

## What is the Weather on Kilimanjaro?

The short answer is that the temperatures on Mount Kilimanjaro range from hot to bitter cold. Climbing Kilimanjaro is unique for many reasons, and one of these is that from origin to summit, climbers find themselves weaving through several distinct climate zones. It is said that the journey from the gate to the peak is like traveling from the equator to Antarctica in a matter of days! Mount Kilimanjaro has five major ecological zones, each approximately 3,280 feet (1,000 m) in altitude. Each zone is subject to a corresponding decrease in rainfall, temperature and flora/fauna as the altitude increases.

Moshi, the gateway town from which our climbs are organized, is located just south of the base of Mount Kilimanjaro. At 2,667 feet (900 m) above sea level, the town is located in the lowest, warmest ecological zone. Average temperature, humidity and precipitation figures for Moshi.

Average Temperature, Humidity and Precipitation in Moshi, Tanzania					
Month	Low (F)	Average (F)	High (F)	Humidity (%)	Rainfall (in)
January	64	78	92	58	1.4
February	64	78	92	57	2.0
March	66	78	90	63	4.7
April	67	76	85	73	13.8
May	65	72	79	77	9.3
June	62	70	78	72	1.5
July	60	69	78	69	1.0
August	60	70	80	66	0.7
September	60	71	83	61	0.6
October	62	75	88	57	1.0
November	64	76	89	57	2.5
December	64	77	90	60	2.1

As shown, January and February are the warmest months, April and May are the wettest months, June and July are the coolest months, and August and September are the driest months. These generalities about the weather in Moshi hold true for Mount Kilimanjaro as well.

Due to its proximity to the equator, Mount Kilimanjaro does not experience wide temperature changes from season to season. Instead, the temperatures on Mount Kilimanjaro are determined more so by the altitude and time of day. At the beginning of the climb, at the base of the mountain, the average temperature is around 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (21 to 27 degrees Celsius). From there, the temperatures will decrease as you move through Mount Kilimanjaro's ecological zones.

At the summit, Uhuru Point, the night time temperatures can range between 20 and -20

degrees Fahrenheit (-7 to -29 degrees Celsius). Due to Mount Kilimanjaro's great height, the mountain creates its own weather. It is extremely variable and impossible to predict. Therefore, regardless of when you climb, you should always be prepared for wet days and cold nights.

## Kilimanjaro's Five Ecological Zones

Below are Mount Kilimanjaro's zones from the lowest to the highest altitude along with the average annual precipitation, zone characteristics, and links/feeds to the current weather in each particular zone.

### Bushland/Cultivated Zone

**Altitude: 2,600 to 6,000 ft (800 to 1,800 m)**

**Precipitation: 20 to 70 in (500 to 1,800 mm)**

The lowest elevation climate zone is the bushland, resting a half mile or more above sea level. Cultivated land, grasslands and populated human settlements characterize this zone.

Natural bush, plains, and lowland forests once covered the region. However, because this area is rich with fertile volcanic soil, it makes an ideal land for agriculture. The Chaga people settled on these lower slopes to farm a variety of crops, such as highly prized coffee and tropical fruits. The grounds are irrigated by underground channels tunneling through the earth from the lush rainforest nestled above.

Many of the local mountain guides hail from the nearby villages. Large wild animals are rarely seen here, having been eliminated by farmers generations ago. However, small nocturnal mammals such as galagos and tree hyrax still thrive. Birds, such as speckled mousebirds and tropical boubou, are also are plentiful.

### HRain Forest Zone

**Altitude: 6,000 to 9,200 ft (1,800 to 2,800 m)**

**Precipitation: 79 to 40 in (2,000 to 1,000 mm)**

The rain forest is drenched by six to seven feet of rain per year and bursts with biodiversity. During the day, warm temperatures and high humidity characterize this densely forested climate zone. However, rainy nights can produce surprisingly low temperatures. Climbers definitely want to have their rain gear handy to protect themselves from the constant drizzle.

