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# RETURN FORM THE NORTH POLE: WOMAN ON ICE

When I last spoke with Misadventures I was training for a North Pole ski expedition — that was back in January when the skies were dark and the weather was cold. My mind was set on getting even colder with my upcoming April trip. It is now summer, the days are long and hot, and I've returned from the Pole, yet my mind is still set on getting back to the cold of the Arctic.

Some may think that kind of trip is crazy and others think it's just cold, but my North Pole ski expedition for Mamont Foundation was an amazing adventure. It was exhilarating, challenging, and bittersweet. As with all expeditions, there is a time of reflection when all is said and done which makes one either want to walk away with lessons learned or pack up and go again. I fall into the latter category, as I can't wait to get back to the North Pole and the High Arctic.



In spite of all the training I did under guidance of guru Michael Margulies at Core Fitness, NYC I was tested every single hour on the ice. Temperatures were freezing (on average -20/30 below 0) and wind was blowing every day. We had sunny skies for a few hours, then cloudy and overcast conditions with blowing snow, which made for poor visibility on the ice. We also had 24 hours of daylight and found ourselves in various time zones depending on what degree the drifting ice had shifted us into.

The mental aspect of these challenges are often the most difficult. The body gets cold, tired, and taxed to its limit. The challenge sets in to keep going and not panic or freak





in recognizing how removed one is from help. It is also quite unnerving to see thin ice and hear it cracking beneath your skis knowing full well that there is only a few inches between you and the depths of the Arctic Ocean.

I was as prepared as I could be; I had packed great food to keep me going (I, personally, like tea, cocoa, honey, maple syrup and dried fruit as treats) and I was geared up in Red Fox

outdoor clothing which was invaluable. (I have used all the top brands on my expeditions around the world, but Red Fox is my choice now for staying warm, dry, and comfortable.) I cannot stress enough the importance of wearing the right clothing and gear.

I can't report that I had a Polar Bear sighting at the North Pole (although I did in Loneyarbyen, Svalbard) but they were out there and they knew we were there too. It is wise to remember that when traveling in remote regions of the world, we are the odd woman out. The land belongs to the wildlife and indigenous people of the areas, and it is so important to respect that.

I never take for granted that I am safe in such places; I never forget to be careful. I prepare and plan as best I can and I am always mindful that when things start to go wrong (and they do) it is good to have an exit plan. I've learned not to let my ego get in the way of calling it a day.

I was halfway into my ski expedition when I badly distended my knee. Unfortunately for me, I had been





outfitted with boots that were two sizes too large with no alternative options. I had been told not to bring my own gear as it was being provided. I broke my own rule on this trip in that I did not travel with my own skis and boots (always have your own gear at this level of expedition). It was a rough start and an even rougher ending for me, as I had to be medevac'd off the ice back to Camp Barneo in excruciating pain and a knee the size of a melon. I had been in the same clothes for days and had no idea of the swelling until the camp Doctor examined me and said he had to drain all the fluid that had pooled in my knee.



If you have skied and suffered a knee injury, you understand how frustrating and painful it is to have to stop and heal. Because of that, this was my first North Pole ski expedition but not my last. I left the North Pole in pain, tired, and frustrated but also with a renewed passion of our Polar Regions, our seas, and their preservation. How amazing it was to recognize that though I was a mere speck in all the Arctic vastness, I could cause so much damage to its landscape and wildlife. It is powerful and fragile at once.



It certainly is a lot of responsibility to change the way we live, but we should all do our part. Conservation and education are of the utmost importance and I truly believe that we can make a difference one step at a time. I have to.