

Kilimanjaro

THE TREKKING GUIDE TO AFRICA'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

also includes MOUNT MERU & guides to
Arusha, Moshi, Marangu, Nairobi & Dar es Salaam

HENRY STEDMAN




with downloadable
GPS waypoints

5th
edition



Born in Chatham, Kent, **HENRY STEDMAN** has been writing guidebooks for almost a quarter of a century now and is the author or co-author of a dozen titles, including Trailblazer's *Coast to Coast Path*, *Hadrian's Wall Path*, *Dales Way*, and all three books in the South-West Coast Path series as well as *The Bradt Guide to Palestine* and the Rough Guides to *Indonesia* and *Southeast Asia*. Travel remains his abiding love, a passion surpassed only by his obsession with Kilimanjaro – an obsession that has seen him

climb all the routes several times, as well as collect books, maps and other paraphernalia about it. He also maintains a website dedicated to climbing it ( www.climbmountkilimanjaro.com) and occasionally leads groups up the mountain.

When not travelling, Henry lives near Hastings in England, writing, editing and putting on weight. Friends describe him as living proof that almost anyone can climb Kilimanjaro.

Kilimanjaro – the trekking guide to Africa's highest mountain

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A request

The author and publisher have tried to ensure that this guide is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, things change quickly in this part of the world. Agencies come and go, trails are re-routed, prices rise and ... well, rise some more, governments are toppled and glaciers shrink. If you notice any changes or corrections for the next edition of this guide, please email Henry Stedman at ☐ henry@climbmountkilimanjaro.com.

You can also contact Trailblazer via ☐ www.trailblazer-guides.com. Those persons making a significant contribution will be rewarded with a free copy of the next edition, an acknowledgement in that edition and Henry's undying gratitude.

Acknowledgements

See p402 for a list of those who contributed to this edition.

Warning: mountain walking can be dangerous

Please read the notes on when to go (pp15-16), health and fitness (pp53-8) and on safe trekking (pp260-72). Every effort has been made by the author and publisher to ensure that the information contained herein is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, they are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given in this guide.

Updated information will, as always, be available on:

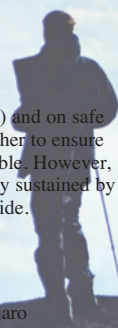
☐ www.climbmountkilimanjaro.com

Photos – Front cover and this page: Looking towards Kilimanjaro from the crater of Mount Meru.

Previous page: Kilimanjaro as seen from Moshi, the nearest town to the mountain.

Overleaf: The final 100m to Uhuru Peak – just keep going!

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IN THIS EDITION

For this fifth edition we have, of course, given everything a thorough update, including our guides to the cities and towns and our reviews of the trekking agencies.



The main change between the previous edition and this one is that we have collected the trekking agency reviews – which were previously scattered across several chapters depending on their location – and given them their own chapter; by doing so, we hope that we have made the task of comparing the agencies a little easier. For this fifth edition we have also walked routes again to satisfy ourselves that our descriptions are still accurate; and once again, we've called upon the services of Karen Valenti at KPAP (see pp26-9) to help us tackle the problem of porter mistreatment.

We do, of course, also welcome updates, criticisms and suggestions from readers on *any* aspect of the book.

www.climbmountkilimanjaro.com – the website!

The website that was set up in 2007 to accompany this book is still going strong. It was designed to keep our readers informed of the latest news and developments on the mountain; if we discover something major has changed since the publication of the book, this is where you can find out all about it. This is also the place to find out about park-fee increases, rule changes in the national park and all the tragedies and triumphs that occur on the mountain. If you need to get in touch with us then the email address on the website – henry@climbmountkilimanjaro.com – is your best bet; and unless we're out trekking, we usually respond within 24 hours.

The six golden rules for ascending Kilimanjaro safely and successfully

- **Walk slowly** Emulate the deliberate, careful tread of an elderly, cautious elephant. Or a jaunty tortoise.
- **Drink plenty** Aim for at least three litres per day. Water, not beer.
- **Eat well** Don't worry, it's very unlikely you'll gain weight on your trek, so tuck in!
- **Take as long as you can** Six days minimum, seven better, eight best!
- **Climb up to high altitude before you arrive** If you've got a mountain in your back garden, now's the time to climb it.
- **Choose your trekking company carefully** To make the task simpler, check out our reviews of the trekking agencies beginning on p75.

INTRODUCTION

Kilimanjaro is a snow covered mountain 19,710 feet high, and is said to be the highest mountain in Africa. Its western summit is called the Masai 'Ngà'je Ngài', the House of God. Close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude.

Ernest Hemingway in the preamble to *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*

On 13 August, 2014, Karl Egloff of Switzerland stood at Umbwe Gate on the southern slopes of Africa's greatest mountain, Kilimanjaro. We can imagine the scene that day, for it's one that's repeated there every day of the year. There would be the noisy, excitable hubbub as porters, guides and rangers packed, weighed, re-packed and re-weighed all the equipment; the quiet murmur of anticipation from Karl's fellow trekkers as they stood on the threshold of the greatest walk of their lives; maybe there was even a troop of blue monkeys crashing through the canopy, or the scarlet flash of a turaco's underwing as it glided from tree to tree, surveying the commotion below.

Herr Egloff's main goal that day was no different from the ambitions of his fellow trekkers: he wanted to reach the summit. Unlike them, however, Karl planned to forego many of the features that make a walk up Kili so special. Not for him the joys of strolling lazily through the mountain's four main eco-zones, pausing frequently to admire the views or examine the unique mountain flora. Nor did Egloff want to experience the blissful evenings spent scoffing popcorn, sharing stories and gazing at the stars with his fellow trekkers. Nor, for that matter, was he looking forward to savouring the wonderful *esprit de corps* that builds between a trekker and his or her crew as they progress, day by day, up the mountain slopes; a sense of camaraderie that grows with every step until, exhausted, they stand together at the highest point in Africa.

It is these experiences that make climbing Kilimanjaro so unique and so special. Yet Karl had chosen to eschew all of them because, for reasons best known to himself, he had decided to *run* up the mountain. Which is exactly what he did, completing the entire route from gate to summit in an incredible 4 hours and 56 minutes – on an ascent trail that takes the average trekker anywhere from four to six days to complete! For an encore he then ran all the way back down to Mweka Gate, and in doing so set another record for the fastest ascent and descent of Kilimanjaro, completing the round trip in just 6 hours and 42 minutes.

Karl Egloff ran to the summit in an incredible 4 hours and 56 minutes

And that's just the ascent; for coming back again we've had skiing, a method first practised by Walter Furtwangler way back in 1912; snowboarding, an activity pioneered on Kili by Stephen Koch in 1997; and even paragliding, first attempted by a team back in January 2013.

Don't be fooled

Cyclists, skiers, bikers, boarders and backward walkers: it's no wonder, given the sheer number of people who have climbed Kili over the past century and the ways in which they've done so, that so many people believe climbing Kili is a doddle. And you'd be forgiven for thinking the same.

You'd be forgiven – but you'd also be wrong. Whilst these stories of successful expeditions tend to receive a lot of coverage, they also serve to obscure the tales of suffering and tragedy that are just as frequent. To give you just one example: for all the coverage of the Millennium celebrations, when over 7000 people stood on the slopes of Kilimanjaro during New Year's week – with 1000 on New Year's Eve alone – little mention was made of the fact that well over a third of all the people who took part in those festivities failed to reach the summit, or indeed get anywhere near it. Or that another 33 had to be rescued. Or that, in the space of those seven days, three people died.

... these stories of successful expeditions ... also serve to obscure the tales of suffering and tragedy that are just as frequent

Below: Marching through the everlastings east of the Saddle, with Kibo in the background.



heart of the sweltering East African plains, just a few degrees (330km/205 miles) south of the equator, with lions, giraffes, and all the other celebrities of the safari world running around its base, only adds to its charisma.

Then there's the scenery on the mountain itself. So massive is Kilimanjaro that to climb it is to pass through **four seasons in four days**, from the sultry rainforests of the lower reaches through to the windswept heather and moorland of the upper slopes, the alpine desert of the Saddle and Shira Plateau and on to the arctic wastes of the summit. There may be about 124 higher mountains on the globe but there can't be many that are more beautiful, or more tantalising.

In sitting down to recount my experiences with the conquest of the "Ethiopian Mount Olympus" still fresh in my memory, I feel how inadequate are my powers of description to do justice to the grand and imposing aspects of Nature with which I shall have to deal.

Hans Meyer, the first man to climb Kilimanjaro, in his book

Across East African Glaciers – an Account of the First Ascent of Kilimanjaro (1891)

Nor is it just tourists who are entranced by Kilimanjaro; the mountain looms large in the Tanzanian psyche too. Just look at their supermarket shelves. The nation's favourite lager is called Kilimanjaro. There's Kilimanjaro coffee (grown on the mountain's fertile southern slopes), Kilimanjaro tea (ditto), Kilimanjaro mineral water (bottled on its western side) and Kilimanjaro honey (again, sourced from the mountain). While on billboards lining the country's highways, Tanzanian models smoke their cigarettes in its shadow and cheerful roly-poly housewives compare the whiteness of their laundry with the mountain's glistening snows. And to pay for all of these things you might just use an

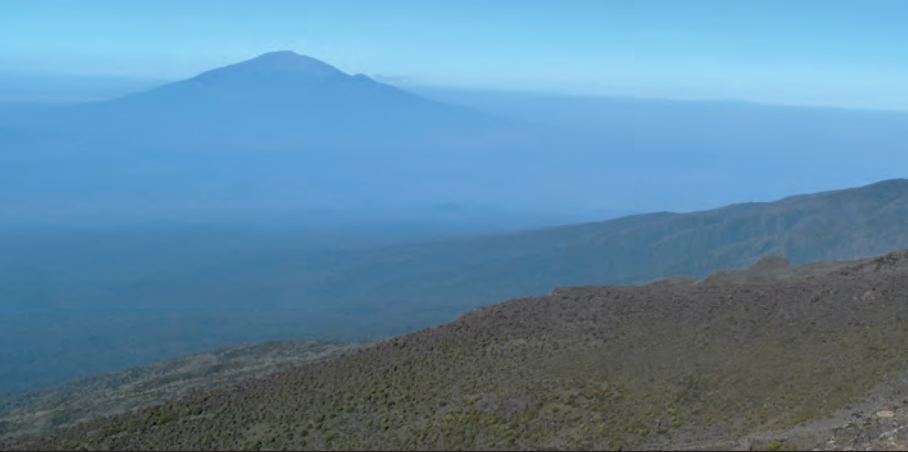
**VOLCANO
ABOVE THE
CLOUDS**
Kilimanjaro—Africa's Tallest Mountain



See p394
for more
sights and
sounds of
Kili



THE NEW ALBUM
KILIMANJARO
ALBUM: 6359 035 CASSETTE: 7150 035



PLANNING YOUR TRIP

1

With a group or on your own?

INDEPENDENT TREKKING NOT AN OPTION

In 1991, the park authorities made it compulsory for all trekkers to arrange their walk through a licensed agency. Furthermore, they insist that all trekkers must be accompanied throughout their walk by a guide supplied by the agency. Even after these laws were introduced, for a while it was still feasible to sneak in without paying and many were the stories of trekkers who managed to climb Kilimanjaro independently, tales that were often embellished with episodes of encounters with wild animals and even wilder park rangers.

