

Preparing for Kilimanjaro Part 1: Physical Preparation

Greetings from Arusha! We are looking forward to accompanying you to the peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the “Roof of Africa”! It's going to be an amazing experience!

To help you prepare for the trek, we've created a short series of emails with tips and helpful information about the mountain and your upcoming trekking adventure.

It's been said that the key to successfully climbing Kilimanjaro is three-fold: 1) physical ability, 2) mental will, and 3) a good quality outfitter and crew.

So today let's start with getting yourself physically ready to climb that mountain!

To train for Kilimanjaro, keep in mind that this is not a technical mountain climb. It's really just a *very long* walk up a *very big* hill. :) So the best way to train is to replicate that same scenario at home. Go on lots of long walks and hikes. As much as possible, train on actual trails rather than a treadmill or paved paths or sidewalks because the rougher terrain will condition your muscles for the trails on Kilimanjaro. If you have the opportunity to do some higher altitude hiking, that's great! But if not, even walking hills will be invaluable to strengthening your muscles for the trek.

If you are already doing other types of cardio as part of your regular fitness routine, don't stop doing those. Running, biking, swimming, aerobics are all great to strengthen your cardiovascular system.

Good balance and a strong core will also be to your advantage. Parts of the trail can be tough to maneuver because of the loose gravel. So add in some yoga and/or Pilates when you can. Yoga will also be helpful in training you to control your breathing which will be an asset as you reach higher elevations and the oxygen levels decrease.

Don't overcomplicate your training program! Focus on strengthening your cardio health and your core strength, and you'll be in great shape for the mountain.

Bonus tip: As you get closer to your arrival in Tanzania—at least a month or so—you can also start hiking with the boots you'll be using for the climb, and your day pack packed with everything you'll be carrying on the mountain with you. That will help condition your muscles for the extra load, and also alert you in advance if you need to scale back on what you carry. It may also point out a problem with your pack rubbing wrong or causing pain, and it will make sure your boots are properly broken in. You can also start practicing with walking poles if you haven't used them before. (We'll talk more specifically about walking poles, packs and other gear in another email coming soon.)

In upcoming emails we'll talk about readying your mindset for the trek and also introduce you to your mountain guide and tell you a little more about us and our company. But for now you may want to check these out:

Website: <http://tanzaniachocesafaris.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tanzaniachoice>

Reviews: <https://www.safaribookings.com/reviews/p1592>

Any time you've got a question about the trip please feel free to drop me an email and I'll be glad to help!

Preparing for Kilimanjaro Part 2: Mental Will

Hi friends,

I hope you're all in a rhythm now with a fitness plan to get your body ready to climb Kilimanjaro. Now, let's talk about getting your mind ready.

As I said in my previous email, the three keys to successfully climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro are 1) physical ability, 2) mental will, and 3) a good quality outfitter and crew. So as you prepare your mind for the climb, consider these ideas:

Know Your WHY

Why have you decided to take on this challenge? What inspired you to say yes to the trek? Think about what your motivations are and write them down. Be as complete and detailed as you can. Revisit it often and carry it with you on the climb. When things get tough on the mountain, it can remind you of why you started in the first place.

Visualize Your Success

Use the power of your imagination to see yourself at the peak of Kilimanjaro. Convince your mind that you've already succeeded. I've attached a few photos of previous guests who reached the top—visualize yourself in their place, celebrating your successful summit.

Create a Playlist

Put together a collection of songs that motivate and inspire you. Use it for your workouts as you prepare for your climb, but also bring it along on your phone or MP3 player so when your energy starts to lag you can pop in your ear buds and let the music keep you moving.

Choose a Mantra

Select a short phrase or even a single word that you can repeat to yourself to keep you moving when you start to feel tired. Or choose a prayer, scripture or song lyrics to focus on.

Focus on One Step at a Time

Our lead mountain guide Festo is famous for saying, "Every single step will get you there." Don't think about how many miles or hours you have to hike each day, just focus on the next step and then the next.

