



Kilimanjaro Geology

Kilimanjaro (Kilima Njaro or "shining mountain" in Swahili) consists of three major volcanic centers - Kibo (19,340') in the center, Mawenzi (16,893') in the east, and Shira (13,140') in the west. Uhuru Peak at the crater rim is the official summit point. Currently, only Kibo retains glaciers - and unfortunately, the glaciers are melting so rapidly that some researchers estimate they will all be gone by the year of 2020. According to U.S. researchers, the glaciers measured 4.8 square miles in 1912 and had shrunk to 1 square mile in 2000. Further research is needed to determine to what extent global warming and/or natural climate variability are responsible for the demise of Kilimanjaro's glaciers.

A climb of Kilimanjaro will take you through an amazing variety of landscapes - parallel to traveling from the equator to the Arctic! This makes Kilimanjaro an incredibly special trip:

Cultivated farmland. You'll start your trek through pastures, plantations, and grassland. Much of the food consumed by climbers and porters on Kilimanjaro originates from the farms at the foot of Kilimanjaro. This area gets heavy rainfall and is in theory part of the next zone - forest. Before farming this area was covered with shrubbery and dense forest. (Up to about 2,000m.)

Forest. Very lush vegetation drenched in heavy rainfall (almost 80 inches per) with a number of endemic plants such as *Impatiens Kilimanjari* and *Senecio Johnstoni*. (About 2,000-3,000m.)

Heather. An often misty foggy zone near the forest with a variety of heather-like shrubs. (About 3,000-3,500m.)

Moorland. As you climb into this eco zone, the weather will likely be cool, clear, and intensely sunny. (So, don't forget your sunscreen!) You will still enjoy clusters of plants endemic to Kilimanjaro. (About 3,500-4,000m.)

Alpine desert. In this zone, chances are you'll wear almost everything you have brought within 24 hours! Temperatures usually fluctuate wildly from days of 95 degree heat to nights below freezing! This is a barren and lunar-like landscape - not at all favorable for plants. (About 4,000-5,000m.)

Summit. Welcome to arctic conditions! Freezing cold at night and burning sun during the day. The air pressure falls and here there is only one-half the amount of oxygen in the air as at sea level, so get your summit picture and get back down! (About 5,000-6,000m.)