

# AFRICA'S

# CROWN

For some it's a sacred peak, for others its summit is an exigent obstacle en route to a more

meaningful life. For east Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro is a symbol of its natural wonder



I'm a firm believer in ending things on a high note. Even death should be approached with an optimistic attitude. When it comes to that point where your life is flashing before your eyes make sure it's during or after accomplishing something worthwhile, like a date with your Hollywood idol or, more realistically, a strenuous hike up a gargantuan mountain such as Kilimanjaro.

This impressive natural landmark and the world's tallest, free-standing, dormant volcano was the inspiration for Ernest Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, in which a bitter

author dies before ever writing about the astonishing moments in his life.

Kilimanjaro is not only grand in presence but also in its indelible spirit. For generations, the people of east Africa flocked to the giant stack to talk to God. Assuming the vast piece of land was heaven on earth, they believed God lived on the peak and so visited "Kili", as it's known, when in need of greater help.

This ancient example of one of nature's masterpieces was formed 750,000 years ago, by not one but three inactive volcanoes – Kibo (19,342ft), Mawenzi (16,894ft) and Shira (12,999ft). In spite of the lava-propelling past and its

location three degrees south of the equator in Tanzania near to the border of Kenya, an ice cap covers the crater of Kibo. However, due to climate change over the years caused by global warming, the snowcap is starting to melt. Scientists claim it has shrunk by a staggering 80 per cent since the beginning of the 20th century and believe that it may completely disappear by 2015.

Nevertheless, Kilimanjaro looms majestic and proud over Africa, standing as a powerful motif for Tanzania's surprising extremes. The mountain's name alone brings an element of mystery to one of the continent's largest countries. While some refer to it as the

A brave group battle through the tough terrain to reach the summit

"KILIMANJARO IS NOT ONLY GRAND IN PRESENCE BUT ALSO IN SPIRIT"



Mountain of Light, Mountain of Greatness, Crown of Africa, Roof of Africa or more bizarrely, the Mountain of Caravans, many perceive its title as ambiguous as its peaks are wreathed with clouds. Others simply view Kilimanjaro – regardless of names – as a metaphor for the undeniable beauty of east Africa.

With a fascinating landscape and iconic views, it's no surprise that thousands of intrepid adventurers attempt the awe-inspiring climb. Although it remains a substantial feat of human endurance, it's still considered one of the easiest mountains to scale, with the age of hikers ranging from 13 to 80 years old! Hans Meyer made

history when he became the first European to successfully ascend the highest point of the mammoth rock face in 1889.

However, enthusiasts don't have to trek as high as Hans. There are several different routes for people to follow, each with varied endurance requirements. The Marangu trail, referred to as the "Coca-Cola" route, is by far the easiest. During the five-day trek, climbers stay in three purpose-built camps. The Mauau path is more challenging. Although it meets up with the Marangu's highest camp, there are no facilities available for the first two days, meaning you sleep rough under canvas. While some prefer

Elephants inhabit the lower levels of the mountain hike

“THIS ANCIENT EXAMPLE OF ONE OF NATURE’S MASTERPIECES WAS FORMED 750,000 YEARS AGO”



## ORYX HOT PICKS

### KILIMANJARO KEMPINSKI

#### HOTEL DAR ES SALAAM

TEL: +255 22 213 1111

[www.kempinski-daressalaam.com](http://www.kempinski-daressalaam.com)

Since the 1960s, this distinguished hotel has fast become a landmark in Tanzania's capital of Dar Es Salaam. Having played host to a legion of famous faces including Michael Jackson and the inspiring world leader Nelson Mandela you're guaranteed to be in good hands. Fusing Dar Es Salaam's past with a modern flavour of European hospitality, the hotel and its spa offers an insight into the fascinating country without losing Kempinski's chic signature style. Rates from US\$174.



### KILIMANJARO MOUNTAIN RESORT

TEL: +255 27 275 8950

[www.kilimanjaromtresort.com](http://www.kilimanjaromtresort.com)

Tucked away in the coffee plantations of Kyalla village, near the gates to the Kilimanjaro National Park, this luxurious boutique hotel is in an ideal location for those wanting to summit Africa's tallest point. Embracing the scenic country life, each of the 25 colonial inspired rooms are decked out with heavy wood features and surrounded by nature. Most of the large rooms boast awe-inspiring views of the mountain. For those seeking to avoid the summit, you can explore nearby waterfalls or learn about tribe culture. Rates from US\$50.

