

Trip itinerary

Day 1: Karibishwa Tanzania! Welcome to Kilimanjaro Airport.

Our trip begins upon arrival at Kilimanjaro Airport (JRO). We provide a group transfer to a comfortable lodge near the fertile slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Driving: 1 hour

Day 2: Taste Kilimanjaro coffees and prepare tomorrow's biking adventure.

After breakfast, we stroll the terroir and learn organic cultivation techniques at a local tea and coffee farm. Kilimanjaro has a perennial spring-like climate, moderate altitude and rich soil. Taste the difference with a proper cupping of many varieties of teas and coffee. In the afternoon, we meet with our cycling guides for a bike fitting and briefing on tomorrow's activities. The rest of the afternoon is free to relax. Feeling energetic? A short 15-minute hike from the lodge leads to a lovely little waterfall. The trail passes coffee trees, streams and under shady glades of magnanimous hardwoods. All meals included.

Day 3: Cycle the backroads of Kilimanjaro to our private REI Signature Camp.

Departing the lodge on two wheels, we cycle through the vast patchwork of farms and villages that dot the slopes of Kilimanjaro. We pedal down residential dirt roads, passing family owned banana and coffee farms and stop to peruse local markets. The Chagga people dominate this region. Our guides will illuminate the history of this enterprising Bantu tribe and their rivalrous chiefdoms. Tonight we camp within the private grounds of Mama Rosa, a Chagga elder. A short walk through the banana trees brings us to a beautiful view of Mount Kilimanjaro. This evening, we enjoy the homey atmosphere and authentic experience of our expedition-style REI Signature Camp. All meals included.

Mountain biking: 16.5 miles; elevation gain: 1525', elevation loss: 1887'; terrain: uneven dirt roads; time in the saddle: 2.5 hours

Day 4: Bike down from Machame Gate and hike to a hidden waterfall.

For those feeling particularly energetic, there is the option for an early morning ride to the gates of Kilimanjaro National Park (3.9 miles; elevation gain 1552'). Alternatively, we have the option to drive to the gate, which is the starting point for the Machame Route. From here, we hop on our bikes and enjoy a pleasant downhill ride to the town of Uswaa (7.8 miles; elevation loss 2238'). After a picnic lunch we set out on foot, winding through fields and forests to a stunning waterfall. We hop on our bikes for the final decent (6 miles, elevation loss 960'). Tonight we return to our Kilimanjaro lodge to enjoy a hot shower and delicious meal. All meals included.

Mountain biking: 17.7 miles; elevation gain: 1690'; elevation loss: 3,200'; terrain: uneven dirt roads; time in the saddle 3.5 hours; Hiking: 2 miles; elevation gain: 180'; elevation loss: 180'

Day 5: Fly to the Serengeti in search of lions, elephants and more.

An early morning flight from the Moshi Airport takes us to the heart of the action—Serengeti National Park. The Serengeti is one of Africa's greatest treasures and remains one of the few places on earth where large mammals are seen in massive numbers. Touching down in the Serengeti, our safari guide and vehicle whisk us straight into the bush for a full afternoon on safari. We overnight at a traditional tented safari camp. Each large canvas-sided chalet has a as a full or twin bed, en suite facilities and modest veranda. All meals included.

Internal Flight: 1.5-3 hours; safari game drive: 4 hours

Day 6: Full day exploration in the Serengeti's unforgettable wilderness.

We have the full day to enjoy the splendor of the Serengeti. Our camp is located in the central Serengeti, which is a wildlife rich environment year round. We will most certainly see hundreds of animals including zebra, wildebeest, hartebeest, topi, hyena, eland, warthogs, giraffe and various predators. Depending upon the season and with a little luck, we may even have the opportunity to witness the largest migration of mammals on earth. We return to our camp each evening to enjoy sundowner drinks around the campfire. We'll retell the sightings of the day and watch as the star-studded African sky slowly takes center stage. All meals included.

Safari game drive: 6-8 hours

Day 7: Serengeti safari and journey to the Ngorongoro Crater Rim.

Today we wake up early for a morning game drive, one of the best times to catch Serengeti wildlife on the move. After lunch we leave for the Ngorongoro Crater, one of the natural wonders of the world. Our route takes us past Maasai villages and up along the crater rim (7,600'). On the western flanks our classic tented safari camp is perfectly poised with a commanding view of the crater. Here we enjoy a fireside seat to an unforgettable sunset. All meals included.

Safari game drive: 4 hours; transfer drive: 3 hours

Day 8: Ngorongoro Crater safari and remote highland camping at Empakai Crater.

