

ELLA AL-SHAMAH

PALEOANTHROPOLOGIST & STAND-UP COMIC

Ella Al-Shamahi, paleoanthropologist and stand-up comic, talks about some of the personal crises that pushed her to imagine a more positive future for herself. "Nobody expected me to go from too afraid to leave the house to being a National Geographic Explorer." Al-Shamahi's research on early human ancestors focuses on countries with political instability. Areas where scientific work is difficult or impossible hold some of the most revelatory discoveries.



CLARE JONES

About Ella Al-Shamahi

Ella Al-Shamahi is a National Geographic Explorer, palaeoanthropologist, evolutionary biologist, and stand-up comic. She specializes in Neanderthals, caves, and expeditions in hostile, disputed, and unstable territories.

As a stand-up comedian, Ella uses comedy both as a coping strategy and to communicate science. She performs nerdy stand-up internationally, from the Bloomsbury Theatre in London to the National Geographic stage in Washington, D.C. Ella was a 2019 TED main stage speaker, and her TED talk has been viewed more than 2 million times.

In 2018, Ella was the presenter and associate producer for BBC Two's science series *Neanderthals: Meet Your Ancestors* and *Horizon: Body Clock*. She also hosted a National Geographic show, *Viking Warrior Women*. Ella has been featured twice in *National Geographic* magazine and was a co-guest editor for the first UK edition of *National Geographic* magazine.

Ella holds a BSc in Genetics from University College London, an MSc in Taxonomy and Biodiversity from Imperial College London/Natural History Museum, and is pursuing a PhD in Neanderthal rates of evolution at University College London.

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