



Kilimanjaro Marathon

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart mid-evening from London Heathrow on an overnight flight to Kilimanjaro International airport.

Day 2 – Arrive at Kilimanjaro Airport around breakfast time (subject to which airline used). An East African Adventure representative will be there to meet you and help with your baggage and transfer (generally) to the Ilboru Safari Lodge. This lodge is about an hour's drive from the airport on the outskirts of Arusha and is a good quality, local lodge offering characterful accommodation and personal service. The accommodation is in thatched African rondavels, with two well appointed, individual rooms per rondavel, each room having its own verandah, all set in 5 acres of large gardens of many indigenous flowers, plants and trees. There is a swimming pool to relax in and keep your legs fresh before and to get them moving again after the marathon.



Day 3 – Breakfast is served in the restaurant, overlooking the pool and gardens. To help get over the flight we have a leisurely start to the day and aim to leave the lodge by 10 o'clock this morning, to spend the day in nearby Arusha National Park. This is a lovely national park that is home to lots of game (especially giraffe) as well as Tanzania's second highest peak, Mt Meru. We reach the park gate by late morning and spend the rest of the day inside the national park, spotting the local wildlife from our safari-prepared 4wd. The park is locally known as 'giraffe-y park' because of the abundance of giraffe to be found, along with many other plains game species such as zebra and buffalo, as well as varied birdlife. Arusha National Park has areas of forest, wetland and plains habitat so there is a great variety of wildlife to be seen here. Waterbuck are usually found by some of the lakes and small dik dik antelope can be spotted, usually in pairs, in the undergrowth on some of the many hillocks of the lower parts of the park. We take a packed lunch from the lodge and can stop after a couple of hours for lunch at a nice spot, possibly in the forest overlooking the large Ngurdoto Crater where we should be able to spot buffalo in the wetlands below -this is left entirely to nature as there are no roads into the crater and a large herd of buffalo roam inside it.

After lunch we head to Small Momella Lake and go canoeing for a slow paced, relaxing couple of hours on the soda lake to see the park and its wildlife from a totally different angle. It is possible to see buffalo grazing on the shore from quite close, and the lake is home to two groups of hippopotamus. Our canoe guide knows where the hippos usually spend their time and should be able to get us quite good and safe views of them, as well as spotting other wildlife and birdlife on the shore and on the water. We return to our vehicle after a couple of hours and spend our remaining time on another game drive, slowly making our way back to the park gate to leave the park, and arriving back at our lodge for around 6 o'clock. There is time to relax and have a shower before dinner in the restaurant in the main lodge building.



Day 4 – Today is spent at your leisure in the Ilboru Safari Lodge and its grounds to relax and prepare for the marathon tomorrow. In between breakfast, lunch and dinner one can relax by the swimming pool or explore the gardens of the lodge to stretch your legs and see the different types of trees and birds. Alternatively, a walk into Arusha town does not take long to see the local sights, shops and maybe a local market.

A quiet day to take it easy and eat and drink for the race tomorrow whilst enjoying the comforts of this secluded, peaceful lodge and its natural setting.

Day 5 – Race Day! The start of the marathon is around 6.30am to run in the cool of the morning. The Kilimanjaro Marathon is run in and around Moshi, about an hour's drive from the lodge and at the base of Kilimanjaro. This means an early start as we aim to get to Moshi Stadium to sign in around 5.30am to allow plenty of time to sort ourselves out. We leave the lodge around 4.30am after a quick breakfast (it is a good idea to have a small supply of food with you such as energy bars/gels to make sure you are properly fuelled up for the race).



The stadium in Moshi is the start and finish of the race and there is a real party atmosphere in town as this is one of the biggest days of the year.

To run a marathon at the foot of one of the most iconic mountains in the world is quite something and there are views of Kili from most of the route, the route even venturing onto the lowest slopes of Kilimanjaro, the world's tallest free-standing mountain and the biggest volcano in Africa. To run a marathon in this part of the world is a great experience, with far more interest than most other road marathons!

