



Mount Kilimanjaro is the tallest point in Africa. It is also the world's largest free-standing mountain. Even during the hottest time of year, its peaks are snow-covered.

Getting to the top of Kilimanjaro is not like getting to the top of Mt. Everest. The world's tallest mountain has to be climbed. Africa's tallest mountain can be hiked.

Kilimanjaro is a dormant volcano. It rises to 19,341 feet (5,895 m).

What are some of the coolest things to know about Kilimanjaro (which is located in the northern part of Tanzania)? The Tanzanian Tourist Board helps us to answer that question. Here is their top-ten list:

- Mount Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain on the African continent and the highest free-standing mountain in the world.
- Kilimanjaro has three volcanic cones, Mawenzi, Shira and Kibo. Mawenzi and Shira are extinct but Kibo, the highest peak, is dormant and could erupt again. The most recent activity was about 200 years ago; the last major eruption was 360,000 years ago.
- Nearly every climber who has summited Uhuru Peak, the highest summit on Kibo's crater rim, has recorded his or her thoughts about the accomplishment in a book stored in a wooden box at the top.
- The oldest person ever to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro was 87-year-old Frenchman Valtee Daniel.
- Almost every kind of ecological system is found on the mountain: cultivated land, rain forest, heath, moorland, alpine desert and an arctic summit.
- The fastest roundtrip climbing record currently belongs to Karl Egloff (an Ecuadorean-Swiss mountain runner) who made it to the summit and back in 6 hours and 42 minutes during August of 2014.
- The mountain's snow caps are diminishing, having lost more than 80 percent of their mass since 1912. In fact, they may be completely ice free within the next 20 years, according to scientists.
- Shamsa Mwangunga, National Resources and Tourism minister of Tanzania, announced in 2008 that 4.8 million indigenous trees will be planted around the base of the mountain, helping prevent soil erosion and protecting water sources.
- South African Bernard Goosen twice scaled Mt. Kilimanjaro in a wheelchair. His first summit, in 2003, took nine days; his second, four years later, took only six. Born with cerebral palsy, Goosen used a modified wheelchair, mostly without assistance, to climb the mountain.

- At least 25,000 people attempt to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro annually. Approximately two-thirds are successful. Altitude-related problems are the most common reasons why climbers turn back.

What makes altitude-related problems so common for people trying to reach the top of Kilimanjaro? Climbers are able to hike up the mountain, meaning they reach altitude much faster than if they were climbing Everest or K2. Jon Garside, a British training officer, explains why that matters:

*It [hiking to the top of Kilimanjaro] is nothing that a reasonably fit person shouldn't be able to do. The path is a pretty gentle gradient. It is not technically challenging.*

*But you get very high very quickly. That affects the body. You have got to walk so incredibly slowly. Imagine an arthritic 90-year-old walking backwards - that's probably too fast.*

*If you exert your body at altitude the body will find it really hard to get its breath back.*

It's a beautiful trek, though, particularly if climbers reach the summit. Says Garside:

*It is really amazing when you get to the crater rim and you see this lunar landscape. It is a very beautiful mountain to climb.*

Because Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa, it is one of the "Seven Summits" (the highest points on the seven continents):

- Mount Everest - Asia - First ascent 1953 - 8,848 meters
- Aconcagua - South America - First ascent 1897 - 6,961 meters
- Denali (also known as Mount McKinley) - North America - First ascent 1913 - 6,194 meters
- Mount Kilimanjaro - Africa - First ascent 1889 - 5,895 meters
- Mount Elbrus - Europe - First ascent 1874 - 5,642 meters
- Mount Vinson - Antarctica - First ascent 1966 - 4,892 meters
- Mount Kosciuszko - Australia - First ascent 1840 - 2,228 meters

Spencer West, a legless athlete aided by two of his closest friends and a specially made wheelchair, climbed to the summit of Kilimanjaro in 2012. Instead of using legs and feet, to reach the top of the mountain, Spencer used his arms and hands for about 80% of the trek.

This image of Kilimanjaro depicts its grandeur while elephants graze in the foreground. Click on the photo for a full-page view.

Credits:

View of Mt. Kilimanjaro by 20/20 Vision Quest.

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