Mount Kilimanjaro
Trekkers Guide to the Summit

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II. Author Bio

Mark Whitman was born in Cape Town, South Africa. He runs a portfolio of internet companies that allow him to travel extensively and pursue his passion for adventure. *Mount Kilimanjaro: Trekkers Guide to the Summit* is based on Mark’s extensive knowledge of trekking Kilimanjaro, as well as depth interviews with local guides and significant desk research.
III. Disclaimer

Trekking Kilimanjaro comes with obvious risks to your health and safety. This book is provided as an information resource only, it does not guarantee your success in reaching Kilimanjaro’s summit and is not to be used or relied on for any diagnostic or treatment purposes should you suffer health complications on the mountain.

The information on Acute Mountain Sickness and illnesses related to altitude is not intended to be patient education, does not create any patient-physician relationship, and should not be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.

Distances, times and altitudes which are used extensively in Chapter 4 – Kilimanjaro Routes - are best approximates but may vary from other numbers you see quoted online or in printed materials.
1. Introduction

“I believe that the ascent of mountains forms an essential chapter in the complete
duty of man, and that it is wrong to leave any district without setting foot on its
highest peak.” – Sir Leslie Stephen

The quote above is from the late 19th century English author and mountaineer, Sir
Leslie Stephen. Now, I’m guessing your sentiments about the ‘complete duty of man’
are not as draconian or in this case Victorian; however, there is an element of sense
in what Stephens’ was saying.

Arriving in Kilimanjaro International Airport and seeing the behemoth
geomorphologic structure that is Mount Kilimanjaro rise into the African heavens like
one giant pimple on the Tanzanian landscape, it is hard to imagine not wanting to set
foot on its highest peak (see figure 1). Leaving, without having done so, would in a
way feel ‘wrong’!

Or if not wrong, at least a missed opportunity!

The fact that you are reading this guide suggests that you are not one for missing
opportunities; especially challenging ones like trekking Mount Kilimanjaro. The good
news is that you are not alone.

Thousands of trekkers flock to Kilimanjaro every year with the sole aspiration to
stand on the Roof of Africa. A number of factors have led to Kilimanjaro’s popularity;
not least that it is the highest mountain on the African continent and one of the
Seven Summits that requires no technical climbing skills. However, it’s seemingly
benign reputation for being a ‘very long hike’ leads many trekkers to underestimate
it’s difficulty and have to leave disappointed and ‘summitless’ from the slopes of
Kibo. In fact, statistics from Kilimanjaro National Park show that less than 50% of
trekkers actually reach Uhuru Peak, the summit of Kilimanjaro. Why such a low
success rate?

Well, the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro is 5,895 meters (19,341 feet) above sea level;
an altitude that is aptly categorised in climbing parlance as extreme. As you might
have guessed the body does not cope well at very high altitude, let alone extreme
altitude, unless it has had lots of time to acclimatize. And herein lays the answer to
the question above. Kilimanjaro’s camp profile makes for what is generally
considered a very rapid ascent to extreme altitude. Over the years, new routes and
camps have helped lengthen and flatten the ascent profile, and provided additional
opportunities to acclimatize, but as high altitude climbing goes, Kilimanjaro is
definitely one of the highest ascents that can be completed in such a short period of time.

However, high altitude and low success rates shouldn’t deter you. Like many mountains, Kilimanjaro provides various ascent options that make it accessible for all types of trekkers – old and young, fit and unfit, abled and even disabled!

The key to getting to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro successfully as well as getting down safely is preparation in its fullest sense. Or as Benjamin Franklin once said: ‘By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.’ Preparation means understanding the benefits and challenges of the various Kilimanjaro routes and choosing the most appropriate one given your circumstances. It means making sure you have the right equipment for the job and a full knowledge of the risks associated with high altitude, and the strategies you can employ to help prevent the onset of acute mountain sickness. It also means preparing the body physically so that your cardiovascular system is at its peak for the trek. And perhaps most importantly it means preparing your mind to be able to overcome physical exhaustion and push for the summit.

In this guide I have tried to cover all of this preparative information as well as other relevant material, without using unnecessary fillers which are so common in non-fiction books today. The first three chapters cover background information on Tanzania (Chapter 2), Mount Kilimanjaro (Chapter 3) and the extensive network of routes that lead to the Roof of Africa (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5-7 I set out all the information you need to know before you depart for Mount Kilimanjaro. In particular, Chapter 5 outlines information on visas, vaccinations and medications; Chapter 6 covers fitness and nutrition preparation; and Chapter 7 gives a detailed commentary on the equipment you will need, as well as a full checklist. Chapter 8 deals in detail with acclimatization and acute mountain sickness, including the severe forms of high altitude illness, known a Pulmonary and Cerebral Edema. In Chapter 9 I provide important information about the guides and porters that will form your core support team, and the tipping standards that are customary on Kilimanjaro. The final two Chapters cover interesting facts about Mount Kilimanjaro as well as further recommended reading.

Throughout the guide I have used a series maps, profile and altitude diagrams and pictures which help illustrate the environment in which you will be trekking.

The guide is meant to be used as a reference document so that you can quickly and effectively dip in and out of any Chapter as and when you need too. However, I believe you will find it most informative to read the guide in its entirety first, before skipping chapters to revisit key topics.
Figure 1: Mount Kilimanjaro from the lower slopes of the Mweka Route
2. Tanzania

"To measure a country's wealth by its gross national product is to measure things, not satisfactions." - Julius Nyerere

Tanzania is an East African country that is bordered by Kenya and Uganda in the North; Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the West; and Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique in the South. It is the 31st largest country in the world and the 13th largest in Africa (see figure 2 and 3).

Like many African countries, Tanzania has had a tumultuous history which has included occupation and control of the South-East of the country by the Portuguese from 1506 through to 1699, significant Arab slave trade activity throughout the 19th century, colonization by Imperial Germany in the late 19th century and eventually British rule under the League of Nations charter post WW-1.

At the end 1961 British rule came to an end and the transition to independence begun under the leadership of Julius Nyerere. After difficult economic times in the 1970s and 80s which included infrastructural partnerships with China and significant borrowing from the International Monetary Fund, the country has slowly started to develop but still suffers from abject poverty and low literacy rates.

Tanzania is a one party dominant state with its economy heavily based on agriculture, which accounts for more than 25% of gross domestic product, provides 85% of exports, and employs 80% of the workforce. On your trip to Kilimanjaro you will undoubtedly notice significant subsistence farming activities of sorghum and maize which occur in the foothills of Kilimanjaro National Park and around the towns of Moshi and Arusha.

The total population of Tanzania is just short of 45 million and is made up from more than 120 ethnic groups each with varying cultures and languages.

The demographic diversity of the country is mirrored by breath-taking fauna, flora and geographical variety. Not only does Tanzania house the highest free-standing mountain in the world, but it is home to the majestic Lake Victoria, beautiful Serengeti plains and the marine wonderland of Zanzibar.

The country is also known for some of the earliest fossil records of our ancestors, and some believe mankind began in Tanzania.

**Top tip:** It is highly recommended that you tack on to the end of your Kilimanjaro trekking itinerary a Serengeti safari, visit to the Maasai Mara or a Zanzibar diving excursion.
Figure 2: Map of Tanzania and neighbouring countries

Figure 3: Tanzania regions with the area of Kilimanjaro visible in the North-East of the country
3. Mount Kilimanjaro

“There, ahead, all he could see, as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro. And then he knew that there was where he was going” – Ernest Hemingway: The Snows of Kilimanjaro

Mount Kilimanjaro is located in the North-East of Tanzania – near the border of Kenya (see figure 3). The mountain proper covers an area of 100 kilometres long and 65 kilometres wide.

Mount Kilimanjaro is in fact a large stratovolcano (i.e. it is built up of many layers of strata consisting of lava, volcanic ash, pumice and tephra). The mountain consists of three peaks or volcanic vents. Shira is the oldest but only stands at 3,962 meters (13,000 feet). Mawenzi is the second oldest and stands at 5,159 meters (16,893 feet). Both Shira and Mawenzi are extinct volcanoes (see figure 4).

Kibo is the youngest and houses Uhuru Peak at 5,895 meters (19,341 feet); the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. Kibo is still dormant and could erupt again. The last eruption from Kibo is believed to date back 150,000 to 200,000 years ago; however gas-emitting fumaroles still occur today and have resulted in several landslides and rock-collapses.

Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and the tallest free-standing mountain in the world (note: free-standing means it is not part of a mountain range). It is also one of the Seven Summits (i.e. tallest mountain on each of the seven continents).

Kilimanjaro, the name

Its height has given it the colloquial name, ‘Roof of Africa’; however, the precise origin of the name ‘Kilimanjaro’ is unknown. Early accounts show that Europeans were using the name ‘Kilimanjaro’ by 1860 claiming it was the Kiswahili name for the mountain.

German missionary and explorer, Johann Ludwig Krapf, claimed in 1860 that the name Kilimanjaro was used by the Swahilis and that it meant ‘mountain of greatness’ or ‘mountain of caravans’, with ‘Kilima’ meaning mountain. This seems inconsistent or perhaps a European confusion with the actual etymology of the word ‘Kilima’ which means ‘hill’, and ‘Milima’ which means ‘mountain’ in Kishwahili.

Other theorists have surmised that Kilimanjaro comes from the Kichagga ‘kileme’ which relates to ‘defeat’, or ‘kilelema’ which relates to ‘difficulty’ or ‘impossibility’.
Following this line of linguistic reasoning, ‘jaro’ could be derived from ‘njaare’ which means bird, or ‘jyaro’ meaning caravan.

What is certain though is that when the Germans took control of the country in the 1880s they called the mountain ‘Kilima-Ndscharo’ using the Kiswahili name component.

When Hans Meyer, a German geographer, became the first European to reach the summit on Kibo he named it ‘Kaiser-Wilhelm-Spitze’ (Kaiser-Wilhelm-Peak’). After independence from the British, the Tanzanian authorities renamed the summit to ‘Uhuru’ meaning ‘Freedom Peak’ in Kiswahili.

Figure 4: Mount Kilimanjaro profile with its three volcanic peaks – Shira, Kibo and Mawenzi

Weather

Because Kilimanjaro is such a large geographic structure it essentially creates its own weather.

South-East winds from the Indian Ocean hit the Southern slopes of Kilimanjaro, causing the air to rise and cool and the pressure to drop. As the air rises it condenses forming clouds and precipitation (rain and snow).

The South-East trade winds from the Indian Ocean typically arrive in March and last well into May (before being interrupted by the North-East Anti trade winds), making this time of the year the rainy season on Kilimanjaro (i.e. not the ideal time to climb).

That being said, the Northern slopes, tend to be buffeted from the winds and are considerably less wet (hence they are also more barren). If one wants to trek Kilimanjaro in March - May it is best to consider the Rongai Route (see Chapter 4) which follows a trail on the Northern side of the mountain.

Anti-trade winds from the North-East arrive between May and November and don’t carry much rain as they lose their moisture before hitting Kilimanjaro. They also generally blow quite strongly forcing their way through the Saddle (the valley between Kilimanjaro’s two peaks – Kibo and Mawenzi).

The strength of the anti-trade winds mean that the South-East winds are kept below them and hence rain is common up to the 3000 meter mark but quickly disappears above this altitude. This makes late May to November a great time to climb.
The North-East Monsoon arrives between November and February and brings some rain to the Northern slopes. This wind however has travelled a long way over the continent and doesn’t have a high moisture content which means that the season is generally quite light on rain.

**Top tip: Weather is of course unpredictable.** I have climbed in mid-March and experienced rather good weather. The main concern is not the weather on the lower reaches but the weather on upper slopes of Kibo. These cannot be predicted but gale force winds are common as is snow and sleet. Prepare for a difficult summit night and hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised.

**Climate change and Kilimanjaro**

When Mount Kilimanjaro was first observed by Europeans more than 150 years ago, its cone lay beneath a thick crust of ice.

Since 1912 though, we know that 85 percent of this ice has vanished. In fact, Hans Meyer, the German geographer I mentioned above, was horrified to find that glaciers had retreated by almost 330 feet when he returned nine years later in 1898.

Glacier shrinkage on Kilimanjaro is nothing new, but now scientists concur that it is happening faster than ever: around one percent a year from 1912 to 1953 but 2.5 percent a year from 1989 to 2007.

In 2009, the most recent study of the mountain warned that climate change could cause Kilimanjaro’s glaciers to disappear within 20 years. The study, which took seven years to complete, used data from ice cores drilled from the top of Kilimanjaro’s glaciers (see figure 5).

Shockingly the study found that ice between six and 17 feet thick had vanished since 2000. Almost a quarter of the ice was lost from 2000 to 2006 and one of Kilimanjaro’s glaciers, the Furtwängler Glacier, became half as thick from 2000 to 2009.

The study showed that Kilimanjaro’s glaciers are evaporating rather than melting. The main theory for the observed evapotranspiration and loss of glacial cover on Kilimanjaro is less moisture and greater dryness in East Africa. No factor other than climate change can account for this.
Climatic zones

On Kilimanjaro you are going to walk through four climatic zones, each with its own distinct fauna and flora.

Rain forest zone (~800 meters – 3,000 meters): From the earliest part of your trek you are going to be confronted with tropical rain forest (see figure 6). Humidity is high and light mist or sometimes drizzle is common. Various flora such as orchids, ferns, fig and olive trees cover this area of Kilimanjaro. You will likely see Blue and Colobus monkeys, and if you are trekking from the North-East Rongai route or Western Lemosho, Shira or Northern Circuit (see Chapter 4) you may even see elephant, buffalo and large antelope.

Low alpine zone (~3,000 meters – 4,200 meters): At approximately 3,000 metres the rainforest rapidly gives way to semi-arid grasslands and moorlands, this area is known as the low alpine zone (see figure 7). Heather and small shrubs cover the landscape, the weather is significantly less humid and temperatures can get to sub-zero in the evening. The most prominent flora features in this zone are the Senecios and Giant Lobelias, which look like deformed palm trees. Fauna is sparse; however you will likely see crows overhead foraging for food.

High alpine zone (~4,200 meters – 5,000 meters): This zone is characterised by an arid desert environment that is rather inhospitable (see figure 8). During the day temperatures are hot and solar radiation is high (make sure to apply lots of sun-cream). At night temperatures plummet to below freezing. From this zone the slopes of Kibo and Kilimanjaro’s summit come into perfect view.

Glacial zone (~5,000 meters to 5,895 meters): The final zone houses the upper reaches of Kibo and Mawenzi and consists of high altitude artic conditions (see
Life is very scarce in this zone as oxygen levels are near half what they were on the lower reaches of the mountain. Fine glacial silt covers the slopes that reach up to Kilimanjaro’s summit and large glaciers are visible from Kilimanjaro’s crater rim. Due to the high solar radiation during the day, freezing temperatures at night, gale force winds and low oxygen levels, this zone is not one where you want to stay too long!
Altitude zones

Mount Kilimanjaro can be classified into three altitude zones.

