

KOSCIUSZCO - AUSTRALIA 16th October - 21st October

I have been really looking forward to going back to Australia. I visited very briefly back in 1996 for a week of which only 2 days were in Sydney and i loved it! As Kosciuszco is reputedly a fairly easy climb (famous last words) i have asked my sister, two girlfriends, and of course my Norwegian friend Sissel Smaller who is climbing the Seven Summits also to keep me company. So our trip comprises of 5 blondes (well sort of!) and the extremely lucky Guy Cotter!! Im not sure Guy sees it that way!

Suze Murray had flown to Sydney 2 days prior to the rest of us to catch up with an old school friend and the rest of us, My sister Lucy, Christy Powell (formerly Murray) Sissel and myself all met at the airport in Hong Kong to fly down to Sydney together. Its a nine hour flight so quite a long way to go for such a short trip.

We arrived in Sydney feeling exhausted. Christys sleeping pill was still in full effect and she walked through sydney trance like and i wasnt in much better shape but my fatigue was due to trying to fit in too many meetings in Hk prior to coming down to australia and combining it with a rigid exercise routine. We are all staying at my friend Nick Barhams apartment in Sydney, this was his contribution to my sponsorship and im hugely grateful to him for helping me out. His apartment turned out to be absolutely stunning, right on the water so we were in heaven. Tanya Byrnie, who looks after Nicks apartment met us and she is also very interested in climbing and knows a lot about it, so the two of us talked for a while climbing talk much to the annoyance of lucy, suze and Christy!! Tanya had arranged for us to do the Sydney bridge climb when we returned from Kosciuszco which we were all really excited about! We all looked out the window at the bridge and Sue decalared it looked like a piece of cake!! Things always look smaller from a distance so i kept my mouth shut on that matter!!!

Upon arrival we then went to Bondi beach and had a healthy breakfast before doing a little bit of retailing. Having had a heatwave and no rain in Sydney for the past few months it is now freezing cold! I met up with an old girlfriend from HK for a coffee and then we all went back to the apartment to wait for the arrival of Guy Cotter who was flying in from New Zealand.

Sissel and i decided to go for a quick run as i was so tired right now i could hardly focus - always a good way to get some energy back before having to go out for dinner! The run perked me up and we went for an early dinner, guy and his harem of women - the amount of people that asked him what his aftershave was!!! We all got an early night in preparation for our drive out to Coomba where Mt Kosciuszco is located some 6 hours from Sydney first thing the following morning.

18th OCTOBER

I had a great nights sleep at Nicks apartment, actually the best sleep i had since arriving in asia a week ago!! I ve realised i always seem to write about me being fatigued and sleep deprivation and i want to emphasise that im not a whining person about this when u meet me - just in my very personal diaries!! By 10.00am we were in our maroon van with Guy at the wheel and Sissel navigating with the rest of us like naughty school kids in the back, burning our way towards Kosciuszko which is located about half way between Sydney and Melbourne in the Snowy Mountains. It was pouring with rain and a cold,

grey day which reminded me of London - why do i have to bring the weather with me??? The forecast for the next few days is the same unfortunately and its only forecast to be sunny the day after we leave on 21st which is just typical. Im thinking of my panoramic summit shots that id been dreaming about getting for my sponsors and a little apprehensive about what the outcome may be. After our summit shots from Kilimanjaro where the guide managed to misjudge how long it would take us to reach the summit and we arrived in the dark, i was anxious to try and get some good shots down in Australia. The weather is almost black outside and its 11.00am!

Sissel and Guy very kindly shared the driving, if it was me at the wheel we would probably still be lost in the suburbs around sydney!! We have about 40 minutes to go until we reach Kosciuszco which is in fact a ski resort. When we arrived it was very apparent that the ski season had ended, it was like a ghost town and most places were closed. Id rented a small place for the night and for all of us to pile into in anticipation of tomorrows climb. Sissel and i braved the rain and went for a run and although i complained bitterly as we started out, i felt a lot better having done it after 6 hours in the car.

We then all went out for dinner in the only place that was open that actually had fantastic food! We were all in bed by eleven for an early start in the morning!

19th OCTOBER

I woke at 6.00am with the sun streaming into our room which i was really happy about! It brings a certain zest to the day when its sunny. Despite the sun it was still pretty cold and i was wrapped up when i went outside to do some filming with Guy.

