

# ASTEP AHEAD

custom guided journeys

## MOUNT KILIMANJARO – 8 DAYS CLIMB

THE SHIRA PLATEAU ROUTE WITH WESTERN BREACH ASCENT AT NIGHT



### BRIEF ITINERARY

DAY 1	Hotel near Arusha -	1,350 m (4,430ft)
DAY 2	Hotel near Arusha -	1,350 m (4,430ft)
DAY 3	Forest Camp -	2,790 m (9,150ft)
DAY 4	Shira 1 West Camp -	3,510 m (11,510ft)
DAY 5	Shira 2 East Camp -	3,900 m (12,800ft)
DAY 6	Moir Camp -	4,200 m (13,780ft)
DAY 7	Lava Tower Camp -	4,650 m (15,220ft)
DAY 8	Arrow Glacier Camp -	4,870 m (15,950ft)
DAY 9	Millenium Camp -	3,800 m (12,500ft)
DAY 10	Hotel near Arusha -	1,350 m (4,430ft)

### WESTERN BREACH ASCENT

The Western Breach Route on Mount Kilimanjaro was closed by Kilimanjaro National Park authorities following a rock fall in January 2006. After extensive studies by the Kilimanjaro National Park authorities, this route was reopened in November 2007, with new national park regulations requiring all climbers to read and sign a special indemnity form, and making it compulsory for all climbers to wear helmets on the Western Breach section.

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## GUIDES

We have 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. Here are descriptions of two of these:

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).

Ake Lindstrom was also born in Kenya, and raised in Sudan and Tanzania. He owns and manages Summits Africa, our ground operator for Kilimanjaro. Naturally Ake has lead many climbs on Kilimanjaro, and has a healthy lover for the outdoors in general, enjoying hiking and biking too.

Justin, Ake and our other professional guides 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.



## 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 provide helmets for all climbers ascending the

Western Breach. 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.

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## CAMP

Every two climbers (except where single accommodation is specifically requested and provided) share a three-man (standard) mountain dome tent (6m<sup>2</sup>/64sq ft). Each climber is provided with a minus 18° Celsius (0° F) rated sleeping bag and a 7cm (3in) foam mattress to sleep on, increasing warmth. There is also a walk-in dome dining "mess" tent, with very lightweight folding tables and chairs, and solar lighting. There is a private chemical flush toilet and toilet tent provided at all campsites, even where there is a national park latrine.

## 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. 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 either 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 gerkins, to make your own sandwiches. Often there is also packet juice, and hot beverages such as tea or coffee.



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If we have a hot lunch in camp we may also have hot soup, pasta or a hot 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 bolognaise sauce. Dessert is usually fruit or cookies followed by a hot beverage. There is no alcohol or bottled water supplied or other soft drinks, 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 de-cantering 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 SHIRA PLATEAU ROUTE -WITH  
WESTERN BREACH ASCENT  
ARUSHA NATIONAL PARK AND 8 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 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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### DAY 3 – MONTANE FOREST (2,790 m - 9,150 feet)

Today is an early start. We drive approximately 2 hours to the Kilimanjaro National Park gate at Londrossi (2,250m / 7,380ft). After completing park entry formalities we continue driving for 1 hour to the trailhead (2,400 m - 7,870 feet) at the forest edge. From here we walk about 3½ hours for 5 kilometres through undisturbed forest to our camp for the night. We might see black and white colobus monkeys and even signs of elephant on the way. Our camp tonight is in the forest zone, where Podocarpus (African yellow-wood), Hagenia and Hypericum (St John's Wort) dominate.



### DAY 4 – SHIRA PLATEAU WEST SIDE (3,510m - 11,510 feet)

Today we hike through the last stretch of montane forest, passing through giant junipers, into the heath zone, and usually have a picnic lunch on the way. We hike through a secluded valley where an endemic Protea dominates, and where we will hear the trilling calls of the Hunter's cisticola and might see several species of sunbird, including the scarlet tufted malachite sunbird. We arrive in camp in the early afternoon after a 9 kilometre (6-8 hour) hike. From camp we often have stunning views of snow-capped Kibo (Kilimanjaro's central and highest massif), as well as the craggy edges of Shira itself.



### DAY 5 – SHIRA PLATEAU EAST SIDE (3,900m - 12,800 feet)

Our hike today we hike 8 kilometres (for about 3-4 hours) across the Shira Plateau and 1 hour up the western slope of the Kibo Massif. The heath-land changes dramatically. The heath itself is now much smaller, the landscape is more rocky and rugged, with lush protected green valleys of giant senecios, lobelias and other moorland plants.



We will have lunch in camp, and either relax or go for a short hike in the afternoon. We might even spot a herd of eland in the distance, or startle a grey duiker near camp. White-necked ravens soar close by, and friendly Alpine chats hop around our tents. If you are considering hiking the Barafu Route instead of the Western Breach you will need to discuss plans with your *A Step Ahead* guide here, as this could mean you skip Moir Hut tomorrow.

