

8TH DECEMBER - SUMMIT DAY

I was woken at 9.30am by the sounds of boots and crampons scrunching on the ice outside our tent. It seemed like everyone was going for the summit today. We had breakfast and got ready to go. I was desperate to get going and must have been annoying Luis like mad. We finally left camp at 10.45am, apart from Guys group everyone else was ahead of us which being competitive by nature I hated! We started up the long approach to Vinson Massifs summit. Summit day is very long - 3 underlating valleys we need to navigate prior to arriving at the base of the summit ridge. We got into a rhythm Luis first, me in the middle and Hamish on the back of the rope. We had to go over a few crevasses not too far out of camp, which I always hate going over. I always do this huge leap over the crevasse which inevitably pulls Hamish flying forward much to his annoyance. Guys group, the wedding party were behind us and moving slowly. We caught Phils group after a few hours and then soon caught up with Ernesto and Gabby from my Chilean group. Andronico had gone ahead solo, it feels strange not climbing with him after spending so much time with him on Everest and for all our training. As we approached the summit ridge it was really windy and cold, we all had frost in our hair and resembled yettis at this stage. I changed into my minus 40 down suit, rabbit hat and put in two pairs of handwarmers. Once all done, we set off again and of course within minutes the wind had died down and I started to really overheat! I was wanting to go as fast as possible and kept braking our rhythm, I was just so desperate to get to the summit. I passed Andronico who was already on his descent and gave him a hug before continuing upwards. We stopped briefly at the top of the ridge so Hamish could unclip and start to film our approaching the summit. The summit was by now within eye reach and I was chomping at the bit to get there. I could feel the tears welling up as we walked the narrow ridge which led to the summit. There was breathtaking views either side and we had idyllic weather conditions. In no time I was there and hugging Luis and Hamish. I burst into tears which is becoming more and more regular when I arrive on a summit, but this was such an important mountain in terms of my goal and I was so elated to be there. We stayed on the summit about an hour, filming, getting some good photos for my sponsors and congratulating the other teams. Guys group were a couple of hours behind us but still heading upwards which was good news. We then started heading down as fast as possible. We met the others on the ridge and hugged them all. We wished Kat and Rob all the best for their wedding vows. It was a big moment for John Rost as this was the last climb of his seven summit quest. Hamish was in the front of our rope chain and with his long stride I was running to keep up with him and we started cranking it down the mountain. We were passing a couple of groups when I tripped up over my ice axe and literally did a face plant.. most uncool. My blisters were now absolutely killing me - I think the adrenalin rush of getting to the summit keeps the pain at bay, but now my heels were throbbing uncontrollably. We arrived back at camp 3 at around 8pm - 10 hours round trip. I hung out with Andronico for a while before crawling into my tent to rest and send a dispatch. I was sooo happy to have made the summit and soon fell into an exhausted slumber.