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Lauren: Hello and welcome to Wanderlust, a podcast about travel. I am your host, Lauren. In each episode we'll meet a traveler, learn more about them and something they're passionate about. I hope you enjoy this journey with me.

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Lauren: In this episode I'm joined by Kristen. Kristen is a scientist with a background in forest conservation and an avid hiker please welcome Kristin.

Kristin: Hi everybody.

L: Where was your first trip?

K: I think my first like big trip was out west to Alberta that was like the first place we went that was far enough away that we had to fly so it's my first time on a plane we went out and just spent a couple weeks in the Rocky Mountains and it was amazing and I spent pretty much my whole life after that wanting to get back into the mountains.

L: What is the best adventure you've had

K: When I hiked the Pacific crest trail from Mexico to Canada in 2017.

L: Do you have a big misadventure that you've had?

K: The biggest misadventure was actually probably this summer which I was not expecting at all since Covid was happening and I was kind of gearing up for a summer of just sitting at home, but we got an opportunity to go out west again and go tree planting in British Columbia. Which I'd never done before but had always been kind of curious about. And we had a ton of car trouble we drove from Nova Scotia to British Columbia so like literally from one end of Canada to the other. Our car did not survive the trip so we ended up having to like get a new car part way through and do part of the trip in rentals and the planting was just brutal and it was a crazy summer.

L: Oh no sorry to hear about your car.

K: Yeah we got it checked out like before because it was a 17 year old car so we took it to the shop before we left and we were like "is it going to make it across the country and back?" and they said "it would be fine". And it was not fine. We had quite a bit of trouble

along the way. We ended up sleeping in a parking lot in northern Ontario when the car was broken down and it snowed overnight in May. [laughs]

L: You did a field camp course in Malaysia and Thailand.

K: Yes

L: What is the field camp of course?

K: So that was part of my master's program that I did that you mentioned in forest conservation. So the actual school portion was only in Malaysia and then me and some of my friends from the course traveled to Thailand like outside of the school portion of the trip.

L: [understanding realization sound]

K: But the field camp was kind of just so our programs in forestry so we just traveled around Malaysia and saw different examples of how forestry and forest conservation worked in a setting that was completely different from what we were used to in southern Ontario, Canada. It's just like a completely different ecosystem being like the tropical rainforest as opposed to like a temperate forest in North America so there forests grow for example a lot faster than ours grow. They do have like some really good examples of conservation but there's also obviously like we went to sanctuaries for orangutans that have been displaced because of the deforestation of the rainforest. So that was really interesting to see how they're doing some conservation really well and have some forestry going on that's just done in a really sustainable way.

L: What's the difference between a thru hike and just a regular hike?

K: So a thru- hike I think is technically defined as going from the one end point of the trail to the other end point in like a continuous hike. So a lot of people on those long trails like the Pacific Crest Trail will do what's called section hiking where they'll just do a section of the trail so like that could be a week on the trail or 2 days or a month. And then day hiking is like another different thing where you just go for one day and don't actually spend an overnight out on the trail.

L: What do you pack for your thru hikes?

K: We try to pack pretty light. Like my whole gear set up when I hiked the Pacific Crest Trail was about 15 pounds. So you don't bring too much. You obviously have the

backpack that everything goes in. Had a tent that was a super lightweight tent from a brand called Tarptent, sleeping bag, and sleeping pad to sleep on. You basically had one outfit that you hiked in all day every day that got absolutely disgusting. [laughs] You needed some kind of water purification system, so I had a filter that I would pass all my water through from the like natural water sources that I came across to make it safe to drink. Like a warm jacket, warm hat, like it was pretty minimal the stuff that you brought with you 'cause whatever you brought you had to carry on your back for over 2,000 miles. [laughs] So you wanted to be super choosy about what you packed.

L: Do you have a favorite pair of hiking shoes or boots?

