

## **Katie-Jane L'Herpinere**

### **Explorer (& former model)**

**Katie-Jane L'Herpinere** is the first woman to walk the entire Great Wall of China from its most westerly terminus to its most easterly. This trek took six months and covered 3,000 miles. During a recent pioneering expedition to one of the world's largest icecaps, Katie-Jane's tent was ripped to shreds in a terrifying storm. She spent 5 nights in a makeshift shelter slowly making her way down a glacier in horrendous conditions (suffering snow blindness) to finally reach safety.

Katie-Jane's story is all the more inspiring because she left behind the international catwalk to take on expeditions in hostile environments – swapping high heels for ice-climbing boots; lipstick for crampons and salads for double-cream.

Katie-Jane's unique story is told with great humour and fantastic film footage and photographs. This acclaimed talk is entertaining, moving, dramatic and awe-inspiring. Her key messages are about change, challenge and above all, how we have hidden reserves of strength and potential to face the toughest of tasks. Katie-Jane proves that we can face fear, doubt, exhaustion (and Nature at her worst) and yet still find the courage to take another step.

Katie-Jane L'Herpinere (formerly Cooper) built a successful career as a commercial model. Working for M&S and Alexander McQueen among many others, Katie-Jane was enjoying the opportunities that modeling created. Katie-Jane acted as Cameron Diaz's body-double in the film 'The Holiday' as well as appearing in several other Hollywood films. Meeting experienced adventurer and polar explorer Tarka L'Herpinere, however, changed everything. They were complete opposites. Tarka climbed mountains and excelled at endurance: Katie-Jane's focus was making it down the catwalk in heels. 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 the full route along the Great Wall of China that had been revealed recently 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 – she began endurance training, both physical and mental, and she had to put on three stone in weight.

Katie-Jane knew she would have difficult goals in China: walking up to 30 miles a day across difficult terrain while carrying a huge rucksack. During the estimated 12 million footsteps, Katie-Jane faced blizzards, temperatures of minus 35°C, frostbite, starvation, exhaustion and dehydration. She 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 people from 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 and she has also worked as part of a scientific 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 and innovative expedition to make a major crossing of the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap without kites or support. This is the world's third largest ice cap and mostly unmapped. It is 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 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 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. It was while sheltering from the wind in a crevasse awaiting pick-up from a 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). Their story has featured on BBC and ITV news, UK national newspapers such as *The Telegraph* and *Sunday Times* and magazines such as *Bella* and *Hello!*

Katie also presents at client events with Tarka L'Herpiniere and their dual talk offers a unique opportunity to hear 'Both Sides of the Story'.

### **Speaking Style**

Natural, vivacious, entertaining and charming, Katie brings alive the highs and the lows of her journey through remote, rural China and across the Patagonian Ice Cap. Katie's story is delivered with good-natured humour and candid honesty and audiences enjoy hearing about her transformation from glamorous model to endurance athlete and adventurer.

### **Rave Reviews**

'I have to say that Katie-Jane was THE most inspirational speaker I've ever seen (and I've seen a few) I was absolutely transfixed throughout the whole presentation and have to say I didn't want it to end!' (Dale Carneige)

'Tarka and Katie went down a storm – they were fantastic. 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*)