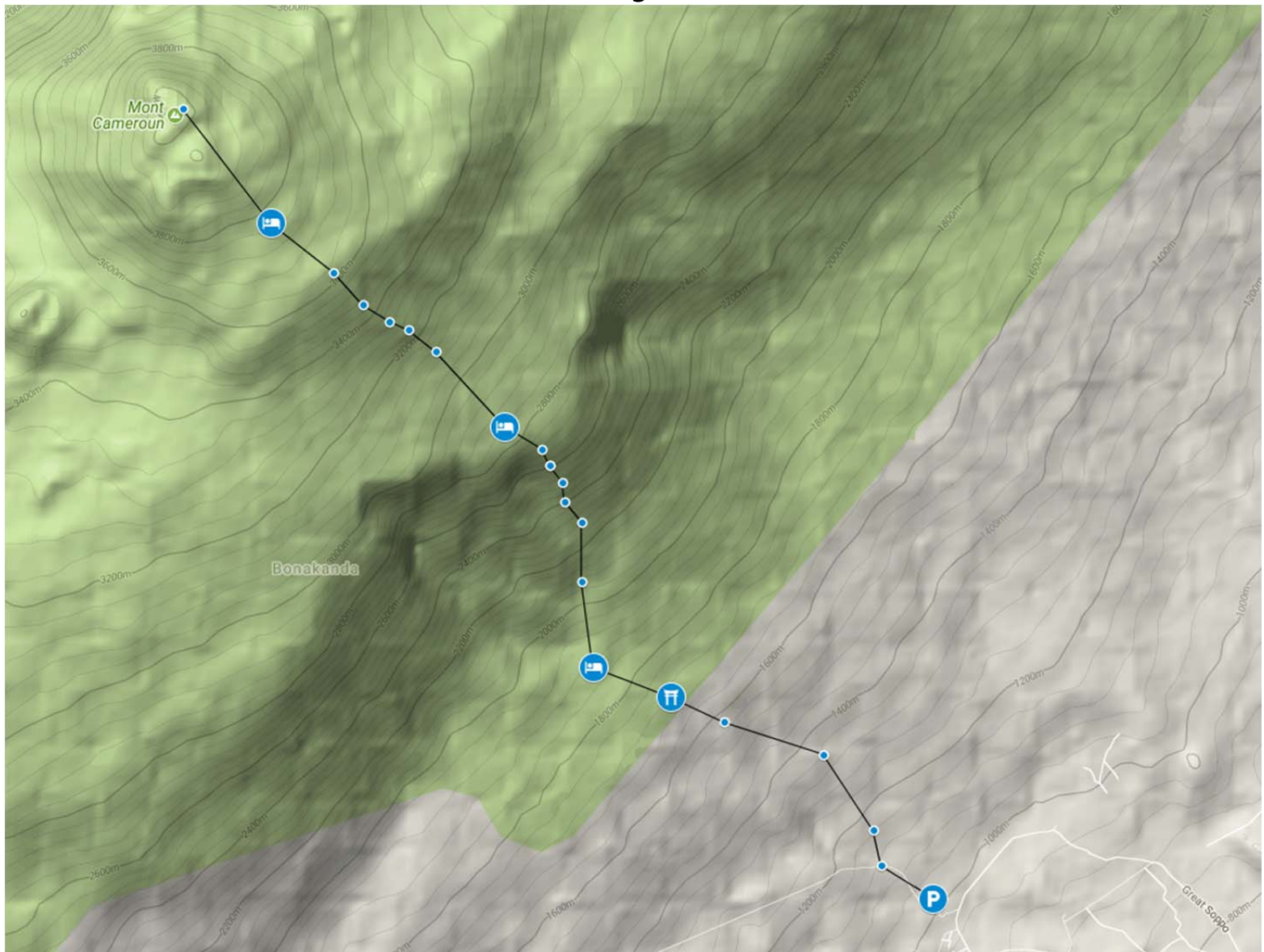


Africa Fleet Mercy 2018 Cameroon



28 Feb 2018 Postcard 4 Mount Cameroon

Woohoo! Got to go trekking last weekend. A small group of 17 (!) ranging in ages from 9 to 62 (guess who) signed up for a Three Day ascent of Mount Cameroon.



This is reportedly what Mount Cameroon looks like.

The closest I got to seeing the Mountain before the climb was on the airplane ride in...



I am told that occasionally the Mountain can be seen clearly from the ship dining hall- but that report is sort of like "I saw it once a few months ago"

Peter Buma arranged the tour (Buma Peter [<mailto:ecotourguidemtcam@gmail.com>], Web: ecotoursmtcameroon.wordpress.com). Very good guides and very good price.

Thurs Feb 22 2018



We met the evening before for last minute “who remembered the sunscreen?” kinds of questions, and were up at 5:30 am. There were four porters scheduled to carry big packs so our loads could be lighter.

Friday Feb 23 2018 0600



“Got your passport? Need to pee?”