K: Yes, I definitely do. So contrary to what a lot of people think a lot of long distance hikers today don't actually wear boots anymore. A lot of people, including myself, use trail runners instead of hiking boots. One of the main reasons is that they are a lot lighter than boots. Weight on your feet- because with every step you're picking it up, right, on your feet feels like extra heavy. It makes sense to have like lighter footwear to make the walking [laughs] less strenuous. And then also on the PCT and like most other long distance trails you're gonna be crossing rivers like semi frequently and hiking boots even if they're waterproof like once the water actually gets inside them and they begin saturated like they take forever to dry. So if you get them wet or if it rains you're gonna be hiking in wet boots for days or as if you were trail runners like they can dry out in a couple hours in the sun. So that's really nice. People think "oh you need boots 'cause you need ankle support." meh. Like especially on the PCT the terrain actually isn't that difficult so you don't really need the like intense ankle support. But anyways [laughs] my favorite shoe brand is called Altra is a trail running brand. The shoes that I wore to walk from Mexico to Canada is called the Altra Lone Peak and I think like I don't know at least 75 percent of the people that hiked in the year that I hiked also wore those same shoes

L: How many pairs did you go through?

K: Think went through over the whole hike about 5 pairs and the first pair, because I started the trail not wearing the Altra Lone Peaks, I was wearing a different type of shoes when I first started because it was really hard to find the Lone Peak's in Canada so I had to like get a different pair of shoes to start with. I wore them on some training hikes at home and they seemed fine. I thought they were good. I only ended up wearing them for the first week of the Pacific Crest Trail because by the end of that first week and absolutely destroyed my feet. My feet were covered in blisters like I was hobbling into the first town. My toenails were like starting to go black and luckily there's a little

gear store set up there and I walked in and was like “I need new shoes”. And luckily they sold the Altra’s. I got those and I barely had any feet issues like after I switched shoes and then I went through like 4 pairs of Altra’s before the end of my hike.

L: Wow. That’s a lot of shoes.

K: Yeah, Yeah [laughs] it is a lot of shoes. Especially when they’re like not cheap. But I think the rule of thumb-ish for trail runners is like they last around 500 miles and the Pacific Crest Trail’s like 2,600 miles.

L: So hikers usually have poles-

K: yes

L: What do poles do?

K: Think they just take a lot of the weight off of your back and your legs. I never really used them unless I am overnight backpacking with a heavy pack because if you don't have them like the weight of the pack is just fully pushing down on your back. Where as if you have the poles it can kind of like a displace some of that weight into your arms. And they’re also really good for like going up hill, going down hill, like stabilizing yourself if you’re on kind of rough terrain, they can help you if you’re you know gonna fall you can use them to catch yourself.

L: Do you have a favorite kind of those?

K: [laughs] Yes, I do also have a favorite kind of those. It’s kind of like this obscure brand that I didn’t- haven’t really seen anyone else hiking with and I honestly do not know how to you properly pronounce it but I think it’s Fizan. It’s F-I-Zed-A-N, or Z-A-N. I’ve never seen them in any stores like I had to order them online but they’re super light weight and they’re super sturdy like my poles- I’ve had the same pair of poles since 2016, used them all through my thru-hike every like shorter hike day hike that I’ve used them for. They’re still going strong and like my partner on the Pacific Crest Trail went through like 3 pairs of poles using other brands because they kept like breaking and getting destroyed from the trail. I was like “you need to get a pair these because they can apparently survive anything” and I’ve never seen like almost anyone else hiking with them and I don’t understand why because they’re awesome.

L: So in 2017 you did the Pacific Crest Trail which we've established goes along the west coast of the United States from Mexico to Canada. What are some other basics about the Pacific Crest Trail for people who don't know what it is?

K: It travels the whole length of California, Oregon, and Washington. And a lot of people think it's like the Pacific "Coast" Trail in that you're by the ocean but I never saw the ocean the whole time I was on the trail like it's- follows kind of the spine of the inland mountain ranges and it's like it's a super diverse environment. I think when I was researching like before I started the hike it said it goes through like 6 of the 7 like North American eco regions. So like the first 700 miles are through like the desert in southern California then you get like the obviously the high mountains in the Sierra Nevada you get kind of like grasslands in northern California, like rainforests in Washington, like you go through such a diverse range of environments. Like I said it's just over 2,600 miles long and it takes most people like on average 5 months. You hike over the summer. We started in April and finished in September it took us like just over 5 months to do.

L: What inspired you to do the hike on your own? Because you are saying "we" but I also know that you started by yourself.

