

# Mount Everest The British Story



HOME

EVEREST

TODAY

GALLERY

## HOLLY BUDGE

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### Holly Budge Interview taken in 2017

British adventurer Holly Budge was the first woman to skydive above Mount Everest. She has reached the summit of Cho-Oyu, Buruntse, Ama Dablam, Mera Peak and more. Holly stood on the summit of Mount Everest in May 2017.

### In 2008 you were the first woman to skydive above Mount Everest. What was that like and was it then that you decided one day you would climb Mount Everest?

Skydiving Everest was an incredible experience, jumping out of a Pilatus Porter plane at 29,500ft, just higher than the summit of Mount Everest and getting a bird's eye view of a handful of other Himalayan peaks before landing at 12,500ft. Climbing Everest has been a childhood dream of mine and it was eight years ago on that Skydive Everest Expedition I first saw the mountain and what a wonderful sight! I knew one day I would be back to climb it.

### What did your family and close friends say when you told them you were going to attempt Mount Everest?

My mum wanted to come with me! I am very fortunate to have such a strong support network around me of friends and family. Everyone was super excited about following the expedition on social media and via my tracker.

### Climbing Mount Everest is both a physical and mental challenge. How did you cope/manage the mental side of climbing?

For me, keeping a quiet mind is vital for climbing mountains. As there is a lot of repetition, I try and get into a rhythm and keep doing the same thing over and over, and that's what it is, it's a total mind game. The fitness is obviously a necessary part of it, but most of climbing a mountain is in your head. There's no room for thinking about anything else but the task at hand. I love the simplicity of life in the mountains. Everything I need is in my tent or backpack. Everything has a place, actions have reactions and thoughts have purpose.

### While on the Mount Everest were you treated any different for being a woman or were you expected to muck in like everyone else?

Being the only women in a team of 16 male climbers was, at times, challenging. I definitely mucked in just like everyone else. I feel strongly about the capability, yet lack of women on the mountain. I have found the higher the mountains go, generally the less women are on them. I am only too happy to champion the endurance potential of women. One of my aims as an adventurer and mountaineer is to empower and motivate other women to 'think big, dream bigger.'

### Did you have any problems on the Second Step?

No, I didn't have any problems but it was definitely physically demanding at that altitude. I was quite late arriving to the second step as I didn't leave camp 3 until 2.30am in a strategic move to try and avoid queuing. When I climbed up the second step, there were no queues. A stark reminder of how dangerous climbing above 8000m is, was the body lying at the base of it. Seeing and stepping around bodies was mentally challenging for me, as I'm sure it is for most.

### What was going through your mind when you stood on the summit?

It was incredible to stand on the summit with just myself and Jangbu, my climbing partner and Sherpa. We were fortunate to hit our weather window and enjoyed beautiful blue skies, no wind and an awe inspiring 360 degree view of the surrounding Himalayas. We spent 30 minutes on the summit and I enjoyed and savoured every moment of it.

### The Sherpas are the core of climbing Mount Everest. Do you think they deserve more acknowledgement than what they get?

I have a huge respect for the Sherpas, especially those whom I have had the pleasure to climb and work with. Sometimes I think they deserve a lot more acknowledgement than they get. Without them, the vast majority of climbers on Everest would not reach the summit or make it back down safely. They are skilled professionals and I always treat them with the respect they deserve.

### What part of the climb on Mount Everest did you find the hardest?

I had stomach sickness at basecamp after my first acclimatisation rotation to Advanced Basecamp and Camp 1. I was unable to hold any food in for over 6 days and this left me feeling very weak and disheartened that my dream of climbing Everest was slipping away from me. Thanks to a course of anti-biotics and a positive mindset I was able to claw my way back into the game so to speak. The sickness returned at different stages throughout the expedition so was a definite challenge to stay at full strength.

### What sort of things did you enjoy and hate eating while at any of the camps?

Following on from my last answer, eating anything was a luxury at times! My diet was carbohydrate rich with lots of pasta and rice. I got my proteins from mainly yak meat and chicken, lots of eggs and vegetables. I took 15 kgs of sweet potatoes with me, from Kathmandu to Basecamp, to try and replace the massive and almost instant sugar hit of the energy bars and gels, favouring the 'real food' quality of the potatoes and the slower releasing energy. Unfortunately, my sweet potatoes didn't fair so well higher up on the mountain. I am going to persevere with the potato idea on future expeditions!

### Did you have any problems with 'over crowding' or 'queues' on the North side?

Not so much because I took steps to avoid the queues but at times, it was unavoidable. It was a challenging year on Everest in terms of the weather, with high winds a lot of the time. Therefore, when the weather windows did present themselves, many climbers had the same idea to start climbing!

### What adventures do you have planned for the future?

This October I am leading an expedition to Ama Dablam (6812m) with Summit Climb. I led this trip last year and found Ama Dablam to be a wonderful mountain but challenging and technical also. I am very excited to be running a unique trekking expedition, alongside the climbing expedition, giving 15 trekkers the opportunity to veer off the beaten path and up to Camp 1 at 5700m. This will give them an insight into the world of big mountain climbing and see how they fair at high altitude. More information on this expedition is available on my website at [www.hollybudge.com](http://www.hollybudge.com)

### Do you think that George Mallory and Andrew Irvine climbed the Second Step?

Yes, I think they did.

If you would like to find out more about Holly Budge then please pay a visit to her website at [www.hollybudge.com](http://www.hollybudge.com)