

AUGUST 16TH

I couldn't think where I was when I heard a vague ringing in the darkness of my room. I really felt like I had been drugged, 3 nights of nearly zero sleep and a shot or 2 of vodka will really do the trick. I dragged myself out of bed and got ready to leave the hotel by 4.00am. We had to settle our hotel bill which included trivialities like a sachet of butter and 6 people in the sauna!!

It was a 3 hour bus ride to the airport and I tried to fall back asleep but it was way too uncomfortable. Sean had his black eye shades on and managed to sleep the whole way - I was most envious.

The plane was the same decrepped antique that flew us out to Mineral Vody, I was already nervous. I was wedged between Sissel and Luis on a seat that was permanently reclined much to the annoyance of the fat overly made up woman sitting behind me. She complained to 2 different air hostesses about my seat and kept giving me death stares everytime I looked up from my reclined position and caught her eye. Sissel and I had the pleasant aroma of stale puke wafting between our seats so we both wrapped scarves around our faces and it just added to the horrific atmosphere and general careless demeanor of this plane. Amazingly enough it was a fairly smooth flight and I didn't dig my nails into Sissel or Luis's arms too hard, and we arrived in Moscow to find the weather was freezing. For the first time I was the only person whom was prepared for this weather by still carrying my down jacket - this was purely by default as I was planning to use it as a pillow to sleep on, but all the others had packed theirs so I was nice and warm and looking organised for a change!

We said good bye to Luis at the airport, he was off back to the states from another airport. I next see Luis in November when he is guiding me on Vinson and Aconcagua. That is the plan weather permitting, and will be a very tough 5 weeks for me.

The rest of us decided that we really needed to have pizza so Sean got on his phone to make the arrangements and an hour later we were all eating giant pizzas and anything we could get our hands on after the dill soup diet! We stopped in a market on our way back to the airport and all brought KGs of caviar. Sean told me that it would last me about 2 weeks but I've just managed to eat most of it with Sissel on the flight back to London and I'm now feeling very sick and extremely thirsty!!

We are now almost in London and I really had the most amazing trip. This group has been really fun to climb with and given the very strong personalities on the climb it was amazing that it was argument free - often quite unusual when it comes to mountain climbing!! Gregor, Tony and Lisa were so much fun to have with us on the climb and it was exciting to be part of Lisa's first mountain experience and hope she goes on to do many more!! Sean was such a superstar, continuing on to make the summit on a twisted ankle and of course organising our social part of the trip in Moscow. Sissel was a great partner in crime and an extremely accomplished climber and I wish her all the best on her up and coming Everest trip next spring. It was a great effort on Luis's part to get us all to the top and to choose a great summit day!! I am so happy that I fulfilled my obligations to my sponsors and my own personal goal and I'm now back to finalise the rest of my sponsorship before departing to climb in Africa mid

september. It was a truly great climb and a bonding experience and Russia will always be a very happy memory for me.