



Kilimanjaro Preparation & Packing Guide

Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with our recommendations on what to bring with you on your Kilimanjaro trekking adventure in Tanzania.

If you have any questions about this list or have a question about something not listed here, please [contact us](#).

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Weather

There is generally little or no snow or ice in the first few days of the hike—if there is any, it will be mostly near the peak of Kilimanjaro. Since we'll only spend a few hours at the summit, this won't really be an issue at all (no crampons are needed for your boots, for example).

If we do encounter snow during our ascent, it will usually be a foot (.3 m) or less — nothing too challenging as far as hiking goes (although it can get slippery at times).

There are glaciers at the summit, but they are far off the hiking trails, so we do not get very close to them.

The weather gets colder as you go up the mountain, and it is not uncommon to be at, or a bit below, freezing at night — especially during the last few days near the summit. Pack warm clothes, and dress in layers (as it could be cold in the morning when we start, get warmer during the day as the sun is out and we are hiking, then get cold again in the evening).

It may rain at any time during your ascent or descent. Bring a poncho ([one that covers your day pack](#), or a [backpack cover](#)) for rain at the lower elevations, and a waterproof, insulated jacket for higher elevations. Making sure your pants/boots/outer layer are rain repellent or rainproof (recommended) is also a good idea.

What to Wear

What you wear has a huge effect on the overall Kilimanjaro trekking experience, so bringing the right stuff definitely matters.

You'll be traveling through a few distinct climate zones during your hike, from an elevation of about 8,000 ft (2,400m) — which will be tropical forest — all the way up to the summit, which can be cold and icy no matter what time of year you decide to climb.

As the temperature can fluctuate throughout each day as well, it pays to dress in layers. We've found that light Merino wool (such as [Icebreaker](#)), or synthetic blends (such as [Ex Officio](#)), work best as base layers. Cotton absorbs moisture and doesn't tend to dry quickly, making anything 100% cotton a poor choice for the climb.

On top of your base layer, wear a long-sleeve button-up shirt, sweatshirt, or sweater along with pants (jeans are an option, but if they get wet, they'll stay wet, so better to use something that is a synthetic fabric, such as [hiking pants](#)). Your top layer will consist of a jacket or two — a light shell-type jacket for the lower elevations that protects against wind and water, and an insulated winter jacket for the last day or two of the ascent, as it starts to get colder.

You may also opt to wear [long underwear](#) underneath everything, as that does a great job of keeping you insulated and warm. Snow pants are also encouraged as a third layer for the lower half of your body, even if you don't need them until the final ascent day.

[Winter gloves](#) will be necessary for the final day of ascent at a minimum, so be sure and include them in your kit. A [winter hat](#) is important as well, as you lose a lot of body heat through your head.

[Earmuffs](#) and a [balaclava](#) are optional, but in general, we recommend over-packing rather than under-packing when it comes to gear. If you don't need it, great, but at least you have it with you if you do.

Note: You do have the option to rent some of the outerwear (jacket, gloves, snow pants, hiking poles, etc.) from a local gear shop if needed. However, be aware that we cannot guarantee availability in your size, so it's best to bring gear with you.

Footwear

It is absolutely necessary to bring a comfortable pair of hiking boots, and to wear them before the trip to break them in if they are new. To prevent ankle injuries, these boots should be at least mid-length in height and have a rubber sole on them to prevent slippage.

Tennis shoes/sneakers are only acceptable for the lower elevations of the climb (preferably waterproof, in case of rain) — at higher elevations, your feet will be freezing, they'll let moisture in, and won't dry quickly. They also won't protect your foot from rocks and debris. Many guests wear regular shoes for the first few days of the hike, while you are still in the lower elevation areas, and then switch to boots once conditions warrant.

If you tend to be the type that suffers from foot irritation or wants to prevent any unnecessary rubbing due to new footwear, be sure to pack some [anti-blister foot balm](#) or [blister pads](#) (not corn pads).

