




# SHE who DARES

WRITTEN BY  
**Katie Cooksey**

RIDING YOUR SKIS FASTER THAN YOUR CAR, JUMPING OFF A CLIFF IN A WINGED SUIT, TREKKING THE PLANET'S MOST DANGEROUS PLACES

ONCE SEEN AS MACHO PURSUITS, MORE AND MORE WOMEN ARE TAKING THE LEAD IN EXTREME SPORTS AND CHANGING THE WAY THEY'RE VIEWED. SO WHY IS THE SCENE CHANGING? AND WHAT DRIVES THESE LADIES TO DITCH THE CREATURE COMFORTS AND THROW THEMSELVES HEADLONG INTO A LIFE OF RAW ADVENTURE?



## SQUASH FALCONER

Suggest jumping into a freezing lake, descending a mountain on a unicycle, or anything that sounds silly to most people, and Squash is likely to say "why not?"

After climbing the 6th highest mountain in the world - Cho Oyu in the Himalayas - she bum boarded back down, earning the title of World's Highest Bum Boarder.

She summited the highest mountain in Europe, Mont Blanc, and in similar style became the first British woman to fly from

the top in a paraglider. Inevitably she conquered Mount Everest, though her plans to paraglide down were sadly thwarted by winds and the -58 degree temperature.

Ever heard of an Elliptigo? It's a cross between a bike and a cross-trainer. Squash is currently Elliptigo European Champion and holds the record for the longest distance travelled on one - a 3,074-mile epic round Europe.

"I have a can-do attitude," the 33-year-old explains. "I just always had this belief I

could do it. When I give talks to schools and groups I'm trying to encourage people to do whatever they want to do, whatever that is."

Squash's love of mountain adventure was sparked in Tignes, hiking up the Solaise to paraglide down as a seasonaire, and it's been her preferred training ground ever since. Recently her exploits grabbed the attention of TV producers and she's been recording her own adventure series, meeting extreme athletes in America.

"I love that I can show other women they can do it too," she says. "I think there's

f [MAGAZINE.COM](http://MAGAZINE.COM)

26 o

perception that extreme sports are for men, and they are better at them, and although that view is shifting, it still exists."

That's not to say women don't tackle extreme sports differently, or live their femininity while they're doing it.

"People laugh at my mood. If your knickers are right your day goes right," she says. "I'm not as nervous and vulnerable on a mountain. There's this macho attitude. I'm not having a shower or changing my underwear on an expedition and women don't like that. It puts them off."

To clean knickers isn't power you in the top of a mountain... and all of that stick doesn't go smoke either. Adventure was whirled her as takes women in the South Salween 2-Adventure 5.2 multi-discipline endurance event - Squash and three friends formed their own team, the Uprate Bunch, and won an award for their "Spirit of Adventure".

But when you put yourself in extreme situations over a long period, in an instant. On her Mamfobok ascent, she and her climbing partner fell twice and only just managed to stop themselves hurtling off a

crack. "That's when you need an honest understanding of yourself," Squash says. "I can pretend to be something, but then when the chips are down, if I find I don't have those qualities, I could die. As I was falling, rather than being totally terrified I had an amazing calm come over me. I managed to stop. It showed me that fear doesn't have to paralyse you. I always say the day I'm not scared, that's the day I stop. It means you're going to die."

For Squash, her quest to find her physical limits is the outward reflection of her inner search for happiness.

"I don't genuinely believe a lot of people are very happy. It's asking if they're happy, then acting on the answer," she says. "I think I really decided to figure out what happiness is and to after that, I want to keep being excited by life, never lose my joie de vivre. I don't aim for big things because all these moments that add up to you. When I'm freezing on a mountain what gets me through is thinking about being out there with my friends and smiling with a good tea."

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SQUASH AT [SQUASHFALCONER.COM](http://SQUASHFALCONER.COM)

