

Africa: Day Two

Anticipation and an Exercise in Patience

I have come to the conclusion that the clocks in Africa are pointless. Time is a relative entity. Any stated hour is merely a suggested range. It was the morning we were to start the ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro, and I was chomping at the bit. Patience has never been listed among my attributes and the anticipation of the climb was not helping matters. We finally left the hotel at 9am and headed towards the Machame village. It was a pretty drive that brought us into the jungle at the base of Kili. As we neared the park gate, we noticed a line of people on the edge of the road. Soon we would learn that these people were all trying to get jobs as porters.



At 11:30am we had signed in at the Machame gate and were finally ready to begin our trek. Our head guide, Frederick, stayed back to

finish organizing the porters and all of the items needed to sustain a 33-person climbing team for a whole week. One of our assistant guides began leading us into the great unknown...



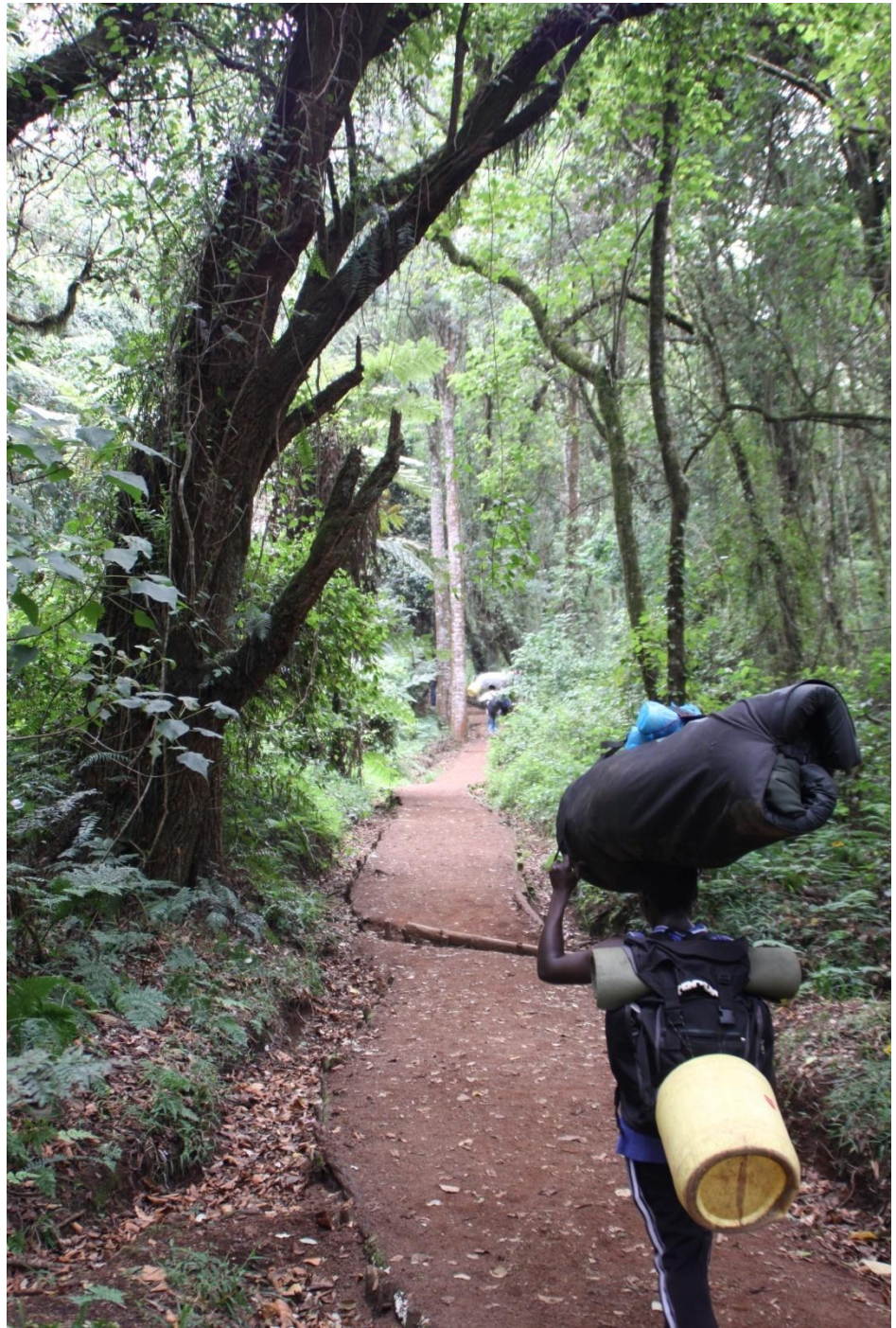
The porters are allowed to carry no more than 20kg. Their loads are weighed at the beginning of the trail as well as once each night at the ranger huts. If their load is found to be too heavy, the guide company they are working for will be fined.



There are six main routes to the “Roof of Africa” and we chose to ascend via the Machame Route. The shortest and arguably the easiest route up Kili is the Marangu Route, commonly called the coke-a-cola route. In comparison, the Machame Route is nicknamed the Whiskey Route. While this route is harder, it also boasts a higher summit success rate. This is partially due to the fact that it is one day longer than the Marangu route, allowing more time for altitude acclimation. Additionally, there is a good chance that the sort of climber that decides to take a harder route is likely a more serious climber and thus better positioned to gain the summit



This first day of hiking was long (4300ft of elevation gain) but very enjoyable. I think our whole group was happy to finally be on the mountain and making progress. The path remained hard-packed and relatively smooth for a good part of the day. The biggest obstacle we faced was finding a place to step out of the way of the many porters (our group alone had 20 porters and 4 guides) passing us by as they rushed ahead to set up camp. In the afternoon we found ourselves in the midst of a light drizzle of rain. This made the trail a little bit more slick, but nothing really to be concerned about.



The Climbing Team

Louise



Jeff

Dorthe





Ian



Jennifer

Brenda



Michael





