



## Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro Detailed Itinerary

**Day 1** – Depart London Heathrow on the morning flight and arrive in Nairobi mid-evening where an East African Adventure representative/trip leader will meet us and help us with our baggage. We then transfer to our hotel (generally the Boulevard) in Nairobi for the night and can relax after the flight.

**Day 2** – We leave Nairobi after breakfast and drive towards Mt Kenya through the Great Rift Valley at its deepest point (in Kenya) north of Nairobi. As we drive across African plains it is easy to forget we are actually in the bottom of the world's biggest valley system, the Great Rift Valley, which stretches roughly 5000 km in all and is in fact the reason that Mt Kenya actually came to be. On a more local scale, small communities, shepherds, Masai bomas (villages of mud and straw huts) and expansive views provide interest and an insight into the country as we travel to Mt Kenya National Park. We stop for lunch and transfer to 4wd vehicles for the last 25km or so as the road up to the Chogoria park gate is rough and can be muddy. It is a short drive to the entrance of the national park where we sign in, and then drive the rest of the way to our overnight accommodation on the lower slopes of Mt Kenya, in the mountain huts at Bandas Camp. Only yesterday we left the UK and it has been a long journey - but we are ready to start our trek up the former volcano Mt Kenya, have seen a small part of Africa and are in the Great Rift Valley!



**Day 3** – The bottom of Mt Kenya is surrounded in mountain forest, home to bamboo and animals including antelope, colobus monkeys and many forest dwelling birds like turacos and bee-eaters. It is possible to go on a game walk before breakfast through the forest to the edge of a nearby valley where we could see bushbuck, waterbuck, buffalo etc feeding below, before returning to Bandas (Swahili for hut) for our breakfast. This is the start of the Chogoria trekking route on the east side of the mountain and the most spectacular approach to the peaks, as they catch the morning sun making for great photo opportunities. The impressive outlines of the peaks make it easy to see why it is sacred for the Kikuyu tribe that have lived and farmed at its base for more than 400 years. This near the Equator it still seems surprising there is regular snowfall on the highest slopes but the altitude means the conditions are alpine. The snow and rain on the mountain forms streams and rivers, which feed the lakes on the lower slopes, and Kenya's largest river, the Tana, flows roughly 400 kms from Mt

Kenya to the Indian Ocean. Hydro-electric stations have been built along it and they supply Kenya with a large amount of its electricity. One of these lakes is the site of our first camp, Lake Ellis at 3400 metres. It is roughly 3 hours of walking that takes us through some of the different climatic zones on the mountain. Trekking through the rest of the forest we come out into a heather moorland zone as the altitude increases, keeping the forest plants to the lower slopes. The heather blankets the ground and we have unobstructed views of the peaks above and plains below as we reach camp, at about lunchtime.

This afternoon there is the option of a short walk up nearby Mugi Hill for good views of the lake, and to hopefully see zebra and eland grazing on the lower slopes below us.

**Day 4** – Today we trek for about 6 hours through moorland and can see giant lobelias that are unique to the high slopes of East African mountains. These large flowering shrubs grow to over 3 metres tall and thrive where other plants wither. On the way to tonight's camp the trek takes us past some of the many rivers and waterfalls, with views of Vivienne Falls and Gorges Valley. Our campsite for tonight is Lake Michaelson at 4000 metres, possibly one of the most photogenic areas of the mountain with the backdrop of impressive cliffs called 'The Temple' and the giant lobelias near camp.

**Day 5** – We leave camp today and follow the stream that flows into Lake Michaelson. As we get higher the vegetation decreases and is slowly replaced by hardy grasses and volcanic rock and ash. The only wildlife we may see are buzzards and eagles but there are small rodents in the cover of the rock, though buffalo and elephant skeletons have actually been found as high as 4400 metres. Our camp for tonight is Simba Tarn (4600 metres) at the top of steep scree, below Simba Col on the north ridge to Point Lenana, (simba is the Swahili word for lion). There are good views from camp both up to tomorrow's summit and down to the moorland and forests. We reach camp in the early afternoon after about 5 hours trekking leaving plenty of time for resting and sorting our gear out for the start to the summit early in the morning.



