



Mt Kenya Pt Batian, 5199 m, highest point in Kenya and second highest in Africa.

Mt Kenya Ascent

Hugh Chaffey-Millar

What follows is an almost verbatim copy of one of many emails that I wrote to family and friends during a four month round the world trip at the end of my undergraduate studies.

The plan was, over the first three days, to increase my sleeping altitude to 3300m, 4200m, then 4790m. Then on the 4th day, leaving at 4am, cross a glacier to the start of the rockface - arriving at sunrise - then rockclimb up to the highest two summits, with a spare day and the option of spending a night on the 2nd highest peak at 5188m

if the weather turned bad on the way up. This however would be highly undesirable, as the altitude of this very exposed hut would risk bad altitude sickness (you're meant to sleep below the highest altitude you reach during the day). This might have been a slightly gung-ho approach, as most people spend an extra day acclimatising at one of the lower altitude camps on the way up.

A bit of background: Mt Kenya, at 5199m, is the highest mountain in Kenya and the second highest mountain in Africa, after Mt Kilimanjaro. It has three summits all about the same height. When most casual trekkers say they've "climbed Mt Kenya", they actually mean the lowest of the three, since the other two require about a 350m rockclimb with a backpack ("technical mountaineering" as the Lonely Planet guide to east Africa describes it), obviously at quite high altitude. This sounded like a far more interesting option, so I modified my original plans to climb Mt Kilimanjaro.

The reason for the early start on the climbing day was that at this time of year in Kenya (April), it rains at about midday, which means snow at high altitude, which is a hassle if you're trying to climb rock.

I would have a guide and a porter for most of the trip, then a (permanently acclimatised) mountaineering guide would meet us on the 3rd day for the final ascent. (*continued page 3*)

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Quick News

- **Upcoming trips:** (see the website for more details, and to post any new trips).

6 Oct	The Ledge Climbing <i>Rajan Chhetri</i>
7 Oct	Basic Level Climbing Course <i>Rajan Chhetri, David Evans</i>
7 Oct	Canyoning <i>Stefan Chapman</i>
13 Oct	World Champs Rogaining <i>Stewart Johnson</i>
14 Oct	Mountain Biking in the Blue Mountains <i>John Rasmussen</i>
21 Oct	Boree Log S2 2006 <i>David Williams</i>
26 Dec	Cycle Tour of South Western Australia <i>Monique Alfris</i>

The Sharp End of the Paddle – Paddling Fitness

Dave Lowson

Spring and summer are not that far away and that means kayaking!! So what fitness do you need for kayaking? If you are paddling with a good technique, you are using your core body muscles (abs and lower back) and the quadriceps in your thighs more than your arms. This is great because, for most of us, our legs are stronger than our arms. The good news is that many of the activities we do help each other out.

Mountain Biking and Rogaining/Hiking

Aside from the all round aerobic workout these can give you, the best part of these is the way they use the thigh muscles. Much of the rotational power in kayaking comes from your quads.

Rock Climbing

Most climbing uses the legs more than the arms, but the pulling action done in climbing is similar to that used in paddling. The abs and lower back muscles used to twist and lock your body position in climbing, are the same as used in paddling to rotate and then pull the paddle in kayaking.

Swimming

While the club does not do too much swimming it is a great all round aerobic activity. It is also a necessary skill in case you get in trouble.

Crunches

The cult of the six-pack is upon us. The great thing about crunches is that they can be done at home, so no embarrassing moments. The best are diagonal crunches; left elbow to right knee, right elbow to left knee and repeat until exhausted. These represent the same contraction of the abs to create pull in your paddling stroke.

Hopefully this will help you get on the water. Next time we will look at why the kayak will not go in a straight line, despite the fact that you have abused for the past 5 minutes. *DL*



You Ask Me Why I Live Here

Anthony Nosworthy

So, you ask me why I live here, then let me tell you why,
In this rugged wondrous place where the mountains reach the sky.
Here, where man is an intruder amid the forest and the ferns,
Where sunshine into rainfall so often, quickly, turns.

