



## MOUNT KILIMANJARO - 7 DAYS CLIMB

### THE RONGAI ROUTE WITH ASCENT AT NIGHT VIA GILLMAN'S POINT



#### BRIEF ITINERARY

|        |                       |                     |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| DAY 1  | Hotel near Arusha -   | 1,350 m (4,430 ft)  |
| DAY 2  | Hotel near Arusha -   | 1,350 m (4,430 ft)  |
| DAY 3  | First Cave Camp -     | 2,850 m (9,300 ft)  |
| DAY 4  | Kikelewa Caves Camp - | 3,600 m (11,800 ft) |
| DAY 5  | Mawenzi Tarn Camp -   | 4,330 m (14,200 ft) |
| DAY 6  | Mawenzi Tarn Camp -   | 4,330 m (14,200 ft) |
| DAY 7  | Kibo Camp -           | 4,700 m (15,420 ft) |
| DAY 8  | Horombo Huts Camp -   | 3,720 m (12,200 ft) |
| DAY 9  | Hotel near Arusha -   | 1,350 m (4,430 ft)  |
| DAY 10 | Last day in Tanzania. |                     |

#### THE RONGAI ROUTE

This is an ideal route for those who have less time, or for people who may benefit from the simpler logistics involved in ascending and descending by the same route.

The climb starts near Rongai close to the Kenya border, which is the driest side of the mountain, and ends at the main Marangu Gate on the south-eastern edge of the mountain.

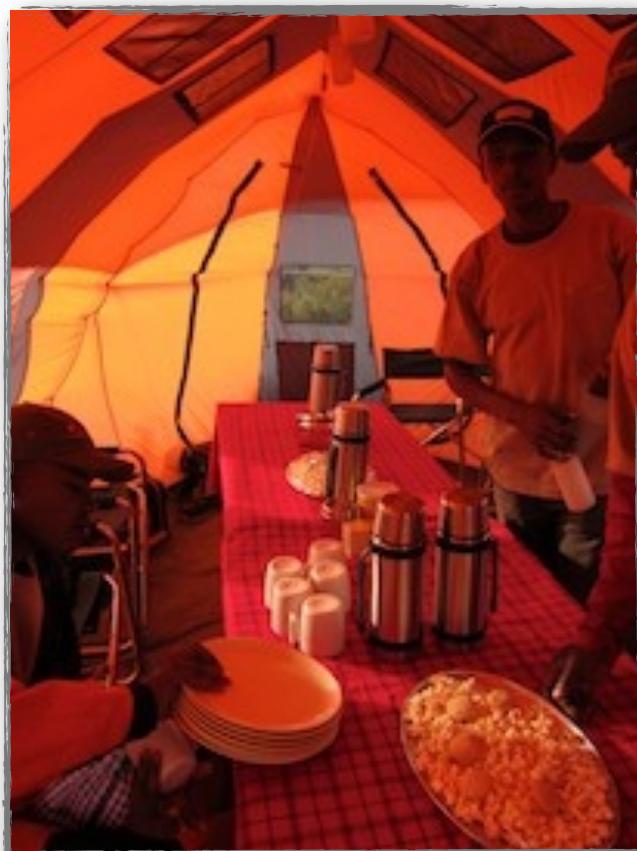
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This route offers wonderful views of the Tsavo area in Kenya, and both the Mawenzi and Kibo massifs, which are the two highest volcanoes of three that make up Kilimanjaro (the third being Shira). We hike to Mawenzi Tarn, and from there across the desert known as the “saddle” to join the hikers on the Marangu Route at Kibo Hut, where we camp before beginning our summit bid at midnight. The hike up the scree at night is evocative of a pilgrimage, as hikers in their respective groups light their way with headlamps. We reach the Crater rim at Gillman’s Point, and continue from there to the summit. The descent is one of the most gentle and longest descents, using the main Marangu Route, popularly known as the “Coca Cola” Route, because sodas are available at the huts along the way! This part of the journey is social, as we encounter climbers ascending and descending. We can compare experiences and give advice to those on their way up. We stay in our own camp in the vicinity of the huts.

