

Kilimanjaro via Rongai Route



About Rongai Route

The Rongai Route is the only route that approaches Kilimanjaro from the north, near the Kenyan border.

Rongai's ascent profile is very similar to that of Marangu. It is one of Kilimanjaro's easier routes. The climb to the top is gradual and steady. However, unlike Marangu, this route has low crowds and passes through remote wilderness areas. It is probably the only route where seeing wildlife in the first days is possible.

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 the starting point is far from Moshi, it is more expensive to climb this route due to the added transportation cost of getting climbers to the gate.

Scenically, Rongai is beautiful because it travels through an unspoiled rain forest and remote wilderness area. However, it is not as scenically varied as Machame, Lemosho and Shira.

Rongai is ideal for those who are not confident in their ability to hike over steeper paths, those who want to avoid traffic, and those who want to enjoy a quieter hike. It is also preferred when climbing during the rainy season because the north side of the mountain receives less precipitation.

7 Day Rongai Itinerary

DAY 1

Rongai Gate to Rongai Cave

Elevation: 6,398 ft to 9,300 ft

Distance: 8 km

Hiking Time: 3-4 hours

Habitat: Rain Forest

We drive from Moshi to Marangu Gate for permits before taking a short transfer to the Rongai Gate trailhead. The path winds through corn and potato fields and then climbs gently through the forest which is home to a variety of wildlife, including the black and white colobus monkey.

DAY 2

Rongai Cave to to Second Cave

Elevation: 9,300 ft to 11,300 ft

Distance: 6 km

Hiking Time: 3-4 hours

Habitat: Heath

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Second Cave to Kikelewa Cave

Elevation: 11,300 ft to 11,811 ft

Distance: 6 km

Hiking Time: 3-4 hours

Habitat: Heath

We begin this morning with a steady incline up to Second Cave. We continue trekking through moorland, leaving the main trail for a smaller path towards the jagged peaks of Mawenzi, before finally arriving at Kikelewa Cave for the night.

DAY 3

Kikelewa Cave to Mawenzi Tarn

Elevation: 11,811 ft to 14,160 ft

Distance: 5 km

Hiking Time: 3-4 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

The hike today is short and steep up a grassy slope. Views of the wilderness area are stunning. As we exit the heath zone and emerge into the Alpine Desert zone, the landscape changes dramatically. Our camp is situated beneath the jagged spires of Mawenzi, at Mawenzi Tarn. The remainder of the day can be spent relaxing or exploring the area.

DAY 4

Mawenzi Tarn to Mawenzi Ridge

Elevation (ft): 14,160 ft -14,400 ft

Distance: 2 km

Hiking Time: 1-2 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

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Mawenzi Ridge to Mawenzi Tarn

Elevation (ft): 14,400 ft -14,160 ft

Distance: 2 km

Hiking Time: 1-2 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

This is an extra day meant for acclimatization and can be spent day hiking on Mawenzi Ridge. The unique landscape offers motivating views of Kibo and Mawenzi. After spending a few moments exploring the area we head back to Mawenzi Tarn for camp.

DAY 5

Marwenzi Tarn to Kibo Hut

Elevation (ft): 14,160 ft to 15,430 ft

Distance: 8 km

Hiking Time: 5-6 hours

Habitat: Alpine Desert

We climb gradually, then cross the lunar desert of the “Saddle” between Mawenzi and Kibo. Our camp, Kibo Hut, sits at the bottom of the Kibo crater wall. Once here we rest, enjoy an early dinner to prepare for the summit day.

DAY 6

Kibo Hut to Uhuru Peak

Elevation (ft): 15,430 ft to 19,341 ft

Distance: 6 km

Hiking Time: 6-8 hours

Habitat: Arctic

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Uhuru Peak to Horombo Hut

Elevation (ft): 19,341 ft to 12,250 ft

Distance: 16 km

Hiking Time: 4-5 hours

Habitat: Heath

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. At Gilman's point (18,600 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.

After spending a few moments taking in the plains of Africa and your accomplishment, we descend to Horombo Hut. Later in the evening, we enjoy our last dinner on the mountain and a well-earned sleep.

DAY 7

Horombo Hut to Marangu Gate

Elevation (ft): 12,205 ft to 6,046 ft

Distance: 20 km

Hiking Time: 5-7 hours

Habitat: Rain Forest

On our last day, we have a long trek mostly downhill through the tropical rainforest. Once at the park headquarters at Marangu gate, we collect our summit certificates. A vehicle will meet us here and drive us back to the hotel in Moshi/Arusha.

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