K: I did start by myself. Like I set out from home flew from Ontario Canada to California. I've never been to like any of these states before I hiked the trail by myself. What inspired me to do it was actually blogs. I don't remember exactly how I found it I think I was just kind of like aimlessly browsing the internet one day and I came across someone's blog that had hiked the Pacific Crest Trail. She'd also done it like as a solo female and I just became kind of obsessed with this blog like I read the whole thing she had written a post like every day. Started looking up other people's blogs and reading all these blogs. And when I first started reading them or reading her blog I was like "oh wow like this is a crazy thing like it would be really cool to do that one day but like that would be just crazy like I probably won't ever do that" and then by the time I had like got to the end of reading her blog I was like "no I'm gonna do this one day" And just reading about another female that had done it solo like I was like "people do this" and like she was not like a crazy like athletic hike-y person like she was just a normal person. And when I found the blog is when I had just started grad school. So I'd just started my masters and I kind of made it my goal that I was gonna do it when I finished my master's 'cause it just seemed like it's a good time to do it. When you're in kind of that transitional period and then between like life stages, like I knew I could graduate and like go do that before I started my career.

L: How much prep went into getting ready for it the Pacific Crest Trail, because I know you have to get permits and a lot of paperwork.

K: They open the permits on a certain day and it's all online. You just have to make sure you're at your computer at the time that the permits open and of course like thousands of people are all trying to log on to this thing at the same time so it crashes and you're like frantically trying to get on. I had to book the day off work so that I could like make sure I got my permit. [laughs] But yeah what you don't actually need the permit technically to hike it you can get like separate permits from each land management agency that like you pass through but that would just be way too much trouble in my opinion. Like the one that you can get from the Pacific Crest Trail Association covers the entire trail, so you just need that one permit to hike from Mexico to Canada which is pretty cool. And then you need another permanent there's like a California fire permit because obviously as we know California has a lot of trouble with wildfires so you have to get like a special permit and you need it even to use like a gas campfire stove. Like we never actually had any campfires but even to like use your stove you needed a permit from California. And then when you get to Canada at the end it's called like an unmanned border crossing so it's just the border of Canada and the U. S. like in the middle of nowhere in the woods. There's no like customs or border patrol or anything. And you just walk into Canada from the States but you need to get a special permit from the Canadian government like saying that you're allowed to do that.

L: Did you need that since you're Canadian?

K: yeah I still technically needed it because I was entering the country like at an unmanned border crossing so there was no one to like check my passport or anything to make sure. It's more important for people that aren't from Canada because like once I was in Canada I was just there and I didn't have to leave but like Americans that do it they'll come into Canada and then like immediately want to go back home to the States and sometimes they'll have to show their permit like at the border show that they legally entered Canada because otherwise there's like no record of how they got into the country in the first place.

L: Did you have to carry those on here the entire time and like how did you keep them dry and safe?

K: You were supposed to, honestly I never showed anyone any one of my permits. That was just like a fluke I think but I never ran into anyone that ever asked. Especially as the trail passes through several national parks and that's usually the time when you're going to run into Rangers that are gonna want to see your permits. One of the main reasons that we didn't get asked is because it we were hiking in one of the highest snow years in like recorded history. The Rangers hadn't even like got out into the parks yet because

they were all snowed in. [laughs] You do have to carry them with you. Kind of but took what the PDF files and shrunk them down to like little card sized pieces of paper printed them out and like layered them with packing tape so that they were semi waterproof. If you wanted to be like super fancy I guess you could actually like laminate them but I kinda just went [laughs] the lazy route wrapped them in tape.

L: You mentioned that part of the Pacific Crest Trail is made up of national parks, how many national parks did you go through?

K: So you go through Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Park in California. Trail goes through Yosemite National Park but I did not actually see that part [laughs] because of circumstances arising. We have to skip a part of the trail. Crater Lake National Park in Oregon, Lassen National Volcanic Park in northern California, North Cascades National Park in Washington, I think there's like 6 or 7 that goes through in total.

L: Did you have to jump off the trail a lot? I know sometimes it was fire-

K: Yeah

L: and sometimes it was snow right?