High altitude (2,500 – 3,500 metres) is the first zone you will experience. You will spend approximately 2-3 days in this zone. The onset of acute mountain sickness (see Chapter 8) in this zone is low but increases as you breach the 3,000 meter mark.
Very high altitude (3,500 – 5,500 metres) is the second zone. Typically you will spend 2-3 days in this zone as well. It is recommended you have an acclimatization day in this zone where you climb high and sleep low. Most people experience some degree of altitude sickness in this zone.

Extreme altitude (above 5,500 metres) is the zone you experience when you approach Kilimanjaro’s summit. You will likely only spend a few hours in this zone as you trek from the upper reaches of Kibo to Uhuru peak and back. The onset of AMS in this zone is high, particularly if you have not given your body enough time to acclimatize in the lower zones. Many people trekking Kilimanjaro experience mild to moderate AMS in this zone, but begin their descent before conditions escalate.
4. Routes

“You never know what's around the corner. It could be everything. Or it could be nothing. You keep putting one foot in front of the other, and then one day you look back and you've climbed a mountain.” — Tom Hiddleston

There are seven main routes that one can use to trek the highest mountain in Africa. The eighth route, Mweka, is used for descent only (see Figure 10).

The Machame and Umbwe depart from the south-west side of the mountain, and then use the Southern Circuit via Barafu and Stellar Point to approach Uhuru Peak. Similarly, Shira and Lemosho also use the Southern Circuit to approach the summit and the Mweka route to descend; however both routes begin on the far west side off the mountain.

Marangu begins in the south-east and approaches Uhuru peak via Gilman’s Point. It is the only route on Kilimanjaro that has hut accommodation for the entire climb and uses the same trail to ascend and descend.

Rongai starts from the North-East and passes through the Saddle situated between Kibo and Mawenzi Peak to approach the summit via Gilman’s Point. Typically the Rongai route descends via the Marangu Route, but some tour operators take trekkers down via the Mweka Route.

The newest and longest route is the Northern Circuit which uses the same starting point as Lemosho but veers north at Lava Tower, circling around the north of the mountain and approaching Uhuru Peak via Gilman’s Point. Descent is either via the Marangu or Mweka Route.

The Western Breach is a difficult trail that was closed due to a tragic rock-fall in 2006 that killed three trekkers. The route has subsequently re-opened but is seldom used by tour operators as it offers poor acclimatization, is steep and remains rather unsafe for inexperienced trekkers. Climbers who use the Western Breach usually approach from the Umbwe Route up to Lava Tower, before taking a steep ascent past Arrow’s Glacier and up the Western Breach to Crater Camp and Uhuru Peak. The Western Breach can also be approached using the Machame, Shira and Lemosho Route. Descent is usually via the Mweka Route.

The following chapter provides detailed route, altitude and distance maps, as well as daily itineraries for each of the main routes.
Figure 10: Kilimanjaro route map showing the seven main routes to Kilimanjaro’s summit and some ancillary routes, including the Great Western Breach Route
4.1 Machame Route

Machame is one of the most popular routes on Mount Kilimanjaro. According to statistics from Kilimanjaro National Park approximately 50% of trekkers use the Machame route to ascend Kilimanjaro. The route is very scenic, providing hikers with incredible views and varying landscapes.

The route is relatively difficult as climbers need to be able to ascend the Barranco Wall on day four and contend with a steep incline up Kibo on summit night. That being said, there are no parts on the route that require any technical climbing skills.

The total route distance is approximately 62 kilometers from gate to gate. One can complete the route in 6 or 7 days. Both options include a climb high, sleep low acclimatization day.
Route Map

Figure 11: Machame route map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 12: Machame route altitude and distance profile
Day-by-day Itinerary

Day 1 – Machame Gate (1,640 meters) to Machame Camp (2,835 meters):

Distance: ~11km / 7 miles
Trekking time: 5-7 hours
Zone: Rainforest

The first day trekking begins at Machame Gate (1,640 meters). Typically you will drive from the town of Moshi or Arusha to the gate, which takes approximately an hour for the former and two hours for the latter. On the way you will get to see subsistence farming and the town of Machame. At the Gate you will meet your trekking crew – your guide, porters and cook (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters). There will be a flurry of activity as porters assemble gear for the trek; weighing packs to ensure they don’t exceed 20 kilograms. You, your guide and climbing team will in the meantime begin the ascent through the stunning rainforest that covers the South-West of the mountain. The first day trek is a long one (~11km / 7miles) and takes approximately 5-7 hours to complete. Most tour operators will provide a packed lunch on route and 2-3 liters of bottled water. This is the only bottled water you will receive. From here on porters will collect water from mountain streams. The day’s trekking ends at Machame Camp (2,835 meters) which sits near the border of the rainforest zone and the low alpine zone. By the time you arrive your porters will have already setup your camp and tents, and dinner will be served.

Day 2 – Machame Camp (2,835 meters) to Shira Camp 2 (3,850 meters):

Distance: ~5km / 3 miles
Trekking time: 4-6 hours
Zone: Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

On day two you will rise early, pack your gear and prepare for the trek from Machame Camp to Shira Camp 2 (3,850 meters). The trek is relatively steep as you enter the low alpine zone which is characterised by moorlands and grasslands. Shira Camp 2 sits on a plateau which provides you with the first views of Kibo in the North-West and Mount Meru in the East. Day two takes approximately 4-6 hours and covers a distance of 5km / 3miles.

Day 3 – Shira Camp 2 (3,850 meters) to Lava Tower (4,600 meters) and then Barranco Camp (3,900 meters):

Distance: ~11km / 7 miles
Trekking time: 5-7 hours
Zone: Low alpine zone / High alpine zone

Day three is a long and tough trek East off the Shira Plateau through the ‘Garden of the Senecios’, up to Lava Tower and the Shark’s Tooth rock formation at 4,600 meters (see figure 13) and then back down via the Southern Circuit (see figure 11) to
Barranco Camp (3,900 meters). The route is approximately 11km / 7 miles in length and takes 5-7 hours to complete. Although you end the day at a very similar elevation to when you started from Shira Camp, it is arguably one of the most important days on your trek as it gives you a chance to climb high and sleep low which is good for acclimatization.

Day 4 – Barranco Camp (3,900 meters) to Karanga Camp (3,960 meters) (and then Barafu Camp – 4,680 meters):

Distance: ~9.5km / 6 miles
Trekking time: 8-10 hours
Zone: High alpine zone

Day four begins with a steep traverse up the Barranco Wall; a 257 meter rock face that requires basic scrambling skills to the top of the Karanga Valley. The path then follows a series of inclines and declines to Karanga Camp (3,960 meters). If you are on a six day trek you will stop for lunch at Karanga Camp and then continue on along the Southern Circuit until it joins the Mweka Trail up to Barafu Camp (4,680 meters). For six day trekkers, day 4 takes approximately 8-10 hours to complete and covers 9.5km / 6 miles. When you arrive at Barafu around mid-afternoon you will be served an early dinner and encouraged to get some shut-eye as the summit trek commences around 24:00 that night. Note: Trekkers on the seven day route spend the night at Karanga Camp before continuing on to Barafu. This additional day is beneficial in terms of acclimatization.

Day 5 – Barafu Camp (4,680 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then Mweka Camp (3,100 meters):

Distance: ~4.5km / 3 miles ascent and then 11km / 7 mile descent
Trekking time: 6-8 hours to the summit and then 5-8 hours to Mweka
Zone: Glacial zone and the all preceding zones

Day five is summit night (and day)! You will be awoken around 23:30 with hot tea and biscuits. Hopefully you have managed to get a few hours’ sleep; don’t worry if you haven’t as most people struggle to sleep before summit night. Do however make sure that all your kit, including warm clothes, headlamp, insulated water reserves and snacks are ready for a sharp departure at 24:00. The trek up Kibo is steep and slow. The trick is to keep your momentum moving forward, one step at a time. It takes about 6-8 hours to reach the top of the crater rim where you will see the sign for Stellar Point (5,739 meters – see figure 14). This is not the summit of Kilimanjaro. You still have another 156 meters of altitude to walk around the crater rim to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters). I recommend resting briefly at Stellar Point and potentially having some hot tea or hot chocolate. Dawn should be approaching. Take a moment to savour where you have got to and then dig deep for the energy to push for the summit. Over 60% of climbers stop at Stellar Point but most can make it to the summit if they muster the metal strength to push through. Obviously if you are
experiencing severe AMS symptoms (see Chapter 8 – Acclimatization and AMS) you should descend immediately. After reaching the summit of Kilimanjaro, a 4.5km / 3 mile ascent, you still have an 11km / 7 mile descent to Mweka Camp (3,100 meters)!

The descent can be very gruelling on your joints. It is recommend you use trekking poles and potentially wear gaiters to avoid fine glacial scree getting into your boots (see Chapter 7 – Equipment and Kit List). Mweka is situated in the upper part of the rainforest zone. The richness of oxygen and moisture in the air will be a very welcome surprise.

Day 6 – Mweka Camp (3,100 meters) to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters):

Distance: ~9km / 5.5 miles  
Trekking time: 3-5 hours  
Zone: Rainforest

Day six is the final day of trekking. By now you will be exhausted and probably only thinking about a hot shower. The trek is a pleasant one through the lower rain-forested slopes and down to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters). Although you cover 9km / 5.5 miles, the trek only takes 3-4 hours. Assuming you successfully reach Stellar Point or Uhuru Peak you will be presented with official certificates – a green certificate for the former and a gold certificate for the latter. It is customary to tip your trekking crew (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters for advice on tipping) before being transported back to your hotel in Moshi or Arusha.
Figure 13: Lava Tower
Figure 14: Stellar Point (5,739 meters) on the crater rim. Uhuru Peak can be seen in the distance on the left-hand side of the image.
4.2 Marangu Route

The Marangu Route is the oldest on Kilimanjaro and is also one of the most popular – mainly because it is the only route on the mountain that has huts provided for hikers. There are 60 bunk beds each at Mandara and Kibo Huts, and 120 bunk beds at Horombo Hut.

Typically tour operators provide mattresses and pillows for climbers (sleeping bags however, need to be brought separately by trekkers). The route can be completed in 5 days; however, it is recommended that climbers take an extra day to acclimatize at Horombo Hut.

The main setback on the Marangu Route is that the ascent is exactly the same as the descent and therefore there is not as much variety in settings compared to other routes. It also means that the route can get very crowded.
Route Map

Figure 15: Marangu route map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 16: Marangu route altitude and distance profile
Day-by-day Itinerary

Day 1 – Marangu Gate (1,870 meters) to Mandara Hut (2,700 meters):

Distance: ~8km / 5 miles
Trekking time: 4-6 hours
Zone: Rainforest

The Marangu Route begins at Marangu Gate (1,870 meters) on the South-East side of Mount Kilimanjaro (see figure 15). Typically you will be driven to the gate from Moshi, which takes approximately an hour and passes through the village of Marangu. If approaching from Arusha it takes over two hours to reach Marangu gate. At the gate you will meet your trekking team, register with the Kilimanjaro National Park authorities and witness porters assembling and weighing packs of gear that they will be carrying up the mountain. Day one is a gradual trek through the Kilimanjaro rainforest and takes 5-7 hours to complete. Your first night is spent in the Mandara A-frame Huts (2,700 meters) which come equipped with solar generated lighting, flush toilets and water piped in from a nearby mountain stream. Each hut has 6-8 bunk beds. If you are a light sleeper I suggest bringing ear plugs!

Day 2 – Mandara Hut (2,700 meters) to Horombo Hut (3,720 meters):

Distance: ~11.5km / 7 miles
Trekking time: 6-8 hours
Zone: Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

Day two begins with an early start. You will be served breakfast and should be on your way by 08:30. The trek continues through the rainforest, around the base of the Maundi Crater and then transitions rather rapidly into the low alpine moorland zone. If the weather is clear you should definitely take the opportunity to scramble up the Maundi Crater to get your first full view of Kibo. During the trek you will also see giant lobelias which are scattered throughout the landscape at this altitude. Day two takes approximately 6-8 hours to complete and covers a significant distance (11.5km / 7miles). At Horombo Hut (3,720 meters) you will be served dinner and shown to your sleeping quarters for the night.

Day 3 – Horombo Hut (3,720 meters) to Kibo Hut (4,700 meters):

Distance: ~10km / 6 miles
Trekking time: 5-7 hours
Zone: Low alpine zone / High alpine zone

Note: Day three is an acclimatization day for 6 day trekkers. Most six day trekkers venture on a 4-5 hour hike to Mawenzi Hut and back, which is good for acclimatization!
For 5 day trekkers you will depart from Horombo Hut early and begin a 1,000 meter ascent to Kibo Hut which covers a distance of approximately 10km. There are two routes to Kibo. The first, or upper route, forks to the right. Six day trekkers would have trekked this route on their acclimatization day to Mawenzi Hut (see figure 15). You will most likely take the lower left hand route as it is easier and nearly an hour shorter. On the left hand route you will pass the last water point at 4,130 meters. Make sure to fill up your water reserves here as you will not find another watering point until you get back to Horombo Hut from the summit (you are able to buy bottled mineral water at Kibo Hut). At Kibo Hut you will be served an early dinner and should try get to bed before 19:00 as you will be awoken around 23:30 to start your 1,150 meter ascent to Uhuru Peak. Make sure that you have all your gear ready for a prompt departure, including insulated water, snacks, your headlamp and camera.

Day 4 – Kibo Hut (4,700 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then Horombo Hut (3,720 meters):

*Distance: ~5.5km / 3 miles ascent and then 15km / 8 mile descent*
*Trekking time: 6-8 hours to the summit and then 5-8 hours to Horombo Hut*
*Zone: Glacial zone, high alpine zone and low alpine zone*

Day four begins with summit night. After being awoken you will be served some hot tea and biscuits and will then begin your summit ascent. The route follows a rocky path to the first check point, Hans Meyer Cave at 5,150 meters. It then continues to zigzag for a good 2-3 hours until you get to Gilman’s Point (5,681 meters) on Kibo’s crater rim. You will most likely be very tired at this point. Take some time to rest and refuel with a snack. The final push is tough and requires mental stamina. Focus on moving slowly and deliberately for the final 200 meter ascent. At Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) you will not be able to stay too long so make sure to get all the pictures you want to take and then begin your descent back to Kibo Hut, and onto Horombo Hut. In total you will be trekking upwards of 12-16 hours. It will be one of the longest days of your life but well worth it! Here’s the good news, beers can be bought at Horombo!