It was scheduled to be about a 90 minute car ride, but that was assuming an early start. Our operator had one car show late so we got off 45 minutes late and caught some traffic at Pont Ronde, where I met the man:



More about him later. He is very cool



Passed a rubber plantation,



And just your usual overload on the springs.



We met our guides at the parking place, 4.15861, 9.229822 for the map nerds in the crowd, and started our ascent



Learned a new ritual – taping one's feet with Duct Tape to prevent blisters. Not being sure about how that would work out, I demurred, being very happy with my Gel Kayano's. I was the guy in the running shoes. Our guides were wearing whatever... soccer shoes, saw one guy in a pair of jellies (yes, like Jeff Lebowski wears) and another guy in a pair of flipflops. I am pretty sure that they thought we were crazy, putting our feet into bondage like we were



Among the paying customers, the only guy more relaxed about what was on his feet than me was our ship's

captain who was along with his son. His sole separated from his shoes before we left the parking lot! He tried the duct tape for a bit, but went with traditional foot binding methodology after a bit.



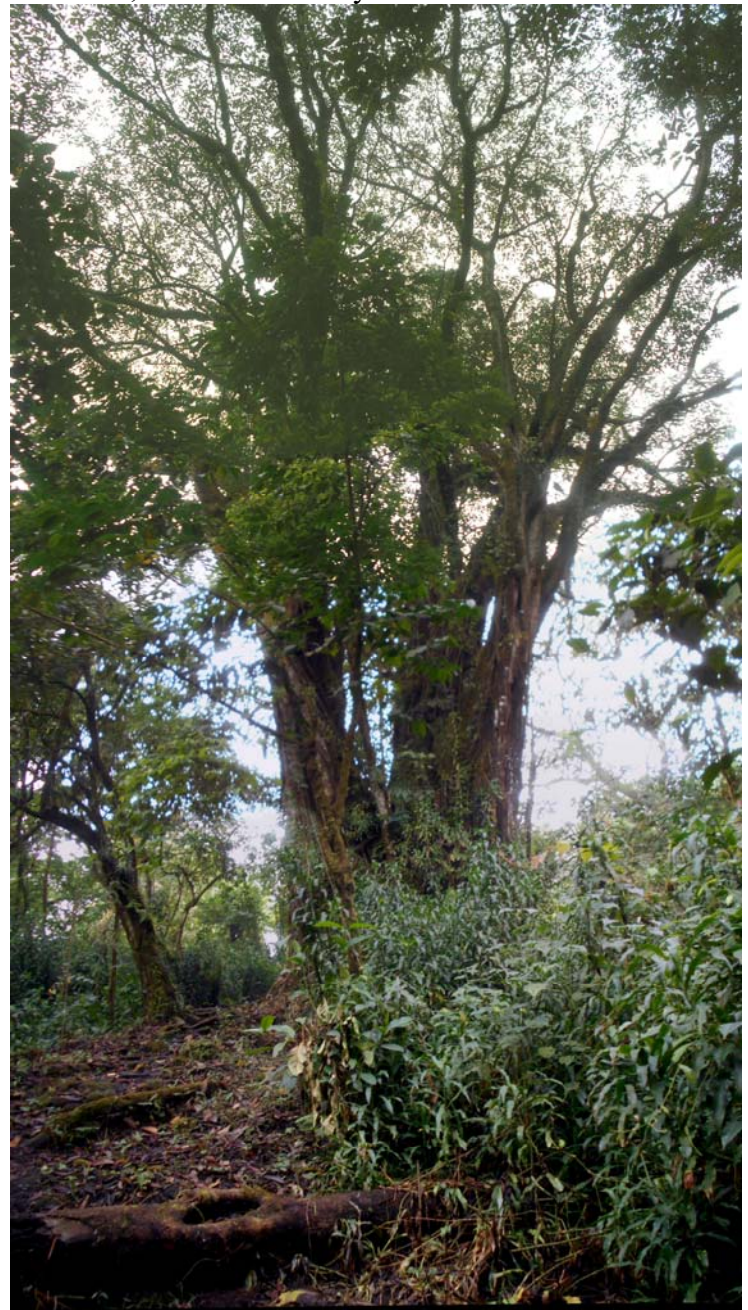
The first bit, to the treeline, was rainforest. Very few birds heard, no animals heard. Very few insects.



So tempting to try to swing on a vine!



4.173698, 9.210049 – Entry into the National Park!



Banyan Tree



Prunis Africanas (?sp) bark – source of quinine and bush medicine. Very bitter taste.



Onward to treeline.



Treeline! 4.182341,9.203399



And the hike starts to get interesting – we are no on the cinder cone. Mount Cameroon last erupted in 2000 so the cinders are fresh. Walking on them turns them into little round balls that are very much like ball bearings! For some reason when you slip and land on your butt, you are said to have “got a chicken” in this part of the

world. I heard that our group claimed 19 chickens. I think we undercounted drastically. It was slippery.



Here we are at the start of the steepest part of the ascent – a section of the trail known as “the monster”.



