

IP-Trek on Kilimanjaro

For some people, being stuck in their office in London is just not exciting enough. Even annual trips to the States for INTA meetings do not do the trick. They need challenges ... physical, mental and emotional challenges!

So it was for ITMA members, Linda Harland, Catherine Nursaw and David Keltie, and associate member, Anna Carboni, who all separately decided that they could not resist the call of the “IP-Trek”. This is a group that describes itself as consisting of “IP professionals who make bi-annual expeditions to some of the world’s most beautiful and challenging locales in search of adventure and friendship” (see their website at www.ip-trek.com). The September 2007 trek was to be a walk in the park – the National Park of Kilimanjaro.

Our intrepid four (plus Anna’s husband, who claimed a tenuous matrimonial link to an IP professional in order to be allowed to join the group) set off on their various routes to Tanzania, to meet up in the bustling town of Arusha with 15 other IP colleagues from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Spain and the USA, and representatives from their tour operator, Berg Adventures.



The IP-Trek Group before the climb

After a day of getting to know the other members on the trek, meeting the guides and preparing for the mountain (which included an unexpected ten mile hike around the local countryside), they were off. The first day involved a long drive up to the west end of Mount Kilimanjaro, with breaks to deal with various punctures and Jeeps getting stuck in the mud, then signing in at the gates of the park, before a hearty lunch at a trestle table decorated with artificial flowers (which followed the climbers all the way up the mountain).

That was the easy bit out of the way. Then came the trekking. Starting in lush rainforest, the ITMA four and the rest of the gang headed up the mountainside through moorland, then scrubland, and eventually rocky, almost moon-like, terrain. They had chosen a long route, in order to help with acclimatisation to the altitude. Their night stops were in bright yellow tents for two, carried between camps by local porters. Somehow flat sections of ground were found to pitch camp, and water was collected to boil and sterilise for the trekkers’ needs. The secret of survival at altitude is to drink gallons of liquid (but no alcohol, sadly).



Camping on the way up

On day 7, the IP-Trek made the big push for the crater, climbing for five or six hours from their camp at 15,970 feet to Stella Point at nearly 19,000 feet. There, everyone was encouraged to have something to eat and drink, but it was tempting simply to sit and sleep. Just walking was a huge effort at that altitude, but the trekkers each in turn decided to head on up to the summit, rather than the original plan of doing the final

ascent the following day. With headaches and some sickness on the way, their trusty guides kept them going to the top: Uhuru Peak – 19,341 feet (5,895 metres).



David Keltie and Linda Harland with guides at the summit

The group camped by the snow in the crater that night, at 18,700 feet, before taking the fast route down the mountain, in a day and a half. Missing and black toenails still remind Catherine and Anna of the speed of their descent! Everyone celebrated at the bottom with music, beer, a big feast and – eventually – long-awaited showers.

The trip was a huge success. ITMA has four more high achievers on its books, who also used the trip to raise large sums for ActionAid, the MS Society and MacMillan Cancer Support between them. Where next, IP-Trek?

Anna Carboni, Wilberforce Chambers
acarboni@wilberforce.co.uk