



For any of you who have ever seen the show "The Jersey Boys" you'll know it starts with saying that if you ask 4 people at the same event to tell you what happened you'll have 4 different versions!!! This is also true for our Charity expedition to climb Kilimanjaro. This however is my version.....others may differ as it's all about a persons perception.

Last year I was approached by a fellow Lion from Switzerland. She told me about a group of all female lions from different countries that had a dream to climb Kilimanjaro and raise monies for children in Africa. I was asked to join this team of ladies. I always love a challenge but instead of saying yes I said I'd consider it.

Consider it I did, could I do it? Would I be able to raise the sponsorship? Would I let the team down? Was I brave enough to attempt such a challenge with people I didn't know? At this time it was 10 lady lions from 10 different countries attempting to raising \$100,000 for children in Africa. With having our first female president it seemed like an ideal time to do this project.

I did nothing but think about it but was so scared I could not do it that I didn't commit. Then in January I was contacted again as they now had the 9th lady in the team. This gave me the kick I needed!! I didn't want to miss such an opportunity so I said Yes! I'm in. Somehow I would get fit and raise the money.

My training started, I walk miles everyday with my dogs so I started carrying a 7kg backpack. I did classes in pilates, yoga, I swam, I went to the gym and started leg weights! Everyday! I started to eat more to bulk up a bit ending up putting on over a stone during the next 6 months!



Fund raising started in earnest. I was very lucky and am very grateful for the help from MD, various clubs and individuals. All of who were extremely generous. I set up a just giving page, my friends sponsored me. I approached local businesses and some not so local. I wrote articles

for various papers and contacted anyone and everyone I knew to help me. The support was overwhelming.

International Convention in Milan took place and several of us met there for the very first time. I'm not sure if this put my mind at ease or made it harder but luckily for me, although all different countries everyone spoke English! That was a real positive as my Russian, Polish, Swiss to mention a few is sadly lacking.

So I spent months slowly buying my kit. Ebay did a brilliant trade on base layer thermals. We approached our leaving date and I looked at all my kit plus provisions there was no way that was all going to fit in my kit bag and weigh 15kg. Anyone who knows me knows I cant pack lightly . This indeed was a challenge and I think I must have packed, unpacked, cut back repacked and unpacked so many times I lost track. Finally it was all in the bag and about 15kg. I figured I'd eat the extra chocolate bars if need be.

I travelled in my hiking boots. I'd been walking in them everyday for 6 months and loved them even if they didn't look very attractive. Airport security was fun having to undo these on each change of flights (and there were 3), but I'd been warned that if my bag went missing on its journey I'd really suffer without my boots. Anything else I could beg borrow or hire to get by BUT not the boots - look after your feet.

So I met up with our team leader Inna from Italy and her cousin Aksana in Dar Es Salaam and we flew to Kilimanjaro. That in itself was a story about tall people with long legs in a very small toilet but that's for another time!

Gradually we all started to arrive at Kilimanjaro and we were all met with such friendly hospitality from the local Lions. They were amazing and we all thank them for their kindness.



So the day before we were to climb we took the opportunity to visit a local school arranged by the local Lions. The children were very excited to see us and took time out of their schooling to talk to us and one class sang and the children danced! This school is very close to the local lions hearts and each year they try to build an extra classroom which is then named after the District Governor. They still need another 16 class rooms to accommodate all the children so lots of ongoing work here!

Day 1 of our climb was fillany here and we arrived at Machine Gate, located at the southern base of the mountain. And so did the rain! So we all checked in, took photos, ate some lunch and watched the monkeys steal any left over food. They seem to get good pickings here! We

then all used the toilet one last time before leaving such luxuries as a flushing toilet behind for a few days.

We started our hike through the rain forest on a winding trail up. The trail quickly became muddy and slippery. Trekking poles definitely needed. Up we went till we reached Machame Camp at 9,400ft. Day 2 we continued through the rain forest eventually leaving this behind and heading across steep rocky ridges covered with heather arriving at Shira Camp at 12,500ft. Day 3 we set off to Lava Tower and Baranco Camp. This takes you across the Shira Plateau towards the peak of Kibo then towards Lava Tower. Day 4 We had to tackle Baranco Wall - what fun that was! I was dreading it when I saw it the night before. In all honesty I had a mini melt down at this stage! I think the altitude had started to take effect on my body and I seriously doubted I could make the climb! However, I might have been a bit slow in the group hiking but this I tackled like a mountain goat and loved it!! Even when we had to hug the "kissing rock" and cling to this large rock as we shuffled round it with a sheer drop below!

