forests we know that clear felling can take an area 500 to 1000 years to regenerate ...

and that is such permanent destruction that we really have to do something about that now because who wants to be responsible for an action that's going to take 10 generations to recover from."

"I am so personally committed to stopping this in my lifetime. The Aboriginal places are emotional and moving and will stay with you forever."

Bob Brown says having Patagonia, and Ridgeway personally, involved in this project is "inspiring and the international attention will undeniably help save the Tarkine".

He says his enthusiasm is palpable and while he was here, a donation of \$10,000 came out of Melbourne alone.

Brown highlights the importance of protecting the region as not only because of the ecosystem, but the jobs it provides, saying 30 per cent of the population in Tasmania work in tourism and hospitality.

"So clearly keeping trees vertical and not horizontal going to wood chip is important locally," he says.

Brown says Ridgeway is already planning a return to the region. **Q**

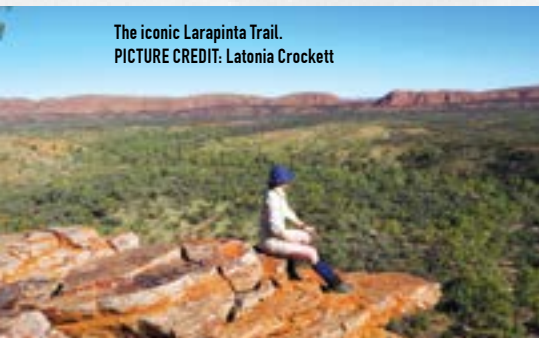
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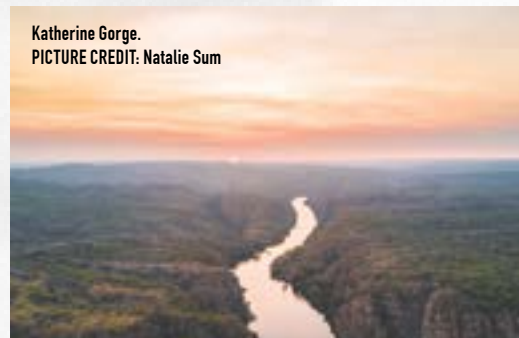
The stunning plains of Kakadu.
PICTURE CREDIT: Jane Barnes



The iconic Larapinta Trail.
PICTURE CREDIT: Latonia Crockett



Katherine Gorge.
PICTURE CREDIT: Natalie Sum



Views aplenty at Kakadu NP.
PICTURE CREDIT: Jason van Miert



Trekking in Australia's Top End has never been better, or more accessible.

Australia's Top End is home to the some of world's most ancient trekking sites. This winter, one of Australia's most experienced adventure tour operators and Tourism NT have joined forces to help make the Never Never more accessible than ever.

Australian Walking Holidays has teamed up with Tourism NT to offer \$250 gift vouchers to Larapinta walkers and cutting prices on two of its most popular walking adventures in the Top End.

The first 300 Larapinta Trail trekkers to book a walk in July and travel this season will receive a \$250 gear voucher from Wild Earth, and anyone booking the Jatbula Trail or Kakadu Walking

Adventure will enjoy big savings, too.

So, if you've been thinking about escaping the cold and heading to the NT, now's probably the best time to book.

Australian Walking Holidays, the domestic division of the World Expeditions Travel Group who pioneered the trail in 1995, has an amazing range of walking trips on the stunning Larapinta, including the six-day Classic

"Swim in peaceful waterholes hidden deep within the West MacDonnell Ranges, marvel at the stunning rock formations at Simpson's Gap, Standley Chasm and Serpentine Gorge, climb Mount Sonder for a spectacular sunrise and gain insight into the rich history of Australia's traditional owner's indigenous culture."

Larapinta Trek in Comfort, the nine-day Best of the Larapinta Trail and the six, nine and 12-day self-guided Larapinta Trail treks.

The award-winning, six-day Classic Larapinta Trek in Comfort, which is one of the 13 Great Walks of Australia, is guided trekking. Walkers carry only a day pack and enjoy the facilities of comfortable, semi-permanent eco campsites – including hot showers and lounge facilities, and accommodation in off-ground beds in stand-up tents. The nine-day Best of the Larapinta Trail is also guided, with walkers carrying only daypacks, and features wilderness camping under the Milky Way.

The self-guided treks are best suited to more confident walkers who enjoy self-sufficiency and travelling at their own pace, but who also appreciate the logistics – such as lightweight food, equipment, maps and transfers to and from the trail – being organised for them.

Whichever way you choose to experience the iconic Larapinta Trail, you'll have the opportunity to swim in peaceful waterholes hidden deep within the West MacDonnell Ranges, marvel at the stunning rock formations at Simpson's Gap, Standley Chasm and Serpentine Gorge, climb Mount Sonder for a spectacular sunrise and gain insight into the rich history of Australia's traditional owner's Indigenous culture.

Further north, the promotion means savings on two of the most popular walking adventures in the Top End. You will save \$200 on the Jatbula Trail and \$250 on the Kakadu Walking Adventure if you book in July and travel before 31 August, 2018.

Save \$200 and pay \$1795 (down from \$1995) on the six-day fully guided, full pack Jatbula Trail, which includes five-nights campsite accommodation, all meals, services of expert guides throughout as well as transfers to and from Darwin.

On the Kakadu Walking Adventure, you'll save \$250 and pay \$2245 (down from \$2495), a deal which includes five-nights exclusive semi-permanent campsite accommodation, all your meals, expert guide throughout, transfers and transport.

More information and terms and conditions at www.australianwalkingholidays.com.au or phone 1300 767 381.

Katherine Gorge at sunset.
PICTURE CREDIT: Chrystal Hutchinson



Swimming in paradise – Kakadu NP.
PICTURE CREDIT: Peter Walton



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Off piste and loving it
PICTURE CREDIT: Thredbo Resort



Thredbo Backcountry Tours now supported by The North Face

One of the world's leading outdoor adventure brands is adding its wealth of experience to help develop a first-class off-piste dimension to an iconic Australian winter resort destination.

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The Thredbo guides are among the most experienced in the country, having gained extensive backcountry knowledge from exploring the mountains for many years. They



Incredible and unique terrain.
PICTURE CREDIT: Thredbo Resort

are first-aid trained, hold avalanche certification and carry appropriate emergency equipment.

Every guest will be provided with a North Face backcountry pack containing a beacon, probe and shovel. Snowshoes, splitboards and touring skis are available for rental, so you don't need to purchase any gear beforehand.

Backcountry Tours will run on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday each week from the beginning of July pending weather and snow conditions. Tours require a minimum of two guests to run and take a maximum of four guests per tour. See our backcountry ski feature in this issue, starting p42. **0**