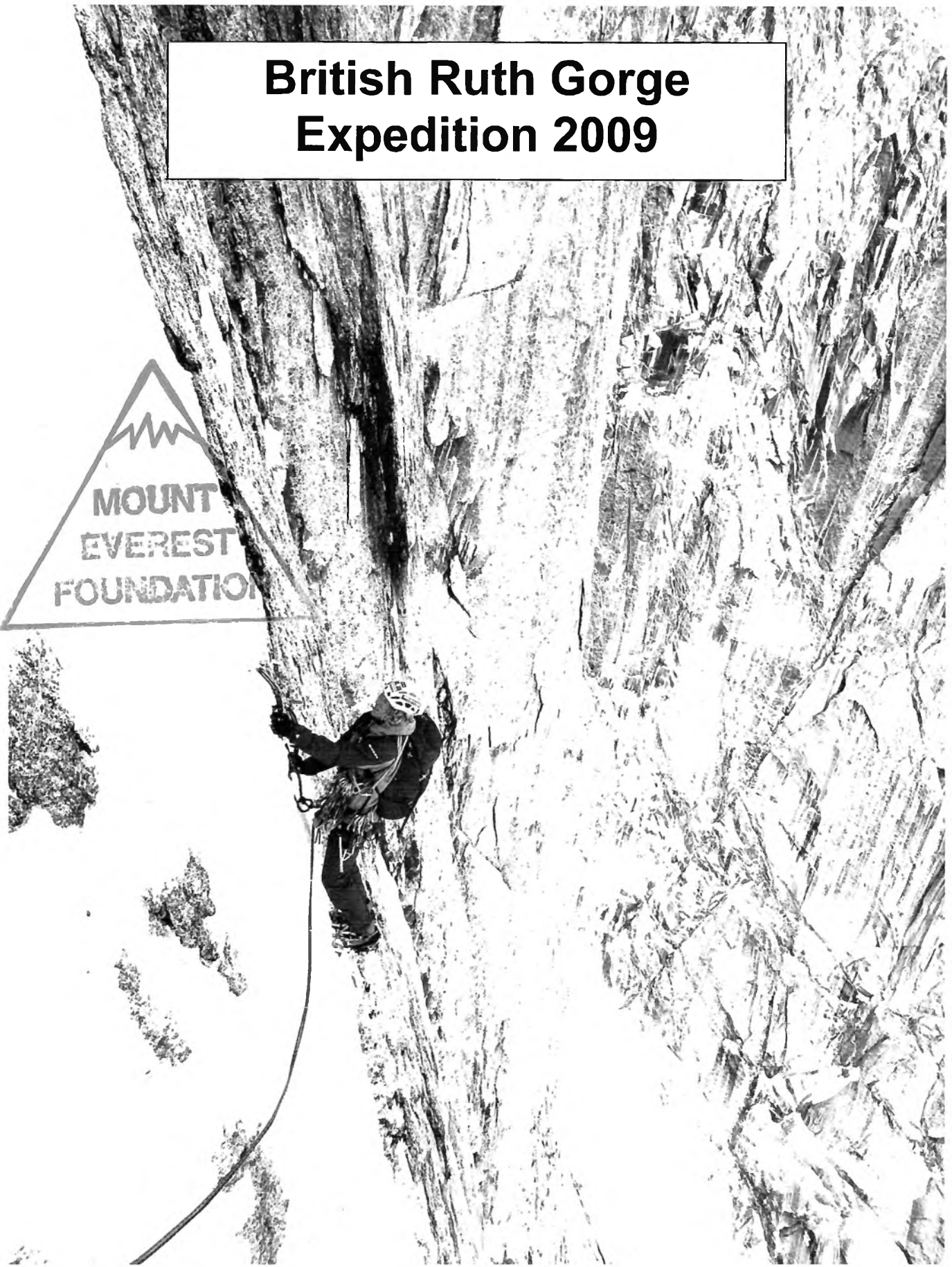


British Ruth Gorge Expedition 2009



The British Ruth Gorge Expedition 2009 Final Report

Climbers: Jon Bracey and Matt Helliker

Aims: To attempt the first ascent of a line on the south face of Mount Bradley Glacier, Alaska

