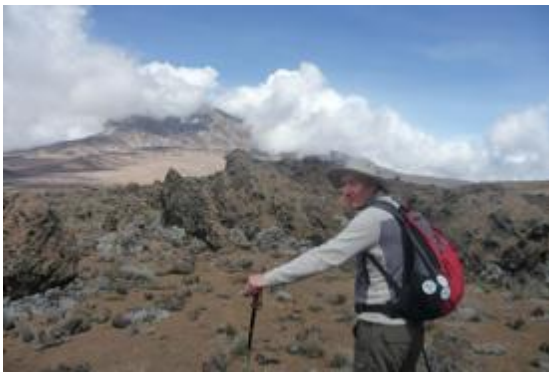


Two Footsteps Supporters Complete Sponsored Climb of Mount Kilimanjaro

By Peter Jackson

During the last week of February David Burditt and I locked our horns with the largest free standing mountain in the world and attempted to ascend to the roof of Africa. At 5895 metres Kilimanjaro towers over the great plains of East Africa and is the highest point on the continent. The path we chose took a fairly circuitous route up the mountain, winding its way up and round Kilimanjaro during the 5 day ascent, allowing plenty of time to see everything it has to offer, but most importantly to acclimatise to the altitude. Spurred on by the team of local guides and the sterling efforts of Eric the chef to loads up with carbohydrates, we emerged from our tents on the evening of Feb 27 as prepared as we were ever going to be.



Climbing by torch and moonlight we battled with the altitude and our inner demons as we inched up the icy rocks for hours on end. Finally at 5 a.m. we reached Stella Point, the volcano's rim and a mere 30 minutes away from Uhuru peak across the snowy path that edges round the crater.

At minus 10 Celsius there was no time (or inclination) to hang about at the summit, and we beat a quick retreat after the obligatory photo call at the summit.

Thirty hours and 40km later we were back at the gates to the Park, desperate for shower and a bed but proudly clutching the certificates declaring that our trip had been a success.

From Kilimanjaro we flew to Nairobi anon to Kyushu in order to visit the various projects Footsteps is engaged in. In on whirlwind day (courtesy of some rather intrepid off-roading by Vincent the driver) Tony took us on a tour of all the schools and the Kati to Medical Centre.



Despite the grinding poverty it was uplifting to see not only the massive progress that has been made but also the ceaseless smiles and enthusiasm of the children. David and I agreed that the proceeds of our charity climb should go towards rebuilding the decayed remnants of four mud walled classrooms at Obingo, hopefully allowing this terribly deprived school to function as it should. All in all, it was a trip that was exhausting physically, mentally and emotionally. The deprivations we suffered on the mountain were only temporary and pale in comparison to the challenges of ordinary life in rural Kenya.