Accessories

Be sure to bring the following items to ensure a comfortable climb for you and your companions:

- a day pack (35L in size or less, such as these [day packs from Osprey](#)), to carry your snacks, water, and rain gear

- a larger main pack (such as a large backpack or [duffel bag](#) from around 70-90L with a total packed weight of 15 kg/33 lbs or less that the porters will carry)
- mobile phone (there is occasional service while climbing the mountain)
 - make sure your phone is unlocked in order to use an e-SIM or local SIM card (ask us in advance if you'll need one), or be sure to sign up for a travel package through your current service provider (see [Mobile Phones & Internet Access](#))
- a [wide-brim hat](#) (to keep the sun out of your eyes and prevent sunburn on your face and head)
- sunglasses (along with cleaning spray and wipes, as it gets quite dusty)
- water bottle or [Camelbak-type hydration reservoir](#) (make sure it has the [cold weather package](#), otherwise the lines tend to freeze on summit day)
 - electrolyte hydration [tablets](#)
- sunscreen and [SPF lip balm](#)
- swimsuit (for pre- and post-hike lodging pools)
- bug spray/insect repellent ([DEET](#) or [Picaridin](#), just for the lower portions of the climb)
- [hand warmers](#) (especially for the final ascent night)
- camera (something better than your smartphone, if available, and you don't mind carrying the extra weight in your day pack)
- extra batteries and [USB charging packs](#) (as we won't have any access to electricity for the duration of the climb)
- flashlight (torch) or [headlamp](#) (preferred)
- [collapsible walking poles](#) (optional — some prefer to use them, some do not, but they can save your knees on the last portion of the trek, which is all downhill)
- [energy bars](#) and snacks (we are fed three meals per day, but you are also burning a lot of calories each day)
- [earplugs](#) and a [sleep mask](#)
- personal toiletries and medication
 - Diamox (optional — see [Diamox](#))
 - your prescription medication
 - [lmodium](#) (a.k.a. *loperamide*, in case of digestive issues)
 - [aspirin](#)/paracetamol or [ibuprofen/Advil](#)
 - [tissues](#) (your nose will run when it gets cold at higher altitudes)
 - toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant
 - sanitary products
 - bandages and [zinc-ointment/Neosporin](#)

Regarding sun care/prevention: we are close to the equator, and the sun here burns a bit stronger than you may be used to. Be prepared — bring sunscreen and cover up!

Note: We will carry a first aid kit, emergency oxygen, and water (see [Water](#)).

Luggage

You'll be carrying one smaller day pack with some warmer clothes, rain gear, snacks, water, camera/phone + charging pack, etc., during the day. This can be a smaller pack, such as a 25-35L backpack.

You'll also be bringing one larger bag/backpack, which will have all of the rest of your gear in it, such as clothing, warm weather gear, summit day supplies, etc. This is usually 50-70L, and the porter carries it the entire climb. This bag *must* be soft-sided — a duffel bag, backpack, or similar.

The maximum weight limit for this bag is 15 kg/33 lbs.

We recommend making sure both packs have some sort of rain tarp/poncho attached to them, to protect the bag (when porters are carrying it along with their other loads), and for water protection, should it rain.

Note: You will be able to leave anything not needed for the hike at the lodge or at our office in Arusha for pick-up after the hike.

Accommodation

We will be assigning two guests of the same sex to each 3-4 person capacity, four-season-rated tent. This will allow ample room for you to move around, as well as to store your gear.

If there is an uneven number of guests, we can put up to three guests in one of the larger tents, although it can get a bit cramped. **We do not encourage tents with only a single guest inside, as it gets extremely cold at higher elevations, which extra body heat helps dissipate.**

We will provide tents, sleeping pads, sleeping bag liners, and pillows, but if you would like to bring your own gear, you are more than welcome to do so. You may bring your own sleeping bag (make sure it is rated to 15°F/-10°C or lower), or you may choose to rent one from us — \$50 for the duration of the trek.

If you choose one of the shorter routes, such as Machame or Marangu, there is an option to sleep in your sleeping bag in a hut, which most guests choose to do (provided the trip is booked far enough in advance to secure reservations).

Water

Initially, potable water from the town will be carried up the mountain by porters. Later in the hike, water will be gathered from springs and boiled to ensure potability. We will be able to refill at the very least in the morning, afternoon, and evening when we stop for lunch or make camp for the night.

