

John Collinson

Everest Blog – Part VI

May 24,2009

After a couple long days at base camp, we finally left today. We said goodbye to our awesome kitchen staff, thanked the mountain, and headed off down the trail. It was a strange feeling, walking away from base camp, and knowing it was for good, not just a bouldering session. I was happy to be headed home, but also sad to be leaving. I was headed away from the peak I worked so hard to get to. Can't we keep climbing? The sun decided to shine upon us, and I was quite grateful, it's been snowy for the past few days. Keeping us confined to our camp. Our walk today brought us the first greenery in our scenery, so I was super stoked. We stayed the night in Pheriche, so two more days to Lukla. Every once in a while I would turn around and look at Everest. I couldn't believe the trip was coming to an end. I could remember nearly every day of the past two months, and every day was positive and such a great experience. But now I guess I am looking forward to going home and seeing the fam, just chilling at home for a few days.

May 25,2009

No such luck with the weather today. Even with a Gore-tex jacket I got super soaked, and stoked. Then the trees were green, and as I looked around, at the mist curling down from high valleys winding between the trees, I knew this was exactly where I wanted to be, rain or shine. This had a mystic effect, this was the Himalaya that hides strange creatures, with unseen peaks looming above the clouds, shrouded in mystery, this was the Himalaya I would dream of as a child, a hidden corner of the world, that I am now exploring. This made me even more proud, to know that I followed my dream, accomplished my goal. As I got lower and lower, more flowers were popping up, little spots of color jumping out of the green. Its crazy to think, that less than a week ago I was on top of the world, and now I'm cruising through a forest in the rain. At the last ridge before Namche, and your first view of Everest on the trek in, I turned around, to take a last look. All I got was mist, but the mountain was there, just hiding.

May 26,2009

Today, after a wet night, we invested in some umbrellas. I've never used one before, so why not have the first time in the Himalaya? It was like we were in London, a mountainy, forested London. We had a very enjoyable walk, shooting tons of photos, laughing and joking. We felt like a team, it felt good. We stopped for lunch in Phakding (where we slept the first night on the walk in) and met a new friend, a little kitten. It got comfy on my and Damian's lap the whole time. We were thinking about throwing it in our packs, bring it home. We arrived in Lukla, and went to guess where? Starbucks. In a high mountain village. Maybe they'll put one at base camp soon. It was pretty cool, everyone on the trail, and all the shop owners in Lukla, would ask " You climb? Yep, You summit? Yep, Congratulations!!" Everybody was so stoked, they would wear a big smile, and pump your hand 4 or 5 times. Thank you. We have tickets to fly out tomorrow, so hopefully the weather will cooperate, and get us to Kathmandu!

May 27,2009

So with the bad weather, (still persisting today) its super hard for planes to land in Lukla, a 300 meter landing strip on the edge of a cliff. We have our connections, so I awoke to Nema busting into our room yelling at Eugene to get ready. They rushed out, and Eugene got out on the first flight. The only one. So the rest of us were stuck in Lukla, wondering what to do along with 70 other people hungry to get out. After a few hours, we chartered a helicopter. We didn't want the chance to get stuck for a week in Lukla, so we sacked up and did it. 4 hours later, our heli arrived. It was pretty crazy, he dive bombed through passes, buzzed over yaks, it was pretty cool. After a 50 minute flight, we arrived back in Kathmandu. Getting back on the streets seemed really weird after pretty much 2 months on the mountain. Dodging through cars, avoiding motorcycles, and looking for the nearest pasta restaurant. Some things never change.

May 28-June 2,2009

We spent a week in Kathmandu, eating, sleeping, and wandering around. It was a big shock, jumping back into reality. Seeing the poverty again, walking by kids, 7 years old on the street, sniffing glue in bags, sleeping on the side of the road, curled up in their ragged t-shirts. Dogs wandering in between cars, their ribs poking out, looking like they would pop through their fur. People offering you things at every single street corner, and all the way in between. "You smoke man? Marijuana?" Nope, thanks for asking. "Tiger Balm? Rickshaw? Taxi? Comb? T-shirt? Flute? Jew harp?". On the last day in town, there was a strike. It's a transportation strike, its started when the Maoists would come into town and wreak havoc. After this started happening, the people in Kathmandu decided to just shut down all transportaion. Then after a while, they decided to just shut everything down during the strikes. Every single shop, restaurant, store, café was closed. The electricity was off all day, and not a single taxi, motorcycle or rickshaw could be seen on the streets. We discovered some new places to eat, got work done, and waited for our luggage to arrive from Lukla. Finally it did, 2 days before our scheduled flight. We made new friends, said goodbye to others, watched a lot of movies, and apparently didn't write in my blog too often..... finally, on the 2nd, we started our flight home.

June 3,2009

We arrived in LA last night, after flying for a while in a chair similar to a stiff backed, no cushioned torture chair. It was pretty cool, apart from the seats, on our plane, there was everyone from base camp. Eric, the HRA doc, and the whole RMI team. I was bumming though, the little movie screen on the plane didn't work, so it was a long flight, with no entertainment. I actually sat next to Erica the whole flight. Neato. And guess who we saw in the LA port? Remember the short Asian woman from 2 months ago? I spotted her at our baggage claim. Full circle. I spent the night under a coffee table, and then Willie and I caught our flight at 6:30 AM, arriving back home in SCL!! It was the best flight ever, flying to my own city after 2 months. Finally. So good to be home. On the drive home we stopped by the Salt Lake Tribune office and did an interview, so hopefully we will see us in the paper tomorrow. My first dinner at home, elk steaks and pasta. Couldn't get much better, chilled with Shay, good times.

June 4,2009

Woke up in my own bed. So awesome. I have a few interviews today with the local news stations, so I have to be looking sharp. After my haircut last night, I could be in the military, so I think it will be ok. These were my first interview that will appear on the tele, and think they went pretty well, we will watch them tonight, see how I look on camera. Then, I saw the Tribune website. I had a story on the home page, and my picture was right after Mr Obama's. super cool. Later, I saw the paper. FRONT PAGE!! Gnarly.