

Planning and preparation are crucial to the success of a Kilimanjaro climb!

And when I say success, I mean not only your chances to reach the summit. Planning and preparation will determine how much you enjoy, or not, the whole trek, from start to finish. Every issue that I mention here is explained in detail on another page, often several pages, but here you can get a good overview of what it takes to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

Planning a Kilimanjaro Climb

You need to make **three major decisions before you can climb Kilimanjaro:**

You have to decide on a date.

You have to decide on the climb route and length (how many days/nights).

You have to decide on a trekking agency/climb operator.

1. Deciding on a date

The best times to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro are the driest months of the year, especially Jan/Feb and Aug/Sep. But any time between January and mid March or between June and October offers reasonable chances of good weather on Kilimanjaro.

2. Deciding on a climb route and the duration of your Kilimanjaro climb

There are several climb routes up Kilimanjaro. They vary in length and difficulty. All except one require you to camp. If you use the Marangu route your accommodation is in huts and camping is not allowed.

Five days is the absolute minimum duration for a Kilimanjaro trek, six is better. For the popular Machame route six days is the minimum, seven days is recommended.

Taking an extra day for acclimatisation will greatly improve your chances to reach the summit. There are longer treks available for those who can afford them.

3. Selecting your trekking agency/climb operator

Mount Kilimanjaro is protected by the Kilimanjaro National Park. Access is restricted and the steep Kilimanjaro park fees make a Kilimanjaro climb rather expensive.

But before you go hunting for a cheap Kilimanjaro climb, read the page about the true cost of climbing Kilimanjaro.

You can only climb Kilimanjaro with a registered guide/trekking agency. A good climb operator will supply guides, a cook, porters, food, water, and camping equipment if you are camping.

There is no need, indeed no opportunity, for you to worry about the details. You don't need to carry anything but your day pack, you don't need to cook or put up your tent or anything. You just choose your Kilimanjaro tour operator.

Most people book their Mount Kilimanjaro climb from overseas. For the majority of

climbers this is certainly recommended over selecting a climb operator in the last minute when you get there.

The selection of Mt. Kilimanjaro tours to choose from is overwhelming. The quality varies wildly, from irresponsible "cowboy" outfits to luxury climb operators who just about carry you to the top.

What you should be looking for is a quality and responsible operator who also treats their staff well. **Do NOT pinch pennies on Kilimanjaro. Do NOT climb Kilimanjaro with a lower end budget operator.**

How to Prepare for you Kilimanjaro Adventure

You need to do some preparation before you can climb Kilimanjaro:

You need to book your flights.

You need to organise your visa.

You need to get the required vaccinations.

You need to buy or rent the necessary equipment.

You need to get yourself into shape.

4. Booking your flights

If you book your Kilimanjaro trek from overseas then your trekking agency may also organise your Kilimanjaro flight for you. If not, then you have to do that.

The closest airport to Mt. Kilimanjaro is, yep, **Kilimanjaro Airport (JRO)**. Kilimanjaro Airport is situated half way between Arusha and Moshi, and most people land there. Mt. Kilimanjaro itself is closer to Moshi. Many trekking agencies are located there, though you also find a good number in Arusha. (Arusha is also the "safari capital" of Tanzania and the gateway to Ngorongoro, Serengeti, Tarangire etc.)

If you are planning an extended Tanzania trip you may also want to fly to/from one of the other main airports in the area: Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar or even Nairobi.

5. Organising your visa

You need a visa to enter Tanzania and a passport that's valid for at least another 6 months.

If your country of residence does have a Tanzanian embassy, phone them or check their website to find out how to obtain your visa.

If your country does not have a Tanzanian embassy, you can buy a visa upon arrival in Tanzania.

6. Getting your vaccinations

You may need a yellow fever certificate and there are a number of other vaccinations recommended. Some of them need to be started months in advance, so talk to your doctor soon.

Depending on your travel plans you may also want to take anti-malaria medication. Talk to your doctor about it.

What exactly you need ultimately depends on the length of your stay and other places you may want to visit besides Kilimanjaro, e.g. Zanzibar or going on a safari.

7. Organising the necessary equipment

If you booked with a quality operator then quality camping equipment is included in the price.

Many Kilimanjaro tour operators also offer other gear for rent, gear that you may not want to purchase for one time use only or may not want to lug around Tanzania on an extended trip.

Equipment you can often rent includes down sleeping bags, insulation pads and down jackets.

Beyond that you will also need very good quality, thermal under and upper layers of clothing, gloves, warm hat, good sunglasses, sunscreen (for the lips, too!), a day pack, rain protection for everything, water bottles/camel back and more.

Most importantly you need high quality hiking boots and they need to be well broken in!

[Here is a list of essential Kilimanjaro equipment](#) and here are more tips on packing for Kilimanjaro.

8. Getting yourself into shape

Mt. Kilimanjaro is a popular climb because Kili requires no special expertise or mountaineering equipment. In fact, it is not a climb, it's a hike. You can walk all the way to the top.