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Framingham Attorney Discusses Trek Up Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa

📅 January 25, 2018 👤 Shauna Golden 💬 0 Comments 📍 Africa, Chris Petrini, Mount Kilimanjaro, Plymouth Church



In July and Aug. of 2016, Framingham attorney Christopher Petrini and his family took a life-changing vacation to Tanzania, Africa.

The adventure started out with a 7-day hike up and down Mount Kilimanjaro. Kilimanjaro is a dormant volcano located in Tanzania. It is the highest peak in Africa, its elevation reaching 19,341 feet.

The inspiration for the trip began when Petrini decided he wanted to pursue as many high mountain climbs as he could in 2011. For example, he has previously hiked Mount Whitney in California. Mount Whitney has an elevation of 14,505 feet.

For Petrini, the hike up Mount Kilimanjaro was unique in two ways: it was the highest summit he had ever climbed, and he was doing it with his children. He was accompanied by his son, Shawn, 26, and his daughter, Tabitha, 23.

To prepare for the trek, Petrini worked out with a personal trainer. He trained in the gym with an oxygen mask that mimicked the air of the high altitudes he would be facing. He also enjoyed training in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

The hike itself was no easy adventure. According to Petrini, the hardest part of the climb was 'summit day'.

On summit day, hikers woke up around 11:30 p.m. and climbed until 4:00 p.m. the next day. This meant that the group was hiking for around 16-18 hours with few breaks. However, Petrini recalled that all of the work was worth it when he was able to reach the summit with his two children.

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Petrini said that the best part of the climb was that he could “feel the inspiration” when he was at the top, “almost like a natural high.”

The 7-day climb was followed by an 8-9 day African safari tour, during which Petrini’s wife Julie joined the rest of the family. The safari mainly involved trips in small charter planes and land-rover-type vehicles.

According to Petrini, one of the best parts of the safari was being able to see “the big five.”

The “big five” refers to the major game animals in Africa, including the lion, the rhinoceros, the elephant, and the Cape buffalo.

Petrini said that there are three major events from the safari that stayed with him the most.

The first was when he saw a lion killing a warthog and devouring it over the course of an hour. Soon, there was nothing but bones left. Vultures had been swarming around the area waiting for their chance to finish the remains.

The attorney also remembered experiencing what he referred to as “The Great Wildebeest Migration.” Petrini explained that wildebeests were traveling across the river from Kenya into Tanzania, crossing the rivers 300-400 at a time.

However, the land was too steep at a certain point and the wildebeests were pushing each other, leading to nearly 100 of them drowning in the water. And again, the vultures were waiting for the ones who didn’t make it. Petrini recalls how this experience made him truly think about the circle of life.

Lastly, Petrini and his family went on a hot air balloon safari tour. At four in the morning, the family got into a hot air balloon with around 10 other individuals. The floated over the Serengeti for approximately two hours, during which they were able to watch the sunrise.

Though Petrini’s vacation adventure was incredible, he also wanted to give something back to the community in which he was staying. For that reason, he and his family donated to the Africa Exchange Project.

The African Exchange Project is based out of The Plymouth Church in Framingham.

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According to the project's web page, their "partnership with educators, doctors, and community leaders has made a lasting impact on the village of Pomerini. Each new effort affects and inspires others."

For anyone looking to follow Petrini's example in both his climb and his humanitarian efforts, his advice is that, "Human beings are very adaptable and can do amazing things [...] pursue your dreams, you can do anything."

Photos courtesy of Petrini



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