

I didn't actually think I'd make it to the top. This was my first 14er to climb and we had tried it once before, but turned back because of the weather. Mt. Elbert is the highest mountain in Colorado and for some reason, my boyfriend insisted that was the one we had to climb. We left home at about six am. I actually slept on the drive in the dark to the base of the mountain, though I remember a gas station stop for coffee and snacks.

We began the hike and at first, I was feeling pretty good! I could feel the cold chill of the September air and my lungs filled full of the mountain freshness. We walked and walked and walked. It started to get steeper as the morning wore on. In fact, parts of the trail were so steep, we had to slow down to a shuffle. The air thinned as the altitude rose and I was huffing for breath. I could hear our hiking boots crunching on the dirt and feel my heart pounding in my head.

By about 12,500 feet, I had to sit down. I felt weak, weary, and dizzy. I felt like the surrounding scenery was spinning around me. Water, granola bar, rest. I carried on. I knew we were so close – I could make it. The end got even steeper. 3 false summits. Each time I saw the top I would feel a swell of excitement, only to be disappointed when we reached the top and saw another higher point beyond.

Pushing onward, our muscles burned. The wind whipped my face, made my ears and nose red. Crawling over rocks to the very summit – the highest point in Colorado. I made it. The view was vast, wide – almost as though I was looking down from a plane. I could scarcely catch my breath, sat down on a pointy rock for my sandwich. He pulled out the ring.

And I returned home with pride and joy – 2 big events in one long, long day. After a full nine hours of hiking, I walked stiff like a robot with diamonds glittering on my finger.