- There is no need for sterilization tablets/UV devices to purify your water. You will, however, need to carry your own water bottle/water reservoir/Camelbak, etc. with you in your day bag during the hike.
- Be aware that if you are using a hydration reservoir that is sitting on the outside of your body, it may get too cold on summit day to function properly (unless you have one with insulation, [such as this model](#)).
- It is a good idea to bring electrolytes or other hydration powders to keep you properly hydrated and full of vitamins. We recommend [NUUN tablets](#) for taste + ease of use.

Hygiene

There will be no access to showers from the start of the climb until we leave the mountain. As water gets scarcer the higher we go, you will have access to enough water to wash your hands and face each day, but that is about it.

The best way to stay as clean as possible is to bring a large pack or two of moistened [baby wipes](#), which you can use to at least wipe some of the sweat and dirt off your body each night before bed. Some guests — especially those with longer hair — choose to also use [dry shampoo](#) to keep their hair as manageable as possible.

Female guests have been recommending bringing a [GoGirl](#)-type device for urination while on the trail.

Immunizations & Medication

We encourage all guests to consult with their licensed medical professional prior to setting off to Tanzania.

Malaria prevention medication, such as *Malarone* or *doxycycline* (both prescription-only in the U.S.), may be taken if you wish. Each medication has its side effects, so consult with a physician before you decide on which to choose, if either. We will not be encountering many mosquitoes

after the first couple of days due to the elevation, so it is up to you whether you prefer to take the medication or to use insect spray and long clothing instead.

Make sure you are up-to-date on your basic travel immunizations, such as Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, MMR, DPT, etc. See a full list of recommended immunizations at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control website, [here](#).

Proof of the Yellow Fever Vaccine having been administered is required if coming from an endemic country, or if spending more than 12 hours on a layover in an endemic country (e.g. Brazil, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, etc. – you may check the current list of countries [here](#)).

If you may need any other medication, such as prescriptions, aspirin, an inhaler, Imodium, etc., please make sure to bring enough with you to last the duration of your trip (and maybe a bit more, in case of any delays).

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), Injury, and Evacuation

Despite the easygoing reputation of Kilimanjaro, climbing it can be dangerous, and people have died while attempting to summit the mountain (although this is a very rare occurrence, and something that we have never had happen on a trek).

The number one cause of aborted summit attempts is due to Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). AMS happens when your body's red blood cells cannot acclimate to a sudden drop in the amount of oxygen in the air, causing your body to struggle to keep up with any exertion you experience. Symptoms of AMS include dizziness, vomiting, loss of appetite, loss of sleep, and, in severe cases, even death.

Acute Mountain Sickness can affect anyone at any time. We have seen 60-something-year-olds who have done little to no training summit with no issues, while an athletic 20-something who has trained for weeks is hit with moderate AMS symptoms. The amount of training, your age, and your fitness level have little to do with how AMS may impact you during your climb — you could climb once with no issues, and then climb again a month later and have issues.

The best way to combat the chance of experiencing AMS symptoms is one of two things:

1. Train, or at least spend time, at as high an elevation as possible. Since this isn't possible for many people, we at least recommend doing your safari *before* your Kilimanjaro trek (if also going on a safari), as we spend most of the time at 4,500 ft (1,300 m) or so, which helps quite a bit versus immediately going from a low elevation and then starting your

hike.

2. Take a longer, less strenuous route. You can theoretically climb Kilimanjaro in as little as five days, but we don't recommend it. Instead, we recommend spending at least eight, if not nine days, on a longer, less crowded route, such as the Lemosho Route. The added cost is negligible, and your chances of summiting increase with every day you spend on the mountain pre-summit.
3. [Take Diamox pills.](#)

If your mountain guide detects that you may be suffering from AMS, they will slow down the pace a bit and check with you to see how you feel. If symptoms appear severe enough, your guide may send you back down the mountain with one of the assistant guides. Your safety is our utmost concern, so please keep this in mind if your guide determines that your symptoms are too severe to continue up the mountain.

