

Frequently Asked Questions

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This section contains the answers to many of the most commonly asked questions. Please see if the answer to your question can be found here. If not then please don't hesitate to contact us, and we shall reply as soon as possible.

Tanzania

Do I need to take malaria medicine?

Malaria is a serious problem in East Africa so you must consult your doctor about getting effective malaria prophylaxis for your visit. Many people are avoiding Lariam nowadays and going back to a mixture of Chloroquine and Nivaquine. You cannot catch malaria above 3000 metres on Kilimanjaro, but you must be careful below that altitude, particularly if you visit the coast where the strains of malaria tend to be especially virulent.

What vaccinations are required for Tanzania?

Visitors are required to have a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate in order to enter Tanzania, but you should also consult your doctor or travel agent about other recommended vaccinations.

Getting Here

How do I get to Kilimanjaro?

There is an international airport (called Kilimanjaro) 80 kilometres from Marangu. This is served by KLM, Ethiopian Airlines and Air Tanzania. Nairobi airport in Kenya has better and more frequent air links with the outside world, and many people choose to fly there and then travel on to Tanzania. There are daily shuttle bus services connecting Nairobi with Arusha, Moshi and Marangu in northern Tanzania. There are also daily flights from Nairobi to Kilimanjaro. We can send you more details about these if you wish. There are also air services to Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, but travelling to northern Tanzania from Dar-es-Salaam is not as easy as travelling down from Nairobi.

Can I get a taxi to Marangu?

We can arrange for you to be collected from Kilimanjaro airport, Arusha or Moshi. We charge competitive rates for transfers, usually less than a private taxi. We can also arrange group collections.

Do I need a visa to enter Tanzania?

Visitors from many countries, including the USA and the United Kingdom, require a visa in order to enter Tanzania. Some visitors can purchase a visa at the point of entry, but some nationalities are required to obtain the visa in advance of their arrival. Please check the current situation with your local Tanzanian diplomatic mission. If you intend to fly to Nairobi and then travel on to Tanzania, remember that you may also require a visa to enter Kenya, even if it is only for a few hours.

The Hotel

Is the water safe to drink?

The water in the hotel comes from our own spring. It is delicious and pure. On Kilimanjaro, the naturally occurring water is generally considered safe to drink untreated. However, many people feel happier if water is treated whilst on a climb, and if you feel that way please bring drops or tablets with which to sterilise water. Higher up the mountain, the water which has melted from nearby glaciers can taste unpleasant because of the high mineral content, and a small filter can improve the taste of the water significantly.

Is it safe to walk around the hotel?

Yes, Marangu is a safe neighbourhood, although walking around at night is not recommended because there is no street lighting. We normally suggest that visitors hire a local guide for day walks because they will see so much more of interest than if they walk alone.

The Mountain

Does an extra day help acclimatization?

Most guidebooks recommend that climbers spend an extra day during the Marangu route climb especially. This is very much a personal decision, but our statistics do not indicate any greater success rate amongst 6 day Marangu route climbers over 5 day climbers. More important for success is the overall approach to the climb, right from the start. That said, many people like an extra day spent on the ascent because it makes the whole climb more relaxed and gives an opportunity to go on some pleasant walks on the slopes of Mawenzi.

I've heard many horror stories about Kilimanjaro. How do I know that it's safe to climb with you?

Our organisation has been sending people up Kilimanjaro since 1932, and we have enormous experience. We arrange climbs for around 1500 climbers every year, and a number of us involved in the running of the hotel climb the mountain regularly so that our experience of conditions is always very recent. Our guides (numbering over 40 at the moment) only work for us, so we can be sure that our standards are consistent. In particular, you will not find yourself being harassed for tips by your crew during your climb.

If there is a problem on the mountain what are the rescue procedures?

The national park operates a rescue service, and the huts on the Marangu route are linked to each other and to the park headquarters by radio. In the vast majority of emergency cases, the problem is altitude related and the solution is immediate descent to a lower altitude. Our mountain crew are all experienced at dealing with such cases and can bring climbers down to safe altitudes very quickly and without park assistance if it is not immediately available.

