



## Mount Meru and Kilimanjaro 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/trip leader will be there to meet you and help with your baggage and transfer to Ilboru Safari Lodge (generally) on the outskirts of Arusha on the lower-most slopes of Mt Meru. This lodge is about an hour's drive from the airport and is comfortably appointed with characterful private thatched rooms set in large gardens of many colourful flowers and plants, a great place for resting after a long day travelling.

**Day 3** – Soon after breakfast we leave to drive to the start of our route on Mt Meru. This takes between 1 and 2 hours and travels through farmland and small communities on the edge of Arusha National Park. As we travel to the foot of the mountain there is a lot to see - examples of the local way of life, the alkaline lakes which are home to flamingoes and other water birds inside the park, and even giraffe near the road grazing. We arrive at the Momella park gate (at 1800 metres) and register while our porters sort their loads. We then enter the park with a National Park ranger who accompanies us throughout our time on the mountain, and cross a small plain that is home to game including zebra, giraffe and elephant. Climbing gradually we enter the rainforest and can look out for bushbuck (a small antelope) and colobus monkeys amongst the large cedar trees and glades of the forest. The relatively few trekkers on the mountain mean the camps are not over crowded and we will not meet many other groups during our trek enabling Mt Meru to retain a feeling of solitude. Around 4 hours walking brings us to Miriakamba Hut at roughly 2500 metres, in a small clearing with views of the lakes in the National Park. Whilst on Mt Meru we stay in large wooden huts divided into small dormitories that are relatively comfortable.



**Day 4** – The path through the rainforest is steeper today and we should have views of Kilimanjaro roughly 50km away to the north east. Hanging vines, many large trees, ferns and streams provide a rich habitat for plants and animals in this part of the National Park where we hope to see monkeys, birdlife and may even spot the secretive leopard. Our camp for tonight is Saddle hut at 3570 metres, this is in a col between Little Meru and Rhino Point on Mt Meru and we should reach this after 4-5 hours walking. We have the option to climb Little Meru once we are at Saddle Hut, which is a 2 hour

return trip and takes us to 3800 metres, useful for further acclimatising. We have time to get our kit ready for the summit tomorrow and have an early dinner, before getting to bed to be ready for the climb's early start tonight.

**Day 5** – We get up around 1 am to leave the hut 2 am, and start walking by the light of our head torches towards Rhino Point and the crater rim. We then follow the crater rim to the 4566 metre summit and enjoy the spectacular silhouetted views of Kilimanjaro as the sun rises over the plains of Africa, including the pyramid shadow cast by Mt Meru behind us. The flag of Tanzania is fixed at the top of Mt Meru, also known as Socialist



peak since the country's independence, and there is a summit register kept in a metal box to sign before leaving. The true, dramatic nature of Mt Meru can be seen on the way down now the sun has risen, the crater rim is shaped like a horseshoe since the opposite wall collapsed leaving cliffs of 1500 metres. These are some of the biggest in Africa and from the top of them on the crater rim we can see the ash cone below, which is a perfectly formed reminder of past volcanic eruptions that is quite spectacular to see. We follow the rim back to Rhino Point with views of Little Meru then back to Saddle Hut for food and to pack before heading down to Miriakamba Hut to stay the night. This is a long day with 1000 metres of ascent, a 2000 metre descent and a total walking time of 12-14 hours, but the little climbed peak of Mt Meru is a very rewarding and worthwhile achievement offering stunning views, making it an ideal acclimatisation peak prior to a climb of Kilimanjaro.

**Day 6** – Today we make our way down through the rainforest, able to look back and follow the route we took around the crater rim to the summit above us. It is 3-4 hours to the National Park gate at Momella and we can look down on the plain we soon cross to spot game as we near it. From here it is less than 30 minutes to the gate and our certificates for climbing to the summit. Now we transfer to a local lodge on the edge of Arusha National Park to overnight between treks, we arrive in time for lunch and can clean up. This lodge is a 20 minute drive from the gate and has direct views of Mt Meru so we can relax in the swimming pool after our climb and look back at the mountain. This afternoon we take a game drive in nearby Arusha National Park, famous for its alkaline lakes and birdlife, but we can also see zebra, giraffe, hyena, baboon, elephant, and antelope. Arusha National Park is a diverse habitat with lots to see and this excursion brings another aspect to the holiday and is a great way to spend our time between trekking.

