

# MOUNT KILIMANJARO

## Climbing the highest peak In Africa



The Trek of **Mount Kilimanjaro** is one of the finest in the world, ascending the highest point in Africa as well as the highest free-standing mountain in the world. It straddles the equator on the border between Kenya and Tanzania. It's height is 5895 metres (19,340 feet) and over a total trek distance of around 120 kilometres you will pass through five distinct habitats, from equatorial jungle to ice cap.



**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 porters 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.

# Route map

START



## Daily Itinerary

### DAY 1 & 2: Arrival Tanzania

Journey time to Kilimanjaro Int Airport is 8 to 9 hours from Ireland or UK, normally via Amsterdam with KLM. It is possible to fly to Nairobi and take a shuttle flight, or even an overland coach to Moshi.



On arrival you pass through the small immigration office to buy a visa. Castro Kapela (left) is our representative in Moshi and he will meet you with transport 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, giving you plenty of time to ask questions, arrange last minute items (we can arrange hire of most equipment) and enjoy a lovely meal in town.

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



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 daysacks and must be prepared for occasional rain showers. There will be a lunch stop enroute.

### 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 possible rain and even snow. The path is easy to follow and clear. 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. This is a long day so be prepared with extra warm clothing and your waterproofs. It can be very sunny, so prevent sunstroke by wearing a hat. The pace will be slower and try to keep together as a group.

### 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, up to fifteen hours, 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 in the afternoon, arriving early in the morning on Day 12. Castro will arrange your transport back to the airports.

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

#### **Emergency Descent:**

The Guides will arrange this if it is required and please do not feel embarrassed or 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.

### 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.

### 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*.

### 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 sound flippant, 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 slightly 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 to Westerners 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.

The Guides carry a first aid case and inside there are some Diamox tablets. In the event of somebody getting suddenly very sick (especially losing co-ordination completely, and acting much like a drunk) then it is a good idea to administer Diamox and effect immediate descent. Under no circumstances should the descent be ignored, it is imperative and should be done at *any time* of day or night.

In your information pack is a 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!