

In a minute... *Elham Al Qasimi*

Travelling with two guides and two fellow explorers, Elham Al Qasimi will attempt to become the first Arab woman to negotiate 100 nautical miles to the North Pole this month

100 nautical miles? Quite an achievement.

It will be an achievement not just for me, but for all Arab women. We focus so much on the progression of women in obvious ways, things like careers or women in government or senior corporate positions, which is fantastic, but there's so much more to progress. Some of it is fun.

Fun?

Yeah, the training is a ton of fun. I've been training in general for about a year and a half and about four or five months specifically for this expedition. I wanted something that required a lot of discipline and a lot of commitment. I did two training trips to cold environments – one to Minnesota, where it was between -15 and -25, and the second to The Alps, where it was -20 with wind chill. I felt like I was strong, but performing when it's that cold you find it difficult to breathe.

The trip's unsupported and unassisted. What does that mean?

Unsupported means we use natural forms of propulsion – our hands and feet. There is no motorised equipment and I have to take everything with me – tent, food, fuel for my stove, everything. I can't have any airdrops along the way. That means, for



example, if a polar bear attacks our sled and eats all our food, the expedition is over – we fail.

Attacking polar bears?

They normally wouldn't attack you, but if they seem to be advancing towards us, we have flares to scare them off. And if flares don't work, we have a shotgun as a last resort. But they're endangered, so we're not interested in making things worse, and polar bears don't tend to go that high in the Arctic Circle.

That's not the only danger, though, is it?

There's the cold, obviously, so frostbite is an issue. Then, of course, there's the danger of falling in the Arctic Ocean. If you fall into an ice hole, you turn around and pull yourself out the way you came in.

www.elhamalqasimi.com
www.twitter.com/PolarBent



THE THAI KITCHEN

Chef Supattra has been on a sojourn to Thailand and returned to her restaurant at Park Hyatt Dubai with a new menu, an intriguing special of *juhm jhm* (hot pot) from her province of Esarn and a new Wednesday night BBQ (Dhs150 to Dhs185. We'll be trying it out soon.
Park Hyatt Dubai, Deira, Dubai, 7pm to midnight. Tel: (04) 3172222. www.dubai.park.hyatt.com



THE LIME TREE CAFÉ & KITCHEN

It feels like it's always been there, but Jumeirah's favourite café celebrates its ninth birthday this month. To celebrate, five of their best-selling cakes will go head-to-head for the title of best birthday cake. Vote, and you stand a chance of winning a year's supply of cake. Let us eat cake.
Jumeirah Beach Road, Dubai, 7.30am to 6pm. Tel: (04) 3498498. www.thelimetreecafe.com

Guess list

Secrets for celeb spotters

70%

GROOVE ARMADA

What a party it would be if this particular Armada sailed into town. The London dance duo is, rumour has it, top of not one but two different promoters' wish lists. We're not bothered which one wins out, as long as they come.



50%

KASABIAN

We're big fans of Kasabian here at *What's On* and our source is pretty confident that the Leicestershire lads will be touching down for a gig in the UAE soon. With the success of latest album *West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum* and being named Best British Group at the Brit Award's 2010, the boys should be on fine form. They are, however, very expensive – so this one's in the balance...



35%

RAZORLIGHT

We know, we know. Borrell and the boys are regulars on our guess list (appearing as recently as February). We're slowly losing faith, but we have a man on the inside and he's pretty sure negotiations are still going ahead to sort this one out. We'll just have to wait and hope. Rumour has it the lads are working on a new album, so they deserve a break. And it's fair to say this would be a massive coup for the UAE's music scene if the deal went down.

