

Aurora?s Revington climbs Mount Kilimanjaro



Aurora resident Dan Revington successfully climbed to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, becoming one of the oldest people to make it to the top at age 69.

Revington is a Bruce Trail hike leader and has experience taking long treks up Canada's oldest and longest marked public footpath. Despite years of hiking, he says climbing Mount Kilimanjaro is by far the most difficult thing he's ever done.

Coming in a close second would be completing law school, he says.

Earlier this month, at the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, Revington held a photo of his late wife Kate who passed away three years ago.

?I felt really thrilled to have the privilege to climb Kilimanjaro when I got to the top. It was important to me to carry the picture of my wife with me,? he said. ?She loved to hike. She certainly would have wanted to be part of that adventure.?

The final ascent to the top of Kilimanjaro begins during the cold and windy hours of midnight, Revington says, so climbers wear headlamps to see the path before them. As they watch their footsteps, a canopy of stars from the southern constellations twinkles high above, seen clearly because there's no light pollution.

?We chose to do the final climb on a night with the full moon. It was beautiful. And the reason they start a bit late is because you reach the summit as the sun comes up. So, when you get to the top, and you see the sunrise over Africa, and you can see for miles from the top of Kilimanjaro, it's really an unforgettable sight,? Revington said.

Looking back at the journey, he said successfully climbing the final ascent is what he is most proud of. It took about 14 hours to climb up the summit and back down; the footing is treacherous, the night is cold, and climbers are tired and dehydrated.

Climbers were given only one option for hydration?water that came from the mountain itself.

Revington said the water had a strong taste due to the soil from the mountain, making him feel sick and leaving him with few options.

"I had the choice of drinking water that made me sick, or not drinking and becoming dehydrated," he said. "That was probably my personal challenge. But everybody had similar challenges, some dehydration, difficulty keeping up your appetite. And some people just had knee and back problems from climbing. Fortunately, I didn't have that."

Revington "went in blind," not yet acquainted with anyone before taking the trip, but he quickly became familiar with the other climbers, noting that there were quite a few doctors on the trip, and three people who scattered the ashes of their loved ones at the top, for a total of four Canadians and seven Americans.

Only nine climbers made it to the top. Due to severe critical altitude sickness, a few climbers were evacuated.

In addition, a total of five guides accompanied the climbers on the expedition, and also over 30 local porters who helped carry tents, gear, and food up the mountain. Some climbers choose to make the trek up on their own, however it's always recommended to go with local guides who are trained to help climbers make it to the top.

"I chose a company that was unionized because they treat their guides and porters much better than the non-unionized companies. That was important to all of us," Revington said.

One guide told him that in his decades of leading those expeditions, Revington was the oldest person he had seen make it to the top.

"I'm not Guinness Book of Records material," he said, laughing. "I'm sure there's people probably in their 80s who managed to do it. I was certainly towards the older end of the spectrum of people climbing."

For about three months before the expedition, Revington trained at a specialized gym in downtown Toronto with low oxygen chambers to mimic climbing Kilimanjaro at an altitude of 19,000 feet. He says, still, that nothing compared to the actual climb.

"It was a struggle, I have to admit I had a few doubts," he said. "But all of us did. We all encouraged each other in the group. And when you see that other people have the same doubts that you did, it encourages you and you realize you could make it. A lot of people say that climbing Kilimanjaro is the hardest thing they've ever done—both mentally and physically—and I would agree with that."

The entire trip took about 10 days to complete, taking place from June 25 to July 4, 2023. Revington said he discovered Mount Kilimanjaro when researching online and thought that given his age, it would be better for him to go sooner than later.

By Elisa Nguyen