



## Exclusive Pt. 3: K2 2017 Interview with Vanessa O'Brien



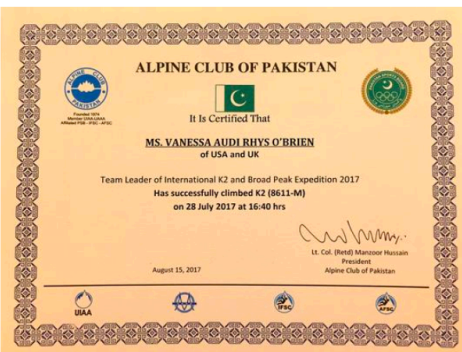
Vanessa returns to Camp 4 after summiting K2.  
V. O'Brien

"With global warming, there are some routes I wouldn't try in summer that I think would be great for winter"



Wednesday, October 11 2017 at 09:57PM, by [rowan](#)

In today's third and final part of the Explorersweb interview with Vanessa O'Brien, we talk about the Polish attempt to summit K2 this winter and Vanessa's own future plans.



Certificate of recognition from the Alpine Club of Pakistan.

V. O'Brien

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*ExWeb: This year, a Polish team led by Krzysztof Wielicki will attempt to make the first summit ever of K2 in the winter. What are your opinions on their attempt?*

Vanessa: "Go Poles! I am their number one fan. I really think the Polish will do it and I hope they do it this year. They have a strong team, have worked hard, trained and planned for this. I also do not think this K2 in winter is impossible, in fact, with global warming, there are some



Vanessa being presented with her certificate by the president of the Pakistan Alpine Club  
V. O'Brien

routes I wouldn't try in summer that I think would be great for winter – like the Cesen Route! So if I were placing bets, yes, I'd go with the Polish for sure."

*ExWeb: You have summited Everest and K2, the highest and some of the most deadly mountains in the world. In terms of achievement, you cannot go bigger, but you can make it more difficult for yourself.*

*What is next? Would you be interested in attempting the same peaks but with less support - for example without Sherpa or*

*without oxygen?*

Vanessa: "A Sherpa or even a High Altitude Porter for me is like a climbing partner, but even better than a climbing partner, he or she, has gone to climbing school – most likely the Khumbu Climbing School (or something similar in Pakistan). They are similar to a Scuba Diving buddy, so unless you are a soloist, which I am not, I wouldn't climb without one. So I am unlikely to go for that unless all my mates decide to become climbers.

Climbing without oxygen doesn't interest me because I am quite fond of my hands and feet. The problem with oxygen is that it has been misused, so it gets a bad rap like training wheels on a bike, but the way we use it, it really doesn't amount to much. On K2 we used a 2-litre flow rate mixed with ambient air – that's minimal given the exertion levels and altitude we are at – this is not 100% oxygen replacement.

The reason for the oxygen is first and foremost for emergencies and to ward off extreme hypoxia; that is, to get a minimum level of oxygen to the tips of your toes and fingers to prevent frostbite.

However, keeping in the spirit of the question there are plenty of harder routes one could choose, and even more technical peaks at lower altitude – either which would up the ante on the challenge scale. Having just returned from K2 I have not yet booked my next holiday, but never say never!"