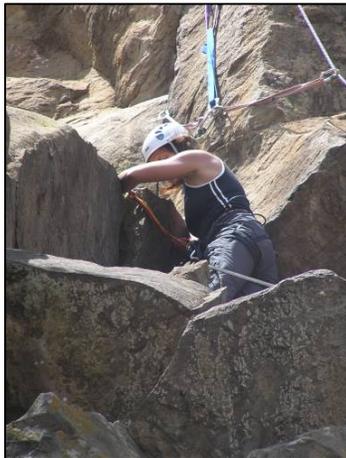


**KENYA  
MOUNT KENYA  
FEBRUARY 2006  
By Karen Hauptfleisch**

Talk about coincidences. At 7 o'clock on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2006 two Karens were picked up in a town called Karen by Chris Muriiti, the guide from Africa Big Mountains.

It's difficult to decide which Karen was the craziest.

Karen G's heart was broken. She used to be a climber but once her fiancée broke off their engagement, she made a decision never to climb again. Their honeymoon would have been on Mt Kenya.



***Karen H climbing at Hell's Peak***

Karen H's heart was kinda broken. She climbed some small peaks before (1 pitch). She was supposed to get married on Mafadi and have her honeymoon on Mt Kenya. Although she has never climbed more than 1 pitch, she was determined to see the sunrise on Bation and Nelion.

The two Karen's met for the first time at the airport on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, where it was discovered that Karen G forgot to pay for the tickets she booked for the two of them.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> Chris took the two Karen's to Hell's gate. Karen H had to climb while Karen G did some bird watching and practised her Swahili. Karen H almost didn't make it to Mt Kenya. When she got to

the top of Hell's gate, she got a whiff of Steven's smelly feet. He used to be an officer in the army for 50 years and instead of retiring he decided to guard this particular peak. He had very specific ideas about climbing the peak.

17<sup>th</sup>: After picking up the two Belgians, Joke and Jaak, they travelled to Chogoria. It was an extremely bumpy road. Their first glimpse of the mountain was from afar, but they could see that she was on fire. Once they got to Bandas camp site they were fortunate to meet a bird lover and went exploring. Karen H had several panic attacks after she was told by the Americans that the climbs to Bation (5199m) and Nelion (5189m) were very exposed.



***Karen H picking up litter at Bandas hut***

18<sup>th</sup>: Karen H woke the rest of the camp when she fell down a hill picking up litter. The Belgians, clearly affected by the altitude, warned her not to go to Mt Everest.

## Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – Kenya

They were all a bit grumpy due to a lack of sleep. They were kept awake by the porters celebrating their descend and then at two o'clock they were entertained by the buffaloes snorting and eating next to their tent.



***Karen H picking up litter at Mintos hut***

Joke was definitely affected by the altitude. The hike to Lake Ellis took 6 hours instead of 3. Karen H refused to walk past litter and Karen G was taking pictures of the burned mountain and practising her Swahili, which clearly impressed the guides. Once at the Roadhead camp the porters were instructed to clean the camp and to burn the litter. By 19h45 everyone was ready for bed.

19<sup>th</sup>: Karen H felt a bit more comfortable climbing the peaks after watching the beautiful stars in the sky the

previous night. She also decided against taking diamox since she was already slowing down the group by picking up litter. They left the camp by 8h00. They

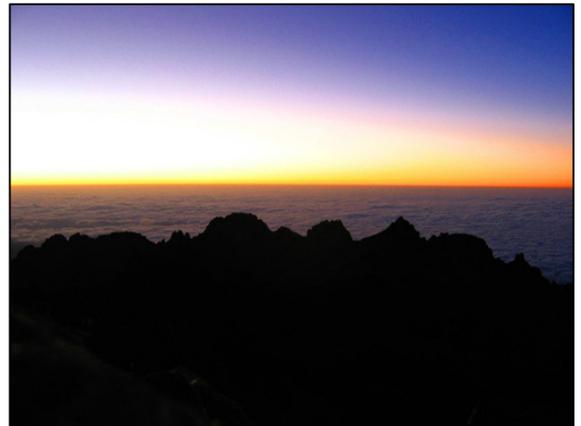
didn't get far before it was decided that Chris would return with Joke. Apparently there are no mountains in Belgium. Karen G still impressed the locals with her Swahili. At 4200m the altitude was starting to affect everyone.

At Mintos hut Karen H had her usual bath before going on a cleaning spree. Karen G followed with her camera and her satellite phone. A decision was made – they would contact their “ex's.”

20<sup>th</sup>: Karen H was ecstatic when two guides accompanied her and Jaak at 2:30 to watch the sun rise on Lenana (4995m). Because of the bright moon headlamps were unnecessary.

It was freezing and Jaak suffered. He said it was his first and last sunrise on a peak.