The rain forest presents the most abundant opportunities for viewing unique types of African flora and fauna. Various species of orchids, ferns, sycamore figs, olive trees, and palms dripping with hanging mosses are found here. Camphorwood trees reach as high as 130 feet through the canopy grasping for sunlight. Blue and Colobus monkeys gallivant through the trees, loudly beckoning mates, and a vibrant cacophony of sounds emanate from the diverse population of birdlife.

Climbers approaching the summit from the Rongai, Lemosho, Shira or Northern Circuit routes may be lucky enough to spot elephant, buffalo, antelope and an occasional predator drifting through in search of a wayward meal.

### Heath/Moorland Zone

**Altitude: 9,200 to 13,200 ft (2,800 to 4,000 m)**

**Precipitation: 51 to 21 in (1,300 to 530 mm)**

Also known as moorland, this semi-alpine zone is characterized by heath-like vegetation and abundant wild flowers. According to mountain medicine, the heath zone is in the "high altitude" region. The first symptoms of acute mountain sickness may begin to appear in some climbers. Most of our clients wisely choose spend several days at this altitude to gradually acclimatize to the decreasing oxygen and the higher elevations to come.

As we move higher, the humidity and dense forest surroundings begin to give way to drier air and cooler temperatures. The flora thins into smaller shrubs like heather, and the presence of fauna becomes increasingly scarce. The most prominent flora are the unique and iconic Senecios (also known as groundsels) and Giant Lobelias. Kilimanjaro's giant Senecios and Lobelia are endemic to the region. The Senecios, which translates from Latin to "old man," have thick weathered stems topped with large, succulent rosettes. Lobelias resemble oddly-shaped palm trees with rosettes that close in the evenings to guard against the chilly night temperatures.

The most common birds seen in the heath zone are the easily recognizable black and white crows which forage around camp. Sometimes, large birds of prey such as the crowned eagle and lammergeyer soar overhead.

Current weather conditions for Mount Kilimanjaro's heath zone can be found [here](#)

### Alpine Desert Zone

**Altitude: 13,200 to 16,500 ft (4,000 to 5,000 m)**

**Precipitation: 10 in (250 mm)**

The alpine desert receives little water and correspondingly light vegetation exists here. The temperature can reach over 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the day. The thin air and proximity to the equator result in very high levels of solar radiation. Applying liberal amounts of sunscreen an absolute must. During the night, temperatures often plummet to well below freezing, leaving a dusting of morning frost on the tents.

This zone is in the "very high altitude" region of mountain medicine. For ideal acclimatization, climbers should spend a few days here. Our preferred routes encourage clients to "climb high, sleep low" which will reduce the ill effects of altitude.

This arid zone has thin soil that retains little water, making it inhospitable to most plant and animal species. Everlastings are one of the main plant species that can withstand such harsh conditions, as well as tussock grasses and varieties of moss. A few of the animals that make appearances in the moorland will wander to these elevations, but the occurrences are very rare.

Current weather conditions for Mount Kilimanjaro's alpine desert zone can be found [here](#).

## Arctic Zone

**Altitude: 16,500+ ft (5,000+ m)**

**Precipitation: 4 in (100 mm)**

The final region of the climb up Kilimanjaro is the arctic zone. Finding a region like this in Africa's equatorial belt is like finding a swath of rainforest in the middle of an Arctic glacier. Characterized by ice and rock, there is virtually no plant or animal life at this altitude. Glacial silt covers the slopes that were once concealed by the now receding glaciers visible from Kilimanjaro's crater rim. Nights are extremely cold and windy, and the day's unbuffered sun is powerful.

Mountain medicine classifies this zone as "**extreme altitude**." Oxygen levels are roughly half of what they are at sea level, making breathing slow and labored. It is likely that climbers will experience varying degrees of altitude related symptoms at these elevations. To combat this, we try to avoid spending too much time here. We summit and descend expeditiously before AMS can escalate.

Current weather conditions for Mount Kilimanjaro's arctic zone can be found [here](#).