Mt. Kilimanjaro Trek Overview
Offered Via Green Paw Adventures

Growth International Volunteer Excursions

The Roots of Change
Mt. Kilimanjaro Overview

Climbing and summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro is an incredible experience and the feat of a lifetime! Towering over Africa at 19,341ft/ 5,595m, Mt. Kilimanjaro is the highest peak in Africa and the tallest freestanding mountain in the world. We have compiled information for you to prepare for your climb in this overview. There are many other resources for you to learn about climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro as well, such as going to a mountaineering store near you to speak with an avid climber or reading blogs about the climb online.

What To Expect

Your climb will take 6 days: 4 days to the summit and 2 days to descend. Most treks will be a full day where you will take several short breaks, drink a lot of water, and have substantial meals. Be prepared to wake up early to depart camp and get a good start each day.

Expect your body temperature to fluctuate during the day as you climb. Layers are incredibly important so you can add and remove layers accordingly depending on your activity level, the temperature, etc. **It does get cold while climbing Kilimanjaro, especially at night, so make sure to be prepared for temperatures at/or below freezing!**

You will be able to rent/hire clothing and hiking gear if necessary, but we recommend that you bring all the required clothing from home, such as hiking boots, waterproof coat/pants/gloves, hand warmers, etc. If you don’t have gear, borrow from family or friends, buy new, or buy used. If you do rent/hire clothing and gear, know that it may not be as good of quality of what you could bring from home. **Make sure you have high quality, proper gear, as this will greatly determine your success and comfort when climbing the mountain.** There are limited items that we do recommend renting in-country, for your packing and travel ease, such as hiking poles.

Preparation

While you prepare to climb, it will be helpful to dedicate some time towards fitness. You do not need to be in excellent physical shape for your climb, however, you should focus on increasing your cardio and remember that your days will consist of long hikes at high altitudes.

You will be hiking at least 6-8 hours a day climbing Kilimanjaro. The best fitness preparation is hiking to prepare your muscles and body for long durations of hiking on inclined and declined terrain with a backpack and the hiking boots you plan to wear on up Kilimanjaro. It will be beneficial for you to go on hikes in your area and/or simply walk for long periods of time on terrain that includes both uphill and downhill. We also suggest doing squats and climbing stairs, as some areas on Kilimanjaro require you to ascend rocky terrain. During the climb, you will carry a backpack with daily necessities, such as layers
and a rain jacket, and at least 3 liters of water, so, while preparing, you should practice doing the same.

If your hiking boots are not broken in, then we highly suggest wearing your boots while you hike, walk, or climb stairs. You can also break your boots in while volunteering at the construction site on Zanzibar. Many volunteers choose this route instead of bringing separate work and hiking boots.

Mental endurance is key to climbing Kilimanjaro and you will need stamina and determination for the climb. The best way to build mental strength is to spend long periods hiking, walking, or climbing stairs coupled with remaining mentally positive while you engage in these exercises. Bring along your ideas of games, riddles, songs, etc. to keep you entertained during the hike. And, take this incredible opportunity to get to know your guides and porters, as well as deepen your bonds with fellow volunteers!

**Gear for Rent/Hire + Overnight Gear**

We highly recommend that you bring your own gear from home for your climb. This especially includes your under layers, like flannels, socks, and long johns. If possible, please bring a high quality sleeping bag, down jacket, and outer layers (*waterproof winter jacket and pants). If you do not own these items, ask family or friends to borrow theirs or go to a second hand mountaineering shop to find discounted items.

If necessary, you can rent/hire items that you cannot bring for your climb from Green Paw Safaris for $15.00 USD per item. Before you begin your climb, you will meet your lead guide to review a list of recommended items and decide what you need for rent/hire. **Note: the asterisk (*) on the packing list indicates items available for rent in Tanzania.**

Your porters will set up your tents before you arrive to camp each night, which you will share with one other fellow GIVER. When you arrive, you will choose your tent, sleeping bag, and sleeping pad. Note that you may not have the same tent, sleeping bag (unless you’ve bought your own), or sleeping pad every night as they may rotate with your fellow climbers.

