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# ANTARCTICA

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## Mt. Vinson: 2019



Antarctica and more specifically, climbing Mt. Vinson, has always been a dream of mine. A continent so remote and pristine that it is hard to describe the experience without feeling as if you sold it short. To get there requires much planning and much cost. However, once you arrive and see the natural beauty, cost becomes irrelevant. ALE, Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions, went above and beyond making everyone's experience seamless. Our team arrived in Punta Arenas a few days before our scheduled departure for gear check, information about travel and to await a weather window to fly. As scheduled, we departed on the Ilyushin IL-76TD and landed on the Blue-Ice Runway of

Left to Right: Dr. Chris Imray, Dr. Ben Mattingly, Guide: Lapka Sherpa, & Dr. Bruce Mattingly back at High Camp after summiting Mt. Vinson on Jan. 13, 2019

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Union Glacier. Union Glacier is the staging ground for many explorations and you can travel to nearly any part of the Antarctic continent including Mt. Vinson, the South Pole, the Emperor Penguin colony and other expeditions. Shortly after we arrived and got a short introduction to Union Glacier we were packed into the twin otter to take advantage of the weather and went straight to Mt. Vinson BaseCamp. It's hard to describe the vast landscape and beauty on the short flight. Endless glaciers, snow, & mountains untouched in their natural beauty as they have been for millions of years. We got a short introduction to our team, prepped our gear and picked out our sleds for our morning trek to low camp. Spoiled with the amazing food by chef, Michel, we were sad to pack up and leave so soon. Next morning our team trekked to Low Camp and settled in. Crossing the many small crevasses with the towering mountains above, had us all in awe. Our Guide, Lapka, was well versed in the mountains and was a huge part of our success and confidence. After one acclimatization day, we found ourselves at the bottom of the over 1200M of fixed lines ready to ascend to high camp. After around 7 grueling hours, we arrived at high camp and given a good weather window forecast we planned to summit the next



Acclimatization Hike on our only "Day Off" sporting the "Wild Med" Banner

***"Fingers are more important than pictures"***

**-LAPKA SHERPA**

day. Up early, we left camp and traversed the summit ridge in high winds to the top of Mt. Vinson. With a windchill temp of nearly -75F, we didn't waste much time on the summit as Lapka warned, "Fingers are more important than pictures!" Unforgettable views and the beauty of the Antarctic Continent will forever be stamped in my mind. A few days later (and dance parties) we were back at Union Glacier where we met many great people. We were lucky to escape frostbite as some of the other teams weren't so lucky. A

few days of card games, beers, and deep discussions - we found ourselves back in Punta and at the Black-Jack Table. Climbing isn't about the Summit, but more about seeing how far you can push yourself, the overpowering beauty, and mostly about the people you meet. Sharing this experience with

good friends and climbing with my Dad is something I will always remember. Thanks to a great team of guides and climbers. Thanks to guides: Lapka & Mike Gardner, and to ALE for their incredible logistics team. Also, thanks to all the climbers we met along the way: Curt, Henry, Nick, Grazyna, Gary and Michael.



**L to R: Bruce Mattingly, Chris Imray and Ben Mattingly on the Summit of Mt. Vinson**

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