Fortunately, the authorities have tightened up security and clamped down on non-payees, so these tedious tales are now few in number. Don't try to climb Kilimanjaro without a guide or without paying the proper fees. It's very unlikely you'll succeed and all you're doing is freeloading – indeed, stealing isn't too strong a word – from one of the poorest countries in the world. Yes, climbing Kilimanjaro is expensive. But the costs of maintaining a mountain that big are high. Besides, whatever price you pay, trust us, it's worth it.

WITH FRIENDS . . .

So you have decided to climb Kilimanjaro, and have thus taken the first step on the path that leads from the comfort and safety of your favourite armchair to the untamed glory of the Roof of Africa. The second step on this path is to consider with whom you wish to go.

This may not be as straightforward as it sounds, because Kilimanjaro breaks friendships as easily as it breaks records. The tribulations suffered by those who dare to pit themselves against the mountain wear down the most even of temperaments, and relationships are often the first to suffer. Idiosyncrasies in your friend's behaviour that you previously thought endearing now simply become irritating, while the most trivial of differences between you and your chum could lead to the termination of a friendship that, before you'd both ventured onto its slopes, you thought was as steadfast and enduring as the mountain itself. Different levels of stamina, different levels

(Opposite) Top: Almost there! Struggling through the snow above Stella Point. **Middle:** Kilimanjaro as seen from Amboseli National Park in Kenya. **Bottom:** Some excellent post-trek activities such as cycling are now on offer (see p114).



arrange **the trek that you want**; you choose the trail to follow, the time to go and for how long; the pace of the walk, the number of rest-stops, when to go to bed – these are all your decisions, and yours alone. You are the boss; you have nobody else's feelings to consider but your own.

If you want to join a group trek, for companionship or simply to make the expedition cheaper (a private trek for one person is always the most expensive option), that's not a problem. You can book your trek in your home country with a tour operator (they nearly always insist on a minimum number of participants before the trek goes ahead); or you can book with a company in Tanzania and ask to be put with other trekkers (which will often happen anyway, unless you specifically say otherwise).

Furthermore, even if it does transpire that you are walking alone, you can always meet other trekkers at the campsite in the evening if you so desire.

Trekking by yourself is fun and not the lonely experience many imagine; unless, of course, you enjoy the bliss of solitude and *want* to be alone. That's the beauty of walking solo: everything is up to you.

Budgeting

The most significant cost of your holiday, unless you opt for a few days at one of Tanzania's top-of-the-range safari lodges (US\$8000-plus per night for a four-person cottage at Singita Serengeti is the most mind-boggling rate I've heard for a night's accommodation though there are probably other, even higher ones), is the walk itself. With the introduction of a sales tax on park fees in July 2016, those already sky-high trek prices soared even further into the stratosphere. Set aside US\$1200-plus for the *absolute cheapest* budget trek (though double this is more usual); more if you plan on taking more than the minimum – and thus not recommended – five days, or if you're ascending by the Lemosho/Shira or Rongai routes (which both have higher transport charges). You will also need to plan to spend more on your trek if you insist on walking without other trekkers. Once on the mountain, however, you won't need to pay for anything else throughout the trek (save, of course, for tips for the crew at the end – see p23-4), especially as the rangers at the huts and campsites along the way are no longer allowed to sell drinks and snacks.

Away from the mountain and the other national parks, by far the most expensive place in Tanzania is Zanzibar. Elsewhere, you'll find transport, food and accommodation, the big three day-to-day expenses of the traveller's life, are pretty cheap in Tanzania and particularly in Moshi and Arusha – it's just unfortunate that Zanzibar and the national parks are pretty much all most visitors want to see of the country!

ACCOMMODATION

Basic tourist accommodation starts at around £6.50/US\$8. You can get cheaper, non-tourist accommodation but this is often both sleazy and unhygienic and

■ AN EXAMPLE: THE MACHAME TREK

A 7-day Machame trek for one person, taking one guide, one assistant guide, one cook and four porters (and assuming they're paid the TANAPA recommended wage) would cost as follows:

Park fees	
Rescue fee	US\$20.00
Conservation fee (US\$70 x 7 days)	US\$490.00
Camping fee (US\$50 x 6 nights)	US\$300.00
Porter/guide entrance fees (US\$2 x 7)	<u>US\$14.00</u>
TOTAL	US\$824 + 18% VAT = US\$972.32
Wages	
Four porters (assuming a wage of US\$10 per day)	US\$280.00
Assistant guide (assuming US\$15 per day)	US\$105.00
Cook (assuming US\$15 per day)	US\$105.00
Guide (assuming US\$20 per day)	<u>US\$140.00</u>
TOTAL	US\$630.00
Food	
One person plus crew	US\$235.00
Transport	
Estimate per person	<u>US\$70.00</u>
GRAND TOTAL	US\$1,907.32

Obviously if there are more of you some costs, such as food, wages and transport, can be divided between the group, thus making it cheaper. Nevertheless, the above example gives you an idea of just how quickly the costs add up. Any excess over these costs goes straight to the agency but they have significant costs of their own, including an annual licence fee of US\$2000 plus VAT. Remember, too, when working out your budget, to add on **tips** for your crew; see opposite for details.

However, while TANAPA were adamant that these wages would be observed by all the companies on the mountain and the companies themselves signed written agreements to this effect, many porters are still being paid as little as Ts8,000 (less than US\$4) because the more devious companies simply make up their own dollar/shilling exchange rates.

Transport to/from the mountain A litre of premium diesel at the time of writing cost Ts1925. According to one company's price schedule, the cost of transport from Arusha to Machame is around Ts150,000, (just under US\$70), for Marangu it's Ts200,000 (US\$90), Lemosho Ts300,000 (US\$135) and Rongai Ts400,000 (US\$180). Of course, the per-person charge may change dramatically if there are enough of you that you need to hire a second vehicle for your crew.

Food on the mountain Your total bill has to cover not only *your* food but the food of the porters and guides too. One agency boss told me that, as a rough estimate, the food (including cooking fuel) for one person plus crew on a seven-day climb is US\$150, though the per person cost drops significantly as more people join the trek.

Finally, I am obliged to Hassan, a guide at Mauly Tours, who accosted me halfway up the Breakfast Wall on the Machame Route to tell me to write, in bold, the following: **that the figures we have quoted above are correct for 2017.** If you're trekking in 2018, ask your trekking agency, or KPAP, for the latest recommended tips, or add on another 5-10 per cent to the above figures to allow for inflation; and thereafter, for every subsequent year, add 5-10 per cent onto the figures. **What you mustn't do is use the figures in this book as an excuse for bringing a lower tip, as people have been known to do.**

The above are mere guidelines; you may wish to alter them if you feel, for example, a certain porter is deserving of more than his normal share or if your trek was particularly difficult.

The crew

PORTERS

My guide was as polite as Lord Chesterfield and kindly as the finest gentleman of the world could be. So I owe much to the bare-footed natives of this country, who patiently for eight cents a day bear the white man's burden. **Peter MacQueen** *In Wildest Africa* (1910)

The wages may have gone up – a porter today could earn almost US\$10 per day if the minimum wages were enforced – and all now have footwear of some description. But the opinion expressed back at the beginning of the 20th century by the intrepid MacQueen is much the same as that voiced by thousands of trekkers at the beginning of the 21st.

These men (and the ones hired by trekkers are nearly always male, though female porters are occasionally seen on the mountain) never fail to draw both gratitude and, with the amount they carry and the minimum of fuss they make about it, admiration from the trekkers who hire them. Ranging in age from about 18 (the minimum legal age, though some look a good deal younger) to 50 (and occasionally beyond this), porters are amongst the hardest workers on Kilimanjaro. To see them traipsing up the mountain, water in one hand, cooker in another, rucksack on the back and picnic table on the head, is staggering to behold. And though they are supposed to carry no more than 20kg (plus 5kg of their own luggage), many, desperate for work in what is an over-supplied market, manage to bypass the weight checks at the gates to carry much more.

And if that isn't enough, while at the end of the day the average trekker spends his or her time at camp moaning about the hardships they are suffering – in between cramming down mouthfuls of popcorn while clasping a steaming hot cup of tea – these hardy individuals are putting up the tents, helping with the preparation of the food, fetching more water and generally making sure that every trekker's whim is, within reason, catered for.

Yet in spite of appearances, porters are not indestructible. Though they rarely climb to the summit themselves, several still die each year on the slopes

with us. I was assured that he was engaged elsewhere on tasks essential to the success of my journey, but I occasionally wondered whether Stephen actually existed. I was particularly aggrieved when he failed to collect his pay in person at the end of the trip. The other guides collected it for him. They also collected his tip.

The practice is common enough to have been given a name – *kirunje*, which is Swahili for ‘shadow’. This sort of thing shouldn’t happen if you’re with a rep-

- Making available appropriate climbing gear for any mountain crew to borrow. KPAP has a couple of wardrobes full of good-quality trekking gear, much of it donated by American skiing companies and couriered over by trekkers. For a returnable deposit (which can be anything from a school certificate to a mobile-phone charger) the porter can borrow for free items of clothing such as fleeces, boots etc.
- Educating the climbers and general public on proper porter treatment
- Encouraging climbers to select a climbing company with responsible practices towards their crew
- Assisting climbing companies with implementing procedures that ensure fair and ethical treatment of their porters

The partnership scheme

KPAP tries to encourage the trekking agencies to improve the way they treat their crew via the ‘**Partner for Responsible Travel**’ scheme. Established in 2006, the Partner Program was created to recognise and highlight those tour operators committed to fair treatment of the mountain crew.

Despite what several trekking companies may tell you, there is no charge to become a KPAP partner. Instead, in order to join the scheme companies have to conform to certain guidelines issued by KPAP. These include directives on porters’ wages (which KPAP have said has to be a minimum of **Ts20,000 per day**), a limit on the amount the porters are required to carry, the amount of food and water they receive on the mountain, what the sleeping conditions are like and how they are treated in the event of an accident or sickness. You may have noticed that several of these guidelines, such as the amount the porters are allowed to carry (20kg) and the wages a porter should be paid (US\$10) are already covered by KINAPA’s own rules. Unfortunately, KINAPA does a poor job in enforcing them. True, the bags are weighed at every gate to make sure the porter isn’t over-burdened – but the practice of bribery is as widespread on the mountain as it is elsewhere in Tanzania, and it doesn’t take much for a guide to hand over a few thousand shillings to a warden to persuade him to record incorrectly what the scales are saying. Similarly, while KINAPA have set a minimum wage of US\$10 per day for the porters, those companies – and they are the majority – who want to pay their porters less than this merely use a different exchange rate to the usual market one – which is why many porters end up with Ts10,000 (US\$5) or less per day.

So it’s left to KPAP to try to enforce the rules properly. In order to be considered as a partner, the trekking agency not only has to adhere to KPAP’s guidelines but also has to allow KPAP to monitor them, too, to make sure they stick to them. If the trekking agency manages to fulfil all these criteria the benefits, in terms of increased marketing opportunities and the extra demand that comes from being known as a Partner for Responsible Travel, are considerable.

There are several ways in which KPAP monitors their partner companies but the most effective way is the ‘investigative porter’ method, in which the partner company allows an undercover worker on *all* of their climbs.

