

[Megan Holbeck]



WILD THINGS

Crafting Your Life

As with any adventure, thought, planning, and preparation are important.
But so are space and risk.

Some of my most memorable adventures have been the ones that have just happened with little planning or preparation. My husband and I spent three days exploring Mt Mulanji in Malawi, central Africa's highest peak, in socks and hiking sandals, supplementing a shared sleeping bag with some old woollen blankets. We later sailed for four days up the coast of Mozambique in a traditional wooden dhow, sleeping on deck with rucksacks as pillows. The moon was so bright you could read the brands of the concrete bags from which the sail was made.

The trips don't have to be big, either. My husband and I recently got a very rare overnight leave pass so sailed our crappy yellow boat across the harbour to Watsons Bay. We followed the cliffs to Bondi and stayed the night there, stopping along the way to admire whales frolicking offshore. On Sunday we returned under heavy skies, the black clouds pierced by random fingers of sunlight and squalls of rain. (Yes, we got soaked, and no, we didn't have waterproofs.)

There's a lot to be said for preparation, too. Having the right gear, experience and planning makes an adventure more likely to (a) happen, (b) be safe, and (c) be enjoyable. The more involved/hardcore the trip, the truer this is. Still, some of my favourite stories are of people who made it up along the way.

Oskar Speck left Germany in a folding boat in 1932, heading for Cyprus to look for work. He ended up in Australia more than seven years later via Greece, Syria, Iran, India, Malaysia, PNG and Indonesia, arriving just in time to be interned as an enemy alien for the duration of World War II. Sandy Mackinnon set off in a Mirror dinghy for a gentle week-long trip down to Bristol. He then

“Over and over again, I heard the same message: Your life is something you create, yours to craft into what you want it to be.”

kept going to London, then across the Channel, winding up at the Black Sea 14 months later. The Sequoias bought a catamaran in Mexico, taught themselves to sail, and sold it in Fiji two years later.

Everyone knows someone like this, who shows the possibilities of life. In the last year I've chatted to some interesting people about their lives, their passions, the way they make their world work. People like adventurer Tim Cope whose profile is on page 30 of this issue, sea kayaker Sandy Robson (who retraced Oskar Speck's journey), and runner and orienteering World

Champion Hanny Allston. Some of those I spoke with had huge profiles; others had goals that were only their own. And over and over again, I heard the same message: Your life is something you create, yours to craft into what you want it to be.

This is self-evident, but also easy to overlook in the busyness of living. The scary thing is that most people put more time and effort into planning a bathroom renovation than they ever do into planning their life—that one unique, irreplaceable shot each of us ever gets.

So, how do you craft a life that has meaning, for you if no one else? The first part is doing something, sooner rather than later: Taking one exploratory step which leads to the next, and then considering what those steps are and where you want them to go. Plan adventures, and leave space for spontaneous ones to arise. (The adventures don't always have to be physical ones, although for anyone reading *Wild*, I'm guessing the outdoors will play a part.) Say yes. Do something that scares you and see what happens. If you have a weekend with nothing on but boring jobs, think of what you'd really like to do and do that instead.

Think about what you want and how you can get it into your life, leave some space, try it, then repeat. Creating your own life can be as simple as that.