

Interview with Doychin Boyanov

After conquering Mount McKinley and returning to Bulgaria Doychin Boyanov is now ready to proceed to new challenges that will put his spirit to the test. Before that we asked him a few questions about the adventure “Conquer Alaska”.

1. What inspired you to climb the highest peak in Alaska?

Alaska has always had a special place in my mind and in my idea for true adventures in nature. Perhaps it's because of the books of Jack London! Of course, later on, when I started mountaineering, this target came to life – and I'm really glad I could achieve it. Actually it was my second attempt to climb this peak.

2. How did you prepare for the adventure?

Mount McKinley involves ski trekking and towing luggage with a sleigh. In fact this was not only my climbing strategy but also the strategy of many other teams. The low temperatures and the strong wind are another specific feature. I paid special attention to skiing before the trip and I often climbed Cherni vryh /*Black peak* near Sofia/ towing my son with a sleigh. This way I clarified for myself some specifics about the suspension of the sleigh and the specific towing techniques, about its distance from the ski and me, as well as about how to control it. In order to cope with the cold I trusted “The North Face” for some prime quality equipment. To protect ourselves from the strong winds we used to build snow walls around the tents in each camp we made.

3. What did you miss the most during the expedition?

Since it was my second attempt to climb this peak, I was prepared in detail, but thanks to my partners Rumen and Yoana I managed to reach the top in good comfort. I think we had everything we could have needed. Beside that, we could communicate with our friends and family via a satellite phone – and that was wonderful.

4. What did you eat the whole time?

We had taken some fresh bread and vegetables for the first few days, and with a couple of ready-made soups and cans we almost felt like home. Afterwards we continued with home-made flat sausages and nuts.

5. Was there a moment when you thought of giving up?

No, we knew we would eventually face nice weather – even if we had to stay longer! Beside that, we were healthy so there was no moment of hesitation or bustling.

6. What do you use all the ice for – except for water?

I already mentioned the walls we built with snow blocks around the tents, but snow can also be used for ice caves – and we have discussed this option to camp in our climbing tactics. Sometimes we have to climb snow, sometimes we ski on it and sometimes we even use it as a security tool. When all you have is snow, you learn how to do everything with it!

7. What did you see from Mount McKinley?

When we reached the top, 250 m below us there were thick clouds and as we discovered later – heavy snowfall. I could not enjoy a long distance panorama, nevertheless it was a great experience!

8. Do you consider going back again?

I plan, if possible, to return to this region and to conquer some more icy peaks. In the area of Ruth Glacier there are some marvelous peaks which are not as famous as McKinley, but are quite challenging for clean climbing.

9. Why are the peaks of Alaska such a big challenge?

In mountaineering the level of difficulty is important – and in Alaska it is really difficult. The main reasons are the climate and the topography, the access is also quite complicated. All these challenges are a major attraction for us. The USA have managed to preserve this and that's great.

10. Which will be the next peak?

This year the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute organizes its 23rd expedition to Antarctica. I will be part of the expedition team together with Nikolay Petkov and we plan to be the first ones who will conquer some peaks on Livingston island. Quite an interesting project for me.