(continued overleaf)

which you'll probably already be aware, perhaps the most popular being **Skyscanner** (☞ skyscanner.net) and **Cheapflights** (☞ cheapflights.co.uk); both of these give a summary of flight prices to your destination from several different agents, enabling you to choose the cheapest.

Other online agencies to recommend are **DialAFlight** (☞ dialaflight.com), **Netflights** (☞ netflights.com), **Expedia** (☞ expedia.co.uk), **lastminute** (☞ lastminute.com), **TravelUp** (☞ travelup.co.uk) and **Travel Trolley** (☞ traveltrolley.co.uk). High-street travel agents (all of which have a considerable online presence too) include **STA Travel** (☎ 0333-321 0099; ☞ statravel.co.uk), **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800-587 0058; ☞ flightcentre.co.uk) and **Trailfinders** (☎ 020-7368 1200; ☞ trailfinders.com), all with branches countrywide.

From North America

Skyscanner (☞ skyscanner.com) are again probably the first place to look for cheap flights as they compare different travel agencies to find the lowest fares. Otherwise, try **Flight Center** (USA ☞ flightcenter.com; Canada ☞ flightcentre.ca), **Travel Cuts** (Canada ☞ travelcuts.com) and **STA Travel** (☞ statravel.com).

From Australia and New Zealand

Skyscanner (☞ skyscanner.com.au) also operate Down Under and are a good place to start your search for cheap tickets. Also try **Flight Centre** (Aus ☞ flightcentre.com.au; NZ ☞ flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (Aus ☞ statravel.com.au; NZ ☞ statravel.co.nz).

OVERLAND

A big country lying at the heart of East Africa, Tanzania has borders with many countries including Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia.

There are several border crossings between Tanzania and **Burundi** including a sailing on the venerable old *MV Liemba* that traditionally journeys to Kigoma, cutting across the northern corner of Lake Tanganyika from the Burundi capital Bujumbura. The last time we checked it was running twice a month on a Wednesday afternoon, taking 44 hours to Zambia. However, it's important to check on the current situation with regard to both the state of the *Liemba* – it's often out of action – and the security situation in Burundi. If the boat's out of action, you can always catch a Taqwa or Tawfiq bus from Dar to Lusaka, spending a night at the border settlement of Tunduma before continuing on the next day to the Zambian capital. Both journeys last about 12-14 hours.

The borders with **Rwanda** (at the Rusumo crossing), **Uganda** (most commonly crossed at Mutukula, north-west of Bukoba), **Mozambique** (over the Unity Bridge across the Ruvuma), **Malawi** (Songwe River Bridge) and **Kenya** (see p209 for details on the border crossing at Namanga; Tarakea, north-east of Kili, is about to become an official crossing point for tourists too) are all relatively straightforward and served by public buses.

Tanzania and Zambia are also linked by express train, running twice weekly between Dar es Salaam and Kapiri Mposhi via Mbeya.

Fitness, inoculations and insurance

FITNESS

I ascribe the almost perfect health I have always enjoyed in Africa to the fact that I have made every step of my journey on foot, the constant exercise keeping my bodily organs in good order.

Hans Meyer *Across East African Glaciers* (1891)

There's no need to go overboard with fitness preparations for climbing Kili. The main reason why people fail to reach the summit is altitude sickness rather than lack of necessary strength or stamina. But the trek will obviously be more enjoyable for you the fitter you are, so anything you can do in the way of training can only help (see box p54).

A weekend (or several) of walking would be a good thing to do; it won't improve your fitness to a great degree but it will at least confirm that you can walk for more than a few hours at a time, and for more than one day at a time too. Wear the clothes you plan to take to Kilimanjaro – particularly your boots and socks – and the daypack that you hope to be carrying all the way to the top of Kibo, as well.

INOCULATIONS

Sort out your vaccinations a few months before you're due to fly. Note that in order to enter Tanzania **it is compulsory to have a yellow-fever vaccination if you're coming from a country where the disease is endemic** (even if you were only transiting there, assuming you left the airport in that country for more than 12 hours); see p126 for further details.

In the UK the jab costs about £60-85 including a certificate (from what I understand it's about US\$150 in the States though can climb to US\$350) to prove you've been vaccinated. Other recommended inoculations include:

- **Typhoid** This disease is caught from contaminated food and water. A single injection lasts for three years. Available on the NHS in the UK. There is also a typhoid vaccine that is combined with one for...

- **Hepatitis A** This debilitating disease of the liver is spread by contaminated water, or even by using cutlery that has been washed in this water. The latest inoculation involves two injections; the first will protect you for a year, the second, taken six to twelve months later, will cover you for 20 years. (These times may vary if you're taking the combined Hep A/typhoid vaccine).

- **Polio** The polio vaccine used to be administered by sugar-lump, making it one of the more pleasant inoculations, though these days it's nearly always injected. The vaccine lasts for ten years and there's a high chance you may

Who to book with

TANZANIAN OPERATOR vs AN AGENT FROM HOME

This all depends on what the foreign agencies are adding to the package provided by the local ground operator. In many cases they may be adding nothing at all, except perhaps the reassurance that comes from dealing with an agency that you may already know and one that is based in your home country. It may also be easier for you to get compensation from them should something go wrong, and their insurance is likely to be more comprehensive should something go *seriously* wrong on the mountain. Occasionally, some agencies send a North American or European tour leader to work alongside the local guide on each trek, which some people are reassured by; there's a list of the agencies we know that do this in the box on p106. But even assuming they don't, your agency will hopefully have done its homework and checked out the ground operators thoroughly, and flown to Moshi or Arusha to compare a few of them, thus providing you with peace of mind that the Tanzanian agency you'll be climbing with isn't totally terrible.

Another advantage, with UK agencies at least, is that they are required to provide a bond or to join an institution called ABTA which means that, should they fall into financial trouble, their clients' money is safe and will be refunded; other countries may have similar schemes. What's more, the chances are that the English spoken by the agent in your country will be superior to that of the Tanzanian operator, for whom English will be his or her third language (after Swahili and their tribal tongue). Your agent's response may also be more prompt; Tanzanians can sometimes be rather slack at replying to an enquiry.

And then there's the payment. It always feels a lot less, well, *scary*, sending payment to someone in your home country, rather than transferring thousands of dollars to some bloke in deepest, darkest Africa whom you've never even met. And if you pay by credit card, the banking system in Tanzania currently charges somewhere between 3-5% for this – which can easily amount to several hundred dollars in total; pay by credit card with your agent at home and the charges, if they exist at all, are unlikely to be anything like as large.

Booking with a Tanzanian operator

Looking at the other side of the argument, **it will nearly always be cheaper to book directly with a Tanzanian agency.** By doing so, you'll be cutting out the middleman (ie the agency in your country) and removing any fee that he has added to the basic trek cost. **You'll also be dealing directly with those who are actually organising the trek**, and who have a lot of experience on the mountain – rather than somebody who has never climbed Kilimanjaro, indeed may never have been within 5000 miles of the mountain, and when answering your emails must resort to spouting something they were taught at a workshop when training for their job (a role for which they've probably been given the ludicrously inaccurate title of

Of the 300 or so companies that are licensed to operate on the mountain, we have reviewed 84. We didn't really have any set criteria when deciding which ones to review. These 84 may have earned the right to be included in this book because they are the biggest companies, or the most popular, or the most well-known, or the oldest, or the most ethically minded, or simply the ones our readers have asked us about the most. In fact, if we did have any guidelines when it came to choosing which companies to include, it was that we thought they would be the 84 companies that people would most want to read about.

Writing about 84 may seem like overkill but do remember that **booking with the right agency is perhaps the single most important factor in determining the success or otherwise of your trek.** It is the local agency who supplies all the equipment, builds the menus and buys the food, employs the personnel – guides, cooks, porters etc – who are going to work on the trek, arranges the transport to and from the mountain for you and your crew, books your hotel for before and after the trail, organises and pays for the park fees... and so on, and so on. So take your time choosing your agency. Because unless you are a guide, porter, guidebook writer or just plain daft, climbing Kili will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience – and an expensive one too – so it's important that you get it right.

To save you wading through all 84 reviews, we have also created a table (see pp72-4) that provides you with an overview of these companies. We have organised them into price order, with the cheapest first. The prices in the table (which are *per person* prices) are for a group of four people for a seven-day Machame trek; if you have a bigger group or want a shorter trek then the per person price will be smaller; whereas if your group is smaller, or your trek longer, or the route you choose is further away and thus involves greater transport costs (ie Lemosho or Rongai), then you can expect the per person price to be higher. The last column in the table shows you where you can read each company's reviews.

In addition we've scattered boxes across the following pages that hopefully help you to find the company that suits you best; if you want to carry your own luggage on the mountain, or want to go with an ethical company, or you're looking to book on behalf of a big group, then you'll find boxes that will help you to narrow down your search.


ONLINE REVIEWS vs OUR REVIEWS

Which are more reliable?

It's a fair question: Why have we gone to the trouble of reviewing these agencies when the internet has thousands of reviews from clients on various websites, many of which will be more up-to-date than the ones printed here?

Well, we have two main answers to this. Firstly, as we mention above, we think that choosing the right operator is one of the most important decisions you'll make, so it would be remiss of us to not even attempt to offer you some guidance on this matter. But secondly, we felt compelled to write it because of late we have become rather sceptical about some of the reviews we're seeing online.

Please don't misunderstand us. A genuine, detailed online review can be useful. The people who write these reviews have usually actually climbed with

of the agencies we review, unlike nearly everyone who posts online reviews. Given the diktats of limited funds and tight publishing deadlines, we've done as much research as we can; in many cases we've seen the companies operate on the mountain, and we've asked KPAP and other bodies to find out what they know about the company. But we don't for one minute pretend that we are omniscient. Besides, this book was researched in 2017 and the situation does change; though we try to minimise this problem by offering to give you, free of charge, the latest information we have if you write to us ( henry@climbmountkilimanjaro.com).

In summary, we think you should look on this chapter as just a useful tool, one of several in your toolbox that you should utilise when deciding on which company to choose; one that can then be supplemented by looking online or asking friends. And hopefully by doing so you'll end up with the company that's right for you; because that is what we all want.

HOW WE RESEARCHED THIS SECTION

As with the previous editions we once again did as much of our research as possible anonymously. In other words, the companies we contacted thought we were just regular punters and had no idea we were researching the next edition of the book. Having first checked out each company's website, the next step was to email them in order to find out a bit more about the service they could provide and what they would charge for it. To do this we invented a fictional family of four (see below), set up an email address for them, and then sent a standard email to each trekking agency. Our research didn't stop there, however. We also asked trekkers we met on Kilimanjaro or in Arusha/Moshi of their experiences; consulted all the letters and emails from climbers that we'd received, in which recommendations and complaints about agencies often featured; and finally, we talked with KPAP (see box pp26-9) to find out how well or badly each company treated and paid their staff on the mountain.

Please bear in mind that **the reviews are our opinions only**. Remember, too, that things change very quickly in this part of the world, so some of the following will inevitably have altered by the time you begin your research. **For the latest advice and information please do not hesitate to get in touch via email** ( henry@climbmountkilimanjaro.com) and we'll be happy to oblige; and if you have any advice, comments, praise or criticisms about any of the agencies, again, please contact us – we are always delighted to receive them.