You ask me why I live here, when most would find severe
The mist-enshrouded mountains, and deep-enchanted mere.
Where the mist and fog will swirl among the button grass,
Where sun and windless day turns the lake to a looking glass.

You ask me why I live here, when each new dawning day
Is never the same as the one before, in any conceivable way.
Where the sun caresses mountains, and changes every hue
A kaleidoscope of color from scarlet into blue.

You ask me why I live here, when the crimson sun does
Set upon the lake and mountains, ere night has cast its net.
Where the evening sky is bathed in light under red and yellow clouds,
Then twilight settles in again before the nighttime shroud.

You ask me why I live here, where the birds and insects sing,
When across the lake and mountains their joyous voices ring.
Where cries of cockatoo and currawong will often break the peace,
Who's calling is a ritual, which never seems to cease.

You ask me why I live here. when by the lake I stand
With rod and line and tackle gripped firm within my hand.
Where fishing is a pretext for what I try to find,
A peace and oneness with my world and for me, my peace of mind.

AN

Mt Kenya Ascent (cont'd)

Day 1

I travelled from my high altitude (actually only about 2500 m) athletics training venue to town Nakuru, near Mt Kenya, and met up with Moses, the guide with whom back in Nairobi I'd previously made arrangements. This involved yet another experience of Kenyan public transport: 4 hours in a packed 15 seater van (or Matatu as

they're known), without enough room for my head, meaning I had to sit in a slump position, as my curved spine absorbed what the shock absorbers didn't. At one point, the car pulled off to the side of the road, the driver jumped out and all of a sudden the cabin started filling with oily steam. I later discovered that the engine had overheated, and the driver had tipped a bottle of water over it to cool it down. As if this wasn't enough. A couple of hours later, on a dirt road in the middle nowhere, the car



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got a flat. The spare tire didn't fit properly, and when the vehicle took off, there was a horrible grinding noise as the rim rubbed on the brake discs.

That night I negotiated prices for my mountaineering guide over a Tusker (Kenya my Country, Tusker my Beer, the national brew, named after the elephant which gouged one of the employees of the brewery). During this bargaining process, several of the local Ladies of the Lamppost approached me. Conversation with LOTL1 started and ended with "What's your name? Your very handsome!". Nothing I didn't know already, but flattering never the less. LOTL2 was a bit more physical. She just grabbed me by my narrow, European, and obviously irresistible nose.

Day 2

Travelled by 4WD to the My Kenya National Park gate. This involved about 10km of extremely muddy road and about the only thing the car had going for it was that it was 4wd. Apart from that, the tires were bald, the whole thing shook and the driver had a bad tendency to oversteer, taking the car completely sideways three times.

My guide, porter and I began walking up the elephant poo littered trail to camp 1 (3300m). Soon came across the source of the poo: a large grey bum being dragged up the hill by a bull elephant. These guys can be a bit dangerous, so while the porter made all kinds of loud noises to try to scare it off, my guide told me to loosen my pack incase we had to ditch them and make a run for it. Eventually, it ambled off into the bush, showing total indifference to the yodelling noises my porter had been making.

That night I had a major panic attack, as I'd paid the mountaineering guide (a significant amount) up

front, in full, and wasn't going to see him for several days. Even though I had a written contract, signed by both of us and a witness, I was worried he'd disappear and spend it all on LOTLs. My trekking guide reassured me that everything would be ok as he knew him well, was a top bloke, yada, yada, yada...

I met a few medicine students at this first hut. In Africa, a large number of the white travellers my own age that I met were med students who'd just finished an internship at an African hospital. They were just about to complete their trek, and apart from telling me about the usual horrors of African health "care" (including a caesarean section by candle light during a power failure), were all clued up about drugs for altitude sickness. One of them recommended I try some of the drugs they'd been using. I read the documentation for the medication, and discovered that it came from the same class of drug that I'd had an allergic reaction to when I was younger causing me to spend about a week in hospital in intensive care. I've been told that a repeat occurrence could very likely be life threatening. Thanks for the advice champ.

Day 3

Continued on up to camp 2 (4200m). My porter and guide both seemed to be dragging the chain a bit, obviously insufficient weet-bix. I thought they were meant to be acclimatised!

