

Mount Kilimanjaro



Images courtesy of NASA

This is a computer generated image of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Mount Kilimanjaro, at 5896 m, is the highest mountain on the continent of Africa. It stands right on the north-eastern edge of Tanzania, where it borders Kenya. Though not especially high compared to Mount Everest - the tallest mountain in the world at 8,848 m - it is the tallest free-standing mountain in the world. It is also one of the largest volcanoes in the world and has three main peaks, Kibo, Mawenzi and Shira. Both Mawenzi and Shira are extinct, having not erupted for thousands of years, but Kibo, which is dormant, last showed activity about 200 years ago and could erupt again.

Mount Kilimanjaro sits in the middle of Mt Kilimanjaro National Park. The park stretches beyond the mountain to include the surrounding lowlands. While other national parks in Africa are famed for their wildlife, in this park the mountain itself is the real attraction.

Climbing the Mountain

Kilimanjaro is a popular mountain to climb. Experienced climbers can choose tough routes but with proper training it is also possible for beginners to ascend the mountain

along easier routes.

High above sea level the air pressure is lower, resulting in less oxygen.

This can have a serious effect on climbers, causing a condition known as altitude sickness. Symptoms of the sickness include headaches, tiredness, vomiting and dizziness. To prevent it climbers ascend mountains slowly, allowing their bodies to acclimatise, or get used to the change in oxygen levels.



The Shining Mountain

Although Mt Kilimanjaro sits near the equator, the climate of the mountain ranges from desert to cultivated lowland at the base to arctic conditions at the very top, with forest, heath and moorland, and alpine desert in between. The snow-capped Kibo peak is the iconic image we have of Mt Kilimanjaro. The gleaming snow explains why it is sometimes called "The Shining Mountain". The peak is also known as the "House of God" by those who live on the mountain itself.

In the last two decades, there has been noticeable melting of the glaciers on the mountain and it is feared that within the next two decades, the snow will disappear from the top altogether.



The decrease in snow and ice cover on Kibo peak from 1993 (top) to 2000 (bottom).

People of Kilimanjaro

The foothills of Mt Kilimanjaro are home to the Chagga people, one of Tanzania's largest ethnic groups. The capital of the region is the town of Moshi, which has a population of about 150,000.