## SAFETY

All our lead A Step Ahead and mountain guides are trained in first aid. We carry a first aid kit, oxygen and a gamow bag (mobile hyperbaric chamber) as a back up and a pulse oximeter as an aide to measure oxygen levels in our blood on all our trips. We carry cell phones and a backup satellite phone for support to be used only in emergencies (so that the battery does not run out). The ground operation office is based in Arusha and has excellent communications, vehicles and supplies for back up.



## GUIDES

We have three all-rounder professional guides who also are experienced in leading climbs up Mount Kilimanjaro. One of them will normally lead your climb. They will do their utmost to ensure your safety. If necessary they will be able to arrange any changes to your mountain itinerary and optimize the climb for you. Their prime considerations will be your health and acclimatisation, and your comfort.



Marc Baker was born in England, moving to Africa as a toddler. After his schooling he served in the British Army for five years. He then studied at Nottingham University in England obtaining a degree in Conservation

Biology before returning to Tanzania. He is a keen ornithologist, and is the perfect guide to point out an Abyssinian ground thrush, Hunter's cisticolas, a Lammergeyer or perhaps a scarlet-tufted malachite sunbird while hiking Mount Kilimanjaro.

Justin Bell was born and bred in East Africa. At the age of sixteen he climbed Mount Kenya and went on to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in 1983. Since then he has led many climbs up Mount Kilimanjaro. Justin is a trained Wilderness First Responder (First Aid).

Squack Evans was born and bred in Zimbabwe, and has spent over ten years guiding throughout East Africa. He has climbed to altitude in various parts of the world and is a highly trained and experienced walking guide. Squack has an extensive knowledge of Kilimanjaro's flora and fauna is also a trained Wilderness First Responder.

Justin, Marc and Squack love the time they spend



on the mountain, away from roads and vehicles, and thoroughly enjoy walking through the greatly varied vegetation zones.

Aside from your A Step Ahead lead guide, there will be a national park certified specialist mountain guide and additional assistant mountain guides (depending on the size of the group, we aim to provide 1 guide for every 2 climbers), which allows each member of the group to walk at their own pace, and to be able to have a chance at the summit.



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## SUPPORT DETAILS

Our climbs are very well organised. Aside from the experienced guides, there are three to five porters per climber. They carry all equipment - including tents, cooking equipment, fuel, food and client packs. At higher altitudes, they also carry water.



They are hard workers, and full of energy and cheerful spirit. Many Kilimanjaro climbing organisations cut costs, especially where labour is concerned. Our ground operator ensures our porters do not carry more than the mandated loads as recommended by a porter representative organisation, are all provided with proper wind and waterproof gear, are among the highest paid porters on the mountain, and are provided with annual training, including costs for the courses, and transport and meals while on a course.

## CAMP

Every two climbers (except where single accommodation is specifically requested and provided) share a three-man (standard) mountain dome tent. There is also a small dome dining "mess" tent, with very lightweight folding tables and stools, which has solar lighting.



There is a private chemical flush toilet and tent provided at all campsites where there is a national

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park latrine (where waste can be deposited in the pit latrine). At the high campsites (such as the Crater camp) we carry out and dispose of all human waste using the WAG-bag toilet system. There is a shower tent with a small solar bag shower system, and hot showers are possible on most (not all) days.

#### **WHAT YOU NEED TO CARRY**

Clients are only expected to carry their own daypacks, which will usually contain a spare layer of clothing, valuables (such as passport), drinking water, trail snacks and any photographic equipment.

#### **PREPARATION FOR THE CLIMB**

Before you come to Africa to climb Kilimanjaro we require you to honestly complete a Medical Assessment Form. In some cases we may require that your medical practitioner provide us with a written opinion of your health in relation to being able to take part in a hike to almost 6,000 m (20,000 feet) above sea level. We also send you a detailed equipment list, and answer any other pre-trip questions you may have, so that you are fully prepared for the challenge.

#### **MEALS**

Menus are carefully designed to be tasty and to provide the extra nourishment necessary to succeed. We only use fresh fruit and vegetables in our cooking, not freeze dried foods.



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Breakfasts usually consist of tea, coffee or herbal teas, cereals such as hot oatmeal porridge or muesli, fresh fruit, toast, bacon and eggs.

