

# Mount Denali, Alaska

*May 11 – Jun 1, 2014*



Mark "Outback" Smith

# Mount Denali

*Also known as Mt. McKinley*

- "Denali" is the name that Athabascan Indian people gave to the mountain. It means "The High One."
- Named "Mt. McKinley" by US in 1917
- Alaska recognizes Denali, the US still uses McKinley
- Highest peak in North America at 20,237 feet (6,168 meters)
- At some 18,000 feet (5,500 meters), the base-to-peak rise is considered the largest of any mountain situated entirely above sea level

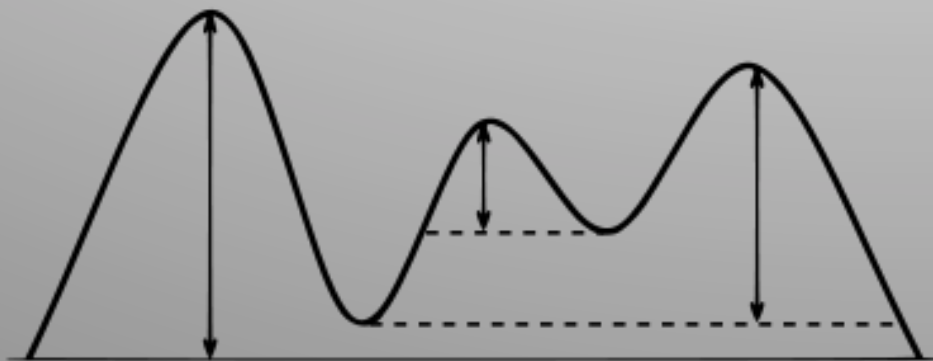
Source: Wikipedia





# Mountain Prominence

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Peak</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Height (Ft)</u>	<u>Prominence (Ft)</u>	<u>Height (M)</u>	<u>Prominence (M)</u>
1	Mount Everest	Nepal/People's Republic of China (Tibet)	29,029	29,029	8,848	8,848
2	<b>Aconcagua</b>	<b>Argentina</b>	<b>22,841</b>	<b>22,841</b>	<b>6,962</b>	<b>6,962</b>
3	<b>Mount Denali</b>	<b>United States (Alaska)</b>	<b>20,322</b>	<b>20,138</b>	<b>6,194</b>	<b>6,138</b>
4	Mount Kilimanjaro	Tanzania	19,341	19,308	5,895	5,885
5	Pico Cristóbal Colón	Colombia (Magdalena)	18,701	18,074	5,700	5,509
6	Mount Logan	Canada (Yukon)	19,551	17,224	5,959	5,250
7	Pico de Orizaba	Mexico (Veracruz-Puebla)	18,491	16,148	5,636	4,922
8	Vinson Massif	Antarctica	16,050	16,050	4,892	4,892
9	Puncak Jaya	Indonesia (New Guinea)	16,024	16,024	4,884	4,884
10	Mount Elbrus	Russia	18,510	15,554	5,642	4,741



Vertical arrows show the topographic prominence of three peaks on an island. The dotted horizontal lines show the lowest contours which do not encircle higher peaks.

Source: Wikipedia

# Climbing History

- First recorded *attempt* was by Judge James Wickersham in 1903 – unsuccessful
- Famed explorer Dr. Frederick Cook *claimed* the first ascent of the mountain in 1906.
  - *It was later proved false!*
- First ascent of the main summit on June 7, 1913 by a party led by Hudson Stuck and Harry Karstens.
  - *The first man to reach the summit was Walter Harper, an Alaska Native.* Robert Tatum also made the summit.
- By 2003, the mountain had claimed the lives of nearly 100 mountaineers
  - Mt. Washington, NH has over 137 deaths from 1849 - 2008



# What do I need?

## Equipment

- Extensive and some of it specialized



Lots of new gear...  
Lots of \$\$\$\$...