K: We kind of had to jump on and off quite a few times later in the trail. We hiked the first I don't know, 800 or 900 miles like completely unbroken and then we had to skip a large chunk because of intense snow and more so the snow melt was making the rivers in the mountains like super dangerous to cross. I feel like I could have dealt with having to hike in snow but like people are actually dying trying to cross rivers in the mountains and we did the first little section of like the mountains, we crossed several rivers that were compared to what would have been a head like super tame and I was terrified. Like I almost fell in and like got swept down and I was like I'm fine with skipping this section and staying safe. Then once we got up north of the Sierra Nevada we ended up jumping on and off quite a few times because of fire. I think like half of the trail in Oregon was on fire. There was a big fire in Washington that we kind of had to jump around and we weren't just deciding not to hike those sections like they were actually closed and you weren't allowed to hike on them because they were on fire. The joke from the year that we hiked was that it was the year of ice and fire.

L: you also while you're on the trail.

K: So that is something like a lot of people will do. You will stop in the town usually once every week or every few days and you can either just go to the grocery store while

you're in that town and buy food for the next section of the trail or a lot of people will like pack boxes of food for themselves for the whole trail before they leave. It only really works if you have someone that's willing to like hold your boxes and mail them out to you at the right time. And it wouldn't have really worked out well for me because I was coming from Canada and it doesn't work- like you can't really do that for like- if you're an international hiker because sending stuff over the border is just a nightmare. But what I did do was- like when we got in the mountains in the snow we need special gear for being in the snow and I would just order things online like a couple towns ahead of when I needed them and get them delivered to the post office. You can actually if you write like "your name like care of general delivery" they'll just hold the package at the post office for you and you can go pick it up when you get there. I did mail some food to myself too there is a really cool service but was like designed by hikers for hikers of that was kind of like an online hiker grocery store. You could order food and they would mail it to you. But I kind of did all of that as I went. I didn't plan any of it beforehand just like if I knew there was a spot coming up that didn't really have a grocery store a couple weeks before I would go online and make my order of food to get dropped off at that place. I don't know how common it is just like in regular life. [laughs] But all the post offices in those towns are very like used to it happening because they're trail towns so they're like accustomed to hikers coming through and they know how to deal with like hikers sending themselves [laughs] packages but I don't know how it would turn out if you just send it to a random post office that wasn't used to that happening. [laughs]

L: How was service on the trail? 'cause you said that you'd order if you knew a place was coming up and I know you also like booked rooms at hostels for 0 days where you didn't hike.

K: I had very little cell service 'cause I was coming from Canada so I had to get a roaming plan and the roaming plans were like insanely expensive. Actually I had calling but I didn't really have any like data to use internet. So I would only basically have internet when I got into a town and could find somewhere that had wifi that I could use. So that's why I would usually like wait until I was in a town like 2 weeks ahead and then use wifi there to order food or gear or something for like a few towns ahead. And sometimes you'd have service on the trail if you like the day before you want to call in and like book a hotel in town. Sometimes you just kind of had to show up in town and hope that there was somewhere you could stay. [laughs] Which it was not always the case but usually like somewhere in the stretch you'd find service. Depended where you were like California was pretty good for service and then once you got up to like Washington there's like no service. [laughs] So dependent what phone carrier you had. My partner had Verizon which was like the best one supposedly like if you wanted

service anywhere on the trail you basically had to have Verizon like none of the other phone carriers worked. [laughs]

L: You also while you were on the trail hitchhiked for the first time-

K: yes

L: How was that?

K: It was probably the part of the hike that I was most nervous about before I started. I wasn't super nervous about being in the wilderness but hitchhiking with strangers was one of the scariest parts for me. And by the end of the hike it ended up being like one of my favorite parts weirdly. [laughs] I mean obviously it is definitely a possibility that things could go wrong when hitchhiking but for me I always found that in my - I don't even know how many times I hitchhiked on the trail but every single time like the type of people that would stop to pick you up would just be the nicest, kindest, most generous people that were like willing to go out of their way to pick you up and get you to where you need to be and I met so many wonderful people by hitchhiking. Which was never what I expected was going to happen when I had to start doing it I was terrified. But it really renewed my faith in humanity a little bit. [laughs]

L: You started on your own but you ended up doing part the hike with like your hiking family?

K: yes

L: How often did you do hitchhiking by yourself?

K: I never hitchhiked by myself, which is probably a big part of why I ended up not being as nervous about. Even now I would probably be pretty scared to hitchhike like totally on my own. I always hitchhiked with one- at least one- of the other members of our trail family as they're- the term is [laughs]

L: Thank you. How early into your hike did you find your trail family?

