

## Being on that Mountain! Some Reflections from Katelyn Lenander

I'm trying to find the words to actually articulate the whole experience of being on that mountain - it sounds ridiculous and dramatic but I actually feel like a completely different person!

Here are some big achievements/standouts that I am grateful for:



The absolutely incredible team of 95 (yes, 95!!!!) porters, guides, chefs and support team who passed us every day carrying bags and bags of pots, pans, tents, our own bags, and who were never too tired to teach us swahili, dance with us, or even carry our daypacks for the last home stretches of each trek. I have never been so humbled and amazed by the support of absolute strangers, who never failed to hold us up and support us through the trek.

For Oscar, a guide who, on day one, was explaining to me how we are one team, one family, how our support and love for each other transcends language, culture, place of birth, anything. Who danced with me and sang with me on every trek, and who on the way down the mountain when i had nothing left in me to give, grabbed me by the arm and walked me down the mountain for an hour and a half, sharing

snacks and everything! If it wasn't for him, I have no idea how long it would've taken me to get down

Simba Camp 2 – 2671 metres - members of the team including Katelyn among the 13 in the photo. It says that the vegetation in this zone is moorland for the next 3 hours so I imagine there might still have been some scrubland on this stage. There were 3 hour stages ahead for more than 19 kilometres and at least 12 hours walking and so much further to go.



Katelyn said: My porter (who carried my bag) was called Rafael, he has a wife and three children and met me EVERY DAY to carry my bag and support me for the final stretch. (Not every porter did this!) He cleaned the dust off my boots and tried to find tent spots that weren't on a slope. We will see a picture of the tents later.

On summit night, after waking up at 11:30pm with one hours sleep that day, and leaving at 12am for the final 2000m climb up Kibo peak, it took SO much strength I didn't realise I had! To keep putting one foot in front of the other, with the loose scree constantly sending you down a few steps and the -10 degree temperatures - I have never been SO exhausted. You make it to Gilman's point at sunrise after 6 hours of

trekking, which is at the top of the volcano, but actually not the highest point. Then, you have the option to go back down or to continue the 2 hour trek round the crater rim of the volcano to Uhuru peak, at 5895m nearly 6000 metres.



Proof Katelyn at the Peak – this shows the terrain at the peak with lots of

rubble and volcanic dust – very difficult walking conditions without the lack of sleep. The next is above the clouds - they were lucky to have the sun at the summit, or did this put more strain on their eyes on the ascent?



Personally, I can be quite a quitter when things get tough (I lack a lot of perseverance), so for me to be able to see the climb right through to Uhuru peak AND coming back down the mountain is massive for me!

But help was at hand when I needed it. Most of all, on my trek down the mountain on summit night, at 10am, having never felt so AWFUL, Raphael, my porter walked up the mountain for at least an hour to hold my hand and carry my bag with me for the last half an hour back to base camp. He was AMAZING!

The tents look reasonable but on cold nights? I shared with a girl who became my tent-mate and closest friend, Gabi, who was not afraid to share our toilet troubles, our prayers, our processing, our food, whatever it was, with no filter and no awkwardness. I truly have a friend for life!

And finally it's Time for Reflection after all the exertion.

It has been SUCH an immense privilege to be able to experience this. Thank you to everyone again for your support!

Katelyn