We chose to trek the Machame route as it exposes you to higher elevations fairly quickly (by day 3) which makes your body start adapting to the change in altitude quickly. The website does state "however, this route requires that a person be in good shape to be able to tackle the challenging elevation gains and losses".

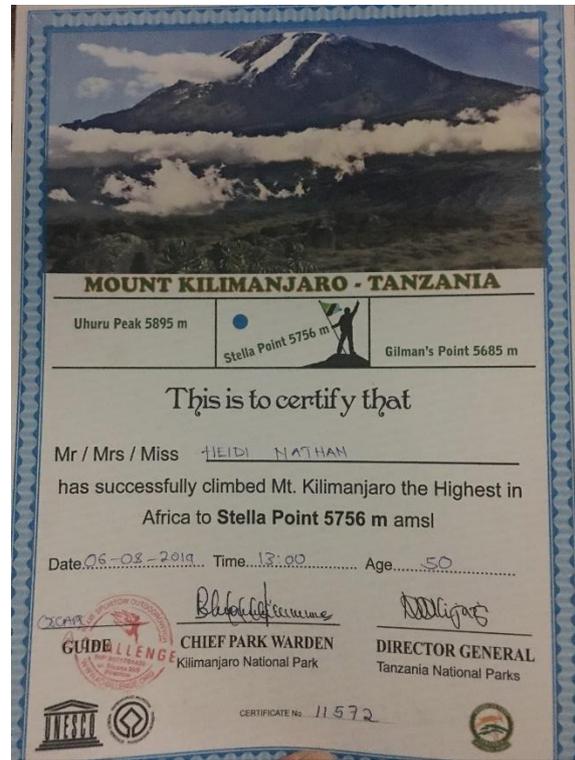
We were supposed to tackle this route in 7 days however the guide suggested we do the 6 day version which does in fact make this quite a difficult route. In particular day 4 combined with day 5 makes a very heavy schedule. Day 4 is a full day hiking from Baranco to Barafu (15,000ft) which is the last camp before summit. Then after dinner and a few very short hours of trying to sleep in freezing temperatures the very long and strenuous summit day began at 2am!

So we set out between the Rebmann and Ratzel glaciers, trying to climb on very very slippery type gravel so one step up one slide down!! They consider the trek from camp to Stella Point to be the most mentally and challenging portion of the trek. For me the mountain just beat me. I managed to get to Stella Point at 18,600ft (5756m) but at that stage I could not continue to Uhuru peak. My breathing was like breathing in fire with every breath, my head hurt if I moved it in any direction and my vision was becoming distorted, so for me I made the decision to stop there rather than risk any further adverse health issues. This is where the guides & porters show their true skill - they each looped an arm through mine and practically ski'd me down the shingle to get me down quickly which is the only way to deal with altitude sickness. So nearly 12 hours climbing up and down to Baranco camp in about 2 1/2!

Coming down the rest of Kilimanjaro was possibly harder than climbing it! The pressure on your knees and hips is immense however I feel all my training with legs weights really paid off as at no time on the entire hike did I suffer with muscle pain in my legs, no blisters nothing!!! The only adverse effect I had was the altitude sickness effects which sadly you can't really train for!

So 7 of the team reached the peak, which was really impressive, and took the Lions flag to the very top! The view from Stella Point was stunning a further 139m elevation must have been even better but I feel proud of what I accomplished. Our goal was to climb mountain and raise money to help children in Africa, I feel I can certainly tick both of these boxes!

During our training months we had been looking at different projects. We decided on a project at the Amrita Centre in Kenya. The project is to raise \$100,000 to build 4 classrooms, an admin room and a toilet block to allow the centre to set up classes for nursery age children at the centre this includes the orphans along with children who live in the local slums surrounding the centre. I would like to thank LCIF who have shown such great interest in this project from the beginning. We are hoping that they may be able to partner us in this appeal.



I feel very proud to have been part of this challenge. Each of us within the group have struggled with one aspect or more of this whole adventure. Whilst I may have struggled with the altitude, I have been very lucky and very well supported by everyone with my fundraising having raised in excess of \$18,000. Don't despair if you didn't sponsor me!! There's still time if you would like to. I would really like to reach \$20,000 and am working on other ideas to raise this extra \$2,000 including doing a wing walk! If you would like to support me and make a donation please contact me on heidisami@yahoo.co.uk and I can provide full details.

We are also producing a Lions Calendar for 2020 with amazing photos from our adventures. All monies from the calendar will be going to LCIF for this project. If you are interested in purchasing any of these please contact me on the above email address and I will supply you with details when they are available.

So finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has already supported me, without you I could not have achieved this.

Lion Heidi