



to have the utmost respect for Everest's caprice. I began my journey to the base camp of Everest only a fortnight before that tragic loss of life made headlines, worldwide.

TO THE FEET OF CHOMOLUNGMA

About three months of mental and physical preparation gets one into shape to climb to a height of 18,000 ft above sea level, right into the mouth of what many a climber refers to as the 'death zone'. Two to three months prior, one needs to start working on stamina and endurance exercises like sustaining low-impact activities such as walking or jogging for a couple of hours at a stretch. I started by running the junior cross country distance (approximately 3.5km) and three months later I was running 10kms with ease. Coupled with lunges and squats, I built up my core strength and most importantly, prepared myself mentally!

The journey begins in the bustling capital city of Kathmandu. Nestled in a valley in the lower Himalayas, this ancient city is full of historic sites and has been a centre of worship for both Hindus and Buddhists for centuries. The busy neighbourhood of Thamel is a great place to pick up any last-minute gear you may need for your trek, as well as get a good meal and a drink before heading into the wild. After a good night's rest, we made our way to the Tribhuvan Domestic Airport for what would be one of the most exhilarating journeys of our lives - the short flight to Lukla.

Since their historic ascent, scores of climbing expeditions have attempted to reach these forbidding heights and many have succeeded. But though she can be climbed, 'the Mother Goddess of the World' (Chomolungma in Nepalese) cannot be conquered. Since the 1920s, many people have died climbing Everest when she turned against them, by sending in bad weather or avalanches. Many climbers go out there with the notion of conquering a peak, but they tend

Known as one of the most dangerous airports in the world, this journey is completed in a matter of 40 minutes. There are no fixed flight times and all the relic-aircraft, some over 30 years in age, take off as sorties, dependent on clear weather. The pilots fly by line-of-sight and once airborne, we are greeted with spectacular views of the greater Himalayas. The