

EXTREME DISCOVERY — THE LAST WILD PLACES ON EARTH

With
Kira Salak

Each week on EXTREME DISCOVERY adventuress Kira Salak will take us to one of last wild places on Earth. Each week the only female explorer on TV, traveling with two to three international celebrities, will show us the wonders and dangers of these untouched places.

Conservation International estimates that a staggering 54% of the globe is still wild.

Kira knows intimately from numerous expeditions the thrills, challenges and dangers of travel into the wild. She narrowly survived malaria in Turkey and cholera in Rwanda. She escaped death at the hands of child soldiers in Eastern Congo, from a gang of Tauregs in Mali and gang rape from a group of rebel soldiers in Mozambique. Then, after surviving a coup attempt while in Bangladesh, she sought out the guerilla leader of Papua New Guinea's OPM rebel group and there again narrowly survived an attempt on her life.

While a few men have sought out the wild, few if any women have done so like Kira. For religious, social and physical reasons, the wild is very frequently more dangerous for women. But this increased difficulty only makes the challenge of the adventure more exciting for Kira. And what makes her accomplishments all the more amazing is that she has done most of them solo. The first person to kayak 600 miles down the Niger to Timbuktu. She cycled solo 800 miles across Alaska to the Arctic Ocean. The first woman to traverse the island of New Guinea. And one of a small handful of people to ever successfully complete Bhutan's 216-mile Snowman Trek, the hardest high altitude trek in the Himalayas.

Book Magazine has called her "the gutsiest—and some say craziest—woman adventurer of our day."

The New York Times said of her, "Kira Salak is a tough, real life Lara Croft."

Kira compliments the physical with the mental. She is an author and journalist. In 2004, her article on the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo was on the

prestigious PEN Award in Journalism. She is a contributing editor for National Geographic Adventure magazine. In 2005, the National Geographic Society honored her with the Emerging Explorer Award. And this year she published her first, critically acclaimed novel largely based on one of her adventures.

Why Extreme Discovery? Why does she go? Because now is the time to see these vanishing places and peoples. The world is at a transition phase, a tipping point. People in the future will look back at today's explorers and expeditions to understand people and places that no longer exist.

Each week on EXTREME DISCOVERY, Kira will guide us into the wild and back again.

SAMPLE EPISODES:

1) A show that finds places/ people on the verge of being lost forever. [The show might also be able to save some of these wild places, if the right people watched and got mobilized to do something. It could incorporate reporting with the adventure.]

--example: we visit the remote, spectacular jungles of Indonesian/ Malaysian Borneo, which are slated to be cut down in a year

--we spend time with the X Indians of the Amazon, newly discovered and soon to be forcibly removed to a reservation to make way for the timber companies

2) A show ("First Contact") which finds remote places and people never before documented by the West. [Could be especially interesting and unpredictable.]

--example: reaching the Totobiegosode tribe of the Amazon, population ~300, the last group of uncontacted Indians in South America

3) A show that recreates old explorer routes into some of the world's wildest places. [This idea would not only bring viewers to remote places and peoples, but it would provide a natural thru-line: Can we safely and successfully retrace the explorer's route? What's new along the way? What's stayed the same? The show would do everything possible to adhere to the original routes and travel conditions, and it could also have a bit of an historical angle.]

--example: retracing Clapperton's arduous journey across

the Sahara along the ancient slave route from Libya to Niger

--re-experiencing Stanley's trek across the savannah of western Tanzania into Rwanda

--retracing the route of Eliza Spalding & Narcissa Whitman, the first white women to venture west of the Rocky Mountains in 1836

4) A show that uncovers explorers' unsolved mysteries

--example: going in search of the fabled Lost Oasis of Zerzura, which Count Almasy (of *The English Patient* fame) sought in the Libyan Sahara [I nearly found the location of the oasis when traveling in Libya, but it turned out to be over the border in Egypt, and I didn't have the time or visa to go there]

5) A show which involves visiting remote places in order to experience unusual shamanic rituals. [Sort of like "Tribe," though there aren't any shows with a Western woman interacting with tribes and participating in their ceremonies. Reactions to a woman in some of these indigenous cultures would be completely different from anything we've seen on TV.]

--example: spend time with the Tsaaten shamans of the Mongolian steppe

--take ayahuasca with Peruvian shamans in the Amazon

--visit the iboga shamans of Congo or Ghana

--spend time with a Dogon sorceress in Mali

Regarding POSSIBLE EPISODE IDEAS, there could be many viable and exciting trips involving the retracing of old explorer routes. Some additional ideas:

--visit the unspoiled wilderness of southern Sudan or Chad (unvisited for years because of the surrounding civil war)

--join a grueling Tuareg salt caravan across Niger and Chad

--in Papua New Guinea, visit the "lost tribe" recently discovered by missionaries

--search for the world's largest tree in the wilds of western Madagascar (the baobabs of Madagascar are much wider around than the largest redwoods, but have never been officially documented in the West)

--visit the stark beauty of the Libyan Sahara, with its remote oases and ancient volcanoes located hundreds of miles from the nearest civilization

--find the Naga people (former headhunters) in the remote jungles of NE India by the Burmese border

--experience eastern Bhutan's untouched wilderness, which

the government recently opened to travelers and has never
been documented in the West

--kayak to some of the unspoiled, remote islands of Baja,
California