Supported by: British Mountaineering Council

Assistance from: DMM
Patagonia
Searpa
Osprey packs
Adidas Eyewear
Maximuscle

Approved by: The Mount Everest Foundation



Matt Helliker heading towards the summit ridge on Mt Barrill. Credit: Jon Bracey

Summary: We arrived in Talkeetna on the 5th May and flew into the Ruth Gorge on the following day to find warm springtime weather. Despite several reports suggesting very poor ice conditions, in general the mountains looked in good shape. We were too late for our original objective on the south face of Mt Bradley as only north faces were a sensible proposition for mixed climbing in the relatively hot temperatures.

On the 10th May we climbed a new route up the centre of the 1300m north face of Mount Grosvenor finding superb thin ice runnels and descended the south side to the Grosvenor/Church col.

On the 15th May we climbed the Japanese Couloir to the summit of Mount Barrill in bad weather, in search of some missing climbers. Thankfully they returned safe and well.

On the 17th May we climbed a new route on the 1150m north face of Mount Church up a large fault system to the east of the summit.

With prolonged bad weather forecast we decided to leave early and flew back to Talkeetna on the 18th May.

Team members:

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Expedition Diary:

May 3	Fly London to Anchorage
4	In Anchorage- shopping for food and supplies
5	Transfer to Talkeetna
6	Fly into Ruth Gorge and establish base camp
7	Organising BC and ski tour down to Mt Church to check conditions
8	Observing a line on Mt Dickey- checking conditions + objective hazards
9	Pack for an attempt on Mt Grosvenor
10	Climb new route on Mt Grosvenor
11	Rest
12	Rest
13	Rest
14	Pack for attempt on Mt Church
15	Bad weather- climb Mt Barrill in search of missing climbers
16	Rest
17	Climb new route on the Mt Church
18	Fly back to Talkeetna
19	In Talkeetna
20	To Anchorage
21	Fly Anchorage to London

Climbing Details:

We landed in the Ruth Gorge on the 6th May to find un-seasonally warm weather, but reasonable looking snow/ice conditions after some recent warm stormy weather. Earlier reports from the range suggested little ice and in general quite dry conditions.

Our original objective on Mt Bradley had good ice but lots of objective danger in the form of falling ice and rock. We were keen to attempt a line on Mt Dickey's huge East face but the warm temperatures meant this face was in constant flux with avalanches down most mixed lines all day, every day!

We were basically restricted to north faces and spotted a good unclimbed line on Mount Grosvenor. Superb thin ice and mixed climbing up this line gave us a great days climbing. We downclimbed the SE face to the Grosvenor/Church col and then down the steep glacier back to our skis.

After a couple of rest days with continuing good weather to planned to attempt another unclimbed line on the north face of Mt Church. Unfortunately to awoke at 2am to heavy snowfall and whiteout conditions on the glacier. At this point we were starting to get very concerned for a couple of climbers from Anchorage who had the previous day set out to climb the Japanese couloir on Mt Barrill and were expected back that evening. At 8am on the 15th May we contacted Talkeetna Air Taxi via Sat phone to inform them and the Park Rangers of the missing climbers. We then skied up the glacier in the still whiteout conditions to go and start looking. Some complex navigation finally got us to the start of the Japanese couloir, where we found the skis of the missing team and a huge area of avalanche debris.

We then climbed the Japanese couloir to the summit of Mt Barrill, still with no sign so reported back to TAT and descended back to basecamp.

It turned out that the missing team spend a grim night out in the open near the summit and managed to find their way down to the mountain house. We arranged a pick up for them back to the Ruth Gorge and all ended up fine.

