

# Tupande Kili!

*(Let's climb Kili!)*



Short Guide to Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro

by Tanzania Specialist

*The best preparation for your Kilimanjaro climb!*

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# Introduction

You are about to embark on a beautiful trip to Tanzania to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. Tanzania is known for its natural wealth and besides being home to Mount Kilimanjaro, it's home to two other of the seven African wonders:

- The Great Migration in Serengeti National Park.
- The Ngorongoro Crater

The Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National Park are famous for the multitude of animal species that can be found here. The Big Five for example (elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, and rhino) can be found in both places, and in some of the other national parks as well. Besides, tropical islands such as Zanzibar, Mafia, and Pemba can be found off the coast, with coral reefs and the most amazing beaches. Divers will love it here!

But of course, the Kili (as many people lovingly call it) is your first priority. In this guide we give some information and tips, that will help you conquer this icon!

# About the country



Tanzania lies in East Africa between the Indian Ocean and neighboring Kenya and Uganda to the north, Rwanda, Burundi, and DR Congo to the west, and Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique to the south. The name Tanzania was given to the country after the unification of Zanzibar and Tanganyika in 1964.

The country nowadays has a population of 62 million people belonging to 120 different tribes. The largest tribes are the Sukuma, Nyamwezi, Haya, Nyakyusa, and Chagga, each with over one million people. Most of the tribes are descended from the Bantu of West Africa. The best-known tribe, the Maasai, is relatively small.

Tanzania has two official languages: English and Kiswahili. However, in most parts of the country, you will find it difficult to converse in English, as English is not widely spoken. Kiswahili is the spoken language of choice for most people, and not only spoken in Tanzania but also in Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and Kenya (among others). It originates from Bantu and Arabic but also uses some English and German words.



## Cities

Dar Es Salaam, with a population of almost 6 million, is the largest city and also the former capital of Tanzania. It is an important economic center, a port city, and one of the fastest-growing cities in the world. Arusha is the capital of tourism in the north of the country, and the third largest city. The actual, but rather unknown, capital Dodoma is located in the center of the country.

## Facts about Tanzania

- Capital: Dodoma
- Currency: Tanzania Shilling
- Population: 62 million
- Language: Kiswahili and English
- Surface area: 945,000 km<sup>2</sup>
- Water surface: 61,500 km<sup>2</sup>
- Neighboring countries: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique
- Highest point: 5,895 meters (Mount Kilimanjaro)
- Time difference: In summer Tanzania is one hour ahead of the UK, in winter it is three hours. The time difference to the USA is 7-10 hours.
- The most popular destinations are Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Crater, Mount Kilimanjaro, and Zanzibar.



## Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro

With a height of 5,895 meters, Kilimanjaro is not only the highest mountain in Africa but also the highest free-standing mountain in the world. Climbing to the peak is an unforgettable adventure. You see breathtaking landscapes and enjoy beautiful views while our team of experienced guides helps you reach the summit. Then, on the roof of Africa, you experience the most beautiful sunrise and feel the first rays of sunlight on your face!



### Your health on the mountain

It is important to be in good health when going on an expedition like this. The basic camps and facilities, altitude differences, rough terrain, and temperature fluctuations can be demanding to the human body. Add to that the long distances you have to cover under these circumstances, and you realize you need to be in good shape.

Demanding circumstances inherently come with risks. When climbing Kilimanjaro, you need to consider the risk of altitude sickness or physical injuries combined with limited evacuation possibilities. We ask our clients to be aware of these risks, before deciding to climb. We also require our climbers to fill a form at the time of booking, indicating that they are aware of the risks and informing us of pre-existing medical conditions.

### Altitude sickness

Altitude sickness can happen when the body doesn't adjust properly to the changing altitude and lack of oxygen on the mountain. Symptoms of high-altitude sickness can be: sleeplessness, coughing, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and muscle cramps. In severe cases, altitude sickness over a prolonged time led to pulmonary or cerebral edema.