How to read the table

In the table the **companies are listed in price order**, with the cheapest first. The price is for a seven-day Machame trek for 4 people, and was given to us by the companies in response to an anonymous email we sent to them in which we pretended to be a family of two adults and two children, with one child 17 years old and one aged 14. Note that sometimes a company would give us a range of prices depending on the standard of the trek; if this was the case then we give all the prices they gave us, and you can read about the differences between these standards in the company's review. Sometimes, a company doesn't actually deal

their ranks – another useful selling tool, methinks.

● **Summary** Definitely worth enquiring with if you're after a solid mid-range company.

Easy Travel & Tours (☎ 0686 374363; 🌐 easytravel.co.tz; Boma Rd, A) Long-established company located right in the centre of Arusha by New Safari Hotel. Efficient and very busy, more renowned for their safaris though they do seem to be concentrating more on Kili treks these days. Prices are reasonable (US\$2112pp) but there are a couple of negatives: the under-16 discount they passed onto us was only US\$350, and they charge US\$250 for a tank of oxygen – a sum that's high enough, we believe, to persuade some trekkers not to take it. Still, the last we heard is that they are looking to become partners of KPAP, which is a step in the right direction.

● **Summary** Doing a fair bit of Kili business now and about to be adopted by a major Canadian agency, we hear, though reviews of their treks are still few in number – possibly because those who have climbed with them booked with an overseas agency and so had no idea they were actually climbing with Easy. If they can emulate the success of their safari arm on Kili then everyone will win, though it's too early to say this just yet.

Enosa (☎ 0715-223767; 🌐 enosaexpeditions.com; M) Company that, like several others, has managed to secure a fair bit of business by featuring highly on review websites (eg [TripAdvisor](http://TripAdvisor.com), safaribookings.com). Good prices (US\$1800pp) and the full discount for under 16s was offered within the first paragraph of their reply. Indeed, their whole email was concise but full of sound common-sense.

● **Summary** Not one of the more established companies but plenty of good reviews online suggests they could be worth a punt for those looking below the US\$2000 threshold.

Everlasting Tanzania Travels (☎ 0788 835575, 🌐 everlastingtz.com; A) Wholly Tanzanian-owned company run by three ex-guides. Has been suffering recently following the sudden death of the Irishman Ian

McKeever who used Everlasting as his ground operator for the large groups that he used to bring over. (Mr McKeever died from a lightning strike on the mountain.) Nevertheless, Everlasting still have a lot going for them: KPAP partners with a strong ethical outlook and a deserved reputation for taking massive groups on Kili – indeed, they hold the record for taking the largest group ever to climb the mountain, with 117 out of the initial 119 making it to the top. Their treks are efficiently run and all guides are WFR trained. Prices firmly in the mid-range at US\$2650pp, including two nights at Arusha's expensive African Tulip; after prompting, they confirmed that the under 16 discount would be a healthy US\$650.

● **Summary** For large groups, this team's experience and nous has few rivals.

Fair Travel Kilimanjaro We've given this company space in this book purely to emphasise the fact that this is *not* the same company as Fair Travel Tanzania (see below), and are, by all accounts, actually pretty dreadful.

● **Summary** Don't get them confused!

Fair Travel Tanzania (☎ 0786 025886; 🌐 fairtraveltanzania.com; A) Is this the future of trekking on Kilimanjaro? Those who care about the welfare of porters would probably like it to be. Fair Travel Tanzania are KPAP partners who describe themselves as a non-profit company, founded by a Swede who won a large amount of money on a TV game show and decided to invest it by setting up Fair Travel. Approaches the whole question of porter welfare from a whole new angle by firstly determining what amount a porter needs each month to maintain a decent standard of living (which they've decided is US\$252 per month), then paying them a daily wage, assuming that they work on two treks each month, that will equal this amount. All of which means that the porters on a Fair Travel climb earn US\$18 per day in wages – a startling amount when you consider KPAP's own minimum daily wage is a comparatively paltry US\$10! It also means that their clients are not obliged to pay any gratuities for their crew and the

people's tastes, though others will like the feeling of safety that comes with being surrounded by so many kindred spirits. Offer three payment options: you can either pay for it all yourself; pay a deposit then commit to raise a certain amount of sponsorship for a charity of your choice, from which payment for your final balance is taken; or you can opt for a mixture of the first two. A UK trip leader and doctor accompany every trip and the packages include everything, even the flights. Only the Machame, Lemosho and Rongai routes are offered. Currently uses both Big Expedition (see p77) and Ahsante (see p77), we believe.

Africa Odyssey (☎ 020-8704 1216, africaodyssey.com) Agents for African Walking Company (see p76).

Africa Travel Resource (ATR; ☎ 01306-880770, africatravelresource.com) The only foreign agency I know that offers, for a price, the ALTOX Personal Oxygen Systems (where two bottles of oxygen are fed through cannulas inserted into the nostrils to help clients to the summit; their advertised summit success rate is 96%, possibly because of this). ATR's website is stuffed with information but can be a little clunky and confusing. Uses African Walking Company. Recommended.

Audley Travel (☎ 01993-838 000, audleytravel.com) A travel agency with multiple awards to their name that uses Nature Discovery (see p92) as their ground operator, so Lemosho, Machame and Nature Discovery's 'Grand Traverse' (which combines the Shira Plateau Route with the Northern Circuit) are the routes offered. Flights are included.

Charity Challenge (☎ 020-8346 0500, charitychallenge.com) Arranges expeditions to various places for those looking to raise money for charity. Seems to concentrate on the Lemosho and Rongai routes only. Flights are included. Use Ahsante (see p77) as their Kili ground operator.

Climb Kili (☎ 0800-098 8773, climbkili.com) UK office of Arusha-based company (see p78).

Different Travel Company (☎ 0788-169 8623, different-travel.com) Offers trips all over the world including the (very) occasional foray up Kili, using the praiseworthy African Scenic Safaris (see p75).

Dig Deep (Africa) (☎ 0114-275 1790, digdeep.org.uk) Great little charity working to increase access to water and sanitation in Kenya. Uses KPAP partners African Scenic Safaris and Trek2Kili for their six-day Machame treks.

Discover Adventure (☎ 01722-718 444, discoveradventure.com) As with many of these charity expedition companies, if you manage to raise a certain amount of sponsorship the money to pay for your climb will come out of it. Currently offer only the Machame Route.

Equatours (☎ 0203-239 3235; equatours.co.uk) Agent for Big Expeditions (see p77).

Exodus (☎ 0203-131 2941, exodus.co.uk) Large, long-standing and agents for African Walking Company (see p76). Offer return flights too. Laudably, they also run the Porter Education Project to teach English to the porters during the low season (Apr-June) and have established three schools in the local area to facilitate this.

Explore Worldwide (☎ 01252-883 725, explore.co.uk) Long-established company offering treks on the Lemosho Route, often in combination with something else such as a four-day safari or three-day Zanzibar jaunt. Prices can include or exclude flights. For Kili they use Ahsante of Moshi (see p77).

Extraordinary Africa (☎ 0207-097 1801, extraordinary-africa.com) Agent for Nature Discovery offering Machame and Rongai routes.

Gane & Marshall (☎ 01822-600 600, ganeandmarshall.com) Africa specialists whose co-founder, Jeremy Gane, was one of the organisers behind 2009's successful Comic Relief celebrity climb (a UK television charity fundraiser). Treks offered include regular, open group climbs (ie anyone can join) for eight days on Shira (that's

corners and hopefully they would have explained to you when you bought your SIM card what you need to do.

In the book we mark the offices of the various network providers in Arusha on the map.

If your existing phone is unlocked you can put the SIM card straight in; if not, you can pick up a phone cheaply in Tanzania or **get your phone unlocked**. Bensons in Arusha offer this service – see p219 – but when I checked they were asking for at least Ts100,000 to unlock a phone and said it would take anywhere from 24 hours to 20 days (the exact cost and time depending on the make of the phone and the network).

Buying a SIM in Tanzania can save you a small fortune in bills compared to using a mobile and SIM from your home country. That said, telephoning in Tanzania has always been a hit-and-miss affair, and sometimes it's an illogical one too. Phone a Tanzanian landline from a Tanzanian mobile, for example, and you often still have to dial Tanzania's international dialling code (+255). Furthermore, if you are having trouble ringing home, try tacking an extra '0' on to the front of the international dialling code: for example, if you wish to ring the UK but the phone continues to bar your call, dial 00044 rather than just 0044. But even if you follow these rules, there are still occasions when it's impossible to get any sort of connection.

Of course the best and cheapest way of ringing abroad is **via Skype and the internet**; most hotels now offer some sort of internet service and if the speed is fast enough it's possible to have a reasonably fluent conversation. If you've brought your Iphone/Android/Windows Phone/Blackberry 10 then WhatsApp will enable you to make free calls over the internet – again assuming you can find a fast enough connection.

Internet access

Most restaurants and nearly all hotels now advertise wi-fi. If your hotel internet is sub-standard then the quickest internet can be had at those cafés which advertise wi-fi, for this service is probably the easiest to join and currently the most reliably rapid.

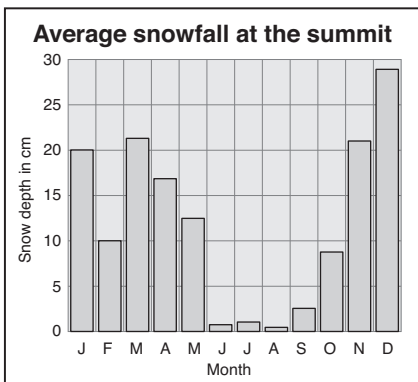
If you didn't bring your own smartphone, laptop or ipad then you'll probably have to resort to Tanzania's **internet service cafés** to get online. They're efficient and good value, charging about Ts1000 per hour. Some of the equipment is a little dated, as you'd probably expect, and the speed of the connection can be a little slow – though since the arrival of broadband the situation has improved markedly.

Post

Thanks to the presence of the English missionaries, matters have already advanced so far in Jagga that the Europeans stationed there get their letters and newspapers not more than a month old.

Hans Meyer *Across East African Glaciers* (1891)

The postal system in Tanzania has improved since Meyer's day but not massively. Reasonably reliable and reliably sluggish, things do occasionally get 'lost in the post' but most gets through... eventually. You should allow about a



Adapted from DR Hardy's *Kilimanjaro snow*
in: AM Waple & JH Lawrimore (eds.)
State of the Climate in 2002,
Bull. Am. Meteorol. Soc., 84, S48

Then there are the dry 'anti-trade' winds from the north-east which carry no rain and hit the mountain between May and October. These anti-trade winds, which blow, usually very strongly, across the Saddle (the broad valley between Kilimanjaro's two peaks), also serve to keep the south-east trade winds off the upper reaches of Kilimanjaro, ensuring that the rain from the long monsoon season stays largely on the southern side below 3000m, with little falling above this. Which is why, at this time of year, the first day's walk for trekkers

☐ Trekking in the rainy season

For those who have absolutely no choice but to walk during the rainy season, don't get too downhearted. For one thing, it's not uncommon for the rains to fail altogether – devastating for the local farmers, of course, but good news for your average trekker. (We were on the mountain in late November once and didn't see a drop of rain the whole time we were there.) And even when there is rain, it doesn't necessarily make for a dreadful trek. We have had letters from several readers who positively recommend the experience. For example, take Jack Hollinghurst from the UK who wrote to us with the following:

'...I do think that you don't give enough encouragement to walking in the rainy season. I was forced to walk at this time by holiday dates and thought it excellent. Due to the hugely reduced numbers of trekkers on the mountain me and my friend were given our own room at all of the huts (including Kibo, where it is about 12 beds to a room) and [your] advice about having dinner early at Horombo is irrelevant as there were about five other groups there at the most.

