

17TH SEPTEMBER - BARRANCO 3,900,M

We were awoken at 7.30am and i had another great sleep and am now feeling fully invigorated from the effects of city life. Kat was feeling really bad this morning, very tearful and fluey and thinking about going back.. I was hoping this was just her feeling bad in the morning and that she would continue to give it a go which is what she decided to do having had breakfast. We then started to walk to Barranco at about 9.30am. It was a slow, gently undulating walk amongst lots of volcanic rock and it was boiling hot as we started out. This all changed about half an hour into our hike when the clouds rolled up the valley and the temperature dropped dramatically within minutes as it always does in the mountains and i was soon adding layer after layer of clothing to keep warm. We headed up to Lava rocks at 4,600metres where we took a break for lunch. I saw the Arrow Glacier route which led steeply upwards from Lava Rocks and i really wish i could have done this route - this was the route that my South African friends Greg and Tony Benetar had advised that i take but it was not my trip to make that decision. It was freezing cold at lunch and as i had not put my gloves into my pack when i left camp in the basking sunshine of the morning, a big mistake, my hands were really cold. Kat very kindly lent me a glove and i had the right glove and she wore the left glove - spot the blondes in the mountains! I have damaged the tissue at the end of my fingers from a training climb down in Chile just prior to Everest when i lost the feeling in my hands for 2 weeks.. all rather scarey but i was assured this was frost nip and not frost bite! Either way nip or bite, my hands are something i really need to be careful with when im climbing. I wolfed down lunch shivering with cold and thought about the misconception that kilimanjaro would be a warm climb due to its proximity to the equator.. to the contrary it has really been surprisingly cold.

After lunch we dropped down 600metres which is something i hate to do as i you always know that you have to climb back up it at somepoint! We arrived at Barranco at 3.00pm - its a sheltered camp that lies below the spectacular cliffs of the Breach wall and the Haim Glacier and is really a stunning location. We are on a sheltered plateau with this amazing scenery and to add to my delight and everyones dismay i got a reception on my cell phone! Normally when im on a mountain climb i can kiss the thought of using my cell phone goodbye so i was escatic when it worked and i picked up a bunch of messages and text messages from friends asking whether id made the summit yet!! I mean i know peoples expectations are scarily high of my ability right now but to make the summit of Kili in 2 days was definattely not going to happen! I busied myself being social for a while and then joined kat, Guy and Rob for tea and lots of Kats chocolate biscuits - thank god i brought my medium size trousers or i dont think id be fitting into my small ones right now! Im now chilling in my tent with Guy who is trying not to fall asleep as im yattering away to him! Dinner is soon and im going to have to undo a button to take on more food!! Another early night its so great all this sleep im getting!!