K: It was actually the very first day. There's a lot of long distance hiking specific terminology. Trail angels so those are people along the trail that will basically help hikers, do anything to specifically help hikers. So there's a very well known trail angels in San Diego which is kind of the closest city to where the trail starts. Their named Scout and Frodo and for years and years and years they would open up their home to

people that were trying to start the trail. If you're flying in like they pick you up at the airport, bring you back to their house, let you camp in their backyard, feed you, drive you to the trail the next morning so you could start your hike which is like an hour drive away from their house. surgeons. So just like super amazing people and the people that I ended up considering my trail family and that I hiked like a lot of the trail with we all just by chance had permits to start on the same day. We all stayed at their house the night before. We didn't actually hike together for like most of the first day. But all by chance ended up sharing a campsite first night and then somehow just from that first night we were all just became a trail family and hiked like majority of the trail together. [laughs] People always ask like how wasn't I like scared to go do it alone. Even though you're in the wilderness unless you purposefully try to be you won't be alone like a lot of the time. Like you'll hike alone, but once you stop for a break or stop to camp there'll always be other hikers around you and when you're in that situation and environment together you just like form these bonds with people like so much more quickly than you would just like in normal life so you're like very rarely actually totally alone.

L: What was best and worst food creations you made?

K: Everything seemed quite delicious in the moment. There were a lot of things that I ate on the trail that I would never consider eating like normal life. [laughs] Like the one that probably sounds the most disgusting is a peanut butter and mayonnaise tortilla which is just tortilla smeared with peanut butter and mayonnaise and-

L: Is that for the calories?

K: Yeah we all carried like tubes of mayonnaise on us at all times [laughs] and I like put mayonnaise on pretty much everything I ate just because it was like basically 100 percent fat and calories which you needed because it was a physically- basically physically impossible to like eat the number of calories that you would burn in a day of hiking. It was really funny when you would go grocery shopping. It would be kind of like the opposite of what normal people do [laughs] when they go grocery shopping. You'd like have 2 options and you'd say like "okay which one has the most calories and fat like that's the one I want." [laughs] One of my favorite things that I ate- we ate a lot of ramen noodles but I came up with this dish that I called "elevated ramen" which was just a package of ramen noodles with a like pouch of Thai chili flavored tuna and a big scoop of peanut butter mixed into it. [laughs] Which probably also sounds disgusting to like normal people but swear it was delicious.

L: Is there anything that you just can't eat now?

K: Have not eaten a Cliff bar since and may never again. [laughs]

L: You went through about 5 pairs of shoes but you only wore one outfit every day

K: u

L: Did you wash it [laughs] you had to have washed it right? Or did it, just soon as you go to Canada it got burned?

K:[laughs] No, we did wash it. When you got into town like once a week or so. Your first- one of your first stops would always be to the laundromat to wash your clothes which is kind of like a hilarious affair when you really only had one outfit. You would kind of put on your like a raincoat and rain pants and nothing else so that you could wash all your clothes. [laughs] So they did get washed approximately once a week. [laughs] The shirt is it no longer living it has not been worn since the trail but the shorts that I wore I actually still have and still wear them if I go on hiking trips [laughs] my endorsement for Old Navy athletic wear. [laughs]

L: Did you have to throw out your socks though?

K: Yes I definitely went through a few pairs- not as many pairs of socks as you would think because I wore- I don't know if you've heard of Darn Tough socks?

L: [no sound]

K: There like a specific brand of outdoor socks that have a lifetime guarantee. They're supposedly never going to get a hole in them. But they do obviously if you're thru-hiking but you can like mail that into them and they'll send you a new pair if you get a hole in them.

L: So did you just mail them all of your socks?

K: [laughs] No there's actually certain stores like outdoor stores would be able to like honor the warranty so if you like walked into an outdoor store you could be like "look my sock has a hole in it" and then they would like to take them and give you a new pair [laughs] Well they did ask that you had at least washed them before you exchanged them. [laughs]

L: That makes sense because I believe I remember seeing a picture that you posted of your socks standing on their own?

K: Oh yeah they totally could. They were- they were horrifying. [laughs]

L: What was the best trail magic from the entire trip?

