



Lifestyle

By Guest Author | May 22nd, 2018

The simple life Holly Budge, Big Mountain climber



Kiwi writer Hannah Davison speaks to Holly Budge, a highly successful British Mountaineer about what

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Today's minimalist movement is seeing our focus move away from acquisition of material things and towards a life of essentials. It's living a simple life and finding fulfilment through experiences. British adventurer, mountaineer and public speaker, Holly Budge, explains it's that love of simplicity that keeps drawing her back to high altitude. "Life in the mountains is without clutter, every piece of equipment has a role, every object has a place and thoughts have purpose. A lot of us want to simplify our lives. This is stripping it down to the absolute bare bones of what I need, and as I've got to carry that on my back, it's got to be essential. Everything you need to survive is on you. I love that."

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Everest laundry day

Her holistic philosophy has seen Holly climb and summit, among others, four big mountains in the Himalayas; Cho-Oyu (8201 metres), Baruntse (7129 metres), Mera Peak (6476 metres), and in 2016 lead an expedition to the summit of the technical, Ama Dablam (6812 metres). Despite describing herself as “sort of pretty normal,” Holly has already managed to get several ‘firsts’ under her belt. In 2008 Holly became the first woman to skydive over Mount Everest.





About to leap out over Everest



in 2009 she was among the first to compete in the longest horse race in the world, riding 1000 km across Mongolia, and in 2016 she made a successful first ascent in the Mongolian Altai Mountains. Her group has applied to name this peak Mount Zuchi, meaning 'guest.'

Simplicity transcends what is in Holly's backpack. She understands mental clarity is vital for big mountain climbing. "It's a lot of repetition. On my last mountain [Ama Dablam], my summit push was 24 hours, with 15 hours of climbing, 9 hours of rappelling. I'm





The fitness is obviously a part of it, but most of climbing a mountain is in your head. I love that mind game. There's no room for thinking about anything else but thinking of the task at hand and I think that's another reason why I love mountaineering, it's a very simple life."



Camp 2 on Ama Dablam

An efficient climbing technique is something Holly developed early. "On the first two mountains I did in the Himalayas, I summited about an hour and a half before everybody else in the team and some of the guys there were real gym bunnies, they could not get their heads around it," she says. By tucking in behind a Sherpa, Holly found a way to climb without the debilitating mental chatter that can overwhelm





If you start questioning yourself, ‘am I good enough?’ especially at high altitude, it starts eating away at your mind and it’s just exhausting. If you stay behind someone, whether it be a Sherpa or another climber, and when they move, you move, all those thoughts just disappear and all you’ve got to worry about is when that foot moves, you move. It’s simplifying it, it’s taking away all that self-doubt. That’s what I did, all the way to the summit.”



Up to the North Col on Everest

Holly also credits her ability with being naturally suited to mountain conditions, she sees that as part of the reason she’s compelled to





could do. But so far, I work really well at high altitude. When you've just climbed a mountain, and this happens to me every time, you come down, your body's hurting, you're mentally exhausted. You sort of vow that you'll never put yourself through that again. but as with lots of things in life, the negativity and the bad memories just slip away, and you want another challenge. I think, for me, I just love the endurance side of it."

Even though she follows an intense diet and fitness regime, Holly doesn't think she has any greater physical advantage than anybody else. The mental fortitude needed however, is something she thinks she was born with. She's certain this same quality lies untapped in many of us, if only we'd push ourselves more to discover it. "You can't train for that easily, you've either got that, or you haven't. It's much easier to train a body than train a mind. Then the question is, how do you know if you've got it or not? You don't, until you put yourself in that endurance," she says.





Training run in NZ

“I’m sorry to bang on the woman drum,” says Holly. She feels strongly about the capability, yet lack of women on the mountains. It’s statistically a male-dominated arena but Holly is only too happy to champion the endurance potential of women. “The higher the mountains go, generally the less women are on them,” she says. One of her aims is to empower and motivate others to ‘think big, dream bigger.’ “Women are fantastic endurance athletes because we’ve kind of had that built into us. I think women are very resilient and aren’t necessarily all about ego and the glory, we just keep plodding on. I think women are incredibly tough creatures. I see that as well, women are much tougher than they necessarily give





in expedition life, physical simplicity also redefines the idea of femininity. “Your nails are split, full of dirt, your hair stays tied up even without a hair-band in it. You don’t feel overly attractive out there,” says Holly. This departure from everyday norms is another practice of embracing ‘the simple life,’ but she insists on maintaining one basic ritual and sole luxury. “It could seem romantic at times this whole notion of climbing a mountain. But at the end of the day you’re stinking, you haven’t washed, the only luxury is Wet Wipes! If you can feel a little bit cleaner, that makes you feel so much better.”



The qualities Holly brought to her first expedition as an leader to the summit of Ama Dablam saw the trip a success. It was not without its





male leader and most of the leaders are men,” says Holly, who used the gender division to her advantage.

“I had a lot of empathy for everyone on that trip. I’d regularly check in with my clients and make sure everyone was okay physically, mentally, and emotionally. I just felt that brought maybe a more personal touch,” she says.

The Sherpas on the expedition were initially surprised by this personable approach. “I would sit down and say to my Head Sherpa, ‘How’re you doing? Tell me how you’re feeling, let’s chat about this,’ and he’s looking at me like, I’m a freaking Nepalese Sherpa, I’ve never been asked in my life, ‘How are you feeling, let’s talk about your feelings,’ by a western woman. But once we broke down those barriers it was amazing what we achieved,” says Holly. “I think maybe women are quite good at [saying], ‘let’s chat about it, let’s talk about it, if there’s a problem let’s get it on out there and we can deal with that.’”





elephants poached for the ivory trade via for her multi award-winning charity, 'How Many Elephants.' "Few people know that 96 elephants are poached each day, and, at this rate, they will be extinct by 2025," says Holly, who spent two years formally researching the elephant crisis before starting her charity in 2014. Holly, also a jewellery designer, works with vegetable ivory, a sustainable material, and through her designs has another platform to talk about the elephant crisis. "I'm very passionate about this material which I have worked with for over a decade. It's almost identical in colour and texture to elephant ivory," she says. Through her adventures, she has raised over \$500,000 for a diverse range of charities and plans to take her exhibition and campaign to China and Hong Kong, as some of the largest consumers of ivory.

Through achieving the goal of broadcasting live from the summit of Mount Everest, Holly hopes she will be able to share her conservation message from the





simple message from a woman
living a simple life.

Update May 2018: Holly summited Everest on May 22nd 2017. It took a total of 47 days on the mountain. “I was very fortunate with finding a small but glorious weather window to summit. I experienced beautiful blue skies, with very little wind on the Summit. The view was spectacular! Jangbu and I spent about 30 minutes on the Summit, soaking it all in, as the conditions were near perfect. We were conscious of time though and how quickly things can change up there, as we later experienced. On our descent, the weather changed very quickly and we got stuck at Camp 3 for a night at 8300m, with ridiculously strong winds. I thought our tent was going to become airborne and I was very conscious of still being very high up on the mountain. When we looked outside the following morning, most of the other tents had been destroyed. The next day we descended to Advanced





Summit selfie from the roof of the world

To discover more about Holly Budge visit www.hollybudge.com or follow her on Instagram www.instagram.com/hollybudge, and her journey at #EverestEveryday. Information on her 'How Many Elephants' charity and campaign is at <http://www.howmanyelephants.co>.

Ama Dablam # Everest # Nepal

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