In the case of severe AMS or an injury, your guide may radio for assistance and send you along with a team (with a stretcher, if needed) back down the mountain as quickly as possible for recovery and/or medical treatment. (There is an option for helicopter evacuation, but it is very costly, must be paid on the spot, and is oftentimes not available, due to inclement weather or pre-booking for tourism activities.)

We require every guest who attempts Kilimanjaro to purchase a travel health insurance policy that will cover them in case of injury or evacuation is necessary (see [Trip Cancellation & Medical Insurance](#)).

Please note that there are no refunds given in the case you cannot submit, as all park and crew fees are paid in advance. Also, any additional costs as it pertains to rescue, transportation, and additional lodging once down from the mountain must be paid by you (all or most of which should be refundable via your insurance).

Post-Evacuation

If you suffer from extreme AMS and need to head back down the mountain, chances are that you will completely recover within a day or two after reaching a lower elevation (and sometimes even hours).

This may mean that you have extra days left in your schedule before your flight onward. Seeing as you cannot have another attempt at the mountain right away, you have two choices:

1. Check into a hotel and rest up, and/or do a day trip around Arusha City.
2. If you haven't yet done so, book a safari (either through us or through a partner firm, based on availability).

Based on how you feel, and how many days you have left (as well as if you already did a safari, or have a safari planned), this decision is up to you. In the meantime, a driver will meet you at the bottom of the mountain and drive you back towards Arusha city so you can either: a.) receive medical attention, and/or b.) check into your lodging.

If you are looking to fill your remaining time with a day-long or multi-day safari trip, you may be limited as far as choices by the last-minute nature of your booking. In the case that you cannot book a safari through Pamoja Safaris, we may refer you to another company that has an opening in their safari schedule (whether it is a private or a group experience).

Note: although we will do our best to ensure the quality of any companies we refer you to, they are completely separate entities from Pamoja Safaris, and we assume no responsibility for your experience once you book/start a trip with them.

Guests are responsible for the cost of medical care and any extra days of lodging, food, and activities post-evacuation. Fees paid for trekking Kilimanjaro are non-refundable, as all parties are paid prior to beginning the ascent.

Diamox (Acetazolamide)

Diamox pills (a.k.a. acetazolamide, prescription only in the U.S.) can be taken in order to try and prevent altitude sickness. It works by increasing the amount of oxygen your red blood cells are able to transport through your body. It's good to at least have it on hand in case you start to feel symptoms when climbing higher and higher, although it works best if you start the regimen before you start climbing.

One unfortunate side effect of Diamox is that it dries you out — making you need to drink even more water than usual, which then makes you urinate more frequently.

Please consult your local medical professional regarding Diamox use, side effects, etc.

Note: If allergic to sulfa/sulfonamide-based drugs, you can not take acetazolamide.

Trip Cancellation & Travel Medical Insurance

We require all Mount Kilimanjaro trekking guests to purchase travel medical insurance in the event that you get sick or injured while you are on the trek.

Optionally, medical insurance *plus* trip cancellation/delay insurance should cover your trip costs, including airfare, if, for whatever reason, you cannot make your trip as previously scheduled (illness, death of a family member, etc.), as well as if you need to be evacuated off the mountain.

There are only a few companies that provide the needed insurance to cover you when climbing over 14,000 ft, as we will be doing on Kilimanjaro.

The companies that we've found that *do* include such coverage are:

- [World Nomads](#) (must select the Explorer package)
- [TravelEx](#) (must select the Adventure Sports add-on)

Note: All expenses related to evacuating from the mountain, including medical care, lodging, meals, and optional activities after the fact, are the responsibility of the guest.

Electronics

Make sure to bring all necessary chargers to power any devices you'll be bringing with you. There will be power outlets in the hotel rooms as well as in the vehicle itself so that you can keep everything charged up.

Tanzania runs on a 230-volt/50-hertz electrical grid. Most power sources auto-switch voltage nowadays, so you most likely will NOT have to bring a voltage converter with you (notebook computers, smartphones, anything with a USB charger, camera battery chargers, etc.).