Entrants come from all over the world, making it a really special race; roughly 250 people run the full marathon (with over 1,000 taking part in the 2009 half marathon) with many top Tanzanian, Kenyan and Ethiopian runners making for fierce competition at the front. The male winning time for 2006 and 2007 was 2 hours 18 minutes and the record for the course is 2.15.25, set in 2009 - very fast for a course with over 300m of ascent! The best winning female time was in the 2009 race with a time of 2.41.30.

The Kilimanjaro Marathon Club along with members of Tanzania Amateur Athletics Association (TAAA) and the local Kilimanjaro Amateur Athletics Association (KAAA) run the Kilimanjaro Marathon. There are twelve water points on the route, regular water tables as well as 'sponging points' and the odd 'shower' to keep the runners refreshed and cool along the entire route. Crowd and traffic control are provided for, as is medical assistance and communications. Official timekeeping is arranged, as is an official prize giving and function attended by local dignitaries.

The route takes runners through smallholder farms, local villages, parts of the town, banana and coffee plantations and patches of forest on gravel, tar and a mixture of both; all the time with Kilimanjaro as the backdrop. There are lots of different things to see and take in, as well as a real glimpse of people's way of life as the route is through quite populated and cultivated countryside for most of the race. The marathon route leaves Moshi stadium and heads towards the town before following the road towards Dar-Es-Salaam for roughly 5 miles. This part is quite flat and there are quite a lot of spectators to watch the runners. We turn around and head back to the town, and run through central Moshi past the market and police barracks on our way back to pass the stadium. This marks the start of the long, steady ascent towards Kilimanjaro and Mweka village.

The uphill climb is gradual, but with Kilimanjaro towering above and all the local villagers out to cheer you on, the time passes quickly. The first part near the town takes runners past small local shops and bars, and then into coffee plantations (thanks to the fertile soil at the base of the mountain). The route climbs about 300m from Moshi at 800m to about 1100m above sea level, before the turn point near Mweka College. The Mweka National Park gate for Kilimanjaro is just the other side of the village – showing just how close to the mountain the marathon is! The turnaround point marks approximately 20 miles, and the last section is a fast downhill run back towards the stadium.

The half marathon usually has a good field of around 500 runners, with lots of strong runners from Tanzania and Kenya. The half marathon male record time was set in 2009 at 1 hour 3 minutes 47

seconds, and the Gold Commonwealth winner Francis Naali is a previous winner of the event with his victory in 2004 with a time of 1.17 (he has also finished fifth in the full marathon, in 2003).

The half marathon starts and finishes in the Moshi Stadium, as does the full marathon, starting on a flat section it then follows the same route onto the bottom slopes of Kilimanjaro to Mweka, at about 10km this is the turnaround point, making the other half of the race a fast downhill back to the stadium. After the race we stay to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the occasion until everyone is ready to leave, then head back to our lodge for the rest of the day to shower, relax, eat, and reflect on probably one of the most memorable marathons you could run.



Day 6 – A good day for a big breakfast! To make the most of the last day of the trip in Africa we visit Meserani Snake Park this morning. This is on the other side of Arusha, which means we drive through some of the town and can see the hustle and bustle of the markets and activity that goes on here: this is a really interesting spectacle for a first time visitor! The drive to the snake park is also really interesting with views of dusty African plains and countryside, as well as great views of Mt Meru as it looks down on Arusha.

Meserani Snake Park was originally set up to take in the dangerous snakes that were found in the local communities to protect them, but it has become more than that now with a large collection of reptiles, a Maasai museum, a large curio shop (to buy souvenirs such as wooden carvings) and a camp site that is popular with overland expeditions and other tourists - a great way to spend the morning. We return to the lodge for lunch and can take it easy by the pool and relax until it is time to leave for the airport and our return flight home this evening.

Day 7 – Arrive back in the UK mid morning.

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