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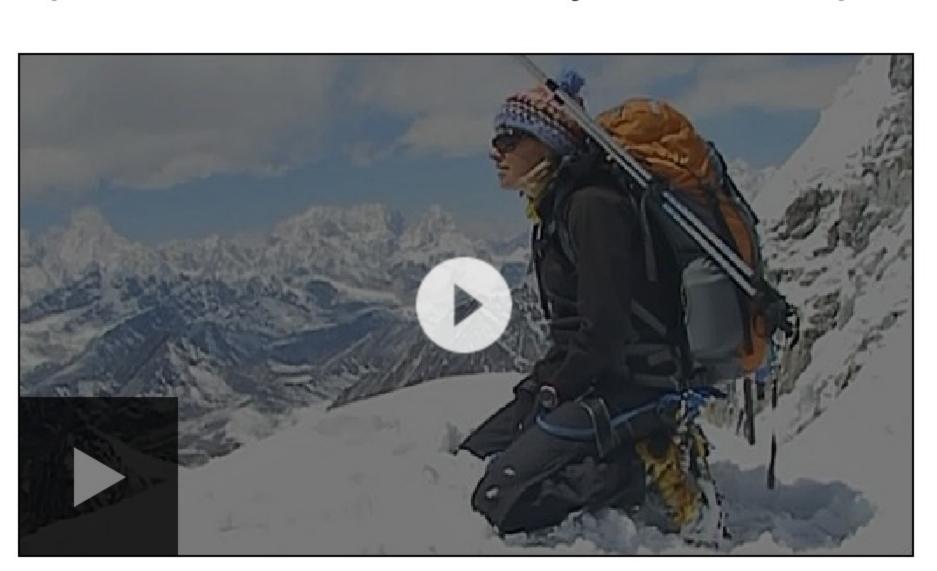
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Squash Falconer aims to fly from the top of Everest



Squash Falconer, from Derby, becomes the first British woman to fly off the top of Mont Blanc

Derby climber Squash Falconer wants to become the first person in history to fly off the top of Mount Everest.

She's already become the first British woman to climb and fly off the top of Mont Blanc and holds the record for being the highest ever bum-boarder.

And now on her 'to do' list is to paraglide from the top of the world's highest mountain: "It's a tall order - I don't want to die doing this kind of thing," said Squash.

"But it's a calculated risk - and the thought of flying off the top of the world is pretty amazing!"

Mountaineering is Squash's first love - though it had relatively humble beginnings: "I started off doing the Duke of Edinburgh Award in the hills.

"Then I did a ski season when I was 18 - that took me to the 'real' mountains, the Alps and so on."

But it was a chance conversation that took her on her first climbing expedition at the age of 24.

"It was a group of friends who were climbing. They'd climbed Kilimanjaro and were going to climb Aconcagua.

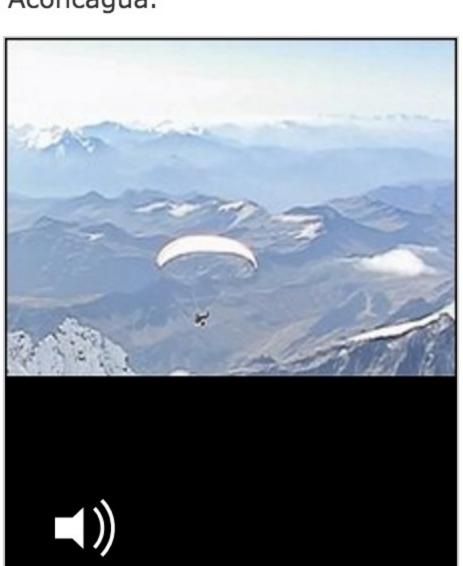
"I said 'Oh, I'd really love to do something like that'.

"So I set about looking into how I needed to do it, got myself fit and went off and did it!"

And from that point, Squash was hooked... so much so that she's made a life of climbing.

From initially working between climbing trips she now makes her living from the trips, co-leading hikes up and down mountains.

She's climbed all over the world, including Europe, Asia and South America.



Squash set her first record in 2008 on the 26,900 ft (8,200 m) Cho Oyu, in the Himalayas. She was reluctant to haul her heavy snowboard to the top of the world's sixth highest mountain - so instead she took her much lighter bum-board.

The oxygen levels were so low when she reached the summit that she could barely breathe or walk. However, using the bum-board made the descent a good deal easier - and Squash became the highest bumboarder on the planet.

Reaching new heights

But her career highlight (so far) came in 2009 on Mont Blanc, Western Europe's highest peak.

She set aside a month to complete the task which started with a three-day motorcycle ride to the south of France (motorcycles are another of Squash's loves having been brought up on a farm with quad bikes and motorbikes.)

Squash set out with the intention of climbing up the mountain and flying down - though she needed to prepare for the event.

To acclimatise, she climbed part way up Mont Blanc three times - not necessarily planned, but the weather took its toll.

On her final ascent, and as she reached the summit, it looked as though the weather might thwart her plans for one final time.

There are, it is said, around only five days each year when conditions are safe for flying from the highest point in the Alps.

But patience paid off as she sat and enjoyed the view over Europe.

The wind started to drop and eventually fell to a safe level for her to set up her 'wings' - and throw herself off the top of the mountain with 15,780 ft (4,810 m) of empty space beneath her.

first British woman to achieve the feat.



The descent took around 20 minutes and Squash says she thinks she was holding her breath for most of it.

It wasn't until after the event that she discovered she had become the

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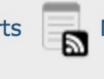
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