Day 5 – Horombo Hut (3,720 meters) to Marangu Gate (1,870 meters):

*Distance: ~20km / 12.5 miles*
*Trekking time: 6-8 hours*
*Zone: Low alpine zone and rainforest*

Day five from Horombo Hut to Marangu Gate is nearly 20km but usually only takes 7 hours to complete. You will be exhausted at this stage and spend most of the hike imagining the hot shower you will be having that evening. At Marangu Gate you will be presented with your certificate, either for Gilman’s Point or Uhuru Peak (depending on how far you managed to get). It is customary to present your trekking team with their hard-earned tips at this point (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters – for information on tipping). You will then be driven back to your hotel where celebrations can begin!
4.3 Umbwe Route

Umbwe used to be the steepest, shortest and most direct route to Uhuru Peak. Traditionally the route utilised the steep Western Breach and Arrow’s Glacier path to the summit; however, due to a tragic rock-fall in 2006 that claimed the lives of three trekkers the approach via the Western Breach was closed. It reopened in December 2007 but due to its difficulty and safety risks most travel operators do not offer this route as an option.

Instead the Umbwe Route now joins the Machame Route on the evening of the second day, following the southern circuit to the summit and descending via the Mweka Route (see figure 17).

Traffic for the first two days on the Umbwe route is low but picks up as soon as trekkers join Machame climbers at Barranco Camp.

Most travel operators offer the Umbwe Route on a five, six or seven day itinerary. The five day route is not recommended as there are no acclimatization days and success rates are low. The difference between the six and seven day route is an additional acclimatization day at Barranco Camp. The itinerary set out below is for a six day route.
Route Map

Figure 17: Umbwe route map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 18: Umbwe route altitude and distance profile
Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 – Umbwe Gate (1,600 meters) to Umbwe Cave Camp (2,850 meters):

Distance: ~10.5km / 6 miles
Trekking time: 5-7 hours
Zone: Rainforest

The Umbwe Route departs from the south. Most trekkers get driven from Moshi or Arusha to the Machame Gate, where registration takes place. From there trekkers are transferred to the Umbwe Gate at 1,600 meters. Here you will start your trek with your guide and porters in tow. The route follows a forestry track through the rainforest before steepening between the Lonzo and Umbwe Rivers. If the weather is clear you will get a good view of Kibo in the distance. It takes approximately 5-7 hours to reach Umbwe Cave Camp at 2,850 meters; 10.5km / 6 miles from your starting point. The camp sits between large evergreen trees and thick undergrowth, with Umbwe Cave a short walk away. On arrival your tents will already be assembled and dinner will be served in your mess tent.

Day 2 – Umbwe Cave Camp (2,850 meters) to Barranco Camp (3,900 meters):

Distance: ~6.5km / 3.5 miles
Trekking time: 4-6 hours
Zone: Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

On Day two the landscape changes rapidly from rainforest to moorland, with rocky outcrops and sparse vegetation. The path follows the narrow Umbwe ridge until it begins to flatten close to the Barranco Valley. The Barranco Camp (3,900 meters) sits in the valley under the shadow of the Great Barranco Wall with Kibo visible in the distance. You will notice the camp is pretty busy. This is because you will be joining hikers from the Machame, Lemosho and Shira Route here.

Day 3 – Barranco Camp (3,900 meters) to Karanga Camp (3,960 meters):

Distance: ~6km / 3.5 miles
Trekking time: 4-6 hours
Zone: Low alpine zone / High alpine zone

Day three starts with a steep climb up the 257 meter Barranco Wall. No technical skills are required but you will need to use all four limbs to scramble up to the top. From here you will follow an up and down route along the Southern Circuit (see figure 17) through the Karanga Valley and up to Karanga Camp (3,960 meters). You will stop at Karanga Camp for the night, unless you are on a five day route, in which case you will continue on to Barafu Camp (4,670 meters)

Day 4 – Karanga Camp (3,960 meters) to Barafu Camp (4,670 meters):
Day four is a relatively short climb from Karanga Camp to Barafu Camp at 4,670 meters. The route sojourns through the rocky and sparsely vegetated high alpine desert zone. Barafu Camp is very exposed to the elements, especially the gale force winds that are common at this altitude. You will arrive at the camp around lunchtime, giving you lots of time to rest or potentially climb a bit higher if you are feeling up to it. Many people have lost their appetite by this stage in the trek but it is important that you try to eat some food. Set an hour aside to ensure that your gear is ready and packed for the summit ascent which begins around midnight. Don’t forget to carry additional batteries for your headlamp and camera, and remember to make sure your water bottles are well insulated (wrapping them in your extra pair of warm socks works well). Try get to bed before 19:00 as you will be awoken around 23:30 to begin your summit attempt.

Day 5 – Barafu Camp (4,670 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then Mweka Camp (3,100 meters):

Distance: ~4.5km / 3 miles ascent and then 11km / 7 mile descent
Trekking time: 6-8 hours to the summit and then 5-8 hours to Mweka
Zone: Glacial zone and the all preceding zones

After being awoken with hot tea and biscuits you will set off up the heavily screed slopes of Kibo. The route up to the carter rim is long and arduous! Your physical and mental capacities will be seriously tested. It is important to remain focused on your goal, one step at a time. Around dawn you will reach Stellar Point (5,739 meters – see figure 14) at the top of the crater rim. This is not the summit but is a major milestone. Take a moment to rest and enjoy where you have got to but don’t lie down as this can stymie your final push to the summit. From Stellar Point the route flattens as you walk an additional 1-2 hours to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters). You will not be able to stay too long at the summit as the lack of oxygen and cold is debilitating. Make sure to get all the pictures and video footage you want and then make your way back to Stellar Point. Many trekkers decide to scree slide down the slopes of Kibo to Barafu Camp where you will have a chance to take a short break before continuing on to Mweka Camp. Remember to use your trekking poles as the impact on your knees of the 5-8 hour descent from the Summit to Mweka Camp can be very tiring and painful.

Day 6 – Mweka Camp (3,100 meters) to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters):

Distance: ~9km / 6 miles
Trekking time: 3-5 hours
Zone: Rainforest
By the morning of the sixth day you should have your appetite back and can enjoy your last breakfast on the mountain before heading down through the thick undergrowth of the lower slopes. Your knees may be very sore so go slowly and make sure of each footing as you descend to Mweka Gate. On arrival at the gate you will sign-out with the authorities and be presented with your summit certificate. At this point it is customary to present your porters with their tips (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters for advice on tipping), before being transported back to your hotel in Moshi or Arusha.
4.4 Lemosho Route

The Lemosho Route is relatively new. It starts on the Western side of Mount Kilimanjaro at the Londorossi Gate and was introduced as an alternative to the Shira Route which begins at a higher, more challenging altitude.

The Londorossi Gate is a fair drive from the town of Moshi, and considerably further from Arusha. At the gate you will register with the authorities before being driven a further 12km to the starting point.

The western side of Kilimanjaro is still very wild and you may get lucky and spot large antelope, buffalo and maybe even elephant.

On day three the Lemosho Route joins the Machame Route at Lava Tower and down towards Barranco Valley via the Southern Circuit (see figure 19). As with the Machame Route, Lemosho trekkers need to transverse the Barranco Wall (see figure 21) and then summit from Barafu Camp. Descent is via the Mweka route.

Most trekkers complete the Lemosho Route in six days; however some tour operators offer seven or even eight day hikes on the Lemosho which of course increases the probability of success. The seven day route typically stops for a night at both Shira Camp 1 and Shira Camp 2. Eight day treks stop again at Karanga Camp for another acclimatization day.

Below is the itinerary for a six day Lemosho Route.
Figure 19: Lemosho route map

Figure 20: Lemosho route altitude and distance profile
**Day-by-day Itinerary**

*Day 1 – Londorossi Gate (2,100 meters) – start point 2,360 meters to Mti Mkubwa Camp (2,820 meters):*

**Distance:** ~5.5km / 3 miles  
**Trekking time:** 3-4 hours  
**Zone:** Rainforest

The Lemosho Route departs from the far West side of Mount Kilimanjaro. Getting to Londorossi Gate (2,100 meters) takes approximately 2 hours from Moshi and longer from Arusha. At the gate you will register with the Kilimanjaro National Park authorities before getting back into vehicles to be transported to the starting point which is a further 12km from Londorossi. During the wet season the track can be very inaccessible to vehicles and you may need to walk the last few miles to the starting point. Most tour operators provide lunch at this point before starting your short trek to Mti Mkubwa Camp (2,820 meters). Spotting large wildlife like elephant and buffalo is possible on this stretch of the mountain and you will likely be accompanied by an armed guide in case one of the big five gets too close for comfort! Dinner will be served when you reach Mti Mkubwa Camp.

*Day 2 – Mti Mkubwa Camp (2,820 meters) to Shira Camp 2 (3,850 meters):*

**Distance:** ~16km / 8.5 miles  
**Trekking time:** 6-8 hours  
**Zone:** Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

Day two starts with a gradual hike through the final stretch of the rainforest zone and then gets steeper as you approach the low alpine moorland zone. The trek is a long one that stops briefly for lunch at Shira Camp 1 which is on the western edge of the Shira Plateau; just over 8km from your starting point. You then continue on your hike across and up the Shira plateau to Shira Camp 2 at 3,850 meters. Here you will join trekkers from the Machame Route whilst enjoying stunning view across the valley below and Western Breach of Kilimanjaro above. The plateau is exposed so be prepared for a cold night with temperatures getting below zero.

*Day 3 – Shira Camp (3,850 meters) to Lava Tower (4,600 meters) and then Barranco Camp (3,900 meters):*

**Distance:** ~11km / 7 miles  
**Trekking time:** 5-7 hours  
**Zone:** Low alpine zone / High alpine zone

On day three you will start trekking due east from the Shira Plateau, passing through the ‘Garden of the Senecios’ which also features many giant lobelias. The landscape rapidly becomes desert-like as you approach Lava Tower and the Shark’s Tooth formation at 4,600 meters (see figure 13). You will have lunch at Lava Tower before
joining the Southern Circuit trail (see figure 19) which descends to Barranco Camp 3,900 meters where you will spend the night at a very similar elevation as the night before. Climbing high and sleeping low is a good way to acclimatize the body to altitude. Note: some tour operators offer variations of this route via Moir Camp just north of Lava Tower, before joining the Southern Circuit.

Day 4 – Barranco Camp (3,900 meters) to Karanga Camp (3,960 meters) (and then Barafu Camp – 4,680 meters):

Distance: ~9.5km / 6 miles  
Treking time: 8-10 hours  
Zone: High alpine zone

On day four you will be presented with the relatively steep Barranco ‘Breakfast’ climb, a 257 meter scramble up the Barranco Wall (see figure 21). Be prepared to use all four limbs as you traverse the wall to the top of the Karanga Valley. From here you will follow a path that sojourns through many inclines and declines to Karanga Camp (3,960 meters). For those on an eight day hike, this will be your camp for the night. Six and seven day trekkers will stop here for a brief lunch before continuing on through the barren desert landscape that leads to the Mweka trail (see figure 19) and up to Baraflu Camp (4,680 meters). At Baraflu you will have an early dinner and then ‘hit the sack’ for some much needed rest before your summit attempt which begins at midnight. Please make sure that you have organised all your gear for the summit. You will be awoken in the dark and searching for your headlamp or camera at this time is not a good way to start your summit attempt.

Day 5 – Baraflu Camp (4,680 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then Mweka Camp (3,100 meters):

Distance: ~4.5km / 3 miles ascent and then 11km / 7 mile descent  
Treking time: 6-8 hours to the summit and then 5-8 hours to Mweka  
Zone: Glacial zone and the all preceding zones

Day five starts at midnight with hot tea, biscuits and a long and zigzagging hike up the heavy scree that covers the steep slopes of Kibo. The going is slow and very tough. You will need to dig deep and ensure you maintain a consistent pace to push yourself up to the crater rim. After about 4-6 hours hiking you will reach Stellar Point (5,739 meters – see figure 14) where you will have a chance to rest and watch dawn break across the Tanzanian landscape. It is a good idea to have some hot tea or hot chocolate at this point as you will need to muster the energy to continue for another 1-2 hours around and up the crater rim to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters). Remember to keep your momentum moving forward, one step at a time. Over 60% of climbers stop at Stellar Point but most can make it to the summit if they are able to find the mental strength to push through. Obviously if you are experiencing severe AMS symptoms (see Chapter 8 – Acclimatization and AMS) you should descend immediately. Your time at Uhuru Peak will be brief. Take as many pictures as you can, savour your
accomplishment and then start heading back to Stellar Point. Many trekkers slide down the scree slopes of Kibo to Barafu Camp, where you will have a chance to rest before continuing on to Mweka Camp (3,100 meters). In total you will be trekking between 12-16 hours on day 5 so it is really important that you pace yourself and remain hydrated.

**Day 6 – Mweka Camp (3,100 meters) to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters):**

*Distance: ~9km / 6 miles*  
*Trekking time: 3-5 hours*  
*Zone: Rainforest*

The final day on the mountain is a short one, but nonetheless tiring as your body will be exhausted and your knees will likely be sore from the previous day’s descent. Go slowly and enjoy the wonderful rainforest scenery as you head towards Mweka Gate (1,640 meters). At the gate you will need to sign-out with the authorities and will also receive your certificate, either for Stellar Point or for Uhuru Peak. It is customary to pay your tips to your trekking team (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters for advice on tipping) before you depart back to your hotel in Moshi or Arusha.

Figure 21: Barranco Wall, a 257 meters scramble that you will face on either day four or day five. You do not need technical climbing skills to traverse the Barranco Wall.
4.5 Shira Route

Shira Route starts at 3,600 meters and is therefore not ideal for trekkers who have little or no experience of high altitude trekking.

The Shira Route is practically identical to the Lemosho Route (see section 4.4). In fact, Shira was the original route before Lemosho was created to improve the route start point. Whereas Lemosho Route starts at the Londorossi Gates, the Shira Route bypasses this and begins further north and higher up at the Shira Gate.

On the first day hikers trek from Shira Gate to Simba Camp which is at a very similar same altitude, allowing trekkers to acclimatize before joining the Lemosho Route on day two at Shira Camp 2.

The high starting point is however a major negative for this route and some trekkers experience altitude sickness from day one as their bodies haven’t had enough time to acclimatize.

After Shira Camp 2 the route joins the Machame Route via Lava Tower, and then descends to the Barranco Camp via the Southern Circuit (see figure 22). Like the Machame, Umbwe and Lemosho Route, ascent to Uhuru Peak is made via Barafu Camp and up the southern slopes of Kibo. Descent is via the Mweka Route.

