

Tarka L'Herpiniere

Adventurer, Endurance Athlete & Film-maker

Bilingual: French/English

Although only in his late-twenties, Tarka L'Herpiniere has shown tremendous courage and ambition to tackle awe-inspiring expeditions including attempting to summit Everest without oxygen. With his partner, former model Katie-Jane Cooper, Tarka has walked the Great Wall of China from West to East in 167 days (a world first in 2007) and completed a major crossing of the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap (the first British Expedition to do so in 2009). Tarka has inspired Katie-Jane to embrace life-changing challenges beyond what most considered possible – and they offer a unique dual talk with superb images and footage giving both sides of their inspirational story. At his solo speaking engagements too, Tarka speaks with experience, insight, passion and humour about:

- Follow your dreams
- Persevere in tough times
- Find courage & conquer the fear of failure
- Achieve your goals - achieve your potential
- Co-operation in adversity

Tarka L'Herpiniere has always embraced a challenge. At just 16 years, Tarka took a bicycle out of a skip, restored it in the science lab of his British school and then set off on a 1,000km journey to the South of France. A couple of years later, inspired to test his limits and motivation, Tarka ran the equivalent of 8 consecutive marathons in 8 days. Born in the UK, Tarka spent several years living in the French Alps and excelled in the opportunities this gave him. Tarka's sporting skills include skiing; rock and ice climbing; mountaineering; mountain biking; paragliding; skydiving, and BASE-jumping. Although a talented rugby player (Tarka played for London Wasps and Bath RC), Tarka's first love remained adventure. In 2006, now an experienced mountaineer, Tarka attempted one of the most difficult things imaginable: he joined a group of elite climbers to summit Everest without oxygen. At more than 7km above sea level, Tarka developed a highly dangerous condition (High Altitude

Cerebral Edema) and had no option but to be evacuated. He then found himself abandoned on an airfield in Katmandu just as Civil War was breaking out. Tarka has experienced the challenge of Arctic winters with successful expeditions in 2002 & 2003. The following year, Tarka attempted to become the youngest person ever to reach the North and South Poles, unaided and in succession, but regrettably sponsors had to withdraw and Tarka couldn't complete the project.

In 2007, Tarka L'Herpinier and his partner Katie-Jane completed a walk along the length of the Great Wall of China from West to East: the full extent of the Wall had only recently been revealed by archeologists and this trek was a world-first. It was an inspiring journey of more than 3,000 miles (4,300km) and took them six months. Staying motivated and working together in challenging conditions were not optional extras. The expedition took them through rural China and remote, dramatic and inhospitable landscapes. They survived the heat of the Gobi desert and blizzards and -35°C in snowy mountains. But it is their encounters with people and their generosity that will stay with them most. A film 'The Great Walk of China' documents their journey and has been short-listed for several international adventure film festivals.

During late 2008, Tarka cycled through eight African countries on a bike that had seen better days: in fact, 'Herbert' needed almost constant repair. Rather than arrive with a modern highly specialized bike, Tarka chose to buy a second-hand one in North Africa and then donate it on completion of his journey in South Africa – 8,000 miles later. One objective of this expedition was to raise awareness of the charity Re-Cycle - a project to collect and ship second-hand bikes and spare parts to Africa. Just months later in early 2009, Tarka and Katie-Jane took the opportunity to work supporting a scientific project near the North Pole living in minus 40°C.

In August 2009, Tarka and Katie-Jane set out on an extraordinary attempt to become the first team to traverse the full length of the Southern Patagonia Ice Cap without kites or support. The 'Rivers of Ice' team trekked, climbed and skied across ice fields, frozen cliffs and glacial river networks negotiating

crevasse fields in ferocious winds, whiteouts, blizzards, freezing fog and heavy snowfall. During an extreme storm on the Ice Cap, after 30 successful days on expedition, Tarka was shocked when their specialist tent failed. In frightening conditions, Tarka built an emergency shelter in an ice hole and considered their best options for survival. Their dramatic story of five nights in makeshift shelters on the ice as they slowly progressed down a sheer glacier when conditions allowed caught the imagination of the international press. Their story was shared with thousands as Tarka and Katie-Jane posted daily podcasts on the expedition website. Finally reaching sea level, the team realized a boat couldn't collect them due to the instability of ice at the glacial mouth and so a helicopter pick-up was arranged. It was at this point, sheltering in a crevasse out of the wind that Tarka proposed – producing a ring he had carried hidden in his camera bag!

Tarka and Katie-Jane didn't complete their original full crossing but they are the first British couple to do a major crossing of the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap. They intend to return in 2010 – fitter, faster and married! Beyond the Patagonian expedition, Tarka and Katie-Jane continue to plan their next epic journey that Sir Ranulph Fiennes has described as “*Set to be the greatest expedition of the century*”. Tarka and Katie-Jane will embark on an unprecedented historic journey. Using only their own motive power, in the form of man hauling, cycling and ocean rowing, they 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.

Documentaries filmed and narrated by Tarka, ‘The Great Walk of China’ and ‘The African Way’ have been released on DVD. Tarka and Katie-Jane intend to make a film about the Rivers of Ice expedition in 2010 too.

Tarka is increasingly fascinated with how resilient, resourceful, determined and flexible human beings can be. Tarka's expeditions often raise money and awareness of charities and where possible aim to contribute to scientific research about high performance, the human body and its behaviour in extreme circumstances.

Tarka speaks with passion about taking opportunities, facing difficult challenges and staying focused in tough times. He knows what it is to face disappointment and hardship and how vital it is to stay motivated no matter how difficult the task and harsh the conditions. Tarka seeks to inspire audiences to break free from any self-imposed limitations and achieve their goals. His humour, dramatic photographs and film footage create a memorable and entertaining presentation. Tarka has a broad range of experiences to draw upon when tailoring talks for each speaking engagement.

Speaking Style

Fluent in English and French, Tarka is an accomplished, experienced speaker. He has excellent film footage and photographs to draw upon to tailor each talk. His style is inspirational, engaging, enthusiastic and humorous. Tarka also offers a captivating dual talk with Katie-Jane Cooper about their Great Walk of China and other expeditions.