

Special Feature

Journey to the Top of the World - Part 1 Pheriche

Pheriche is a tiny village in a very remote valley close to the top of the world. Seven intrepid explorers (and one stuffed owl which belonged to my nephew who died in a climbing accident in July this year)



gathered in Kathmandu on 15th October, eagerly anticipating the trek of a lifetime. We were aiming for Everest Base Camp, but an equally important destination for me was the Himalayan Rescue Association Hospital at Pheriche.

The Thrill of Everest

We flew into Lukla, a mountain village with a short, uphill, runway that ends in a cliff. Only one week before, a similar flight had crashed killing all the tourists on board. Met by our Sherpa guide, Pasang Temba Sherpa, we set out straight away along the dusty trail. Over the next week we struggled up the long steep paths, visited Thyangboche Monastery, perched on a ridge with a classic view of Everest, and walked on up the valley to Dingboche. I will never forget my first view of Everest. It was still miles away, but the thrill of actually seeing it for myself was immense. Pheriche was just over the ridge from Dingboche (a 45 minute trek with several steep climbs) so that afternoon I trekked over to the hospital. Hospital is rather a grand name for the tiny clinic that I looked down on from the ridge. It was recognisable by the wind vane in the yard, solar panels on the roof, and a memorial to those who have

died on Everest just outside the door. Three doctors were in residence, two of whom I met that day. I was shown the three treatment rooms, one of which was occupied by a patient on oxygen due to be flown out by

helicopter the next day.

COLD!

There was a small room piled high with basic medications, and the living quarters at the back were basic, minimalist, and COLD. While the installation of wind and solar energy by Sandy Scott and his merry men has provided much needed power, and the new water heating system delivers greatly appreciated hot showers, the glycol heating system does not work. I was told very forcefully that what they really needed was a 'Yak dung heater' that could be supplied at minimal cost. Certainly every tea house we stayed in had such a heater, burning the dried patties of yak dung collected from the fields. I left the clinic for the long climb back, full of awe for the amazing doctors who suffer such cold basic conditions, for no pay, but the immense reward of being on the front line of emergency medicine one day's trek from Everest Base Camp. I felt very proud that almost 100 of my friends and colleagues have so generously helped me to raise over £5,000 for Sandy Scott's **Everest Memorial Trust** which continues to fund improvements to the clinic.

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