K: There's so many different forms of trail magic. One of the best ones that was like kind of the classic thing that people think of when they think of trail magic is people will come set up on the side of the trail with like a bunch of really good food. Like the types of things you don't usually carry with you when you're hiking. One of the best ones we had was earlier in the trail in southern California. Two of the people that were in my trail family had to get off the trail for a few days because one of them was injured and they ended up meeting these people randomly that like took them and let them stay at their house and then they decided that they wanted to do trail magic. So our friends from our trail family and these trail angels that they're staying with came out to the trail in the middle of the desert and like met up with us and all of a bunch of other hikers that were around us and they had ice cream, and like burgers, and fresh fruits. Like all the things that you fantasize about when you're hiking in the desert. Were just there magically so that was pretty good

L: What was your favorite part of the trail?

K: I think like weirdly I don't think a lot of people will feel this way, but one of my favorite sections was the desert. First of all because I'd never been really been in a desert before and it was like a mind blowingly different from what I was expecting and I mean it wasn't like all classic desert like sloughing through sand or anything, but I was like kind of amazed by like the diversity of environments that we went through yet even just in the desert section and also that was kind of when there was the most like camaraderie between hikers because everybody was kind of together in that section and then when you hit the snow in the mountains like some people skipped, some people went through, some people quit and went home, like everybody kind of went every which way and after that section the trail like felt a little lonelier after the desert section. But I think the most beautiful scenery section was probably northern Washington. That was pretty amazing and I would definitely go back there to hike just to see like the views again.

L: I think it's interesting that since you have a degree in forest conservation that your favorite part was the desert.

K: [laughs] Yeah, it is kind of hilarious. Honestly like my [laughs] It's going to sound horrible but some of my least favorite parts were like the parts that were just in the forest for like days and days and days.

L: Got tired of trees?

K: yeah I was like I need to see something other than a tree and a shrub. [laughs]

L: Did you get to see any cool animals while you're on the trail?

K: We saw 3 bears which doesn't really sound like a lot for like having been living in the wilderness for like five and a half months.

L: I'd expect more.

K: Yeah I also kind of expected more. So the first 2 that we saw were in California and they were just like small, not quite baby bears but they definitely weren't full grown and they both were like fleeing away from us in terror so we only saw them for like a split second. [laughs] But the third bear that we saw was probably my favorite wildlife sighting. Like my dream bear sighting would be from far enough away that I'm not like too nervous and it's in an open area where I can just like watch the bear and that was exactly what happened. We were climbing a pass in northern Washington and we were above tree line so we have like completely clear view of all the mountains around us and I just looked down and I was like "oh there's like a giant bear down there". [laughs] It's huge and we could just like stand up on the top of the ridge and like watch it kind of meander through the valley and that was definitely the coolest wildlife sighting.

L: When you got home did you have her first culture shock?

K: I definitely was looking forward to getting back into civilization but it was also a pretty intense experience going from living in the woods to being back in like an urban environments with tons of other random people around you all the time. When we finished the trail, you finish in like a fairly remote part of British Columbia and then we got on a greyhound bus which took us into downtown Vancouver which I'd never been to Vancouver before and I was super excited to like get to see the city. Not going to lie kind of hated it. Like I'm sure if I went back now I probably think it was a great city but just all the sudden being thrust into that level of civilization and like urban environment was just completely overwhelming like we were staying with one of my friends and we just eventually went back to her house and like laid down because we couldn't handle it anymore. [laughs]

L: Did you have any like habits that you picked up on the trail?

K: Probably just being like a disgusting human without shame. Like then you got back into civilization and were like "oh I have to like control myself and not just like be openly

disgusting in public.” [laughs] Oh and eating. Eating's like super fast for a while. When we would like get to eat we'd go to a restaurant in town or whatever and we'd all be chatting while waiting for the food to come and the food would come and it would just fall dead silent for like 5 minutes while we were just all just shoveling food into our faces. [laughs] It took a while to stop eating like that every time there was food in front of me.

L: It's called hiker hunger right?

K: Yes, hiker hunger is real. We went to like a restaurant in a suburb of LA once off the trail. Me and my trail family, we all got burgers at this restaurant and they came we were just like stuffing our faces. The waitress came over with like a giant pile of napkins and she was like “I was watching you guys eat and I thought you might need these.” [laughs] We were like “oh we've been shamed.”

L: Would you like to do a quiz with me? [20:50]

K: sure

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L: So this is a quiz on tinyinteract.com: “which trail should you hike?”

K: Ooh!

