Every year about 40,000 people attempt to climb Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. They bring with them lots of waste. The crowds might damage the beauty of the place. The glaciers（冰川）are disappearing, changing the face of Kilimanjaro.

Hearing these stories, I’m skeptical about the place — other destinations are described as ＂purer＂ natural experiences.

However, I soon discover that much has changed since the days of disturbing reports of camps among tons of rubbish. I find a clean mountain, with toilets at camps and along the paths. The environmental challenges are significant but the efforts made by the Tanzania National Park Authority seem to be paying off.

The best of a Kilimanjaro experience, in my opinion, isn’t reaching the top. Mountains are regarded as spiritual places by many cultures. This view is especially evident on Kilimanjaro as climbers go through five ecosystems（生态系统）in the space of a few kilometers. At the base is a rain forest. It ends abruptly at 3, 000 meters, giving way to lands of low growing plants. Further up, the weather changes low clouds envelope the mountainsides, which are covered with thick grass. I count twelve shades of green from where I stand. Above 4, 000 meters is the highland desert : gravel（砾石）, stones and rocks. Finally you climb into an arctic-like zone with permanent snow and the glaciers that may soon disappear.

Does Kilimanjaro deserve its reputation as a crowded mountain with lines of tourists ruining the atmosphere of peace? I found the opposite to be true.