'...the walking is [also] much more enjoyable when you have some peace and quiet...Maybe you should advise walkers to wear waterproof trousers at this time of year (although I didn't take any and was fine) but otherwise I wouldn't walk at any other time of year.'

His sentiments were endorsed by Martin Fehr from Denmark, who wrote to me of his experience a few years later:

'Don't be afraid to recommend climbing the mountain [at the end of] April. Our porters were so happy to have work in low season, we didn't get a lot of rain, and there were absolutely no climbers on the mountain besides us, which made our climb exceptionally great! Plus the top of the mountain was all covered in snow – a challenge, but soooo beautiful (and it was great to be able to "sleigh" down the mountain as well).

no impassable abyss to intervene, I could have reached it in three or four hours’.

After Rebmann’s pioneering work it was the turn of his friend Krapf, now risen from his sickbed, to see the snowy mountain his friend had described in such detail. In November 1849 he visited the Ukamba district to the north of Kilimanjaro and during a protracted stay in the area Krapf became the first white man to see Mount Kenya. Perhaps more importantly, he was also afforded wonderful views of Kilimanjaro, and was able to back up Rebmann’s assertion that the mountain really was adorned with snow (see box p154 for quote).

FIRST ATTEMPTS ON THE SUMMIT

Baron von der Decken and Charles New

After the missionaries came the mountaineers. In August 1861 Baron Carl Claus von der Decken, a Hanoverian naturalist and traveller who had been residing in Zanzibar, accompanied by young English geologist Richard Thornton, himself an explorer of some renown who had accompanied (and been sacked by) Livingstone during the latter’s exploration of the Zambezi, made the first serious attempt on Kilimanjaro’s summit. Initially, despite an entourage of over fifty porters, a manservant for von der Decken and a personal slave for Thornton, their efforts proved to be rather dismal and they had to turn back after just three days due to bad weather, having reached the rather puny height of just 8200ft (2499m). Proceeding to the west side of the mountain, however, the pioneering baron did at least enjoy an unobstructed view of Kibo peak on the way:

Bathed in a flood of rosy light, the cap that crowns the mountain’s noble brow gleamed in the dazzling glory of the setting sun... Beyond appeared the jagged outlines of the eastern peak, which rises abruptly from a gently inclined plain, forming, as it were, a rough, almost horizontal platform. Three thousand feet lower, like the trough between two mighty waves, is the saddle which separates the sister peaks one from the other.

Von der Decken also provided the most accurate estimate yet for the height of both Kibo – which he guessed was between 19,812 and 20,655ft (6038.7m to 6295.6m) – and Mawenzi (17,257 to 17,453ft, or 5259.9 to 5319.7m). Thornton, for his part, correctly surmised that the mountain was volcanic, with Kibo the youngest and Shira the oldest part of the mountain.

The following year von der Decken, now accompanied by Dr Otto Kersten who had replaced Thornton as the baron’s travelling and climbing companion, reached a much more respectable 14,200ft (4328m) and furthermore reported being caught up in a snowstorm (see box p156). On his return to Europe, the baron described Kibo as a ‘mighty dome, rising to a height of about 20,000 feet, of which the last three thousand are covered in snow’.

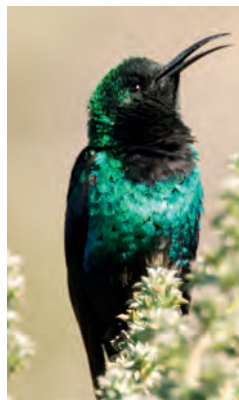
Following this second attempt, von der Decken urged **Charles New** (1840–75), a London-born missionary with the United Free Methodist Church in Mombasa, to tackle the mountain, and in 1871 New made a laudable attempt to reach the summit. That attempt failed, as did a second attempt in August of the same year; nevertheless, by choosing on the latter occasion to climb on the south-eastern face of Kibo where the ice cap at that time stretched almost to the



White-necked raven



Streaky seed eater



Malachite sunbird



Four-striped grass mouse



Blue monkey



Skink or grey lizard



Colobus monkey



Vervet monkeys (Meru)



Two-horned chameleon



Lammergeyer

level and occasionally in the upper reaches of the forest too. Most people will know this flower thanks to its anti-depressant properties.

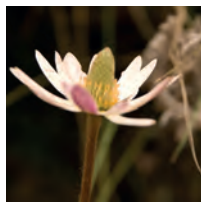
Grasses now dominate the mountain slopes, picked out here and there with some splendid wild flowers including the white- or yellow-flowered *Protea kili- mandscharica*, an indigenous rarity that can be seen on the Mweka and Marangu trails and, so we've been told, around Maundi Crater – the best place for botanists to spot wild flowers. A whole raft of *Helichrysum* species make their first appearance here too, though certainly not their last; see box p182.

A plant that most readers will recognise instantly is the back-garden favourite *Kniphofia thomsonii*, better known to most as the **red-hot poker**. Climbing higher, you'll begin to come across **sedges** such as *Mariscus kerstenii* with, like most sedges, a triangular stalk. If you're extremely lucky you may also spot an orchid, *Disa stairsii*, a short flower with a spike of small pink flowers. Also growing in the grass here is a pretty, delicate **anemone**, *Anemone thomsonii*, with white flowers; a **scabious**, *Scabiosa columbaria*; and, occasionally, a vivid red **gladiolus** that's simply gorgeous, *Gladiolus watsonides*, which you can also find in the upper reaches of the forest belt.

The shrubs are shrinking now: *Philippia trimera* is the most common, along with the gorse-like *Adenocarpus* beside



*Gladiolus
watsonides*



Anemone thomsonii



*Carduus
keniensis*



*Adenocarpus
mannii*



Disa stairsii
(orchid)



*Bidens
kilimandscharica*



*Lobelia
deckenii*



Thunbergia alata



*Bearded
lichen*

market, Jamia Mosque (Nairobi's most impressive mosque but closed to infidels), and the **McMillan Memorial Library**, a grand colonnaded building dating back to the early 1930s that sits at the opposite end of Wabera Street from the Hamilton Fountain. Heading south to rejoin Kenyatta Avenue, take a left here, and after a couple of hundred metres you'll come to the final port of call on this walk, the **Thorn Tree Café**, with its overpriced but wonderfully cold beer.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Security

Nairobi has been the venue of a couple of horrific terrorist attacks in recent years, with 2013's atrocity at the Westgate Mall, when 72 people were killed by Somali fundamentalists, coming on top of the 1998 attack on the US Embassy (see p200) in which 263 people perished. There is little you can do to avoid these – thankfully rare – tragedies. However, these major events are not the only dangers facing tourists in Kenya's capital. A few years back some inspired wag dubbed Kenya's capital 'Nairobber', and less-inspired wags have been retreading that joke ever since. Tired as the gag may be, however, it does still have relevance, for Nairobi's reputation as East Africa's Capital of Crime is well founded.

To be fair, the authorities are trying to improve matters, at least in the centre, blocking off many of the darker backstreets. There seem to be fewer beggars and touts populating the centre too. There is also a 'beautification' programme going on, which seems to involve a lot of tree-planting.

Nevertheless, the need to be wary when out on the streets of Nairobi remains paramount. The **most notorious hotspot** is the area immediately to the east of Moi Avenue, including River Rd and the bus stations, a

popular location with travellers because of its cheap hotels. During the day violent robbery is rare though certainly not unheard of, simply because it's so packed with people; pickpocketing, on the other hand, is rife at this time, probably for the same reason. At night, both techniques are common.

To avoid becoming another victim, **be vigilant**, leave valuables at your hotel (having first checked their security procedures) and make sure they give you a receipt for any goods deposited. Furthermore, tuck moneybelts under your clothing and don't walk around at night but take a taxi, even if it's for just a few hundred metres.

It can only be to your advantage if you are over-cautious for your first couple of days in the capital. After that, if you're still staying here, you can begin to appreciate Nairobi's charms – which do exist, and are not entirely inconsiderable – and can begin to moan, like the rest of the travellers here, about how unfair guidebook writers are about Kenya's capital.

ARRIVAL

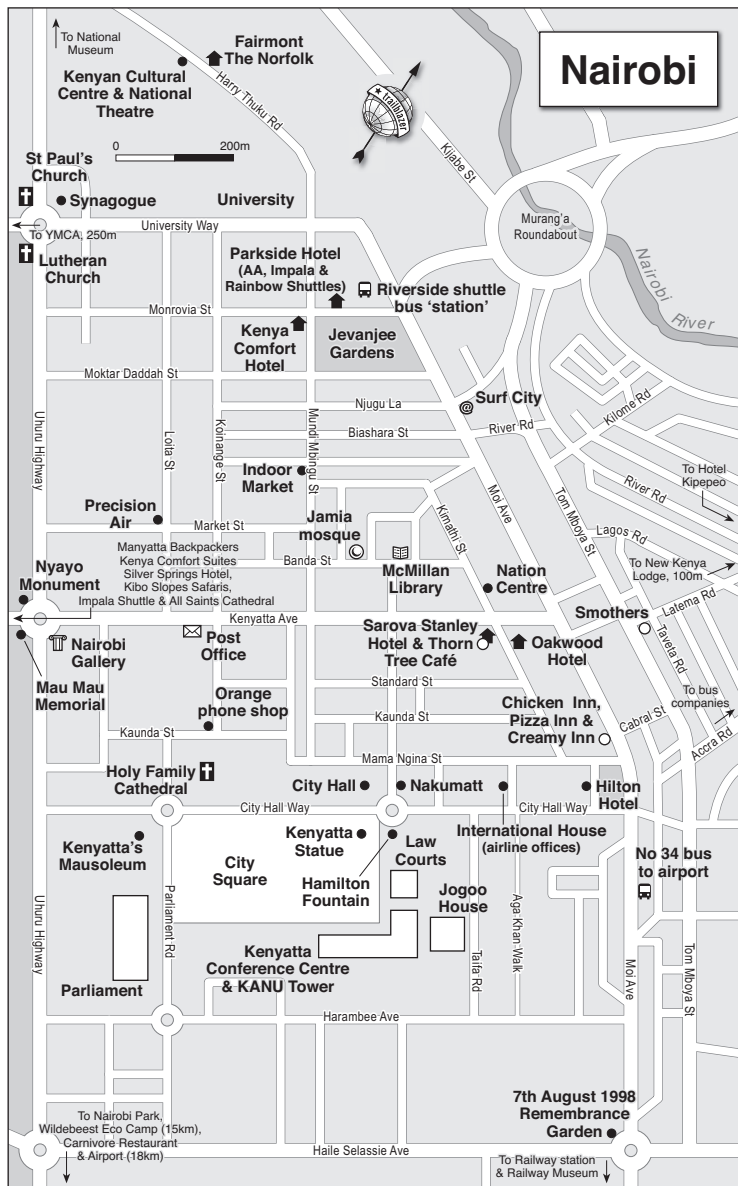
By air

Jomo Kenyatta Airport (also known as Nairobi International Airport), situated 18km from the centre of Nairobi, is still struggling to come to terms with the fire in

□ Diplomatic missions in Nairobi

Australia Riverside Drive, 400m off Chiromo Rd; ☎ 020-427 7100; 📧 kenya.embassy.gov.au; **Belgium** Limuru Rd, Muthaiga; ☎ 020-712 20 11; 📧 countries.diplomatie.belgium.be/en/kenya; **Canada** Limuru Rd, Gigiri; ☎ 020-366 3000, 📧 canadainternational.gc.ca/kenya; **Denmark** 13 Runda Drive, Runda; ☎ 020-425 3000; 📧 kenya.um.dk; **France** Barclays Plaza, 9th Floor, Loita St; ☎ 020-277 8000; 📧 www.ambafrance-ke.org; **Germany** 113 Riverside Drive; ☎ 020-4262 100; 📧 nairobi.diplo.de; **Japan** Mara Rd, Upper Hill; ☎ 020-289 8000; 📧 ke.emb-japan.go.jp; **South Africa** 3rd Floor, Roshanmaer Place, Lenana Rd; ☎ 0709-127000; **UK** Upper Hill Rd; ☎ 020-284 4000; 📧 gov.uk/government/world/kenya; **United States** United Nations Av; ☎ 020-363 6000; 📧 ke.usembassy.gov.

