

**TANZANIA
KILIMANJARO - MACHAME ROUTE
DECEMBER 2002
By Karen Hauptfleisch**

"12 June 2002 - "Please be careful, December I'm going to see the sun rise on Kilimanjaro", were my last words to the orthopedic surgeon operating on my knee before succumbing to the anesthetist.

Since I've never been on a hike before, I still don't know where that idea came from.

Four days later I was in Cape Union Mart, on my crutches and accompanied by my Mom, a shopaholic who would not survive one day in the great outdoors. Encouraged by her excitement (it was after all a huge shopping mall in Umhlanga), my 13th cheque was history within two hours. My purchases included a book about Kilimanjaro, a minus 15% sleeping bag and two hiking sticks. I was an inspired woman on a mission.

I just had to phone my friend: "Cornelia, I'm going to Kili".

"Great!" came her reply. "When are we going?"

Cornelia was involved in a serious motorcycle accident three years before and is a walking miracle. She has had 45 operations since this accident, and gave her team of medical specialists a permanent headache, not to talk about her curator. The two of us were going to Kilimanjaro in December.

Her heart specialist recommended the Pioneer Adventure Club and I quickly phoned them.

"December is not a good time," came the reply.

Thereafter Cornelia was at a medical specialist every day. I had to go for physiotherapy every day. In the background, the ladies at the Wesley Methodist Church said a prayer for us every day.

On the 14th of December 2002 I took my first step into another African country.

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks - Tanzania



The Team at the start

On the 15th of December 2002, at the tender age of 38 I took my first step on a mountain. Every second thereafter was an amazing experience.

The view we had on the 19th was hard to describe. We started our hike to Uhuru peak shortly after midnight while it was still snowing. Cornelia had to turn back after 6 hours since she suffered from pulmonary edema. The rest of the "frozen" group was quiet. When the sun came up I was in awe of the beautiful mountain.



Our start at midnight

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks - Tanzania

Minutes after we had our photo taken we discovered that Adriaan suffered from mountain sickness. The one guide ran down with him while the rest of us walked down slowly, everyone lost in their own world.



On top of Uhuru Peak



The guys taking a nap at Gilman's point

The next morning, my refusal to get in the vehicle that was send to take Adriaan down, almost led to mutiny. In the end, Adriaan, being the team leader, decided to walk down with me. When it started to rain, I kept the urge to dance and sing to myself. No use pushing my luck.

What a glorious experience.