

Early BIRD

BBC Breakfast presenter Louise Minchin on why she's a terrible cook, tackling triathlons and those painful 3am rises...



Seven million people wake up to Louise Minchin's familiar face every morning on *BBC Breakfast*. After stints on *Radio 5 Live*, *BBC News* and *The One Show*, the cheerful presenter landed the coveted sofa spot in 2012 when the Beeb relocated to Salford. Many presenters were reluctant to leave London, but Louise leapt at the chance to try a new way of life,

relocating to the Cheshire countryside with husband David and their two daughters Mia, 14, and Scarlett, 11. Always an outdoorsy girl, Louise took to country life like a duck to water, indulging her passions for swimming and cycling so much so that she even took up triathlons. She may like working up a sweat in her own time, but on screen, she's an expert at keeping calm, having interviewed everyone from David

Cameron to Will Smith (who accidentally threw a blueberry down her cleavage on live TV). However, when she appears on Channel 4's *Time Crashers* this month, we'll see Louise in a whole new light as she's forced to take on the humble roles of lady's maid and squire in the time-travelling celebrity reality show. Could the unflappable host be about to lose her cool? We doubt it...

I really don't like getting up at 3.40am every day. And I definitely wouldn't be able to do it if I didn't love my job. I'm not naturally a morning person, so I've become a secret sleeper. I always have a little nap at some point in the afternoon, because I just can't make it through the day without one. My secret is being able to sleep at any time, and in any place - it's a gift I've always had.

Live television can be stressful, but exercise keeps me sane. I spend my me-time doing triathlons. I started about two years ago and I've done about eight now. I've gone absolutely sport mad! The intense training is the way I separate work from home. If I go out on my bicycle for a long ride, then I simply don't have to think about anything else for a few hours.

I'd love my girls to be inspired by my interest in sport. I read something a few years ago that said if your mum is active and sporty, then you're more likely to be, so I hope that's true. I assumed my races wouldn't interest them, but they come and cheer me on - they're so supportive. It's absolutely lovely.

My husband and I are lucky that our jobs allow us to spend a lot of time together. I work in the mornings and he runs his own business, so we sometimes get a whole afternoon just the two of us. Like me, he loves cycling, too, so some days we'll go for a bike ride and stop for a drink in a pub while the children are at school. We don't often have time for date nights as I go to bed at 9pm during the week, so I really look forward to Friday night. It's always curry night and we'll have a glass of wine and relax or watch a movie at home.

David's surrounded by alpha-females - including our dog, Waffle. I couldn't do my job if he wasn't such a huge help. When I'm at work, he makes breakfast and gets the girls to school, and does the evening meals, too. He's a brilliant cook, which is fantastic because if it were left up to me, we would eat carrots, houmous and tomato soup every day!

When we lived in London, we rarely had time to sit down to dinner together.

It used to be that the girls would eat early and we would have our meal on our own later. But since we've moved up north, our schedules are much more flexible which means we can all eat together most nights of the week, which is lovely as we get the time to chat as a family. My girls tell me off if I have my mobile phone at the dinner table, and they've banned them when we take the dog for a walk, too. It's such a brilliant role-reversal.

We absolutely love living in Cheshire. It was a big move and a nervous time, but it's been fantastic. I didn't realise that the hustle and bustle of city life was quite so stressful until we moved - it was a real eye-opener to discover that there are so many fun things to do here. I don't miss London at all now - you don't have to live in a metropolis to have a really great time.

MY BIG LOVES

▼ **GOGGLEBOX**
It's so clever and very funny. It also means you're seeing the best bits of lots of other shows.

▼ **SUNDAYS**
We'll plan a big family walk with the dog in North Wales, which usually involves a pub at some point - ideally for a big roast.

▼ **ANGELINA JOLIE**
She has to be my favourite celebrity

interview. As a mum, an actress, a humanitarian worker and a director, I've always found her inspirational.

▼ **CORNWALL**
I used to holiday there every year as a child and we still go back to the same beach.

▼ **SEQUINS**
I absolutely loved the long sequined dress I wore when I hosted Radio 2's D-day concert. If I'm ever going out and I'm not too sure what to wear, I'll wear that dress. It always makes me feel a billion dollars.



From working up a sweat with Bill Turnbull (left) to sitting pretty on the sofa with Charlie Stait - it's all in a day's work for Louise



In *Time Crashers*, I got to try living in different eras. We were blindfolded, fitted with clothes and dropped in mystery locations. First you'd have to work out where you were by looking at your surroundings or what you were wearing, then live in that era for up to 36 hours.

The biggest challenge for me was the Tudor era. I was a lady's maid and had to do everything for her, including washing her nightwear in urine and sleeping on a straw mattress outside her bedroom! It was an extraordinary experience. You can look back in history books or watch period dramas, but until you wear the clothes and do the work, you have no idea what it's like and how tough life was in the past.

* The six-part series of *Time Crashers* starts this month on Channel 4 - find out more on page 127