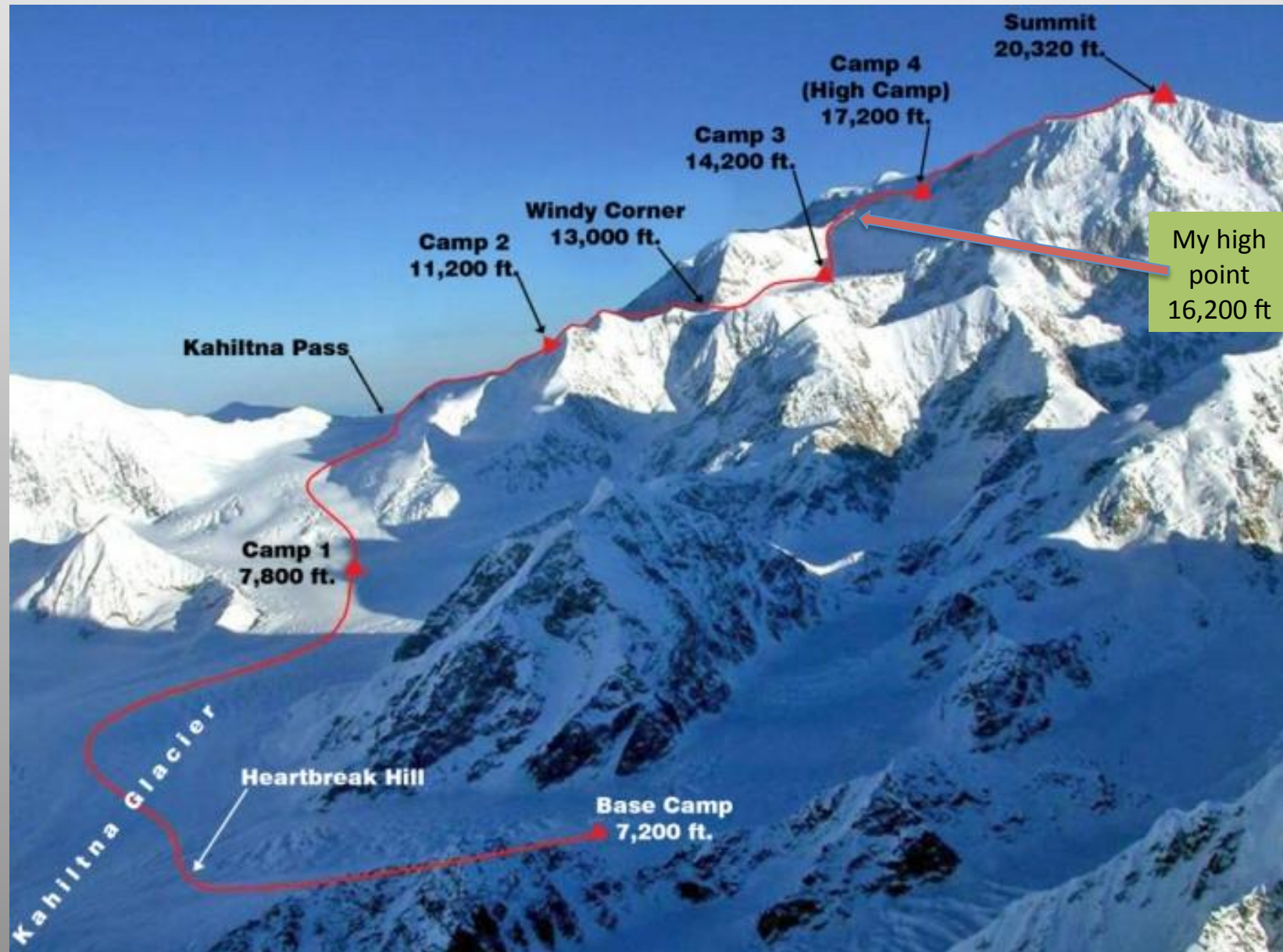
# What do I need?

