



PHOEBE'S KILIMANJARO ADVENTURE

A huge thank you to everyone who sponsored me, including Holy Trinity Outreach Committee. The whole group, 22 of us from Exeter and Newcastle Universities, met up for



the first time at Heathrow Airport on 5th September, and flew to Nairobi, before getting a six hour African-style bus to Arusha, where had our last night with all the luxuries such as a shower, heating and a bed. The next morning, we had an early start as we had still to drive to the bottom of the Mountain. The excitement on board the bus increased as we drove closer and closer to Machame Gate, the beginning of our route. The scene outside the gate is something else—over a hundred porters all waiting to be assigned to a particular bag, food or a tent or two. After our guides had allocated all of the equipment coming up the mountain with us, we were off! During

Mount Kilimanjaro (inouganda.com)

the first day, we walked through the humid rain forest, giving us a chance to get to know our guides, and their 'English' names, for the trek; Sam, Buster, Gerard and Oberdere. Whilst we were walking 'pole pole', (Swahili for 'slowly slowly'), the porters would race ahead with one, or often two, huge bags on their heads, back or both. We liked them even more, when we got to the first camp and saw that they had put up all the tents and set up tea and popcorn ready for our arrival! The popcorn went down very well indeed.

During the second day, we were walking through heather and moorland, a complete contrast to day one, as we were also above the first level of cloud, giving us some amazing views. Each day we were walking for five to six hours, although whenever we asked how long it was going to take, the guides would give us 'porter times', so we just added an hour. (African timing took some getting used to!) Our camp for the second night was at Shira camp, and we were fortunate enough to have a tour of the caves, where the porters and guides used to sleep, until the turn of the millennium. It here that we saw the summit for the first time, although it looked really far away and so high. The scenery changed yet again on the third day, to rocks and boulders—alpine desert, everywhere you looked. It was also cloudy, so this meant that we were walking along a ridge in the middle of a cloud. This was our day of acclimatisation, which meant that we walked up from 820m/2,690ft to 4,630m/15,190ft before dropping down to our next camp, Barranco Camp. First up,



Phoebe at the summit!

on the morning of the fourth day, was the giant Barranco Wall. For the first couple of hours, we were climbing up the wall, jumping over gaps and being hauled up by the guides, before we were able to have a break and survey our efforts. The rest of the fourth day was pretty mundane after the excitement of the Wall, up and down, walking through the Karanga Valley, before finally walking up to base camp. After an early supper, we were all in bed by 7:00pm. We were woken up again at 11:00pm, so at midnight on Tuesday 11th September, 22 students, each wearing seven or eight layers, embarked on the final push to the summit.

Alongside us, we had our four guides and six night porters, who did everything they could to get us up to Uhuru Peak—the very top. Gradually, the group split up, as people got tired and cold, but each splinter group had a porter who stayed with them and encouraged them every step of the way. If you looked ahead, all you could see were the lights from everybody’s head torches. After what seemed like forever, I eventually made it up to Stella Point, 5,739m/18,839ft, but not before I saw the most beautiful sunrise I have ever seen. I couldn’t feel my fingers, but my night porter, Sam, took photos for me. He also kept me awake, or tried to, as I kept on falling asleep on rocks, during our breaks, every few steps. At Stella Point, I regrouped with three others, and together we walked the final stretch to Uhuru Peak. During this part, we kept on seeing friends who had made it to the top, and were now on their way down, which helped us all to keep on going. Thankfully, after the steep ‘path’ up to Stella Point, the final hour was comparatively gentle. We reached the top, Uhuru Peak, at 9:20am on Tuesday 11th September, 2012. After a few photos, we started our descent. The descent down from Stella Point, for me, was extremely rapid as my guide, Sam, was running down the gravelly sand, and I had no choice but to follow him, and that was how I learnt to African Ski!

When we reached base camp, just after 1:00pm, we had a short nap and lunch before setting off again. After an hour and a half we reached a camp, High/Millennium Camp, which we found out, after one my friends tried to sign us in, was not our camp for the night, and we had to continue walking. The path from Millennium Camp was rocky—no rest for our knees—and seemed never-ending. We reached Mweka Camp just after sunset, so we started and finished this epic day in darkness. The next morning, we got up at the normal time of 6:00am, for the ‘three’ (four) hours down to Mweka Gate. Once we arrived, we signed out, as well as being surrounded by people trying to sell all sorts of gifts, jewellery, art and even knives.

That evening, after everyone had got themselves clean again, we had a celebration meal in our hotel, with a little certificate ceremony. The next morning, the majority of us went on Safari to the Ngorongoro Crater, followed by the Tarangire National Park the next day. We saw all the ‘Big Five’ except a leopard. We were lucky enough to see one of only 20 black rhino left in the Ngorongoro Crater. After our two day safari, we joined the others in Zanzibar. After a blissful few days, on the beach, a sunset cruise, a spice tour and a trip to Stone Town, it was time to leave the 40 degrees of Zanzibar and return to the 17 degrees of England.



Safely down again

Between the 22 of us, we raised over £60,000 for Practical Action and Meningitis Research Foundation.

Phoebe Adams

Within the church choir, Phoebe is known as ‘Phoebe One’. (There are six Phoebes in the choir!)