

Pair begin tough Silk Road odyssey in Istanbul

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ervation on both sides of the boundary in mountains along the Silk Road and wilderness beyond.

"The greatest threats our planet faces today transcend political borders, whether climate change, poverty, peace and security, water issues, or habitat and biodiversity loss," said Harris. "These are all tightly interlinked challenges and to tackle them we need to think beyond borders."

Cycling Silk will study those issues in the mountains and deserts of the Silk Road. The expedition will explore conservation initiatives straddling the border in the Caucasus, Tian Shan, Pamir, Himalyan and Karakoram mountains.

The two women are starting in Istanbul, Turkey, the geographic edge of Europe and the origin of the historic Silk Road, they will bike through Georgia, Azerbaijan, cross the Caspian Sea by ferry then continue from Kazakhstan through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Nepal to the expedition's final destination in northern India.

Harris and Yule have been friends since childhood. Harris is a writer, scientist, adventurer and photographer. She won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University where she completed her Master's thesis on trans-



Melissa Yule, left, and Kate Harris, formerly of Georgetown, are trekking along the Silk Road between Istanbul and northern India over the next few months. The pair began their odyssey recently in Turkey. *Submitted photo*

boundary conservation and peace parks. She also holds a Master's degree from MIT in earth and planetary sciences.

Yule is a social scientist, environmentalist and endurance athlete. In her work and research she combines community development with environmental science to study ecologi-

cal impacts on human health. She has a Master's degree in International Development from the University of Guelph.

Throughout their trip, Harris and Yule will conduct research to develop case studies on cross-border conservation at six existing or proposed TBPA's or "peace parks" along the

mountainous route.

They will explore and document each proposed protected area along the mountainous routes. They have planned periodic stops along their route to explore and document each TBPA case study, interview scientists, conservationists, government officials and local communities, and continually update their followers on their website www.cyclingsilk.com.

The expedition is sponsored by Seven Cycles, Polartec, the WILD Foundation, OneWorld Sustainable Investments and Wings WorldQuest, among others, and endorsed by the IUCN-WCPA.

In addition to their previous trip along the Silk Road, Harris and Yule also biked coast-to-coast across the United States in 2005.

The two women will share their explorations through a multimedia website and classroom outreach, and they plan to make a documentary upon their return.

"We believe that people must first care for a place before they feel compelled to protect it, so our goal with Cycling Silk is to leverage adventure into environmental advocacy," said Yule. "We hope to instill a deeper understanding and inspire a greater appreciation for wild spaces and species that transcend borders, both on the Silk Road and beyond."

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