We recommend you bring a sleeping pad and sleeping bag designed for 0 Fahrenheit/ -17 Celsius degree weather. Green Paw Safari’s offers mountain sleeping bags for the whole excursion. Warm socks are also incredibly important for summit night. You can also bring hand warmers to help keep you warm at night or during your summit.

**You will be provided a tent and sleeping pad free of charge on the climb. Please bring your own sleeping bag (or rent one for $15) and high quality cold weather gear if possible as the temperatures get very low on the mountain.**
**Camera**

You will not have an opportunity to charge your camera while climbing Kilimanjaro, so make sure it is fully charged when you leave our accommodations in Arusha. During your climb, keep in mind that you’ll want to have a charged camera battery on the summit to take photos. We suggest that you bring an extra set of batteries, extra battery pack, or a solar charger to charge your camera.

**Water**

It is extremely important that you stay hydrated during your climb. Dehydration may contribute to altitude sickness symptoms. It is recommended that you drink 3-5 liters a day to stay properly hydrated. Your water will freeze on top of Kilimanjaro, so you can bring a thermal water bottle for that portion of your climb, although it is not necessary. We recommend not using a Camelback when you summit as the hose can freeze.

The national park does not allow disposable plastic water bottles. It is recommended to bring 2 large reusable water bottles to carry at least 3 liters of water with you in your daypack. There will not be opportunities to refill once you leave your campsite each morning.

Your porters will boil water to purify it for drinking water. As an extra precaution, **we recommend bringing purification tablets to purify your water on the climb.**

**Luggage and Daypack**

You will carry a daypack everyday while climbing Kilimanjaro containing only what you need for the day. Your porters will carry your other bag with clothing you don’t need on daily treks. Your daypack should either be waterproof or you should have a waterproof cover for your daypack. We recommend a 20-30 liter backpack large enough to carry at least 3 liters of water, your camera, raincoat, snacks, warm layers, toilet paper, hat, and sunscreen. It is important not to over pack your daypack with items you will not need each day as you can pack these items in your other bag.

Remember that your porters will carry your duffle bag, so **it is important to only bring what you will need on the climb.** You can safely leave clothing and items you will not need on your climb at our accommodations in Arusha. Since you will only bring a portion of your belongings up Kilimanjaro, it’s smart to bring a small duffel bag or collapsible bag in your luggage to Tanzania. Leave your larger luggage at our accommodations and only bring your small duffle bag or collapsible bag with only climbing gear and clothing to climb Kilimanjaro.

**You will need one small backpack and duffle bag/backpack for all your Mt. Kilimanjaro gear (the porters will carry this). Do not bring your entire luggage for your excursion up Mt. Kilimanjaro – only bring what you’ll need for the trek.**

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Clothing

It is recommended that you take several thin layers of clothing that allow ventilation as opposed to a few thick ones. It is easier to add or shed layers as needed throughout the day based on your body temperature. Clothes made from synthetic materials are recommended, as wool clothing takes longer to dry.

Porters and Tips

On average, it takes about 3 porters to carry one person's gear, food/water, tents, etc. So, if you have a group of 10 climbing Kilimanjaro, then you will have about 30 porters. Your porters are incredibly supportive during the climb. There is a lot of time to talk with your porters, learn more about their experience and culture, and get to know them!

Tips are a significant portion of your guide and porter’s salaries. The tips for your guides and porters are not included in the cost to climb Kilimanjaro. You must bring a minimum of $150 USD to give to your lead guide, who will disperse tips to the other guides and porters. **This $150 tip is a minimum, and we suggest bringing more if possible, as you will truly want to reward the porters who work so hard for you!** You will be able to stop at an ATM on the way to or from Mt. Kilimanjaro to withdrawal money.

