



Outdoor Adventure Graduates

Blog 7 - Ben Shillington and Cam Dube

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We're currently situated at camp 5, approximately 15,500 feet, some 4,000 feet below the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. Kibo Hut, where we've been stationed now for two days, is considered the central hub for many of the routes up the eastern side of Kilimanjaro.

Yesterday's move from camp 4 to here was a considerable milestone that was successfully accomplished by the team in roughly 5 hours of hiking across one of the highest deserts of the world. It is somewhat comparable to how it would be walking on the moon, very barren, flat

with no vegetation in sight, only rocks and paw prints of jackals that roam the area scavenging for whatever they might come across as food.

As our evening summit push approaches, there are many mixed emotions amongst the group; a lot of excitement as well as anxiety. It is now a game of 'hurry up and wait'. The risks associated with high altitude climbing are now accepted as a reality by the group and no matter what you read or hear about Kilimanjaro, that it is often considered by many as an easy hike, the group was quick to realize this morning that the inherent risks of climbing this mountain, like any other high altitude mountain, are real.

At 7 am this morning, as the group was having their tea and breakfast in the mess tent, reality set in when a person from another party who had departed late last night for the summit, was evacuated off the mountain after collapsing and vomiting numerous times. As news broke out about this event, team members exited the mess tent with curious intentions to witness a true evacuation unfold.

As this young girl slipped in and out of consciousness, the only remedy to prevent long-term damage is to descend the victim to a lower elevation as soon as possible. This girl was lucky to have the assistance of many porters to aide in her evacuation from camp 5 to Horombo, the quickest and most commonly used route on this side of the mountain. She was lowered on a one-wheeled stretcher provided by Kilimanjaro Park.

Our plan now is to rest and drink plenty of fluids before our midnight departure up the mountain. We will leave as one unit, with the guidance of eight Tanzanian guides, Clive Ward, Ben Webster, Shaunna Burke, Ben Shillington and Cameron Dube. We will commence in the dark with headlamps, one liter of water each and very little food, to minimize indigestion. We estimate that as pre-dawn breaks, roughly 4:30 am, we will be within two hours of the summit.

It's been an incredible journey so far. Many people have pushed themselves far beyond what they thought was possible, reaching many different objectives and personal goals. We try to keep in mind that this trip has always been about the experience and the journey, and summiting will only be the icing on the cake.

Ben Shillington and Cameron Dube