

8th AUGUST

I tried to ignore the sound of Sissels alarm going off at 6.45 am. I was exhausted, the previous night i had worked until 3.00am so this was my second consecutive night with a serious lack of sleep. Not conducive to an imminent mountain climb where sleep on a mountain generally eludes you. We did a fly by visit to Red Square and the Kremlin which was amazing, i wish we could have spent longer there to learn more about Russias fascinating history.

The domestic airport was a shambles, there were no trolleys anywhere so we had to carry our 14 huge duffel bags from the carpark to the check in. I could feel my arms growing under the weight of lugging numerous bags around. All of us sweating profusely we had to sort our overweight fees as you are only allowed 23kg per person (practically my hand luggage!! The plane was positively prehistoric i would estimate at least 50 years old. I almost started crying when i went to the bathroom prior to take off and saw duck tape on the walls. I havent been on a plane this old since my ex fiancée, Kipp and i were involved in a plane crash down in Fiji in 2001. I was terrified. The take off had me shaking in a ball when part of the ceiling fell down combined with the collapse of my tray, which Luis stuck back up with duck tape to stop it falling onto me constantly.

Amazingly enough we landed safely in Mineral Vody and once again had to drag our huge duffel bags to the carpark - my only work out in about a week! We now have a 3 hour bus journey to the valley where Elbrus is located. The weather looks pretty ominous. Sure enough as we approach the valley where we are staying the black clouds develop into rain, thunder and lightening not a good sign for our climb i think to myself... especially with a target summit attempt on Friday 13th!

Our hotel was a small pretty hotel surrounded by pine trees and once again we lugged our 14 bags up to our rooms. We are all in our own rooms tonight and its way more civilised than our hotel in Moscow. We all headed down to the sauna where the boys cranked it up to about 100degrees, it was unbearable..We had dinner, im not overly impressed with the food here i have to confess - i was even missing Nepals dahl baht!! I had the boniest most anorexic fish you could wish for and almost killed myself choking on one of the bones!!

Luis gave us our briefing for tomorrow and im now about to fall into a much needed sleep!!