

Rose-Marie Kennedy's Trek in the Arctic



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Rose is the EU Regulatory Relations Lead for Wells Fargo Bank. Prior to joining Wells Fargo, Rose was a Director in Deloitte with over 15 years' experience working in financial services, specialising in regulatory advisory in all aspects of Irish and European financial services regulation. Prior to joining Deloitte, Rose worked for KBC Bank where she held various positions across Internal Audit, Compliance and Risk, with her most prominent role leading on all regulatory engagement with their European Regulatory Authorities.

What made you take on this trip? Former colleagues of mine had taken part in the Arctic Challenge in previous years. Hearing about their trip, I became more aware of Debra Ireland as a charity and did my own research to help understand it a bit more. For me, being a mother of 3 young boys and while not impacted myself, through Debra seeing the daily challenge that patients suffering from EB (Epidermolysis Bullosa) go through, I felt compelled to help, not only to raise awareness but also to see how I could support raising much needed funds.

Why did you choose Debra Ireland as your chosen charity? For two reasons: after nearly two years of COVID restrictions and the challenge that it involved, I found that incorporating training/exercise into my week had become tricky. I wanted to set myself a physical and mental challenge in order to focus my mind each week (some would say this was a bit extreme!). I managed to encourage a

best friend of mine Nicola Prendergast to join me on this journey which meant that we were experiencing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity together which added an extra layer of support to our preparations.

Over the last year I have become more aware of Debra Ireland and the patient stories, as a mother of 3 young boys, I understand the pain that patients suffering from EB go through on a daily basis with no cure available, I felt that I needed to do something to support the parents and families in order to help find a solution and to end this suffering. The money we have raised will go towards supporting medical research underway to find a cure for EB, which would be incredible. While it is only a small contribution in the scheme of things, my hope is that I've also raised awareness of Debra Ireland over the last year and that others will now be encouraged to support the charity in the future.





Tell us about the trip? (What did it involve) –

Where do I start?! We travelled to Kittilä Airport in Finland and from there we went north to do 6 days of trekking within the Arctic Circle. Throughout the week, in addition to daily trekking using cross country skis and snow shoes, we learned the basic skills necessary to survive, lighting fires using lichen, pickaxing through ice for drinking water, regulating our body temperature to make sure we didn't get too hot or cold and cooking local food on camp fires. Throughout the week, our treks got longer, with the longest stretch encompassing an overnight campout on the snow and ice. While I camp with my family in Ireland, camping on snow and ice in -20°C was a different ball game altogether!

Did you find the trip challenging? Yes absolutely. No running water, no electricity, no central heating, no Wi-Fi and camping in -20°C Degrees was not easy. Of course we had great support from the Expedition Leader, Ronan Mullen in Adventure.ie and his team both as part of our preparations and during our trip. On a daily basis, our water needed to be sourced from the frozen river below the ice by using an axe to break the frozen water and by carrying multiple buckets for cooking, drinking and washing. Heat was from fires we built ourselves and cooking with head torches on. While it was tough, it wasn't all bad, Debra Ireland brought an amazing expedition group, together this year and we all supported each other over the course of the week to cross the line as a group which was an amazing achievement for us all, and a real team effort.





What did you miss most when you were away? Definitely the connection with my family, the challenge of not being able to connect with them was difficult. However; the lack of technology was equally a great way to unplug and disconnect. We are all constantly online these days either, through work or social media, so for me this acted as a circuit breaker to really switch off from it all. With that, I was able to have the headspace to reflect while taking in the fantastic surroundings of the Arctic Circle.

Would you recommend others undertake this type of challenge? Absolutely. Debra Ireland is an amazing charity with a fantastic team so I would recommend anyone to get involved even in a small way if this trip isn't for you. They do lots of events throughout the year to raise funds. This challenge in particular for me was really special one as it was an incredible opportunity to learn more about myself both physically and mentally in terms of what I was capable, of whilst also doing something for a much deserving charity.

Can people still donate to this cause and how? Yes most definitely, we are looking to keep the momentum up on the fundraising the *justgiving* page that myself and Nicola have is still open.

Justgiving link: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/roseandnicolaarticchallenge2021>

