Personal Experience in Kilimanjaro

1. The normal staff

It is important to be prepared well before Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro; On Mt. Kilimanjaro, if it’s not (wo) man vs. mountain, it’s most definitely you vs. yourself. On the way up, it’s easy to let the anxiety feeling stop you in your tracks. “Am I getting altitude sickness? I’m not going to make it. I’m not strong enough.” These fears take over during the day, and when you’re trying to sleep, they sap precious mental and physical energy. They are normal staff, ignore them and make sure you have a right mindset.

Sound familiar? Maybe you’ve got a big project coming up or you’ve been staring down the barrel of something completely new. In either case, don’t let the voices of panic and the ghosts of failures past cloud your success story. Allow deep breaths and your perspective to put them in their place. If you climb with Fair Travel Kilimanjaro; your guide will prepare you well with all these.
2. Support is a beautiful thing.

It needs a time work to success. Understand in life that you are not going to do it alone, and that often you’ll need the support of others. I call it interdependence. And you’ll need it to get up the mountain. Before you go, it comes in the form of words from friends and fans. On the mountain, it comes in the form of a mob of people including guides for Kilimanjaro, porters, and cooks all watching out for your well being during your Kilimanjaro Climb. Not to mention, your partners in the climb. In life, know that even in the midst of your greatest challenges you are not alone. Take comfort in others who have taken the challenge before you, with you and in your wake. Along the way, graciously accept their genuine support. And give it, too.

3. Appreciate the journey, in all directions.

Keep your head down if you need to, but look up, look down. Look forward primarily, but occasionally look back to know where you’ve been and to appreciate the beauty of where you stand.
One the way

4. Take it slowly, slowly. “Pole. Pole.” (Swahili for “Slowly. Slowly”) If you hear it once on the Mountain Kilimanjaro, you’ll hear it a thousand times. It cannot be said enough. For us mere mortals, it is the single greatest key to the enjoyment of climbing and the satisfaction of summiting Kilimanjaro. In the beginning of the climb, the plodding seems so maddeningly slow as to be ridiculous, but there’s good reason for this. A slow but deliberate pace is the key to continually managing energy and acclimatizing to altitude.

I’ll tell you why I’m convinced of this. On the way up the mountain, especially on the night of the final ascent, I had my struggles. We all had our struggles. Oddly enough, however, it was on the way down that I felt like my guts were going inside out, my head pounded, and my vision was blurred. On the way down? Why?

I made the mistake – in a fit of great excitement – of over-exerting myself at the summit. And I paid for it. All the way down to our overnight camp. In life, sometimes – pole pole – one foot in front of the other; slowly, slowly, surely and deliberate – all the way to the end – is the best way to ensure you reach your goals.

During our Climb

5. Have the right tools.

From firsthand experience, I can tell you that climbing Kilimanjaro does not in any way need to be belabored with equipment anxiety in the run-up. But having a few key items in your bag (either upon arrival or renting on the spot) is important. When you’re struggling to put one foot in front of the other on summit day, the last thing you need to mind is being cold, wet or uncomfortable. Make sure you have the right gear so you can channel all your energy into the task at hand.

There’s no need to over think the gear you need for life and go gadget-crazy, but having a few key tools to allow you to do your work will enable you to focus on what you do best.

6. Allow yourself to acclimatize and adjust.
9. Personal victories are satisfying. Shared victories are sublime.

On the night of our final ascent (we set off at midnight after only a few hours of broken sleep), I envisioned us at the peak more times than was healthy. I am grateful that Audrey and I made it together, but that wasn’t enough. There were five of us in our group. About one-third of the way up, around 2:30 A.M., one of the women in our group sat on the ground and broke down. “I’m totally exhausted,” Jo said in tears. Her husband, Damian, held her in support. I could empathize and sympathize with that sentiment, right down to every last weary, altitude stretched, sleepwalking bone in my body. Based on the climb ahead, I put her chances of reaching the summit at an even 50/50.

Apparently her porters said all the right things and she did all the right things. In one of life’s miraculous and satisfying swings — only five minutes after Audrey and I reached the summit — we turned around to find Jo and Damian just behind us.

Joy in the success of others. It’s a great thing.

10. Sometimes it’s about more than you.
On summit day, we also climbed with a young woman from Russia named Leila. When we reached Gilman Point, a sort of pre-summit two hours short of Uhuru Peak, she sat down and said, "I am happy. I think I will stay here." She was fatigued from the last five hours of climbing, masking persistent altitude sickness and enduring stunning blisters across her heels with a determination that betrayed little of the physical pain she must have been experiencing. Five minutes later, she was leading the way to Uhuru Peak. Leila story is one that I'll never forget. She received news from home just two weeks earlier that her father had died suddenly. After talking with her family, she opted to do the climb as scheduled, as a tribute to her father, an avid traveller and adventurer. He had been so excited for her to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. I'm inclined to think he had something to do with her determination and final burst of energy.