

We left Anchorage at 7.30am for the small town on Talkeetna where we were to be getting the small plane to fly us to denali's basecamp located on the glacier. It was a 2.5 hour drive and i was wondering whether i had enough clothes given that my guides had been brutal on me in terms of yesterdays gear check and weight restrictions (i would definately come to reluctantly thank them for their brutality later in the trip!!)

Soon we were loading all our gear onto two single propeller beaver planes and amazingly enough lifted off fine considering our weight and headed out to denali basecamp an hours flight away. The scenery in Alaska is absolutely breathtaking and it was nice to enjoy it from the plane. Often when you are climbing, you are just too exhausted or nervous about your whereabouts to take in the beauty of ur surroundings. We crossed a huge forest and i was looking for signs of the grizzly bears as they are now waking up from their hibernation period. The pilot had seen some on a previous flight but unfortunately i didnt see any this time. We were soon in the Denali national park and flying over knife shaped mountains until we were began circling a rather remote looking basecamp and came into land. We landed on the ice, the beaver plane had skis with which to land on and began the procedure of dragging our gear off the plane on sleds and we began distributing the weight between our packs and our sleds..We had more than 21 days of food, fuel and gear in order for me to be able to wait out weather if we got stuck beyond my target completion date of 15th May. Its horrible trying to climb a mountain with a timeframe restriction, so i was really trying not to focus on how important an issue it was for me to be done by 15th May and just to enjoy the climb and the experience of being in Alaska in this beautiful environment.

Adventure Consultants have arranged the logistics of my whole year of climbing outside of Everest, and i have been extremely happy with what they have done for me and how flexible they have been to help me achieve my goal. It was also Guys last of the Seven Summits too and i really wanted him to be on Denali with me. In order to comply with the Denali National Park regulations we needed to work with one of their designated guiding companies and I worked with Mountain Trip whom were great. They were also flexible in the timing which i really appreciated. My guide from mountain trip was Clark Fynes and he was superb. He has guided Denali 10 times and he certainly knew the mountain really well which i was thankful for. His second guide was Brent Moore from Telluride, a technical ice climber and also a really nice guy. I also had from NZ Mark Seddon a really nice kiwi mountain guide and cameraman who was going to film our trip and how i fared on trying to get to the summit and of course i had greg with me too whom had flown in from Johannesburg in South Africa.

The first thing that went wrong was that i realised i had left my PDA (the device from which i send my mountain dispatches) in Talkeetna. Clark jumped to the rescue as i sat in a complete panic about not being able to update my website, and got onto the radio to Talkeetna Air Taxi's. They miraculously located my PDA in my left luggage and put it on the next flight to basecamp!! As soon as i had my PDA we

began the walk to camp one some 5 hours or so up the glacier. We had opted to do a single carry (ie, all our loads in one go as opposed to half our gear one day and returning back to basecamp to bring the other half the next day) It was really hard work and i would estimate that i had about 38 llbs on my back and about 60llbs in my sled. We were in two rope teams of 3, Clark, Myself and Mark Seddon on one rope and Guy, Greg and Brent on the other.

When we arrived at camp 1 some 5 hours later, it was 11.30pm at night and we were all exhausted, freezing cold and physically aching in all joints from carrying such heavy loads. My waist had welts on the side from where my sled was pulling on my backpack. We then had to prepare camp, pitch tents and Clark and Brent got us something to eat. It was by now about minus 30 and still light outside but no sun hence the cold - talking about settling back into mountain life with a bang!! I could hardly eat dinner i was so tired and we all fell into an exhausted slumber.