The Shira Route can be completed in six or seven days.

This section does not provide a detailed day-by-day route itinerary as this can be read in section 4.4 (Lemosho Route), which is identical apart from a different start point and first day trekking.
Route Map

Figure 22: Shira Route Map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 23: Shira route altitude and distance profile
4.6 Rongai Route

The Rongai Route is the only trail from the North-East side of Mount Kilimanjaro. Because of its remote location the route offers trekkers a relatively unspoilt wilderness experience where it is possible to see large wildlife like antelope, elephant and buffalo.

The North-East side of the mountain gets significantly less moisture than the southern slopes which means that trekkers are less likely to encounter rain. Trekkers are also more likely to get clear, unclouded views of the mountain.

The Rongai Route is flatter than the other Kilimanjaro routes but because of its profile it does not offer trekkers the option to climb high and sleep low. It can be hiked on a six, seven or even eight day route. The seven or eight day routes are highly recommended as trekkers have extra days to acclimatize. Summit night from Kibo Hut is steep and follows the same path taken by Marangu trekkers which passes Gilman’s Point to Uhuru Peak.

Due to its remote setting the route receives the least traffic of all the routes on Kilimanjaro.

The route descends via the Marangu trail.

The itinerary below is for a six day trek. Seven and eight day trekkers usually spend an additional day at Mawenzi Tarn (4,300 meters) to acclimatize. Eight day trekkers also typically stop on day two at Rongai Second Cave (3,450 meters) before proceeding to Kikelewa Camp (3,600 meters).
Route Map

Figure 24: Rongai route map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 25: Rongai route altitude and distance profile
Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 – Rongai Start Point (1,950 meters) to Rongai First Cave (2,620 meters):

Distance: ~6.5km / 3.5 miles
Trekking time: 3-4 hours
Zone: Rainforest

On day one trekkers are driven from either Moshi or Arusha to Marangu Gate for registration before be shuttled a further 70 kilometres on poor roads to the Rongai Start Point at 1,950 meters. The trek begins from Nale Moru village and follows a gradual and winding trail that first crosses maize fields before entering the rainforest. The first day’s hiking is easy going and you will arrive at Rongai First Cave (2,620 meters) around mid-afternoon, where you can freshen up and have dinner.

Day 2 – Rongai Cave (2,620 meters) to Kikelewa Camp (3,600 meters):

Distance: ~12km / 6.5 miles
Trekking time: 6-8 hours
Zone: Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

On day two the hike continues from Rongai First Cave through the rainforest before transitioning into the low alpine moorland zone where you will notice the vegetation change to shrubs and grasses. You will stop for lunch at Rongai Second Cave (3,450 meters), 6km from the First Cave Camp, before turning east to Kikelewa Camp (3,600 meters) for your overnight stay. Depending on your tour operator, eight day trekkers might stop at Rongai Second Caves for the night before proceeding to Kikelewa Camp.

Day 3 – Kikelewa Camp (3,600 meters) to Mawenzi Tarn (4,300 meters):

Distance: ~4km / 2.5 miles
Trekking time: 3-4 hours
Zone: Low alpine zone / High alpine zone

Day three is a short, but steep climb from Kikelewa Camp to Mawenzi Tarn (4,300 meters) which sits in the shadow of the magnificent Mawenzi Peak. You will arrive at Mawenzi Tarn in time for lunch and then have the whole afternoon to explore the surrounds and acclimatize.

Day 4 – Mawenzi Tarn (4,300 meters) to Kibo Hut (4,700 meters):

Distance: ~9km / 5.5 miles
Trekking time: 8-10 hours
Zone: High alpine zone

Day four is a long but very gradual hike from Mawenzi Tarn heading west through the Saddle which is formed between the peaks of Kibo and Mawenzi, and up to Kibo
Hut (4,700 meters). The route is dry, barren and rather inhospitable, but provides spectacular views of Kibo. At Kibo Hut you will get served dinner and will go to bed early as you will be awoken around 23:30 to begin your summit attempt. Trekkers should remember to prepare their gear, including headlamp, camera, insulated water and warm weather clothes before they go to sleep.

**Note:** Seven and Eight day trekkers typically hike from Mawenzi Tarn to Kibo Hut and back on day four. They then trek to Kibo Hut again on day five before continuing to Uhuru peak on day six / seven.

**Day 5 – Kibo Hut (4,700 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then Horombo Hut (3,720 meters):**

*Distance:* ~5.5km / 3 miles ascent and then 15km / 8 mile descent
*Trekking time:* 6-8 hours to the summit and then 5-8 hours to Horombo Hut
*Zone:* Glacial zone, high alpine zone and low alpine zone

Day five begins at midnight, after being awoken with tea and biscuits you will begin your ascent in the dark across a rocky path to the first check point, Hans Meyer Cave at 5,150 meters. You should have a break here and refuel on an energy bar. The path then zigzags and increases in steepness as you approach Gilman’s Point 2-3 hours later at 5,681 meters. You are now on Kibo’s crater rim, a huge achievement! But you still have a 200 meter ascent to trek to the summit, Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters). Dig deep to find the reserves and mental stamina to push you up the final slopes. At Uhuru Peak you will be able to stay briefly before descending back to Kibo Hut and on to Horombo Hut. In total you will be trekking upwards of 12-16 hours. It will be one of the longest days of your life but well worth it! Here’s the good news, beers can be bought at Horombo Hut!

**Day 6 – Horombo Hut (3,720 meters) to Marangu Gate (1,870 meters):**

*Distance:* ~20km / 13 miles
*Trekking time:* 6-8 hours
*Zone:* Low alpine zone and rainforest

The final day from Horombo Hut to Marangu Gate (1,870 meters) is a long one, nearly 20km! Your knees will be sore from the previous days hike so go slowly and make sure of your footing as you descend, using your trekking poles to limit the impact on your joints. At Marangu Gate, the place where you signed in 6 days ago, you will now sign-out. Those who got as far as Gilman’s Point but no further will be presented with a green certificate. Trekkers who made it all the way to Uhuru Peak will receive a gold certificate. Most trekkers present their trekking team with their hard earned tips at this stage (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters – for information on tipping) before being driven back to your hotel for a well-deserved hot shower!
4.7 Northern Circuit

The Northern Circuit is one of the newest routes on Mount Kilimanjaro.

It begins in the West at the Londorossi Gate and follows the same path as the Lemosho Route for the first two days. After crossing the Shira Plateau the path veers north after Lava Tower, following the longer Northern Circuit instead of the more popular Southern Circuit via Barranco Valley (see figure 26).

The route circles around the quieter northern slopes to the east side of the mountain. There are a few different route variations from this point; however, all approach the summit via Gilman’s Point and then either descend via the Mweka Route joining trekkers from the Machame, Umbwe, Lemosho and Shira routes, or via the Marangu Route.

The route is longer than the other trails on Kilimanjaro, taking a minimum of eight days to complete, with most tour operators offering a nine day trek. The additional time on the mountain means that success rates for Northern Circuit trekkers are relatively high.

The eight day trek skips the additional acclimatization day that is usually spent at Shira Camp 2 and continues straight on to Moir Camp, via Lava Tower. The itinerary below is for a nine day trek, using the Mweka Route for descent.
Route Map

Figure 26: Northern Circuit Route Map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 27: Northern Circuit Route Altitude and Distance Profile
Day-by-day Itinerary

Day 1 – Londorossi Gate (2,100 meters) – start point 2,360 meters to Mti Mkubwa Camp (2,820 meters):

Distance: ~5.5km / 3 miles
Trekking time: 3-4 hours
Zone: Rainforest

The Northern Circuit Route begins at Londorossi Gate (2,100 meters) in the West, the same start point as the Lemosho Route. The drive to Londorossi Gate takes approximately two hours from Moshi and considerably longer from Arusha. Registration with the Kilimanjaro National Park authorities occurs at the gate and then you will be driven further up the mountain to the trailhead starting point. Most tour operators serve lunch here before the short first day trek to Mti Mkubwa Camp (2,820 meters) begins. You may get lucky and spot large wildlife like elephant and buffalo that sometimes emerge from the rainforest onto the path as you trek towards your first camp. Dinner will be served when you reach Mti Mkubwa Camp.

Day 2 – Mti Mkubwa Camp (2,820 meters) to Shira Camp 1 (3,610 meters):

Distance: ~8km / 5 miles
Trekking time: 5-6 hours
Zone: Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

On day two you will spend the first hour trekking through the last section of rainforest path before entering the low alpine moorland zone which follows up onto the Shira Plateau. The trek is relatively short and gradual, ending at Shira Camp 1 (3,610 meters).

Day 3 – Shira Camp 1 (3,610 meters) to Shira Camp 2 (3,850 meters):

Distance: ~7km / 4 miles
Trekking time: 3-4 hours
Zone: Rainforest / Low Alpine Zone

On day three the trek crosses the Shira Plateau from Shira Camp 1 to Shira Camp 2. Nine day trekkers usually spend the night at Shira Camp 2 where they will join trekkers from the Machame Route. At Shira Camp 2 it is worth trekking a little higher up the plateau to enjoy the stunning view across the valley below and Western Breach of Kilimanjaro above. The plateau is exposed so be prepared for a cold night with temperatures getting below zero. Note: Trekkers on an eight day hike will continue east up the Shira Plateau ridge and on to Lava Tower (4,600 meters) and then back down via the Northern Circuit to Moir Camp (4,200 meters).

Day 4 – Shira Camp 2 (3,850 meters) to Lava Tower (4,600 meters) and then north to Moir Camp (4,200 meters):
Distance: ~14km / 8 miles  
Trekking time: 5-7 hours  
Zone: Low alpine zone / High alpine zone

Day four is a long trek heading east which passes through the ‘Garden of the Senecios’ and then enters the high alpine desert zone. The morning is spent trekking up to Lava Tower and the iconic Shark’s Tooth rock formation at 4,600 meters, where you will have lunch. After lunch you will join the northern circuit heading down to Moir Camp at 4,200 meters (see figure 26). This is an important day in your trek as you will get to experience high altitude and then sleep low, which is good for the acclimatization process.

Day 5 – Moir Camp (4,200 meters) to Buffalo Camp (4,020 meters):

Distance: ~12km / 7 miles  
Trekking time: 5-7 hours  
Zone: High alpine zone

Day five involves a moderately steep climb out of Moir Valley. Trekkers can take a small detour here to climb the summit of Little Lent Hill at 4,375 meters before returning to the northern circuit trail. From here the route follows a series of inclines and declines, skirting around the northern slopes of Kibo to Buffalo Camp (4,020 meters). The trek gives great vistas out across the plains that lie north of Kilimanjaro and stretch out to the Kenyan / Tanzanian border. You will arrive at Buffalo Camp just after midday, where you will have lunch and have time to rest after a long day hiking.

Day 6 – Buffalo Camp (4,020 meters) to Rongai Third Cave (3,800 meters):

Distance: ~8km / 5 miles  
Trekking time: 5-7 hours  
Zone: High alpine zone and low alpine zone

Day six starts with a climb up the Buffalo ridge and down into Porfu Camp where lunch is usually served. The route then continues east around the northern slopes to the Rongai Third Cave at 3,800 meters. The trek is shorter than the day before and by now you should be feeling well acclimatized to the altitude. You will arrive at the Third Cave just around mid-afternoon.

Day 7 – 3rd Cave (3,800 meters) to School Hut (4,800 meters):

Distance: ~15km / 8 miles  
Trekking time: 4-5 hours  
Zone: High alpine zone and glacial zone

Day seven involves a steady incline up and over the Saddle which sits between the peaks of Kibo and Mawenzi Peak. Trekkers then continue walking south-west up to
School Hut (4,800 meters). After arriving at School Hut you will be served an early dinner and then you should get some shut-eye as you will be awoken before midnight to start your summit attempt. Remember to prepare all your gear, including warm clothes, insulated water bottles, snacks, headlamp and camera before going to bed.

Day 8 – School Hut (4,800 meters) to Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters) and then onto Millennium Camp (3,950 meters):

Distance: ~6km / 3.5 miles ascent and 10.5km / 6 mile descent
Trekking time: 6-8 hours ascent and then 4-6 hour descent
Zone: Glacial zone and all preceding zones

You will be awoken around 11:30 with hot tea and biscuits and will then begin the steep incline up the slopes of Kibo under the cover of darkness. Your first checkpoint is Hans Meyer Cave where you will take a short break. The climb steepens as you approach Gilman’s Point (5,681 meters), which will be around 5-6 hours after departing School Hut. Take a moment to enjoy the approaching dawn and incredible view out and across to Mawenzi Peak, but remember you still have 1-2 hours trekking to reach Uhuru Peak so dig deep for the energy. The slope flattens as you head west around the crater rim and you should arrive at the summit at or just after sunrise. Your stay here will be brief so get as many pictures as you can of the incredible views and surrounding glaciers. You will then retrace your steps back around the carter rim to Stellar Point (5,739 meters) where you will turn south and head down the heavily screed slopes of Kibo to Barafu Camp (4,680 meters). Most trekkers take a short break here before continuing down to Millennium Camp (3,950 meters) for your final night on the mountain. In total you will be trekking for 14-16 hours on day eight so it is important to pace yourself, remain hydrated and keep your blood sugar levels up. Note: some tour operators return via Gilman’s Point to Horombo Hut using the Marangu Route.

Day 9 – Millennium Camp (3,950 meters) to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters):

Distance: ~10km / 6.5 miles
Trekking time: 3-4 hours
Zone: Rainforest zone

The final day is a short hike through the dense montane rainforest from Millennium Camp (3,950 meters) to Mweka Gate (1,640 meters). At the gate you will need to sign-out with the authorities, who will also provide you with your official certificate – a green certificate for those who made it to Gilman’s Point and a gold certificate for those who reached Uhuru Peak. It is customary to give your guides and porters tips at this point (see Chapter 9 – Guides and Porters – for information on tipping) before being driven back to your hotel in Moshi or Arusha.
4.8 Western Breach

The Western Breach is the most technically challenging route to the Kilimanjaro’s Summit. As the name suggests, the Western Breach sits on the western side of Kibo and was formed hundreds of thousands of years ago by volcanic eruptions and lava flows from Kibo’s Crater.

Due to its steep and rocky slopes, the Western Breach is considered a risky and dangerous route. In fact, in 2006 a tragic accident occurred when a rock-fall killed three trekkers on the route. Kilimanjaro authorities closed the route briefly but it reopened in late 2007. Due to its high risk profile most tour operators do not offer treks using the Western Breach to the summit.

The Western Breach can be approach from many of Kilimanjaro’s routes, including the Lemosho and Shira in the West, and the Machame and Umbwe in the South. The Umbwe is the most popular and demanding approach.

