

# David Cole moves closer to his mountain challenge

Mount Everest climber, David Cole arrived at base camp last week after he and James, another team member, had made their way from Namche Bazaar up the valley towards Gokyo.

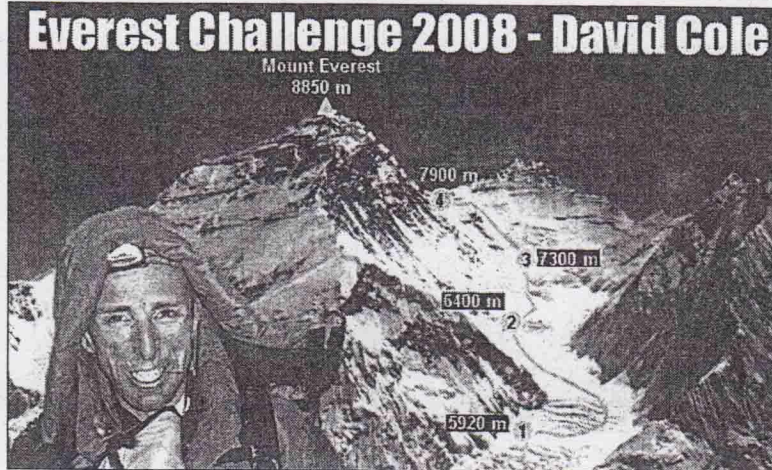
David said late starts and short two to three hour walks were a high priority, as was making the most of their appetites along the way.

"It seemed that most lodge owners were happy to have us stay longer, given the amount of money we would spend on food.

"Noodle soup, potatoes and eggs generally become the staple diet, with the occasional piece of home made apple pie."

The lodges are small, family run operations, offering extremely basic amenities.

David said a hot shower was a luxury, usually at about \$3 each and



was typically a bucket of luke warm water with holes in it above a small shed located outside the lodge.

"Our longest day was crossing over the Cho La pass which we underestimated to be an easy five hour walk," David explained.

"Well, as we reached the top of what we thought was the pass, we were shocked to see in front of us the trail descent down several hundred metres across and rocky glacier moraine, only then to sharply ascent up a steep and rocky headwall — the real Cho La pass!

"We kicked one step at a time up the loose, slippery scree slope, finally reaching the top of the pass several hours later.

"On the other side, we were greeted by an equally steep descent down through snow and rock.

"The altitude got the better of me, with a severe headache, something which one just has to get used to."

David said it was pretty much like a bad hangover that never goes away.

"We reached the valley on the other side of the pass and now felt a lot closer to Everest."

The following day the climbers were within three hours walk of the base camp but Everest was still out of view.

"To see Everest, we climbed in the evening light to the top of Kalar Patar, a nearby peak of 5600 metres.

"From the summit there was no mistaking the Everest — its prominent pyramid shape towering above the surrounding peaks in all its glory in the setting sun.

"Our objective now after several weeks of making the approach seemed all the more real."

The pair arrived at base camp the following day and found their sherpa team busy setting up and all

the other team members resting and eating well.

David said night time temperatures in the tent are  $-11^{\circ}$ , but when the sun rises over the surrounding peaks and hits the tents, the temperature soars to  $30^{\circ}$  and there is no escape from the heat.

"When clouds pass in front of the sun the temperature immediately drops and everyone grabs for their down jackets.

"Our camp is set up on the glacier ice which we can constantly hear cracking and creaking beneath us.

"At night time, avalanche activity is at its peak and often we are awoken by the sound of snow, ice and rock avalanches on the surrounding peaks."

The sherpas were preparing a stupa for the Puja ceremony that all Nepalese sherpas and the whole climb team will participate in before stepping foot on the mountain.

"As a team, we will all congregate around the stupa, laying our ice axes and crampons at its base, along with food offering to the mountain gods, and in Nepalese, prayers will be made offering respect to the mountain, and requesting safe passage of travel for all climbing members."

Last Monday, as they had become somewhat acclimatised to the altitude, David and James were to accompany the sherpas as they carried loads, climbing through the ice fall to reach camp one.

"We shall spend a couple of nights there and then ascend higher to camp two and stay there for a couple of days, climbing perhaps to 7300 metres before returning to base camp for rest, only to repeat this process again.

"Fun, fun, fun!"