

MODERN-DAY EXPLORERS

Who are the men and women who are conquering the unthinkable? They walk among us, seemingly normal, but undertake feats of extreme adventure and live to tell the tale...

LEWIS PUGH

RHYMES WITH "WHEW"

"...he couldn't feel his fingertips for four months!"

The funniest line in Lewis Pugh's recently-released memoir, *21 Yaks and a Speedo: How to achieve your impossible* (Jonathan Ball Publishers) is when he says, "I'm not a rule-breaker by nature." The British-South African SAS reservist and endurance swimmer is a regular in the icy waters of the Arctic and Antarctic oceans. He's swum long-distance in every ocean in the world and holds several world records, perhaps most notably the record of being the first person to swim 500 metres freestyle in the Finnish World Winter Swimming Championships (the usual distance is 25 metres breaststroke) – wearing only a Speedo. He also swam a near-unimaginable 1000 metres in -1.7°C waters near the North Pole, after which he couldn't feel his fingertips for four months! When he's not breaking endurance records, Lewis tours the globe speaking about his passion: conserving our oceans and water, climate change and global warming. Sounds like the very definition of a rule-breaker to us.

21 Yaks and a Speedo: How to Achieve Your Impossible is a must-read.



Lewis Pugh swims 1km in -1.7°C waters in a speedo!

Alex Honnold famous free soloist



ALEX HONNOLD

GIVES ROCKS

"...if you fall, you'll likely die (and many free soloists have)."

When your appetite for the thrill of danger is as large as 27-year-old Alex Honnold's, you'd better find a 600 metres-high sheer cliff such as the Half Dome, a granite dome in the Californian Yosemite Valley, and scramble up it with your bare hands. That's right: no ropes, no carabiners, nothing to jam into the minuscule cracks in the rockface. The "sport" is called free soloing – climbing rockface without any safety devices to help you, or even to catch you should you fall – so obviously it's extremely dangerous, with a high body count. If you fall, you'll likely die (and many free soloists have).

With his friend Hans Florine, Honnold set a speed record last year. Together, they free-soloed up a cliff in just over two hours. Acknowledged by his peers as one of the very best free soloists in the world, he also does the technically more difficult climbs (with ropes and other equipment), and free climbs (with safety ropes) and is a great route-deviser. Clearly, Alex Honnold knows how to do one thing better than anybody else in the world: forget his fear of falling.

JILL HEINERTH

MODERN MERMAID

"...the first person to have entered caves in the Antarctic icebergs..."

When Jill Heinerth was a schoolgirl, she was told she couldn't be an astronaut because she was a girl. So she shifted her focus from great heights to great depths and became the best female scuba diver in the world instead. She has dived deeper into caves than any woman in history. She has achieved more than most women and men and she holds records for being the first person to have entered caves in the Antarctic icebergs and so she's been the first person ever to see several underwater locations. Because this scuba and closed circuit rebreather expert is also a keen photographer, filmmaker and writer (also a qualified graphic designer who owns an advertising agency), she has shared her spoils with the rest of humanity. You can see stunning photographs of her adventures at www.intotheplanet.com. Jill's passion isn't just for fun either. She participates in scientific diving missions, doing 3D cave mapping, and she's a voice for marine conservation, notably with her *We Are Water* project.



Jill Heinerth cave diver

TYLER BRADT

WHATEVER FLOATS YOUR BOAT

“...Bradt broke a vertebra in his back while descending the Abiqua Falls in Oregon, but after receiving surgery he was soon back in the, er, saddle.”

Here's another 27-year-old superman with a thirst for adventure. This man's poison is water: whitewater kayaking, to be precise. Ever since his dad introduced him to the sport at age six, he was hooked and quickly outstripped his father – and then the rest of the world – in ability. Yes, he's kayaked the world's biggest rapids on the Congo River. But his career high came in 2009 when he broke the world record for the highest waterfall ever successfully kayaked, the Palouse Falls in Washington State, at 57 metres. (That's 5.2 metres higher than Niagara Falls.)

In 2011, Bradt broke a vertebra in his back while descending the Abiqua Falls in Oregon, but after receiving surgery he was soon back in the, er, saddle. His latest epic adventure is circumnavigating the globe in a five-year sailing trek. He and his crew departed from Mexico earlier this year and have just completed their Pacific crossing.



Tyler Bradt descends Palouse falls from 57 metres

HERBERT NITSCH

DEEP DOWN

“The neurological damage he sustained meant he had to learn to walk, talk and move again.”

Free divers come in two categories: those who take a deep breath and dive down, down, down, competing to see how far they can get a) without any breathing apparatus and b) without getting seriously ill with the bends; and those who stay on the surface, but compete for the sheer length of time they can hold their breath.

Enter Herbert Nitsch, an Austrian free diver who ironically, during his day job, rises to great heights as a pilot. Able to hold his breath for nine minutes at a time, he holds the 2007 world record for “the deepest man on earth”, descending to a depth of 214 metres on a single breath. He also holds 33 other diving-related world records. Last year he attempted to descend to 249 metres in his no-limit dive.

