

Mount Meru 4 Day Itinerary



Standing **adjacent to Mt Kilimanjaro**, Mount Meru at **4566m**, is the **fifth highest mountain on the African continent** and the **second highest in Tanzania**. Its location makes it a **fantastic vantage point**, from which to shoot **stunning photographs of Kilimanjaro and wildlife** with **Kilimanjaro** as a **backdrop**.

Mt Meru is both an **excellent** mountain to hike as either an **acclimatisation** hike in preparation **for hiking Mt Kilimanjaro**, or as a **stand-alone option** for those with **less time available**, or those on a smaller budget. It should **not** however, be considered as an **easier option**, for it is **equally**, if not more **challenging** in some aspects. While **most** of this hike is **relatively easy going**, with steep trail in places, the night **ascent to the summit** from Saddle Hut, contains a **few short, exposed sections**. These now have a **chain rope to provide some security** on this exposed section. A good **head for heights and sure footedness** are necessary for this final ascent **to Mt. Meru Summit**. Those wishing to hike on **Mt Meru as part of an acclimatization hike for Mt. Kilimanjaro**, but **not wishing to make the full summit** ascent, due to the exposed sections, will find **equal enjoyment in the ascent to 'Little Mt. Meru'** The **total hike is 46km** and can be hiked in 3 days, but is **usually** hiked over a period of **4 days**.

Geological History

Mt. Meru is a **stratovolcano**, which up until its **last eruption in 1910**, was very active. Approximately **8,000 years ago**, Mt. Meru was higher than Mt. Kilimanjaro. At that time, the entire eastern flank of Mt. Meru was blown away by a massive volcanic blast. This left Meru with a **huge caldera on its eastern side**,

from which lava erupted and flowed, forming many **lava cones**. These give the mountain the **distinctive appearance** and character that it has today. Officially, Mt. Meru, is still considered an active volcano, last erupting with a small eruption in 1910, but has no sign of life recently.

Flora and Wildlife

The ascent up **Mt Meru** passes through **many** different **vegetation zones**. The **dry forest** of the lower region gives way to a **dense mountain rainforest**, which then turns into a **scrubland**. As the **flora** changes the **wildlife** does so too, making this a **diverse and impressive hiking experience**. Due to the presence of **big game** and leopards, it is obligatory that every tour be **accompanied** by an **armed park ranger**. The **experience** of **walking past giraffe, elephants, and buffalo** as they feed off the drier scrubland plants in the lower zones, and then entering the **rainforest with monkeys feeding and swinging** in the **trees**, makes this tour as much a **walking safari** as a mountain ascent. In the rainforest, you will be treated to the sight of **giant plantain leaves**, the **smelling sweet Jasmine**, as it blooms, along with many other **sensory treats**. Towards the top of the mountain, the vegetation consists of heath and moorland. After Rhino Point the vegetation is replaced by **volcanic rock of shades of brown and red**, creating a **stunning** baron alpine desert.

Geocaching

Those hikers who also like to **Geocache**, you will find an **Earth-cache** at the **summit**, and **Geocaches** hidden around Arusha National Park, leading you to some of the most **scenic locations**. Our **guides** are **Geocache friendly**, and will happily **stop while you hunt**.

Accommodation: Hotel: 2; Huts: 3

Recommended days on trek: 4 – 5 days

Kilimanjaro Bliss: 4 day tours

Minimum days on trek: 3

Difficulty: Intermediate

Scenery: Very Good

Traffic: Low - Medium

Starting point: Arusha

Distance: 46km

Included

- Transfers to/from Kilimanjaro International Airport
- 2-nights hotel accommodation in Arusha at either end of your stay.
- National Park gate fees
- Hut/camping fees
- Transport from Arusha to starting point on mountain and return to Arusha
- Certified, experienced, English-speaking guides for all routes
- Hiking support team (Cook, assistant, porters)
- Emergency Communications systems
- Emergency First Aid kit, including: Emergency Oxygen, pulse-oximeter, stethoscope.
- Daily altitude acclimatization check-ups.
- Rescue fees within Park

- 3 meals daily on the mountain
- Tents, foam sleeping pads, cooking equipment, and eating utensils
- Boiled / filtered water on the mountain. (Plastic water bottles are not permitted in the Park, so please be sure to bring and fill up your reusable water bottle on the first day of the climb).
- Group Mess Tent with table and chairs.
- Private group toilet.