I was feeling slight nausea, possibly due to altitude, but possibly also due to the ubiquitous Kenyan sausages which I had been served for breakfast, which also require acclimatisation to (a Kenyan sausage is a dish which is best served [almost] cold, or so they seem to think). Other possible symptoms were blurred vision and a vague feeling of confusion, but I think for me this is just normal.



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Day 4

Ascended point Lenanna (4985m), the third highest summit, then walked down to Camp 3 at 4790m. Felt ok, no altitude sickness, not even out of breath, no worries.

From this camp I had a truly awesome view of the highest two summits (Pt. Batian and Pt. Nelion). They stood up like two serrated, angry looking, snow capped shards of rock, with a puff of cloud just obscuring the pointy tip of each.

I sat around waiting for my mountaineering guide to arrive. It was 8pm and he still was nowhere to be seen. We were able to radio back to the lowest camp (at the opposite end from which I entered the park) and confirm that he had departed and must be somewhere on the mountain. He eventually arrived at 20 minutes to midnight. His porter had acquired altitude sickness on the way up and had to go back down.

Since the skies were clear and the weather was looking good, we decided to start out at 6:30am rather than 4 am.

Day 5

Headed off at first light, crossed the Lewis Glacier using crampons. (I'd never used these before, but they completely rule: you can walk on slippery snow/ice and go nowhere! -like ice-skates, but every direction is sideways) Then, up some very loose volcanic scree, with the occasional glassy chink as larger rocks collided with one another. We passed a less fortunate tourist: a dead leopard which had been killed by a falling rock.

Then we began the rockclimb. I should be careful not to talk this up, it was a fairly easy rockclimb as rockclimbs go, the main difficulty being that I was



View of Pt Nelion (4985 m) from part of the way up the final rock climb.

carrying a backpack with enough supplies for 2 days and it was at high altitude, which was starting to affect me. Having said that, there were a couple of times when I was hanging off my fingers and toes, concentrating and breathing very hard, knowing that a fall would be pretty nasty. I reckon about a grade 10 with a few grade 13 or 14 moves/sections.

Climbed for about 250m and reached a 1m wide rocky ledge, probably just over 5000m, with cliffs on either side and a fantastic view. The next section required a traverse across to the bottom of the final 100m or so cliff. Very disappointingly, the gradient of this traverse was such that it had clung onto quite a lot of snow, meaning that we could not traverse across due to the inability to place protection gear, and could not walk across in crampons due to the steepness and looseness of the snow. There were large loose snow drifts on the rock and we didn't have the correct equipment for this.

My mountaineering guide decided the only safe option was to abseil down again: eight 30m abseils



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From left to right: dead leopard at the base of rock climb, killed by falling rock; bull elephant on path; rock hyrax, cute looking but have a nasty bite.

and a few down climbs back down to the loose gravel.

Bummer.

Continued walking down to a camp at 4300 m, reaching it after about 10 hours of rockclimbing, abseiling and walking. By this stage, I had significant headaches and nausea due to altitude sickness. My guide wanted to move me down to a lower camp, but this would require a 4 hour walk and it was getting dark. I managed to convince him that I would be ok to stay, and after 14 hours sleep and 3 litres of water, felt much better.

Kilimanjaro on which you are required to use guides and porters (purely so that the Tanzanian government can extract maximum money out of you), and I changed my plans late, was travelling alone and for the trekking only part of the trip it seemed like ridiculously good value that it only cost me about AUD\$70/day for a guide, a porter, accommodation, park entry fees and all my meals cooked. If I were to go back and try to get to the summit again, I'd probably do it independently.

HCM

Day 6

We walked out the next morning and travelled to one of the four towns situated on the corners of Mt Kenya, Nanyuki. Managed another winner of a deal: my own room in a hotel for \$10 per night, including full English breakfast.

Postlude

To conclude, it would have been possible to do all of Mt Kenya independently, without the help of guides or porters. My reason for doing it the way I did is that I had originally budgeted to do Mt



From left to right: porter, myself and my guide, standing in the main street of Nanyuki, Kenya.