You can reduce this risk by taking longer routes (gradual ascent) or adding acclimatisation days before starting your climb. For climbers without prior experience the recommended duration to climb Mount Kilimanjaro is seven days or more.

Diamox is the indicated medication to counter altitude sickness. Be aware, however, that the (simultaneous) intake of Diamox and malaria tablets may cause side effects, and we advise to consult your physician about this before deciding on taking one or the other.

### Physical injuries

Even though no actual climbing is involved in reaching the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, there is a risk of physical injuries. The terrain on the mountain is rugged and rocky, and during the rainy season there is an increased risk of slipping. Walking poles are advised to prevent falling as are sturdy walking shoes. Please check the gear list on our website for recommended items.

## Evacuation

Our climbing packages cover evacuation over land with stretchers, assistance of our guides and national park's rescue cars. Depending on the rescue spot, this may take up to 12 hours, as cars can only go up to 3,500 meters (11,480 feet). For evacuations from an altitude higher than that, a medical helicopter is needed. As Tanzania Specialist, we are partners of AMREF Flying Doctors, who operate rescue helicopters on Mount Kilimanjaro up to a certain altitude. Check their [FAQ](#) to know the maximum height per route on the mountain and read more about AMREF Flying Doctors in our chapter about Useful Insurances.

Please note that evacuation per helicopter needs to be insured separately, is only for life-threatening situations and can be restricted by height, bad weather or other justified reasons. When helicopters for some reason cannot reach the injured climber, evacuation is done over land with assistance of our guides. A climber can specifically request a helicopter in a non life-threatening situation, but this will be at their own costs. To summarize:

- Foot of the mountain - 3,500 meters: rescue by foot/ car.
- 3,500 - 4,700 meters: rescue by helicopter in life-threatening situations and with insurance only. If a climber is not insured, it will be at their own cost. If a situation is not life-threatening, evacuations are done on foot with help of our guides.
- 4,700 - 5,895 meters (Uhuru Peak): rescue by foot until a helicopter/ car can take over.

### The role of our guides

Our mountain guides are (medically) trained every year to make sure they can give first aid in case of emergencies, and they know how to avoid accidents on the mountain. It is essential you communicate well with your guides during the climb; follow up on their advice, and tell them if you are feeling unwell or unsafe. They are also informed about any pre-existing medical condition you might have, by the form we ask you to fill when booking.

The head guide will be doing regular checks once you reach the higher parts of the mountain. He will for example check your oxygen level, but also your emotional and mental well-being. This way we mitigate the risks of the climb and ensure you reach the summit safe and sound, or are guided down safely if the situation requires that. If this happens, extra costs may apply if, for example, you need to pay for extra nights in a hotel.

## When not to climb Mount Kilimanjaro

There are several things that increase the risk of accidents on the mountain, and that indicate to postpone or cancel your plans for climbing:

Postpone if in the last six months:

- You had surgery or a serious medical intervention and/ or are recovering from a physical injury;
- You experienced a blackout, fit, seizure or fainting episode;
- You suffered a heart attack or stroke;
- You experienced chest pain or shortness of breath without reason;
- You broke any bones or seriously injured any limbs and have not yet fully recovered.

## Medical clearance by a physician

Medical clearance from a licensed physician is needed if one of the following applies to you:

- You have heart, neurological, or respiratory conditions.
- You have epilepsy.
- You regularly experience vertigo, dizziness, or loss of balance.
- You have significant visual or hearing impairments.
- Sleep disorders bother you.
- You have diabetes.
- You are less than 20 weeks pregnant.
- You are over the age of 70.
- You have high blood pressure or take blood-thinning medication.