Karen H was in tears when the sun came out. 10 minutes later she was in tears again when she saw the litter on top of Lenana. Going back to camp the Jaak told the people they passed that the peak was closed due to all the litter. They congratulated Karen H on picking up their litter. Karen H was in tears again. This was the best sunrise she has ever experienced. She also had to say goodbye to Jaak who went to Shipton's hut. The porter decided at this stage that the quickest way to get back to the camp was to help her pick up the litter.



***Breathtaking sunrise on Lenana***

After Breakfast Karen G went exploring while Karen H slept. When Karen G returned she could hear Karen H cursing. She has declared war against the people littering Mt Kenya and was picking up their rubbish – zip lock bag firmly wrapped around her hand. She had a brilliant idea for a t-shirt: “If you are going to litter you are unfit to be on this mountain”. One of the porters was helping her.

Karen H had mixed feelings about the mountain. There was the fire destroying the animals, the overwhelming sunrise and all the litter.



**Karen H picking up litter in the Gorges Valley**

21<sup>st</sup>: Karen H exploded when she woke up to find new litter lying around. She confronted the French family next to them who denied littering. At this stage she was on a mission. Karen G decided to join her in her effort and together they picked up two bags on their way to Austrian Hut.

The guide didn't find it amusing when she told him that they have to remove the plane wreck as well.

Karen H was petrified when she saw the two peaks but after practising her glacier hiking with Simon her technical climbing guide she felt more comfortable. How bad can 15 pitches be?

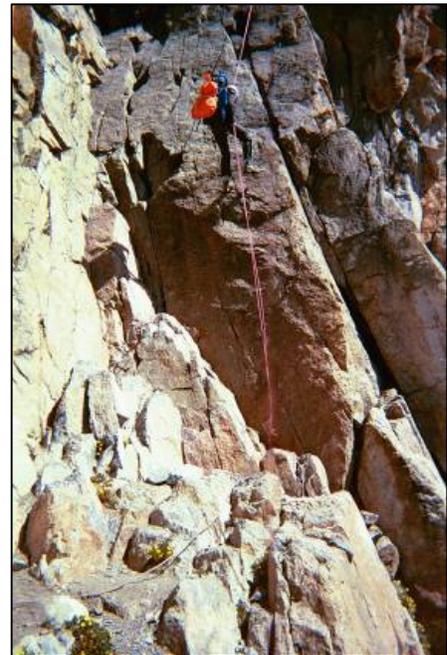
The two Karen's were in bed by 8. Both experienced some difficulty breathing and woke up gasping for air.

22<sup>nd</sup>: Karen G left the hut at 3 to watch the sun rise on Lenana. Karen H has crossed the glacier by 7. There was no turning back for her now. The first pitch was not bad, but she refuses to say anything after that one pitch. Approximately 15 pitches later (4 hours), she was on top of Nelion. The hut looked like a five star hotel.

After the guide went to sleep she started picking up litter. The porters in Austrian hut looked through the binoculars and saw her picking up litter. "Mamma Taka Taka is picking up Taka Taka", they shouted when Karen G got back. Soon the whole camp was transformed. Everyone was picking up litter.

The evening was spend in the hut melting ice. Karen H was gasping for breath and would swallow two panados at regular intervals. At 5189 m the altitude was affecting her.

23<sup>rd</sup>: Karen H experienced another wonderful Sunrise on an African Peak at 6h30. It took them 3 hours to abseil down with one karrimore bag filled with litter and about two hours to cross the glacier. Back at Austrian hut the porters were running around showing her the bags of litter they picked up. Karen G was showing Karen H her scars she got hiking to Lenana. After lunch and a nice bath (Karen H was really smelly), the two of them started the hike to Shipton's hut.



**Karen H abeiling down Nelion with a karrimore bag filled with rubbish collected on top**

3 Bags of litter were picked up on their way and Karen H cried a lot. Shipton's hut was a nice surprise. Huge hyraxes and rats were running around and they had an en suite "bathroom"

24<sup>th</sup>: After breakfast they started their hike to Old Moses hut. Loads of litter were collected. Once at the hut they met some crazy "hikers". Some of them were on their way to Lenana with only a fancy jersey. They were obviously not going to make it to the top.

25<sup>th</sup>: It was only the porters and guide that was keen to go down. The two Karen's were sad to leave the beautiful mountain. Everyone joined in picking up litter going down.

As soon as they were in the vehicle the mist rolled in and the mountain was covered.

It made the parting more bearable.....



“But we have been changed, perhaps forever. Each meeting with the mountains does this to us. We test ourselves against nature, and once in a while she is gracious enough to let us have our way. There is no thought of conquests of mountains in the arrogant language of some climbers, simply put the mountain politely and kindly allowed us to climb” Brent Russell”

With the help of the guides and porters they came across, 38 bags of litter was picked up and carried off the mountain.