Is it possible to rent mountain equipment from the hotel?

We have a large stock of clothing, tents and sleeping bags. This is primarily for the free use of our fully equipped climbers but we also make equipment available for hire to hard way climbers where possible. In all cases, we encourage climbers to bring as much of their own warm clothing as possible. In particular, climbers should avoid having to hire or borrow boots.

I read in the *Lonely Planet* that the success rate on Kilimanjaro is less than thirty percent. Is this true and if so is there any reason for me to climb it knowing I won't make it to the top?

Many people climb Kilimanjaro without knowing what they are letting themselves in for. Consequently they may be inadequately clothed and fed, and they therefore have a miserable and unsuccessful time. We make sure that you are properly informed and equipped, and our success rate to the crater rim is 87%. Our success rate to Uhuru peak is 70%. However, we always stress that the main reason to climb Kilimanjaro (or any other mountain) is to have a safe and enjoyable time. Reaching the summit is a bonus, but should never be seen as the sole aim of the climb.

How cold does it get on Kilimanjaro?

The temperature at the top of the mountain can vary widely. Sometimes it is only a degree or two below freezing, but visitors should be prepared for the possibility of temperatures as low as minus 25 degrees Celsius, perhaps in conjunction with a wind.

Can children climb Kilimanjaro?

The national park rules stipulate that the minimum age for climbing above 3000 metres is 10 years. This is because altitude sickness can affect children very quickly and dangerously.

What should I know about altitude sickness?

There are different types of altitude sickness. "Acute mountain sickness" is very common, and is not as frightening as its name suggests. The symptoms are headaches, nausea and vomiting, though not everyone suffers from all the symptoms. Normally, symptoms fade after a few hours, but if they do not a climber may need to turn back, especially if vomiting is leading to dehydration. Any enjoyment to be had from the climb will have disappeared by now anyway.

A much more serious type of altitude sickness is called oedema. This is a build-up of fluid in the body, and when the fluid collects in the lungs or the brain a serious condition develops which requires immediate action in the form of descent to a lower altitude, where recovery is usually miraculously fast.

To acclimatise properly, a climber should not climb more than 300 metres per day, but all ascents on Kilimanjaro are very much faster than

that. The secret, therefore, is to make each day's ascent as slow as possible.

During your pre-climb briefing, we describe altitude sickness to you in detail, and advise you how to cope with it. The most important thing is not to fear it, but to respect it and to know how to deal with it. Our guides have seen every condition that the mountain produces, and they will always know how to deal with problems.

What is an anorak?

A weatherproof jacket, such as Gore-tex.

What is a balaclava?

A woollen sock that fits over the head with slits for only the eyes and mouth.

How is cooking done on the mountain?

We use high pressure Kerosene stoves (made by Primus in the USA). These are very efficient (about 90% of the efficiency of gas, which is not always available here), and you can also feel satisfied that no firewood is being used which might damage the ecology of the mountain.

Why are tents used on the Machame route although there appear to be huts on that route?

Although there are one or two metal shelters at each of the Machame route camps (and these shelters were referred to as "huts" by the Kilimanjaro Mountain Club which built them long ago), they are not suitable for sleeping in. The crew often use them as wind-breaks for cooking, but both you and your crew sleep in tents.

If I choose a hard way climb, do I also have to provide food and equipment for my guides and porters?

No, food is provided for the guides and porters by the hotel.

I've heard that many Kilimanjaro operators don't care if their crew sleep out in the open. Do you provide tents for guides and porters on camping routes?

Yes, we do.

Do you pay wages to your guides and porters? I've heard that the only reward they get is the tip at the end of the climb, which is why so many climbers get hassled for tips.

Yes, we do pay them wages, and we pay well above the levels recommended by Kilimanjaro National Park. We also pay guides and porters immediately after each climb. Our crews all know that tips from climbers are discretionary. And even if you do want to give a tip, we always ask you not to do it on the mountain but back at the hotel after the climb is over. There, everything is relaxed and open.