L: While on hiking trips do you prefer to rough it in a tent every night or cozy up indoors? Your options are: camping in a tent, what's a hiking trip without sleeping in the wilderness? or I want to sleep inside in comfort after a day outdoors.

K: definitely tent.

L: What's your international travel style? International travel? I don't use my passport. I like to visit new countries but I still want all the comforts of home. Or I want to go somewhere totally different than what I'm used to.

K: Let's go somewhere totally different.

L: How social do you like to be while on a hiking trip? I am so social, I want there to be plenty of people around so I can make new friends along the way. I don't mind bumping into other people on the trail but I hike to get away from the crowds. Or I would prefer to see the least amount of people as possible, I like having nature to myself.

K: [laughs] We'll go through the middle ground: get away from the crowds but run into at least a few people.

L: What kind of food do you like to eat on hiking trips? Anything I can get from a U. S. grocery store or restaurant, I like making my own backcountry meals. I'm assuming Canada is included in that as well. We'll go North America. [Kristin laughs] The basics: bread, vegetables, fruit, cheese, eggs, and meat. Rice and vegetables, maybe throw in some spices and a little chicken too. Or I don't care what I eat as long as it fuels me for hiking.

K: [laughs] Yeah probably the last one I'll eat pretty much anything.

L: Why do you hike? I hike to be immersed in nature and meet other like minded people. I want to be in remote parts of the mountains far away from cell phone service. I like to be self-sufficient and carry everything I need to survive on my back. I want to see some cool stuff.

K: Be immersed in nature and meet like minded people.

L: You've just spent the day hiking and soaking up the views. What does your ideal evening look like? Cirled up around a campfire with a few other hikers reminiscing about the day until it's time to cozy up in my tent for the night. Hanging out in a lodge by a wood burning stove, maybe playing cards with some other hikers while we sip tea and wait for dinner to be served. [Kristin laughs] Sleeping in a comfortable hotel or guest house, maybe I'll stop by a pastry shop for treats or eat a traditional local dinner. Curled up in my tent all alone, reading a good book and cooking dinner on my camp stove.

K: [laughs] Probably a campfire.

L: I think you've done this one. The Appalachian Trail the Appalachian Trail in the United States traverses over 2000 miles through 14 states. It takes an average of 5 to 6 months to complete. Hikers camp out along the way or stay in shelters on the trail. They can resupply on food and shower in trail towns a couple times a week. Hundreds of people complete this trail every year.

K: Yeah, we did a section hike on the Appalachian Trail last summer. We did the state of New Hampshire. So it was just a small section of it but it was really nice.

L: What is your dream trail?

K: There's one that I've been fantasizing for a couple years now about doing. You've already talked about 2 of the 3 like major long distance trails in the U. S. There's the Pacific Crest Trail on the west coast which I did and then the Appalachian trails like the eastern- east coast like long distance trail. But there's one that kind of goes up through the middle of the states called the Continental Divide Trail. Which also goes from Mexico to Canada but it starts in New Mexico? Yeah, starts in New Mexico and goes up through like Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. So you're kind of like in the Rocky Mountains area. And I've been fantasizing about somehow making it work to do a thru-hike of that trail for awhile now. [laughs]

L: Outside of hiking, do you have a dream trip?

K: I do have a list of places that I want to go there like unrelated to hiking. I've always wanted to go to Australia just 'cause that seems like a super cool place. [laughs] Costa Rica is one that I've- on the top of my list of places I want to go. I'd love to see more like more of Europe. After the Pacific Crest Trail I decided- which never happened- that my like next trip was going to be to Patagonia. Which I would still love to do someday. I have a very long list of places I'd like to go.

L: Do you have anything you'd like to promote or any last words for the audience?

K: I think my words of advice would be that if you're dreaming about doing something that seems crazy then you should find a way to try to do it. [laughs] And like even if you're terrified because I am not the kind of person that you would think that would do all these wild adventures. But I purposefully tried to push myself outside of my comfort zone. I have had the best experiences of my life and it made my life so much richer and better by taking those leaps and doing something that seems totally wild. I would say if you have some wild idea make it happen. [laughs]

L: Well thank you very much Kristen.

K: Thank you for having me.

[music]

Lauren: What's your favorite hiking trail? Let me know on twitter at Wanderlustpod. Until next time dear travelers. Thank you for listening.

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