



**Kilimanjaro Doctari Professional Hunter Rifle - 27 Days in Africa**  
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Doctari Professional Hunter Rifle illustration courtesy of Kilimanjaro Hawaii, LLC.

There is nothing like taking a rifle on a grueling and rigorous hunt to “shake out” any bugs or to reveal weak spots. That is exactly what Erik Eike, President of Kilimanjaro Rifles, did with his guns recently. For five weeks and a full 27 days of hunting, including 21 days in the Selous Reserve of Tanzania. The rifles were subjected to what can only be described as the most strenuous field testing possible in the African wild.

Kilimanjaro believes strongly in field testing of its rifles in the harshest conditions to hone machining tolerances, improve design features and ensure rugged dependability. There is a big difference between taking a shot at a Whitetail and putting down a charging Cape buffalo and that difference gives a whole new dimension to the best design and craftsmanship of a rifle. Having returned from Africa, the next stop for Erik and Kilimanjaro is field testing for two weeks in the rugged Alaskan bush for Brown Bear this fall in Alaska’s Unit 9.

More than a few hunters are wary of subjecting rifles like the Kilimanjaro to rough conditions in the field, but that is, after all, what they were designed to handle. The Stealth Lamination of the Turkish Walnut stocks, coupled with the twenty-step wood finish, which can only be described as “museum quality,” makes the Kilimanjaro virtually impervious to all except an accidental drop onto a pile of rocks, which didn’t happen. As Erik points out, even if you somehow manage to damage it, the real beauty of fine walnut is that it is easily repaired and restored and the Stealth Lamination gives the stock the strength of an ax handle.

Prior to this safari, I had seen Erik’s personal rifle that he has used around the world and it looks brand new. In fact, he brings it to the Safari Club International convention and Dallas Safari Club Show each year just to demonstrate the durability of its beauty. Mary really covets that gun.

The actions and barrels of every Kilimanjaro rifle are honed and polished before finishing. The non-glare ceramic metal finish is not only good looking, it permits the rifle to operate in dust, dirt, ash or mud, as the recent safari proved. In other words, this rifle will probably never fail to function properly.

During this safari the Doctari Professional Hunter designed by Dr. Kevin Robertson, a new model now in production, was tested. It functioned flawlessly, as did the other Kilimanjaro rifles that went along for the hunt. Now think for a moment, these rifles bounced around in the gun racks of Land Cruisers for 27-days, endured the gentle handling of eighteen different airline baggage handlers and survived three weeks of ash and carbon residue from the burning of long grass of the Selous. If that weren't enough, they handled the thick Miombo and Acacia bush without damage.

Just when you think the above was enough of a test, my friend Erik decided to torture his rifles in another way. They did not receive any cleaning, maintenance of any kind or even wipe downs in camp. Now, I would not recommend that for any rifle, let alone one costing over \$15K and neither would Erik. However, he wanted to ensure that his rifles would take anything that any hunter in the world could throw at them. They did.

The last question to be answered is: do the rifles shoot accurately? Sixteen of the nineteen trophies were taken with clean, quick one-shot kills. These included a lion, East African leopard, hippo, multiple Cape buffalo, eland, Masai bushbuck, nyala, kudu, waterbuck, common reedbuck, warthog, blue wildebeest, gemsbok, impala, multiple Lichtenstein hartebeest for camp meat and believe it or not, a free-hand head shot on an Egyptian goose with a Kilimanjaro 416 Rem. Magnum rifle. How's that for pin-point accuracy in a big bore?

One of the Cape buffs, a gemsbok and an impala required a follow-up second shot. Not unusual for a buffalo or gemsbok (they are tough) and, although it was dead on its feet, it was not advisable to follow the Impala into the bush for its finish. Despite several exciting stalks at very close quarters for an elephant, nothing was seen that was suitable, so rounding out the Big 5 will have to wait for another day.

The Egyptian Goose was a memorable encounter. As any hunter on a traditional East African safari knows, you have to take care of your hunting crew and it is "Bwana's" job to bring home the meat. On that particular morning, the camp cook forgot to pack lunch for Erik's team of trackers, driver and the Government Game Scout. It is they who spotted the geese and pointed out the impending famine. Erik and Professional Hunter Terry Calavrias set out to bag a goose or two with Terry's old .22 LR rifle, but it jammed with a bullet stuck in the barrel.

With the geese getting ready to depart to safer environs, Erik motioned to Lead Tracker Andrea to hand him the Kilimanjaro .416. Andrea refused, clearly concerned about what such massive fire power would do to lunch. Erik was insistent, however, took the rifle and shot free hand, as the hunting team watched in horror, expecting nothing but feathers for the mid-day meal. However, the goose dropped and when retrieved by Game Scout Dennis was in pristine condition, except for a 416 hole in the head.

At a later time, we will have to go into details of what it was like to have elephants, lions and leopards come into camp on multiple nights. (We definitely weren't in Kansas any more). Add three different close encounters with deadly Black Mamba into the equation and you have a truly exciting African safari experience.

There is no set MSRP for the Kilimanjaro Doctari Professional Hunter, as each rifle is custom built to your specifications. However, the "base price" is \$14,995. Erik does have some "ready-to-go" rifles for those who can't wait. For details about rifle models and pricing, see the Kilimanjaro website at <http://kilimanjarorifles.com/>

Kilimanjaro offers several bolt action rifle models in addition to the Doctari Professional Hunter. These include the Kilimanjaro, Serengeti, Artemis (for women) and Tigercat. Depending on the model and whether you want a Sako 85, Granite Mountain, Weatherby Mk. V, Kimber, Dakota, Serengeti or other action, stock geometry, "best" grade walnut, exhibition grade walnut, premier grade walnut, Stealth Lamination or a McMillan synthetic stock and how much checkering and engraving you require, Kilimanjaro's 2011 rifle prices range from about \$6K on up.

Granted, that is a lot of money, but if you have one Kilimanjaro rifle, you won't need another and it will last a lifetime. (It comes with a Lifetime Guaranty). You could pay the same amount for a cheap car and it will be trash in a few years. If Mary could order a Kilimanjaro for North American game animals, she'd chamber it in either a .300 WSM or 7mm Remington Mag. and if I were really, really good she'd let me borrow it once in a while.