Cell phone coverage up the entire mountain. Giovanni, our group leader, is checking in with the hut croo.



Sections of the grade approached 60%. The overall average of this ascent was 30%. Stairmaster territory!



Approaching the Intermediate Hut, still smiling!



Site of the Invisible Tree.(4.191079 9.200959)



WAY above treeline, there was a tree growing where it didn't belong. For years it was known as the Magical Tree for disobeying all the rules. Some idiots cut it down for firewood. All that remains is the stump but it

is remembered now as "the invisible tree". A similar story to the Tree of Tenere, <https://www.treeoftenere.com/> were the only tree for miles had to be hit by a car and die.



Before they turn into little balls, they start out as big balls.



We arrived at Hut Two (4.194033,9.197549) where we would sleep the next two nights.



Having nothing to do (the porters set up the tents!) I took a nap till on arrival. This is easy camping!



Lots of group discussion about the toilet facilities. I title this slide “Empathy Training”. There is a hole in the floor and a cinder block that was used in various ways for various tasks. A most polite discussion.

Saturday Feb 24 2018



We were up early the next morning for the ascent to the summit.



I thought the sign was a little overstated. It was one of those “The only way is up” moments.



The approach to the summit was quite steep and we were huffing and puffing at the elevation of 4040 meters (13,255 feet).



Happily the entire group was able to summit. A hard climb. 3000 meters of elevation change over about 9 km of horizontal distance. Everyone was happy to say the least.

Proof that I was not just photoshopped in



We returned to Hut 2 for dinner



And then off to bed. Lots of wind, but fortunately no rain – that was the next day, after we were back on ship.



The Hut Two architecture was very cool.



This is Samuel, the oldest of the guides. He asked how old I was. I said “62”. So, he said “I am 95”. I asked to see his teeth. Outstanding. We agreed that I was 62 in miles but he was 95 in kilometers.



It was indeed a trek. A great way to make friends



And a special thank you to Giovanni, who kept the group safe and not too spread out.



Hiking stick left for another lucky hiker.



We took a detour on the descent to see the caldera of the 2000 eruption. The cracks above are from the associated earthquake.



Assessing the damage.



Sunday 25 Feb 2018

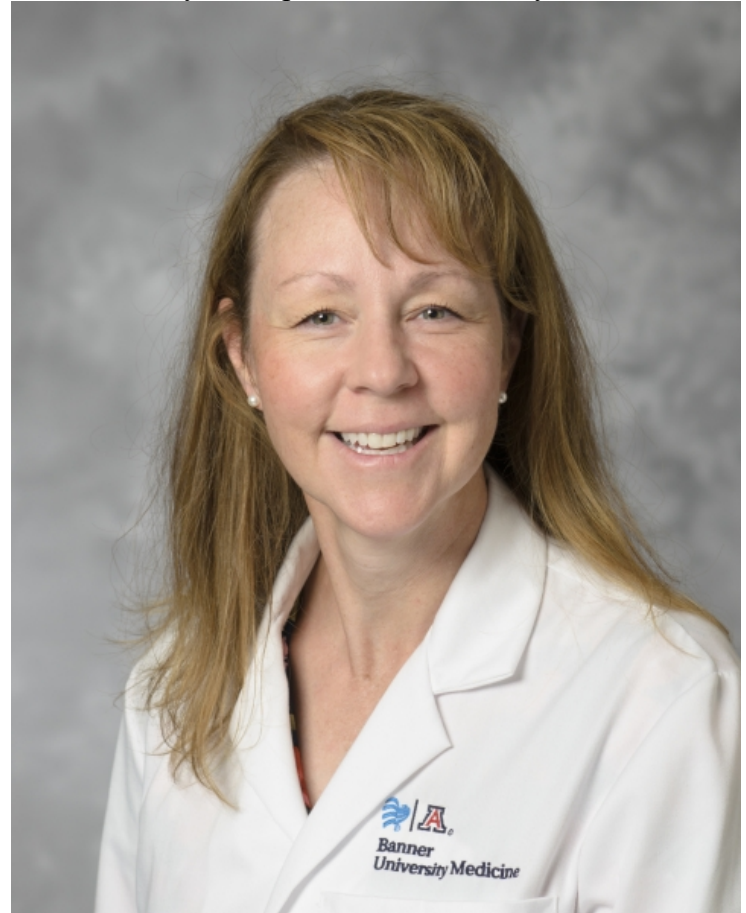
The hike out was uneventful and anticlimactic.

Back at Ship next day after a smooth hike out.



My only injury... Joe's chicken!

It was a blast. Glad I went. Made me grateful for my health, and my Orthoped Dr Jolene Hardy!



Jo, thanks. I didn't do the hike on my unicycle, but I didn't do it on one leg either, thanks to you.



Bribe money fished out of the sidewalls of my shoes proved not needed.



No blisters! Thank you ASICS! End of the road for this pair.

A great deal of fun, and something to remember.
Thanks for reading.

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Douala, Cameroon
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