

## WALKING UPHILL

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*“Strange as it may seem, mountaineers strenuously avoid going uphill unless their objective is a mountain top.”*

H. W. Tilman, *Mischief Among the Penguins*, Ch. 11.

It is of course difficult to scale mountains without going uphill, which some may consider to be healthy exercise, but others regard as a necessary but painful prelude to standing by the cairn or waltzing along a level ridge. In an effort to assist the latter group, the following hints are offered to ease the process:

1. *Route*: Mountains quite often have several sides, and your approach can often be varied, at least in places, to take account of the wind, terrain, views, etc.
2. *Topography*: Some prefer Cairngormsian convexity, with the slope easing off ahead, if often reluctantly, while others prefer concavity, steepening until one pops out at the top.
3. *Slow down*: It is better to keep moving, however slowly, than to “stop for a rest”. If you stop, do so only as long as it takes to draw breath, and no longer.
4. *Zigzag*: This varies the view, and, by altering the angle, the pace, if wished. It also reduces erosion and makes it easier to keep an eye on those lagging behind you.
5. *Posture*: Clasping hands behind one’s back maintains posture, and encourages a steady, gentle pace. It also makes one look confident and authoritative.
6. *Stride*: Though perhaps better suited to established trails than to rough Scottish hillsides, the “Indian step” of pushing forward at every fifth step is one way of increasing the pace.
7. *Think*: Balance between physical and mental activity can be improved by reciting to oneself a half-remembered poem or song, or by proving in one’s head that the square root of 2 (or, better, 3) is an irrational number.

8. *Look Ahead*: One does not want to miss the views (see *Zigzag* above) but paying close attention to the stones and plants underfoot can ease the walking and inform the mind.
9. *Poles*: Considered essential by some but a nuisance by others; can also erode paths. Take your (mental, not physical) pick!
10. *Stop at the Top*: It's not compulsory to freeze to death at the cairn; choose a more sheltered spot within 50 yards or so.

*“There is no easy route up it [Mount Kenya], but much virtue may be got from a mountain without climbing it.”*

H. W. Tilman, *Snow on the Equator*, Ch. 4.