

Colleague of the moment: Alexandra Mazilu

## Pushing to the limit – and beyond

Be it the Himalayas between the Indian subcontinent and the Tibetan Plateau or the High Atlas in central Morocco – Alexandra Mazilu, software developer at Body & Security in Timișoara (Romania) has already scaled plenty of heights, although she's also experienced some challenges along the way.

At first it was the beauty of nature that took Alexandra Mazilu's breath away – picturesque stone houses, colorful rhododendrons, prayer flags fluttering on the sides of steel bridges suspended high above emerald water, and countless majestic snowcapped peaks towering thousands of meters. But then, as Mazilu neared an elevation of 5,000 meters on her Everest base camp trek, she literally found the climb had left her breathless. "The higher we climbed, the more challenging it was to enjoy the experience and the landscape. My mind started to protest and I was gasping for air. The ascent became strenuous, and something changed inside of me," says Mazilu, 31.

Although she is a passionate mountain climber, this expedition pushed her to new limits. Climbing at high altitude, breathing the thin air was depleting her energy,

making every further step a willful effort. "At that moment I thought I wouldn't be able to go on, but something inside me kept pushing me forward, and in the end I made it," she says. "I just kept focusing on each step, and once I actually reached the 5,000 meter mark, I realized – nothing is impossible! It was both amazing and overwhelming."

Ascending above 5,000m she could already sense that she was no longer the same person. "At a certain moment I said to myself: even though this is hard, I can put my struggle aside and just take in the beauty around me, enjoy the here and now. It was a sort of maturing process, and it continues to give me strength today," she explains. "Although it might sound like a cliché, time really did stand still and life took on a new dimension for me."

Her experiences on her mountain expeditions have given her a lasting sense of confidence and certainty. Her most exotic trip to date took her from the top of Jebel Toubkal in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, which at 4,167 meters is the third highest peak in Africa, to the windswept sand dunes of the Sahara. "On that expedition, we rode on camels through the desert, crossed the Rif Mountains, and caught an

amazing glimpse of the magical blue city of Chefchaouen," she recalls. And she is looking forward to further adventures. Right now she is planning a trip to Kilimanjaro and a return to the Himalayas. "My experiences there left a positive mark on my life. I stopped setting mental limits for myself and learned to simply be present in the here and now, patiently, without any further expectations. I know I can overcome whatever life brings," she adds.

For Mazilu, mountaineering is a source of energy – in both in her personal life and at work. She says: "Mountain climbing brings an aura of cooperation to a group, which nourishes interpersonal relationships. I apply this experience every day!"

Webcode: #cm92

*Alexandra Mazilu during the ascent: "I am deeply grateful to the wonderful people who have made these experiences possible for me. I can only encourage everyone to travel and will be happy to provide tips to anyone interested."*

