



Case File

Suspected broken ankle on trek to Mount Everest Base Camp

Our mission

To airlift our customer from Mount Everest to our partner hospital in Kathmandu for tests and treatment on a suspected broken ankle. Once she was treated, we then ensured her trip home was safe and comfortable.

Who did we help?

Our policyholder, Jean, who was fulfilling a long-held dream of trekking to Mount Everest Base Camp in Nepal.

What was their situation?

Jean had been in Nepal for 10 days, trekking and acclimatising with her tour group as they slowly and carefully made their way from the bottom of Mount Everest to Base Camp, 5,364 metres above sea level. The trek to Base Camp is arduous and physically and mentally demanding, with trekkers testing their physical fitness, mental strength and capacity to adjust to inhospitable weather conditions that change instantly, combined with the impact of high altitude, which can cause extreme sickness, nightmares and hallucinations, among other symptoms, if not adjusted to slowly and carefully.

What happened?

During a day acclimatising to the altitude, where the group treks at a location higher on the mountain than where they sleep that night, Jean slipped and knew she had hurt her ankle, but kept walking. The surface on Mount Everest is almost like walking on sand, with vast areas covered in small rocks that slip and slide underfoot. Jean was battling high winds, very cold temperatures and the dry, unstable surface when she fell.

At first, Jean thought her ankle was sore simply because she was aching all over due to the eight hours per day trekking the group was doing combined with the high altitude. The group was at their highest point yet, 500 metres below Base Camp. Continuing to walk on her injured ankle that day, and for five hours the following day, Jean finally admitted to herself that something was seriously wrong and she removed her hiking boot.

Released from the boot, Jean's foot swelled immediately and was already black and blue from the injury. As soon as Jean was aware of how badly she was injured, she felt the true extent of the pain.

Despite her protests, Jean's tour guide recommended that she return to Kathmandu to get the treatment her ankle looked like it desperately needed. Jean was hopeful that she may be able to ice her ankle and continue on to Base Camp, but staff on the mountain convinced Jean that her ankle needed serious and immediate attention, or she may be dealing with the additional damage to her ankle for years to come.

Jean had trained for months for this once in a lifetime expedition, and was the fittest she had ever been, so admitting that she was not able to continue on to Base Camp was devastating.

How did we help?

Jean needed to contact us to arrange the airlift from Mount Everest to Kathmandu, but the phone signal at the camp was dropping in and out. With WIFI coverage, Jean was able to get online and spotted her nephew on instant messenger, who she explained the situation to and he called us to relay this information to our team. The phone issues didn't abate, so we continued talking to Jean's nephew in Australia until the helicopter was confirmed to collect Jean from the camp and make the two-hour flight to Kathmandu. Jean's nephew kept Jean constantly informed of the arrangements we were making for her.

What happened next?

Jean was airlifted from Mount Everest to Kathmandu airport where an ambulance was waiting on the tarmac to take Jean to hospital. The hospital's treating staff found that Jean had torn the ligaments in her ankle. While she was relieved that it wasn't fractured, Jean knew she had made the right decision by listening to the advice of the staff on the mountain and had come to Kathmandu to get treatment. The hospital provided Jean with an ankle brace and crutches and we started liaising with Jean about her journey home.

What was the outcome?

Jean spent two nights in Kathmandu as we made arrangements for a business class flight home, to ensure Jean's comfort on her return journey. We maintained regular contact with Jean to keep her updated on our progress and our nurses checked in with her to make sure Jean's ankle was manageable. We also ensured that Jean received an injection to prevent DVT on the return flight, a necessary precaution considering how limited her movement would be in the air.

Following her experience, Jean says she realised that her trip wasn't about the destination, it was about the journey. At the time of her injury, Jean had already spent 10 days climbing Mount Everest, adjusting to the altitude, battling the weather, steep climbs and hard trekking every day, as well as nightmares and terrible sleep caused by the altitude.

"They showed so much empathy, I kept hanging up the phone from them and thinking, 'wow, they have gone out of their way.' They even called me when I got home to make sure my return trip home went smoothly."



The Case

- Our customer Jean Mar was fulfilling a once in a lifetime expedition with her trek to Mount Everest Base Camp in Nepal
- On day 10, Jean seriously injured her ankle while walking on a slippery, steep surface in high winds
- We airlifted Jean from Mount Everest to Kathmandu for tests and treatment on her suspected broken ankle
- Jean tore the ligaments in her ankle and after treatment in Kathmandu was flown home in business class for further recovery

The Claim Costs

- The cost of Jean's medical care, her evacuation by helicopter to Kathmandu and her repatriation to Australian totalled **\$7600**.
- We were happy to help and even happier that could bring her home safely.
- She has made a complete recovery—and we celebrate her drive to **keep travelling**.