

The polar challenge

TV presenter **Helen Skelton** has never been afraid of a charity challenge. She has run the 78-mile Ultra Marathon in Namibia, and she has kayaked 3,200 kilometres down the Amazon, from Nauta, in Peru, to Almeirim, in Brazil, for the charity Sport Relief, which helps poor and disadvantaged people. Now she has decided to leave the heat of Africa and South America to take part in a polar challenge, a 500-mile ski, kite-ski, and bike journey to the South Pole, the bottom of the world. During the challenge, Helen is writing a blog.

A ☐

It's over a month since we arrived in Antarctica, and if everything goes to plan, we should reach the South Pole late tonight. We've been here for so long it's almost become a routine. We camp, get up, ski, camp, get up, ski. I'm wearing a face mask because of the wind and sun. I may look like Darth Vader, but it will help me get there.

B ☐ 1

My first night in Antarctica. It's summer here, and the 24-hour daylight is weird. The plan, until 3rd January, is to train before starting our trek. Today was my first full day on cross-country skis, pulling a sledge full of my food, tent, and supplies. It was a nightmare! Still, the scenery was incredible. I'm now going to try out the ice bike for the first time, and we're also going to practise kite-skiing.

C ☐

The first day of the trek is over! We managed to make the bikes work! But we need to do a minimum of 25 miles a day, and we only managed 15 miles today. After nine hours of cycling (and a lot of pushing), we had to stop, because I was completely exhausted.

D ☐

We've only been in Antarctica for four days, but there's been a huge snowstorm for the past 48 hours. It's freezing outside, so we can't train – we've had to stay in the tent. The winds are 70 miles per hour, with a temperature of -15°C and lots of snow. The visibility is terrible, too. However, we're staying warm and morale is still good.

E ☐

This morning, the second day of our trek, we set off on the kite-skis, and straight away we were travelling fast. In the first hour, we'd gone eight miles. I thought we could do 60 miles today, but late this afternoon the wind dropped, so we decided to stop and put up camp. But we'd travelled 41 miles – I'm very proud of that. I've only kited a few times before. But I'm trying to complete my challenge in 20 days, and there's still a long way to go...



F ☐

We're now only 150 miles from our destination. For the last few days, we've only been using bikes and cross-country skis, not kite-skis. We had a ten-hour day yesterday with the bikes. The morning went well, but then we hit some soft snow and we ended up pushing the bikes for the last six miles. Today, we decided to use skis, but progress has been slow.

G ☐

We've completed our 500-mile journey in 18 days! When I talked to Dad on the phone, saying we've done it, I cried. This is the biggest thing I have ever been part of.

H ☐

We're on our way to the halfway checkpoint today, where we can have a rest...and I've been promised lots of hot water so I can have a good wash – my second one since arriving in Antarctica. I have to admit it, I smell awful...and my hair is absolutely filthy.

I ☐

The training is over and we're starting our 500-mile journey today! We've been cycling, walking, and kiting for ten days. I washed and changed my clothes. I'm not going to get clean clothes again for three weeks!