Lunch is often a picnic along the trail, consisting of



dried fruit and nuts, fresh fruit, bread, peanut butter, cold meats and cheeses, and some salad vegetables, such as cucumber, avocado and gherkins, to make your own sandwiches. Often there are also packets of juice, and hot beverages such as tea or coffee. If we have a hot lunch in camp we may also have hot soup, pasta or toasted cheese sandwich. Dinner consists of a soup, followed by a main course of stew or curry with rice, or chicken or fish, or lasagne, or pasta dish with bolognese sauce. Dessert is usually fruit or cookies followed by a hot beverage. There is no alcohol, bottled water or other soft drinks supplied, since these create a waste disposal problem, and are heavy, unnecessary items for the porters to carry. There is a water purification or filtration system in camp, and ample fresh mountain water is delivered to the mess tent for purification and decanting into your water bottles.

## DAILY ROUTINE

Normally you will be awoken at about 6:30am when tea or coffee is brought to your tent. Soon afterwards a bowl of hot washing water is placed just outside your tent, so that you may freshen up. You get dressed and pack your things into your duffle, and then we have breakfast at around 7:30am. We start our hike between 8 and 9am on most days.



On short days we may arrive in camp for a hot lunch. On longer days we will eat a picnic lunch on the trail. Sometimes a table and chairs are provided. Once you arrive in camp, and have put on dry clothes, tea refreshments are provided in the Mess tent. Often this includes popcorn, cake or cookies. On short days we may go for an extra hike around the area in the afternoon. On longer days we prepare ourselves for the next day, or play cards or read. Dinner is usually at around 6:30 or 7pm, and we are often in bed by 9pm. On the hike to the summit we may set off at midnight or 1am, so the routine that day will be different.

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## DETAILED ITINERARY

### THE RONGAI ROUTE -WITH KIBO HUT & GILLMAN'S POINT ASCENT ARUSHA NATIONAL PARK AND 7 DAYS ON KILIMANJARO



#### DAY 1 - SMALL COUNTRY LODGE, EDGE OF ARUSHA NATIONAL PARK

On arrival in Tanzania you are met by your *A Step Ahead* guide (Marc Baker or Squack Evans) and transferred to a small lodge just on the edge of Arusha National Park (1 hour drive) to settle in for a light supper and a good night's sleep at 1,300 m - 4,300 feet a.s.l (above mean sea level).

#### DAY 2 - SMALL COUNTRY LODGE, EDGE OF ARUSHA NATIONAL PARK

Today we awake to the sounds of tropical bird calls and a hot cup of tea or coffee. After breakfast we depart by vehicle either to the national park gate (10 minutes) or to a good spot to begin our hike through local wa-Meru villages, benefiting from an insight into life in Tanzanian villages. If we decide to visit the park, we game drive to Momella gate where we begin our acclimatisation hike. On the way we may sight the beautiful black and white



colobus

monkeys. The hike begins in open glades where we might see Cape buffalo, warthog, and giraffe. We then climb into the montane forest, where if we are lucky we could catch sight of a Hartlaub's turaco or maybe even a bar-tailed trogon! The walk could take from 2-5 hours. We might take a picnic lunch or have lunch back at the lodge.

At some point today your *A Step Ahead* guide will do a climb briefing in preparation for the Kilimanjaro climb and will also check all your mountain equipment with you. There is a good chance that we will have a glimpse of Mt Kilimanjaro through the clouds at sunset.

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Today we awake to the sounds of tropical bird calls and a hot cup of tea or coffee. After breakfast we depart by vehicle either to the national park gate (10 minutes) or to a good spot to begin our hike through local wa-Meru villages, benefiting from an insight into life in Tanzania.

If we decide to visit the park, we game drive to Momella gate where we begin a short acclimatisation hike. On the way we may sight the beautiful black and white colobus monkeys. The

hike begins in open glades where we might see Cape buffalo, warthog, and giraffe. Soon afterwards we enter montane forest, where if we are lucky we could catch sight of a Hartlaub's turaco or maybe even a bar-tailed trogon! The walk could take from **2-5 hours** to Maio Falls. We would most likely have a picnic lunch there, and then either return to the lodge, or spend more time in another part of the park on a game drive. On Day 3 it will be possible to start on foot from the same spot as yesterday, and after half an hour, continue on the mountain climbing trail to Miriakamba Hut, instead of hiking into the forest.

