

BASE CAMP

THE MOUNTAIN INQUISITION

Squash Falconer

Highest mountain you've climbed?

When I was little it was Thorpe Cloud (287m) in the Peak District, which looks giant when you're less than 4ft tall. Now my highest is Everest!

What's with the unusual nickname?

I was given the name Louise but my sister Jo, who was 15 months old when I was born, couldn't say that. So she called me Ease, then Peas, then Squashpeas – then finally settled on Squash.

Funniest thing you've seen on a hill?

'Shut up' written in stones en route to Everest Base Camp. Of all the things to write...! I really giggled.

Have you ever Googled yourself?

Yes... and again just now because you asked. I just tried Google Images too, and a photo came up of a brown mountain that says, "may all the mountains you climb in life be made of chocolate"! Google know me very well.

You're in a pub. What's on the menu?

Homemade chips, garlic mushrooms, Greek salad, Cajun chicken salad, margherita pizza, roast dinner, banoffee pie, chocolate brownies with cream, chocolate fondant... I could go on!

Who would play you in a movie about your life?

Ideally me! I'd love to go back and do the things I've done all over again.

What was the last book you read?

Mr Small by Roger Hargreaves. I have a friend who's very small so I bought a copy and 'edited' it for him as a gift. It caused a lot of amusement, for me anyway.

What tastes the best on the hill?

Chocolate, obviously, and sun-dried tomatoes, perhaps not so obviously. I took a jar when I went to Everest and opened them before the summit push. They were such a treat!



MONTY TOMLINSON

Squash descends the Alps' Col de l'Iseran (2270m) on her ElliptiGo - a kind of cross between a stepper and a bike.

What's scarier, heights or sharks?

Sharks! I went diving recently and the water was really cloudy, then from nowhere a huge whale (which I know isn't a shark) appeared and terrified me more than standing on the edge of a mountain ever has done.

Are you happier alone or in a group?

In a group. I love meeting people and sharing experiences.

What's your favourite animal?

A quokka, they actually smile. I grew up on a farm so I'm an animal lover. Except for chickens – I'm scared of them!

What's the worst thing you've ever eaten?

Durian fruit. I tried it in Singapore a few years ago, and it smells and tastes so bad. I couldn't believe fruit could be so appalling.

Weirdest place you've slept?

On my recent Go Trek trip (a 3,074 mile ElliptiGo journey through Europe) we stayed on the floor of a German bike shop. We had beds in the middle of penny farthings, electric bikes and Segways, and the shop owner sang karaoke to us. It was strange.

A quokka: eternally happy about something...



Most expensive piece of kit you own?

My Ozone Ultralite mountain wing (for paragliding); but my Rab down suit and expedition sleeping bag come a close second.

Wild camp or posh hotel?

Wild camp, although there's nothing wrong with a posh hotel now and then.

Which celeb would you like to share a tent with?

Peter Kay. It's always best to share a tent with someone who makes you laugh.

Scafell Pike, Snowdon or Ben Nevis?

All of them really, but Snowdon if I have to choose one. My godparents live close by and I love the whole area.

Who's your mountaineering hero?

My very good friend Emma Jones. She's not well-known but she's an amazing mountaineer.

What's the best flavour of crisps?

I love eating salt & vinegar crisps with milk chocolate and a cup of tea. Try it – delicious!

Strangest person you've met on the hill?

What if he reads this? I'd better not say!

When were you last naked outdoors?

This summer on The Go Trek. I reached Lake Serre-Ponçon in France at 10.30pm, it had been a hot day and I needed a wash. It was dark so I jumped in the lake for a refreshing bath!

How much is a pint of Yewbarrow Ale at the Wasdale Head Inn?

£3.30 – I just called and asked. Is that cheating? I don't drink so I'm useless when it comes to knowing the cost of a pint.

Your ultimate mountain day in three words?

Motorbike, climb, fly!

» Squash Falconer (32) is a British adventurer and mountaineer. She's climbed Aconcagua, bum-boarded off Cho Oyu, paraglided off Mont Blanc – and she summited Everest in 2011. To keep up with her adventures visit www.squashfalconer.com