Support and Encourage Each Other

Be sure to cheer each other along as you go. It will help to keep your own spirits up as you encourage others—and not just the others in your group but also the other climbers you'll encounter on the way. You've all got the same goal—to reach the top!

Have Fun and Enjoy!

This climb may be the biggest physical and mental challenge you experience. But don't take it too seriously! Take in the scenery, get to know your mountain crew, tell a few jokes and share a few laughs with your fellow climbers. Your time at the summit is just a tiny portion of the time you'll be on the mountain--don't focus so much on the top that you miss out on the special moments along the way.

In the next email of this series I'll tell you more about your crew, what gear you'll need for the mountain and what you can expect from us as your outfitter for the climb. In the meantime, please feel free to reply to this message with any specific questions you have about the climb or the trip in general.

Preparing for Kilimanjaro Part 3: Outfitter/Crew & Equipment

Hello again friends,

By now I hope you're coming along nicely with your training program to get you physically prepared for Kilimanjaro, and you've done some work on your mental fitness as well. Today I'd like to tell you a bit about your mountain crew, and give you more details on the gear you'll need for the climb.

Your mountain climb will be led by our Lead Mountain Guide, Festo Mtui. Festo grew up on Mt. Kilimanjaro and has summited the mountain more times than he can count! He's incredibly knowledgeable about the mountain, and a skilled guide. Along with Festo your crew will consist of assistant guides, cooks and porters to carry all the food, equipment and gear needed for the climb. This crew will be key to your success. They'll keep you safe, warm, dry, well-fed and inspired along the way. As it is customary to tip the crew at the end of the climb, I am attaching a tipping guide to help in your planning.

As your outfitter for the trek, we'll be taking care of your camping equipment, meals, clean drinking water, all the park fees and transportation. We'll manage all those logistics so you can focus on the climb. And we'll be available to answer any questions you have about the climb (our virtual coaching call will be a great time to ask your burning questions and get answers straight from our Kilimanjaro expert).

As for your personal gear, you'll want to start collecting that for the climb if you haven't already. Attached is a recommended gear list to guide you. Many of the items needed can actually be rented here for a nominal fee so if there's something on the list you don't have and you don't think it's necessarily worth investing in, consider just renting it instead. The two most common things our guests rent are sleeping bags and walking poles just because of the bulk of bringing them along. The one item we don't recommend renting here are your boots. You'll want a pair of boots that fit you well and that you've had a chance to properly break in before you start the climb.

During your actual hiking time, you will only be carrying your day pack with the things you need to have with you at that time—rain gear, water, sunglasses, camera, etc. Since you'll be carrying that bag yourself, take care to pack only the essentials. Once you've got your day pack and its contents figured out, you may want to start carrying with you on some of your training hikes to get accustomed to the weight and feel.

Use a larger bag—either a larger backpack or duffel-style bag—to pack your other belongings.—your clothes, toiletries, etc. This bag will be carried for you by a porter. The porters go ahead of you on the trails to get the next campsite set up so when you arrive there you'll find your larger bag waiting for you. Please note on the packing list that there is a weight restriction for this bag so plan carefully. Anything you bring with you for safari that you won't need on the climb can be safely stored at our office while you are on the mountain. (Conversely, anything you bring for the mountain that you don't need for safari can also be stored for you.)

As you put together your gear, don't feel like everything must be brand new. Check out Craigslist, eBay, garage sales, or borrow from family or friends.

The day before you start the climb, Festo will do a gear check to look over everything you've brought with you. This is to both make sure that you didn't leave out anything essential, and that you aren't bringing more than you need. If it turns out you did forget something, there will still be time to round it up for you locally.

One fun item to consider bringing is a special "prop" to use in your summit photo. Attached are a couple of photos of what previous clients brought/wore for their photos. One couple brought along a flag they had made showing their alma maters and another client wore his cycling team uniform.