Not included

- Travel insurance
- Tips for guides cooks and porters
- Personal mountain equipment (boots clothing and sleeping bag)
- Lunches, dinners, drinks at your hotel in Arusha
- Laundry (available at the hotel)

Itinerary

Day 0: Your arrival in Arusha. Airport Pick-up and transfer to hotel. Meeting with your guide.

Day 1: Arusha - Momella Gate (1500m) - Miriakamba Hut (2500m) 10km

In the morning, you will be **collected from your hotel** and driven to Arusha National Park, **Momella gate**. (a 45min. drive from Arusha). Here you will have about a one hour wait while your guide completes the **mandatory entry forms**. During this time, you can peruse the information boards, which will give you lots of information about the Park and region, or if you are starting a little later you can eat your **picnic lunch**. Once the paperwork is completed, and the hiking team are ready, an armed park ranger will assemble you, along with other hiking groups to begin your hike. You will get a first **glimpse of the wonderful giraffes and buffalos**, as you cross the open plain. Once you have left the buffalo herds and giraffes behind, you will enter the **acacia forest** in which you will follow the Southern Route. After a **steady 2-hour climb**, you will reach **Maio Falls** and some **picturesque meadows** that are a perfect place for a picnic. After a rest, you will again be on your way and soon reach the well-known **'Arched Fig Tree'**. Here your park ranger will tell you about the formation of this tree and how it gained its shape forming an arch over the path. After **another 1½ - 2 hours**, you will reach the **Miriakamba Hut**. Here you will be **allocated a room** (each room sleeps up to four people) You will receive a bowl of **hot water for washing**. Your expedition cook will have **afternoon tea** ready for you, followed by an **evening meal** before you **retire** to your room for a **well-earnt rest**.

Day 2 Miriakamba Hut (2500m) - Saddle Hut (3550m) 6km

In the morning, after **breakfast** you will **leave the Miriakamba Hut** at about 08:30. The hike follows a **steep track with wooden steps**. The gain in elevation, will make it noticeably **cooler**, than on the previous day. This will make the hike appear to get **easier**, as you will be less drained by the African heat. **Clouds** which are part of the mountains micro-environment often **linger in the rainforest**, give a **mystical appearance** to the mountain, and intensify the lushness of the vegetation. Approximately **2 hours into the hike**, you will reach the **vantage point 'Mgongo wa Tembo'** (Elephant back) at an elevation of **3200m**, where you will enjoy a well-earned **break**. A few step up the trail from here you will find a well-placed **washroom**. Continuing upwards from here the vegetation changes from rainforest into a bush land, before reaching the **Saddle Hut (3550m)** at

midday. Your cook will have **lunch** ready by the time you have settled into your room and enjoyed a wash. There will be time for a **relaxing break**, and socializing with other hikers. Later in the **afternoon**, you have the option of making a side trip to **Little Meru** (3820m). This **delightful peak** takes approx. 1 - 1 ½ hours to reach and on a clear day provides you with **stunning views** of Arusha National Park, and of **Mt Kilimanjaro** (approx. 80 km away). On your return to Saddle hut, an **early** warm **dinner** will be served, and your guide will **prepare** you for the **night hike**, beginning between 12 - 2am up to the summit.

