

## Q&A

with Macpac Ambassador

# DULKARA Martig

WORDS BY: TPL & DULKARA MARTIG

Dulkara Martig is a woman enamoured with outdoor adventure. She hikes, rides, runs, paddles, eats, drinks and sleeps in the outdoors whenever possible – and it seems like it's pretty much always possible. Born on the West Coast and bred in Nelson, New Zealand, Dulkara is everything a Macpac ambassador should be: authentic, capable, and perhaps above all, eager to spread her infectious love of the natural world to as many people who will listen. We asked her about what it's like being a woman who's immersed so deeply in the world of outdoor adventure, and the challenges that it can present.

### **What challenges are unique to women in your area of outdoor expertise?**

As a young woman I found it challenging being a minority in various outdoor groups. I craved female role models and friends to go on missions with. I've always loved whitewater but one of the reasons I shied away from it more than other outdoor sports as a young woman was because it was so male-dominated. I found the culture a bit intense.

I've observed different styles of leadership and decision making amongst women in the outdoors. Perhaps certain characteristics are more common in females than males. One challenge I've personally found is that in groups of men I'm often less vocal, less likely to contribute to decision-making and leadership. As a generalisation I think women tend to be less confident, doubting themselves even when they're highly competent.

### **How do you overcome these challenges?**

I sought out females who shared the same passions as me. I found a greater sense of belonging amongst a strong group of female adventurers. As I've grown older, I've also realised that we all bring our own special magic to the world. I used to feel embarrassed at feeling more afraid in the outdoors than my male friends. I don't worry about what people think much now, I'm just authentic. Now I'm really motivated to get more stories of women in the industry out there; increase the exposure of women in the outdoors.

### **Do you think it's more difficult for women to take part in outdoor activities than it is for men?**

I've noticed a huge shift in the last few years – I think it's easier now than it has ever been. And it's becoming more socially acceptable to share parenting roles. I went riding at Wairoa Gorge mountain bike park last weekend with 16 women. One woman breastfed her 4-month old baby

between runs, while wearing downhill kit and a full-face helmet. I am really inspired by women having families and still adventuring. I think there used to be more of a perception that men were stronger and better suited to technical outdoor activities. That has definitely changed. There are so many badass women in the outdoors who have proved otherwise!

### **Is there a strong community of female adventurers that you feel part of?**

Definitely, and it's growing rapidly. There's a different vibe in a group of women in the outdoors. I personally find it more relaxed, and generally more supportive. Decision making tends to be more collaborative and there's this softness that seems unique to girl's trips.

I'm inspired by everyday women who get outside and empower others to do so, women who instigate things, bring people together. I'm inspired by my friends. Right now I'm feeling super inspired by a group of ladies I'm collaborating with – Ashley Peters, Perryn Lydford and Jo Guest.

### **How can other women tap into these communities?**

Facebook is a great place to start – there are so many awesome women's specific outdoor groups and events popping up. I think it can be challenging to meet like-minded women at the start but as soon as you meet one or two women you'll find more. For some reason we tend to hang out in packs!

### **How can these communities continue to grow, and inspire more women to embrace outdoor adventure?**

Outdoorsy women need to band together, to collaborate, empower and support each other. There are many women's-only groups and events that are thriving – the Spring Challenge adventure race is a classic example.



It would be cool to see more representation of women in all walks of the adventure world. But, it will be great when the outdoor community has evolved enough to focus on people as simply people, not as genders – and for women to feel confident embracing the outdoors whoever they are with. I think the outdoors in New Zealand used to have quite a macho feel to it. A few years ago, it seemed pretty common for an outdoor woman to feel like they needed to act more like a man to fit in – or to prove themselves.

**Are there women you've been inspired by in the adventure community?**

When I was younger, I was mostly inspired by men because that's who I saw doing things that excited me in the outdoors. But there were a few women. I remember sitting at the New Zealand Kayak School and Jess Brown showing us pictures of some epic paddling in California. As a young woman it made me think 'wow, that's cool, they're crushing it and they're ladies'. It made me think that it was possible for me to do that if I wanted to. More recently I've been inspired by many female co-instructors at NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School), a wilderness education organisation I have been working for.

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