

THE STILL NOMAD

KINANGOP HILL

Aberdare Ranges, Kenya • 3,906m ASL

Intermediate – Advanced • ~28km Round Trip • ~1,263m Elevation Gain



Giant lobelias on the open moorland — Table Mountain visible on the horizon

WHY THIS TRIP?

Mt. Kinangop — the second-highest peak in the Aberdare Range at 3,906m — sits between Table Mountain and Satima in both altitude and character. It is not as well-known as its neighbours, and that is precisely what makes it special. The trail from Mutarakwa Forest Station is one of the most complete mountain experiences in the Aberdares: plantation forest, bamboo zones, montane forest, open moorland, and a rocky scramble summit that not everyone dares to attempt.

What sets Kinangop apart is the journey through it. The bamboo section is dense and other-worldly. The moorland opens up to reveal the Twelve Apostles massif to the east — one of the most striking formations in Kenya. The summit itself is a genuine rocky outcrop that requires scrambling and a clear head for heights. On a clear day the views extend to Lake Naivasha, Mt. Longonot, and Mount Kenya.

For The Still Nomad, this is the Aberdares trip for hikers who have done Rurimeria, Satima and Table Mountain and are ready for the next challenge. It is a worthy objective in its own right. You leave Mombasa on a Friday evening, and arrive at the summit by late afternoon.

ABOUT THE HIKE

Location	Aberdare National Park, Central Kenya
Elevation	3,906m ASL — 2nd highest peak in the Aberdares
Distance	~28km round trip (14km each way)
Elevation Gain	~1,263m (from base at ~2,640m)
Difficulty	Intermediate to Advanced — NOT suitable for beginners
Trail Type	Out and back — Mutarakwa Forest route
Start Point	North Kinangop Forest Station, Mutarakwa
Key Feature	Rocky summit scramble + Twelve Apostles views on ascent



Giant lobelias on the open moorland — Table Mountain visible on the horizon



The rocky summit outcrop — Kinangop requires a genuine scramble to the top

THE HIKE: WHAT TO EXPECT

The trail starts at North Kinangop Forest Station at Mutarakwa, roughly 2.5 hours from Nairobi. The first 2km run through relatively flat plantation forest and farmland before a gate marks the entry into the protected forest. From here the ascent begins properly.

Section 1 — Forest & Bamboo Zone (0–8km)

Pine and cypress plantations give way to dense indigenous forest, then a remarkable bamboo zone — tall, silent, and disorienting in the best way. The trail is steep in places and can be muddy year-round. Wildlife is present: buffalo, eland, and occasionally elephant. Stay close to your guide throughout this section.

Section 2 — The Moorland (8–12km)

The bamboo and forest open suddenly onto the high moorland and the trail levels. The Twelve Apostles — a dramatic massif of rocky formations to the east — comes into full view. Giant lobelias dot the landscape. Cold wind, open sky, tussock grass. The rocky summit outcrop of Kinangop appears ahead on the horizon. This is the section to find your rhythm and push on.

Section 3 — The Summit Scramble (12–14km)

The moorland gives way to rocky terrain and the trail steepens sharply. The final section to Kinangop's peak is a genuine scramble — hands and feet on rock, exposed, technical. It is not obligatory. Reaching the base of the rocky outcrop is a fully respected goal. Do not attempt the scramble if you have any fear of heights or unsteady legs from the ascent. Those who go up are rewarded with 360-degree views: Lake Naivasha, Mt. Longonot, the Twelve Apostles, and on a clear day the peaks of Mount Kenya to the northeast.

Section 4 — The Descent (14–28km)

Retrace to Mutarakwa. The descent through the bamboo and forest is fast but demands attention — steep sections, muddy roots, and fatigue at altitude are a serious combination. The mandatory turn-back time is 1:30 PM regardless of summit status. The goal is to be back at the gate by 5:00 PM.

 **Weather note: Kinangop's moorland and summit are fully exposed from Section 2 onwards. Afternoon mist, cold rain, and hailstones are common. The bamboo zone holds moisture and can be extremely slippery after rain. Waterproofs are mandatory. Turn back at 2:30 PM without exception.**

FULL TRIP ITINERARY

This is an overnight trip from Mombasa.. Every minute below is intentional — respect the schedule and the group moves together. Our camp/hotel is approximately 20 minutes from the Aberdares gate.