Nairobi



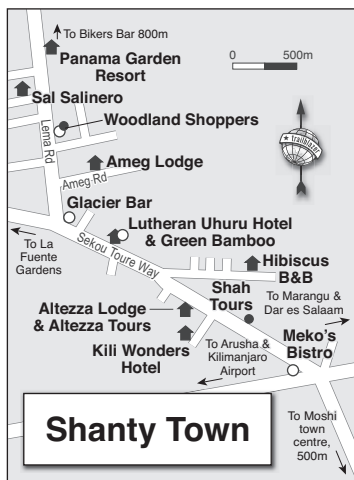
pit and plenty of outdoor seating in their lovely garden. Try to get a room upstairs if you can, for they come with veranda – and those at the back have views of Kili too. Highly recommended. Rates sgl/dbl/tpl US\$30/45/70, though look on book-ing.com to see if you can get it cheaper.

Something strange happened to the hostel scene in Moshi in 2016. Firstly, the *Kilimanjaro Grand* (☎ 0767-646722, kiligrandhostels@gmail.com) arrived in the centre of town, garnered a lot of positive reviews online – then promptly upped sticks and moved north of Moshi to the Rose Garden district. The new place is undoubtedly more pleasant and quieter than the original. Though expensive for a hostel (dbl/tpl US\$18-25/27-35, the exact price depending on the season) it's a lovely place nevertheless; five simple but clean self-contained rooms with air-con and mosquito nets, a lovely outdoor space and some very friendly staff, led by the chatty, busy Ghywnine (though he's better known by his nickname of Mandela). Camping (US\$10 per tent) and a dormitory room (US\$8 per person) are also planned, and some of the profits go towards sponsoring the nearby Komboa Kilimanjaro Organisation,

US\$60 and above per double

Bristol Cottages (☎ 027-275 5083; bristolcottages.com), on Rindi Lane, describe themselves as 'The countryside hotel in the middle of town', and though the noise from the buses revving up the hill outside rather shatters that boast, it's true that this is a little blossom-filled idyll and the most convenient upper-bracket hotel in Moshi. The smart cottages, all with large TV and mosquito net, go for US\$70/100/130 s/c sgl/dbl/tpl; the new wing, a little noisier due to its proximity to the road, is consequently slightly cheaper at US\$60/90 s/c sgl/dbl, while there are some suites with a mountain view that will set you back US\$80/110/140 s/c sgl/dbl/tpl.

Just a few metres up the hill on Aga Khan Rd is another smart place. *Parkview Inn* (☎ 027-275 1341, ☎ 0754 052000; pvim.com) was once a bijou B&B boasting just 12 rooms or so but these days it's a fairly enormous monolith with 49 rooms of



elegant (if monotonous) uniformity and the facilities – TV, telephone, wi-fi, air-con and bath or shower – of a large chain hotel. Thankfully, however, it still retains its friendly informality. Rates are US\$75/85/120 for s/c sgl/dbl/suite.

However, for the top places in Moshi you have to go to the north of the Arusha-Moshi road to **Shanty Town** – a smart area of jacaranda-lined avenues that's quite unlike any shanty town you've seen or heard about. While the Kilimanjaro Impala Hotel is closed for renovations, and possibly permanently, four new places have sprung up nearby to fill the gap. The first, the huge *Kilimanjaro Wonders Hotel* (☎ 027-275 1984; kiliwonders.com), is quite a gargantuan place, its sheer size a bit incongruous in the normally discreet, understated Shanty Town. Still, there's no arguing with the quality of the place nor the sumptuousness of its 44 rooms (with satellite TV, wi-fi, air-con and safe), its gardens, spa and pool. Despite the high standards, rooms aren't actually too extortionate, with B&B rates sgl/dbl/tpl starting at just US\$90/110/130, rising to US\$180/215/250 in the June-October high season; these rates may, however, be some sort of introductory offer and in future we expect them to rise. Best of all, however, is the rooftop bar

SAFE AND MINIMUM IMPACT TREKKING

Safe trekking

Came to cave. Men cold. Passed two corpses of young men who died of exposure, a short time ago. The vultures had pecked out their eyes, the leopards had taken a leg from each.

From the diary of **Peter MacQueen** as recorded in his book
In Wildest Africa (1910)

Because of the number of trekkers who scale Kilimanjaro each year, and the odd ways in which some choose to do so, many people are under the mistaken impression that Africa's highest mountain is also a safe mountain. Unfortunately, as any mountaineer will tell you, there's no such thing as a safe mountain, particularly one nearly 6000m tall with extremes of climate near the summit and ferociously carnivorous animals roaming the lower slopes. Your biggest enemy on Kilimanjaro, however, is likely to be neither the weather nor the wildlife. KINAPA are shy about revealing how many trekkers die on Kili each year, though we reckon it's about six or seven (see p262). The main culprit behind these fatalities is nearly always the same: the altitude.

The authorities do try to minimise the number of deaths: guides are given some training in what to do if one of their group is showing signs of acute mountain sickness (AMS) and trekkers are required to register each night upon arrival at the campsite and have to pay a US\$20 (plus VAT) 'rescue fee' as part of their park fees (though what this actually gets you is unclear). But you, too, can do your bit by avoiding AMS in the first place. The following pages discuss in detail what AMS actually is, how it is caused, the symptoms and, finally, how to avoid it. Read this section carefully: it may well save your life. Following this, on p269 you'll find details of other ailments commonly suffered by trekkers on Kilimanjaro.

(Incidentally, for those climbing Meru the above introduction and the following advice are all relevant. Of course, given Meru's lower altitude, the risks of AMS are consequently lower; though this is offset by the slightly higher risk of attack by wildlife!)

WHAT IS AMS?

AMS, or **acute mountain sickness** (also known as **altitude sickness**), is what happens when the body fails to adapt in time to the lack of available oxygen at altitude. The atmospheric pressure drops





On the summit of Mount Meru

As it does, hopefully at the same time the eastern horizon will start to turn pink and orange with the onset of the new day, and the silhouette of Kili can clearly be discerned, with both Kibo and Mawenzi summits visible.

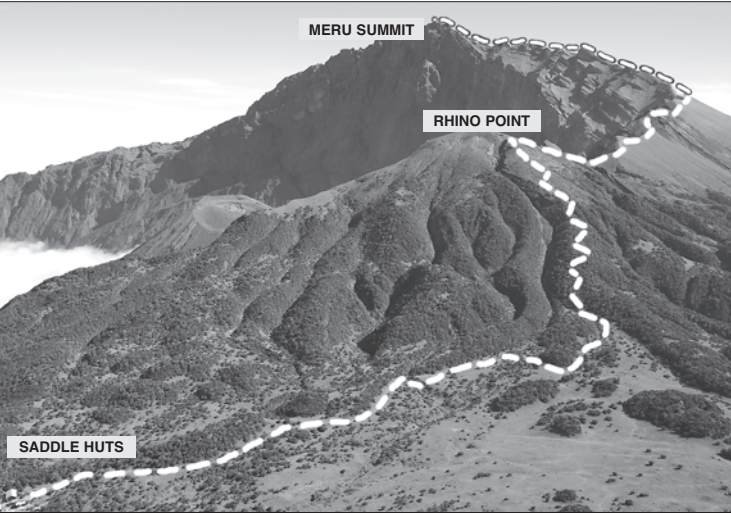
The summit (4566m; 14,980ft) seems tangibly closer, too, so it's disheartening to discover that it's still a minimum of an hour away – or nearer three if it's been snowing and your guides have to create a path

in the ice using nothing but the heels of their boots as spades and bits of rocks as shovels! It can be a little terrifying, too, with one false step sending you plummeting down the icy slopes. Take care!

At the summit (which used to be called Socialist Peak, though they've since taken away the sign) there's little save a flag, a sign and a box containing a book where you can sign your name. There are also, of course, great views over Arusha to the west and Kili to the east, with Meru's perfect ash cone below you.

The descent – the Summit to Miriakamba Huts

Photos taken and hands shaken, it's time for the descent – and isn't it wonderful to be able to walk at a speed of your choosing again! It's also interesting to see how different in daylight the path looks. Look back from **Rhino Point**, for



Mount Meru – Route to the Summit

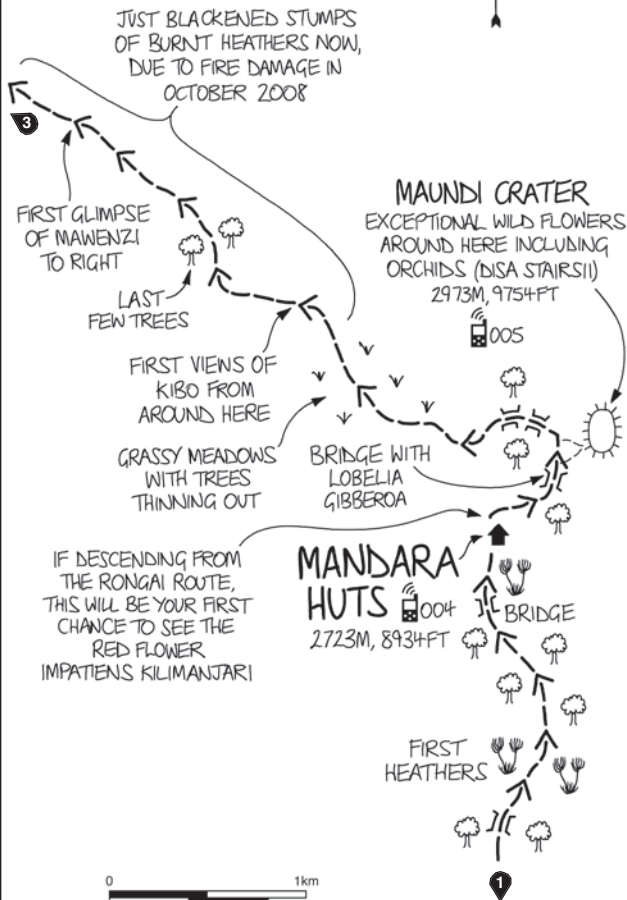
MAP 2



2 HRS 50 MINS TO SLOPING BRIDGE (MAP 3)

MANDARA HUTS

80 MINS FROM KISAMBONI LUNCH STOP (MAP 1)



85 MINS FROM SLOPING BRIDGE (MAP 3)

MANDARA HUTS

45 MINS TO KISAMBONI LUNCH STOP (MAP 1)



that all of them would have been required to present the chief with a huge array of presents brought from their own country. Failure to do so was not an option, for those who, in Mandara's eye (he had only one, having lost the other in battle), were insufficiently generous in their gift-giving, put their lives in peril. The attack that led to the death of Charles New (see p159), for example, was said to have been orchestrated by Mandara after New had 'insulted' him by refusing to give the chief the watch from his waistcoat. Read any of the 19th-century accounts of Kilimanjaro and you'll usually find plenty of pages devoted to this fascinating character – with few casting him in a favourable light.