Tanzania's plug type is the same as the UK plug (as it was once a British colony). We will have some plug converters on hand in case you need them, but we recommend grabbing some converters on your own as well — [such as this one \(plug only\)](#), [or this one](#) (with USB ports) available on Amazon.

We don't recommend bringing high-draw electronics that don't auto-switch voltage, such as curling irons and hair dryers, as using them on the local voltage could ruin the devices.

Note: there will be no access to electricity once we begin our climb, so be sure and bring enough batteries and USB charging packs to charge your phone, camera, etc. during the climb.

Money & Gratuity

The local currency is Tanzanian shillings (abbreviated TSh or TZS), and is available via ATM withdrawals in Arusha city, via local money changers at Kilimanjaro International Airport, or at the banks in town.

Denominations of paper currency include 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, and 10,000 shilling notes. With the largest note — TSh10,000 — valued at just over USD\$4.00, be aware that you'll be carrying a ton of notes around if you make a large withdrawal/currency exchange.

However, most transactions during your stay — especially during the safari portion — will be listed in U.S. dollars. U.S. dollars are the preferred currency for everything from souvenirs, alcohol, and services at the lodge, and gratuity. If you prefer to pay a bill listed in U.S. dollars in Tanzanian shillings instead, just let the clerk or staff member know, and they will convert the total to shillings.

Euros are also widely accepted, but are not as preferred as U.S. dollars.

Base gratuity is included for all Pamoja Safaris excursions. This means that we pay a very competitive amount to our guides and staff, as well as hotel personnel along your route — there is no need to tip anything additional. This is how we attract and keep the best talent in the country.

We include a generous base gratuity for all members of the crew in the price you pay to climb Kilimanjaro. We've found that this provides a better experience for our guests, as you don't need to carry large sums of cash with you, don't need to do the math of who gets what, and don't need to awkwardly hand it over to all of the crew members on the last day.

Including gratuity also provides a better experience for our crew, as they are all guaranteed a certain amount of money to take home to their families when they work with us. This allows us to attract and keep the best talent, which also improves your experience in the end.

Note: Some crew members may go above and beyond the call of duty during your hike. In case you would like to reward them for their service, feel free to carry some extra money — U.S. dollars or Tanzanian shillings — to give to those crew members at the end of your trip. You need to have some cash on hand for this purpose, as alternate payment methods such as Cash App, Venmo, and PayPal do not work in Tanzania. (Although we can facilitate sending the money to any crew members if that's the only option you have.)

Note: There are no shops or ATMs on the mountain.

Mobile Phones & Internet/Wifi Access

1.) The simplest and easiest way to get internet access while in Tanzania is to purchase an e-SIM for Tanzania from a provider such as [Airalo](#) (current pricing for 10GB for 15 days is only USD\$25.00).

This e-SIM can be loaded into your phone and turned on once you are on the ground in Tanzania. It can also be topped up with data credits if it runs out, simply by buying more with your credit card from the app.

Note: While you are using the e-SIM, it will only work for data, not SMS/texting or phone calls to your regular number, although data services such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger will operate as normal. If your phone supports dual SIM cards, you can use the e-SIM for data, and your regular SIM for phone calls and texting capabilities, but watch out for international roaming carrier charges.

2.) If desired, you can use a local SIM card in your phone (as long as it takes physical SIM cards and is unlocked, so no newer iPhones—check with your carrier if you don't know if your phone is SIM locked or not, as many carriers will unlock your phone for you if you just ask). However, in order to get a local Tanzanian SIM card, you'll need to bring your passport and some Tanzanian shillings to one of the registration centers in Arusha, choose your calling/Internet package, and wait for them to sign you up.

Although this can be done, we ask that you let us know in advance if this is a service that you'll be needing, as your schedule may not allow for such a stop.

3.) Lastly, you can also ask your phone carrier to allow international data for the time that you are away; however, this tends to be the most expensive option, running \$10-\$20/day for a limited amount of data.

Note: You will have wifi internet access at your lodges before and after your climb. During the actual climb itself, your access will be sparse, but it is usually accessible at certain points of the trail, depending on the route you take.

