



TRAVELS

with kate

Lake City's world traveler sees the world with a free spirit on a tight schedule and a tighter budget.

By KAYLA LOKEINSKY (Photos courtesy of Kate Herndon)

From cliff jumping in New Zealand to chasing the Northern Lights in Iceland, Kate Herndon has lived a life full of adventure. At just 26 years old, she has seen parts of the world that most people have only dreamed about. Her desire to explore the unknown and create lasting memories has prompted this Lake City girl to spread her wings and travel the globe.



● **MANHATTAN SKYLINE, NYC**

She has hiked forbidden trails in Hawaii, explored hidden waterfalls in Costa Rica and snowboarded down mountains in Jackson Hole, Wyo. When it comes to seeing the world, Herndon has no fear.

“You’ll never know what you’re missing until you break that fear,” Herndon said. “I think if you truly have a passion to go and see the world, fear is not going to be something you allow to hold you back. You are the only thing standing between where you are and where you want to be.”

This fall, she will be accomplishing another major feat: climbing a portion of Mount Everest, the world’s tallest mountain. In September, Herndon will travel to Nepal to do the Everest Base Camp Trek. While she won’t be climbing all the way to the 29,028-foot summit, the base camp has an elevation of more than 17,000 feet above sea level. As daunting as it may seem to climb the tallest mountain in the world, Herndon can hardly wait.

“I start training soon and I don’t think I have ever been more excited,” Herndon said.

For Herndon, traveling isn’t about going on luxury vacations, but about the life-enriching experiences she has along the way. She is frequently asked how she can afford to travel so much, and it’s her meticulous planning and prioritizing of what she wants out of a trip that allows her to travel on a budget.

“I don’t look at traveling as a vacation,” Herndon said. “Whenever I’m going places it’s not to stay at five-star hotels and wine and dine myself with fancy restaurants and high prices. That’s not what I’m looking for. I’m looking to experience the culture and learn about how people live there and just meet people and connect with people who have the same interests. Whenever you’re doing that you can do it very affordably.”



● **SKÓGOFOSS FALLS, ICELAND**

● **BLACK SAND BEACH, ICELAND**

(FACING PAGE)

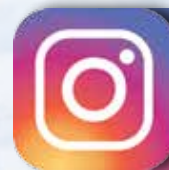
in Lake City and also does hair and makeup for weddings on the weekends. She has a husband, Matt, and a social life. So between all of that, how does she manage to find time to take trips around the world?

The answer is she travels when she can and tries to pack in as much as possible into her short trips. She keeps an on-going list of places she wants to visit, and when she sees an opening in her schedule, she goes for it.

“My work schedule is extremely demanding and unpredictable,” Herndon said. “Depending on how long I am able to be away at that specific time is when I’ll decide what a feasible distance is to go and I will plan accordingly. I like to have multiple things on my list to do for one area so I can really maximize my exploring while I’m there.”

How Does She Do It?

Herndon has a slam-packed schedule. She works full-time as a hair and makeup artist at Hair Graphics



To stay updated on Kate’s travels, follow her on Instagram (@katec08). For more travel tips from Kate you can also visit her blog, www.label-lavitabykate.blogspot.com.



new zealand

While she does like to revisit places, she doesn't like to repeat vacations. For her, there's nothing worse than coming home from a trip and realizing she missed something she really wanted to see. So, she tries to see as much as she can in the time she has.

"It might sound like there is no method to the madness, but I have found that is what works best for me," Herndon said.

Once she decides where she wants to go, she starts planning. While most people find the endless details that come along with planning a vacation downright terrifying, Herndon thrives off of them.

"Most people think of travel as a stress or that it's too much work but I actually find enjoyment in the planning and finding the deals and doing it affordably," Herndon said. "It's just a stress relief for me. It's an outlet and I love it."

Booking a vacation doesn't have to be expensive if you do a little research. Staying in AirBnB's instead of hotels, opting out of checking bags while flying and booking flights that leave at absurd hours are just a few of the ways that Herndon saves money while traveling.

"It really depends on the person," Herndon said. "If you're looking to go away and experience these really fancy hotels and try wines and stuff like that it's going to be more expensive. But, if you're going to travel to connect with people and experience the culture and just get out and become educated in the world it won't be. It's a choice."

