



Kilimanjaro and Meru information

Our mountain climbing trips offer high standards of service for food, accommodation, and staff. Whilst there might be some variations on an individual trip, please find below a general description of the level of services that we offer.

Briefing and debriefing

All clients are met at an appointed place before the trip and given a thorough briefing by a person who is personally experienced in the area of your trip. The briefing will include both general information about the area, safety, and other practicalities plus very specific information for the trip. After the trip, the clients will again be met by an experienced representative (often the same person) to debrief them, and to collect detailed written feedback via questionnaires to monitor the quality of this trip.

Local Staff

Our guides all know the mountains very well, speak English, and are very welcoming and helpful towards the clients. They carry maps and National Park leaflets (where available) on the mountain. When doing climbs of Kilimanjaro, we ensure a ratio of guides to clients that does not exceed 1:3. This ensures good mountain services and is particularly important on the summit day.

Our team of guides are also responsible for cooking with small groups; with 8 pax or more, a specialist cook is provided to assist them. The staff take care of all the chores, including erecting and taking down the tents. Clients need only carry a daypack containing their personal effects and an extra layer of warm clothing.

Porter welfare is an important part of our staff policy. We pay a good salary and we pay it immediately at the end of the climb. We also ensure that our staff have sleeping tents on all camping routes. Porterage is the largest single cost element on mountain climbs and the temptation to reduce this cost always exists. We believe our policy to be correct in human terms, and it also has the commercial by-product of removing the often unpleasant pressure on clients to tip heavily.

We pay a lot of attention to finding the right staff for our trips. We recognise that they are our biggest asset and we are currently developing a guide training programme to enhance our service levels that will include further instruction in the English language, mountain interpretation skills, and first aid.

Accommodation when camping

We provide spacious two person tents of proven quality made in England and specifically designed for mountain use. There is plenty of personal space, an ample luggage storage area, and a separate external flysheet. A limited number of these tents are available as single tents at a supplementary charge and should be reserved in advance. Clients should bring their own sleeping bag and mat.

Breakfast and dinner are served in our communal dining tent with folding chairs, tables and lanterns. This tent is also available for communal use in the afternoon and evening; especially useful in the event of inclement weather.



Handling of luggage

Each client should bring a maximum of 15 kg. when climbing the mountain. Client luggage should be contained in a duffel bag or soft kitbag, which will be carried inside a waterproof bag by a porter. Clients carry only a light daypack. Additional mountain luggage may attract a supplementary charge. Any unwanted client baggage and suitcases can be safely stored at the foot of each mountain.

Medical equipment

Group medical kits with instructions are provided on all climbs. All Western leaders have first aid certificates and the medical kit then has a larger range of drugs including Diamox. Clients are asked only to provide their most basic personal needs.

We pay special attention to avoiding altitude sickness by maximising acclimatisation.

Detailed explanation of our methods is contained in the Client Information Package. We do not carry oxygen cylinders.

Hygiene

We always ensure that the clients have a bowl of hot washing water in the morning and again after the walk at an agreed time in the afternoon. The only exception is the highest overnight on Kilimanjaro (Kibo hut or Barafu or Arrow camps) where there is no running water and so all water must be carried from a lower level by porters.

Handwashing water treated with dettol is available with soap before all meals, and clients are strongly advised to make use of it.

Long drop toilets are available at most of the campsites and huts used on mountain climbs.

We very much encourage a policy of 'burn and bury' on all other occasions to avoid littering the mountains and issue all clients with matches. We do not provide toilet tents as experience shows clients often refuse to use them.

Food and drink

We choose the ingredients carefully to ensure that the food prepared by our team is tasty, easy to digest at altitude, and has a high energy content. We also cater well for vegetarians, ensuring that their meals are varied and inviting. For bigger groups, specialised cooks are provided to assist our experienced guides.

A fresh food resupply is provided for groups of 6 or more clients on all 6 and 7 day Kilimanjaro climbs. This resupply reaches the group on the day before the summit ascent and includes fresh bread, a selection of fruit and vegetables, cheese, and meat. Clients very much enjoy such fresh food before and after the summit ascent.

The sample menus below have a high liquid and carbohydrate content; the two important elements for successful climbing. Meat does feature heavily in our menus due to client demand but is unimportant for mountain fitness on such short climbs.

