

AUGUST 14TH - SUMMIT DAY!!

I was lucky if i slept an hour last night. Lena, our cook arrived in at 10.00pm (we were all in bed at 8.30pm) with a candle in her hand that almost burnt down our whole dormitory as she whizzed it past all our down jackets and the wooden beams!! The hut above our hut had burnt down the previous year in about 5 mins flat, so sissel and i held our breath until vladimir replaced the candle with a headlamp! Sleep completely eluded me and i woke up at 1.30am when Luis went and checked out the weather - we were on for it!! I was so tired at this point it wa almost difficult to rustle up the energy yet alone the excitement i normally feel prior to a summit attempt. I normally rely on the familiar rush of adrenalin that kicks in at the antisocial hours u leave for when u go for it! We all got up and were ready for our 3.00am breakfast. I'm always very unorganised getting ready to leave, but somehow last minute it all falls into place. While Sissel and i were waiting for the snow cat to take us to Pastakov rocks we saw 3 shooting stars and the planet saturn in the night sky - it was really amazing and something i love to experience when I'm in the mountains. The snow cat ride was pretty hair raising as we were all thrown against each other trying to avoid falling out - u just knew the guy would probably keep going if that happened!

We started climbing at 4.45 am and it was a long way up. Gregor, sean and i started singing at one point and big mistake, suddenly we all fell into a big lull and each of us had to take a gu shot to recover. We continued upwards, all silent and collecting our own thoughts. Luis keeps a really great pace and is vigilant about water/snack breaks which i think makes him such a good guide. We all continued upwards, it seemed to go on forever and although the conditions were perfect, there was an icy wind and i really felt the cold. By the time we arrived at the traverse i was feeling lousy, no energy in my legs resulting from 2 nights of non existent sleep and i was freezing. We finally reached a sunny point on the saddle where we stopped for a break of about 20 minutes. Elbrus is a volcano that split in two pieces when it last erupted, hence the saddle where we were sitting was in the middle of the two peaks.

The break here completely revived me and i started to feel really good. Sean had taken so much ibuprofen for his ankle that he was a little spaced out and not feeling so great at this point although was not complaining at all! He really made so little fuss about his ankle, he was really amazing and strong. We continued steeply upwards from the saddle, all walking like ducks so that our crampons were gripping firmly onto the sharp incline of the slope. We took about 1hr and 15 minutes to reach the summit from the saddle.. It was really exciting when we arrived, Tony (luis's main disciple!) went to the summit first with his wife Lisa - it was lisa's first mountain and was seanie, greg and tony's second of the seven summits. It was Sissel's first of the Seven summits and my third. We were all ecstatic to be on the summit and we spent ages hugging each other and taking photos. I'm afraid i took the most time with the photos getting all the summit pictures for all my sponsors and everyone was really patient with me!! Luis warned me that all the flags need to be smaller and i need to do this a lot quicker - his example was when he was on the summit of Vinson last year, he spent a total of 60 seconds on the summit and it was - 60!!!

We came down slowly, seans ankle hurt way more on the descent and he was really in pain now. The weather was very warm and it really was the perfect day to go for the summit. It

took about 3 hours to come down and i was trying not to run to the snow cat once i saw it at Pasakov rocks - i definitely didn't want it to leave without us!

We got back to the hut, had a quick dill soup and all crashed, i now think I'm so overtired that i cant sleep - this is really not good. Its now after dinner and I'm taking a homeopathic sleeping aid again to try and get some rest - i hope they work! I'm so happy that we all reached the summit, it was such a perfect day and it was great to do it all together especially with sean and his twisted ankle. Sean and i have been talking about doing one of the seven summits together for so long now , so its great to have done Elbrus with him. Tomorrow we have the big duffel shuffle back down the mountain and we are all looking forward to being back in the ozone hotel!!!