**Day 6** – Aiming to leave camp for the summit by 4 am we need to get up at 3 am. It is about an hour and a half to reach Simba Col and roughly 30 minutes more to Point Lenana, at 4985 metres, this is Mt Kenya's trekking peak. The true summit is reached by way of rock climbing and only experienced and well-equipped parties should attempt to reach the top, Point Lenana is the recognised high point for trekkers, as it requires no technical climbing to reach it. It is cold at this height until the sun comes up but we should be climbing through this and reach the summit in time for sunrise over the African plains. On a clear day the views from the summit are of the plateau and steppes of the Great Rift Valley stretching out below and over 250 km away over the African plains the glaciers of Mt Kilimanjaro can be seen catching the first rays of the morning sun. After photos we descend the same route to Simba tarn, where we will stop for a celebratory breakfast, which is very welcome. From here

we now join a different path, and the rest of the day is spent descending on the Sirimon route, through moorland on the north of Lenana to a height of roughly 3400 metres where we will camp for the last time on Mt Kenya at the 'Old Moses' camp site. The summit day on Mt Kenya has a height gain of roughly 350 metres from our top camp and a descent of about 1600 metres, in a total walking time of roughly 8 hours. This combined with the generally shorter trekking days, make climbing Mt Kenya, the 2nd highest mountain in Africa, an achievement in itself as well as brilliant training and acclimatisation for Kilimanjaro.

**Day 7** – The last day on Mt Kenya is spent trekking down through moorland and then forest, giving us another chance to see the wildlife and flora of this unique volcano. It is about a 3 hour walk to the national park gate where we pick up our certificates, have some lunch and meet the cars to transfer back to the Boulevard Hotel, arriving late afternoon and spending the night to break the journey to Tanzania and Mt Kilimanjaro. We cross the Equator about an hour into the journey to Nairobi and stop for pictures, there are also some local 'curio' shops at the site selling souvenirs etc. It is nice to come off Mount Kenya and stay at the Boulevard Hotel, where we can relax in comfort and clean up before driving to Arusha and Kilimanjaro the next day.

**Day 8** – Leaving Nairobi after breakfast we head south to the border at Namanga, cross into Tanzania then drive around the north western side of Kilimanjaro to Arusha, at the foot of Mt Meru. The drive itself is an experience not to be missed, as we travel through southern Kenya and enter Tanzania we can get a glimpse of the way of life and cultural tradition, and then have views of Kilimanjaro and Mt Meru as we get closer to Arusha. After a drive of about 6 hours we arrive at the Ilboru Safari Lodge, a characterful hotel with private thatched rooms set in large gardens with many colourful flowers and plants. We can relax here and take advantage of the swimming pool, whilst we look forward to Kilimanjaro, knowing the best bit of the trip is still to come.



**Day 9** – We leave Ilboru after breakfast and drive east, through the bustling outskirts of Arusha on the Moshi road towards Kilimanjaro, and head for the Machame park gate. This is on the south-western

side of Kilimanjaro and is traditionally home to the Chagga tribe. The drive takes between 1-2 hours in which we travel up into the lower, cultivated slopes that are home to many small communities, often growing bananas, vegetables and coffee on these fertile slopes. We arrive at the park gate (1800 metres) mid-morning, and it is a hive of activity as porters' loads are organised, and registration and park fees are finalised before we can start our trek up onto Kilimanjaro through the rainforest on the Machame route. The trek to camp is 5-6 hours, mainly through the forest where we can look out for colobus and blue monkeys amongst the vines and trees. The forest is carpeted with flowers, ferns and begonias whilst mosses and lichens grow on the trees in the humid air deep in the forest. Trekking up a ridge between streams gives us views deeper into the forest and the chance to see leopard, which are known to live here, but are very rarely seen. We come out of the forest at around 3000 metres and pass into heather moorland and soon reach our camp at Machame Huts.