**Do not forget the money for your tip! You MUST bring at least $150 for your guides and porters. This can be in Tanzanian Shillings or USD.**

Footwear

Your boots should be well “broken in” to avoid irritation, blisters, and pain. We suggest that you bring bandages to prevent blisters if you feel one coming on, or in case you actually get blisters or hotspots.

It's important to have comfortable socks and at least one thermal pair for the cold summit night. It’s also recommended to bring liners to keep your feet dry and avoid blisters.

We highly suggest wearing your hiking boots as much as possible prior to departure. Also, you can break your boots in while volunteering at the construction site on Zanzibar. Many volunteers choose this route instead of bringing separate work and hiking boots.

Meals

Each day, you’ll have a hot breakfast, either a sack or hot lunch, and a hot dinner. The chef, Mr. Delicious, cooks amazing meals and tends to surprise you with dishes you’ve been craving! A common appetizer is hot soup and tea, hot chocolate, or coffee before your delicious meal.

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If you have specific dietary needs, tell your lead guide at the meeting at our accommodations prior to your Kilimanjaro trek. They can and will accommodate any dietary restrictions during the trek.

**Altitude Sickness**

It is hard to determine how your body will respond to increasing altitude. Altitude sickness occurs when you go to high too fast or remain at high altitudes for too long. If you experience altitude sickness, descending to a lower altitude will make you feel better and decrease your symptoms.

There are many precautions that you can take during the climb to mitigate altitude sickness, such as walking slow to acclimatize, drinking enough water, and getting adequate sleep. Kilimanjaro is not a race – take your time climbing the mountain and listen to your body and your guides. It is important to maintain good communication with your guides and let them know if you feel strange or experience symptoms of altitude sickness.

There are medicines available for altitude sickness, which you can discuss with your doctor. There are also medications available at the pharmacy in Arusha if you’d prefer to purchase in country.

**Mt. Kilimanjaro Itinerary**

**Day 1: Kilimanjaro Orientation and Preparation**
Say goodbye to your fellow volunteers, who are not climbing Kilimanjaro as they depart for home. Pack for your climb, relax in your excellent GIVE accommodations, and save your energy for your departure to Kilimanjaro! Your lead Kilimanjaro guide will meet with the group to discuss preparations, clothing, the itinerary, and general information about the climb. If you’d like, you can go to the store to purchase snacks for your climb after this meeting. Note that we suggest bringing snacks, energy bars, water purification tablets, etc. from home, as these items can be limited in Tanzania.

**Day 2: Machame Gate to Machame Camp**
Get an early start for the drive to Machame Gate, stopping at a local shop on the way for additional snacks and other items you may need (like toilet paper). Once you arrive at the gate, your guides and porters will pack your equipment and supplies while you enjoy lunch. Begin your trek on a windy path through the incredible rainforest until you arrive at Machame campsite. Be prepared for rain while hiking in the forest, as there is a high possibility of rain, especially in the wetter months from November until May. After you settle in your tent at the campsite, you will have a warm, delicious dinner.

Habitat: Montane Forest; Trek: 5-7hrs; Distance: Approximately 10.8 km; Overnight: Macheme Camp (10,100ft/ 3,100m).
Day 3: Machame Camp to Shira Camp
Leave the glades of the rainforest and hike through the moorland zone. Continue on an ascending path, crossing a little valley to a steep rocky ridge covered with heathers to the Shira plateau. The route then turns West into a river gorge and after a short hike you’ll arrive at the Shira campsite.

Habitat: Moorland; Trek: 5-7hrs; Distance: Approximately 5.2km; Overnight: Shira Camp (12,500ft / 3,800m).

Day 4: Shira Camp to Lava Tower to Barranco Camp
Continue your trek East into a semi-desert and rocky landscape to the massive Lava Tower, which is called “The Sharks Tooth.” This day is geared towards acclimatization and you may experience some minor altitude symptoms, like breathlessness. Reach the arrow glacier and continue your descent to the Barranco campsite, where you will spend the night at the great Barranco Wall and should see an incredible sunset.