At higher altitudes, stimulants (such as coffee) and less digestible foods (such as meat) are almost totally absent from the diet. The evening meal at the highest overnight on Kilimanjaro is a combined soup/stew as experience shows this to be the best preparation for the summit day.

Boiled water is offered to the clients each evening for their waterbottles and is readily available at other mealtimes too. A wide selection of hot drinks (tea, coffee, drinking

chocolate, Milo) is also available at meals and soup is served twice daily. Please refer to the Client Information Package about the need for a fluid intake of 4-5 litres daily. Soft drinks and beers are not available except on the Marangu route on Kilimanjaro.

Bed Tea

Tea or coffee served in your tent or bunk

Break fast

- Eggs with bacon/sausage and tomato/cucumber
- Muesli and/or corn flakes and/or porridge
- Seasonal fresh fruit (mango/banana/watermelon)
- Toast with margarine, jam, and honey
- Tea, coffee, Milo or drinking chocolate

Snacks

Energy snacks are provided for the daily walk such as biscuits, bananas, and flapjacks or chocolate bars.

Lunch

This is either a packed lunch on longer days or, more usually, a hot lunch served in camp by a small team who have raced ahead of the clients.

A packed lunch typically consists of :

- Sandwiches with cheese and jam or meat
- Fresh fruit, an egg, and cake
- Hot soup and tea provided on the trail.

Peanuts or popcorn plus hot drinks are served as soon as camp is reached.

A hot lunch typically consists of:

- Soup (chicken/minestrone/different vegetables)
- Bread (often toasted) or pancakes
- Cheese, tinned fish, jam, and peanut butter
- A salad (tomatoes, cucumber, carrots, onion)
- Peanuts or popcorn plus cake or biscuits
- A variety of hot drinks

Tea

In late afternoon, tea, coffee, and drinking chocolate or Milo is served. Whatever was not provided at lunch of cakes/biscuits and peanuts/popcorn is served now. A pleasant eating experience, and a good opportunity to make the clients drink lots!

Dinner

Dinner is the main meal of the day and always consists of three courses (soup followed by a main dish of several elements and then by a dessert).

- Soup (chicken/ broth/ vegetable)
- Chicken/beef/ fish. It can be roasted or prepared in a sauce.
- Fresh vegetables, such as carrots, beans, peas, cauliflower, peppers, tomatoes. Often made into a delicious sauce.
- A variety of carbohydrates (potatoes/chips/ rice/ macaroni/spaghetti)



- Fruit salad or pancakes and biscuits and more hot drinks!

Environmental concern

All client cooking is done on kerosene or gas stoves wherever possible, and all non bio-degradable rubbish (both from the camp and the clients) is carried off the mountain. We aim to follow the Sierra Club motto “Take nothing but photos, Leave nothing but footprints”.

Transfers

We use different types of transport depending on local road conditions. Landrovers are provided for the roughest roads and we never take more than 4 clients per landrover to ensure some comfort and space.

Whenever possible, minibuses or buses are used for transfers, and are always hired from a reliable local provider. We often provide the transport for smaller groups with our own vehicle.

Special requests

The information above details the normal standard of services on treks. If your clients have any other requests, such as a special diet or a personal porter, please contact us in advance and we will be happy to provide such additional services.

Special Note

Serious cases of altitude sickness can only be treated by immediate descent. The decision of the Senior guide in such situations will be final. Any client refusing to accept this decision will be deemed to have abandoned the climb. No further responsibility will be taken except to ensure their safe descent and a porter will be provided to escort them to the nearest roadhead. The information contained in “General Standards of Service” is given in good faith and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on these trips. High altitude mountain climbs are subject to unexpected changes and abnormal conditions can prevail at any time.

Clients should be prepared to be flexible when necessary.

HEALTH AND PLANNING FOR YOUR TRIP

Acclimatisation

Technical descriptions of the causes and symptoms of altitude sickness can be found in many guidebooks. It is likely that you will experience some form of mild altitude sickness on a high mountain trek. What follows below is based on practical experience rather than on detailed medical explanations.

Altitude sickness is caused by the failure of the body to adapt quickly enough to the reduced level of oxygen in the air as one gains altitude. There are many different symptoms but the most common are headaches, light-headedness, nausea, loss of appetite, tingling in the fingers and toes, and mild swelling of the face/ankles/fingers.

