


A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a teal long-sleeved shirt and a red backpack, is seen from behind, pointing her right arm towards a rugged mountain peak. The mountain is covered in dry, brownish vegetation. Below the mountain, a vast sea of white clouds stretches across the valley, with distant mountain ranges visible on the horizon under a clear blue sky. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden light and a lens flare effect on the left side of the image.

# ▶ Be a *wild* WOMAN!

Itching to get outdoors? With a raft of initiatives focused on getting us outside to challenge our bodies and minds in nature, there's never been a better time to enjoy an al-fresco adventure

WORDS: Gabrielle Nathan



**F**rom your local hills to a sprawling forest, now is the perfect time to head into the outdoors. But we're not talking sunbathing, picnicking or a gentle stroll – this season, the onus is firmly on adventure and exploration. Increasing numbers of women are participating in outdoor activities, with hiking, mountain biking and trail running top of the list. It seems outdoor exercise is the perfect antidote to our increasingly sedentary and tech-driven lives. 'Breathing in fresh air and taking a proper break away from screens and devices allows you to reconnect with yourself, and reflect on where you are in life and where you're headed without interruptions,' says Lucy Sharma from outdoor educational charity the Outward Bound Trust. That feeling is shared by 74 per cent of women, who say the outdoors is a place to escape everyday stresses.

## PUSH YOUR BOUNDARIES

While simply spending time outside is enough to make us feel happier, healthier and more connected to nature, adding an element of endeavour can bring even more rewards, as Sharma points out. 'Challenging yourself through outdoor exploits is a fantastic way to test your boundaries, escape the constraints of your comfort zone and prove to yourself

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what you're capable of achieving – there's always more in you than you think!' says Sharma. Hers is a view shared by the Outward Bound Trust's CE Nick Barrett, who believes outdoor al-fresco exploration has the power 'to awaken

people's potential and develop in them strength, resilience and self-belief.' To experience all this, you don't need to scale Everest or spend a week wild camping (though we'd encourage you to try). Because from venturing out to a crag to learn the basics of rock climbing, to hiking deep into the woods, to camping out under the stars for a night, your outdoor adventure is whatever you make it, for as long as you want and as extreme as you wish.

This season, thanks to high-profile media campaigns such as The North Face's #SheMovesMountains which, in partnership with the Outward Bound Trust, celebrates adventurous female explorers; and Colombia Sportswear X She Explores campaign and clothing line ([columbiasportswear.co.uk](http://columbiasportswear.co.uk)), aimed at encouraging women to explore outdoors in whatever way suits them, you won't be short of support.

Turn the page and soak up the inspiration from some top female adventurers...





## What inspires you?

'Nature – to be part of it and also to protect it. After all, the natural environment enables these adventures and chances to explore.'

### WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE CHALLENGE SO FAR?

'Setting the world record for the fastest time running up and down Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, in 10 hours, six minutes. The mountain environment was just incredible – forests, rocks, glaciers, and all kinds of animals. I also learnt a huge amount from the incredibly special people I met in Tanzania.'

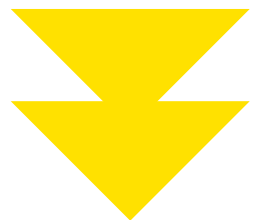


## FERNANDA MACIEL

The Brazilian is a world-record-breaking endurance runner, environmental activist and spokeswoman for The North Face's #SheMovesMountains campaign. Formerly an environmental lawyer, Fernanda now lives in the Spanish Pyrenees where she trains as an ultra runner and is passionate about protecting nature.

### WHAT DOES OUTDOOR ADVENTURE MEAN TO YOU?

'Freedom and discovery! It also brings me peace, balance and self-awareness. Extreme adventures are physically and mentally demanding, so my physical performance has to be at the same level as my mental and emotional performance.'



### What advice would you give to women who are keen to have an outdoor escapade?

'Be inspired by what you see of the world, plan thoroughly by doing your research, know your route well, take the right kit for the environment that you're exploring and go with courage and open heart!'

MAIN IMAGE: The North Face

### WHY SHOULD PEOPLE GET OUTDOORS MORE?

'As a full-time athlete, I spend many hours outdoors every day, and I'm much happier being outdoors than inside. I was an environmental lawyer before and changed my lifestyle to have the opportunity to be outside. It's worth any change if you can live and work outdoors.'

### 'MY FAVOURITE KIT'

'My bright-red The North Face Thermoball Hoodie and Ultra Vertical running shoes – I'm keen on bright colours – and my Etip gloves'



The North Face Thermoball Hoodie, £170; [thenorthface.co.uk](http://thenorthface.co.uk)



The North Face Womens' Etip Gloves, £35



The North Face Ultra Vertical Running Shoes, £120



## GO WILD!

*Sign up for a trip to whet  
your appetite for adventure*

**Plas y Brenin; [pyb.co.uk](http://pyb.co.uk)**

Visit the National Mountain Sports Centre in Snowdonia, Wales and hone your climbing, hiking, biking and paddling skills during an all-inclusive break.

**MP Adventure Academy;  
[mpadventureacademy.com](http://mpadventureacademy.com)**

Spend a week testing your mettle on a hardcore course on Indonesian islands. Led by ex-British Military Overseas Expedition Leader Matt Prior or Squash Falconer, this is an unforgettable intro to adventure travel and overland expeditions.