### MOEVENPICK ROYAL PALM HOTEL

TEL: +255 22 2112416

[www.moevenpick-hotels.com/hotels/dar\\_es\\_salaam](http://www.moevenpick-hotels.com/hotels/dar_es_salaam)

A landmark hotel, the luxurious Moevenpick Royal Palm Hotel has, since its opening in 1995, been the first choice for celebrities and Head-of-States. Ideally located in the heart of the Dar es Salaam business district, its proximity to the airport also makes it the perfect place for guests to refresh before taking a Precision Air flight the following morning to Kilimanjaro Airport. Rates from US\$235.

this back-to-nature experience, others struggle with the lack of home comforts. Bear in mind that trekkers are not permitted to climb Kilimanjaro independently.

Scaling Kili will take you through five distinct zones. The lowest levels are cultivated farmlands, which can be accomplished with merely a walking cane and normal clothes. Next up is the rainforest whose damp grounds create a striking mass of plant life and idyllic winding rivers. The third level is an expansive 3,200m of moorland and heath. It's here that you'll break through the cloud line and find yourself surrounded by sky. Most of the vegetation dies off

beyond 5,000m after which the desert landscape and harsh rock face is prominent. Those capable of saddling the summit will be confronted by a thin blanket of snow and ice.

Unlike most expeditions, the climb up Mount Kilimanjaro is exhilarating as well as entertaining, with its lower levels offering 360 degree views of African wildlife, including elephants, rhinos and monkeys as well as elusive leopards – if these speeding creatures don't make you climb faster, nothing will.

Although completing the dramatic walk to the top of Africa's so-called "roof" is considered an incredible

The views from the top are nothing short of awe-inspiring

**"KILIMANJARO IS ONE OF THE EASIEST MOUNTAINS TO SCALE. HIKERS RANGE FROM 13 TO 80 YEARS OLD!"**



## TOP ADVENTURE TIPS

Adrian Hayes is an accomplished adventurer who has climbed Mt Everest, walked to the North Pole, and will shortly attempt to walk 1,130km across Antarctica to the South Pole. If successful, he will become the second Briton and, in a period of 19 months, the fastest person in history to achieve the three pinnacles. Here he gives Oryx his top tips on scaling mountains.

### How should one train before a summit?

Practice what you're going to be doing. Running, swimming and step machines are all well and good, but the only thing your muscles will thank you for when you're painfully trekking up that mountain is how much you've prepared them for tackling hills.

### How do you prepare before an expedition?

It depends on the severity of the climb. For the serious ones, I go ballistic for six months prior – long hikes in the mountains with a backpack full of rocks, and then a whole range of cycling, running, triathlons, stair climbing, adventure racing, rock climbing and weights to get the whole body super fit.

### What's the hardest part of mountain climbing?

For high mountains, the lack of oxygen can be very hard and totally exhausting.

### How do you keep motivated?

If you love where you are and you're clear why your doing it, you rise above the pain and enjoy the whole experience.

### How should you pace yourself?

Start as slow as possible and pace yourself. Rushing will only lead to Acute Mountain Sickness a day or two later.

### What's your advice for those that do reach the top?

Savour it, no matter how bad you're feeling. You're experiencing a place and a view that relatively few people in the world have experienced. Enjoy every minute!

### What advice would you give to those wanting to quit?

If it's due to altitude sickness, then being sensible could save your life – you can always try again. If you're just feeling bad but not severe enough to descend, then remind yourself it'll end soon.

For more information log on to [www.adrianhayes.com](http://www.adrianhayes.com)

accomplishment, there is much more to Kilimanjaro than its summit. When it comes to safaris, Tanzania knocks the socks off its local competitors. Boasting some of the world's largest game reserves, the best tours are found at Serengeti National Park, Kilimanjaro National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater, where, aside from the chance to witness the big five (lion, elephant, leopard, rhino and cape buffalo), a haven of fluorescent pink flamingos can be spotted in tranquil waters.

The incredible Serengeti Park is now a Unesco heritage site. Originally vast, open plains where Maasai tribes grazed their livestock, the site now includes the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Maasai Game Reserve. Covering 14 per cent of Tanzania's land area, its mission is to protect some of Africa's greatest and most varied collection of wildlife. Surreal safaris afford you the opportunity to shake hands with monkeys, track tiger prints and snap Kodak moment shots.

Predictably the Kilimanjaro National Park centres around the mountain. However, for a break from the history, tribes and game attractions, take a short flight or ferry ride to the nearby islands of Zanzibar, whose tropical sands and laid-back tourist attractions, from forests to cocktail bars, are ideal for recharging the batteries after an adrenaline-filled trip up Mount Kilimanjaro.

Whatever you choose to do in Kilimanjaro and Tanzania, you can guarantee that you'll take away memories that will last a lifetime. So unlike the character in Hemingway's novel, document your trip and do all you can to seal what are bound to be some of the best moments in your life. ■

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Qatar Airways has daily flights to Dar Es Salaam.  
For details, visit [www.qatarairways.com](http://www.qatarairways.com)