



Words and photos
Matt Thorpe, **Trail** reader



Everest Base Camp

The photo Matt had dreamt of:
posing at Everest Base Camp.

Look what can happen when you share a random thought with walking mates...!

With the idea fresh in my head I phoned Paul and Geordie. "I've got a great idea. Let's do Everest Base Camp!"

From both of the conversations it became clear that my enthusiasm wasn't going to rub off over the telephone, so the next day at work we sat around the kitchen table in the fire department.

Geordie was complaining that his knees wouldn't be up to it. My response to this was "Come on mate, you'll be fine. We'll train like crazy – and get ourselves buff in the process." Geordie was in!

Paul didn't take much convincing and two other walking companions of ours, Lee and Alan, didn't need a lot of persuading either.

One year later, we were sitting in our hotel at Kathmandu. It was the night before the start of our trek. The plan to get buff hadn't really taken off, and we had just learnt that two people from the tour ahead of us had been airlifted back to Kathmandu with altitude sickness. We were starting to wonder what exactly we had got ourselves into.

The next morning, after a hair-raising landing on one of the world's shortest runways, we arrived at the small Himalayan town of Lukla (2860m).

It would take us eight days to reach Everest Base Camp. The days were spent walking slowly, normally for around 7 hours, drinking gallons of water to reduce the effects of altitude. Our tour company harped on about down jackets and waterproofs, but hadn't warned us of how hot the days can be.

We were in a group of 16, and nearly everyone had at least a day of feeling bloody awful. Poor Alan was sick every day. Lee managed to get himself so



On day four, following the trail. Next stop, Tengboche Monastery.

badly sunburnt that our Sherpas called him Pinky Man. Paul and Geordie suffered from diarrhoea and sickness, and I had a headache that felt as though my brain was being pushed out of my ears.

Waking up in the early hours of the morning because your body is crying out for oxygen isn't a very nice feeling either, especially when you are wrapped tight in a sleeping bag. But the pros far outweighed the cons, and we soon forgot about discomfort: we were standing among the highest mountains in the world! The scenery ranged from rich wooded valleys to lunar-like landscapes of scree and glaciers. Surprisingly, amid the remoteness at just below 4000m, there was a monastery we had the pleasure of visiting. Each night our guides introduced us to a variety of spicy foods and teas, and we had many entertaining evenings.

Base camp day involved 9 hours of walking on rough terrain along the Khumbu Glacier. The sun seemed to be throwing everything it had at us as we staggered along the trail and we could hear regular avalanches around us. Finally at 07:10 GMT our entire group arrived at Everest Base Camp (5360m/17,590ft). Everyone looked ridiculously happy as we hugged, shook hands and swapped cameras. It was such a big moment, and one of many incredible memories from a truly unforgettable experience. **T**

>> See Matt's excellent video of this trip at www.youtube.com/watch?v=APW0weXR-bQ



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