



Anthea and Kelly set off across Lapland on a sled pulled by a team of huskies. "I quite like being a Girl Scout every so often," Anthea tells HELLO!. "And this was certainly no spa holiday"

AFTER BONDING ON 'THE JUMP' ANTHEA TURNER AND KELLY SIMPKIN SET OFF ON AN ICY ADVENTURE AND TELL HOW FRIENDSHIP HAS HELPED HEAL HEARTACHE

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For five days and nights, Anthea and Kelly (together, right) endured sub-zero temperatures during their Lapland adventure. "I've done some arduous things with *Blue Peter*, but this was completely different," says Anthea. Adds Kelly: "On the first night, we were like, 'Oh God, what have we let ourselves in for?'"



They first bonded on the snow, so it was only fitting that Anthea Turner and Kelly Simkin should reunite in a frozen landscape for an adventure that tested their stamina but not their friendship.

For five days, the women – who met last year when Anthea was competing alongside Kelly's boyfriend, celebrity hairdresser Nicky Clarke, in *The Jump* – trekked 125 miles over icy terrain in Swedish Lapland with a team of huskies pulling them on a sled, accompanied by Kelly's dad Malcolm and uncle Ray. They battled bitter temperatures of -20°C and slept in unheated log cabins, but for both it was a spectacular life experience.

"I wanted it to be a challenge – and it was," says Kelly, 33, a fashion designer and hairdresser, who organised the trip to raise money for and awareness of Lupus UK, a charity that supports people with the autoimmune disease.

WILDERNESS CHALLENGE

"I quite like being a Girl Scout every so often," says Anthea, 54. "And this was certainly no spa holiday."

"The toughest part wasn't actually the sledding. It was the fact that at the end of the day, you couldn't think, 'Ooh, I'll have a shower and a hot chocolate.' I've done some arduous things with *Blue Peter*, but battling the cold is a completely different animal."

"You're totally in the wilderness," adds Kelly. "I love the snow, so it was amazing to be out in the stillness and quietness, in the middle of nowhere. All you could hear was the dogs' paws on the snow. You have a lot of time to think, to reflect, and at times I found my mind wandering to the point where I almost forgot what I was doing and realised I had to concentrate."

Kelly, who suffers from lupus, a chronic and presently incurable

'The past few years have been terrible, but I will always dust myself down and move on' Anthea



illness of the immune system that causes painful inflammation in the joints, muscles and organs, had to cope with symptoms that were further exacerbated by the freezing temperatures.

"Although Kelly looks so beautiful, you'd never guess the pain she's often in," says Anthea of her friend, who started designing clothes when her illness made hairdressing full time too difficult. "Fashion is now my main focus," says Kelly.

TV presenter and businesswoman Anthea had her own health challenges on the trek, having had bronchitis the week before setting off. "I went feeling like I had half a lung," she says.

"And of course you think these huskies are pulling you, but you have to do quite a bit yourself, especially going uphill. One of my huskies kept looking round and if he could speak, he would have said, 'Are you going to get off and push a bit?'"

PROTECTION FROM THE ELEMENTS

Describing themselves as "a right pair of fairies", the women kept warm with Canada goose down jackets and hand warmers. "Everywhere – we had them in our bras, our knickers, our shoes," says Anthea, of the self-heating warmers. "I spent a lot of time with a massive face mask on, too, because the cold is quite painful, especially if you're a pair of suburbanites like Kelly and me."

Overnight, they stayed in log cabins no bigger than a garden shed, without electricity, running water, an indoor toilet or any heating apart from a small stove. "After a hard day trekking, you'd finish about 4pm, eat, play cards, then go to bed around 8pm," says Kelly. "We'd lie there in the darkness, chatting about the day and thinking about the day ahead."

"Then you'd wake up at about 3am," adds Anthea. "It would be so cold, you could see your breath in the air and all you're thinking is, 'I need to go to the loo.'"

"I'd never done anything like this before," says Kelly of the trip, arranged by Nature Travels. "I've never even camped in a tent, so to be somewhere with no toilet or running water was really out of the ordinary for me. After the first night, Anthea and I were like, 'Oh my God, what have we let ourselves in for?' Not being able to charge your phone or wash your hands – it was really strange."

By the time they got back to base camp, Anthea had never been so happy to see a shower. "By the end, I smelt like a husky and looked like a husky."

However, she is determined to keep

ly back in the warmth, Anthea and Kelly delight in a warm drink (above) and say a grateful k you to the huskies (below right) that helped them over 125 miles of icy terrain in Swedish and. They embarked on their chilly challenge to raise money for and awareness of lupus – a ful autoimmune disease Kelly lives with. Conditions on the trek were basic, with the pair sleeping in huts (below) with no running water or inside toilet



'Whatever we do next, it has to be somewhere warm' Kelly

challenging herself as she gets older. "You tend to live a safer life, but I think every year you should do something that pushes you," she says.

That's especially true since her split from husband Grant Bovey two years ago. Now living alone, but with Grant's three daughters as regular house guests, she's in the process of re-evaluating her life.

EMBRACING LIFE AGAIN

"I'd be lying if I said life has been fabulous over the past few years," she says. "It's been awful, terrible and something I never thought I'd be facing and dealing with. But I'm a reasonably philosophical person and I will always dust myself down and move on, because you have to."

She describes the breakdown of her relationship as similar to bereavement. "You go through various stages and come out the other side, ready to rebuild again," she says. But having gone through the "traumatic bit", she's embracing life again.

"It's an interesting age to be because you could think, 'Oh, I'm 54, what am I going to do?' But we are a great collection of people," she says of women her age. "We have a lot of knowledge. We're not going to just sit there and wait for our pensions."

Besides, she and Kelly, who is delighted to have raised almost £8,000 so far, are thinking of another trip to organise.

"You get a bug for it - to raise awareness if nothing else," says Kelly. "But I said to Anthea, 'Whatever we do next, it has to be somewhere warm.'"



INTERVIEW: ROSALIND POWELL
PHOTOS: JAMES ROBINSON

For more on lupus, visit lupusuk.org.uk. To donate to Kelly and Anthea's appeal, visit justgiving.com/kelly-simpkin. For sledding treks, visit naturetravels.co.uk.

