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AFRICA | ASIA | SOUTH AMERICA | PACIFIC



CLIMBING

KILIMANJARO



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AN INTRODUCTION TO — MOUNT KILIMANJARO —

THE SLEEPING GIANT

A behemoth of the climbing and natural worlds, Mount Kilimanjaro is one of the 'seven summits' - the seven tallest peaks on each of the seven continents. Despite its reputation with experienced hikers, it is considered the easiest of summits, requiring no special equipment and equally as accessible to novices.

With porters carrying most of the burden, there is no need for heavy packs, and most reasonably fit, able-bodied walkers can make the climb to its snow-capped peak.

At a height of 19,341 feet (5,895 m) above sea level it is the tallest mountain on the African continent and the highest free-standing mountain in the world. Comprising three volcanic cones, Mawenzi and Shira are extinct, but Kibo - the highest peak - is dormant and, while presenting little activity, could erupt at any time. Thankfully the last major event was over 360,000 years ago, so any eruption is highly unlikely.

Beginning on in the foothills of Tanzania and the mountain's eponymous national park, the trek spans up to nine days over 35 miles (66km) and it is advised to take a more relaxed approach to the climb in order to acclimatize to the changing altitude.

QUICK FACTS:

- There are seven routes to the summit of Kilimanjaro, ranging from 30 miles (49km) to 35 miles (66km)
- No one knows where the name came from, but it is suspected that it derives from the local Chagga words 'kilelema' and 'njaare' or 'jyaro', roughly meaning 'That which is impossible for the bird' or 'That which defeats the caravan' respectively
- It is the tallest free-standing mountain in the world
- There is a book at the top of Uhuru peak in which climbers can document their thoughts
- Kilimanjaro possesses a range of ecosystems, from rainforest, through heath & alpine desert to its arctic summit
- About 25,000 people attempt the trek each year, with over 65% achieving the summit

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR — KILIMANJARO —

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WHEN TO CLIMB KILIMANJARO

Close to the equator, Kilimanjaro has dry and wet seasons, rather than the familiar seasons of the northern hemisphere. The wettest months of March, April and November should be avoided. December to February, and May to July receive some rain and fewer crowds, while August to October are the optimal months climatically, though can be busy.

BEFORE YOU BOOK

While we wouldn't recommend such young participants, children over 10 years old are permitted to climb. At the other end of the scale, the oldest climber was 87 years old, and with its gentler slopes and steady pace it is wonderfully accessible, yet still challenging, for a wide range of people and abilities.

A reasonable level of fitness is required, especially considering the effects of altitude. Cardio training and leg, core and back exercise are highly recommended in preparation, ideally beginning three months in advance. Hiking at a slow pace may seem simple, but eight hours of walking each day can be challenging, and at altitude even a stroll can feel like a sprint.

Altitude is the primary reason for climbers turning back before reaching the summit. Mild altitude sickness presents as nausea, headache and hangover-like symptoms and can often be overcome with adequate hydration. Daily health checks usually identify any issues before they become debilitating, but if symptoms increase, descent is required and obligatory.

QUICK FACTS:

- The fastest ever ascent was by Italian Bruno Brunod & took just 5 hours and 40 minutes, though this is not recommended!
- In 2007, Bernard Goosen, born with cerebral palsy, scaled Kilimanjaro in a wheelchair, taking 6 days to do so
- Though porters will carry most equipment & tents are provided, sturdy, high-quality walking shoes, a good day pack & suitable multi-layer apparel are essential
- Purchase this equipment well before your trip & train with it, breaking in your boots & familiarizing yourself with your kit
- Other equipment recommended includes a head torch, water bladder & walking poles (view a complete packing list on page 5)

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— YOUR CAMP —

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TENTS

Lightweight hiking tents are used on climbs for their ease of transportation. Though compact, they are private and comfortably spacious. On a basic budget, camp is simplified to the bare essentials. For a medium budget, a toilet tent is also provided, while premium climbs also have shower facilities.

BEDDING

All bedding is also provided, and likewise varies depending on budget option. Base-level packages include a foam bed roll, medium, a thicker and more comfortable camp mattress, while the highest package includes elevated cots.

While clean pillows and sleeping bags are included, it is worth packing your own sleeping bag liner and pillow case for improved hygiene and warmth.

LOCATION

To prevent or minimize altitude sickness, daily hikes will ascend before returning a short distance for clients to sleep at a slightly lower altitude. This improves acclimatization as your body adapts overnight. There are no established camp sites as such, and so there are no permanent facilities at your overnight rest stops.