## A plan

- Logistics are daunting and can take 1-2 years to plan yourself
- Most expeditions take 2-4 weeks
  - Most guide services allow 21 days
- The vast majority of climbers use the West Buttress Route, pioneered in 1951 by Bradford Washburn
  - Considered the least technical route
- I used a guide service “*American Alpine Institute*”
  - Only five companies are authorized to guide on Denali

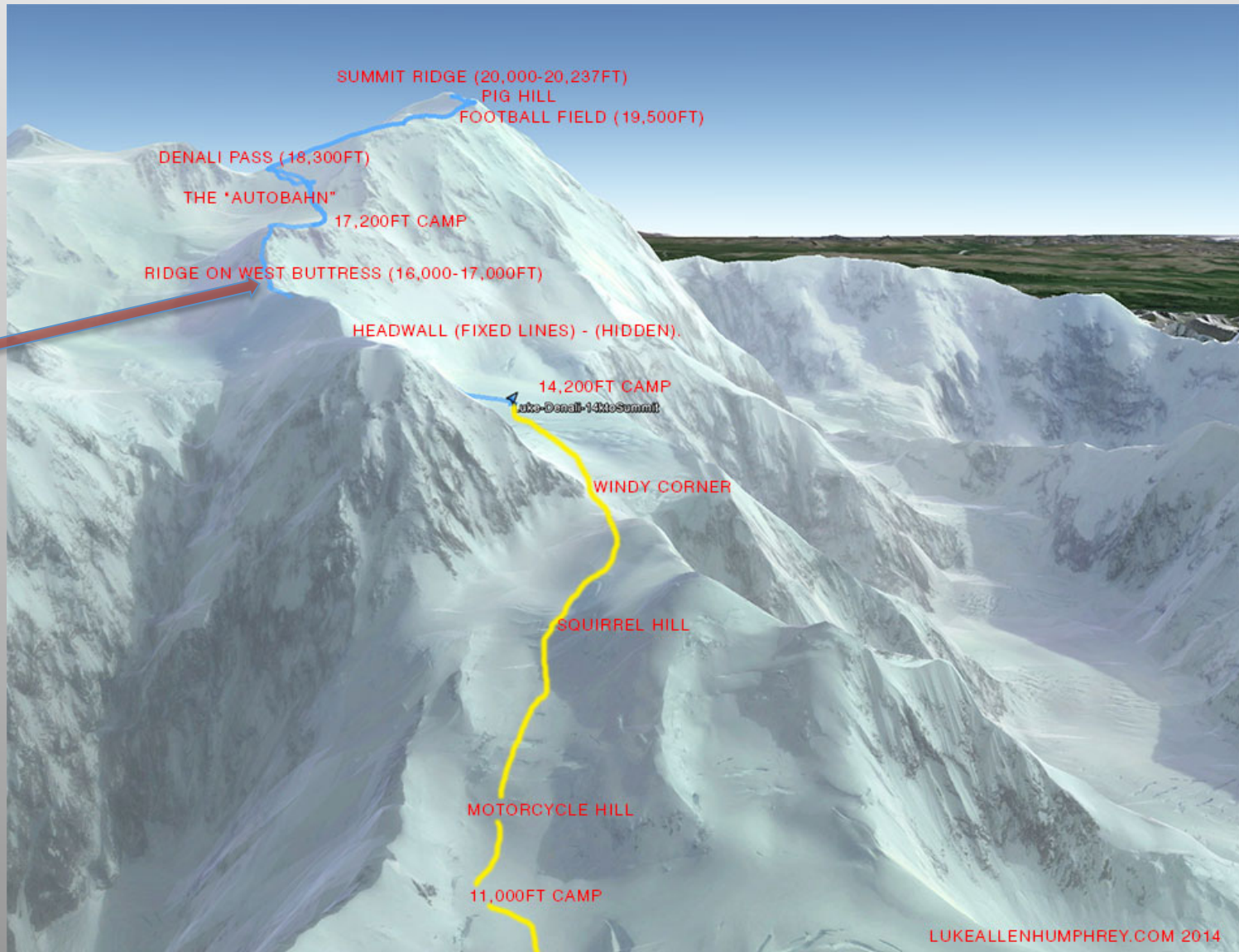


# West Buttress Route





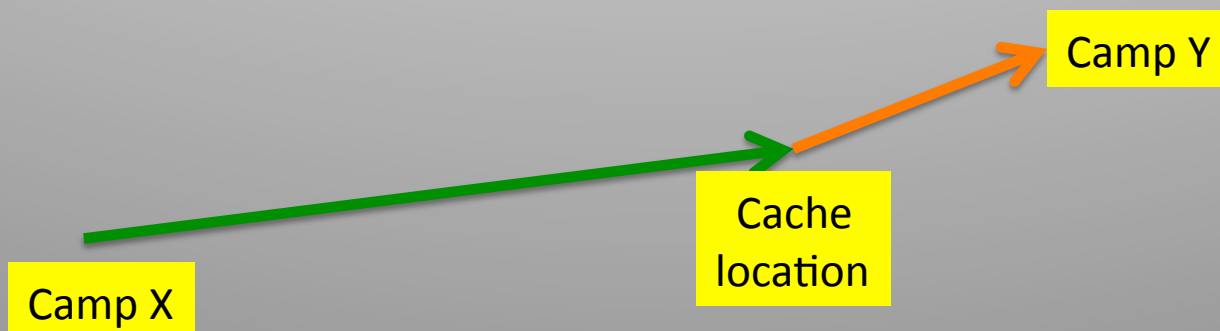
# West Buttress Route



My high  
point  
16,200 ft

# Climbing Process

- Establish camp
- Climb to “cache” gear/supplies at higher altitude
- Return to camp for night
- Break camp and climb to next camp with remaining gear
- Establish new camp
- Return to “cache” location to recover gear and bring to next camp
- Repeat as necessary
- *Climb High, Sleep Low* -[for altitude acclimitization]





# Getting There

Fly to Anchorage, Alaska

3+ hour drive to Talkeetna, Alaska

30-40 minute plane ride to Base Camp on Denali glacier





# Getting There



Andrew demonstrates the CMC (Clean Mountain Can)





# Flying onto the Glacier



Base Camp





# Camp Life

- 2-3 hour to set up or tear down camp
  - Guides search for crevasses
  - Build level surface for tents
  - Set up & anchor tents and dig foot wells
  - Build snow walls
  - Sometimes build “privy”
- 3 and 4-person tents
- 1 common cook-tent/  
meeting tent





