

29th NOVEMBER

I was in the deepest sleep when i was awoken with Luis knocking on my door saying we were going. We had 45 minutes to get ready before being collected and taken to the airport. I lept into the shower so i could wash my hair prior to " i dont know how many days of not being able to wash it or too cold to want to wash it" I shoved everything into my bag that was staying at the hotel in storage, grabbed my pack and was ready. In no time at all we were actually climbing up the ladder onto the illusion jet that looked like it was off to a war zone rather than dropping off a motley crew of climbers and south polers in antarctica. I was not prepared for the seats to be parachuters style on the sides of the plane and a ton of gear in the middle. The gear comprised of anything from mattresses to a bbq to huge barrels of fuel. I sat down with Hamish in the nearest available seat already feeling my anxiety about flying kicking in. We promptly got told by someone from ALE that we were selfish to just sit down in the nearest available seats and block up the narrow gangway and Hamish was not allowed to film. We were all given ear plugs to block out the noise of the four huge jet engines and i eyed all the loose wires hanging around us nervously. After the quickest safety briefing in history, just basically find a seat belt and do it up, we were hurtling down the runway at punta arenas. Soon this huge beast of a plane was airbourne and we flew to Ushuya in Argentina where we were to land on a longer runway in order to be able to take off again with a full tank of fuel. the runway at punta arenas was under repair and therefore not long enough for the illusion to take off fully fuelled and loaded. Hamish and i were allowed to go into the glass nose cone of the plane which was just amazing. You can see everything from there. Vladimir was the navigation officer and he showed us one rather decrepped looking piece of equipment that was supposed to be guiding us and i thankfully spied a modern looking computer next door which was also helping navigate! It was incredible watching the runway bearing up on us as we sat in the cone, i prayed nothing went wrong now or Hamish, Vlad and i were toast. It was a great landing and soon we were in our isolation section at the airport. We were on the ground 2 hours and then in no time Hamish and i were back in the nose cone with Vladimir for the take off. I think i distracted him with too many questions and grabbing his leg during turbulence during the landing so i decided to try and be brave and i sat right on the glass and braced myself for take off. We were loaded with enough fuel to get to Antarctica and back to Punta Arenas if necessary (lets hope that wasnt the case) If the crosswinds are more than 20 mph the plane cannot land on the ice.

It seemed forever that we hurtled down the runway, my face felt feet away from the tarmac. I was starting to panic as i saw the end of the runway and we were still going full guns along the ground, when we slowly pulled up and took off. It was a very bumpy take off and i soon began dry crying into hamish's leg much to his horror. He said it looked too rude to film! So here i am 2 hours into the flight, people are lying on the luggage and amazingly enough asleep in the very uncomfortable seats. The loo is a small bucket in the corner of the plane or else you could use your pee bottle if you were feeling brave. Im hoping we are going to be able to land, apparently the wind is picking up which isnt great news.

After four hours we were told to start getting into our down clothes as we were going to be landing soon. I started putting on layer after layer, got my hat and gloves ready and sweating profusely from the heat still coming out of the ventilators of the plane, prepared myself for the notion of landing on ice. I was clinging to my neighbours as we were about to land and soon there was a loud crunching sound and we were whizzing along the ice seemingly very fast! The doors opened and an icy blast blew in and soon we were treading on treacherously slippery ice in Antarctica, truly amazing. The next thing I knew was that Luis and I were to be on a separate flight to the base of Vinson and we were going soon.. they were anticipating bad weather later and wanted to start flying us in now. I was a little upset as I didn't feel like getting stuck at Vinson basecamp whilst all the others were at Patriot Hills, that's the last form of civilisation around here, and with a sulky face I was loaded onto the twin otter with Luis and five others being flown by 2 young Canadian pilots. Amazingly enough the pilots had flown the twin otters to Antarctica from Canada! The flight was perfect, we took off on skis and I looked out at the huge white vastness of Antarctica from the plane. Soon we could see Vinson Massif and its neighbouring mountains. We landed on skis at our basecamp and loaded our bags onto sledges and towed them to our campsite. My sledge felt really heavy, luckily camp wasn't too far away! Luis and I spent the next 2 hours digging a wind wall, a kitchen and pitching the tent so that when Hamish arrived 2 hours later it was all ready for him - four seasons or what!! It's sunny outside right now and it's 11.30pm at night. Rob and Kat are drinking champagne next door! Rob has brought a case of wine and a case of champagne for when they get married. They plan to get married on the summit of Vinson and the wine was for the party afterwards! We have had dinner and I'm going to be trying to sleep soon - it's been quite a day! Kat's mum very kindly gave me some very Joan Collins velvet scented lavender eye shades which the boys of given me copious amounts of grief about but I love them and they block out the light perfectly!

I've got my Chilean team camped next door which is great to spend time with them all on Vinson.

That's it for today, it's really great to be here finally and I'm exhausted from all the adrenalin rush's I've been having from the illusion jet! Goodnight from Vinson basecamp!