CAMP CUISINE

Dietary requirements are accounted for, as you would expect at any lodge or hotel. Considering its location and that every meal must be brought with you by porters, food is of a particularly good standard. While you won't find fine dining on the slopes of Kilimanjaro, you will be pleasantly surprised by the standard achieved by the camp's chefs.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Porters and guides are equipped for most health eventualities, though the primary concern is altitude sickness. Every step is taken to mitigate this issue, and hikers are encouraged to keep thoroughly hydrated. At regular intervals, all participants have their oxygen levels checked with a blood oximeter. Guides are trained to recognize the early signs of altitude sickness and will advise accordingly.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

There are no convenient plugs of outlets on Kilimanjaro and, as such, most electrical equipment will be redundant unless battery-powered. For cameras, a lighter compact model is recommended to minimize weight. Reception has recently reached Kilimanjaro, but a battery charger is necessary to keep your phone topped up during your hike.

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— PACKING TIPS —

While almost all camping equipment is provided, it is necessary to supply your own apparel, including scarves and hats, multiple layers, a towel, your own water bottle and cosmetics such as sun cream. This is a comprehensive list of all necessary equipment:

	QTY		QTY
Thermal Hat	1	Hiking Socks (1 pair per day)	6-8
Wide Brimmed Hat	1	Waterproof Hiking Boots (worn in)	1
Sunglasses	1	Spare Shoes for in Camp (training shoes are fine)	1
Scarf / Buff®	1	Gaiters (pair)	1
Headlamp & spare batteries	1	Yaktraxs (pair) or similar additional shoe traction	1
Waterproof Jacket with Hood	1	Walking Poles (pair)	1
Heavyweight Fleece	1	Water Bottle ¼ gallon (1L)	2-3
Lightweight Fleece	1	Sun Cream > factor 25, preferably 40	1
Hiking Shirts	2-3	Small Towel	1
Thermal Gloves (a thin inner glove to fit inside a waterproof outer glove)	1	Kit Bag (soft) - this will be carried by porters. Waterproof lining or large plastic bag recommended	1
Waterproof Outer Gloves / Mittens	1	Day Bag 8 gallons (30L)	1
Thermal Base Layer - Top	1	Personal Medication	-
Thermal Base Layer - Bottom	1	Insurance Details	1
Lightweight Trousers	1	Emergency Contact Phone Number	1
Waterproof Trousers	2		



— ADDITIONAL INFORMATION —

THE ROUTE

There are numerous routes to choose on Mount Kilimanjaro, ranging in difficulty and from five days to eight or more, depending on the group's pace. Though the shorter routes may seem preferable, the eight-day Lemosho route is highly advisable. The 28.5-mile (46 km) route allows for an easier adjustment to altitude and takes in a range of ecosystems, from heaths and alpine meadows to the arctic summit and rainforests on the descent.

FURTHER HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

At altitude, the body requires three times' more hydration. Water is supplied and streams on the mountain provide refilling opportunity. Porters will filter and purify this water, but a Life Straw will allow you to effectively filter your own water on the go. Metabolism also increases, so eating at least 30 percent more than usual is necessary.

TIPPING

Tipping is strongly recommended. Though the staff are provided a salary, tipping is offered as an incentive and to further assist their livelihood. The advised amount is \$400 USD per person, given to the head guide or porter for distribution amongst the team.

OPTIONAL ITEMS

If you intend to take any battery-powered items, additional batteries will likely be necessary. One option for phones and other rechargeable electronics is a solar battery charger. These lightweight devices can be strapped to your backpack, giving you endless energy from the day's sun. Ear plugs, wet wipes, energy bars and a pocket knife are among other supplementary items to consider. Playing cards, a small notebook or other small items can also be taken to keep you entertained and document your journey,

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Staff are diligent in their protection of the environment, removing any trash, including food scraps, and pitching camp so as not to damage flora and terrain. Guests are strongly urged to be equally as considerate, managing their own trash and avoiding picking or trampling native plants. Any litter you do produce can be given to staff to dispose of responsibly on return.

PREPARATION

A medical check is necessary for climbing Kilimanjaro and is especially relevant for those over 40 years of age. The following page contains a recommended training guide.



TRAINING PLAN

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PREVENTION

You will be in the great outdoors and walking for prolonged periods. Blisters and sunburn can occur if not addressed. Sun protection is essential, and the first signs of rubbing should be addressed immediately. If you have any weaker joints or past injuries, account for these with braces or supports.

- THREE MONTHS

Fitness sessions two times a week that make you work hard and increase fitness rather than build muscle. Regular walking wherever possible, even short walks to the shops, though hikes with a weighted vest or backpack are recommended.

Diet: remove sugary sodas and junk food.

- TWO MONTHS

Fitness sessions three times a week. Again choose workouts that focus on fitness rather than muscle. This improves mental stamina as well as increasing physical conditioning. Increase your walking to at least one hour once a week.

Diet: keep healthy but remember to replace lost fuel and keep very well hydrated. Water helps to flush out toxins and promotes cellular health.

- 1 MONTH

Fitness sessions three times a week. No need to go crazy on gym sessions, simply keep up a good routine and do not over-exercise. Increase walks to two or three hours per week, taking the opportunity to break in the boots you will be taking to Kilimanjaro.

