

I have never been athletic. Never have I won any sports medals at school nor have I taken part in any sporting competitions but I do enjoy keeping active.

So when some of our friends suggested trekking Mount Kilimanjaro, my husband and I were interested.

After a lot of thought we finally committed ourselves to this trek of a lifetime.

We had seven months to prepare.

I was aware of the physical demands of this challenge and wanted to give myself the best chance to reach the summit.

Although I was used to walking and staying active, I was not ready to climb hills and mountains and knew that I had to get a lot fitter.

I joined a group of walkers and started trekking up local hills. Initially once a week for an hour but soon I was walking up steep hills and for 4 - 5 hours at a time.

I also took up running to increase my fitness. My local park organises Park Run every Saturday morning at 9 am. Park Run is an organised event where you can either run, jog or walk for 5 kilometres. This event is available in several parks throughout the UK and abroad as well.

None of these activities cost me any money and I could feel myself getting more energetic and fitter. Moreover the exercise also helped me deal with stress of a busy GP and mum.

I gradually started increasing the amount of activity I did and was surprised by my own ability.

Finally in August 2018, we embarked upon our epic journey to Tanzania and Mount Kilimanjaro - the rooftop of Africa.

We chose to do an eight day trek which enabled us to gradually acclimatise to the high altitude hence increasing our chances of reaching the summit.

Along with my husband and six other friends I started my journey on this highest free standing mountain in the world.

Accompanied by an entourage of porters, chefs and guides we climbed this magnificent mountain day after day. Every night we spent in a different camp site in our tents. The tents were functional but comfortable and the food provided us with lots of much needed carbohydrates.

Each day we walked for 5-6 hours. Day 4 was particularly challenging as we had to scale the Barranca wall which is a particularly steep and rocky part of the mountain and we had to scramble on all fours.

Finally the day of the summit arrived. We started our 12 hour trek at 11pm and gradually climbed the final part of the mountain very slowly, literally putting one foot in front of the other in slow motion. The effects of the altitude were certainly getting the better of us. It got harder and harder to breathe as we got higher. I started feeling tired and drowsy and almost

gave up. To add to this the temperature had dropped to minus fifteen degrees. My body was frozen but I still carried on.

My joy knew no bounds when I reached the summit. I was above the clouds and witnessed the most spectacular sun rise. It felt like heaven.

I am still glowing in my achievement of climbing Kilimanjaro. I would never have imagined doing something like that just over a year ago.

The key to improving my fitness was starting slow and gradually increasing activity.

I hope this inspires others to take on activities. If I can do it anybody can.