**Day 10** – During today's trek we have excellent views of Kibo straight ahead (the summit peak of Kilimanjaro) and Mt Meru to the west as we walk through heather moorland to reach Shira Hut and our campsite for tonight at 3850 metres. The rainforest has turned to heather moorland as a result of the higher altitude and different climate found here which stunts the growth of other plant species found lower. Large heather and grasses thrive and cover the ground whilst fig trees draped with usnea (old mans beard) are about the only trees now. We can also see Giant Lobelias that are only found in this low alpine moorland, these large flowering shrubs growing to over 3 metres tall. It is a 6-8 hour trek today that takes us onto the Shira Plateau with views of the Shira Ridge, Cathedral and Needle, the latter two are impressive lava formations not far from camp.

**Day 11** – From Shira Hut we head straight for Kibo and as we get closer can make out much of the detail of its craggy west face glaciers and cliffs, including the Western Breach. Today is a good acclimatisation day as we make our way to around 4500 metres and pass near the Lava Tower formation before traversing Kibo to tonight's camp at Barranco Hut (3950 metres). This walk takes between 6-8 hours and can be tiring but Barranco (Swahili for gorge) Hut is one of the most dramatic camps on Kilimanjaro, situated near Great Barranco, with excellent views down to the forest and plains below.

**Day 12** – It is an earlier start today but once the sun has climbed high enough to shine onto camp it warms up quickly and we can change from warm clothes to T-shirts in minutes. We leave camp to cross Great Barranco and it is a steep pull out of the gorge but from there it is fairly level walking along the Kibo South Circuit with views of the Southern Icefields above us, before turning north and going steeper uphill for 2-3 hours. It is 6-8 hours walking today and we hope to reach our camp at Barafu Hut (4600 metres) early to mid-afternoon. We have time to sort our gear for the summit and get some rest before an early dinner and then to bed as soon as we can for the very early start for the summit.



**Day 13** – Waking up around midnight we aim to leave for the summit between 1-2 am. The path to Stella Point on the crater rim of Kibo is a steep scree zig-zag route using head torches to light our way until the coming sunrise brings some welcome warmth in the early morning. We will be near Stella Point as the sun rises and have wonderful silhouettes of Mawenzi and views of Africa below us. Now on the crater rim we can see inside it to the vents and glaciers as we climb the final 100 metres (1 hour) to the summit, Uhuru Peak at 5895m. From the top we have a 360 degree panorama that includes Mt Meru, Mawenzi, Kenya, glaciers and new friends as we celebrate our success and take photos. It is soon time to re-trace our steps to Stella Point and Barafu Camp for some food as we make our way from there down to Mweka Hut at 3100 metres and our last night spent in tents. This is a long, tough day with over 1200 metres of ascent, 2700 metres descent on the Mweka route and 14-17 hours walking, but it is worth it for the satisfaction, achievement and experience of reaching the summit of the world's highest freestanding mountain and one of the seven continental summits.

**Day 14** – Large heathers and fig trees surround the campsite as we are on the lower edge of the moorland once more and we wake to the sounds of the forest. There is 3-4 hours trekking left now on good paths through rainforest down to the National Park gate at Mweka, we will have tired legs but may see wildlife in the rainforest once more. Reflecting on the trek with new friends, and spotting monkeys in the canopy above us makes this an enjoyable end to the adventure. At Mweka gate we receive certificates for our achievement and have some food before transferring to the Ilboru Safari Lodge in Arusha to spend the rest of the day relaxing or shopping in Arusha and enjoy a great last night in Africa.

**Day 15** – We leave Ilboru after breakfast and drive back to Nairobi via the Namanga border crossing again, savouring our last experiences of Africa as we drive through the plains and villages to Nairobi. We have day rooms in the Boulevard when we reach Nairobi before our return flight to the UK that evening.

**Day 16** – Arrive at Heathrow in the early morning.

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