

Katie-Jane Cooper

Former-Model and Adventurer

Katie-Jane Cooper proves that we can embrace change and achieve extraordinary things. As Katie says: 'we just need to be bold enough to begin.'

Katie-Jane built a successful career as a commercial model. Working for M&S, Alexander McQueen, TIGI, Oliver Brown and Ludlow of London among many others, Katie-Jane also acted as Cameron Diaz's body-double in the film 'The Holiday'. Meeting experienced adventurer Tarka L'Herpiniere, however, changed everything. They were complete opposites. Tarka had been climbing mountains since he was three years old: Katie-Jane had conquered the catwalk. And yet as romance bloomed, Tarka suggested they do a major expedition together and Katie surprised everyone by agreeing to the challenge.

Katie-Jane and Tarka decided to become the first people to walk 3,000 miles along the Great Wall of China – the full route had been revealed by scientists and no one had walked it continuously. It was to be a harsh six-month trek through inhospitable landscapes. To succeed, Katie-Jane had to undertake a colossal transformation.

Katie-Jane committed herself to endurance training, putting on extra weight (almost three stone) and preparing her self mentally for the grueling expedition. In exchanging salads for double cream and high heels for walking boots, Katie-Jane knew she would have difficult goals to meet in China: walking up to 30 miles a day across difficult terrain while carrying a huge back-pack. During the estimated 12 million footsteps it took to complete the Great Wall of China, Katie-Jane faced blizzards, temperatures of -35°C , frost bite, starvation, exhaustion and dehydration. During the trek, Katie-Jane lost an inch in height from the weight of her backpack. Despite the odds, Katie-Jane and Tarka completed this greatest of journeys from the West to the East

– through the heat of the Gobi Desert and the sub-zero temperatures of the mountains – and they treasured their encounters with remote rural villages along their route. They completed 4300km (3,000 miles) in 167 days. A world-first. And they only argued twice – about directions.

Katie-Jane continues to embrace change and opportunity. She has set goals and taken on challenges far beyond her comfort zone. Katie-Jane cycled through Ethiopia in October 2008 to raise awareness of a charity 'Re-cycle' a project that sends second-hand bikes to Africa. She also worked as part of a support team near the North Pole in early 2009 building up her experience of life at minus 40°C. However, Katie-Jane's most difficult challenge was to follow later that year.

In August 2009, Katie-Jane and Tarka set out on another ambitious expedition to make a major crossing of the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap without kites or support. The world's third largest ice cap, this area is mostly unmapped and infamous for its notorious weather: whiteouts, blizzards, ferocious winds and freezing fog. Their 'Rivers of Ice' expedition became an international news story when their tent failed unexpectedly on day 30 of the expedition.

Katie-Jane and Tarka knew it would be a harsh and difficult journey especially as they hoped to make a full and unsupported trek from the North to the South, a feat never completed before. They skied, climbed and walked across the Ice Cap in predominantly storm conditions, traversing ice fields with dangerous crevasses, frozen cliffs and glacial river networks. Having completed two-thirds of the crossing in record time, Katie-Jane and Tarka waited for a weather window to cross a technically difficult section of the journey that could only be tackled in good visibility. But as heavy snow fell and the winds increased, their tent poles snapped and the fabric ripped, leaving them no option but to build a survival shelter in an ice hole using the remains of their tent. They were to spend a total of five nights in temporary shelters as they made their way down a sheer glacier to sea-level in storm conditions. Katie-Jane's goggles were damaged so she suffered temporary

snow-blindness and Tarka suffered with 'frostnip to his toes. A boat couldn't collect them due to the dangers of glacial ice falling, and so a helicopter was sent to pick them up. It was while sheltering from the wind in a crevasse awaiting the helicopter that Tarka produced his Grandmother's engagement ring – he'd secretly carried it in his camera bag for the entire expedition! News of their five-day survival on the ice and Tarka's proposal featured on the news around the world. And although they didn't complete the world-first that they had aimed for, in traversing the Ice Cap as far as they did, Katie-Jane became the first woman to complete a major crossing of the Ice Cap - an extraordinary achievement. They are also the first British expedition to do so.

Katie-Jane and Tarka plan to return to the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap to complete the first full crossing without kites or support. They also continue to plan their ultimate goal – an expedition known as 'One World: Powered by Us'. This epic grueling three-year expedition has been described by Sir Ranulph Fiennes as 'set to be the greatest expedition of the century.' This will be an historic journey. Using only their own motive power, in the form of manhauling, cycling and ocean rowing, Katie and Tarka will go beyond what was believed possible as they navigate the globe on its polar axis to complete the 30,000km epic voyage from one geographic pole to the other.

Katie's story reveals that we can leave our comfort zones and achieve what seems impossible. Her story is about succeeding in harsh conditions and not losing hope and motivation when it gets tough. Katie is passionate about awaking potential in others. Audiences relate to her honesty and humour as she talks about her inexperience and the changes she has made in leaving the glamorous world of modeling behind.

Katie-Jane and Tarka's adventures have been made into two inspirational documentaries: *The Great Walk of China* (2009) and *The African Way* (2009). They intend to make a film about the Rivers of Ice expedition in 2010.

Speaker Topics

- Having the courage to change
- Staying motivated in tough times
- Setting & achieving goals

Rave Reviews

‘Tarka and Katie went down a storm – they were fantastic and I am really pleased we chose them as our speakers for the evening. Feedback was all extremely positive. They were both such lovely down-to-earth people, wanting to share their experiences – and the story is amazing. Certainly made the audience think (including me!) about ‘what’s next’ in life.’ (*Midlands Excellence*)

Speaking Style

Natural, vivacious and charming, Katie brings alive her journey through remote, rural China. Katie’s story is delivered with good-natured humour and candid honesty. Audiences enjoy hearing about her transformation from glamorous model to endurance adventurer. At present, Katie only offers a dual talk with Tarka L’Herpiniere. Their presentation ‘Both Sides of the Story’ is illustrated with vivid photographs and inspiring film footage.