

Darcy Gaechter

Adventurer, Author, First & Only Woman to Kayak the Amazon River from Source to Sea

An adventurer, record-setter, and boundary-breaker, Darcy Gaechter is best known as the first woman to kayak the Amazon River from source to sea. Her three-person team also became the first team to kayak the entire river, where all previous expeditions had either hiked around or rafted portions of the whitewater in the Amazon River's headwaters. The journey required her crew to paddle over 4,000 miles across the widest part of South America, a voyage that took 148 days to complete. The successful traverse of the entire Amazonian watershed relied on Gaechter's team's ability to balance many factors: physical endurance, an ability to work with the locals to assuage their fears of outsiders, patience for interpersonal conflicts arising from three people spending every waking moment together for five months, and a mental toughness that allowed no room for quitting to be an option. Without a doubt, the Amazon was as much an intellectual and emotional undertaking as it was a physical challenge.

Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), Gaechter inspires audiences with her personal journey of overcoming obstacles and making the impossible possible – sharing useful tactics to take on even the most daunting of challenges and demonstrating how a strong belief in yourself and in your goal are key ingredients to any success. Taking groups along her adventures, she shares how having an “expedition mindset”— expecting the unexpected and understanding that obstacles don't lead to failure, but rather present opportunities for success—is applicable to every walk of life.

Besides kayaking the entire Amazon River, Gaechter has achieved many “first female descents” of the world's hardest rivers. She has participated in kayaking expeditions that required her to carry an 85-pound kayak for 13 miles up and over a 12,000-foot pass in the Sierra Nevada Mountain range to then tackle six days of the hardest runnable whitewater. She has led expeditions in Africa, Asia, South America, Europe, and North America. Hunger, thirst, exhaustion, complicated logistics, and difficult communications with people who don't share the same language are all common trials for Gaechter on her expeditions.

When she is not on a whitewater expedition, Gaechter stays busy running her adventure kayak guiding business, Small World Adventures. She is also the author of *The Kayaker's Guide to Ecuador* and *Amazon Woman*, an adventure memoir detailing her Amazon River expedition and the life challenges she faced to get there – the rights of which have been purchased to turn her story into a movie.

Throughout Gaechter's entire life, people have told her that she can't do all the things she likes to do because she's “too little,” “too short,” or because “women can't do that.” She was even nicknamed “Diminutive Darcy” by the sports writer for her local paper that covered high school sports in her hometown. But she never let this commentary from others become her truth. Sometimes, having the conviction that what you are trying to do is simply *possible* is the most important first step forward toward your goals.