We were walking by 9.15am. As Kosciuszco is one of the seven summits and a popular hiking route, there is a metal grid in neutral colours that u walk on to protect the environment from millions of feet! We walked up across the snow for about an hour and a half, filming as we went along. Its a pretty easy hike and we were soon on the summit by 10.45am. It was absolutely freezing on the summit, an icy wind was blowing fiercely, so much so it was hard to keep the flags in position! We then all hunkered down behind some rocks and did some interviews for guy. Soon we were running down the snowy slopes as fast as we could in order to start the 6 hours car journey back to Sydney which is where i am right now! Nicks apartment is too tempting and we all wanted to get back to Sydney that night.

Tomorrow Tanya byrnie has very kindly arranged for us all to go and do the Sydney Bridge Climb and to film it, which we are all really excited about! I think its such a great idea to be able to walk over the Sydney bridge, it gives so many people such a thrill! However, i do struggle with heights myself even though i love mountain climbing so i hope i can look cool and composed on the bridge!! How embarrassing if i cant do Sydney bridge!!

20th OCTOBER - SYDNEY

Tanya came by to meet us and take us to the bridge climb. We dropped off our maroon van en route and headed down to the rocks to meet Annabel, who had arranged the logistics of our bridge climb. It was just the 6 of us and we needed to be faster than

normal as Suze had to catch a flight back to HK that afternoon. PJ and Bearnie were assigned to take our group and they were great! Two quick witted ozzies whom made our trip really fun. We were soon all in our uniformed grey jump suits with everything clipped onto ourselves including our hair ties!! Nothing must be able to fall from us onto the traffic hundreds of metres below us whilst we are on the bridge! This climb really is a genius idea and PJ told me that nearly 1.5 million people have walked the bridge since its opening 6 years ago! If any of you go to Sydney its really a must do!

Despite my fear at embarrassing myself with vertigo, i was actually really confident, i think that must be a result of the ladders in the Khumbu icefall! My sister Lucy was probably the most nervous initially but she was soon joking with the rest of us and soon we were at the peak of the bridge at 440 metres above sea level with panoramic views of Sydney and the Opera House. The weather was grey and windy but as of yet the rain had held off - we were really lucky with the weather both on the bridge climb and Kosciuszco!

It was such a great thing to have managed to squeeze into a very short trip to Australia and i cant thank Tanya, Annabel, PJ and Bearnie enough for taking care of the 5 blondes and Guy and making it happen!!

When we got back down, we said goodbye to Suze and to Guy who was leaving the "bridge bunnies" as we were christened to go back to Hk and New Zealand respectively. I think Guy did an amazing job putting up with all the girls - not an easy job i can assure you!

The rest of us are flying back to HK tomorrow. While the girls went to get presents for all their kids, i (the only one without kids now that suze had left!) went to meet my friend Claire for one final gossip before leaving town!

The rain was by now unstoppable and it just makes your day miserable when you are constantly getting soaked! We had a dinner with a few other friends that we knew in Sydney and headed back to the apartment in order not to sleep through our 5.00am departure back to HK.

SUMMARY.....

It was a hectic four days but it was so great to be able to go to Australia with all the girls and to have another summit under my belt. I have a really tough 5 weeks of climbing ahead and im now in serious training for Antarctica, getting my body prepared to tow a heavy sledge in frigid conditions. Nothing can prepare me for the cold and i hate the cold as you all know but im working on building up my strength for the weight i am going to be carrying. My next 3 climbs are such that i cant really have friends join me anymore, i need to be fully focuse in order to try and achieve my goal and its going to be tough. Im completely beholden to good weather in order to ensure success.

Iv loved climbing these past three mountains - ELbrus in Russia, kilimanjaro in Africa and Kosciuszco in Australia. Its been facinating going to one new country and one new continent and i have been really luck in having great friends join me on all 3 climbs - iv really loved it!

Sissel Smaller has now done 2 of the Seven Summits with me and i wish she could join me on some of the others. She is a great person to have around you both on and off the

mountain and i wish her all the luck in the world on her up and coming Everest climb next spring 2005.

It has been so nice having my sister Lucy climb with me in Australia, our lives are such that we dont see that much of each other anymore and we were inseperable for the 8 years that we lived together in HK prior to her getting married and starting a family, so i loved spending time with her this trip. Suze and Christy, the other sisters on the trip to australia made it so fun - a great girls team!!!

I wish i could spend more time in Australia and explore some of its varied terrain and beautiful coastlines. Hopefully not in the too distant future!!!