At some point today your *Wilderness Africa* guide will do a climb briefing in preparation for the Kilimanjaro climb and will also check all your mountain equipment with you. There is a good chance that we will have a glimpse of Mt Kilimanjaro through the clouds at sunset.



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**DAY 3 (First day on Kilimanjaro) – RONGAI FIRST CAVE CAMP (2,650 m - 8,700 feet)**  
 Today is an early start. We drive approximately 5 hours past Moshi town and around Mawenzi to the Kilimanjaro National Park gate at Rongai (next to the Kenya border) to register. After completing park entry formalities and meeting the porters and crew at Nale Moru village (1,950 m - 6,400 feet), we walk for 6½ kilometres / 4 miles (about 5 hours) and gain 700m / 2300 ft. The hike begins through “shambas” (planted fields), pine plantations and undisturbed forest to our camp for the night. We might see blue monkeys on the way. Our camp tonight is at the forest edge, where Hagenia and Hypericum (St John's Wort) dominate.

**DAY 4 – KIKELEWA CAVES CAMP (3,600 m - 11,800 feet)**

It is a 6-8 hours hike today to cover 9 kilometres / 5½ miles and we gain 950m / 3100 ft. We first climb for 4 hours through the open heath zone to the Second Cave Camp where we may stop for lunch (3,450 m - 11,300 feet). If we have found the hiking really hard, we could camp the night here. Then we traverse through open moorland to the



landscape around Kikelewa Caves Camp located in a sheltered valley, where we spend tonight. Views of the Eastern Icefield of Kibo and Mawenzi in the late afternoon are impressive.

**DAY 5 & 6 – MAWENZI TARN CAMP (4,330 m - 14,200 feet)**

It takes 3-4 hours to trek the 9 km / 5½ miles into the dry desert landscape to Mawenzi Tarn. We gain 370m / 1210 ft. We might have lunch on the way, or we could arrive in camp for a hot lunch. Here we

enjoy stunning vistas of the saddle (the dry desert between Kibo and Mawenzi) and we now feel right under Mawenzi. This beautiful camp is the perfect spot for an acclimatization pause, so if we have managed well on Day 5 and continued to Kikelewa Caves Camp as planned, today we get to Mawenzi Tarn can acclimatize here for 2 nights. The following day we can go for a 3-4 hour hike in the vicinity, and relax the rest of the day.



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**DAY 7 – KIBO HUT**

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#### CAMP (4,700 m - 15,420 ft)

We hike 4-5 hours covering **9 km / 5½ miles** across the dry mountain moon-like desert called the saddle. This is a stark and harsh environment, where the sun beams down, winds may blow, and there is an icy chill when you are in the shade. The contrast between the sun and the shade is dramatic, and the views of Mawenzi to the east and Kibo to the west are spectacular. We join the hikers on the Marangu Route (from Horombo Hut) just before arriving at Kibo Hut.



#### DAY 8 -

#### HOROMBO HUT CAMP (3,720 m - 12,200 feet)

##### Summit Day

Our hike for the last few days has been in preparation for today. We should now be well acclimatised and fitter. At midnight tonight most climbers will begin their ascent. We may either do the same, or leave just before dawn, climbing in daylight when it is warmer, and sumitting in the early afternoon. The disadvantage if we start later is that we are likely to arrive at Horombo as it gets dark. It is **5 kilometres / 3 miles** to the summit, taking from 6 to 8 hours. We then descend **15 kilometres / 9 miles** to Horombo Hut Camp. We gain 1195m / 3920 ft, and then descend 2175m / 7140 ft. This is a long arduous, and hopefully ultimately a rewarding hike, that will work our knees as well as our lungs!

We set off from Kibo Hut Camp and wind our way up the scree, past Hans Meyer Cave (5,150m) and onward to Gillman's Point (5,685m) on the Crater rim (5-6 hours hike). This requires great physical and mental effort. Here we have wonderful views into the Crater of Kibo, and can see the icefields, and the ash cone. If we hiked in the night we should also enjoy a spectacular sunrise over Mawenzi.

