

Kilimanjaro Via Machame Route



About Machame Route

The Machame Route is known as the “Whiskey Route” in comparison to Marangu’s “Coca Cola Route”. This is because Machame is a more difficult route, and does not have sleeping huts for accommodation. Machame is the second most popular route on the mountain.

The trek begins in the south-west area of the mountain at Machame Gate. The route takes six days minimum to complete, although seven days is recommended. The descent is down Mweka, on the south-east side of the mountain. Because of the ascent in the west and descent down the north, Machame offers great vistas of Kilimanjaro. Additionally, Machame visits stunning places such as Shira Plateau, Barranco, and Lava Tower.

Machame is ideal for those who want a more difficult climb, and are confident in their ability to hike over extended periods of time on sometimes steep terrain. Climbers using Machame place a premium of varied scenery, but also accept heavy traffic.

7 Day Machame Itinerary

DAY 1

Machame Gate to Machame Camp

Elevation: 5,380 ft to 9,350 ft

Distance: 11 km

Hiking Time: 5-7 hours

Habitat: Rain Forest

The drive from Moshi to the Machame Gate takes about 50 minutes. The journey passes through the village of Machame which is located on the lower slopes of the mountain. As we leave the park gate, we walk through the dense rain forest on a winding trail up a ridge until we reach the Machame Camp.

DAY 2

Machame Camp to Shira 2 Camp

Elevation: 9,350 ft to 12,500 ft

Distance: 5 km

Hiking Time: 4-6 hours

Habitat: Heath

We leave the glades of the rain forest and continue on an ascending path up to a steep, rocky ridge. On the Shira Plateau, we pass through heather and open moorlands, then cross a large river gorge to Shira 2 Camp.

DAY 3

Shira 2 Camp to Lava Tower

Elevation: 12,500 ft to 15,190 ft

Distance: 7 km

Hiking Time: 4-5 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

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Lava Tower to Barranco Camp

Elevation: 15,190 ft to 13,044 ft

Distance: 3 km

Hiking Time: 2-3 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

We continue to the east up a ridge and then head southeast towards the Lava Tower – a 300 ft tall volcanic rock formation. We descend down to Barranco Camp through the strange but beautiful Senecio Forest to an altitude of 13,000 ft. Although you begin and end the day at the same elevation, the time spent at higher altitude is very beneficial for acclimatization.

DAY 4

Barranco Camp to Karanga Camp

Elevation: 13,044 ft to 13,106 ft

Distance: 5 km

Hiking Time: 4-5 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

We begin the day by descending into a ravine to the base of the Great Barranco Wall. Then we climb the non-technical but steep, nearly 900 ft cliff. From the top of the Barranco Wall we cross a series of hills and valleys until we descend sharply into Karanga Valley. One more steep climb up leads us to Karanga Camp. This is a shorter day meant for acclimatization.

DAY 5

Karanga Camp to Barafu Camp

Elevation: 13,106 ft to 15,331 ft

Distance: 4 km

Hiking Time: 4-5 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

We leave Karanga and hit the junction which connects with the Mweka Trail. We continue up to the rocky section to Barafu Hut. At this point, you have completed the Southern Circuit, which offers views of the summit from many different angles. Here we make camp, rest and enjoy an early dinner to prepare for the summit day. The two peaks of Mawenzi and Kibo are viewable from this position.

DAY 6

Barafu Camp to Uhuru Peak

Elevation: 15,331 ft to 19,341 ft

Distance: 5 km

Hiking Time: 7-8 hours

Habitat: Arctic

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Uhuru Peak to Mweka Camp

Elevation: 19,341 ft to 10,065 ft

Distance: 12 km

Hiking Time: 4-6 hours

Habitat: Rain Forest

Very early in the morning (around midnight), we begin our push to the summit. This is the most mentally and physically challenging portion of the trek. The wind and cold at this elevation and time of day can be extreme. We ascend in the darkness for several hours while taking frequent, but short, breaks. Near Stella Point (18,900 ft), you will be rewarded with the most magnificent sunrise you are ever likely to

see coming over Mawenzi Peak. Finally, we arrive at Uhuru Peak- the highest point on Mount Kilimanjaro and the continent of Africa.

From the summit, we now make our descent continuing straight down to the Mweka Hut camp site, stopping at Barafu for lunch. The trail is very rocky and can be quite hard on the knees; trekking poles are helpful. Mweka Camp is situated in the upper forest and mist or rain can be expected in the late afternoon. Later in the evening, we enjoy our last dinner on the mountain and a well-earned sleep.

DAY 7

Mweka Camp to Mweka Gate

Elevation: 10,065 ft to 5,380 ft

Distance: 10 km

Hiking Time: 3-4 hours

Habitat: Rain Forest

On our last day, we continue the descent to Mweka Gate and collect the summit certificates. At lower elevations, it can be wet and muddy. From the gate, we continue another hour to Mweka Village. A vehicle will meet us at Mweka Village to drive us back to the hotel in Moshi/Arusha.

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