

Press Office

[Home](#) / [Offices](#) / [Press Office](#) / [Press Releases](#) / [2016](#) / [July](#) / University of Leicester mountain climber scales new heights to advance science

Press Office

News

Press Releases

→ 2010

→ 2011

→ 2012

→ 2013

→ 2014

→ 2015

→ 2016

– January

– February

– March

– April

– May

– June

– July

› **Fasten your seatbelts: University of Leicester's 2016 student-built Formula Student car set for Silverstone**

› **Four lessons from Chilcot and the Iraq War**

› **Study finds children's purchasing behaviour 'significantly impacted' by social media and mobile apps**

› **Head of British Army to give public talk at University of Leicester**

› **University of Leicester mountain climber scales new heights to advance science**

– August

– September

– October

– November

– December

→ 2017

Podcasts

Videos

Features

Think: Leicester

Experts Guide

For Journalists

For Staff

Media Appearances

Public Events

Awards

Contact Us

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University of Leicester mountain climber scales new heights to advance science

Posted by [ap507](#) at Jul 19, 2016 10:35 AM | [Permalink](#)

Mountaineering space physicist returns to world's longest mountain range to collect data for global studies in microbiology, climatology, topography and Earth's energy balance

Issued by University of Leicester Press Office on 19 July 2016

- Dr Suzie Imber will travel to South America in November/December to collect data for universities in the UK and US
- Earlier this year the experienced climber generated the first objective catalogue of every peak over 5,000 metres in the Andes range and climbed several mountains she discovered
- She will increase the accuracy of the data by climbing and precisely measuring a collection of 6,000 metre summits and also plans a second series of first ascents in the region
- She came across Incan ruins on the summit of the unclimbed mountains

Images of Dr Suzie Imber at the Andes mountain range are available here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/raxmtzl87mrxn97/AAAjtzs3hVI4taCn?dl=0>

A University of Leicester physicist is preparing to embark on a comprehensive study of South America's Andes mountain range in the hope of answering questions about everything from the hardiness of bacteria in extreme environments to climate change and the Earth's energy balance.

Dr Suzie Imber, 33, of the University of Leicester's Department of Physics and Astronomy, will attempt to scale 15 peaks over 50 days to gather a huge cache of data for research being carried out at several universities in the UK and in America.

Earlier this year, the prolific high-altitude mountaineer used a supercomputer to catalogue every Andean mountain over 5,000 metres in altitude. She then launched an expedition to the Andes to climb a selection of mountains discovered during the mapping process, completing several first-ascents and even stumbling across long-lost Incan ruins in the process.

Now, she plans to go back in November with her climbing partners Maximo Kausch and Pedro Hauck to face temperatures of minus thirty degrees Celsius, wind speeds of up to 100 mph and even minefields – all in the name of science.

She said: "Among others, we have volunteered to collect data for Harvard Medical School to study resistance of bacteria, and we will be collecting snow and ice samples for a consortium of US universities interested in climate change. We are collaborating with the Earth Observation Science Group at the University of Leicester who are interested in comparing satellite measurement of land surface temperatures with measurements we will make from the ground, using instruments called radiometers. Such studies are essential for monitoring Earth's changing climate, and radiometer measurements have never been made at such altitude before."

With the team, Dr Imber, a lecturer and research scientist in Space Plasma Physics, will also be using a high accuracy GPS to further map the longest continental mountain range in the world, which runs through seven countries including Argentina, Chile and Peru.

She said: "The GPS data returned from the expedition will not only help us to accurately identify the altitude of key summits in this mountain range, but will also be used to ascertain the level of uncertainty in our existing altitude data sets. It's hard to believe, but we have more accurate maps of the topography of Mars than we do of this region of our own planet!"

You can read a feature about Suzie Imber's journey here: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/features/features-2016/discovery-led-learning-academic-follows-passion-for-adventure-with-aid-from-supercomputer>

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For interviews contact Suzie Imber via si88@le.ac.uk

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