

Mount KILIMANJARO

Climbing the highest peak in Africa



Dominating the landscape like no other mountain, Kilimanjaro is the highest volcano in the world and the highest free-standing mountain in the world at 5895 metres, or 19,340 feet. It is one of the fabled Seven Summits, the highest peak in Africa and a great challenge for the adventure traveller and aspirant mountaineer.

Kilimanjaro is a perennial favourite, not to be underestimated but entirely feasible for the hill walker looking to combine a high mountain adventure with going to Africa. You can combine your climb with a safari to the southern Serengeti, or fly to Zanzibar



Trek organiser: The trek is organised by Adventure Alternative (owner Gavin Bate, left) and our subsidiary company Cappello Adventures, which is run by our representative Castro Kapela. We have an office in Moshi, the town at the base of the mountain. We average 24 trips per year and we have a summit success rate of 90%, a 100% safety track record and our ratio of staff to members is 3:1.



Route and Weather: The total trek distance is 120 kilometres, over 7 days with a net height gain of 4405 metres and passing through five distinctly different habitats – cultivated farmland, montane forest, alpine heath, semi-desert and ice-cap. The temperature will generally be warm during the day dropping to an average minimum of 5 degrees. Summit morning however can be as low as minus 10 or 12 degrees. Rainy seasons are traditionally in April and October, but Kilimanjaro can be climbed any time of the year.



Food: We provide a high quality menu, and we can cater for vegetarians. Breakfasts are a variety of fruits, porridge, sausages and eggs, toast, tea, coffee and herbal teas. Lunches are salads, soups, sandwiches and fruits with beverages. Dinners are three course with soup starter; main dish of meat (commonly chicken) with vegetables, pasta or rice; dessert of fruits or jelly or pastries. Water is provided every day, and boiled by our cooking staff. You can bring your own supply of water purifying tablets if you wish, but we do not provide plastic bottled water



Accommodation and toilets: is in 2 man tents which are spacious and dry, and we also provide waterproofed foam mattresses for every member. A 'porch' is there for storing luggage. Toilets are at every camp and are small huts with 'long drops'; some are more hygienic and cleaner than others but all are maintained by the Rangers at every camp.

Guides and Porters

Your main guides will be Cornel Mushi, Lipman Mtui and Reginald Kamanda. A recent addition is Matthias, if we need to bring other guides on the mountain. The ratio is 1 guide to 4 members.

The number of porters is 3 to every Westerner. They will carry all the gear for you and prepare tents and food. Most of them come from Marangu Village. They all work for Adventure Alternative very regularly and they earn \$70 per trip (plus their food on the mountain) which is the designated maximum amount by the Kilimanjaro park authorities.

Weather and keeping dry

There is little doubt that you will have some rain, and it is likely to be in the lower regions around the montane or cloud forest level. Waterproofs will be necessary, but then again you could be lucky! Remember that on the equator the winter season is July/August, while their summer is December/January. The rainy season is traditionally April and September/October but this is not to be relied on nowadays with the extreme changes to the climate.

Expect short term extreme conditions, i.e. sharp showers of rain, very hot sun, big gusts of wind, heavy snow and low night temperatures. Clear nights will be colder but more beautiful, and generally the cloud builds up during mid morning, only to dissipate again with the setting sun.

Above Shira Camp (day 2) you will get precipitation in rain, snow, sleet and even hail. The ground is more open and exposed so it will be important to have some dry bags for your daysack (or a cover) and all the appropriate clothing.

Up higher at Barafu Camp it will definitely be colder and windier so the shell jacket is really vital; temperatures can drop dramatically, and there may be snow. Summit morning can be icy underfoot, so good boots with the hats and gloves are important.

Do work on a wet and dry system so that if you get a wet T-shirt during the day, you always have a dry T-shirt and warm top to change into the moment you get to camp. This is really important in terms of potential hypothermia. Don't let people keep wet clothes on. It's such an obvious point but very commonly ignored.

Daily routine

Generally breakfast is between 7.30am and 8.00am, and departure from camp is at 9.00am. Summit morning is different; tea and biscuits at 11.30pm and start hiking to the top at midnight. Most daily hikes take from 4 – 7 hours. The pace is slow and not forced at all. There is a rest at least once every hour and plenty of time to take photos, enjoy the view and chat with your fellow hikers.

When you arrive at the campsite you will find the tents erected and your bags ready to collect. In the morning please have your bags packed before breakfast so the staff can prepare the loads.