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#### **DAY 6 – MOIR HUT (4,200m -13,780 feet)**

Today we turn northwards, which will help us gain altitude slowly and acclimatize. We cover about 3½ kilometres in 2-4 hours. We walk up a ridge and into a valley which we then ascend to camp, arriving in time for lunch, most likely including a hot soup. We are now in the high desert zone, where only hardy everlastings and small senecios survive, and we are just below the Lent Group, a collection of massive volcanic dykes. Immediately above us is a huge circular bowl, created probably by glaciers, and there are numbers of lave tube caves in the cliffs at the uppermost edge. Above that is the Kibo massif and the northern icefield. Below we have views of the Shira plateau, like a giant sloping depression, and we can see much of the area we have walked recently.

#### **DAY 7 – LAVA TOWER CAMP (4,650m - 15,220 feet)**

It takes about 3-4 hours to hike the 5 kilometres up the ridge towards a sugarloaf shaped rock called “Lava Tower”, situated close to the Western Breach and immediately below the Kibo Massif. We will most likely have a hot lunch in camp. Here we could see the unusual Lammergeyer or bearded vulture soaring high above us. The desert landscape is dramatic, and our views of the Kibo massif and its glaciers above us are stunning. If we wish we can climb Lava Tower in the afternoon (4,695m / 15,400ft), looking down on our camp (45m/150ft below us) and the Barranco Valley on the opposite side.



#### **DAY 8 – ARROW GLACIER (4,870m -15,950 feet)**

With the Western Breach ascent route in view, our hike today will take about 3 hours and we will cover about 1½ kilometres! After passing Lava Tower, the trail climbs steeply to the base of the route up the Western Breach, just below Arrow Glacier, where we make camp. Here we are right under the Western Breach, and surrounded on three sides by steep rocky slopes and cliffs. To the south, the terrain drops down into the Great Barranco valley 3,000 feet below. Views are so remarkable they are hard to describe, and rarely seem as impressive in a photograph. Aside from

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walking below camp to look at the Barranco valley, we can also explore Arrow glacier itself. We have an early dinner at around 5pm, in order to get some sleep before our hike very early tomorrow.

**DAY 9 – MILLENIUM CAMP (3,850m -12,600 feet) via the Summit (5,895m -19,350ft)**

We awake at midnight and leave an hour later to wind our way up the Western Breach. This is our toughest climbing day, as we ascend this non-technical route up the mountain. It will take about 6 hours to reach the crater rim, (5,730m / 18,800ft), and we will have covered about 2.8 kilometres! In a few places we scramble on our hands and feet along a rocky ridge. Although non-technical, this section is not for those afraid of heights, and all climbers will be required to wear the supplied helmets. From here the views of the Great Barranco Valley are stunning. When we arrive at the crater rim the summit is clearly visible and the ice wall of the Furtwangler Glacier is spectacular. We now traverse part of the crater floor (1 km) and then ascend up a steep scree slope to the summit (1 km). This should take about 2-3 hours. We hope to reach the summit by 9am, and earlier if we are strong. Then we reach the summit, Uhuru peak, at 5,895 m (19,340

feet) above sea level, at the top of Africa. Invariably we take photographs, and admire the dreamlike views of Africa below. From here Mount Meru (4,566 m - nearly 15,000 feet a.s.l.) resembles an anthill. We might see the Ngorongoro Highlands in the distance, and sometimes even Mount Kenya - 300 kilometres away!



We then begin the long descent (10½ km), exercising our knees to the full, past Barafu Hut at and on to

Millenium Camp (3,830m - 12,560ft descent). On the way we will have views of the opposite side of the mountain to our ascent. These include Mawenzi; Kilimanjaro's rugged second highest peak, and the renowned "saddle"; the alpine desert between Kibo and Mawenzi. We will have joined other climbers who would have also left at midnight from Barafu Hut. We reach Barafu Hut (4,700m - 15,400 feet) after descending 4 kilometres, where we rest for lunch, and off-load some of our gear, before continuing on down into the heath zone again. We usually arrive at Millenium Hut in the afternoon, after a total of about 11½ kilometres (5 hours) descent.



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#### DAY 10 – HOTEL NEAR ARUSHA (1,400m - 4,500 feet)

It takes about 6 hours to walk the remaining 12 kilometres (7½ mi) down a steep and slippery trail to make the descent to the roadhead at Mweka Gate (1,650m – 5,400 feet). We hike through the heath zone, and enter the forest just below Mweka Hut. 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. At the roadhead and park gate, we have a picnic lunch. After a eight day hike covering a total distance of approximately 60 kilometres (37 miles), we enjoy a celebratory beer, say farewell to our mountain crew, and drive to a lodge on the outskirts of Arusha where we

have a welcome second or third cooler beer, hot shower and other luxuries!



End of A Step Ahead services

#### DAY 11 - 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 flight home.



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**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 2,400m (7,800 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 1.5 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 summiting 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.* or our agents.

Note that it is possible to shorten the climb and still reach the summit. Your success rate depends mostly on acclimatization, 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 maximize the chance of success.



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