Day 3 Saddle Hut - Socialist Peak (4562m) - Miriakamba Hut (2500m) 5km up, 13km down

After an **early start** with **tea and biscuits**, you will **leave for the summit** between **12:00 - 02:00am**. You will make your way up the **trail by torchlight**, zig-zagging through bush land to **Rhino Point** (3821m) After this point the path is a **little exposed** as it descends a little, before again ascending. This downward section is a little more **challenging** for many, especially in torch-light, because it requires an occasional light climb, and a **head for heights**. Following this the trail alternates between dark **purple/black** lava ash and **volcanic rock** along the **north ridge to the summit**. It is a steep slog upward, which is made more challenging by the **increasing altitude**. It should be hiked **slowly**, to avoid **altitude sickness**. After approx. **4 - 5 hours**, you will **reach the summit** exhausted and **elated** from the upward journey through the night. The Tanzanian flag and name plaque for this summit, also known as the **“socialist peak”** mark the highest point. Depending on the time you reach the summit, you will be able to **enjoy the sun rising** above Kilimanjaro and the **fantastic view** of Mount **Meru’s crater** with its steep sides and the **“Ash Cone”** in the middle. Be sure to **bundle up** now that you are not hiking, as you will **cool down quickly**, in addition to a cool breeze. You will **descend** along the same route back to **Saddle Hut** (3550m). You will be tired, but be sure to take **photographs** as you descend now that it is light. Your guide will happily take photos for you. You will arrive back at Saddle Hut before **lunch**, where you will take a well-deserved **break** and recuperate with hot soup and tea. Once **refreshed**, you will **continue with the descent**. During the early afternoon, you will reach **Miriakamba Hut** (2500m) - **tired but happy**. At this hut, you can finally relax, enjoy the **evening meal and sleep**.

Day 4 Miriakamba Hut (2500m) - Momella Gate (1500m) 10km

After breakfast, you will **descend via the ‘Northern Route’**, a **2 - 3hour hike** back to your starting point, **Momella Gate**. The descent is shorter than the ascent, but there is still a **chance to see elephants, buffalos, giraffes**, as well as the black and **white Columbus monkeys**. At the gate, you will say **farewell** to your **ranger** and hiking crew (**be sure to tip them** for their service before you leave). Your driver will take you **back to Arusha** for lunch. **Let us know at the time of booking**, if you would like **an afternoon driving safari in Arusha National Park**, so that we can schedule the timing of this. This is a great opportunity for **GEOCACHERS** to seek some of the many Geocaches and Earth caches located in this park.

If you are also **planning to hike Kilimanjaro**, we recommend that you take a **rest day in Arusha** to **allow your legs (knees) time to recover** from the steep descent coming off Mt Meru, and time to send **clothing to laundry** (be sure to check it will be ready the same evening). Various **local visits**, and soft **activities** can be arranged by your guide.

Mt Meru difficulty Note:

As stated above, the majority of the hike is relatively easy going, with steep trail in places. The night **ascent to the summit** stage contains a **few short, exposed sections**, some of which have a chain rope to provide some security on these semi-climbing passages. A good **head for heights and sure**

footedness are necessary for this final ascent to **Mt. Meru Summit**. Those wishing to hike on **Mt Meru as part of an acclimatization hike for Mt. Kilimanjaro**, but **not wishing to make the full summit** ascent, due to the exposed sections, will find **equal enjoyment in the ascent to 'Little Mt. Meru'**.

In **adverse weather** conditions (heavy rain, icy rocks and paths or thick fog) the park **ranger may call off the hike to the steeper, exposed Meru summit**. We do not advise climbs in the rain season (April and May).

HIKE START TIMES (Strictly enforced): There are **set hiking start times** from Momella Gate, which are scheduled to **avoid conflicts with the wildlife** in the park. The start times are strictly **between 9:00am and 3:00pm**. If you plan to hike Meru in **3-days**, you will need to start your hike **by 10:00am on the first day**. Especially if you plan to take the 10km "long road" route up to Miriakamba Hut.

COSTS

See separate price sheet

Add on: Half-day Arusha National Park Safari and or Geocaching. \$90 USD pp

Tipping amounts are as follows. These numbers are per group, not per climber.

Per main guide – US\$20-25 per day

Per assistant guide – US\$15-20 per day

Per cook – US\$15 per day

Per porter – US\$10 per day