Clothing and equipment

T-shirts	Trekking trousers	Shorts	Shirts
Jumper or fleece top	Sunhat	Hiking boots	Trainers or sandals
Duffle bag	Hiking socks		
Fleece jacket	Waterproofs	Gloves/mitts	Thermals/base layer
Gaiters	Warm hat	Daysack, 30-40 ltrs	Headtorch
Sunglasses	Sleeping bag	Duffle bag	Plastic bags
2 water bottles			
Small towel	Soap, shaving kit	Deodorant	Nail brush
Toothbrush/paste	Scissors, mirror	Dry bags	Plasters
Suncream	Moisturiser	Lypsyl (SPF)	Sore throat tabs
Paracetamol/aspirin	Immodium	Tweezers	Prescribed medicines
Passport	Money	Camera	Books

Notes on Equipment

- Boots can be leather or GoreTex, and have good ankle support and a fairly rigid sole. No trainers for climbing but hybrid 'mountaineering' boots can also be heavy and unnecessary. Gaiters are a very useful addition but not essential.
- Your sleeping bag should be a minimum 3 season bag, either synthetic or down filling. If you do get cold easily then a 4 season bag will keep you warm. The night time temperature can drop to minus 10, and the tent will ice up. Some people opt for a 3 season bag with a fleece or silk liner to add warmth if necessary.
- The duffle bag can replace a large rucksack since it will be easier to access, but either is acceptable. The porters will put our bag into a second sack and carry it on their head so they do not need to use a rucksack as we would. Keep items inside 'dry bags' which can be any plastic bag.
- You will carry a daysack every day (35- 40 litres is quite adequate). Take a dry T-shirt, a jacket or top, at least 1 litre of water, camera, sunglasses, suncream, sunhat, waterproofs and gloves or hat when necessary (second half of the trip).
- Walking poles are very handy, especially if you are worried about your knees coming down. Again, you can hire these in Moshi from Castro.
- We provide comfortable mattresses to sleep on inside the tents, so there is no need to bring a Thermarest or sleeping mat.

We do have sleeping bags, poles, jackets, fleeces and even some boots for rent. Castro will arrange this with you if you need it. This may be a cheaper, and lighter, option than buying everything, particularly for things like gaiters.

Daily Itinerary

Days 1 & 2: Depart home and Arrival in Tanzania



You can buy your visa in the airport. Castro Kapela (left) is our representative in Moshi and he will transport you to the Keys Annexe hotel (45 mins), which is 5 minutes out of Moshi itself. It has a swimming pool, comfortable twin rooms with fans, a wonderful view of the mountain and it is completely safe with beautiful gardens. The hotel has internet and international phone facilities (although your mobile will work fine), left luggage storage and a TV room.

Day 3: Rest day, briefing

A day in Moshi for rest and a briefing by one of the AA staff members. You will meet the guides and see the tents and have a complete chat about the expedition ahead and enjoy a lovely meal in town.

Day 4: Machame Gate to Machame Camp (5 to 6 hours; 18kms; 1490m to 2980m)

START



Depart from the hotel at about 8am and arrive at the gate an hour later, where passport details are taken and all the equipment is weighed and prepared. The trek is through equatorial forest, a very easy path. You carry light day sacks and must be prepared for occasional rain showers.

Day 5: Machame Camp to Shira Plateau (5 hours; 9 kms; 2980m to 3840m)



Leaving camp at around 9am the path continues fairly steeply uphill through forest onto more open ground, eventually to the huge lava plateau which is called Shira after about 3 hours. After a long lunch, it is another 2 hours uphill to the camp. It can be quite dusty and exposed on Shira plateau.

Day 6: Shira Plateau to Barranco Camp (7 hrs ; 15 kms; 3840m to 3950m)



The day ascends 700 metres and then all the way back down again, with only a net gain of about 100 metres, which is good for acclimatisation. The terrain is high desert and exposed to sun, rain and even snow. The route heads towards the dramatic summit massif to a junction of paths for lunch, and then descends quite steeply on often loose ground to the beautiful Barranco Valley.

Day 7: Barranco Camp to Karanga Valley (3 hours ; 5kms; 3950m to 3950m)



This is a short day with no net height gain, although the route goes up and down over two valleys. It is very dramatic. The day starts with a scramble up the Barranco Wall (the porters call it 'breakfast') which is enjoyable and fun (don't carry poles, they will get in the way), and then follows a rocky path to a high point with great views of the Heim Glacier. This is followed by an easy route down into the next valley and across to the Karanga Valley. Be aware of a few sections

of rock which can be wet and slippery. The route effectively circles the summit massif. The lack of height gain means that people should be sleeping well and generally feeling strong.

