



## Mel Middleton's: **tropical honeymoon**

In our Summer edition of 2008, Mel Middleton was about to embark on her dream adventure: Antarctica.

Here Mel writes for us again about her magical experience.

On the 22nd of November I finished packing the last of my medications into zip lock bags, secured my doctors letters, checked my passport and of course laid my high heels and hair dryer into my bag. I zipped my 28kg bag up and stood it up to give it a test drag!!! Oh crap. Heavy! Snow gear, heavy water proof boots, thermal underwear - enough to start a small retail shop, 2 months of medications, 3 novels, and of course 3kgs of Allen's lollies - Snakes and red frogs! This is just a small overview of packing requirements for me, Melissa Middleton to face her last frontier...Antarctica! This was my tropical honeymoon and my contribution to the world of possibilities. This is the first time ever that Cystic Fibrosis is going to Antarctica!

Since I was...well let's just say 'younger', I have dreamt about Antarctica. The distance, the price, my health and my lifestyle were reasons why I shouldn't go, but there was a plethora of reasons why I should go. I heard of a great explorer, Greg Mortimer, who owns "Aurora Expeditions". A company that is at the cutting edge of adventure activities in Antarctica, they ventured to the region first - the 'genuine article'; has small ships of 100 people and less, for the personal touch and has strong environmental values. This is all right up my alley.

I not only chased my dream down but I quite literally chased Greg Mortimer down, knowing both he and his company were aligned with my beliefs. Greg not only spent time with me but he helped my endeavour by making me believe it could happen. And happen it did!

On the 23rd of November 2008 I left Australia and on the 28th I boarded the Polar Pioneer in Urshuaia, the southern most point of Argentina, South America, full of anticipation. I not only resembled a Michelin woman when dressed in my "Antarctica best" but I felt like a little girl on her first day at school. Over rough seas my thoughts racing the whole time, I floated toward my destination with my CF flag in tow - "I am

about to plant this in the snow, and for the first time in history CF will arrive in the most barren place in the world!"

Penguins, seals, snow and barren land, all part of the original vision were now in front of me for my eyes to really digest. On the 1st of December as my eyes welled with tears and my body shook with anticipation I stepped foot onto Antarctica "true." Cystic Fibrosis and I had travelled for 7 years to over 35 countries to earn the right to say "we have conquered you, Antarctica."

The roughest, toughest land in the world has now been ticked in the passport and now the future is ours in the CF world. As penguins did their mating dance, laughter and people's voices echoed through the hours I had in this place. Four subsequent landings in the following days allowed me to explore land and water. I gathered my Kayak paddle on landing two and braved the freezing water and tested my paddling skills. I found myself glancing at my wonderful husband, Tim, who supported me through the ups and downs of this journey, and made it possible for me to be here. There was a moment when I was paddling when I saw Tim playing with a Gentoo Penguin with his paddle. They were doing figure eights in the water when he said, "Mel the penguin is playing with my paddle," that was the golden moment for me. All the hospital hours, needles, procedures and the tears were now on the past. I embraced the moment and I truly believe that dreams are possible.

"Time is precious, travel is profound, and I travel for travels sake!" There is a saying out there that chant the words "just do it!", and it as is easy as that. Dream a dream, talk to your doctor, make a plan, and Just Do It! If you can't due to your health... Everyone that takes a trip needs to film it and deliver it back to our family. Within 6 months I hope to have finished editing the 20 hrs of footage I have into a documentary and I promise to show you all the trip that changed my life.