

Kili Climb Report, Day 1 from the Mountain

Correspondent: Paul Francis



Phew! I have to be honest and tell you, I never thought we'd get here. I thought Joe Hockey's idea to hold the Ultimate Burn up Mt Kilimanjaro was a little crazy. And that's being kind.

But Humpty is all about challenges and overcoming them and we've done that by spending our first night at Machame Camp, 3000m above sea level in the foothills of Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest freestanding peak.

The atmosphere is electric and the morale of our 20 Kili Club climbers is beyond description. We've come from all over the place – Sydney, Melbourne and even Amsterdam to be in Africa and our first day yesterday did not disappoint. But before I tell you about the six hours of climbing we did to arrive at Machame, let me fill you in on the trip so far.

We left Sydney on Tuesday, had a night in Johannesburg, flew to Dar es Salaam for another night, and arrived in Kili early Friday. Thankfully, most of our luggage arrived. There were a few nervous moments for Kochie and his crew from the *Sunrise* show on Channel Seven when some of their camera equipment didn't arrive, but it got here in the nick of time.

While the luggage might not seem that important, it is, particularly when you think of what we've packed: walking boots that have been worn in over hundreds of kilometres of training; special cold-weather gear including jackets, gloves, hats, and trousers.

And then there's Kelly Cartwright, our youngest climber, who has even more valuable luggage. At 19 and arguably the fittest trekker in Humpty's Kili Club, the Paralympian and world champion sprinter is carrying a spare leg in the event that her specially constructed prosthesis is damaged on the terrain, or something goes wrong with the mechanics.

She handled yesterday's climb with aplomb even though it was tough terrain. We walked about 12km through solid rainforest for almost six hours and ascended 1200m ASL*. Everyone thought we were going uphill but our great guides from Adventure 35 last night said that was nothing compared with what's ahead. And here we were thinking yesterday's climb was harder than anything anyone had done back home in training!

It was tough, but there were some brilliant moments, like when we got our first glimpse of Kili's summit. Looking at the 5895m-high peak in the distance was simply awesome and inspiring.

Another highlight was the sensational sight of our incredible African porters when we arrived at Machame Camp at the end of a long day. There are about 100 porters 6 porters per person, and they gathered around and broke into song in southern Swahili and Masai. Talk about amazing. The voices were

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spell binding. Roughly translated, the songs meant the porters are very brave and strong, and they are right. What a way to finish the first day's climb.

Dinner was fish, rice and vegies but once the sun goes down on Kili the temperature plummets and it is expletive-deleted freezing! With the business of eating out of the way, most of us were in bed by 9pm – two to a tent.

You know that saying, what goes on tour stays on tour? Well, what goes on Kili stays on Kili, but I will tell you – no names, no pack drills – that there might be a few tent relocations after all the snoring and farting that went on last night. Joe Brown reckons another of our Good Eggs snored like a grizzly bear. No, I'm not referring to either of our female climbers, Penny Gerstle or Kelly.

Right now it's 7am, Day 2 (Sat 1 Aug), and a fresh minus two degrees Celsius. We've got a breakfast banquet going on in the mess tent including sausages, scrambled eggs, porridge, toast, tea and coffee and pretty soon we'll be breaking camp and heading up Kili for our second day of the trek.

We've got between six and seven hours of climbing to do before arriving at Shira Camp at 3840m ASL tonight. And that means 840m closer to the peak. The trek takes us out of the rain forest, so the views will be more expansive the higher we climb.

Expect another progress report tomorrow. It's Joe Hockey's birthday so make sure you join us again at www.humptysmountain.com.au because we've got a surprise for him.

Right now, though, Kili is calling and 20 Good Eggs are rarin' to go.

So *tutaonana*. That's "goodbye" or "we'll see each other again" in Swahili.