Day 8 - Karanga Valley to Barafu Hut (4 hours; 7 kms ; 3950m to 4550m)



A short day but gaining consistent height on a fairly easy path which is still semi-desert, rocky and often dusty. The route aims towards an obvious ridge ahead and you will see the silhouette of a ranger hut and probably some tents. Barafu means 'ice' but it is now all rock, and after lunch we organise an early dinner and an early night. Arrive by noon and take a rest, the guides will give a pre-summit briefing and dinner will be at 5.30pm.

**Day 9 - Barafu Hut to Summit and down to Millennium Camp. 12 hours in total
7 hours up and 4 hours down with up to an hour on the top;**

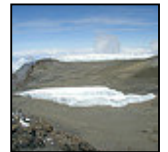
5kms to top and 13 kms back to Millennium Camp;
4550m up to 5895m (summit) and then down to 2800m.



Awake at midnight for tea and biscuits, and leave before 1am. It will be cold and the terrain is mostly rock and scree. Much of the path is zigzag but never precipitous although early on there is a section on open rock which will require care.



Reach the crater rim itself (Stella Point) shortly after sunrise, with extremely scenic views over the Kibo crater, before continuing to the summit itself. This will take about 45 minutes. The path is easy but there may be snow.



Many glaciers are visible from the top, and generally the weather is clear very early in the morning. After about 45 minutes taking photos on the top, start the descent.



It is immediately obvious that going down is as tiring as going up, and probably harder on the knees. People often split into small groups as they take their own time with the initial descent back to Barafu. As long as you are with one of the guides they will ensure your safe descent.



Back at Barafu camp lunch is served and the group then descends to Millennium Camp where there is greenery and a dinner waiting. You will need to pack your bag before leaving Barafu. Generally the walk down to Millennium takes about an hour and a half.



Sometimes summit day is very long and it is always challenging. Climbing at night is, for most people, a first time experience and there is always an element of the unknown and apprehension. Once it is over and everyone is back at Millennium Camp, this is replaced by euphoria and relief. You may be too tired to eat but it is important to do so. More important is to drink lots of liquid because the ascent will have left you dehydrated.

Day 10 – Millennium Camp to Mweka Gate (4 to 6 hours ; 2800m to 1200m)



People with sore knees will be moving slowly but the path is quite easy and passes through beautiful forest with unique indigenous plants. When you reach the gate you must sign out of the Park and receive the gold certificate (if you get to the top), or a normal certificate (if you get to Stella Point). Then pick up the transport and go back to



the hotel for a shower and well earned celebration dinner. Before you leave the gate you should give your tip money to Castro and he will distribute it to the porters, along with their salaries before you go to the hotel. Sometimes, if people are very late getting to the gate, then this is not possible as the porters need to clean up and get back to their village before dark.

Please note that if you give tips in foreign currency then Castro will have to change it in town and hand it out at a later date. We as a company pride ourselves on paying our porters salary and tips at the gate to uphold our principles of fair pay and working conditions, so please do make sure that any money is in Tanzanian shillings and in denominations of 10,000 or 5,000.

Day 11 - Flight home. Castro will arrange your transport back to the airports.

Some people will be preparing for their safari, and this day is normally a rest day before starting the safari the following morning at around 8am.

Emergency Descents:

The Guides will arrange this if it is required and please do not feel embarrassed about talking to them. Every camp has a facility and Park Ranger for assisting people to go down. Part of your expedition fee to Adventure Alternative includes a rescue fee which covers all use of Park Ranger facilities on the mountain such as communication, stretcher, and a car. Their English is not perfect, but good enough. They are well trained in how to arrange safe descents and they will always arrange someone to go with you, to carry your luggage and for you to be met at the gate and taken into town.

There are no helicopters in Moshi for rescue, but at Shira Camp there is a facility for bringing in a car to drive people back to Moshi. From Barranco and Karanga Valley the quickest descent is to Umbwe Gate and takes about 3 or 4 hours, but there are no facilities enroute. From Barafu the quickest descent is to Mweka Gate, via Millennium Camp and Mweka Camp.

Knowing when to go down and relying on the guides

There is no doubt that some people will just not acclimatise well to altitude and for them it is simply not worth continuing if it is likely to be injurious to your health. “The mountain is always there” may be a cliché, but it is true.

The Guides will assist you all the time and will ask if you wish to carry on. If you are clearly very sick and unable to make your own judgement then they will take you down and you will be in good hands.

