

Dentsu SA celebrates Itumeleng Mehale

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Itumeleng Mehale

This Women's Month, [Dentsu South Africa](#) (SA) celebrates Itumeleng Mehale, digital director for [iProspect SA](#), as she successfully summited Mount Kilimanjaro on 18 July 2021 in support of the [Caring4Girls](#) programme.

Itumeleng Mehale gives us insight into her inspirational and remarkable achievement as she reflects on her time on the highest mountain in Africa.

What inspired you to take on Kilimanjaro?

I grew up in an agricultural boarding school in the middle of nowhere (Settlers Agricultural School) which lit my love of nature and adventure. We grew up camping, hiking and being involved in cultural and performance sports, so being adventurous is second nature and Kilimanjaro became an almost natural dream because I always want to do what others say I can't do. Saray Khumalo then successfully summited Everest in the year 2019, being the first African Woman to summit successfully, and I thought wow, if this brave woman can do it, then I can absolutely do it!

I got serious about the dream, and I placed it on my vision board and a couple of years later the universe made it happen when I was introduced to the [Imbumba Foundation](#) and the wonderful work they do for marginalised girl children in Southern Africa by providing much needed sanitary pads so they can continue their education.

The momentous [Trek4Mandela](#) Expedition to Kilimanjaro became the communication vehicle to highlight the plight of these young women.

How fit do you actually need to be and how did you train for the challenge?

You don't need to run marathons, but you need to at least run up a flight of stairs without feeling like you'll pass out, that's a good start.

I went to gym three to four times a week for strength and cardio which also included a lot of flexibility, mobility and yoga.

I also had a hiking schedule with the Trek4Mandela team and a personal one where I hiked bi-monthly with the occasional overnight hike in and around Johannesburg and Drakensberg.

What were some of your highlights during the climb?

It was incredibly beautiful out there, the rain forests, rivers, lakes, the ice glaciers (who knew Africa had glaciers? Not me!) and best of all the sunrises!

The cherry on top had to be the companionship of the team and our leader and captain Mr Sibusiso Vilane as well as the Porters (the team assisting us on the mountain), who all had a kind, supportive and generous energy.



And the lowlights?

The altitude symptoms have got to be the worst thing about Kili, they start affecting you from day two (if using the Rongai Route). It affects the body in ways that are really hard to describe, but essentially there is very little air, so your body is fighting many battles at the same time.

What advice would you give to others when preparing to climb Mount Kilimanjaro?

Be open in mind and heart. Be open to the experience, be open to how the universe will unravel each day and move with the ebb and flow of the mountain. Respect your gut feeling and have a sense of humour!



What was the best item you packed in your backpack?

The First Ascent Down Booties, these great soft booties made for the outdoors that I wore after a long hike and to move around camp. Nothing worse than having to strap on hiking boots in the middle of an icy cold night to use the bathroom!

How would you sum up your experience?

Beautiful! Absolutely stunning! There were so many lessons learnt on that mountain and I will continue to honour this experience and keep it alive within me. I felt all the love, prayers and kind wishes, and truly think that's what helped me get to the top.

Commenting on Itumeleng's achievement, Clare Trafankowska-Neal, managing director for iProspect SA, said: *"I believe we all have a responsibility to leave the world a little better than it was when we arrived in it. Whether this manifests in many small acts or one great moment, is irrelevant. Most of us will walk through life hoping that we have inadvertently done so, and it is a rarity to do so with deliberate intent. If one of my and Dentsu's small acts, was to support this incredibly passionate and strong-willed woman, achieve one of her great moments, then how lucky are we to have been a part of her magnificent journey?"*

If you would like to help Itumeleng Mehale raise funds for the Imbumba Foundation and the Caring4Girls programme, please [click here](#).



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