Diet: a good well-balanced diet is ideal. Any loss of excess body weight will have occurred in the last couple of months, so maintaining a healthy balance is best. Again, lots of water and enough calories to complement exercise.

- ONE WEEK

Relax. Begin the week with a good walk of three hours or more, but then eliminate significant exercise. This will help you to achieve a better mindset and mental preparedness. Training hard the week prior to your hike is unlikely to make a substantial difference and increases the chance of injury, such as sprains or blisters.

On Kilimanjaro, slow and steady wins the race. Porters will regularly regale you with the cry 'pole pole', meaning slowly, slowly. By taking a steadier pace, you will reduce the risk of injury, improve acclimatization and maximize your endurance across the six to eight days of trekking.

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AN INSIDER'S — STORY —

Rothschild South America Travel Designer Aimee Olson
shares her life-changing 2018 Kilimanjaro experience:

PREPARATION

“I’m an avid hiker, and one of my walking friends asked me, ‘what do you think about climbing Kilimanjaro?’ And I just looked at her like, really? We’re just two middle-aged moms with little kids and kids in high school. I’m not a runner or I’m not a power lifter or any of those kinds of things, but I love to hike and be outdoors, so we started planning.

We planned almost a year in advance because we had to put a deposit down and one of the prerequisites that she wanted was to summit on a full moon; they wake you up at midnight, you have a simple little meal and then you start your trek up the mountain to Stella Point, which is the point that you reach before you go up to the top.

We wanted a few creature comforts, so we paid a little bit extra to have a smaller group with a few more amenities, though still not of the standard we usually book for Rothschild Safaris clients.

Planning for the trip, we trained consistently. I would literally walk around with a 20-pound weight vest on. I was trying to emulate what it was going to feel like at a high altitude to carry a day pack every day. I live at sea level, so I would go on walks for five or six miles a day.

I soon realized that it wasn’t so much the physical part of it that would challenge me, it was more mental journey. I am someone who always has done everything for everybody. I’m a mom and a military wife, so there’s a lot of volunteer work and activities and things that you’re constantly in motion with, being a part of and supporting. And you aren’t really, and I don’t mean this negatively, you aren’t really your own person.

That was part of the reason why I wanted to do this; I wanted to prove that I could do something, that I could set my mind to something and live up to the challenge. So for me, before, during and after, it was about the preparation, the anticipation of getting there. ”

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THE SUMMIT

“On the final night at summit, I almost gave up. We spent the last night at 16,000 feet and that altitude is a big part of the challenge.

If someone is suffering from altitude sickness, the only way to recover is to go down, and they will immediately take you down if you're not doing well. They're constantly monitoring you. They had a little oximeter to check your oxygen level on a regular basis. I always felt I was well taken care of and that the guides weren't pushing me per se. But on the last day I felt like the little engine that could as I put one foot in front of the other. It's dark, you can't see how straight up it is despite a full moon, and I was thinking to myself, 'you can do this, you've got this'.

And then it was the anticipation... 'okay, we've just got to keep going'. We made it to Uhuru Peak and its infamous sign that everybody talks about, but I remember being in a daze at that point because at 19,000 feet, the guides were guiding me along, holding my hand to make sure that I would keep going.

The moment we summited, all the weariness, the altitude sickness, the aches and pains - I didn't feel any of it.

THE DESCENT

I can remember being so excited even on the way down, because once you've been to the peak, you don't get to linger up there. It's not a place where you stand around, take lots of pictures. You get your photo, you spend a short amount of time up there and then you start going back down because they don't want you to get sick. We went back to our camp and had an opportunity to rest. They had a great big meal for us and a celebration because we had all made it to the top. After the celebration they packed up camp and we started our descent.

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Heading down the mountain, you spend one night at 10,000 feet and then the next day you return to your lodge. It was a celebration even when we got back there, because it was so exhilarating. And I remember having this overwhelming sense of accomplishment. I mean, I've had accomplishments in my life, but that was a big one.

When I say that it was life-changing, I mean that in the sense of having accomplished something for myself. I was the only one that was going to do that. For me I felt like it was a pivotal moment of being able to accomplish anything; doesn't matter how old I am, what kind of shape I'm in, where I am or what I'm doing. It really changed my perspective on life beyond Kilimanjaro. My husband was retiring, my kids were going off to college - a lot of things coming together at the same time. I really think that I fared well through a lot of those transitions because I would say to myself, 'you know what? You can do this, you've got this'.

HOW IMPERATIVE WAS PHYSICAL TRAINING?

Very. I don't think I would have been able to place one foot in front of the other had I not had some sort of walking or hiking endurance. On the summit day, I was not thinking about the physical part of it at all - it was all, 'I got this, I can breathe, I'm going to keep going, I feel good'.

So by training, you knock out that physical aspect so you don't have to worry about the muscles and the legs. You just need to focus on altitude and your mental fortitude.

However, here's something else I want to point out: It is more than physical. I have seen people who are physically fit, but not make it to the top because of how the altitude affects everyone differently. ”