When getting your medical clearance, be aware to inform your physician of the details of your plans, as indicated below. This will allow him or her to make an appropriate assessment. Be sure to mention:

- The total duration of your climb, and that you expect to hike 4 - 9 hours daily through rugged and rocky terrain. Mention the height you expect to reach (Uhuru Peak is at 5,895 meters) and that on summit night you will need to hike 7-11 hours in freezing temperatures, followed by a 6-8 hour descent to the lower camp in the morning.
- That most of your luggage (max. 18 kg) will be carried by porters, which makes the hike easier.
- That you will be exposed to extreme weather conditions and must be able to withstand exposure to bright sun, hard winds, rain and snow. Even temperatures might be extreme in their differences; it may be plus 20 degrees Celsius during the day and minus 20 degrees Celsius at night (particularly in the summit camp).
- That you need to be physically capable to walk and stand for longer periods of time, with limited toilet facilities, shade or seating. Even though we carry chairs, tables and tents, your time to use these will be limited.

## Preparing for the climb



Good preparation is key. After all, the fitter you are, the more enjoyable the climb will be! We recommend doing hikes with bags full of books in the weeks leading up to the Kilimanjaro climb, to get used to the weight on your shoulders and hiking long distances. Also, it might be good to practice this on steep roads, or, if you live in a flat area, practice going up and down a few flights of stairs regularly.

In general, we can say that anyone who is very active and has a healthy lifestyle should have no problem reaching the summit. Assuming they can handle altitude differences, which is something you can hardly prepare for. Depending on

experience and physical conditioning you can start the ascent at the foot of the mountain or a bit higher up at for example 3000 meters.

## During the climb

Everything is taken care of when climbing with us - accommodations, food, water, porters, guides, and a cook are all arranged. On most routes, you sleep in spacious tents that porters carry up the mountain for you. On the Marangu route special huts (dormitories) are provided.

### Food and water

On the mountain a professional cook freshly prepares good, filling meals for you and the whole team.

- Breakfast consists of boiled eggs, sausages, pancakes, oat porridge, and bread with toppings such as peanut butter and jam.
- Lunch can be hot or picnic-style, depending on the distance you travel that day. Hot lunches usually consist of soup, a main course with pasta, rice and/ or potatoes, some meat or fish and veggies, and a dessert of fresh fruit as long as possible. Picnic lunches would be similar to breakfasts.
- Dinners are heavy with rice, pasta, and/ or potatoes, lots of veggies, and some meat or fish to help your body recover from the hike of that day. The starter is usually a soup (freshly made, different kinds) and desserts consist of fruits.
- In between snacks such as apples, ground nuts, chocolate, and biscuits are shared by the guides and in the afternoon a break is planned for tea, coffee, hot chocolate, or milk with popcorn, biscuits, peanuts, or cashew nuts.

Tea, coffee, and water are served with every meal, as porters collect fresh water from various clean mountain rivers. The water is then filtered and purified with water purification tablets. This way we make sure that the water is 100% safe.

### **Toilet and shower**

The Kilimanjaro National Park provides public toilets at the camps where you spend the night. During the day you can use a portable toilet that one of the porters carries up the mountain.

It's impossible to take a shower for the duration of the climb, but in the morning and evening, you can refresh yourself with some heated water. Wet wipes, toilet paper, and antibacterial gel are good to bring along to keep a certain standard of hygiene during the day.

### **Luggage and clothes**

Of course, during the ascent, space for luggage is limited. Luggage that is not needed during the ascent can be safely stored at the lodge. To ensure that our porters are not overloaded with your luggage, we have limited the luggage per person on the mountain to 18kg.

When it comes to clothing, we advise wearing different layers. Since the weather on the mountain is unpredictable, and you walk through different climatic zones, it makes sense to do so. Also, try to avoid cotton. It might get wet and will be hard to dry on the mountain. Instead of cotton, bring clothes made of polypro, merino wool, silk, or fleece.

### **The weather on the mountain**

The weather on the mountain is quite unpredictable. Temperatures can vary from 20 to 27° C at the base of the mountain during the day, to -2 to -30° C at night at Uhuru Peak, where you might even encounter snow.