**Day 7** – After spending the night at the lodge we are refreshed and ready to start our trek up Kilimanjaro, via the Shira route. Leaving after breakfast we drive to the Londrossi gate to enter the Kilimanjaro National Park on the west side of the mountain. This takes about 3 hours, our route travelling between Mt Meru and Kilimanjaro giving us good views of both. We travel through many communities and smallholdings (shambas), which for a first time visitor to Africa can be a very special experience. We arrive at Londrossi after driving through some of the forest that surrounds the base of the mountain in time for an early lunch whilst porters and park fees are organised. From here we drive to Moram camp on the edge of the Shira Plateau, and trek to tonight's camp at 3500m. Shira 1

campsite is at the bottom of the Shira Ridge, the original Shira volcano's crater rim, and has good unobstructed views of Kibo beyond the Shira Plateau.

**Day 8** – Waking to views of Kibo silhouetted by the sun, and the Shira Ridge, we set off across the Shira Plateau. Today's walk takes 5-6 hours and is through heather moorland with volcanic rock becoming more obvious. One of the plants that we see today is the Giant Lobelia; these large flowering shrubs rely on the special conditions found at this altitude and thrive where other plants cannot survive, growing to over 3 metres tall. We walk close to the Shira Ridge today and see the lava formations of the Shira Cathedral and Shira Needle, stopping for lunch at or near the Cathedral. We camp tonight at Shira Hut (3850m) and after a gradual incline throughout today's trek we are getting closer to Kibo now and can see the detail of the cliffs and glaciers on its West Face.

**Day 9** – After a breakfast enjoying views of Kibo and Mt Meru, we make our way through barren moorland that becomes little more than clumps of grasses and small heathers amongst the covering of volcanic rock. For the first 3-4 hours walking today we are heading straight for Kibo's craggy, glacier-covered West Face including the Western Breach. Our route turns to traverse this face on the southern side, passing below the Lava Tower, a large lava flow from a volcanic eruption that cooled to form a ridge which has since been eroded away to leave just a tower. We trek for a total of 6-8 hours today to reach our campsite, Barranco Hut at 3950 metres. On the edge of Great Barranco (barranco is gorge in Swahili) this is one of the most spectacular campsites on Kilimanjaro. Today is a good day for acclimatising because we trek up to roughly 4500 metres but camp only 100 metres higher than the night before.

**Day 10** – 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. We trek today with views of the Southern Icefields above us as we make our way to Karanga camp, near the Karanga valley, walking for a total of 3-4 hours. This extra day spent on the mountain at around 4200 metres altitude together with a short walking time really helps the acclimatisation process and splits what is otherwise a long day to the next camp at Barafu Hut.



**Day 11** – Leaving Karanga camp after breakfast, we stay on the Kibo South Circuit path until it crosses the Mweka route, at which point we turn north and start to climb to Barafu Hut at 4600 metres. It is roughly 5 hours walking today and we hope to reach camp early to mid-afternoon, allowing us time to sort our gear for the summit and get some rest before an early dinner. We get to bed as soon as we can for the very early start for the summit, when we will be pleased to have had the last two days at good altitude to adjust, and shorter walking times to rest before summit day.

**Day 12** – 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 and we use 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 it 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, southern 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 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 13** – 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, and 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 Moshi and spending the night at the Impala Hotel (generally) for very welcome showers and a drink over dinner that evening.

**Day 14** - A leisurely breakfast at the hotel, followed by relaxing for most of the day until transferring to Kilimanjaro airport in the afternoon for an overnight flight home.

**Day 15** – Arrive at Heathrow Airport mid-morning.

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