Habitat: Semi-desert; Trek: 5-7hrs; Distance: Approximately 10.7km; Overnight: Barranco Camp (13,000ft / 3,950m).

Day 5: Barranco Camp to Barafu Camp
Ascend the mighty Barranco Wall on a steep ridge, which is an easier ascent than it looks! Take a break just below the Heim Glacier, where the breathtaking mountain will tower over you. Follow the route down through the Karanga Valley and take in the view of the two peaks: Mawenzi and Kiho. You’ll refill your water bottles during lunch at Karanga Hut and porters will fill water jugs as here as well, as no natural water stream available at Barafu Camp. Continue hiking to Barafu Camp, enjoy dinner, and prepare your gear and thermal clothing. You’ll go to bed in the early evening to sleep before departing for the summit around midnight.

Habitat: Alpine Desert; Distance: Approximately 9.4km; Trek: 8-9hrs; Overnight: Barafu Camp (15,000ft / 4,600m).

Day 6: Barafu Camp to Uhuru Peak to Mweka
After a light snack of tea, coffee, biscuits and cookies, begin your trek just after midnight. Make sure you wear your thermals, windbreakers, and headlamps! Ascend a steep talus towards the crater rim at Stella Point (5745m). The trek to Stella Point is typically the most mentally and physically challenging portion of the entire route. Take a short break at Stella Point and soak in the view before continuing to the summit, Uhuru Peak. You have now reached the highest point in Africa 5,895 meters!!! After enjoying the summit and taking photos, descend back to Barafu Camp. Have a short rest, pack your gear and head down to Mweka Hut, which is in the upper forest. From the summit descend to Mweka Campsite.

Habitat: Stone scree and ice-capped summit; Distance: Approximately 4.5km ascent, 10.8km descent; Trek: 5-8hrs to Uhuru Peak, 6-8 hrs descent to camp; Overnight: Mweka Camp (10,000ft / 3,100m).
Day 7: Mweka Camp to Mweka Gate
Enjoy breakfast and a small celebration before descending to the Mweka Park Gate. You will receive a different summit certificate if you reached Stella Point or Uhuru Peak. Say goodbye to your guides and porters and drive back to Arusha where you’ll provide tips. Head back to our accommodations in Arusha for a well-earned meal, shower, and good night’s sleep!

Habitat: Forest; Distance: Approximately 8.5km; Trek: 4-6hrs; Overnight: Mweka Camp (10,000ft/ 3,100m).

Day 8: Relax at our accommodations with a hot shower and big meal; you’ve earned it! Get ready to depart for home and say your goodbyes!

Mt. Kilimanjaro Checklist

The below information and checklist is to assist you as you prepare to climb the tallest mountain in Africa after your GIVE excursion!

Green Paw Adventures does not allow suitcases; they suggest waterproof rucksack or duffel bags for the climb. GIVE strongly recommends that you bring a traveling backpack for your entire Tanzania excursion that can also be used for the climb. You only need to pack what you need for the trek, leave your other clothes and other belongings behind. This will be much easier to travel with and you will be able to leave any unneeded possessions in a locked room at our Arusha accommodations both at the beginning of your GIVE excursion and before your Kilimanjaro climb. Your possessions will be locked and safe.

Note that you will not carry your own luggage while climbing Kilimanjaro. The porters on your hiking team will carry your bags. The maximum weight for your luggage during the Kilimanjaro climb is 33lbs/15kgs, and there will be a charge for any luggage over the maximum limit. Because the porters will be taking the bulk of your possessions, you will only be hiking with a small daypack to carry your snacks, a water bottle, sunscreen, and other smaller items like extra layers of clothes and a camera.