Many of these symptoms are not serious and often disappear within 48 hours. Most can be traced back to either poor blood circulation or the leakage of fluid within the body. In serious cases, this leakage is large and begins to fill up either the brain cavity (Cerebral Oedema) or the lung cavity (Pulmonary Oedema).

Cerebral Oedema is recognised by severe headaches combined with severe loss of balance and dizziness and will ultimately lead to coma; whilst Pulmonary Oedema is characterised by coughing up of pink sputum. Both conditions lead rapidly to death unless (and this is the only cure) an immediate descent is made.

Our practical experience is that there are three key steps to achieving successful acclimatisation. You will probably still suffer some mild symptoms of altitude sickness before adapting to function normally with reduced levels of oxygen.

- **Drink lots.** We recommend a fluid intake of 4-5 litres daily. Fluid intake improves circulation and most other bodily functions. Fluid intake does not add to fluid leakage from the body. Our menu contains lots of opportunities to drink! You need to drink lots of water too. If your urine is clear, you are drinking enough. Drink lots during the day to avoid a very broken sleep!
- **Walk slowly** It is vital to place as little strain as possible on the body whilst it is trying to adapt to a reducing oxygen supply. Unless there is a very steep uphill section, your breathing rate whilst walking should be as if you are walking down the street at home!
- **Walk high Sleep low** This means taking every opportunity to take afternoon excursions to a higher level before descending again to sleep. A pleasant way to train the body too! Obviously not a good idea if you already have some symptoms of altitude sickness.

Mild forms of altitude sickness are best treated by rest, maintaining fluid intake, and by aspirin tablets. Aspirin is far superior to other painkillers because it has the double effect of both relieving pain and helping acclimatisation by thinning the blood.

More serious forms of altitude sickness can be temporarily (but not permanently) helped by powerful diuretics such as Diamox. Some people take this drug before the climb whilst others use it only at higher altitudes. Whether you should use Diamox before and during the trip is more a personal decision than a scientific one, as the medical causes/treatments of altitude sickness are still not fully understood.

Our view is that drugs such as Diamox should not be recommended because of the dangers of masking symptoms without removing the problem, and so encouraging you to go beyond your safe medical limits. We prefer to follow the methods outlined above to treat altitude symptoms.

Serious cases of altitude sickness can only be treated by immediate descent. Our guides are all experienced in dealing with the problems of altitude. It may be necessary for you to descend to a lower altitude until you recover or even to abandon the climb in the interests of safety. The decision of the Senior guide in such situations will be final.

Trekking conditions

Most of the trails on all the mountain treks are well-defined and of good quality but some forest sections are often slippery and moorland paths can be very wet. The summit days on Kilimanjaro are almost exclusively on loose scree without permanent footpaths but no technical skills are required. Snow lies permanently on the summit of Kilimanjaro and seasonally on the other mountains but no special equipment is needed to walk on it. These mountains are large volcanoes that tower above the surrounding plains. All climbs therefore require a considerable amount of ascent and descent but this is tempered by the short daily stages necessary for acclimatisation. Be prepared for lots of uphill and downhill; very little walking in East Africa is flat!

Clothing and equipment

All mountain treks have a wide range of temperatures so the best clothing is a lot of thin layers. Such clothing is easier to adjust as the temperature fluctuates and is also more effective insulation than a few thick items of clothing.

This equipment list only describes the necessary items for a walking trip.

Sleeping and carrying equipment

- 30-40 litre daypack (to ensure that all the layers of clothing and other personal kit can fit).
- Duffel bag or soft kitbag for porters to carry on the mountain (not suitcases).
- Plastic bags of various sizes to protect equipment you want to ensure is dry (e.g. sleeping bag and books) and for your daypack.
- 4 seasons sleeping bag (especially for high camps on Kilimanjaro where the temperature can easily drop to well below zero). Consider a fleece liner if you really feel the cold.
- Sleeping mat for camping trips but not for huts. Can be made of foam or alternatively, an inflatable mattress (with repair kit!).

Drinking

- 2 x 1 litre waterbottle or equivalent.
- Purification equipment. Boiled drinking water is provided but you might want to use iodine or chlorine for further purification. Bring powdered juice to take away the taste if you use chemicals! Filtration pumps are excellent though costly.