Tanzanian Visa

It's a relatively simple process to go online and apply for a Tanzanian e-visa. After filling out a few pages of personal details, you'll pay online via credit card, print out your confirmation page, and bring it with you to the airport, where the Tanzanian immigration officials will stamp you in.

Please make note of the following important information before applying for your visa:

- The cost for the visa is \$100 for U.S. Passports and \$50 for most other nationalities that require a visa ([listed here](#)).
- If a U.S. Citizen, the only option for a tourist visa is a multiple-entry visa. For most other nationalities, your only option is a single-entry tourist visa.
- Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your arrival date in Tanzania.
- Visas must be applied for more than 10 business days (preferably more) in advance of your departure date to Tanzania, to allow time for processing.
- You will need to upload a scanned passport photo, a copy of the photo page of your passport, and a PDF copy of your onward flight ticket. The uploading mechanism on the website does not accept large files, so it may give you an error if your file is too large. We recommend any of the online free file compression services ([such as this one](#)) if you need to make your file sizes smaller.
- The port of entry and departure will usually be Kilimanjaro International Airport (JRO) unless flying in or out of Zanzibar's Abeid Amani Karume International Airport (ZNZ). **If entering/exiting via some other city or land border crossing, just contact us for assistance.**

The 'Travel Information' part of the form will be as follows:

Host: Company/Organization

Full Name: Joshua Lovuto

Mobile Number: (select Tanzania from the country drop-down list, (+255) 784-292-546

E-mail: info@pamojasafaris.com

Company Name: Pamoja Safaris TZ Ltd.

Relationship: Company Owner

Physical Address: P.O. Box 14727, Ilboru Unsurveyed Area, Arusha

Where Staying: Hotel

Physical Address: Serena Arusha, Tengeru Road, Arusha (even if the hotel on your itinerary is different, just write this hotel)

To apply for the visa, [please visit the official website here](#).

Note: If the form mentions that you need proof of travel and/or a Letter of Invitation, please contact us for further assistance. If your passport/photo upload doesn't work, try decreasing the resolution/file size of the image and trying again.

Zanzibar

The island of Zanzibar, located just off the coast of Tanzania, is a popular destination visited by around half of our guests in combination with a safari and/or Kilimanjaro trekking adventure.

Although this portion of your trip would not be guided, if you'd like to visit, we can assist in arranging accommodation, flights, certain activities, and ground transport.

Please note that there is now up to a USD\$10 tourism tax per person, per day, which is paid by the guest upon arrival at your lodging in Zanzibar. This tax may be paid via cash or credit/debit card at that time.

In addition to this, the Zanzibarian government requires that every guest opt into their insurance scheme prior to arriving on the island. **This is mandatory for all visitors, regardless of whether they have separate travel medical insurance or not.** The cost for this is \$44 per adult, or \$22 per child, and may be purchased directly from the government website [here](#).

Arrival & Departure

If arriving in Arusha from an international destination, the airport you'll be flying into will be Kilimanjaro International Airport (JRO).

If you will be flying to Arusha via a domestic flight (e.g., from Dar es Salaam or Zanzibar), you can choose either Kilimanjaro International Airport (JRO) or Arusha City Airport (ARK). (ARK is preferable, as it is much closer to the city, but usually costs a bit more and has fewer flight options.)

Either way, we'll be there to pick you up when you arrive — just look for our representative (usually your guide) holding a sign with your name(s) written on it outside of the baggage claim area. From Kilimanjaro Airport, it will be about a 1-1.5 hour drive to Arusha; from ARK, it will be 15 minutes or so.

On departure day, we'll be driving you to the airport, or your lodge will have a free shuttle. You will be scheduled to arrive at the airport approximately two to three hours before your flight departs.

Tip: If needed, be sure and go to the bathroom before the plane lands, as there are no facilities available while waiting in line at immigration.

Tip: If you are flying from the U.S. to Tanzania via Delta/KLM, be sure and bring the physical credit card that you used for the booking with you to the airport for check-in. There is a possibility that they will ask you for it upon check-in and will not let you board unless you have it with you. If you no longer have the card in your possession, or if the card information has changed since you made the booking, be sure to contact customer support before your departure date to inform them of this fact.