

10 HOT STORIES

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT THIS WEEK

GRAZIA EXCLUSIVE

Elham Al Qasimi, right, plans on being the first Emirati to trek the North Pole

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“I want to make history – at the top of the world!”

WHAT WOULD YOU GO TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH FOR? A YSL Rothy, maybe, or a Chanel 2.55?

Not Elham Al Qasimi, oh no. She'd go to “make history for Arab women.” And here's the thing – this is no figure of speech. Because the end of the earth is exactly where she's going.

This April, Elham, 27, will set off to trek to the North Pole. And her every step will indeed make history: not only will she be the first Emirati woman to ever set foot at the northernmost tip of the world, but she'll be the first UAE national to make the trek unassisted and unsupported. That's *Grazia's* kinda girl.

“I have a simple desire to stand on top of the world, where no compass points north,” says the adventurer. “I want to witness a part of nature that very few have before me.” Sounds great – it's just that getting there involves a three-week trek across freezing wasteland on cross-country skis, all alone and dependent on a dog's sled of supplies for survival. We're thinking there's probably no five-star accommodation at the end of the day, then.

“When I get back to Dubai I think I will forever be grateful for bathrooms and showers,” laughs Elham. “But on the trek, instead of fighting nature, or attempting to rise above it, I hope to simply surrender to it. No one, no matter how physically strong, can succeed on such a journey with

physical strength alone, mental strength will be key.” So, what is it that will keep her going? “An imaginary mountain of Pierre Hermé macaroons waiting for me at The North Pole!” Yup, that'd do it.

As well as the macaroons, Elham will be keeping her mission to set an example to Arab women firmly in mind. “If this attempt inspires even just a few of the UAE youth to pursue their own goals, physical or otherwise, it will make the achievement worthwhile,” she says. “We are about a lot more than the tall buildings we have built, and we can break barriers outside in other areas too. I hope my journey shows other women they we can push our limits in many more ways than we imagine.”

But to say Elham ‘pushes her limits’ is a bit on an understatement. Every day she undergoes a punishing training routine that sees her slogging away at cardio and strength workouts, pulling tyres on a harness through the city's parks and even travelling to Minnesota to adapt to Arctic temperatures. “I was dunked in a ice-hole and camped at -25 degrees,” she recalls. While it makes us feel cold even to think about it, she describes the experience as “fantastic”. And it's this enthusiasm and determination to succeed that sets Elham apart – and is sure to make her an inspiration, just like she wanted. You go girl! ■

*Follow Elham's progress at: <http://twitter.com/PolarBent>

Words: Charlotte Cox