

Kilimanjaro Via Umbwe Route



About Umbwe Route

The Umbwe Route is the least used, least crowded route on the mountain. For good reason, it is also the most difficult route on the mountain. Umbwe is a steep, constant, straight climb to the top.

Below is a map of the Umbwe route on Kilimanjaro.

Umbwe is mostly avoided because the ascent profile does not give climbers much time to adjust to the altitude. The success rate is very low.

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. Umbwe is not as scenically varied as Machame, Lemosho and Shira, because the path up and down are nearby.

The Umbwe is ideal for those who want a challenging climb, and are very confident in their ability trek over consistently steep slopes. Also, Umbwe is for those who are experienced at altitude and thus are confident that the punishing schedule of Umbwe will not impede their ability to adjust to altitude.

Umbwe is also for those who want a secluded hike.

6 Day Umbwe Itinerary

DAY 1

Umbwe Gate to Umbwe Camp

Elevation: 5,249 ft to 9,514 ft

Distance: 11 km

Hiking Time: 5-7 hours

Habitat: Heath

The day begins with a 50 minute drive to Machame Gate where registration formalities will be completed. We then transfer through villages and coffee and banana plantations to Umbwe Gate. The trail ascends sharply on a forestry track which winds up the dense rain forest. The path narrows and steepens as we climb the ridge between two rivers surrounded by huge trees. Umbwe Camp is perched between trees and thick undergrowth.

DAY 2

Umbwe Camp to Barranco Camp

Elevation: 9,514 ft to 13,044 ft

Distance: 6 km

Hiking Time: 4-5 hours

Habitat: Heath

The second day of the trek follows rockier terrain with sparse undergrowth and straggly, moss-covered trees. As we gain elevation, glimpses of Kilimanjaro can be seen. The path flattens as we approach Barranco Valley. From Umbwe ridge, the route descends to Barranco Camp through the strange but beautiful Senecio Forest.

DAY 3

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 4

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 5

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 6

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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