

## TIME OUT

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**Why hiking?** Hiking combines two things I love – travel and staying physically and mentally healthy. When you're in the bush there's usually no Wi-Fi or mobile reception, which means you completely disconnect. There's also something incredibly restorative about being in nature.

**How many hikes have you gone on?** Seven so far, with two planned for next year – the Camino de Santiago in Spain and the Three Capes Track in Tasmania.

**What's the longest hike you have undertaken?** The four-day Milford Track walk in New Zealand. We made it, although day three was tough. The normal track was shut because of avalanches, so we were sent down the emergency track. On the descent from Mackinnon Pass, there were times when I was climbing down makeshift steps, where the height between each step was almost half my height. It was slow and slightly tortuous.

**How often do you go hiking?** As often as I can, with a minimum of one big trip annually.

**What are your hiking ambitions?** To keep hiking. The list of hikes on the "to do" list is long: Larapinta (Northern Territory), the Annapurna Circuit (Nepal), the Inca Trail (Peru) and Routeburn (New Zealand) are next in line.

**Favourite hike** The one I am thinking about next. Half the fun is in the planning! The Overland Track (Tasmania) and Milford Track (New Zealand) are very beautiful walks, and we were fortunate on both treks that the weather largely held out for us. We did the Milford Track in so called "freedom style", which meant no showers and shared dormitories for four days. In contrast, with the Overland Track on Cradle Mountain, we took the more luxurious option. Having a hot shower at the end of the day and someone cook for you is a winning combination.

**Most exhilarating or memorable moment** Getting to the top of Mount Kinabalu in Borneo at 5am to watch the sunrise. We had to get up at 2am to be ready, and then it was a slow walk – in the dark – to the summit. When the sun came up, we saw that we were sitting above the clouds. It was magical.

**How did you get into hiking and how old were you?** I did a lot of bushwalking when I was growing up. Although, in my early years I spent much of that sitting on my dad's shoulders and grumbling if I was made to



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walk. After university, life and work took over and I stopped getting out into the bush. About five years ago, inspired by friends who hike frequently, I took it up again.

Keen hikers Michelle Gibbings and her husband, Craig Salisbury, atop Mackinnon Pass in New Zealand.

**What do you think about when you are hiking?** That depends on the time of day. I'm always keen to get up early and get going, and there's always so much to look at. By midday, all I am thinking about is lunch. By the end of the day, I am hoping there is hot water for a shower. When it's pouring with rain, I am hoping I don't step in massive puddles – which means I always do and end up covered in mud.

**Do you need to train?** I exercise regularly, so I thought I didn't need to train. I paid the price on my first hike. Going up was fine, but coming down wasn't fun. I avoided going down the stairs for at least a week after the trek finished.

**Advice for other hikers** It pays to have good equipment and pack light. I always seem to overpack.

**Favourite hiking gear** Black Diamond carbon trekking poles. I laughed when the salesperson was selling them to me before my first trek, thinking, "What a waste of money!" In the end, I was so glad I bought them. They help protect my ankles and joints, while making the downhill easier.

**Ever been injured or in danger?** Luckily, no. We did get a little lost one time and had to backtrack and find the right turn.

**Don't like about hiking** Losing toenails. I didn't realise that was even possible. My big toenails are still recovering from my last trek.

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