Trekkers depart from Umbwe Gate at 1,600 meters and rapidly ascend to Barranco Camp at 3,900 meters, via Umbwe Camp (2,850 meters) in two days. From here most trekkers would take the Southern Circuit to Karanga and then onto Barafu to approach Kilimanjaro’s summit from the South East. The Western Breach route continues north up to Lava Tower (see figure 13) for the night and then onto Arrow’s Glacier to join the Western Breach approach (see figure 28).

The fourth day is a steep scramble up to the Reutsch Crater (5,800 meters) where trekkers spend the night near one of Kilimanjaro’s last remaining glaciers, Furtwangler Glacier.

Day five is a short trek from the Reutsch Crater to the summit of Kilimanjaro, Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters). Trekkers typically return down the southern slopes of Kibo to Barafu Camp (4,680 meters) and then onto Mweka Camp (3,100 meters) for their last night on Kilimanjaro.

The route is typically completed in six days and does not provide much time for trekkers to acclimatize. For this reason, the Western Breach should only be considered by trekkers with significant high altitude trekking experience.
Route Map

Figure 28: Western Breach Route Map

Route Altitude and Distance Profile

Figure 29: Western Breach Route Altitude and Distance Profile
5. Visas, Vaccinations and Medications

“When you got a condition, it's bad to forget your medicine.” — Frank Miller

A lot of preparation work is required before you depart for Kilimanjaro. In this chapter I discuss the essential administrative tasks you need to get sorted in terms of visas, vaccinations and medications.

Tourist visa

Most people who visit Tanzania require a visa. It is recommended you get a Visa before you travel; however, it is possible to be granted a visa on entry in Tanzania. I recommend preparing your visa before departure. Full details on visa requirements are available on the official Tanzanian embassy website for your country.

Medical check-up

If you haven’t had a recent medical check-up I would recommend doing so before you leave for Tanzania. In general if you are in a fit and healthy condition you should be able to cope with most things that Kilimanjaro throws at you. But rather be safe than sorry.

Yellow fever and other vaccinations

There are a number of vaccinations that you should get before you travel. I recommend you check with your local GP or travel clinic which vaccinations you require. In general you should get Hepatitis A and a booster vaccination for diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Depending on where you are flying in from you will likely need a Yellow Fever vaccination. Here are the official regulations:

- If you fly to Nairobi or Addis Adaba (or any other Yellow fever infected area) to Kilimanjaro International Airport you will need the Yellow fever vaccination card. Technically if you stay less than 6 hours in Nairobi or Addis Adaba you do not need the vaccination card, but experience of many travelers at Kilimanjaro International Airport suggest that authorities will request the card. So make sure you have it with you.
- If you fly from Amsterdam to Kilimanjaro International Airport directly you do not need the yellow fever vaccination card.
- Some countries see Tanzania as a yellow fever country and therefore you might require the vaccination card on return to your origin.

In short, I recommend you get a Yellow Fever vaccination and remember to carry it with you when you enter Tanzania.
Malaria

Malaria is an infection caused by a mosquito bite. Tanzania is a malaria country and therefore every precaution should be taken to avoid getting malaria.

Step one is to protect yourself against mosquito bites. This can be done by wearing mosquito repellent (make sure it contains deet), staying indoors between dusk and dawn, applying repellent to your skin, clothes and bedding, using a mosquito net and wearing long trousers and long-sleeve shirts that are light in color (mosquitos are attracted to dark colors).

The good news is that mosquitos are not found at altitude. You are unlikely to come into contact with mosquitos over 1,800m. Therefore as a trekker your greatest risk of infection is just before and after your climb.

Taking anti-malarial drugs

To avoid infection you can take anti-malarial drugs. There are various drugs on the market and I recommend consulting your GP to decide which is best for you. The type of drug depends on many factors such as length of stay, your age and the degree to which resistance to the drug has occurred in the region you are travelling to.

Note: Larium is a popular anti-malarial drug that has been shown to predispose people to acute mountain sickness (AMS). It also has side effects that mimic those of AMS making diagnosis difficult.

The drug that I have seen used most regularly is Malarone. It is more expensive but appears to do the job.

Top tip: Tanzania is a country that poses many health risks, as does trekking Kilimanjaro. There is no harm in having a full medical check-up and taking all precautions to lower the risk of injury, illness or death. Please consult your doctor for advice before you travel and trek Kilimanjaro.
6. Fitness and Nutrition

“Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude” - Zig Ziglar

Training to trek Kilimanjaro is as much about your physical endurance as it is about your mental stamina.

The former is important as you will be trekking between 5-10 miles a day for the duration of your climb (which can be up to 9 days if you have booked onto a long route). The ability to draw on physical reserves as your energy depletes is key.

However, if you read about or speak to high altitude climbers they will all say that your mental stamina is just as important as your physical endurance. This is definitely true of Kilimanjaro, particularly on summit night!

Here are 3 things you can do to prepare for your trek.

Fitness

Aerobic training

Aerobic training (also known as cardio) uses oxygen to adequately meet the energy demands of exercise via aerobic metabolism. The types of exercise that use aerobic metabolism are generally light-to-moderate intensity activities like long distance jogging, swimming, cycling and walking. This differs from anaerobic exercise like high intensity weight lifting and sprinting which uses anaerobic metabolism to supplement the aerobic system due to increased energy demands.

Aerobic exercise builds the cardiovascular system which is important when training to trek Kilimanjaro, as a strong cardiovascular system will help you process limited oxygen in a more efficient way.

There is a flip side though. The more fit you are, the harder and faster you can push yourself, and the quicker you think you can ascend Kilimanjaro.

This is a huge mistake!

Going as slow as possible, even when you are on the lower reaches and feeling great, is key to your success on Kilimanjaro. You will hear your porters say Pole Pole, which means ‘Slow Slow’ in Swahili. This is possibly the best advice you will get!

Your body needs time to acclimatize to high altitude and a strong cardiovascular system can help but not if you have pushed yourself too hard. A good recent example of how a strong cardiovascular system can be misleading comes from an
accomplished Australian marathon runner who collapsed at Stellar Point (5,739 meters) because he had trekked too fast early on in his hike.

If you are relatively unfit I recommend setting yourself a 3-6 month training regime where you focus on long distance walking/running (6-12 km at least three times a week). You can do this on a treadmill in the gym but remember to set a consistent pace and vary the slope (a slight incline is best).

For relatively fit people who already undertake a fair share of cardiovascular exercise as part of their normal weekly routine I recommend maintaining your regime until one month before your trek. At this point I recommend increasing the duration, but not intensity of your exercises.

Please always consult a doctor before starting an exercise regime that you are not accustomed with.

**Hiking**

The best way to prepare for a long trek is to do a few hikes yourself.

I recommend doing at least two long distance hikes (over 5 hours). If you can do back-to-back days hiking that would be even better. Doing a few practices hikes as part of your Kilimanjaro training has a few benefits:

- You get to experience what a 5 hour hike on difficult terrain feels like, going up and down (for me down is often more gruelling as your knees and joints can take a battering)
- You get to wear in your boots. There is nothing worse than arriving in Kilimanjaro with unworn-in boots. This can seriously stymie your summit attempt as you will get blisters and sore feet early on in your hike.

**Mental stamina**

So often the thing that gets trekkers to the top of Kilimanjaro is there mental stamina. There will be times during the summit night that you will want to give up and go back down. Being able to dig deep and pull on your mental reserves is so important.

Thankfully there are activities to train your mental stamina. Most require some form of pushing your body to the extreme, or to what you think your limits are, and then pushing through to accomplish your goal.

I recommend long distance running, particularly marathons, but half marathons can do the same thing if you are not accustomed to running long distance. This type of activity really requires one to draw on their mental reserves to get to the finish line.

Most people who run marathons will tell you the last mile was all mental. If you can get in that state of mind at least once before Kilimanjaro then you will be well prepared for the final push up the slopes of Kibo.
I truly believe most people – regardless of age or physical condition – can climb Kilimanjaro (within reason, of course!). All one needs to do is ensure their cardiovascular system is firing on all engines and that they have the mental strength to see the hike till the end.

**Top tip:** Over and above the importance of improving your fitness for trekking Kilimanjaro is the having the knowledge of how the body acclimatizes to altitude. Please make sure to read Chapter 8 – Acclimatization and Acute Mountain Sickness – to understand the physiological dynamics at play.

**Nutrition**

Eating well on the mountain is important. Your climbing crew will provide you with a variety of food which will meet all of your nutritional requirements (see Figure 30). Commonsense prevails, but try get a good mix of food during the day including fruit, vegetables, some protein (meat, fish, eggs) and high carbohydrate food (pasta, bread, rice, porridge). The two things to watch out for are:

**Dehydration**

You will be exerting yourself every day and therefore losing lots of fluid. Fluid replacement is important! Aim to drink 3-4 liters a day of water mixed with an isotonic or hypotonic solution (which aids water absorption into the blood and body cells). Obviously don’t overhydrate as this can be harmful. Straw colored urine indicates good hydration. Always remember to add water purification tablets (I will explain more about water purification in Chapter 7 – Equipment and Kit List).

Important: Just drinking water can result in a rapid fall in plasma sodium concentration which accentuates dehydration. Add a sports drink powder to ensure this doesn’t occur

Avoid alcohol and caffeine as much as possible (have hot chocolate instead)

**Low blood sugar**

Low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, causes fatigue and is common during prolonged exercise.

To avoid low blood sugar it is important that your body has enough energy stores, especially muscle glycogen (carbohydrates).

This means regular intake of balanced meals and snacks. Each meal should include a small amount of protein, carbohydrate and fat

Eating a small snack, such as some nuts or an oat bar, during your trek is recommended. However, don’t overdose on sweets as this can result in a spike in your blood sugar
Top tip: Do not bring pure milk chocolate bars as these will either melt during the day or freeze during the night. Instead take breakfast or oat bars.

Figure 30: Example of a meal served by your trekking crew. Food usually consists of fruit, bread rolls, soup, fried chicken, sausage and eggs. Porridge is often served for breakfast, and teas, coffee and hot chocolate are usually provided as well
7. Equipment and Kit List

*I think if I get the training spot on, the equipment perfect and I'm in the right state of mind, I can get a result there from no competitive action* - David Millar

Typically you get two types of trekkers on Kilimanjaro - those who are woefully unprepared and under-equipped and those who have spent an arm and a leg on equipment that they will unlikely use during their trek.

This chapter provides a happy medium between the two and covers all mandatory equipment that I recommend you purchase in preparation for your adventure.

If you happen to forget a few things you can usually hire from your tour operator or buy equipment from the various hawkers who loiter outside the route gates trying to sell you everything under the sun. Remember if you decide to buy from these guys they will always try to overcharge. Bartering is just the way it is done in Tanzania.

For your convenience I have provided a full checklist at the end of this chapter.
3.1 Clothes

On Mount Kilimanjaro you will be trekking through four climatic zones (see Chapter 3). To ensure that you remain perfectly comfortable in each zone it is critical that you understand the concept of layering – the ability to layer up and layer down as the weather changes.

Layering only works if each layer supports the wicking process (allowing moisture to pass from one layer to the next). Layers should therefore hug the skin (i.e. not too tight, but equally not too loose) and consist of wickable fabric.

Cotton should be avoided as it is hydrophilic, meaning that moisture struggles to pass through and therefore the wicking process stops.

There are three layers of clothes that you need to take with you

First layer (or next-to-skin layer)

This is arguably the most important layer as it is the one that comes in contact with your skin. You will not need to wear this layer for the first few days on the mountain (unless it is very cold).

- I recommend 1x next-to-skin pants and top (high wicking material)
- For the lower reaches you can wear a pair of light-weight trekking trousers / shorts (x1) and breathable t-shirts (x4-5). To save money and space I would purchase trousers that can covert quickly and easily to shorts

Second layer (or insulation layer)

The second layer needs to consist of insulating fleece materials. You can skip getting a second layer for your legs as you will have very warm third layer trousers that you will be wearing over your thermal pants on summit night, but I do suggest you get a good quality second layer jumper or jacket. This can be worn in the evenings when temperatures get cold and will be worn on summit night.

- I recommend 1 x Polartec Classic 200 for light-weight warmth and breathability. The 100s are the lightest and not as warm as the 300s which are too heavy in my opinion – 200 is a happy medium

Third layer (or water proof layer)

In most cases you will only need your third layer on summit night. This layer is very important and needs to be waterproof, breathable and very warm. I recommend going into a specialist store to purchase this layer. There are two parts to your outer layer:
• 1 x jacket (waterproof, windproof, breathable and very warm). It can snow heavily during your ascent and winds can get up to gale force. Having a good jacket is seriously worth the expense. Do not go ol' cheapo!
• 1 x trousers (again waterproof, windproof, breathable and very warm). Good quality snow trousers with an inner fleece layer will do the job.

In addition to these items I would definitely take with you lightweight rain gear (top and bottom) which often comes in handy on the lower reaches.

**Not recommended**

You should not bring:

• Jeans for obvious reasons – they absorb many times their weight in water, are difficult to trek in, take a long time to dry out, rapidly transfer heat from the body, must I continue …)
• Cotton. Wearing cotton shirts on the lower reaches is fine but in general I would avoid cotton all together. It absorbs moisture and blocks breathability.
The footwear you take on the mountain is very important. Here are the four key things you need to take and one optional accessory.

**Hiking boots**

Your hiking boots are probably the most important piece of equipment you will purchase for your Kilimanjaro trekking adventure. Get badly fitting ones and you will suffer from blisters, sore feet, an aching back and lost toenails. Two things to remember – buy quality and make sure that they fit correctly.

You can test the later by putting your foot in the boot without tying the shoelaces and then sliding your foot forward until it hits the front of the boot. You should have one fingers thickness of space at your heel. If you have more than a fingers space then the boot is the wrong size. Like your third layer jacket I would go into a specialist store and get properly fitted.

The characteristics you are looking for are:

- Sturdy, high tops for ankle support
- Uppers made of leather or leather / condura combination
- High rubber content soles with deep lugs for good traction
- Lacing system that incorporates D-rings and speed hooks for quick lacing and additional support to the ankle

NB: do not arrive in Kilimanjaro having not worn your boots in. Do at least two decent length hikes in them before arriving in Kilimanjaro.

**Trainers**

I recommend taking a basic pair of trainers which you can change into when you get to your camp site every night. It is not ideal to have to continue walking around in boots after a long day hiking

**Trekking socks**

It is important that you purchase good quality trekking socks. You should avoid cotton or cotton-blend socks as these absorb and retain moisture, keeping your feet damp and making them susceptible to blistering.