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From this point onward the gradient is gentle, although high, as we hike around the rim, taking 1½ - 2½ hours to reach the summit. We hope to reach the top of Africa, Uhuru (Freedom) peak (5,895m - 19,340 feet above sea level). Here we have views of Mount Meru (4,566m - 14,980 ft) to the east, and we might see the Ngorongoro Highlands in the distance, and sometimes even Mount Kenya - 400 kilometres away! Invariably we take photographs, and admire the dreamlike views of Africa below.



We then begin the long descent, exercising our knees to the full, back past Gillman's Point, and down the steep but gentler scree to Kibo Hut for a rest, before continuing downward along the Marangu Trail to Horombo Hut in the moorland zone, where we camp for the night. Here we meet climbers on their way up as well as those who are descending, most who will have ascended by this same route, and some who might have followed us on our trail. It is quite a social place!

#### DAY 9 - SMALL LUXURY LODGE, ARUSHA TOWN (1,400m - 4,500 ft)

It takes about 5-6 hours to walk the remaining 20 kilometres / 12½ miles down a well maintained trail past Mandara Hut to the Kilimanjaro National Park Headquarters at Marangu Gate (1,800 m - 5,900 ft). Today we descend 1,840 m / 6,040 ft. We enjoy the vegetation zones in reverse, and this trail is wetter, greener and more lush than the trail we climbed. The forest is really spectacular, with many of the same species of trees that we saw the first hiking day. We usually hear and sometimes see the beautiful Hartlaub's turaco with its emerald green, deep blue and scarlet coloured feathers. On the way we have a picnic lunch, and we celebrate and meet the vehicle(s) at the roadhead and park gate. After our seven days of hiking, we relax and are driven to a luxury lodge near Arusha where we have a welcome cool beer, hot shower and other luxuries!

#### DAY 10 - LAST DAY IN TANZANIA

After a good night's sleep, we spend the day relaxing at the lodge, or we embark on a safari, or journey to the spice island of Zanzibar for well earned relaxation on the white sandy beaches overlooking the Indian Ocean. If this is our last day in Tanzania, in the afternoon we may decide to visit the safari capital of Tanzania - Arusha - or to have a well-earned nap! We freshen up and have an early dinner, before driving to Kilimanjaro International Airport to connect the KLM flight home.

End of A Step Ahead services

**Very Important:** Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and is reputed to be the highest single free-standing mountain in the world. The surrounding countryside can be as low as 750m (2,500 feet) a.s.l, while the summit is 5,895m (19,340) feet a.s.l. The climb begins at about 2,700m (8,500 feet) a.s.l. The trek through the unique vegetation zones and stunning scenery is strenuous, especially due to the fairly rapid gain of altitude. Our Shira Route ascent passes through either the Great Barranco wall or the Western Breach, both of which are taxing, arduous and exposed, and although they are considered non-technical routes, they involve using hands in some places. The descent from summit to gate is a relentless downhill hike of 1½ days. The challenge of strenuous exercise at high altitude is formidable and should not be taken lightly. We advise all climbers to undertake some training prior to the climb. All climbers must complete a "Medical Assessment Form" truthfully before being allowed to participate in a climb. Climbers sumitting via the Western Breach route are required to sign a special Kilimanjaro National Park Indemnity Form and must wear helmets while climbing the Western Breach. While our success rate is extremely high, all climbers should be aware that there is a chance they may not reach the summit. In cases of severe acclimatisation difficulties a climber may be advised by the guide to descend, rather than continue a summit bid. In such cases the guide's advice should always be heeded. Any extra costs incurred due to leaving the mountain early (such as transport and accommodation) are to be covered entirely by the climber concerned and not by **A Step Ahead S.L., Wilderness Africa®** or its agents.

Note that it is possible to shorten the climb and still reach the summit. Your success rate depends mostly on acclimatisation, much of which is physiological. There is considerable genetic variation in people's adaptation to being at altitude. We consider it wiser to allow and plan for a safer and longer climb than risk failure or illness by shortening a climb. Our high success rate is partly attributable to our experienced guides coaching and helping climbers, and partly our carefully designed itineraries. We recommend the above itineraries to maximise the chance of success.



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