



MOUNT KILIMANJARO

THE SHIRA PLATEAU ROUTE WITH WESTERN BREACH ASCENT

Western Breach Ascent

The Western Breach Route on Mount Kilimanjaro was closed by Kilimanjaro National Park authorities following a rock fall on 4th January 2006. After extensive studies by the Kilimanjaro National Park authorities, this route was re-opened 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.

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 as a back up. and a pulse oximeter as an aide on all our trips. We provide helmets for climbers ascending the Western Breach.

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 WESERN BREACH 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 though a secluded valley where an endemic Protea 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 – MOIR HUT (4,200M -13,800 feet)

Today we hike northwards, in a sense making our journey over the last two days a big dog-leg, to help us gain altitude slowly and acclimatize. We cover about **5 kilometres in 3-4 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 – SHEFFIELD CAMP (4,500m - 14,800 feet)

It takes about **3-4 hours** to hike the **4 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, looking down on our camp and the Barranco Valley on the opposite side.

DAY 8 – ARROW GLACIER (4,905m - 16,100 feet)

With the Western Breach ascent route in view, our hike today will take **about 3 hours** and we will cover **about 2 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 walking below camp to look at the Barranco valley, we can also explore Arrow glacier itself.

DAY 9 – KIBO CRATER CAMP (5,717m - 18,750 feet)

We leave early this morning 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 7 hours** to reach the crater rim, and we will have covered **about 2 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. Those who wish to get to camp earlier may head directly round the Furtwangler glacier to our camp at its base (**a half-hour hike**). From here the summit is clearly visible and the ice wall of the Furtwangler Glacier is spectacular. As there are no latrine pits here, we will be using the carry out WAG-bag dry waste system. From the rim, others may wish to explore the inner crater and ash pit, looking down at the sulphur fumaroles, and then head to camp along the icicled edge of the Furtwangler glacier (**2-hour hike**). Depending on how we are all feeling, there is a possibility we could ascend to the summit after tea. If any of us are tired, we might decide to summit tomorrow morning.

DAY 10 – MWEKA CAMP (3,110m - 10,200 feet)

Summit day. At dawn we have breakfast, and then we start our ascent up a steep scree slope to the summit. This should take **about 2 hours**. **Then we reach the summit, Uhuru peak at 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 (15,000 feet a.s.l.) resembles an anthill. We might see the Ngorongoro Highlands in the distance, and sometimes even Mount Kenya - 300 miles away! We then begin the long 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. We reach Barafu Hut (4,600m - 15,000 feet) after descending 3 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 Mweka Hut in the late afternoon, after a total of **about 15 kilometres (7 hours)** descent.

DAY 11 – HOTEL NEAR ARUSHA (1,400m - 4,500 feet)

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!

DAY 12 - 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 *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. 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 **Wilderness Africa** or its agents.*