We waited for a day to let the snow conditions settle before heading off on the 17th May to climb a new route on Mt Church. This 1150m face gave superb climbing- there are plenty more unclimbed lines on this face. We downclimbed to the Church/Grosvenor col and back to our skis.

The next day the weather forecast was for a week of prolonged storms so we quickly packed up and managed to get a flight out to Talkeetna. We later found out all planes were grounded for the next 5 days due to bad weather so we were lucky to get out.

Mount Grosvenor North face. 'Meltdown'

1300m, VI, grade 6+ ice /mixed (ED 3)

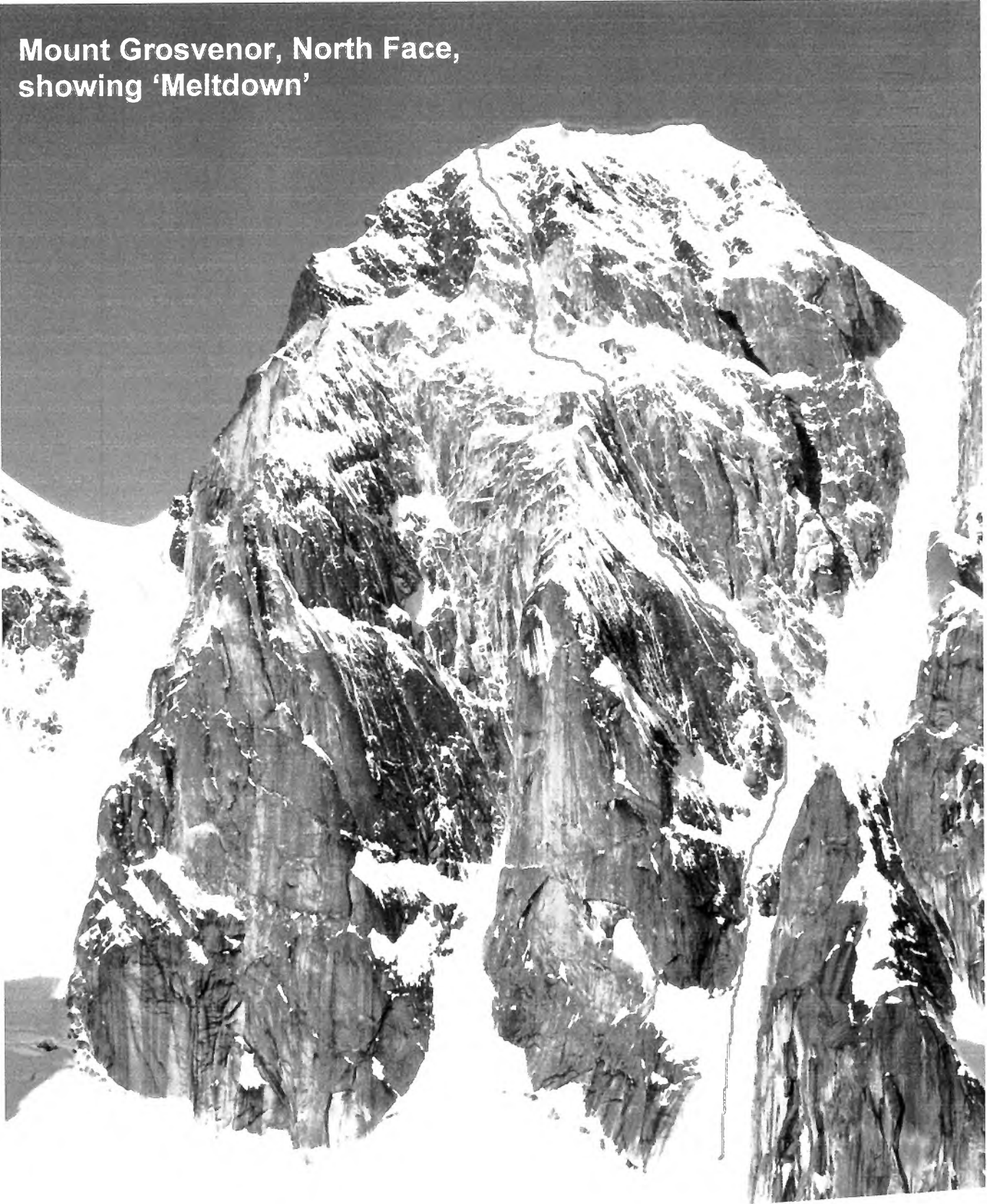
May 10, 2009

Mount Church North face. 'For Whom the Bell Tolls'

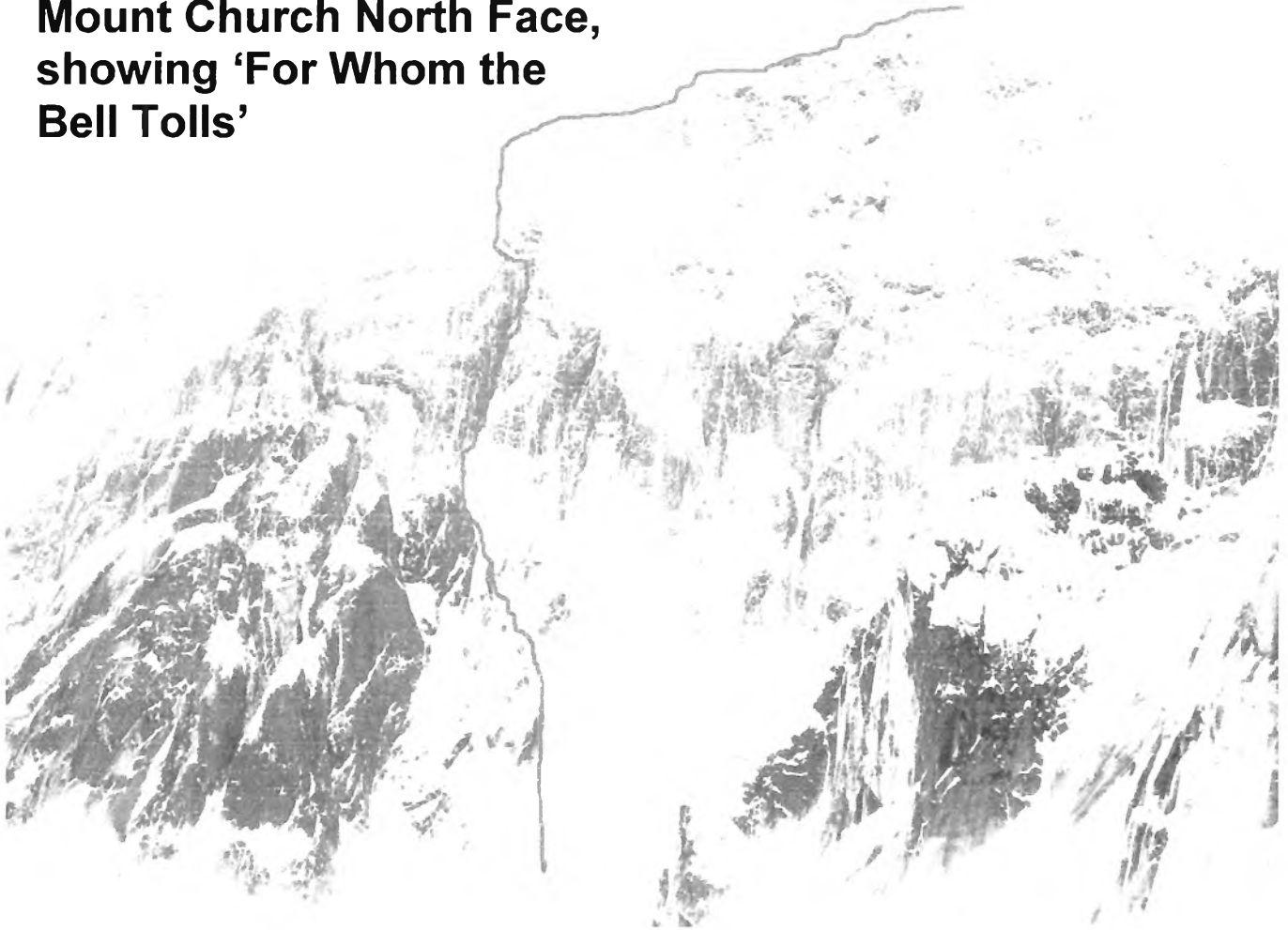
1150m, V, grade 6 ice/mixed (ED 2)