By making frugal choices for herself, Herndon is able to see more of the world. She was able to do a four-day solo trip to New York for under \$400, making it one of her most inexpensive trips she's ever taken.

"I am always very frugal when it comes to my travels," Herndon said. "It's a lifestyle that I want to continue not a luxury that I only do once a year."

Herndon's choice is usually to focus on the journey itself rather than where she'll be laying her head at night. That's why she's so picky about who she travels with. While she travels with her husband about 75 percent of the time, she usually chooses to travel solo when he isn't able to make it.

"I am extremely picky about who I will travel with, only because I've learned that my idea of vacations are very different from that of everyone else," Herndon said. "I'm more of a 100 miles-per-hour, non-stop, 'you can sleep when you're dead' kind of girl. I don't even consider my traveling to be 'vacations.' They are definitely adventures. They don't consist of fancy hotels or expensive meals. I'm usually living out of a backpack, sleeping in the car and running on very little sleep. Anything to make it happen."

By taking shorter trips packed with adventures, Herndon optimizes her time and is able to have as much of an experience as she can without having to miss a lot of work. By making sure to make the most of her trips, she is able to experience a lot in a short amount of



● MILFORD SOUND • LAKE TEKAPO • MOUNT COOK, NEW ZEALAND

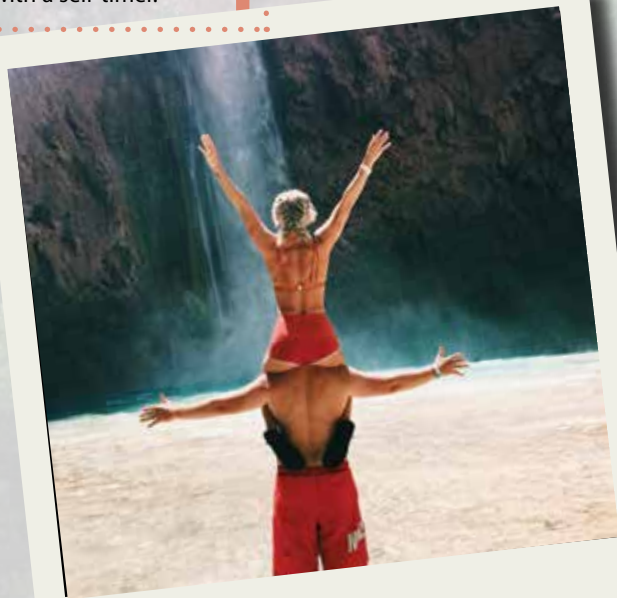


How Kate gets those amazing photos

When traveling on your own or with one other person, it's difficult to get photos of yourself or the two of you together. Over her years of traveling, Kate has become a pro at getting those gorgeous shots.

When she travels with her husband, he usually takes pictures of her and she takes pictures of him. However, if she's traveling on her own, or wants a picture of her and Matt together, she uses a tripod and the self-timer on her camera to get the shot.

"I'm a pro at setting up the self-timer and running in front of the camera," Kate said. "You'd be surprised how many photos of us are done on a tripod with a self-timer."



arizona

time.

"If there is one thing that traveling has taught me, it's to break the mold when it comes to what most people think 'travel' consists of," Herndon said. "I'm a pro at maximizing a three-day weekend. I've accomplished more in that short period of time than most people ever think possible. I've left the country, hiked 11 miles, then turned around and flew all the way back. It's truly about perspective. After all, to everyone else it was 'just another weekend.'"

World Traveler

Herndon has traveled all over the United States as well as overseas to Central America, Europe and New Zealand. Out of all the places she has been, it was her experience in New Zealand last year that has stuck with her the most.

"It was one of the top places on my bucket list for so long and experiencing it for the first time was incredible," Herndon said. "We went during the winter months and loved absolutely everything about it. The scenery, the culture, it truly is just the nonstop adrenaline-junkie's dream. I couldn't have asked for a better trip."

While in New Zealand, Herndon jumped off Shooter Canyon Swing, the world's highest cliff jump. While she sat strapped into a chair attached to a bungee cord, dangling over the canyon below, she experienced the most adrenalin-rushing moment in her life. Plummeting from a cliff that's 358 feet high is something that will be etched into her memory forever.

