



WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

JESSICA BAKER, EMILIE
DRINKWATER, SHELDON KERR

On a Mission in Alaska

University Peak is one of the highest mountains in Alaska, in the broadest swath of untouched wilderness in the United States—and we wanted to ski down it. Few people have pulled it off, and never an all-female team. When you're trying to ski 9,000 vertical feet, conditions have to be perfect. Too hot, and you face avalanches. Too cold, and you get short, dark days with more snowstorms.

In such an intense, hazardous environment, a good team is vital. By the end of a climb, you can absolutely hate your partners—or come out with a deep bond, which is what happened with us. While all three of us are professional mountain guides and skiers, I wouldn't have called us friends before this trip. Now we're connected for life.

We spent just under two weeks on the mountain but were foiled by warm weather; 24 hours after this photo was taken, we were forced to turn back. That's when the tears started. We'd put eight months of planning, along with so much money and mental energy, into the trip, and we were reversing course. But having one another made it a little less awful.

On our last night, as we were packing, we opened the boxed wine we'd stashed at base camp, turned on our solar radio, danced to some hip-hop in our long underwear, and said farewell—for the time being. Because we're not done. Even if it takes five or 15 years, we're going back for another shot.

From left: Kerr, Drinkwater, and Baker.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY Krystle Wright