If you are not sure if you can continue because you are not feeling great, then please note that the Tanzanian guides are unlikely to 'tell' you to go down, unless the situation becomes very apparent. This needs some explanation.

First of all it goes against their culture to give a direct imperative to others (especially Westerners), but also they will assume that you know yourself best! This may appear to be a lack of leadership because guides are employed to 'make the call' when necessary. It could end up as the client waiting for the Guide to make the decision to go down, while the Guide is waiting for the client to make the decision him or herself!

The Guides themselves have climbed the mountain so many times that they are adept at recognising the point at which somebody is clearly not going to summit. But they find it hard to answer the direct question "Do you think I can get to the top?". Politeness dictates that they must answer "yes". Please be assured that I am always trying to educate my staff to be more Western in their approach, but it is hard for them. Talk to them and try to couch your question in a less confrontational (yes or no) format. It seems silly but East Africans rarely speak to each other in this way and they find our Western directness a little alarming.

My personal advice is to listen to your body. If it gets too hard and you are obviously very slow and in pain, and perhaps quite frightened, then don't risk your health and turn the trip into an awful memory. Better to go down and accept it gracefully.

Please read the document entitled Health on a High Altitude Trek which goes into great detail about altitude sickness and other illnesses which may occur on a mountain expedition, and it is strongly recommended that you read this.

In the First Aid Kit on the mountain is a First Aid document which gives you information on how to deal with most first aid emergencies, and it is strongly recommended that you look at this and read it in your own time. Please do put the document back in the First Aid bag afterwards.

Do not be tempted to go faster than is planned for you, just because you are feeling fine. The Guides have been advised not to accede to any request to reduce the number of days of the trip!

Helping to help prevent altitude sickness

You will be climbing a total distance of around 100 kilometres, over 7 days with an overall height gain of 4405 metres and it is inevitable that your body will be pushed to some extremes. The biggest one of these is altitude gain, so consider yourself fortunate if you experience no symptoms at all!

The fact that the trip is seven days is in itself the biggest factor in ensuring adequate time to acclimatize. But you need to also increase your liquid intake to around 3 litres per day. Remember to eat and sleep well too; in this situation food is simply fuel for the body, so if you decide not to have a meal then it will have a direct impact on your energy levels.

Some people like to take a drug called Diamox to assist with altitude-related symptoms. Please remember that Diamox is a strong diuretic so you may well dehydrate yourself further. Also Diamox can give you the side effect of tingling fingers and face; this is a harmless side effect but can be a little worrying without prior knowledge.

Also Diamox does not prevent altitude sickness, but it can help with the symptoms. It may help you to sleep better, get rid of a headache and generally make you feel better, but it cannot allow you to rush up the mountain in a faster time. There is really only one way to ensure proper acclimatization, and an enjoyable trip, and that is to *go slowly*.

Health and Altitude Sickness:

Many of the issues facing people on Kilimanjaro are to do with rate, or speed, of ascent and generally the most common illnesses are a combination of tiredness, too much sun, not enough water and the added effect of altitude. It is therefore vital that you maintain a slow pace each day, drink lots of liquid, and sleep and eat well.

There are varying grades of altitude sickness and it is common for people to gasp at the high camps and experience general tiredness or apathy, occasional headaches, lack of appetite and difficulty with consistent sleeping. These symptoms do not constitute a reason to descend or stop the climb; they are understandable as the body is trying to work hard in an atmosphere with less energy-giving oxygen.

However if the symptoms become worse – continued lack of sleep, loss of co-ordination, change of character (becoming withdrawn and quiet), continued headaches and difficulty breathing - then the best response is to descend.

How to recognise altitude sickness:

There is a difference between a *symptom* of being at altitude and a *sickness*, which will require a descent. Almost everybody will experience symptoms such as:

- Disturbed sleep pattern
- Increased urine output
- Occasional headache (most probably caused also by dehydration and heatstroke)
- Dizziness if moving too fast or getting up too quickly
- Panting or gasping more often, difficulty breathing
- Tiredness or general lethargy
- Waking up gasping (Cheynes Stokes syndrome)
- Vivid and colourful dreams
- Slight puffiness around the eyes and face, and the fingers

The point at which things will require a descent are:

- Continued headaches and loss of sleep over several nights
- A feeling of drunkenness, stumbling over words, change in character (gloomy and depressive)
- Very tired and lethargic, no energy
- Complete lack of appetite
- Feeling sick and vomiting
- Loss of co-ordination
- Becoming very withdrawn and gloomy, never wanting to get up, extremely slow pace, walking in a daze, not caring of your surroundings at all.