TIME	ACTIVITY
FRIDAY EVENING(DEPARTURE)	
8:00 PM	Converge at SGR Mombasa Station
10:00 PM	Depart Mombasa on SGR - Evening Train
4:00 AM	Arrival in Nairobi and transfer to Aberdares
SATURDAY(HIKE DAY)	
4:00 AM	Freshen up, breakfast, drive to Gate
~9:30 AM	Arrive North Kinangop Forest Station (Mutarakwa) — gear check, trail briefing, warm-up
~9:45 AM	Hike begins — Mutarakwa trailhead <i>The trail enters plantation forest immediately. Stay close to your guides at ALL TIMES.</i>
9:45–11:00 AM	Section 1 — Forest & Bamboo Zone (0–8km) <i>Pine and cypress plantations give way to dense indigenous forest, then bamboo. The first 2km are relatively flat through farmland before entering the protected forest gate. From there the trail climbs steadily through the vegetation zones.</i>
11:00–13:30 AM	Section 2 — The Moorland (8–12km) <i>The bamboo gives way to open highland moorland. The Twelve Apostles massif comes into view to the east. Giant lobelias, tussock grass, cold wind. The summit rocky outcrop appears ahead — close enough to motivate, far enough to humble you.</i>
13:30 AM–14:00 PM	Section 3 — The Summit Scramble (12–14km) <i>The moorland gives way to rocky terrain. The final section to Kinangop's peak is a genuine scramble — steep, technical, and exposed. Not all hikers attempt to summit the peak itself. Reaching the base of the rocky outcrop is a legitimate and respected goal. Do not attempt the scramble if you have a fear of heights.</i>
14:00–14:30 PM	Expected Summit Window — Mt. Kinangop 3,906m <i>On a clear day: Lake Naivasha, Mt. Longonot, the Twelve Apostles, and — if visibility cooperates — Mount Kenya. Celebrate briefly. Do not linger.</i>
14:30 PM	MANDATORY TURN BACK TIME Guides turn the group around at 14:30 PM regardless of summit status. Non-negotiable. The guide's decision is final.
~7:00 PM	Back at base — descent complete <i>Stretch, hydrate, change if needed. Use the gate facilities.</i>
7:30 PM	Depart base — late packed lunch on the road <i>Included in your package.</i>
~10:30 PM	Arrive Nairobi
11:00 PM	Drop off
SUNDAY	

6.30 AM	Meet at SGR,Board train
8.00 AM	Leave for Mombasa

WHAT'S INCLUDED VS. NOT INCLUDED

✓ WHAT'S INCLUDED	✗ NOT INCLUDED
• Return SGR ticket (Mombasa ↔ Nairobi)	• Personal hiking gear & clothing
• Ground transfer Nairobi ↔ Aberdares	• Personal snacks & extra drinks
• Experienced professional guides	• Tips for guides (discretionary)
• Park entry & conservation fees	• Any personal medical expenses
• Lunch and water on the trail	• Extra nights in Nairobi beyond package
• Summit badge	• Overnight stay near Aberdares (camp / hotel)

WHAT TO PACK

This is a high-altitude, full-day hike through forest, bamboo, moorland, and rocky terrain. Cold, wet, and muddy conditions should be assumed. Coming from Mombasa — plan for a completely different climate.

Essential Gear

- Waterproof / trail hiking boots with ankle support (non-negotiable — the bamboo and moorland sections are seriously muddy)
- Gaiters — essential; mud can be knee-deep in the bamboo and forest sections
- Trekking poles — strongly recommended for both ascent and the long descent
- Headlamp with spare batteries (for pre-dawn departure from camp)
- Daypack (10–40L is ideal)

Clothing (Layer Up)

- Thermal base layer — top and bottom
- Fleece mid-layer
- Waterproof shell jacket / hardshell (mandatory)
- Waterproof or wind-resistant hiking pants
- Beanie / balaclava
- Waterproof gloves
- Hiking buff / neck gaiter
- 1–2 extra pairs of socks
- Change of clothes and shoes for after the hike — your feet will be wet
- Change of clothes for the train ride back

Food & Water

- 3 litres of water minimum (hydration pack or bottles)
- Personal snacks: energy bars, nuts, trail mix, fruit, biscuits
- Warm drink in a flask — coffee, tea, or cocoa (essential on the moorland and summit)

Lunch and 500ml water are included in your package. Personal snacks are your responsibility.

Personal Items

- Valid ID (required for KWS / park entry)
- Personal first-aid kit or medication
- Sunscreen and sunglasses (high-altitude UV is intense on clear mornings)
- Phone + portable power bank
- Small amount of cash (for stops on the road)
- Plastic bag for wet or muddy gear

IMPORTANT NOTES



DIFFICULTY: This hike is rated Intermediate to Advanced. It is NOT suitable for beginners or anyone who has not completed at least 2–3 earlier hikes. The summit scramble requires comfort with exposed rock and a head for heights. Reaching the base of the summit is a fully valid and respected goal.



NAIROBI JOINERS: Pick-up begins at 4:30 AM in Nairobi at Highway Mall - Mombasa Road. The vehicle departs at 5:00 AM together with the Mombasa team. No exceptions — do not be late. You are welcome to join the Mombasa team on the overnight camping. Specify when booking.



THE SUMMIT SCRAMBLE: The final section to Kinangop's peak requires hands-on-rock scrambling and is exposed. If you have a fear of heights, reaching the base of the rocky outcrop is a legitimate and fully respected goal. Do not attempt the scramble unprepared. Your guide will brief you at the base.



MANDATORY TURN BACK: 14:30 PM is a hard turn-back time regardless of where you are on the trail. Afternoon weather on the Aberdares is unpredictable and the descent through the bamboo forest in poor light is dangerous. The guide's decision is final.



DIFFERENT RETURN DATE: If you need to return to Mombasa on a different date than the group, communicate this at booking. No last-minute changes once train tickets are booked.



LUNCH: A quick late lunch will be had on arrival in Nairobi. This is included in your package.

BOOKING & PAYMENT

HOW TO PAY

CLICK HERE TO PAY;

<https://paystack.shop/pay/thestillnomadhikes>

OR

M-PESA Paybill: 303030

Account Number: 2055655238

Deposit to secure your spot: KES 2,000

Send your deposit to secure your slot. Full payment is required before departure. Reach out via **0115262097** for confirmation.

When booking, please specify: your preferred departure option (3 PM Friday / 10 PM Friday), whether you want the optional Aberdares overnight, and whether you are joining in Mombasa or Nairobi.

THE STILL NOMAD • Mombasa's Outdoor Lifestyle & Social Wellness Club

The great outdoors is calling!