From our camp on the crater rim, we have direct access to the expansive Ngorongoro Crater. Some regard the Crater as the original Garden of Eden; the Maasai consider it "the footprint of God." It is the largest intact crater in the world and the only one with a self-contained ecosystem. Here you can find the "Big Five" in a day's game drive. Surrounding the crater is a vast network of Maasai communities living in communion with wildlife. In the afternoon, we drive to the far reaches of the Ngorongoro Conservation area to our private campsite. Enjoy expedition-style REI Signature Camping on the edges of the Empakai Crater at 8,150 feet. All meals included.

Safari game drive: 3-5 hours, transfer: 2hours

Day 9: Begin a two-day trek through Maasai highlands to Lake Natron.

This morning we break in our boots with a quick hike into the verdant Empakai Crater. Like entering a lost world, our Maasai guide and Ngorongoro Park Ranger lead us through the thick foliage to an expansive soda lake at the bottom. Here Flamingos can be seen in vast numbers. They utilize this protected sanctuary as a stopover in their migratory route throughout the Great Rift Valley. Ascending back to the rim, we begin the real trek for the day, a 10.4 mile slow decent through golden hills and remote Maasai communities. The landscape here is simply breathtaking. On our way we pass Maasai people grazing their cattle and witness the reality and beauty of the Ngorongoro Conservation area alongside our fellow trekkers. Our expedition-style camp consists of spacious REI tents with full length cots, air mattresses, pillows, and mobile compostable bathrooms. Enjoy a campfire set in a serene acacia grove on the outskirts of a Maasai community at 6,540 feet. All meals included.

Empakai Crater Hike: 2.8 miles, 2 hours; elevation gain/loss: 978'; Empakai Crater to Acacia Camp walking: 10.4 miles, 4.5 hours; elevation gain: 1,053'; elevation loss: 2,838'

Day 10: Descend the rugged rift valley, passing Ol Doinyo Lengai Volcano.

Our hike today takes us from wet to dry environments in dramatic fashion. Dropping from the lush highlands, we pass through the Rift Valley Escarpment, descending thousands of feet in only a few miles. The dynamic geology of the region is on full display. An active volcano, Ol Doinyo Lengai stands raw and impressive directly to our west, its slopes blanketed in white carbonatite lava and ash, a unique blend found nowhere else on earth. The vistas on this trek are some of the most enchanting and rugged in the entire East African Rift Valley. Our classic tented safari camp is set up in a protected forest near the shoreline of Lake Natron. Here we enjoy a nice cold drink and hot shower, washing off the past days' dust and dirt. In the evening we visit a nearby promontory to watch the sun set in this exceptionally serene and stunning location. All meals included.

Hiking: 6.2 miles, 3.5 hours; elevation gain: 240'; elevation loss 3,133'

Day 11: Visit Lake Natron, local communities and swim in a refreshing waterfall.

Lake Natron stretches for miles, touching the Kenya border with a surreal mirror like quality. Along the shoreline, we'll see hundreds of migratory flamingos and other avian species as we walk with our Maasai chaperon. Nearby lies the village of Ngaresero, where we stop to visit a medical outpost. Our stroll through this frontier town will take us by a local primary school and end with a stop at Rehema's Bar for a cold soda. Later in the afternoon we have the option of taking a short hike to a waterfall, a rare treat in this arid land. All meals included.

Hiking: 2.2 miles; elevation gain: 377', partially through thigh-deep running water and over rough and slippery rocks.

Day 12: Visit a working Maasai boma and drive to the Ngorongoro highlands.

Waking up early, we depart early to visit our guide's family home. Here we watch as they prepare dung for the day's construction efforts, milk the cattle and release them out to graze. Step into the dark interior of the family's home and discover the intrinsic bond between Maasai, herd and home. We return to our classic tented camp for breakfast before hitting the road back towards the Ngorongoro Highlands. Arriving to our comfortable lodge in the early afternoon, we have time to take a dip in the pool, or perhaps indulge in some pampering with a massage before our final dinner together. All meals included.

Driving: 3 hours on unpaved road; 30 minutes on paved road

Day 13: Visit an inspiring medical clinic, return to Kilimanjaro Airport.

On our last day in Tanzania, we'll spend the morning hiking into the forested Ngorongoro highlands. On our way we'll pass the Endoro waterfalls and may catch sight of dik-dik, baboons, forest elephant as well as a myriad of bird species. The trail leads us to the elephant caves. These have literally been hewn into arched caves by the tusks of the elephants, hungry for the mineral deposits within the soil. After our hike we'll visit the nearby FAME Clinic. Founded in 2002 by American doctors Frank Artress and Susan Gustafson, FAME provides high quality medical care to a remote region of Tanzania. We tour their facility and learn about their collaborative and courageous work. Afterwards, we drive to Arusha where we have some time to shop. This evening we provide a group transfer to the Kilimanjaro Airport, for flights departing after 8pm. Breakfast and lunch included.

Hiking: 3 miles, 1.5-2 hours; elevation gain: 489'; Driving: 3 hours

Note on Itinerary

Although we do our very best to adhere to the schedule listed above, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control.