I recommend 5 x Ragg Wool trekking socks as these are the best for wicking moisture away from the foot. If you are allergic to wool I would go for an acrylic or acrylic-blend alternative.
Key characteristics to look out for include:

- Flat seams. Bulky seams are prone to increase friction which results in blisters
- Thick socks as they provide more cushion for the foot
- Snug, not tight, fit

**Thermal socks**

On summit night you will need to wear thermal socks. Again I would go with Ragg Wool, ensuring that they are extra thick and warm. Some people go with a polypropylene liner to assist with the wicking process.

- I recommend 2 x extra thick Ragg Wool thermal socks and 1 x Polypropylene liner socks. The extra pair of thermal socks can be used as a thermal cover for your water bottle (more on this later!)

**Gaiters (optional)**

Gaiters are made of waterproof material that extend up from your boot to your calve muscle. They are used to keep unwanted materials out of your boots (mud, water, rocks etc.). In general I don’t think you need gaiters on Kilimanjaro. The paths are very good and the amount of mud is very minimal. If you want to save $50.00 I would not buy gaiters
7.3 Headwear

Here are the five required headgear items and one optional.

**Hat with neck cover**

You are going to want to have a good hat with you for the trek to protect your face from sunburn and keep your head cool. I like hats that have an adjustable neck cover. Make sure the hat is made from a material that breathes well. The hat should fit comfortably in your daypack - you don’t want to have to hold the hat every time you want to take it off.

**Beanie**

A thermal beanie is a must for summit night. You want to keep your head and ears warm. Make sure the beanie fits snug and is suitable for snowy conditions.

**Scarf or balaclava**

A scarf or balaclava is a very good idea. It can be used to protect your neck from sunburn and is very handy in protecting your face from the blistering cold during summit night. Any decent quality scarf or balaclava should work.

**Sunglasses**

As you trek to higher altitudes on Mount Kilimanjaro, the sun intensity gets high. To protect your eyes from dangerous UV I recommend a good pair of sunglasses. They don’t need to be a big brand name but a high UV protection lens is a must.

**Headlamp**

A headlamp is the best type of torch for night hiking as it frees your hands which you will need to use your trekking poles. You will use your headlamp on summit night. There are many different types of headlamps on the market, some cheaper than others. I would go mid-range in terms of price. Make sure the headlamp is lightweight and uses LEDs as these last much longer and are less susceptible to blowing.

**Clear goggles (optional)**

Goggles are optional and are only useful if it is really snowing hard on summit night. I recommend bringing goggles if you already have them. For those without goggles I would spare the expense.
There are two types of bags that you will need to bring with you on your trek.

**Duffle bag**

The type of duffle bag you choose is important as it will be used to carry all of your gear, including sleeping bag. The bag will be carried by your porter who will transport your gear from one camp to the next. Porters carry bags on their head so it is important that the bag is soft and weighs no more than 20kg when fully loaded. An 80 liter bag should be more than sufficient.

Key characteristics to look for in a duffle bag:

- Waterproof material: I recommend packing your gear into plastic bags which you then stuff into your duffle bag. Trust me you don’t want a wet sleeping bag
- Strong, sturdy zipper with ability to lock the bag. I highly recommend taking a small lock to secure your bag
- Hand strap and shoulder strap

**Daypack**

In addition to your duffle bag (which is carried by your porter) you will be carrying your daypack. I would keep all expensive, personal (money, passport etc.) or small breakable items (camera, phone etc.) in your day pack. I like small, lightweight daypacks - the lighter the better. Definitely ensure your daypack has a rain cover, compression straps to reduce weight stress on your back and side mesh pockets for easy access to your water bottle and other useful stuff
7.5 Hands and walking

Here are three must-have pieces of gear for your hands.

Outer gloves

I cannot stress the importance of having good gloves. Your hands will be the first to start freezing on summit night. Cold hands are super debilitating and painful. Invest in the warmest, most durable and waterproof gloves that you can find.

Inner gloves

I highly recommend inner gloves as well. Ideally these should be made from lightweight, quick drying fleece material. As with your thermal top and pants, good inner gloves are your next-to-skin layer for your hands. Keeping your hands warm on summit night is really important!

Set of trekking poles

I also recommend buying a set of adjustable trekking poles. Most people think trekking up Mount Kilimanjaro is difficult. Let me tell you, coming down is just as testing. Your knees take a battering. Good trekking poles can reduce the impact on your knees by up to 20%. Trekking poles provide excellent additional support going up as well. Make sure your guide shows you how to adjust the poles to the perfect length for your height.
7.6 Sleeping

Sleeping bag

A good sleeping bag is a must as temperatures at night can get well below freezing. I recommend a sleeping bag with a rating of at least -10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit). There are two types of sleeping bag – goose / duck down or synthetic.

The former tends to be lighter and more comfortable, but is typically more expensive. Whichever type you decide to purchase, I recommend looking out for the following features:

- A good fit for your body in both width and length – a mummy shape is best as it is made to fit the contours of your body
- An insulated hood which can be pulled around your head with a draw cord
- A two-way zipper for better insulation and unzipping from either end

Inflatable pillow

If you are like me I like to have a soft, slightly raised surface to rest my head. An inflatable pillow that can quickly be inflated and deflated for storage is useful. Equally you could just use a pile of clothes.

Thermal mat (optional)

Your tour company should provide a thin mattress on which you can set your sleeping bag. If you are concerned about the cold and want additional cushioning I would purchase a thermal mat that can be stored as a small roll in your duffle bag.
7.7 Other accessories

There are various other accessories that you can take on your trek up Mount Kilimanjaro. Here are twelve key accessories:

**Water bottle**

A good water bottle is a must. You want to be able to carry 2-3 liters on you when you start trekking each day. I recommend drinking 500ml before starting your trek in the morning and then refilling before you set off.

To carry 2 liters of water you will usually have to take two water bottles with you. Hydration packs, which sit inside your daypack with a tube direct to your mouth, have become very popular. My concern with hydration packs is that the tube tends to freeze on summit night. To avoid freezing of either your water bottle or hydration pack you will need to make sure that they are well insulated on summit night. Wrapping your water bottles in your spare pair of thermal socks is a great solution. Another useful tip is to keep your bottle upside down as liquid freezes from the top.

**Water purification tablets**

Always purify your water. Your guides will provide water that has been boiled, but bacteria in your water bottle will infect the clean water. Iodine is an effective water purifier and can be purchased in droplet or tablet form. Follow the instructions on the pack to avoid using too much iodine which can be harmful. Remember to brush your teeth with purified water as your gums may bleed when you brush your teeth and bacteria in the water can enter your body that way. One pack of 50 iodine tablets should be more than sufficient for the duration of the climb.

**Baby wipes**

Trekking Kilimanjaro is strenuous exercise. By day two you are going to be a ‘smelly’, sweaty human being. This is particular true if you are using the routes that don’t have camping huts. Your guides will provide you with a small bowl of tepid water and soap after each days trek as well as first thing in the morning; however, using a bowl of water to clean yourself is not the easiest thing to do. Much easier is using baby wipes to clean your hands and rub yourself down. One pack of baby wipes should be more than sufficient.

**Sunscreen**

UV light increases rapidly as you ascend Mount Kilimanjaro. Snow is also a powerful reflector of UV light. Definitely take a high SPF sunscreen and ensure to apply several times a day.
Spare batteries
I recommend taking spare batteries for your headlamp and camera. Running out of power on your camera just as you want to take that killer summit picture is not fun.

Ear plugs
If you are a light sleeper I recommend taking ear plugs. The stillness at night means that sound travels really well. Many people stay up late sharing trekking stories, and those who get to bed early sometimes snore, which can make sleeping difficult. Moreover your porters and guides are usually up early getting ready for the new days hike. If you want to ensure you get that extra 30 minutes sleep in the morning, ear plugs are a useful addition to your gear.

Zip lock bags
Your day pack is going to be exposed to the elements during your hike. Exposure to dust and rain is common. To protect your valuables (i.e. wallet, money, binoculars, camera etc.), I suggest taking a few zip lock bags.

Small lock
Your duffle bag will be carried by porters. Typically your gear will be safe but I still recommend taking a small lock to secure your belongings.

Energy bars
Taking energy bars on your trek is the easiest and most effective way to snack and keep your energy levels up. I suggest taking 3 energy bars for every day you are on the mountain (so if you are doing a seven day hike that would mean you bring twenty-one energy bars). Make sure your energy bars are not predominately milk based as they will freeze on summit night, making it impossible to chew. High energy oat bars are good.

Energy drink supplement
Many people don’t like the taste of water, especially after iodine has been added. An energy drink supplement will mask the taste of iodine as well as provide you with additional energy during your climb. I recommend using an isotonic or hypotonic Octane solution. A good rule of thumb is to drink half a litre of water first thing in the morning and then continue to drink another 2.5 litres during that days hike

Medications
Many people go wild on taking with them various medications. Others bring virtually nothing. The amount and type of medications you take is really up to you. I suggest taking these three medical supplies as they are the ones that usually come in most handy. 1. Paracetamol for headaches. 2. Valoid for nausea or vomiting. 3. Imodium
for diarrhoea. Note: your guide will be carrying a first aid pack that should have most medical supplies in it

**Toilets and toilet paper**

Toilets on Kilimanjaro are notoriously bad. You can decide to brave the toilets or you could request that your tour operator organize a portable loo which will be carried and setup at each camp by a porter. This is completely up to you. I have used both and although a portable loo is pleasant, I feel it removes the authenticity of trekking on Mount Kilimanjaro. Portable loos can usually be hired for approximately $150-$200. You will also need to bring your own toilet paper – one roll should be sufficient.
7.8 Checklist

Here is the full checklist of equipment you will need to trek Mount Kilimanjaro. Things to note:

- This list excludes the clothes that you wear pre and post your climb. You can leave this kit at your hotel before your climb commences
- I have included an asterisk (*) next to items that I believe are optional

### Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid passport</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Check with the Tanzanian Consulate to see whether you require a Visa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow fever card</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and medical insurance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Highly recommended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money including tip money</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take US dollars</td>
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### Clothes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underwear</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal underwear pants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used on summit night. Must be wickable and breathable fabric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal underwear top</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used on summit night. Must be wickable and breathable fabric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking trousers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ones that convert into shorts are good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-shirts</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Wickable and breathable fabric is best</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleece jumper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A warm fleece material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain coat or poncho</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer trousers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used on summit night. Must be waterproof, breathable and windproof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer jacket</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used on summit night. Must be waterproof, breathable and windproof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Footwear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiking boots</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Make sure they are waterproof, worn in and ankle high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Useful to put on after a day's climb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal sock</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Used on summit night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sock liners (inners)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used on summit night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trekking socks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Breathable material important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaiters*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>To protect against mud and sand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

# Headwear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarf or balaclava</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat with neck cover</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunglasses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal Beanie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>For summit night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear goggles*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can be useful if it is snowing on summit night but not necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headlamp</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bright and focusable light</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Bags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duffel bag</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Approx. 80L bag for gear. Soft pack. Waterproof. Make sure bag weighs no more than 20kg when loaded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daypack</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Light weight. 20-30L. Size sufficient for your daily gear (camera etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterproof bag covers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>To protect your daypack from rain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hands and Walking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (√)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer gloves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Make sure these are super well insulated. Used on summit night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner gloves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use on summit night. Your hands are the first to start freezing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set of trekking poles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Make sure they are adjustable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sleeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (√)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping bag</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At least a -10 degree rating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflatable pillow*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal sleeping mat*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basic mat will be provided by your guide but additional thermal layer is useful on cold ground</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other accessories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (√)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water bottle / hydration pack</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Make sure bottles carry at least 500L and are insulated to avoid water freezing on summit night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water purification tablets</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Iodine based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet roll</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby wipes</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Pack of 40 wipes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sack liners</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>To make sure all gear in your duffle bag stays dry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunscreen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oil based (high SPF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet accessories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soap, toothbrush, contact lenses and solution, tooth paste etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip lock bags</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Small lock | 1 | For locking duffle bag
Energy bars | 15-25 | At least 3 a day. Cereal based
Energy drink |  | Isotonic or hypotonic powder
Spare batteries* |  | For headlamp and camera
Ear plugs* |  | For peaceful sleep

**Medication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (√)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paracetamol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valoid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imodium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye drops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insect repellent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure it contains Deet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamox</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip balm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Other optional accessories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Comments</th>
<th>Checklist (√)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camera</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binoculars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Camera</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweets and nuts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone</td>
<td></td>
<td>They work on most parts of the mountain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Acclimatization and Acute Mountain Sickness

“Getting to the top is optional. Getting down is mandatory.” - Ed Viesturs

High altitude trekking comes with obvious risks. In particular, Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) and its severe variants, High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE), are your biggest concerns on Mount Kilimanjaro.

In this chapter I provide an overview on how the body is affected by changes in altitude and how it acclimatizes to these changes. I then provide a detailed overview on AMS, HACE and HAPE, before closing with some guidelines, tips and medications you can use to properly acclimatize.

I have gathered this information from various sources but I am particularly indebted to Rick Curtis’ Outdoor Action Guide to High Altitude, written for Princeton University, and recent insight from the Everest Base Camp Medical Centre.

Please note: The information is this Chapter, as with the whole guide, is provide as an information resource only, and is not to be used or relied on for any diagnostic or treatment purposes. The information is not intended to be patient education, does not create any patient-physician relationship, and should not be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment. Research in this area is always progressing which may mean some of this information is out of date. It is your responsibility to seek the latest information should you be going to high altitude.

Acclimatization

At sea level the atmospheric oxygen level is at about 21% saturation (i.e. % of oxygen in the air) and the barometric pressure is around 760 mmHg (millilitres of mercury). As one climbs in altitude the oxygen saturation level remains about the same (up to approximately 21,000 meters or 69,000 feet), however, the percentage of oxygen per breath reduces considerably with lower air density.

For example, at about 3,600 meters (12,000 feet), barometric pressure is around 480 mmHg, and hence there are approximately 40% fewer oxygen molecules available in each breath.

The body deals with this decrease in available oxygen by breathing faster and deeper (even at rest) so as to increase the oxygen content in the blood. Acclimatization is the process by which the body becomes accustomed to lower availability of oxygen in the air and can only be achieved by spending time at various levels of altitude before progressing higher.
To illustrate this point it is worth thinking about a term that climbers call the acclimatization line.

The term is used to describe a point at which someone’s altitude sickness symptoms occur. For example, let’s say a person’s acclimatization line is 3,000 metres on day one. After trekking to this height and spending a night or two there, the body would acclimatize to that altitude and that person’s line might move to 3,800 metres. If they then climb to 3,700 metres they will remain asymptomatic, but if they climbed to 4,000 metres they would begin to experience altitude sickness symptoms.

