

*A day in the diary of...*  
**NORTH POLE ADVENTURER**  
**ELHAM AL-QASIMI**

*In just three weeks, UAE national Elham, 27, will aim to be the first Arab woman to set foot at the North Pole*



WORDS: CHARLOTTE VAN DEN BROUCQUE PICTURES: MOOSA KP

“I’m undertaking a ‘last degree’ expedition to the North Pole, which means I will ski in temperatures of minus 30 degrees Celsius, from approximately 89 degrees latitude to 90 degrees latitude, where no compass points North. Training and preparing for the expedition requires a lot of commitment, so I gave up my job as an Investment Manager to concentrate on the challenge.

I get up at 7am and quickly eat an egg and a piece of toast before training. I pull tires in the park to work on my core strength and also do leg-strengthening exercises to prepare for pulling the sled. I love the training and being able to focus 100 per cent on getting as fit as possible. There’s no room to slack off at all. Every day that I don’t train is

cheating myself of having a good expedition, because I know I’ll make it – it’s just a question of how painful it will be to get there and how much fun I can have on the way.

I spend the rest of the day working on preparation for the expedition. This may involve researching the technology I’ll need to be able to blog from the North Pole, developing my website, seeing my physiotherapist or speaking to people in the Russian ice station (at 88 degrees latitude) about the weather forecast.

In the evening, while doing my evening exercise, I’ll test protein bars that have been left in the freezer to see how long they take to thaw in my pocket. During the expedition I won’t stop to eat during the day, I’ll just snack

on dried fruits, nuts and protein bars. The up-side to my training is that I have to consume 3,000 calories a day and I love eating. Unfortunately, all those calories have to be consumed without eating sweets and chocolate!

The most difficult thing about the expedition will be the mental challenge. I practice meditation, yoga and visualisation techniques, however, there’s no way to tell if they’ll help until I get there.

This is something I’ve always wanted to do but I just never thought I could. As I overcame other challenges in my life I got to the point where I asked myself ‘why can’t I?’. So I started researching it and found that going to the North Pole isn’t as death defying as I thought it was. I’ve received a lot of inspiration and encouragement

from my family. My Mum taught me to always be in control, confident, calm and committed to progressing as a woman. My Dad has always had an adventurous spirit but when he encouraged me to be the same way I don’t think he was thinking ‘North Pole’. I shocked even him, but he’s supportive and I’m grateful.

I’m normally a private person, but I’ve gone public about this expedition because I want other young people in the UAE and worldwide to see that if you put your mind to something then you can do it. You just have to create the opportunity.” \*

**Elham begins her North Pole expedition on 16th April for two weeks. You can follow her progress at [www.elhamalqasimi.com](http://www.elhamalqasimi.com)**