

Sophie conquers Kilimanjaro

Sophie Brewster from Edinburgh has just got back to the capital after climbing Kilimanjaro.

Conquering the highest free standing mountain in the world is a big moment for anyone.

This was a bigger deal for Sophie as she really is someone who loves home and family – and for this challenge she left both her fiancé Toby Clutton and beloved dog Oakley behind.



Sophie arriving back in Edinburgh Airport is met by fiancé Toby PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

27 year-old Sophie is a physio at The Royal Hospital for Sick Children and it was important to her to meet some children on her journey, fundraising for the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity.

She spent a few days at the Stella Maris School, an English Speaking and teaching school for orphaned and underprivileged/vulnerable children. It is hoped that teaching children in English will best prepare them for secondary school openings.

It is run by a charity called the [Mailisita](#) Foundation and has an adjoining lodge called the Stella Maris Lodge where Sophie stayed. The income from the lodge helps to fund the school.

Sophie said : "The children were amazing, full of life and never without a song to sing. Everyone at the school and lodge were so welcoming and kind. I'd really recommend it for volunteering or incorporating into a Kilimanjaro climb! I did lots of maths marking, some teaching about Scotland and they taught me some Swahili."



Sophie's adventure was just beginning

She then met up with the group she would be making the climb with. Sophie told us all about her adventure : "I think I was really lucky not to suffer from altitude sickness. Many of my

group did with constant headaches, shortness of breath and occasional dizziness. I tried my best to follow what the guides advised.

“We were encouraged to drink as much liquid as possible and I think one day I drank around 7L of water which seemed to really help – though did mean a lot more weight in my backpack.

“I also made sure I was eating as much as I could – the food they prepared for us on the mountain was amazing considering the conditions. I think for me it wasn't necessarily the physical challenge but more the stepping outside of my comfort zone – going to a completely new country and getting used to the climate and culture, originally not knowing anyone and joining a group of strangers, camping for 7 nights in a tent on the side of the mountain (I've never really camped) and just generally being away from my family and friends. I'm a home bird!

“During the climb you see the terrain change from rainforest to moorland to alpine desert and then the snowy summit and so part of the challenge is being prepared for that too. The first day and night were quite hot but the temperature dropped from then on in and was well below freezing at the peak!

“Nights were long and cold – a lot of heat packs and hand warmers were used!



Sophie at the peak

"Summit night was an adventure. We left base camp at 11.30pm Wednesday night and summited 07.25am Thursday at Uhuru Peak.

“Positivity was essential at this stage – lack of sleep and the cold can make people miserable! The stars were beautiful and we even saw a thunder and lightning storm over other peaks in the distance.

“We were lucky to summit in clear conditions and watching the sunrise over Africa was magical. I was really well looked after throughout the trek with twice daily health checks.

“If you take away the prospect of altitude sickness it is a far more achievable physical challenge than people might expect.”

Sophie was raising funds for the Edinburgh Children’s Hospital Charity and her fundraising page is [here](#).



Oakley was really pleased to see Sophie on her return!