



## Mount Everest 2016 - Blog No 10: Camp 3

Hi all,

Jaco and team made it to Camp 3 and are now back in Base camp, recovering and waiting for better weather. Please see below a summary of a week on the mountain ...  
Daan

*I've been away from Everest Base Camp exactly one week, but this week feels like an expedition in itself. Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> my alarm wakes me up at 1.30 am. Today is the day we'll go into the notorious Khumbu Icefalls, on our way to Camp 1 at 6100 meter. After breakfast, which I find difficult to digest at this time of the day, we're being sent into the darkness, after having received a blessing from head-Sherpa Purba. With 'only' 18 kilos in my backpack and headlight on, I leave Base Camp behind me. After an hour we reach the glacier and put on our crampons. My estimation is it's around -15 degrees, which means you have to be quick if you take off your gloves to do something, or else... The Khumbu Icefalls are notorious because they are continuously moving and because you have to walk through an icefield with ice towers as high as 40 meters, and crevasses as deep as 100 meters. Despite knowing all of this I feel very confident and happy with my skills and materials. After sweating for three hours the real fun starts – the crevasses and ice towers are so big we need to bridge and conquer them with ladders: sometimes two ladders tied to each other, but in one case even five ladders tied to each other. At the vertical passage with these five ladders, two Sherpa's find it necessary to go straight behind me on the ladder. When I'm almost there and want to get off the ladder, the whole ladder construction moves out of the ice wall by half a meter ... After having caught my breath first I yell at them in Dutch. Despite the fact that the scenery is magical and unique, I'm not taking any pictures. On a regular basis you hear the ice break with enormous bangs and hence for four hours "don't think, just walk" is our mantra to get through the ice falls as quickly as possible. The final part of the Icefalls is a 25 meter high vertical ice wall. Super-cool but after six hours of climbing extremely tough. An hour later I get into my tent and I call Russ via the radio to let him know I'm safe, so he can inform Daan.*

*The route for the next day is not that long, but again presents more than enough challenges. First I hear that the 5-ladder construction that we took has been completely ruined at the end of yesterday by a falling ice tower, which obviously makes me think. Today we're zigzagging on the glacier to Camp 2 at 6400 meter. Again, we're using many ladders and have to conquer vertical parts and I notice I have to get used to the altitude as I need to catch my breath after every climb. At this moment, there's only 30% of the oxygen in the air compared to what you would have at sea level. After two hours of climbing I'm very happy to spot Camp 2. But unfortunately it's like the holidays in Switzerland with my parents when I was a child: you can already see the hut but it seems to take forever to get there. Struggling and exhausted I arrive at Camp 2 at the beginning of the afternoon. I'm the second to arrive. We end up staying here for three days because of the heavy snowfall. The temperature is obviously even lower than at Base Camp which is why I'm wearing my down suit half the*

time. Very warm and comfy, but also very annoying when you need to go to the toilet and have to pooh in squat position in some sort of a plastic bag (all human waste goes back to Kathmandu!).

In the meantime it's the second of May and I have started noticing the effects of sleep deprivation. Just like the others at night I'm having weird dreams or I can't control my breathing, which is driving me nuts and keeps me awake for hours. Anyways, I pack all my stuff and around 7.30 am we're leaving for Camp 3 at 7200 meters. My altitude record so far is 6972 meters, so very unique that we'll sleep at 7200 meters tonight. Because of the cold we're all wearing our down suit which is great for the first hour, but after that I'm sweating like crazy. On the glacier, my watch indicates a temperature of 37 degrees! With the exception of the first hour the remaining 7.5 hours are close to vertical climbing, vertical as in up to 60 degrees. Next to this, the ice is as hard as stone and either your crampons or your ice axe appear not to have any grip. For some parts my pace is only five steps walking, ten counts rest, five steps walking, ten counts rest. Finally at 4pm I'm there and I quickly get into my sleeping bag. Unfortunately it's completely clouded but the following morning I see we are right underneath the summit. But, today we won't go up as our bodies simply wouldn't cope with the lack of oxygen. Therefore we're going back to Camp 2 and I'm in the front. Normally quite nice but climbing back on this ice wall, whilst it's freezing cold and knowing that all ropes are covered with snow, is not necessarily funny. Other groups are also very accommodating with me going first, so there I go. The first half an hour I'm quite nervous but slowly I find my rhythm. After four hours we're back in Camp 2 again and I receive many compliments for leading the way. In the afternoon we find out that unfavourable weather is forecasted, so the plan is we'll get some rest and recover at Base Camp, which means that ultimately we have to through the Icefalls at least one more time.

It's May the 5<sup>th</sup> and at 3am my alarm clock rings. An hour later I have my headlight on again. It's terribly cold and everything is covered with snow. This presents a challenge immediately as the route across the glacier is untraceable. Because of the snow most crevasses are not visible and this causes a major risk. Therefore we need to wait for half an hour until the first rays of sunlight light up the mountain. I literally almost faint because of the cold. After having walked for an hour the view is so beautiful that I decide to grab my camera, which I pay for with frozen fingers for an hour. After having reached Camp 1 through various abseil-points the Khumbu adventure starts again. My legs are still tired from yesterday but the icy scenery is just unique, especially now we're seeing it at daylight. Yes, I'm very careful and still not taking any pictures, and I'm suppressing the pain of my blue toes. After Lobuche they had already turned blue, but my toe on the right side has now turned purple and on the left hand side the nail is completely detached bar 2 mm's. I've taped both toes but this doesn't take away the pain. Two hours later I'm at the bottom of the "ice playground" and I message Russ via the radio that I'll be in Base Camp in the next half an hour.

Another week of acclimatisation is done. I'm now going to call my love and after that we'll take a couple of days rest before we'll be away again for a week, after which we'll hopefully return with the summit in the pocket.

Jaco