STAGE 2: MANDARA HUTS TO HOROMBO HUTS

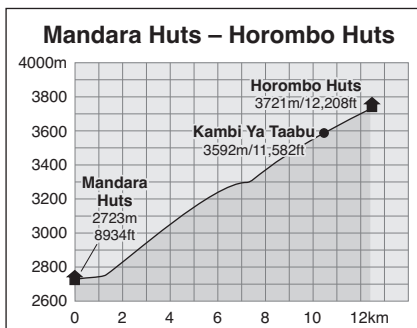
[MAP 2 p295; MAP 3, opposite]

**Distance: 12.5km (7¾ miles);
altitude gained: 998m (3274ft)**

On this stage, in which you gain almost a kilometre in altitude, you say a final goodbye to the forest and spend the greater part of the day walking through the bleaker landscape of Kilimanjaro's moorland. If the weather's clear you will get your first really good look at the twin peaks of Kili, namely spiky Mawenzi and snow-capped Kibo; they will continue to loom large and will doubtless appear in just about every photo you take from now to the summit. The proteas, giant groundsels (*Dendrosenecio kilimanjari*) and phallic lobelias (*Lobelia deckenii*) also make their first appearance, with the groundsels growing in some abundance towards the latter part of the walk and especially around Horombo Huts.

The whole landscape as far as the eye could reach was a medley of dull grey lava slabs, dotted with the red-leaved protea shrub (Protea Kilimandscharica) and stunted heaths, which became smaller and smaller as we rose higher. Not a sound disturbed the silence of this uninhabited mountain mystery; not a sign of life broke the stillness save a little ashy-brown bird that hopped about the boulders, flipping its tail up and down. And to add to the impression created by the eerie scene, huge senecios lifted to a height of 20ft their black stems and greyish-yellow crowns and stood spreading out their arms in the deep moist gullies, like ghostly sentinels of the untrodden wilds.

Eva Stuart Watt *Africa's Dome of Mystery* (1930)



Note: In all the route descriptions, do remember that the times we quote are approximations and, more importantly, refer to **walking times only** with no time spent resting, taking photos etc. Add on 30-50% to get an estimate of the total time spent on the trail.

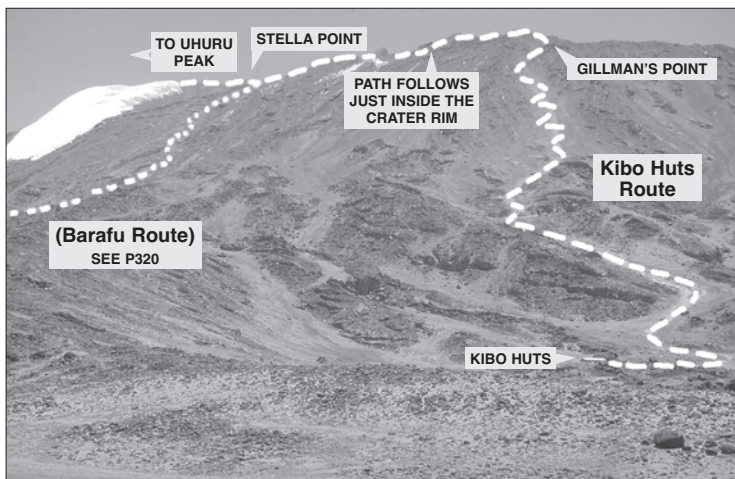
the hard stuff is, in theory at least, largely behind them. All of which means that the chances of failure on this route are comparatively high – and of making it, but throwing up or passing out along the way, are even higher. Just remember the golden rule: when it comes to climbing Kibo, there is no such thing as too slow. The mountain was formed around 500,000 years ago and has remained much the same ever since, so I think it's reasonable to assume it will still be there in the morning, no matter what time you arrive at the top.

I find a rhythm and try to lose my thoughts to it but feel the first pain of a stomach cramp and then another, and I feel the nausea starting and the headache that I recognise all too well ... The pain is sharp in my head and my cramping is still with me; if I feel this way how is Danny doing with no sleep and nothing in his stomach from the vomiting after dinner?

Rick Ridgeway, *The Shadow of Kilimanjaro – On Foot Across East Africa*

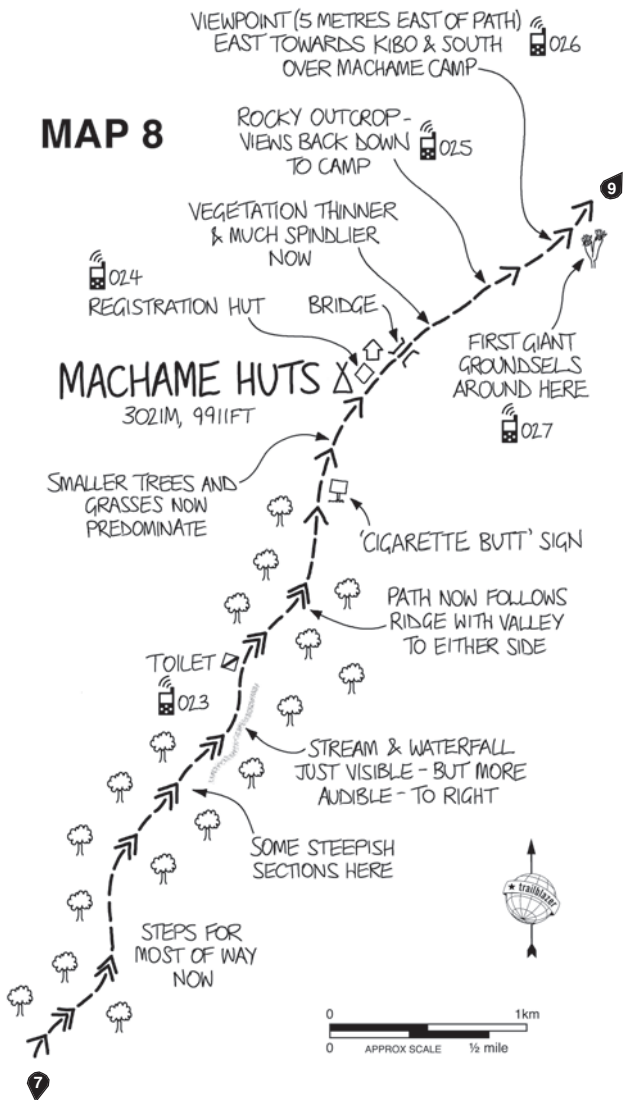
What you can't see from Kibo Huts, and yet what is rather good about this path, is that there are a number of landmarks on the way – the main ones being William's Point at 5131m (16,834ft) and Hans Meyer Cave at 5259m (17,254ft) – that act as milestones, helping both to break up the journey and to provide you with some measure of your progress. **William's Point** – or rather, the large east-facing rock immediately beneath it – lies 1¾ hours from Kibo Huts and is usually the first major resting point. **Hans Meyer Cave**, a small and undistinguished hollow adorned with a plaque commemorating the Hungarian hunter, Count and *bon viveur* Samuel Teleki, who is believed to have rested here in 1887, is 30 minutes further on.

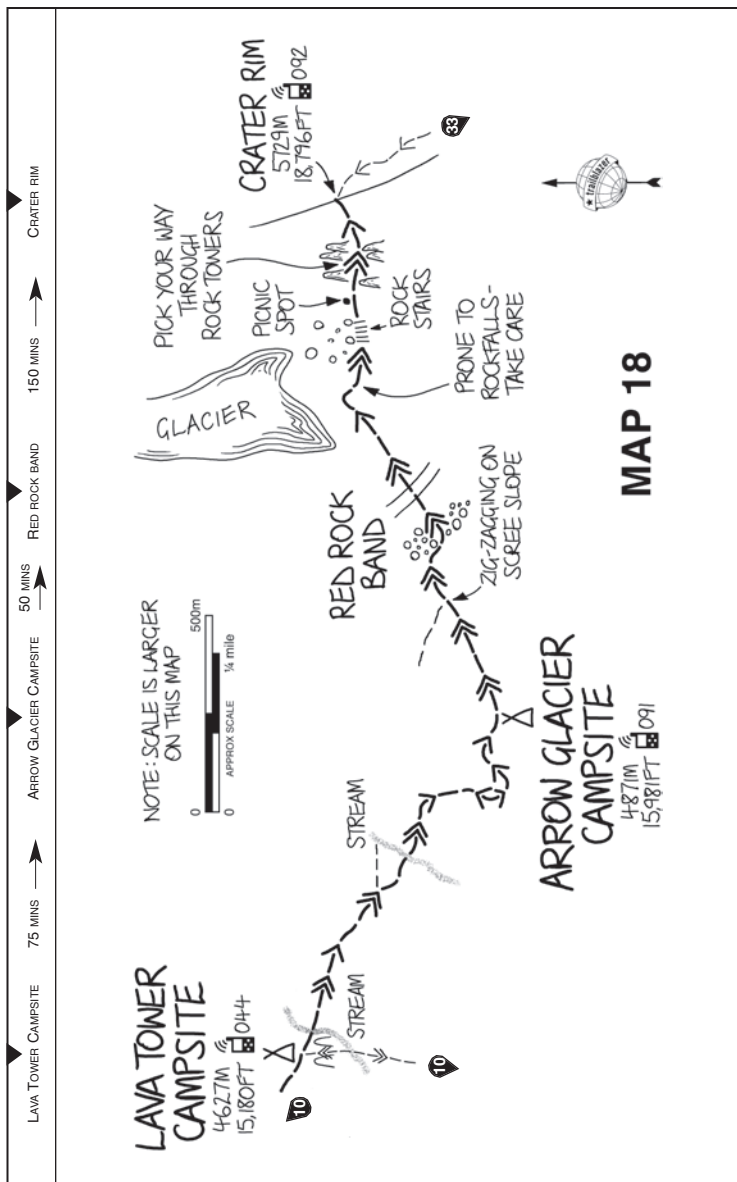
From Hans Meyer Cave, it's a case of following the scree **switchbacks**; if you've mastered the art of walking in a zombie-like trance, now is the time to put that particular technique into action.



Kibo Huts Route

MAP 8





the west of Barranco Campsite to the signposted junction at the head of the Barranco Valley and is still marked on most maps though it's a rare guide – indeed, anyone – who'll follow it these days.)

