

Wild Med Adventures: Kilimanjaro 2018 Trip Report

Arriving in the late evening at Kilimanjaro International Airport in Arusha, Tanzania is always surreal coming from the mid-winter malaise of New England in February. It was warm, humid and crowded, and mixed with the fatigue of an overnight flight the line for a visa seemed to drag on forever. But as soon as we made it to our shuttle and onto the road to the hotel things settled in. The African countryside was dark and pleasantly cool air, fragrant with agriculture, came in through the open windows. We traveled for almost two hours. At the Protea Aishe Hotel our rooms and a snack were ready and we slept late into the next morning. This was my second trip to Mount Kilimanjaro. The first time in 2016 was an amazing adventure. Despite early snow predictions, the conditions were perfect and we had an amazing time with new friends, great guides and a massive mountain. This time we braved rain, snow and cold and again came away with new friends and a one-of-a-kind experience on the mountain.

Day 1 began when we met our mountain for a short hike to Mataruni Falls, which we did in a warm downpour. Our guides provide locally sourced banana tree leaves for umbrellas, but despite this we are all soaked to the bone by the time we arrive. On our return we enjoyed our first meal prepared by our mountain chefs. We returned to the hotel excited to prepare for the

first day of our climb tomorrow.



The plan is to ascend for 7 days, gaining approximately 2000 feet/day in elevation. We'll be trekking about 6 miles a day through a variety of terrain and vegetation environments. We began our trek at Lemosho Gate, elevation 2100 M and made our way to Forest Camp. We were greeted by an entertaining Blue Monkey, who had no fear of his larger cousins. We had a great meal, a lecture and then rain all night. By mid-morning the next day the clouds had cleared and we were out of the forest. Day 2 we camped at Shira Camp (3610m) and it rained again for most of the night. Because of the rain we had to jump several streams early in the day as we made our way to Shira II (3850m), where we had more rain and we could see snow just above on the mountain.



On Day 4 we encountered our first snow on the trail among the large boulders as we trekked to Lava Tower (4600m) for lunch. The snow was almost over-the-boot deep by the time we stopped for lunch and took a break. The snow continued to fall as we descended through the Senecio trees into Baranco Camp(3900m) and got our first look at the Baranco wall.



That night I woke to someone moaning painfully in the porter's tent and found that one of our chief guides and assistant chefs was suffering from UV keratitis. He had already taken some tylenol without relief. Fortunately, Dr. Kaya, the wilderness medicine fellow, had some proparacaine drops in his medical kit and a few drops in each eye were enough to help. In the morning we had light rain as we ascended over 250m vertically up the Baranco Wall and then to Karanga Camp (3995m) for lunch. Another afternoon of trekking and we were at Barafu Camp (4673m) near dusk.



The plan for the next day was to make it to Crater camp, with an early morning summit the next day, but the next morning there was more than 6 inches of snow in camp. We began the day with an overcast sky and cool temperatures, but as the clouds burned off we felt the high-altitude equatorial sun acutely as it reflected off the fresh snow. We reached Stella point (5756m) after lunch sitting in the snow on the side of the mountain. Unfortunately, Crater camp was inaccessible due to the snow and lack of a water supply there. We decided to continue to Uhuru Peak (5895m), which took another hour. Everyone was feeling the altitude and after a brief stay for pictures we descended for several hours back to Barafu camp. Sleep came easy that night.



We descended the remainder of the mountain the next day getting back into rain forest as we neared Mweka Gate (1640m) and were treated to an amazing meal. At this point we said goodbye to our guides and porters, who had taken incredible care of us during some difficult times on summit day and been all around wonderful throughout the trek. We returned to the hotel a day early to recover before starting safari.



Our accommodations in Machame at the Protea Aishe Hotel were excellent, but were no comparison to the experience staying the Miramboi Tented Lodge, which is less than a kilometer from Tarangire National Park. After seeing a herd of over 50 elephants passing meters from our truck, a group of young lions close up and many other exotic animals, we were thrilled with necessity of being escorted back to our rooms by former-Masai warriors armed with spears. In fact in the morning when several lions were found on the hotel grounds, we realized this was not just a tourist stunt.



Lake Manyara and Ngorongoro Crater were equally amazing. Giraffes, hippos, water buffalo, hyenas, white rhino, zebra, wildebeest, antelope and a lion sitting in a tree were among the sights. We even saw (from a distance) an elusive cheetah. We finished up our CME lectures in the Ngorongoro Farmhouse with plenty of food and drinks.





As with any Wild Med Adventures CME Trip friendships were built and good times were had by all.

Special thanks to our guides and porters on the mountain, Albert, Victor, SanJay, Felix, Kanini, Umam and everyone. Our safari guide Mr. M'Koni. And Fares who made sure we had rides and guides for everything.