



## **MOUNT KILIMANJARO**

### **THE SHIRA PLATEAU ROUTE –WITH BARAFU ASCENT**

#### **Barafu Ascent**

In 2007 we began using the Shira Route with Barafu Ascent, after a rock fall resulted in the temporary closure of the Western Breach Route. The Barafu ascent route is the itinerary that is described below. This circumnavigates the southern side of Kibo, and provides spectacular views of Barranco valley. However here we join the most popular of all the Kilimanjaro Routes, the Machame Route, so our trek becomes somewhat social, which can be a lot of fun!

Our climbs are very well organised. The tents used are standard mountaineering three man tents for every two climbers. There is also a small dining tent, with very lightweight folding tables and stools. There is a private chemical flush toilet tent and system provided at all campsites where there is a national park latrine, so that waste can be deposited in the latrine. At other campsites (such as the Crater camp) we carry out and dispose of all human waste using the WAG-bag toilet system. On average, 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. Clients are only expected to carry their own daypacks, which will usually contain drinking water, trail snacks and any photographic equipment. 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. Aside from your Wilderness Africa lead guide, there will be a national park certified mountain guide and additional mountain guides (depending on the size of the group), which allows each member of the group to walk at their own pace, and to be able to have a chance at the summit. We carry oxygen and a gamow bag on all trips as a back up.

#### **Our Lead Guides**

**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. In the last seven years he has led many climbs up Mount Kilimanjaro. Justin is a trained Wilderness First Responder.

**Marc Baker** was born in England, moving to Africa when he was four years old. 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.

**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.

## **THE SHIRA PLATEAU ROUTE –WITH BARAFU ASCENT ARUSHA NATIONAL PARK AND 9 DAYS ON KILIMANJARO**

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

On arrival in Tanzania you are met by your *Wilderness Africa* 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 *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.

### **DAY 3 – MONTANE FOREST (2,700 m - 8,850 feet)**

Today is an early start. We drive approximately **2½ hours** to the Kilimanjaro National Park gate at Londrossi. After completing park entry formalities we continue driving for ½ to 1 hour to the trailhead (2,700 m – 8,850 feet) at the forest edge. From here we walk for **7 kilometres (about 4 hours)** through the 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 (3,600m - 11,800 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 *Prtea* dominate, 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 **7 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 (3,850m - 12,600 feet)**

Our hike today we hike **7 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.

**DAY 6 – SHEFFIELD CAMP (4,500m - 14,800 feet)**

It takes about **5-6 hours** to hike the **7 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 stop for a picnic lunch on the way. We are now in the high desert zone, where only hardy everlastings and small senecios survive. 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, looking down on our camp and the Barranco Valley on the opposite side.

**DAY 7 – KARANGA VALLEY CAMP (3,960m - 13,000 feet)**

Our hike of about **8 kilometres** today will be about **2-3 hours** into the Barranco Valley, **2 hours** up the Barranco Wall, then **3-4 hours** traversing to Karanga Valley Camp. We set off past Lava Tower and then down a valley that leads into the Great Barranco valley, whose slopes are covered in giant senecios and lobelias. From here the views of the Great Barranco Wall are better than anywhere else on the mountain. By now most of the Machame Route climbers will have left the valley to traverse the southern slopes of Kibo. From the bottom of the valley we cross a couple of streams and then climb very steeply up the spectacular Great Barranco Wall. We climb out of the Barranco Valley and ascend up to 4,300m - 14,000 feet. Once we have climbed the Barranco Wall we look for a sheltered place to have a picnic. The views are dominated by the Heim Glacier above us. We then traverse under the glaciers of the southern ice-fields of the Kibo massif, and will have close-up views of all the mountain’s southern glaciers. In the early afternoon we descend steeply into the Karanga Valley, cross the stream and climb up to camp on the other side.

**DAY 8 – BARAFU CAMP (4,600m - 15,000 feet)**

We should hike steadily uphill for about **3 kilometres (3-4 hours)** today, through rocky barren landscape, with the Decken and the scanty remains of the Rebman glaciers above us. We should arrive at Barafu in time for lunch. Here we will meet many of the climbers who chose to take the Machame route, and we can swap stories and experiences (they will be leaving for the summit at midnight). We may choose to make use of the warmth of the sun for a nice afternoon snooze, or if we like, we can explore further up the ridge. We will have an early dinner to allow us plenty of time to rest and sleep before our ascent at dawn tomorrow.

**DAY 9 – CRATER CAMP (5,650m - 18,500 feet)**

**SUMMIT DAY.** We will have climbed **4½ kilometres** and descended **1½ kilometres** before the end of the day, and will probably arrive in camp in the mid-afternoon (**7-10 hours**). We start our ascent to the summit at dawn after an early breakfast. The hike up the Kibo massif varies between rocky areas and scree. It is a strenuous climb up rocky ridges and some loose scree, making today our toughest day by far. The difficulty is compounded by the extreme cold. Once we reach the Crater rim at Stella Point (5,700m - 19,000 feet) we have wonderful views into the Kibo Crater, and of the eastern ice-field. We hike another **1½ hours** along the rim to the south towards the summit. We pass the Rebmann Glacier to our left and can see down into the Crater on our right. Soon after, we arrive at **Uhuru peak, 5,895m - 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 (4,562m - 14,967 feet a.s.l.) resembles an anthill. We might see the Ngorongoro Highlands in the distance, and sometimes even Mount Kenya – 480kms (300 miles) away! We then have a short steep hike down from the summit to our camp beside the Furtwangler glacier. If we have time some may wish to explore the inner crater and ash pit, passing the icicled edge of the Furtwangler glacier (**2-hour hike**) on the way, and looking down at the sulphur fumaroles at the inner crater, before returning to camp.

**DAY 10 MWEKA CAMP (3,200m - 10,500 feet)**

Today we begin the descent, exercising our knees to the full, past Barafu Hut at and on to Mweka Hut. 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 made a marathon ascent starting from Barafu Hut at midnight. At Barafu we rest for lunch, before continuing on down into the heath zone again. We usually arrive at Mweka Hut in the late afternoon, after a total of about **15 kilometres (7 hours descent)**.

**Day 11 HOTEL NEAR ARUSHA**

It takes **about 4 hours** to walk the remaining **7 kilometres** down a steep and slippery trail to make the 1,600m (5,500 foot) descent to the roadhead (**1,500m – 4,900 feet**). 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 nine day hike covering a total distance of approximately 87 kilometres – 54 miles, we may now choose to fly out to the bush, or to drive a lodge in Arusha where we have a welcome cool beer, hot shower and other luxuries!

**End of Wilderness Africa 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 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" before being allowed to participate in a climb. 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 Wilderness Africa or its agents.*