Footwear

- Walking boots that are worn-in and of proven quality (leather strongly recommended).
- Thick socks and maybe also thin socks to wear under the thick socks (this often helps to prevent blisters).
- Trainers or trekking sandals to wear in camp.
- Gaiters can be very helpful in wet conditions and to stop scree getting inside your boots.

Inner clothing

- T-shirts. At least some synthetic as cotton dries poorly and does not provide very good insulation.
- Underwear.
- Shorts.
- Trousers (loose and comfortable). One pair should be thick and warm.
- Thermal underwear is recommended for both upper and lower body if you feel the cold.

Outer clothing

You need a minimum of 3 warm layers for the upper body for evenings and for summit day ascents.

- 4 seasons duvet jacket (especially important for Kilimanjaro)
- Fleece jacket or equivalent windproof jacket.
- Waterproof jacket and trousers. There can be short but heavy showers even in the dry season.
- 2 pairs of gloves/mittens (1 thin, 1 thick).
- 1 sweater that can be worn under fleece and duvet jacket if necessary.

Head and face

- Warm hat or (preferably) balaclava.
- Sunhat.



- Sunglasses (essential for summit days to avoid snow blindness).
- Suncream with a high factor. The equatorial sun combined with the altitude is a very powerful combination even if you are used to the sun.
- Lip balm, preferably with sun protection.

Personal usage

- Towel and toiletries.
- Toilet paper.
- Favourite snacks. Snacks are provided on all treks, but you might have something special you really like. Especially good for summit days.
- Head torch. Practical in camp and very necessary on the summit day. Remember to bring lots of batteries and to allow for evening reading.
- Camera and films. Films of reasonable quality can be bought in Kenya and Tanzania but are often expensive and not always easily available.
- Pocket knife (always handy to have!).
- Reading material and games/cards. The need to acclimatise means that many daily stages are no more than long mornings.

Personal medical kit

Although all trips are equipped with a medical box, we recommend that you bring your own personal medical kit for the most basic needs.

- Aspirin for headaches and mild pains. Aspirin is particularly good because it also thins the blood, which helps acclimatisation at altitude.
- Blister kits or plasters.
- Imodium for severe diarrhoea.
- Malaria tablets. Malaria is obviously not a problem on high mountains but all trips begin and end in malarial areas.
- Knee support. Bring, if you have any sort of knee problems; the descents are steep and sustained.

Reading list and maps

This is not a complete list but a recommendation of some books that we find most useful and interesting for your climb of Kilimanjaro.

Trekking in East Africa, David Else (Lonely Planet 1998). Most comprehensive guide for trekking and walking in East Africa and also contains good background information. ISBN 0-86442-541-4.

Guide to Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro, edited by Iain Allan (Mountain Club of Kenya 1990). This is the most comprehensive book for technical climbers, especially on Mt. Kenya. It includes a good chapter on mountain medicine.

Some of the practical information about trekking routes on Kilimanjaro is rather out of date, but the route descriptions are good. ISBN 9966-9856-0-3.



Kilimanjaro National Park Leaflet, (Tanzania National Parks 1987). This 60 page booklet can only be obtained in Tanzania, but contains a good general description of the mountain and the different climate zones you walk through. It also has a small map.

Maps

- Kilimanjaro, 1:75,000 (West Col productions) Available outside Tanzania. The best Kili map.
- Kilimanjaro, 1:50,000 (Mark Savage) Does not cover the lower slopes of the mountain. Widely available in East Africa.
- Mt. Kenya, 1:50,000 (West Col productions) Available outside Tanzania.
- Kenya & Tanzania, 1:2,500,000 (Bartholomew) There are other good general maps available both in Nairobi and outside East Africa.

Expenses and guidelines on tipping

It is almost impossible to spend any money on a mountain trek except on the Marangu route on Kilimanjaro (where beers, soft drinks, and chocolate are available at the huts).

Although tips are optional, and should depend on the level of service provided, we would like to point out that tipping is customary in Kenya and Tanzania. Our detailed pre-trip briefing advises you on tipping for your particular trip, but as a rough outline you should allow between \$5 and \$10 per client per day on the mountain.

Our staff are carefully briefed not to pressure anyone for tips or equipment and are salaried at a level that does not make them dependent on receiving tips or gifts.