May 17, 2009

Mount Grosvenor, North Face,
showing 'Meltdown'



Mount Church North Face, showing 'For Whom the Bell Tolls'



Travel:

Continental airlines offer competitive flights from London to Anchorage with the additional benefit that it is fairly easy to change your outbound leg of the journey.

Talkeetna Shuttle picked us up from our B&B in Anchorage and took us to Talkeetna. This is often more expensive early season unless they have more than 4 people (we paid \$200 per person return). Denali Overland Transport offer a similar service.

Talkeetna Air Taxi (TAT) offer a brilliant flight service into all locations of the Alaska Range. The cost of glacier flights have gone up significantly due to fuel price increases. Baggage allowance is 125lb per person and excess costs \$1 per pound.

Accommodation:

Earth Bed and Breakfast in Anchorage offers a comfortable and well priced service (\$35 per person per night). Very friendly and hospitable.

In Talkeetna we stay at TAT's free bunkhouse, which is quite basic, but has a shower and small kitchen.

Other Logistics:

All food can be purchased at one of the huge supermarkets in Anchorage (Sears, Carrs, or Walmart).

Climbing equipment, books, maps, butane/propane canisters, and dehydrated hill food can be bought at **REI** or **AMH** in Anchorage

TAT in Talkeetna supplies Coleman white gas for MSR stoves.

Anchorage Satellite Phones and Rentals, which is located across the street from REI hire Iridium and Globalstar satellite phones. Iridium has good coverage and reliability in Alaska compared to the Globalstar which is highly unreliable!

Permits: If climbing on Denali or Foraker a \$200 National Park permit is required which needs to be applied for 60 days in advance unless you have previously registered, in which case you only need to apply 7 days beforehand. For climbing elsewhere it cost \$15 to register and you need to go down to the ranger station in Talkeetna for a short briefing and to pick up a 'Clean Mountain Can' for human waste.

Gear:

We climbed in lightweight alpine style making use of the very long days and short nights.

Rack: One and a half sets of wires, 1 set cams, 5 pegs, 8 ice screws, 10 extenders

Ropes: 2 x 60m x 8.5mm half ropes. (Mammut Genesis)

DMM Rebel axes, and DMM terminator crampons

Scarpa Phantom 6000 and Phantom lite boots

Base camp: one 3 man tent plus an igloo. Two MSR petrol stoves (2 gallons of white gas)

Approach skis used for glacier travel

Budget:

Expenses		Income	
Flights to Anchorage (rtn)	£1340	BMC Grant	£2500
Air Taxi (TAT)	£750	Personal contributions	£1120
Accommodation	£120		
Transfer to Talkeetna (rtn)	£220		
Satellite phone hire	£140		
Taxis in Anchorage	£30		
Food	£440		
Equipment/supplies	£160		
Insurance	£294		
National park Permits	£16		
Excess baggage	£110		
Total	£3620	Total	£3620

Thanks

We are very grateful for the help of the following organisations, who provided welcome support and assistance.

British Mountaineering Council

DMM

Scarpa

Patagonia

Osprey Packs

Adidas Eyewear

Maximuscle

Mount Everest Foundation- for their approval

Useful Email Addresses

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Denali Overland transport **denaliak@alaska.net**

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