Very near to one’s acclimatisation line the body can continue to adjust and a day or two’s rest at that height will usually result in resolution of symptoms. However if one continues to ascend beyond ones acclimatization line it is almost guaranteed that symptoms will worsen and further acclimatization will not occur. It is critical that one gets below the point where symptoms began in order to see improvement.

This last point illustrates why it is so dangerous to ascend with any symptoms of altitude sickness.

There are four main physiological changes that result as your body acclimatizes to changes in altitude. The first I have already mentioned; breathing becomes faster and a lot deeper. The second is an increase in red blood cell count which allows more oxygen to be carried in the blood. Thirdly, pressure in pulmonary capillaries increases which forces blood into areas of the lungs that are not used when breathing at sea level. And finally, more of a particular enzyme is produced which causes oxygen to be released from haemoglobin to the blood tissue.

As highlighted in Chapter 4 there are three altitude zones on Kilimanjaro - high altitude (2,500 – 3,500 metres), very high altitude (3,500 – 5,500 metres) and extreme altitude (above 5,500 metres). Most people can ascend to 2,400 meters without experiencing the negative effects of altitude. However, as one enters the high altitude zone changes in air density and available oxygen begin to impact one’s physiology. One’s susceptibility to these changes is very difficult to predict, though, as there is no correlation to factors of gender, age, fitness etc.

We do however know that going too high, too fast is the key cause of AMS. Other contributing factors are dehydration and over exertion at altitude.

A proper acclimatization strategy involves not going too high, too fast whilst also ensuring you don’t overexert yourself and remain well hydrated.

**Acute Mountain Sickness**

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is caused when the body has not had enough time to adapt to reduced levels of oxygen at higher altitudes.
Over 75% of people start experiencing mild AMS symptoms at about 10,000 feet (3,000 m). Some people can experience symptoms as low as 8,000 feet (just over 2,400 m).

Typically symptoms begin 12-24 hours after arriving at altitude. If your symptoms are mild and you remain at the altitude at which your first symptoms began, they should completely disappear after 48 hours. Once they have disappeared you have acclimatized.

If you are not doing well at altitude it is safe to assume it is AMS until proven otherwise.

The symptoms of AMS almost always have a gradual onset, and get worse slowly over several hours if ascent continues. AMS symptoms also tend to be worse at night when respiratory drive decreases.

You cannot develop AMS while descending if you were asymptomatic at height. In almost all cases of severe AMS, symptoms began at a lower height which were ignored or attributed to something else and then got worse as ascent continued.

Denial is common on mountains. The first step to staying out of trouble is to admit that you have altitude sickness.

There are three levels of AMS symptoms – mild, moderate and severe. On the following pages I discuss each.

**Mild AMS**

Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Nausea & Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Disturbed sleep
- Loss of appetite

Mild AMS is common on Mount Kilimanjaro. Many trekkers will experience one or more of the symptoms above, which will decrease in severity as you spend more days on the mountain.

As soon as you start experiencing any of the above symptoms it is important to note your altitude (remember the acclimatization line illustration above) and notify your trekking partners’ of your condition so that they can help monitor the symptoms with you. The natural progression for mild AMS is to get better and often simply resting at the altitude at which you became ill is adequate treatment. Ascent, at a moderate rate, can continue as long as symptoms are mild.
Moderate AMS

Symptoms include:

- Very bad headache that is not relieved with medication
- Feeling very nauseous which often results in vomiting
- Very fatigued and weak
- Decreased coordination (known as ataxia)
- Shortness of breath

A clear sign that you are experiencing moderate AMS symptoms is when one or all of the mild symptoms start getting worse to a degree that becomes debilitating. Typically people experiencing moderate symptoms have very bad headaches and usually vomit. A feeling of decreased coordination is common (i.e. ataxia).

People can often walk on their own when experiencing moderate AMS; however ascent under such symptoms will almost certainly result in worsening of the symptoms to a degree where one cannot walk anymore. This would necessitate a stretcher evacuation (see figure 31) which should be avoided at all costs.

If you experience moderate AMS the only cure is descent. Ascending under moderate symptoms can lead to death.

It is important you descend to the altitude at which you first started experiencing symptoms, and remain at a lower altitude until the symptoms subside. Once the symptoms have disappeared you have acclimatized and you can ascend again.

Severe AMS

Symptoms include:

- Inability to walk
- Shortness of breath whilst resting
- Loss of mental capacities and hallucination
- Fluid build-up in the lungs

Ascent under severe AMS symptoms is extremely dangerous and should never be attempted. People experiencing severe AMS are usually unable to walk, struggle to breathe and lack their mental capacities to think straight.

There are two conditions associated with severe AMS, each of which occurs when fluid leaks through the capillary walls either into the lungs (this is called High Altitude Pulmonary Edema – HAPE) or into the brain (this is call High Altitude Cerebral Edema – HACE). Both conditions are rare but almost always occur because of ascending too high, too fast, or because one has stayed too long at very high altitude.

High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE)
HAPE occurs when fluid enters the lungs through the capillary walls. The build of fluid in the lungs prevents the effective exchange of oxygen in the lungs and thus a decrease of oxygen into the bloodstream. As the condition worsens, cyanosis or impaired cerebral function sets in and ultimately results in death.

Clear symptoms that one is suffering from HAPE include:

- Very short of breath, even while resting
- Very tight chest
- The feeling of suffocation, particularly while sleeping
- Coughing that brings up white, frothy fluid
- Extreme fatigue and weakness
- Confusion, hallucination and irrational behaviour

If the last symptom occurs (i.e. confusion, hallucination and irrational behaviour) one can assume that the pulmonary edema has started to affect the brain due to a lack of oxygen in the bloodstream. There is no medication that one can take to prevent the onset and worsening of HAPE symptoms. Immediate descent is paramount.

Trekkers should take care to ensure that the person descending with HAPE doesn’t exert themselves as this can result in worsening of the condition. A stretcher evacuation is the preferred method of descent. Once the person has reached the lower limits of the mountain, medical support should be sought immediately.

**High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE)**

Like HAPE, HACE is also caused when one ascends too high, too quickly, and the increase in pressure results in fluid breaching the capillary walls and entering the brain. The fluid build-up in the cranium results in swelling of the brain tissue which can result in death if not treated immediately.

HACE can be identified if someone is suffering from the following symptoms:

- Severe headaches which cannot be relieved by medication
- Hallucination
- Loss of consciousness
- Disorientation
- Loss of coordination (i.e. ataxia)
- Memory loss
- Coma

Immediate descent is the only way to treat HACE. Unfortunately HACE often strikes at night. Trekkers shouldn’t wait until morning to evacuate someone with HACE symptoms as delay at altitude can be fatal.
Other treatments, in addition to decent, include using oxygen, being placed in a hyperbaric bag and dexamethasone (a steroid that is sometimes used following a brain injury, to help reduce swelling on the brain).

I deal briefly with each in the section below.

Guidelines, tips and medications

There are a few guidelines and tips to remember when trekking at altitude. Below I have distilled them into short sound bites. I have also included information on key medications that can be used to prevent and treat the symptoms of AMS in addition to descent.

Do’s

There are 6 main things to remember to do on Mount Kilimanjaro

1. **Drink lots of fluids (at least 3-4 litres a day).** You will be sweating out a lot of fluids during your trek. It is critical that you replace these fluids and remain well hydrated. Include an isotonic energy supplement in your water to improve the taste and encourage water abortion. Obviously do not overhydrate as this can also be potentially dangerous.

2. **Go slowly, always.** From the outset you will hear your porters and guides reminding you to go ‘Pole, Pole’ (‘slow, slow’ in Swahili). Listen to them. Trekking Kilimanjaro is not a race. Enjoy the scenery, stop regularly to drink water and take pictures.

3. **Climb high and sleep low at least once on your ascent.** Try to choose a route (see Chapter 4) that gives you an opportunity to climb high, sleep low. For example, the six day Machame, Lemosho and Shira Route have a climb high acclimatization day to Lava Tower (4,600 meters), which then descends to Barranco Camp (3,900 meters) where trekkers spend the night at a very similar altitude to the night before. The Northern Circuit gives the most opportunities to climb high, sleep low.

4. **Focus on exhaling slowly and fully, forcing all air out your lungs before the next breath.** This is not a natural way for us to breathe but is effective in encouraging oxygen exchange in the blood. It is also a nice way to take your mind off things during the long, dark and slow summit night trek.

5. **Eat frequently.** Most trekkers experience a loss of appetite at altitude. However, if you don’t eat you will not have the energy reserves to get to the summit. It is important that you try to eat as much food as you can. Focus on foods that are high in carbohydrates and low in fats and protein.

6. **Monitor yourself and others for symptoms and listen to your guides and trekking partners.** Do not ignore or deny symptoms. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter from legendary mountaineer Ed Viesturs states: “Getting to the top is optional. Getting down is mandatory.”
Don'ts

Here are the five don'ts to remember.

1. Avoid alcohol and tobacco and minimize caffeine which result in slowing respiration during sleep and therefore worsen the symptoms of AMS
2. Avoid high salt intake which causes your body to retain fluid and can hence increase the severity of AMS
3. Avoid an empty stomach. A biscuit or small snack can go a long way in providing that additional bit of energy you need to get to the summit
4. Avoid sleeping tablets, antihistamines and tranquilisers. Like alcohol, tobacco and caffeine, these depressants also inhibit respiratory drive during sleep
5. Don't succumb to peer-pressure. It is easy when trekking in a group to feel pressured to continue when you know that your body is giving you all the signs that you should descend. Listen to your body.

Altitude Medication - Diamox

Acetazolamide, or what is commonly sold under the trade name Diamox, is a drug that is used for various medical treatments – including glaucoma, sleep apnea, epilepsy and hypertension. It is also used to help mitigate the effects of altitude sickness.

Using Diamox on Kilimanjaro is a question you are going to face when you start your preparations to reach the Roof of Africa.

What is Diamox?

Diamox, as it is used for Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), is a diuretic (i.e. it promotes the production of urine) and a prophylactic (i.e. is used as a preventative medicine – not a cure).

It is also a carbonic anhydrase inhibitor (ahem, what?). Essentially this means that it promotes the excretion, via urine, of bicarbonate – which is why it is useful for altitude sickness.

The excretion of bicarbonate increases the acidity of the blood, as bicarbonate is a conjugate base of carbonic acid. Increased acidity in the blood is equated by our bodies as increased CO₂. The body responds to the imaginary excess CO₂ by breathing deeper and faster to get rid of it. Deeper, faster breathing increases the amount of oxygen received by the blood. This helps with the acclimatization process and helps prevent the onset of AMS symptoms.

It is important to note that Diamox does not cure the symptoms of AMS, it merely helps prevent the onset of symptoms. Once AMS symptoms have started, the only way to stop them is descent. Therefore, under no circumstances should Diamox be used to continue an ascent with AMS.
So is it worth using Diamox on Kilimanjaro?

In short, yes. Anything that is going to help you reach the summit safely should be considered a worthy investment.

Obviously you should first consult your doctor to check whether Diamox is a suitable drug given your particular medical history. It is not suitable for pregnant women or anyone with kidney or liver disease issues (obviously these people shouldn’t be trekking Kilimanjaro in the first place). Diamox is also a sulfonamide drug and hence people who are allergic to sulfa drugs should not take Diamox.

I recommend taking Diamox for 2-3 days 2 weeks before departure to test whether you experience any symptoms.

Typical symptoms associated with Diamox are

- Frequent urination – everyone experiences this when taking Diamox. It can result in the development of kidney stones so it is important that you drink loads of fluids
- Numbness and tingling in the fingers, toes and face – I experience this symptom when taking Diamox. The sensation is a little discomforting but not dangerous
- Taste alterations (some foods might taste weird)
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea – this is rare. These symptoms should be identified during your test before departing for Kilimanjaro. Unfortunately these symptoms are common with AMS and therefore can easily be misdiagnosed as AMS
- Drowsiness and confusion is also possible – again these symptoms can be confused with AMS

Typically Diamox comes in 250mg tablets. Most people take half a tablet in the morning and half in the evening. You should start taking tablets one day before arriving in Kilimanjaro and continue taking the same dosage for all ascent days. You can cease taking Diamox on descent.

Diamox myths

- It hides symptoms – All Diamox does is accelerates acclimatization. It doesn’t cover up symptoms! If you feel sick you are sick
- It will prevent AMS from worsening during ascent – it does not prevent symptoms from worsening with continued ascent
- If it is stopped symptoms will worsen - There is no rebound effect. After stopping Diamox, acclimatisation will slow down to your intrinsic rate. You won’t become ill by just stopping Diamox
Dexamethasone

Dexamethasone is a strong steroid that prevents swelling on the brain and is therefore very effective in helping people suffering from HACE. However, as I mentioned earlier it should only be used in conjunction with immediate and rapid descent. It should not be used to continue ascent.

Consult a doctor for cautions, side-effects and dosage. It is likely, but not guaranteed, that your guide will be carrying Dexamethasone. You may want to check with the tour operator to see whether guides carry this medication.

Nifedipine

Nifedipine is used to treat high blood pressure but also seems to improve oxygen transfer in the pulmonary, and can therefore be used in the treatment of HAPE. It is not nearly as effective of Dexamethasone in HACE patients, but can help buy some time to evacuate a trekker experiencing HAPE symptoms.

Oxygen

Some tour operators take oxygen on a climb. You can request to have oxygen but often there is an additional cost for this. Typically oxygen should only be used in serious cases and should never be used to ascend Kilimanjaro. On oxygen AMS symptoms resolve very rapidly (within minutes) on a moderate flow (2-4 litres per minute)

Hyperbaric therapy

A hyperbaric bag is a simple human size contraption made of airtight nylon. The bag is inflated with a foot pump and a patient can be put inside where the pressure is two p.s.i. - this is equivalent to bringing the person down a couple thousand feet.

Once a patient is in the bag improvements are usually dramatic and quick; however the bag only serves to buy time so that the patient can walk down to receive proper medical support. Most tour operators on Kilimanjaro don’t carry a hyperbaric bag.

Important!

Never use oxygen therapy or medications to continue an ascent once severe symptoms have occurred. The result can be fatal.
Figure 31: A ‘wheelbarrow’ stretcher used to evacuate very sick trekkers from the upper slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro
9. Guides and Porters

"Their lives are linked by a love and profession to the mountains, and their company will enhance the experience of all those who wish to approach the mountains and learn." – Peter Boardman

On your Mount Kilimanjaro trek you will be accompanied by a full support team of local guides and porters who are employed by your tour operator to ensure you have a safe and memorable experience to the Roof of Africa.

Guides and porters are usually from the small towns that are dotted around the lower slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. They often have a profound knowledge of the mountain, its fauna and flora and have lots of high altitude trekking experience. Be patient, friendly and genuinely interested and you will most likely find out a wealth of information about the various tribes who live in the area and intriguing local stories about the mountain.

