

21st century 'Explorers'



Human beings have been to all corners of the world. They have explored land and sea and even walked on the moon. How much more is there for them to explore and experience in the 21st century? The answer is: 'A LOT'! Human beings are amazing!

Gary Connery – Wingsuit flyer

Gary Connery is 42 and he's a '**wingsuit flyer**'. He has made over 1,350 jumps from a helicopter over 730 metres above the Earth. He's flown free through the air at 80mph (128kph) and landed without a parachute. He has jumped from the Eiffel Tower, Nelson's Column, the London Eye, Tower Bridge, and from inside the Millennium Dome.



So, what exactly is 'wingsuit flying'? It is the sport of skydiving, but you don't use a parachute to land. You wear a special suit with huge wings on the arms and legs, and you fly for miles like a bird and finally land on a mountain of cardboard boxes!

Gary's lucky – the sport he loves is also his work. He has worked in over 100 films as a stunt man. Perhaps you saw him in one of the 'Indiana Jones' or 'Batman' films or in TV's 'Sherlock Holmes'. But surely his most famous role was when he played Queen Elizabeth II in the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics in London and flew into the Olympic Stadium.



Lynne Cox – Cold-water athlete

Lynne Cox, long-distance swimmer and cold water athlete, swims as easily as most people walk. She is American, but has twice held the record for the fastest swim across the English Channel, from England to France. She has also swum across the icy waters of the Bering Strait from Alaska to the Soviet Union. This swim was in 1987 and took just two hours and five minutes. The two countries' presidents, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, praised her courage. Gorbachev said it showed how close the people of America and Russia were.



Lynne has swum all over the world in even colder waters. In 2003, she swam 1.22 miles (1.96 km) in the Antarctic. Here the sea gets cold enough to kill a person in 5 minutes, and she got into the water and stayed there for 25 minutes. She has also swum round the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and the Straits of Magellan in Chile.

Lynne has survived not only freezing waters but also a serious heart illness. She is a true superhero.

Robbie Shone – Cave explorer and photographer

'Caving' (called 'spelunking' in the US and Canada and 'potholing' in the UK) is the sport of exploring underground caves. **Robbie Shone** is a **cave explorer and photographer**. He has travelled the world with his camera, from the Alps in Austria to China, from Borneo to Mexico. He has taken pictures of the deepest, largest and smallest caves ever discovered and his photographs have appeared in many books and magazines, including the 'National Geographic' and Bear Grylls' 'Great Outdoor Adventures'. In 2007, he worked on the BBC TV series, 'Earth – The Power and the Planet.'



Caving is often very dangerous. There are big dangers such as flooding or rock falls, but also smaller ones. In 2016, during a three-month trip to Papua New Guinea a leech got into Robbie's eye and stuck to it. It took two days before he finally removed it with salt and meat!

It is no surprise that Robbie has received many national and international awards for his photographs.

Karen Darke – Paralympic cyclist, triathlete and adventurer

In 1992, a fall when **rock-climbing** changed **Karen Darke's** life forever. She thought her sporting life was over, but since then she has found that even when paralysed many things are possible. She has won medals at the Paralympics and travelled the world, having adventures on wheels, water and snow. Karen just loves being outdoors. She says: 'I think adventures can be anything – small or large – in your garden or on the other side of the world.'



She has crossed Greenland's 372-mile ice cap sitting on skis, kayaked from Canada to Alaska, and hand-cycled over the Himalayas. She has also climbed Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, and hand-cycled, skied and swum the length of Japan. In 2010, she became a member of the British Paralympic cycling team and in 2012 she won a silver medal at the London Paralympics. In 2016, she did even better and won gold in the Rio Games in Brazil. In 2017, she received an MBE from Queen Elizabeth for services to sport.

Karen is truly an inspirational and extraordinary human being.