## Camp Life – 11,200 feet





# Camp Life – 11,200 feet





# Top of Motorcycle Hill





# The Polo Fields





## Camp Life – 14,200 feet



# Sudden Storm





# Camp Life – 14,200 feet



# Climbing





# Climbing





# Climbing

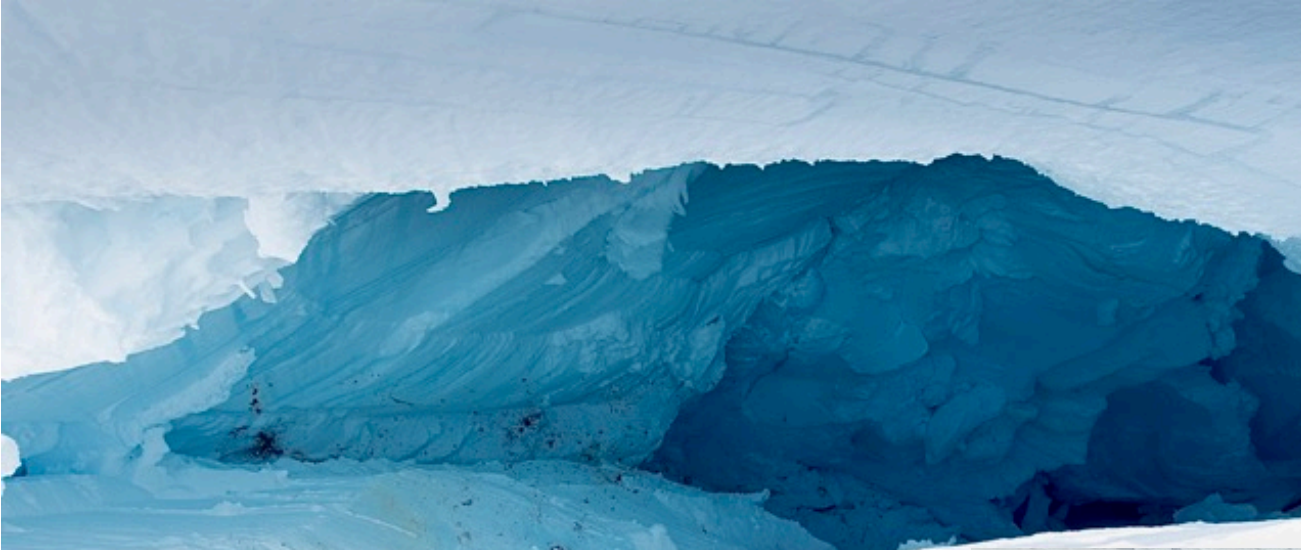




# Climbing



# Crevasses





# Caching Gear





# Caching Gear





## 14,200 – 16,200 ft: *The Fixed Lines*



# The Fixed Lines – Going up





# The Fixed Lines - Going up



# The Fixed Lines - Going Down





**16,200 feet**





**16,200 feet**





# “The Edge of the World”



Photos: Amy Wise



# **“The Edge of the World”**



Photos: Andrew Yasso



**May 23, 2014 – 11:05pm**





**May 24, 2014 – 7:34am**





# The Climb Down

- 2+ hours to break camp
- 10+ hour climb down from 14,200 ft camp to Base Camp at 7,200 ft
- 2+ hours to set up camp





# Stuck at Base Camp



# Base Camp – Clearing the Runway





# Base Camp



Getting Ready to Fly Home

# Success Rate

Year	# of Attempts	Did Not Summit	Reached Summit	Summit Percentage
1903	8	8	--	0
1910	15	15	--	0
1912	7	7	--	0
1913	4	0	4	100
1932	9	5	4	44
1942	8	1	7	88
1947	14	4	10	71
1948	3	0	3	100
1951	8	0	8	100
1952	29	19	10	34
1953	9	6	3	33
1954	13	0	13	100
1955	4	4	0	0
1956	18	18	0	0
1957	8	8	0	0
1958	12	2	10	83
1959	8	4	4	50
1960	24	1	23	96
1961	31	9	22	71
1962	40	15	25	63
1963	50	21	29	58
1964	37	12	25	68
1965	31	28	3	10
1966	22	15	7	32
1967	83	20	63	76
1968	40	10	30	75
1969	71	22	49	69
1970	124	52	72	58
1971	163	115	48	29
1972	181	101	80	44
1973	203	95	108	53
1974	282	143	139	49
1975	362	231	131	36
1976	508	169	339	67
1977	360	76	284	79
1978	459	189	270	59

Year	# of Attempts	Did Not Summit	Reached Summit	Summit Percentage
1979	533	182	351	66
1980	659	376	283	43
1981	612	291	321	52
1982	696	386	310	45
1983	709	235	474	67
1984	695	371	324	47
1985	645	324	321	50
1986	755	349	406	54
1987	817	566	251	31
1988	916	365	551	60
1989	1,009	492	517	51
1990	998	425	573	57
1991	935	378	557	60
1992	1,070	555	515	48
1993	1,108	438	670	60
1994	1,277	575	702	55
1995	1,220	697	523	43
1996	1,148	659	489	43
1997	1,110	548	561	51
1998	1,166	746	420	36
1999	1,183	675	508	43
2000	1,209	579	630	52
2001	1,305	533	772	59
2002	1,232	587	645	52
2003	1,179	489	688	58
2004	1,275	619	656	51
2005	1,340	565	775	58
2006	1,152	571	581	50
2007	1,218	645	573	47
2008	1,272	517	755	59
2009	1,161	479	682	59
2010	1,222	552	670	55
2011	1,232	545	687	56
2012	1,223	725	498	41
2013	1,151	346	787	68
2014	1,204	775	429	36
Totals:	40,884	19,585	21,278	52%

Source: Denali National Park Service

