

Hannah McKeand

World-record Holder: Solo, Unsupported trek to South Pole

British adventurer and endurance skier, Hannah McKeand became the fastest person ever to trek to the South Pole, solo and unaided in December 2006. During this expedition, Hannah pulled a sledge that weighed up to 100kg (16st) for 690 miles from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole. Despite a diet of fudge and chocolate, Hannah lost three stone during her solo trek. Completing her polar expedition in just 39 days, 9 hours and 33 minutes, Hannah broke the world record (beating both men and women) for the fastest solo, unsupported journey.

Hannah's next challenge is to take on the toughest route to the North Pole to achieve a world first. Hannah will attempt to become the first solo woman to travel successfully from Ward Hunt Island (Canada) to the Geographic North Pole on foot without re-supplies and with no outside assistance. It is a gruelling 415nm epic journey that has only been completed by one man solo without outside assistance, British explorer Pen Hadow. The terrain is hostile with open leads of water that must be swum across, potential threats from Polar Bears and temperatures as low as -50 °C. The frozen Arctic Ocean is constantly in a state of flux and forms rubble and huge pressure ridges of ice that have to be negotiated (many stand two-storeys high). In March 2008, Hannah began her trek across this difficult terrain but after two weeks progress, she was forced to end her expedition early due to injury. Hannah was hurt when the ice unexpectedly cracked and she fell into a deep hole in the polar ice. One of the world's rising stars in polar exploration, Hannah's courage, determination and positive spirit continue to inspire many. Hannah is already planning her return in 2009. As she says, she has unfinished business!

Hannah followed a degree in Classics with a Marketing career in theatre for seven years before following her passion for exploring. Hannah has travelled remote regions in Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Afghanistan. In 2004, Hannah joined a team to ski to the South Pole completing this trek in 56 days. She'd never skied before. (Extraordinarily, just two years later, Hannah set the speed record for the journey solo and unaided.) After her first expedition to the South Pole, Hannah began training to join the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race in 2005 completing half of the voyage. She and her partner David Pryce then set up their own company, Blizzard Expeditions and have run successful sailing expeditions from Australia to Chile and the Antarctic region since 2007.

Hannah's energy, vitality, dedication and resourcefulness were clearly evident in her South Pole success. Focus, determination, positive visualization and a will to face adversity are vital in the polar environment. Hannah's inspirational story about extending your own limits and potential has some powerful messages for business and everyday life. She is passionate about raising environmental awareness too.

Hannah offers an entertaining and inspiring keynote talk with stunning images from the Polar environment and footage from her expeditions. She also enjoys after dinner speaking engagements. Her style is natural and engaging with self-effacing humour and her story is highly motivational as she seeks to encourage others to achieve their goals.

'A fluent and inspiring speaker with a wholly engaging personality. Her film clips, in which she speaks direct to camera with disarming honesty of her feelings, have an intimacy and a spontaneity that are both poignant and inspiring. One cannot help but be amazed at her courage.'