**Rock & Sun; [rockandsun.com](http://rockandsun.com)**

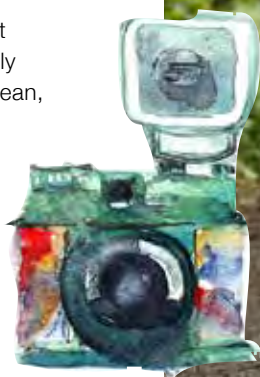
Fancy a women-only climbing holiday in Spain or a taster session in Swanage? You'll find a Rock & Sun course that's perfect for you.



Gale Straub is an American landscape photographer and founder of She Explores, a website and podcast for women who love the outdoors and travel. She Explores has teamed up with Columbia Sportswear for the She Explores campaign to inspire women to discover the outdoors.

## HOW DO YOU FIT OUTDOOR ADVENTURES INTO YOUR LIFE?

'My two favourite activities are backpacking and hiking, but I probably trail run the most often because it's so accessible – it gives me the opportunity to get micro-doses of nature on a daily basis. I also live near water (ocean, rivers and a bay), so I like to get in and on it, too. I love incorporating creative projects into outdoor time, most often recording field audio for my podcast or taking photographs.'



## What inspires you?

'I'm inspired by the feeling I get when I'm out in nature, and by experiencing nature through the stories and artwork of other women. My work is all about highlighting the work of others, and I find that to be infinitely inspiring.'

## What advice would you give to women who are keen to have an outdoor exploit of their own?

'Start close to home – you might be surprised what activities are accessible to you – be it an urban hike, kayaking or yoga in the park. Sometimes the word "adventure" is intimidating, so the key is to get started where you're at, rather than comparing yourself to others.'

## WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE EXPERIENCE TO DATE?

'I think the most fun experience I had was a simple overnight trip, taking my twin sister backpacking for the first time. It was meaningful for me to share my love for the outdoors with a person I'm close with. She ended the trip asking when we could go again!'



**GALE STRAUB**

## 'MY FAVOURITE KIT'

'I'm a big fan of my lightweight, cute and practical Columbia OutDry Extreme Featherweight Shell jacket. The Capture Clip lets me take hands-free pics with my DSLR camera, and my hiking shoes keep my feet blister-free and dry.'



X Columbia Conspiracy III Titanium OutDry Extreme Eco Shoes, £135; [columbiasportswear.co.uk](http://columbiasportswear.co.uk)



Columbia OutDry Extreme Featherweight Shell, £180; [columbiasportswear.co.uk](http://columbiasportswear.co.uk)



Peak Design Capture Camera Clip, £49.99; [wexphotovideo.com](http://wexphotovideo.com)

## WHAT DOES HAVING AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE MEAN?

'Whether it's short or long, close to home or far away, an outdoor adventure means a reset with huge mental-health benefits; I find that if I spend too long working on a computer, I'm less productive and more susceptible to depression. Spending time hiking and camping helps me find perspective. Plus, there are the physical benefits.'



## What inspires you?

'People telling stories of their own adventures, spectacular views – especially mountains – and my own experiences. Often, I've been surprised that I could go beyond or achieve more than I thought I could and that inspires me to try harder and go further next time.'

### WHAT ARE YOUR BEST EXPERIENCES SO FAR?

'Climbing then paragliding Mont Blanc (I was the first British woman to achieve the latter), climbing Everest, which was the most physically, mentally and emotionally demanding trip I've ever been on, and more recently, an MP Adventure Academy ([mpadventureacademy.com](http://mpadventureacademy.com)) in Indonesia, which involved a week in the heat and jungle – totally different to what I'm used to and very far out of my comfort zone.'



### HOW DOES BEING OUTSIDE FORM PART OF YOUR LIFE?

'Outdoor adventure is part of my life every single day as I run or work out outdoors. In the summer, I like to trail run, hike and camp, and in the winter I love being in the mountains, especially ski touring. I've worked hard to create a career from the outdoor adventures I've pursued; I can't imagine my life without outdoor adventure.'

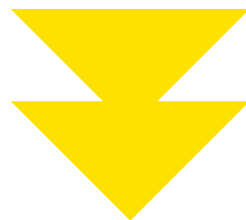


## SQUASH FALCONER

The British adventurer, mountaineer and paraglider became the first British woman to paraglide from the top of Mont Blanc in 2009. She also climbed Everest in 2011. Squash now presents adventure-travel documentaries and leads adventure courses on snow and in the jungle.

### WHAT IS YOUR KIND OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE?

'It can be as simple as going for a short run across fields or as involving as climbing a mountain on another continent, which takes months to achieve and sends me wildly outside my comfort zone. When I'm challenged physically and mentally, it really feels like an adventure.'



### What would you tell women who'd like to try adventuring?

'Go for it! Try lots of things until you find something that you love. Find someone who will remind you of your goals and your strengths if you lose track – someone you trust who can be there for you, to support, show you the way or just listen to you. And never be afraid to ask for help.' ■

### 'MY FAVOURITE KIT'

'I love my Salomon XA Pro 3D trainers; my Suunto Spartan Sport Wrist HR – a tough GPS watch with loads of functions; and my Rab Microlight Jacket – it's ethically sourced, warm and packable.'



Rab Microlight Jacket, £170; [rab.equipment](http://rab.equipment)



Suunto Spartan Sport, £319; [suunto.com](http://suunto.com)



Salomon XA Pro 3D GTX, £130; [salomon.com](http://salomon.com)