"It was all one giant blur of adrenaline," Herndon said. "I do remember the second it was over I wanted to do it again."

Herndon has shared a lot of her favorite travel memories with her husband Matt. Although he didn't do the cliff jump with her in New Zealand, together they hiked to Havasu Falls in Arizona. It was their first hike together, and a hike that she had been wanting to do for years. She didn't tell him how far the hike was, and the two embarked on the 22-mile trek and were met with some unexpected challenges.

"We started at 4 a.m. on the hike that was illegal and clearly stated no day trips," Herndon said. "Long story short, we ended up running out of food and water in the middle of the desert with heat temps unlike any other and blisters that covered the entire bottoms of our feet."

They were able to make it through the hike and come back with a unique story to tell. Since then, they have been back and done the hike properly, over the course of three days, and decided they much prefer the legal route.

"Many of my adventures take place outdoors and with that most all of my stories have something to do with how I almost died in one way or another," Herndon said. "Praise God for my husband and our ability to laugh at each other when we end up in the most ridiculous situations."

Nearly getting stranded in the middle of the desert taught her to always do her research before going on a hike or excursion.



- HAVASUPAI, AZ (FACING PAGE SAME)
- MOONEY FALLS, AZ (POLAROID)



santorini, greece



"I think being prepared, that's one thing I learned the hard way," Herndon said. "When you think you've done enough research, do more research because what you read isn't always how it is, so you want to be overly prepared."

When Herndon travels, she always tries to do some sort of hike or outdoor adventure. She has even climbed the Haiku Stairs, also known as the "Stairway to Heaven," in Hawaii. It's one of the most extreme and beautiful hikes Hawaii has to offer, and it's also illegal. It was made illegal 26 years ago after it was deemed "too dangerous for the public." However, that doesn't stop people like Kate from attempting the 3,922-stair climb daily.

"The trailhead is guarded and you will be fined if caught," Herndon said. "We took a five-mile detour and began well before daylight to avoid running into authority. We also ended up climbing down the back side of the mountain to avoid being caught on our return. The stairs were extremely dangerous in multiple areas due to a combination of not being maintained and weather damage. I highly recommend doing plenty of research before you go, and take extreme caution."

It's these hikes and memories that she's made with her husband and on her own that are the most rewarding to her. These are things that she has wanted to do her entire life, and she can check them off her bucket list.

"Reading so much about and doing so much research on something then finally being able to do it for yourself, there's no other feeling like that really," Herndon said.

In addition to making some beautiful memories that she will treasure forever, Herndon has also had some funny experiences happen to her while traveling abroad. Like the time she took her mom on a European cruise, and while in Europe she received an unexpected offer: a marriage proposal from a Greek man.

"I would say being proposed to would definitely be one of the funniest things that's ever happened to me," Herndon said. "He offered to buy me homes in different countries and I was like, 'Is this guy serious?'"

Where To Next?

Herndon is constantly planning and researching where she will travel to next. After her trip to Nepal coming up in September, she will be traveling to Thailand in November. From there, she hopes to continue checking countries off of her bucket list, including Japan, China, Argentina and Norway just to name a few.

"It's funny because the second I mark something off my bucket list, I add two or three more things," Herndon said. "It's definitely a never-ending list."

As far as long-term, Herndon wants to eventually have enough room in her work schedule to take her time while she travels.

"I don't think people really realize how short my travels actually are," Herndon said. "Very rarely do I ever go anywhere for longer than four or five days."

While she loves her job and her clients and is grateful to be able to do something she loves, she wants to eventually be able to travel more without having to spread herself too thin to make it happen.

Traveling has changed Herndon's mindset about life and people more than anything else.

"As a whole, it's shaped me into the person I am," Herndon said. "I'm very free-spirited I would say. It's molded me into a different person."

The best advice she can give someone who wants to travel is take the time to make it happen.

"Time literally is of the essence," Herndon said. "You're not going to get this time back [making time to travel] might not be convenient."

"You have to make it work," Herndon said. "You have to be willing to fly at inconvenient times and work really late nights so you can make the time for it. I think if more people realized how much you can do when you just set your mind to it, more people can do it."



● FRANCE (ABOVE) ● ICELAND (BELOW)



● PORTOFINO, ITALY (BELOW)