The only problem with this new route is that, as mentioned, it *is* a short-cut, and one moreover used by porters to *descend* from the mountain. As such, as an ascent route many people find it entirely too short and will have succumbed to the pain of altitude sickness by the stage's end. We therefore recommend you take this into consideration and, as discussed several times already, maybe factor two nights at Barranco into your itinerary, with the rest day spent sauntering up to the head of the valley to help you get used to the rarified atmosphere.

The stage begins with a walk up the Barranco Valley. Come here later in the day and you'll find yourself hiking against a tide of trekkers on the Machame, Lemosho and Shira routes all coming the other way down the same path. But assuming you've started walking in the morning it will probably be just you and your crew, allowing you to enjoy undisturbed views of Kibo through the stands of **groundsels**. About 25 minutes after setting off you leave the main path by a **waterfall** as you continue north, eventually crossing the **stream** you've been following since the day's beginning (and, indeed, as further down it turns into the Umbwe River, since the start of the whole trek). Recrossing it further upstream, you'll find yourself on a slightly gentler trail which continues straight ahead over two streams and on, steeply, up to **Lava Tower**. The entire walking, without breaks, would have taken you just 3¼ hours and you'll probably be at Lava Tower by lunch, allowing you plenty of time to savour this grim campsite's uniquely chilly, godforsaken 'charm'.

For details of the rest of the walk from Lava Tower to the summit, see p340.

The descent routes

MARANGU ROUTE

Stage 1: Uhuru Peak to Gillman's Point to the Horombo Huts

[Map 33, p384; Map 6, p303; Map 5, p301; Map 4, p300]

Distance: 15.75km (9¾ miles); (16.55km – 10¼ miles – for Mawenzi alternative); **altitude lost:** 2174m (7133ft)

Few people remain at the summit for long: weariness, the risk of hypothermia and the thought of a steaming mug of Milo at the Kibo Huts are enough to send most people scurrying back down. There are **two main ways** of doing this: the **first** is to follow exactly the course from Gillman's to Kibo that you took getting up here, carefully retracing every zig and zag like somebody who has dropped a contact lens on the way up but can't quite remember when or where. It is precisely those people who are in greatest need of getting down fast who usually use this slower method to descend.

The **second way** is to cut straight through the switchbacks and simply head

What's at the top?

The crater of Kilimanjaro is a primeval place and decidedly uncomfortable, yet I was drawn to it. The idea of spending some days and nights awoke a compelling mixture of reverential fear and wonder; similar, I suspect, to the compulsion which draws some people unquestioningly to church. And like churches, the crater also invites contemplation of the eternal mysteries.

John Reader Kilimanjaro (1982)

It's only when you reach the top of Kibo that you realise the mountain really is a volcano and all you have done is climb onto the crater rim.

The rim itself is largely featureless, though as the highest point on the mountain it has assumed a pre-eminent role and is the focus of all trekkers. Many of the bumps and tumescences on it have been dignified with the word 'Spitze' or 'Point' as if they were major summits in their own right. Heading clockwise around the rim from **Gillman's**, these features in order are: **Bismark Towers**, **Stella Point** (the aim of those climbing from Barafu), **Elveda** and **Hans Meyer points** and **Uhuru Peak**; while just to the north of Gillman's is **Johannes Notch**, **Leopard Point** and **Hans Meyer Notch**. The distance between Gillman's and Uhuru is a little over 2km, with the crater rim rising 176m (577ft) between the two. The floor of the crater, covered in brown shale and rocks and boulders of all shapes and sizes, lies between 25m/82ft (at Gillman's) and 200m/656ft (at Uhuru Peak) beneath this rim.

Trudging around the rim to Uhuru is achievement enough. There are, however, plenty of other diversions to keep you on the summit for longer ...

WALKING ON THE SUMMIT

[Map 33, p384]

For most people the conquest of Uhuru Peak and a nice certificate that says as much is reason enough to climb Kilimanjaro. Some trekkers, however, always want to do just that little bit more and if you still have some energy to burn once you've reached the summit you may care to take a quick tour around the crater itself. **Warn your guide in advance** of your intentions – preferably before you've even started your trek – as some react badly to the idea of spending any longer on the summit than is absolutely necessary; a little gentle cajoling along with a few hints about the size of the tip that awaits them at the end



Map 30	131	37M 319091 9654859	Junction with path to Karanga Valley on one side and a porters' path on the other
Map 30	132	37M 319086 9654264	Emergency route from Karanga Valley
Map 31	133	37M 319144 9653675	Rescue Hut (aka Millennium Hut)
Map 31	134	37M 318558 9650985	Mweka Huts
Map 31	135	37M 317765 9649028	Bridge
Map 32	136	37M 317256 9647528	Second bridge
Map 32	137	37M 316526 9645691	Start of 4x4 road
Map 32	138	37M 315727 9644014	Mweka Gate

APPENDIX D – AMS ARTICLES

See p260-9 for AMS information. The first article here was sent in by Gerald (Joe) Power, Director of Cardiac Anaesthesia at Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane, Australia. It is a more scientific – and accurate – summary of altitude sickness, its causes and treatments, and we are very grateful to him for taking the time to write and send this in to us; nice one Joe!

Altitude sickness occurs as a result of there being less oxygen in the air you breathe as you ascend through the atmosphere. Although the percentage of oxygen stays the same, the amount of oxygen, best represented by the pressure it exerts, decreases. At sea level, the atmosphere exerts a pressure of 760 millimetres of Mercury (mmHg) or 101 kilopascals (kPa). Oxygen represents 21% of this total and correspondingly exerts a 'partial pressure' of 152mmHg or 21kPa.

The importance of this pressure can be illustrated by the example of a river – water flowing from a high to a low point under the influence of gravity. The greater the difference in height between these two points will influence how rapidly the water flows. Likewise oxygen has to diffuse (flow) from the lungs, into the blood and then into the tissues. This process is influenced by many factors, the most important being the pressure of the oxygen in the air you breathe into your lungs. Human life has evolved to survive comfortably when that pressure is close to 21kPa.

As one ascends higher in the atmosphere, this pressure decreases and consequently the rate at which the oxygen is able to diffuse from the lungs into the tissues decreases. This, however, is not met with a decreased requirement of oxygen in the tissues.

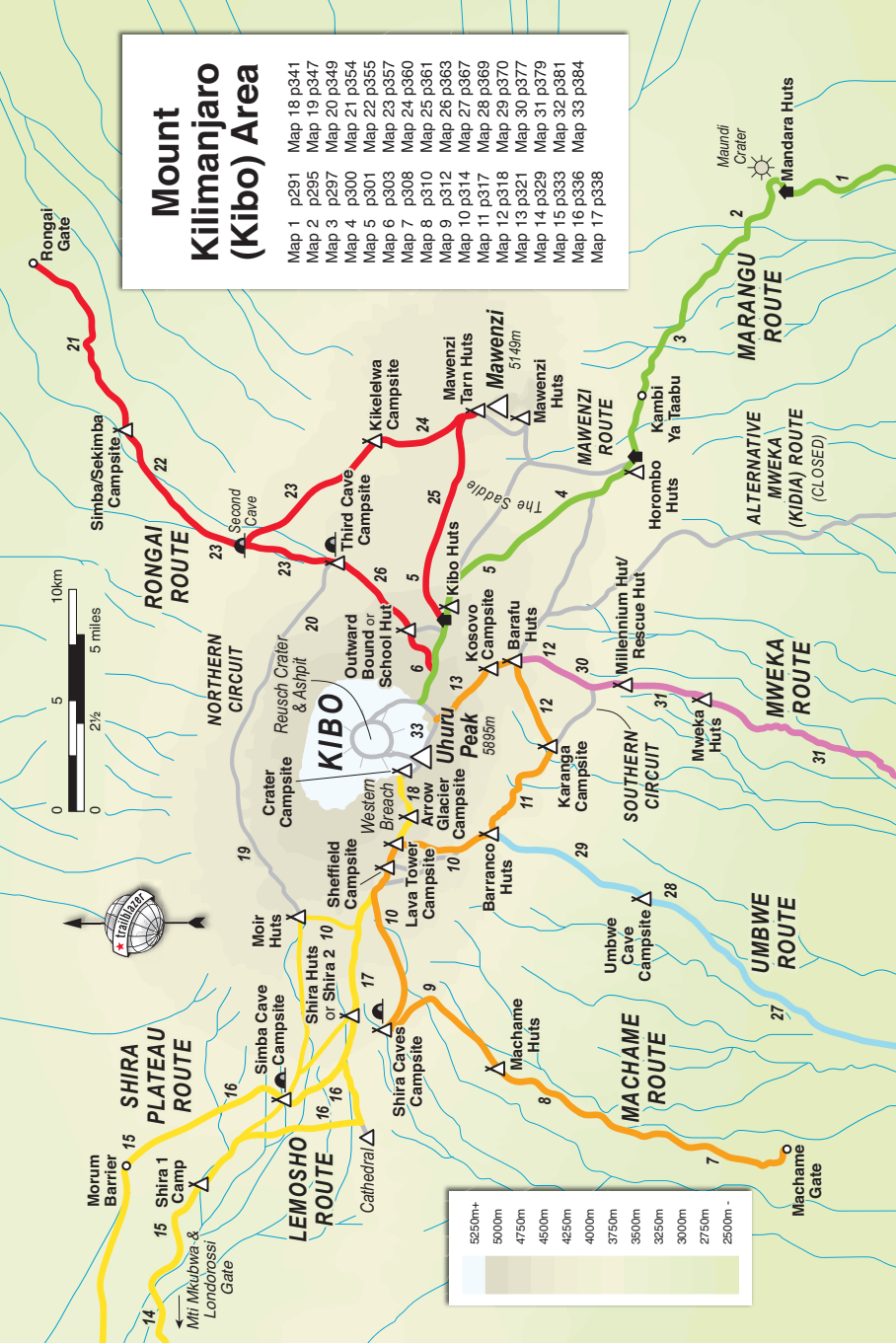
At the summit of Kilimanjaro, the atmospheric pressure is approximately 349mmHg or 48kPa. This is roughly half the pressure at sea level. The partial pressure of oxygen is 9.2kPa, which represents a significant reduction from that at sea level. If a person were to be exposed to this pressure with no acclimatisation (for example if you flew to the summit of Kilimanjaro in a helicopter), loss of consciousness would most likely be the result.

Altitude sickness comes as a result of the abnormal response of the human body to the oxygen starvation that occurs with altitude. The response of the brain to low oxygen supply is to dilate the arteries supplying blood to it. This results in an increase in the pressure in the brain and if the normal regulation breaks down, swelling (oedema) of the brain occurs and if severe, this can cause death.

The lungs have a normal physiological response to decreased levels of oxygen in the air, whereby the small arteries constrict and decrease the blood supply to an area of the lung. Under normal circumstances, this reflex is essential to allow the correct matching of blood supply and ventilation in the lungs. At altitude, this response can become unregulated and will result in fluid filling the air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs.

Mount Kilimanjaro (Kibo) Area

Map 1	p291	Map 18	p341
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Map 3	p297	Map 20	p349
Map 4	p300	Map 21	p354
Map 5	p301	Map 22	p355
Map 6	p303	Map 23	p357
Map 7	p308	Map 24	p360
Map 8	p310	Map 25	p361
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Map 16	p338	Map 33	p384
Map 17	p336		





5
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