It was only on the way back up that he got narcosis and had to undergo intense decompression treatment for months afterwards. The neurological damage he sustained meant he had to learn to walk, talk and move again. Herbert is doing very well and freediving again, one year later. Don't try this at home, kids!

FUN FACT:

German Tom Sietas currently holds the record for simply not inhaling for the longest time: 22.22 minutes.



Free diver Herbert Nitsch

FRANÇOIS GABART

AROUND THE WORLD IN 78 DAYS

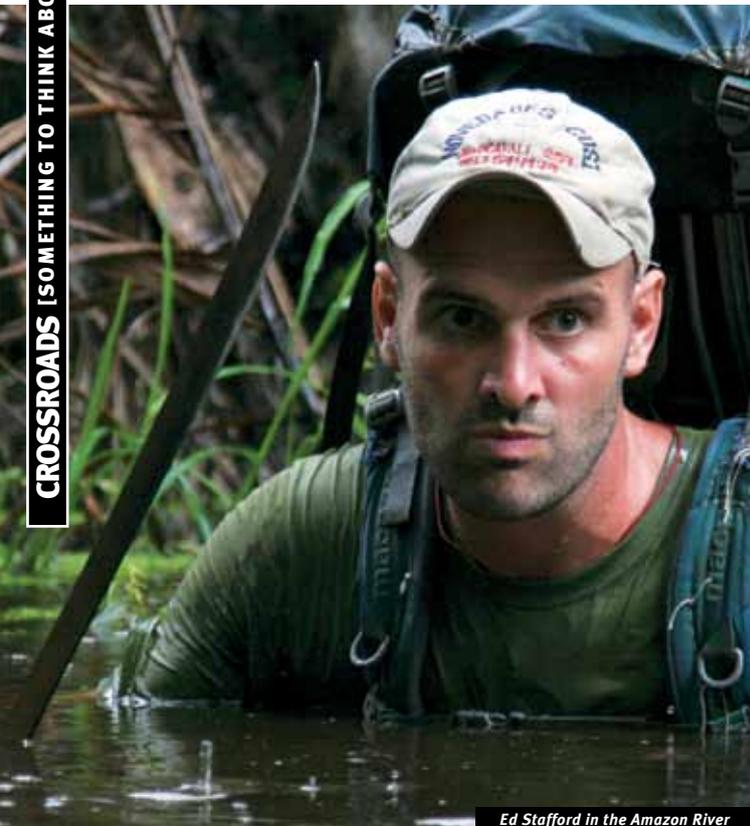
“...months of solitude, as well as the dangers posed by icebergs, bad weather and sea mammals...”

The Vendée Globe: a single skipper on a single 60-foot yacht races non-stop 43 500 kilometres around the world without any assistance. Those are the rules of the world's toughest sea race, which has taken place every four years since 1989. The months of solitude, as well as the dangers posed by icebergs, bad weather and sea mammals all add up to one extreme sail-boating challenge. Unlike the Velux 5 Oceans race, which occurs in stages, there is no break, and last year's race was tighter than ever. The winner, Francois Gabart, broke the record for the shortest circumnavigation of the globe ever, in a little more than 78 days. His runner-up was just three hours behind him!

Somehow we don't think the world has heard the last of this 20-year-old Frenchman.



Extreme skipper, Francois Gabart



Ed Stafford in the Amazon River

ED STAFFORD

THE LONG WALK

“...anacondas, parasites, and a particularly inhospitable Peruvian tribe who threatened to kill him.”

Just four years ago, at the age of 33, Ed Stafford got up and started walking. 860 days and several near-death experiences later, he stopped. He had become the first person ever to walk the entire length of the Amazon River. That's 7000 kilometres of danger: unwelcoming locals, wild animals and the risk of getting lost, starving or dehydrating. Stafford did get into some frightening scrapes involving anacondas, parasites, and a particularly inhospitable Peruvian tribe who threatened to kill him if he was found on their land (they later relented as long as he agreed to employ a member of the clan as a guide). He battled tropical disease, and ran out of food, once, for eight days, when his GPS misdirected him and his stop was not inhabited by people as he had expected.

What sets Stafford apart, and won him his Guinness World Record, is that his expedition (which consisted mostly of himself and one other person for parts of the way) made no use of boats to propel them along their journey at all. If he had to cross the river, he did so perpendicularly so that the river did not shorten his trip. Stafford is passionate about sharing his wonder of the rainforests with other people, to motivate them to care about their conservation. 🌿



Norotshama River Resort is situated on the banks of the Orange River and nestled in the heart of the Aussenkehr grape valley; a gateway to Namibia's wealth of breathtaking landscapes. Norotshama offers traditional Namibian hospitality, luxury accommodation and a host of exciting activities. Our resort comprises 30 en suite chalets, 15 fully equipped camping sites, children's recreational area, an à la carte restaurant, bar and swimming pool. Activities include canoeing, fly-fishing, 4x4 routes, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking and rock-climbing. Retreat to this remarkable oasis of tranquility and experience true Namibian grandeur.

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