Checklist of required items (*you can rent/hire from Green Paw):

- $150 Minimum Required for Porter Tips (can be is USD or TZS)
- Hiking day pack (waterproof or with separate water proof cover)
- Small duffle bag or travel backpack 45-60 L (waterproof! This is for porters to carry your Kilimanjaro gear and supplies up the mountain)
- Water resistant hiking boots that are worn-in
- Shoes for leisure around campsite (optional)
- Balaclava/buff to protect your face from the wind
- Wool hat/beanie
- Snow goggles or sunglasses with dark lenses for eye protection from the sun
- *Gaiters (useful when encountering snow, etc.)
- Snow gloves and mittens/liners
- Fleece zip-up
- Down jacket
- *Waterproof and windproof pants (expect rain and wind)
- *Waterproof and windproof jacket (this is your outer layer, expect rain and wind)
- Shorts & t-shirt (for first day of hiking, moisture-wicking fabric to stay dry)
- 1-3 long sleeve thermal shirts
- 1-2 thermal long underwear
- 6 pairs of socks
- 1 thermal/polartex pairs of socks for summit night
- Small wash kit or wet wipes
- Water bottles/Camelback (camelback hoses will freeze on the summit)

**Note: 3 liters of water will be needed, minimum, per day in your daypack. The national park does not allow plastic water bottles.**

- Energy snacks (i.e. Cliff bars or energy chews)
- First aid kit, including Band-Aids for blisters, eye drops, headache tablets, painkillers, flu and cold tablets
- Sun screen (SPF 30+)
- Lip balm (SPF 30+)
- Insect repellant
- *Headlamp (preferred over flashlight)
- Spare batteries for flashlight/headlamp
- Hand warmers for nighttime and on summit night
- Plastic or Ziploc bags to protect camera and other gear from rain and dust
- Toiletry basics
- Toilet paper
- *Walking Poles (plan to rent these)
- Camera (with extra batteries)
- *Sleeping bag (can rent, but we recommend you bring your own for better quality)
- *Sleeping mat – foam or inflatable work great. (can rent, but we recommend you bring your own for better quality)

*You can rent/hire from Green Paw for $15.00 USD an item. We hope this information and checklist helps you prepare for your journey to the top of Africa!

The simple rule of winter expeditions is to stay dry and warm. Choose clothing layers that wick moisture, dry quickly, insulate and are waterproof and breathable. By adjusting these layers, you can regulate the amount of warmth you need. The 3 basic layers:

**Base Layer:** This is basically your underwear or the layer next to your skin. Synthetic and merino wool fabrics work best (avoid cotton). They wick perspiration away from your skin to outer layers so it can evaporate. They dry quickly so you spend minimal time in wet clothing. When snow camping, it's common to wear 2 base layers: a lightweight or midweight layer, then a thicker heavy weight layer.

**Middle Layer:** This is your insulating layer. It is primarily designed to help you retain body heat. Fleece or microfleece shirts, pants and jacket and/or a goose down jacket are great middle layers.
Outer layer or shell: This is your waterproof/windproof/breathable layer. Gore-Tex will provide premium protection or choose less expensive options, such as polyurethane-coated fabrics that are equally waterproof but somewhat less breathable. Look for core vents and underarm vents that expel excess heat and moisture.

Safety

It is imperative that you respect and adhere to the advice and instructions given by your Kilimanjaro guides. Above all, this is what will contribute to your success while climbing Kilimanjaro. If you have any medical conditions, tell your lead guide your condition, symptoms, and treatment during your preparation meeting at our accommodations in Arusha.

Please understand that this trek is operated under the care and guidance of local professionals. While GIVE fully endorses the aptitude and professionalism of the services provided by Green Paw Adventures, the Mt. Kilimanjaro trek is not operated under the care of Growth International Volunteer Excursions.

Please note that you will be with other volunteers from your trip on the climb, but your GIVE guides will not be on the Mt. Kilimanjaro Add-On. There will be several local guides and 3 porters per person on the trek with you through the duration of the climb. After the climb, you will drive back to our accommodations in Arusha for dinner and a night's rest. Airport transportation has been arranged to take you to the airport the following day.

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Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you and we are excited to see you in Tanzania!