Nights are usually clear, but cold. Then mornings are warm as soon as the sun begins to shine. Nice temperatures and clear skies usually take you through the day and we strongly recommend you bring good UV protection (even though rain can also surprise you once in a while). As soon as the sun goes down, temperatures again drop drastically to below zero. The night you reach the summit can be tough because of the low temperatures, the altitude, and the weather conditions in general (think strong winds, for example). Make sure you have appropriate clothing for the night of the summit, and in general, be prepared for the different weather conditions during the climb.



## Guideline for tips

Tipping is a custom in Tanzania and represents an excellent motivation for the team. It is a nice add-on to the team member's income that directly shows your appreciation as they stay with you for the duration of your climb, day and night. As a general guideline, during Kilimanjaro climbs each group gives \$15 per day to the lead guide, \$10 per day to the assistant guide, \$10 per day to the cook, and \$8 per day per porter.

## Kilimanjaro Responsible Trekking Organisation

Tanzania Specialist is a KRTO-certified partner company and as such we guarantee:

- Socially responsible Kilimanjaro mountain tourism
- Fair and ethical treatment of the mountain crew
- No exploitation and mistreatment of the mountain crew



Practically this means we ensure our porters earn decent wages, work decent hours, make use of proper gear and can follow courses to increase their knowledge. This is monitored by and done in partnership with KRTO and KPAP (Kilimanjaro Porter Assistance Project). For more information about this initiative, please visit [the website of KRTO](#).

## Useful insurances

### Flying Doctors Insurance

The [AMREF Flying Doctors](#) have been conducting medical evacuation flights in Tanzania (including Kilimanjaro), Zanzibar (including Mafia and Pemba), Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi since the



1950s. This Flying Doctor Service is a flying ambulance service with its doctors and pilots on standby 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Flying Doctors insurance adds to your regular travel insurance and is not compulsory.

If you encounter a life-threatening situation while on the mountain, Flying Doctors can arrange helicopter evacuations and fly you to a hospital in Moshi. Please note that the maximum landing altitude depends on weather, terrain conditions, and approximate weight-lift limits. More information about this can be found in the [FAQs](#).

Tanzania Specialist is a member of the Flying Doctors, which means we can arrange this for you.

The costs for Flying Doctors Insurance are 40 USD per person for 30 days.

**Please note:** The price covers your trip to one or more countries mentioned above. The service does not include hospital costs, medical treatments and medicines, so adequate travel health insurance is still needed next to the Flying Doctors Insurance.

### Travel Insurance

We obligate our clients to have proper travel insurance. Travel insurance usually covers medical costs, as well as damage to or loss of luggage.

## Smart packing for the Kilimanjaro ascent

- Different layers of trekking trousers and shirts - warm and waterproof (not water-repellent)
- Thermo clothes
- Poncho (optional)
- Several pairs of thick walking socks
- Waterproof hiking boots with ankle protection
- Gaiters to put over your shoes to keep them dry
- Hat, cap, bandana and/ or buff
- A pair of thin and a pair of thick gloves, water & windproof
- Backpack (carried by the porters)
- Small day-pack
- Waterproof cover for backpack & other luggage
- Water bottle or CamelBak
- Walking poles
- Headlight and additional batteries
- Camera (plus extra batteries, since devices cannot be charged on the mountain)
- Sunscreen and sunglasses
- Sleeping bag (up to -20° C)
- Sleeping mat
- Small towel
- Toiletry: toilet paper, soap, toothbrush, washcloths, antibacterial gel
- Energy bars (two per day), biscuits & snacks
- Diamox (against altitude sickness)

Please note that some of the items mentioned can be rented from us.

## Preserve Tanzania's nature with us!

Tanzania Specialist invests in, and lives from, the beautiful nature that Tanzania offers. This is why we do everything in our power to preserve the environment to the best of our ability. We ask you, as our guest, to not leave waste on Kilimanjaro, on the beach, or in the national parks. Instead, please keep it with you until you or your guide can dispose of it properly when arriving back in the hotel. It's just a small gesture, but it will help future generations to enjoy this beautiful country just as we do!



*We wish you safari njema (safe travels) and warmly welcome you: Karibu Tanzania!*