On the first day you will meet your full support team at the gate of your route start point. Guides typically speak good English, porters less so.

Porters carry all your gear (excluding your daypack) and all the equipment you need on your trek (tents, cooking equipment, food, water etc.). Each porter carries up to 20kg on their back or head. Yes, 20kg! Some tour operators limit the weight that porters carry to 15kg and new Kilimanjaro National Park (Kinapa) Regulations for Guides and Porters mean that guides and cooks are not allowed to carry any weight apart from their own gear.

Before you set off on day one you will notice porters preparing and weighing packs of gear (see figure 32). This will be their load for the duration of the trek. Each day porters race ahead of you and your guide to make sure they get to camp sites early and have everything setup for your arrival (tent assembled, food ready etc.).

The average ratio of support staff is 3 porters for every trekker, 2 guides for every 4 trekkers, cooks and assistant guides vary depending on numbers. Here are example ratios of support teams to trekking group size (note: numbers vary depending on the tour operator you use)

- 1 trekker - 1 guide / 2-3 porters / 1 cook
- 2 trekkers - 1 guide / 5-6 porters / 1 cook / 1 assistant guide
- 3 trekkers - 2 guides / 8-9 porters / 2 cook / 1 assistant guide
- 4 trekkers - 2 guides / 11-12 porters / 2 cook / 2 assistant guides
- 5 trekkers - 3 guides / 14-15 porters / 2-3 cook / 2-3 assistant guides
• 6 trekkers - 3-4 guides / 17-18 porters / 2-3 cook / 2-3 assistant guides

Useful language

The local language in Tanzania is Swahili. Here are ten phrases that are worth learning before you arrive in Kilimanjaro and will impress your guides and porters to no end.

Hello – Jumbo
Welcome – Karibu
How are you? – Habari?
Fine – Nzuri
Pole Pole – Slow, Slow
Please – Tafadhalı
Sorry – Samahani
Thank you – Asante sana
Water – Maji
Goodbye – Kwaheri

Tipping Guidance

Most guides and porters receive a nominal wage from their tour operator employer, enough to survive in Tanzania, but certainly not prosper. An important component of their income is the tips they receive from trekkers. Tipping on Kilimanjaro is therefore customary and standard; however there is often much confusion on how much to give each support team member.
In this section I have provided a guideline and worked example for calculating how much you should set aside for tips. I encourage using this as a guideline only. If you can afford to give more, then do.

Tips are usually paid at the end of your hike, after you have reached your final checkpoint and signed out with the authorities. It is customary to pay tips individually in separate envelopes, unless advised otherwise (some tour companies suggest you pay your lead guide who then re-distributes the money). Also, some operators suggest that you give your tips at the last meal on the mountain. Unless expressly asked to do this by your tour operator I would wait to distribute tips at the end of your trek.

Tipping guideline amounts are as follows. These numbers are per group, not per trekker.

- Per main guide – US$20-25 per day
- Per assistant guide – US$15-20 per day
- Per cook – US$15 per day
- Per porter - US$10 per day

For example, on a six day trek the total tipping value per group and climber would look as follows*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Climber</th>
<th>2 Climbers</th>
<th>3 Climbers</th>
<th>4 Climbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guides</td>
<td>$120-150</td>
<td>$120-150</td>
<td>$240-300</td>
<td>$240-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ass. Guides</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$90-120</td>
<td>$90-120</td>
<td>$180-240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooks</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>$180</td>
<td>$180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porters</td>
<td>$120-180</td>
<td>$300-360</td>
<td>$480-$540</td>
<td>$840-$900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for group</td>
<td>$330-420</td>
<td>$600-720</td>
<td>$990-1140</td>
<td>$1,440-1,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per climber</td>
<td>$330-420</td>
<td>$300-360</td>
<td>$330-380</td>
<td>$360-405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 33: Tipping worked example for a six day trek

* Note: you may see or hear of figures that are less generous than these. These numbers are based on guidelines from Kinapa. My suggestion is to use your best judgment when preparing your tips, recognizing that your support team work exceptionally hard, in a tough and dangerous environment.

More information
The NGOs, Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project (http://www.kiliporters.org/) and Mount Kilimanjaro Porter Society (MKPS) (http://www.kilimanjaro-porters.org/), provide useful information on the health and welfare of porters.

After your Kilimanjaro trek, and after you reflect on the arduous life of the guides, assistant guides, porters, and cooks, you may want to help someone you met. Kilimanjaro Guide Scholarship Foundation (http://www.kiliguides.org/) can assist you in arranging a scholarship. These scholarships range from 8 week “rainy season” courses to full year courses.

Figure 34: A typical support team of porters and guides for a two man trek
10. Kilimanjaro Facts

“The main facts in human life are five: birth, food, sleep, love and death.” - E.M. Forster

In this chapter I have compiled a list of interesting Kilimanjaro facts about the region, mountain and climbing. You might want to use these nuggets to impress fellow trekkers.

Where is Mount Kilimanjaro?

Mount Kilimanjaro is situated in the Northern part of Tanzania, in the Kilimanjaro National Park. It covers an area of 100 kilometres long and 65 kilometres wide.

The mountain is a dormant volcano which is comprised of three volcanic cones, Shira, Kibo (on which Uhuru summit stands) and Mawenzi. Kibo is classified as dormant but not extinct. The last major eruption from Kibo occurred 360,000 years ago. The last volcanic activity happened 200 years ago and resulted in today’s ash pit (visible from Uhuru Peak)

How high is Mount Kilimanjaro?

The summit on Mount Kilimanjaro is called Uhuru peak and stands at 5,895m or 19,341 feet. To put this in perspective, Mount Everest, stands at 8,848 meters (29,029 feet) – just over 2,950 meters higher.

But here’s an interesting Kilimanjaro Fact: Both Everest Base Camp’s – South and North – are below the summit of Kilimanjaro; however, most climbers take upwards of 10-12 days to reach EBC. On Kilimanjaro climbers on fast routes reach the summit within 4-5 days. The rapid ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro makes it a difficult and rather dangerous mountain to trek due to the risks of Altitude Sickness.

Is Mount Kilimanjaro the highest mountain in Africa?

Yes, Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and the highest free standing mountain in the world. By free-standing I mean it is not part of a mountain range. As the highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro makes up one of the seven summits (i.e. highest mountains on each of the seven continents).

Is climate change affecting Kilimanjaro’s glaciers?

Yes, there is scientific consensus that Kilimanjaro’s glaciers have been rapidly receding for the past century, and that human-induced climate change is largely to blame. At one stage the whole mountain summit was covered by an ice cap,
probably more than 100 meters deep. However, since 1912 Mount Kilimanjaro has
lost 82% of its ice cap and since 1962 it has lost 55% of its remaining glaciers. If the
present rate of recession continues the majority of the glaciers on Kilimanjaro could
vanish altogether.

**How many routes are there on Mount Kilimanjaro?**

There are eight official Kilimanjaro routes. Three routes – Machame, Umbwe, and
Marangu – approach from the South, another three routes – Shira and Lemosho and
the Northern Circuit – from the west and Rongai approaches from the North-East.
The Mweka route is used for descent only. Some trekkers also use the technically
challenging Western Breach to climb Kilimanjaro.

**How many people attempt to summit Mount Kilimanjaro each year?**

Approximately 35,000 people attempt to trek Mount Kilimanjaro every year

**What are the success rates for reaching the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro?**

Reaching the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro is highly dependent on the number of
days taken to trek the mountain. The more days the higher the probability of success
as your body has more time to adapt and acclimatize. Here are the success rate
figures as published by the Kilimanjaro National Park.

- All climbers, all routes 45%
- All climbers, all 5 day routes 27%
- All climbers, all 6 day routes 44%
- All climbers, all 7 days routes 64%
- All climbers, all 8 day routes 85%

**Who was the first person to reach the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro?**

German geologist, Hans Meyer, Ludwig Purtscheller and a local called Lauwo were
the first people to summit Mount Kilimanjaro in October 1889. However, it is possible
that Kilimanjaro’s summit was reached by locals prior to Hans Meyer, but was never
recorded.

**What is the fastest ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro?**

The fastest ascent and descent of Mount Kilimanjaro was by Spanish mountain
runner, Kilian Jornet in September 2010. At the time, the Spaniard was 22 years old.
He reached the summit in a record time of 5 hours, 23 minutes and 50 seconds –
beating the previous ascent record from Kazakh mountain runner, Andrew Puchinin,
by one minute! However, it doesn’t end there. After reaching the summit, Kilian then
ran down the mountain to base camp reaching it in a total time (up and down) of 7
hours and 14 minutes. This incredible feat smashed the previous ascent and descent
record set by Simon Mtuy of 8 hours and 27 minutes!
Who is the youngest person to trek Mount Kilimanjaro?

The youngest person to reach the summit of Kilimanjaro is Keats Boyd, at the tender age of 7 years old. The Los Angeles resident reached the summit on the 21st January 2008 – an incredible achievement made even more impressive as he somehow managed to dodge the minimum age rule for young climbers (i.e. 10 years or older).

Who is the oldest person to trek Mount Kilimanjaro?

Richard Byerley was ‘officially’ the oldest person to reach the summit of Kilimanjaro. Byerley reached the summit in October 2010 at the ripe old age of 84 years and 71 days. However, his record was incredibly surpassed by Martin Kafer (85) and his wife Esther (84) in October 2012. The Canadian-Swiss couple now hold the record as the oldest man and oldest women to trek Kilimanjaro. Esther’s achievement surpassed the previous oldest woman to reach the summit, Bernice Bunn, who climbed to the Roof of Africa at age 83.

Nonetheless, there is some controversy around who is the oldest person to have reached the summit. Frenchman, Valtée Daniel, reached the summit at the age of 87; however, the climb was not independently verified and did not have sufficient documentation to be verified (i.e. logbook notes, photographs and film).

How many people die on Mount Kilimanjaro every year?

Many conflicting figures are banded around on the number of people who die on Kilimanjaro each year. Based on research from a number of reliable sources, I estimate between 3-7 deaths a year. Deaths on the mountain occur due to various reasons including AMS (such as HACE and HAPE), falls, and hypothermia. Sometimes porters die due to the onset of malaria whilst on the climb.
11.  Recommended Kilimanjaro Reading

“Your guide will probably tell you,” Ezekiel said, “that the name Kilimanjaro comes from kilima, the Swahili word for ‘mountain,’ and jaro, the Maasai word for ‘white capped.’ But that’s just for the tourists. We Chagga people who have always lived here, we believe the name comes from our own language: kilema-kyaro, which means ‘Impossible to Climb.’” – Tim Ward

Whenever I take on a new challenge, or indeed visit a new country, I like to immerse myself in relevant literature. I find that it allows me to experience new environments at a much deeper level.

In this list of best climbing books on Mount Kilimanjaro I have tried to select a wide array of perspectives from experienced climbers to amateurs.

A confession: I have only read 3 of the 8 books listed here but in researching this list of Mount Kilimanjaro books I discovered one thing that unites all of them. Each book provides a story much greater than the triumph of standing on the Roof of Africa. Each is a book about people who set out on a journey to conquer more than the summit of Kilimanjaro – they set out to conquer a personal summit.

I’m confident that you will find a book here that is just right for you.

**The Shadow of Kilimanjaro: On Foot Across East Africa** by Rick Ridgeway

This is definitely my favourite book about Kilimanjaro and the wild Tanzanian landscape. If I had to pick one book for you to read it would be *The Shadow of Kilimanjaro*. Written by explorer extraordinaire, Rick Ridgeway (first climber to reach the summit of K2 without bottled oxygen), the book will leave you so inspired to get to Africa and conquer Kilimanjaro.

**Zombies on Kilimanjaro: A Father/Son Journey Above the Clouds** by Tim Ward

Tim Ward tells his intensely personal story about his Kilimanjaro experience with his 20 year old son in *Zombies on Kilimanjaro*. During the climb their relationship develops a touching authenticity as topics of fatherhood, divorce and kept secrets are dealt with. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and know you will too. Highly recommended!

**Kilimanjaro: A Photographic Journey to the Roof of Africa** by Michel Moushabeck and Hiltrud Schultz

The perfect coffee table photographic journal which has over 200 amazing pictures set to a wonderful narrative about Mount Kilimanjaro. I don’t own the book (as I don’t
yet have a coffee table) but have seen some of the pictures online and can vouch that they are incredible.

**In My Wildest Dreams: A Woman’s Humorous Perspective of her Mt. Kilimanjaro Experience** by Sue Freeman

I haven’t read this book but the reviews on Amazon are great. Here’s one I like: “I felt like I was on the journey with Sue. The book might be short & a quick read, but it holds so much valuable information & delivered with such a keen sense of humor. It encourages you to meet your next challenge with gusto & wit.” Most of the reviews are admittedly from ladies so perhaps the book is best read by the finer sex.

**Kilimanjaro and Beyond (a Life-Changing Journey)** by Barry Finlay and Chris Finlay

Another epic father and son tale about trekking Kilimanjaro! This time both father and son are on a journey to raise funds for children in Africa whilst conquering the slopes of Kibo. The story that unfolds is one of true determination to make personal dreams and other people’s dreams come true. If you are looking for inspiration to climb I can’t recommend this book enough.

**Kissing Kilimanjaro: Leaving It All on Top of Africa** by Daniel Dorr

I haven’t read this book but after reading some of the reviews I believe it deserves a spot as one of the best Kilimanjaro trekking books. Here is an Amazon review: “I was in the mood for a good outdoor adventure book that was not far out fiction when someone suggested this book to me. I was not disappointed. The story is well written, the characters were so real they reminded me of several people I know. The descriptions of the scenery were explicit and moving and the occasional humor throughout made this book a great read. The only problem is that now I have to find some money to take my own trip up Kilimanjaro! :-("

**Kilimanjaro Via the Marangu Route: Tourist Route My Ass** by Phil Gray

This book caught my eye as many of the tour operators punt the Marangu Route as the ‘Tourist Route’. Of course there is no such thing and at the end of the day getting your ‘ass’ up Kilimanjaro is no easy feat. Described as toilet humour in Amazon I suspect this book is perfect for those who want a really quick read and some fun laughs.

**A Table On Kilimanjaro** by Janice Coy

Again, I can’t say I have read this book but it sounds pretty extraordinary. It is on my to read list so perhaps you can give me feedback if you decide to get it. Here is what Amazon has to say: “A Table on Kilimanjaro is a coming of age story about the nature of success, the realization that every mountain can’t be conquered and every person, even those closest to us, can be a stranger.”
Mount Kilimanjaro

A Trekkers Guide to the Summit

Office website

www.climbkilimanjaroguide.com