

KILIMANJARO – “GRAND TRAVERSE”
SHIRA PLATEAU ~VIA THE NORTHERN CIRCUIT WILDERNESS AND
MAWENZI, WITH CRATER CAMP~
9 DAYS / 8 NIGHTS on the mountain

Route Description

This special route combination is the by a wide margin the least-used route on Kilimanjaro, getting you far away from the madding crowd. The trailhead is at high elevation, and thus we start slow and easy on this route. The trail begins on the Shira Plateau, and the hike across the plateau is said to be one of the most stunningly beautiful hikes in Africa. Early on we leave the tourist trails and head off across the north side of the mountain, facing Kenya and the famous Amboselli National Park. The spectacular hike along the northern circuit affords opportunities to see some animals; possible elephant, buffalo, eland, and signs of many other animals. Along this way we won't see other tourists, only following cairns which signal the route. For the first four days we traverse the valleys and ridges of the entire north side of the mountain between 12,000' (3,650 mt.) to 14,000' (4,265 mt.), and on day 5 the trail reaches the base of Mawenzi, the second highest peak of Kilimanjaro- it's jagged rock spires reaching 16,893' (5,149 mt.). From here we trek across the magnificent saddle between Mawenzi and Kibo Peak. From the seldom used Outward Bound camp we depart in daylight to the summit, where the trail joins with the Marangu (Coca-Cola) Route high on the mountain. The opportunity to stay in the Crater Camp offers an up-close experience with Kilimanjaro's dwindling glaciers and enables you to experience Kilimanjaro in a way that so few others do.

All the trekking is done by daylight, and overall this trek is designed to get you closer to nature, and to benefit from plenty of acclimatization time, the most diverse and complete 'grand traverse' of Kilimanjaro from west to east, and by far the most remote trails. The accommodation is in mountain tents and dining is in our mess tents. Toilet tents with convenient and sanitary portable flush toilets are set up at all camps.

Daily Itinerary

DAY 1 MORUM BARRIER GATE (12,362 ft./ 3,768 mt.) ~ SHIRA 1 CAMP (12,200 ft./ 3,720 mt.)

Departure from Arusha will be at around 7:30am for Londorossi gate, about 4 hours, where you will complete entry formalities. Then continue up by car to Morum Barrier Gate (another hour to reach the trailhead). Upon arrival at trail-head, eat lunch, then commence through heather and moorland which lead to the first camp, (which is a descent) only about 1-2 hours of trekking. The view of Kibo from across the plateau is stunning.

DAY 2 SHIRA 1 CAMP ~ MOIR CAMP (13,800 ft./ 4,205 mt.)

Trek across the Shira plateau, east toward Kibo's glaciated peak. Shira is one of the highest plateaus on earth, averaging 12,500 feet. We immediately veer away from the tourist trails toward the northeast edge of the Plateau to reach Moir Camp. The trek is about 4-5 hours over easy terrain. Moir camp is an isolated and seldom used camp affording views over the Shira Plateau.

DAY 3 MOIR CAMP ~ POFU CAMP (13,200 ft./ 4,025 mt.)

Begin the morning trek heading out of the moorland and into the stark alpine desert, on a steep ridge off the main trail, and begin our venture on the Northern Circuit Route. The total trekking time is about 5 – 7 hours. From the Pofu Campsite you will enjoy a magnificent view into Kenya's wild lands to the north.

DAY 4 POFU CAMP ~ KIKELEWA CAVES CAMP (11,800 ft./ 3600 m)

Proceed onward through valleys and over ridges through the alpine desert and moorland, continuing our circuit to the east, enjoying a vast mountain wilderness to ourselves. Trekking time today is 5 - 7 hours.

DAY 5 KIKELEWA CAVES CAMP ~ MAWENZI TARN CAMP (14,160 ft./ 4,315 m)

Trek 3-5 hours steadily upward to reach a placid mountain tarn (lake) at the foot of the majestically rising steep ridges of Mawenzi, Kilimanjaro's second highest volcano. The camp here is nestled along the tarn in a protected alcove with magnificent views towards the steeply rising rocks of Mawenzi.

DAY 6 MAWENZI TARN CAMP ~ OUTWARD BOUND CAMP (15,585 ft./ 4,750 m)

The trekking time today is 5 - 7 hours, though a relatively easy hike across the wide saddle between Mawenzi and Kibo. The trek takes you across the massive saddle- the crossing is impressive and the landscape spectacularly stark. The temperatures turn cold as you near the foot of Kibo, reaching Outward Bound Camp after 5-7 hours of trekking. Prepare all your gear for the day ahead, and turn in early to rest. A resupply of fresh food and supplies will reach camp on this afternoon.

DAY 7 OUTWARD BOUND CAMP ~ UHURU PEAK (19,340 ft./ 5,895 m) ~ CRATER CAMP (18,800 ft./ 5,730 m)

A 5am wake-up call is the start of a juggernaut (7-10 hours of trekking). You begin trekking at 6am up the winding path of endless switchbacks. From your camp to the rim of the crater (Gillman's Point (18,750 ft./ 5,712 m)) to Uhuru Peak, the trekking time is about 7 - 8 hours. The slope is steep, with switchbacks, over loose rock and scree with some boulders as you near Gilman's Point. You will stop at Hans Meyer cave on the way, the famous place where Kilimanjaro's first western climber described in his journals. Once you arrive at Gilman's Point at the edge of the crater, the trail to the summit is less demanding, and is reached after a further 1½-2 hours along the snowy crater rim (depending on the season). We arrive at the summit in the early afternoon hours, when there are seldom other tourists there at that time. From the summit we take a short descent to reach the Crater Camp. Our camp is set in soft sands near the retreating vertical ice walls of the Furtwangler glacier. Rest and enjoy snacks and hot drinks in the mess tent, then opt to explore the strange landscape of the inner crater,

including a walk around the Furtwangler glacier. So few that trek Kilimanjaro ever experience the summit zone in this way.

DAY 8 CRATER CAMP ~ MWEKA CAMP (10,070 ft./ 3,070 m)

Morning hike to the Reusch Crater and central ashpit, then, descend via Stella Point to Barafu Camp for lunch. In the afternoon continue the descent into the Heather Zone to Mweka Camp for the night. The trekking time from the Crater to Mweka Camp will be from 6-8 hours.

DAY 9 MWEKA CAMP ~ MWEKA GATE (5,370 ft. /1,635 m)

Descend straight to the gate (2-3 hours), where you'll have lunch and will be awarded climbing certificates. Transfer back to Arusha for a much-welcomed shower!