

4 4-2 Lemosho ascent Lemosho Glades to Big Tree Camp

Time (average)	2–3 hours
Altitude gained	400m (1310ft)
Grade	mostly a steady ascent, with some steep undulations
Terrain	narrow path enclosed by rain forest, slippery in wet weather
Summary	a short hike with some steep sections and lots of interest with wild flowers, birdsong and traces of large animals

The Lemosho route starts from the west and offers a more scenic, less busy approach to Barranco Camp than the Machame route with which it merges. It gained fame in 2009 in the UK when televised on BBC1 as the route used by the Red Nose Climb stars. It spreads the hike to Barranco over 4 days, and with the optional overnight at Karanga, an 8-day Lemosho allows 6 days to reach Barafu – 33% longer than a 6-day Machame. Even a 7-day Lemosho itinerary has acclimatisation advantages.

Most of the first day is spent being driven, first to Londorossi Gate (2250m) to complete formalities. With fertile volcanic soil and generous rainfall, you'll notice fine crops of bananas, sunflowers, coffee and maize on the journey west. From Moshi, the 80-km drive takes about two hours on variable roads, perhaps extended by a stop to buy food. Then there's the protracted waiting while permits are issued and fees paid at the Gate, though a picnic lunch may help to pass the time.

Londorossi Gate



Lemoshu
trailhead
2350



Big Tree
Camp
2750



From the Gate, the rough 4x4 track heads south to Lemoshu Glades. In wet conditions this journey can be tough for both driver and passengers. By the time that the porters' loads have been divided and the guides are ready for you set off, it may be late afternoon before you leave the trailhead at 2350m. Carry plenty of water and your head torch in case of arrival after dark.



Steep terrain with tree roots

The trail winds up through luxuriant rain forest, with huge trees bedecked with bearded lichen. The trail has lots of tree roots and may be slick with mud. There are steep undulations, especially at first, but the gradient slackens after a while. The sight of monkeys (blue and colobus), sounds of birds and profusion of wild flowers makes for plenty of interest. After a couple of hours, you reach Big Tree Camp (*Mti Mkubwa*). The Park authorities call it Forest Camp, but everybody else uses the obvious name.

Big Tree Camp



4 4-2 Lemosho ascent Big Tree Camp to Shira 1

Time (average)	4–6 hours
Altitude gained	750m (2460ft)
Grade	easy gradients at first, then steeper when climbing Shira Ridge
Terrain	mainly firm footing on good moorland paths with some rocky parts
Summary	a longer day with a telling altitude gain; plants, wild flowers and splendid wide views

The day begins with easy, undulating walking through rain forest rich in wild flowers, its trees streamed with bearded lichen. Within an hour or so, there's an abrupt transition to boulder-studded moorland. You'll see tree heathers and many varieties of *Helichrysum*.

After a further hour or so, the long climb to the plateau begins in earnest: take your time and drink plenty of water. Today's altitude gain is nearly double yesterday's, not to be rushed. Your picnic lunch stop may be in a clearing among the giant heathers.



Bearded lichen

South over the Shira Plateau

Big Tree
Camp
2750



Shira 1
3500



The path finally levels out as you skirt the northern end of the Shira Ridge, which defines the western rim of the Shira Plateau. As you crest the rise, if it's not too cloudy, a panorama opens up over the rolling plateau, with its landmarks ahead – East Shira Hill, Shira Cathedral and Shira Needle, with Cone Place to the right: see below.

Impressive though the Shira peaks may look, they don't compare with the awesome massif of Kibo, distant in the south-east. Depending on your state of mind, you may find this glimpse of the task ahead inspiring or daunting. From the ridge, there's a short, pleasant descent to Shira 1 by a path through the boulders and masses more *Helichrysum*.



Helichrysum in bud, above
Big Tree Camp



4 4-2 Lemosho ascent Shira 1 to Barranco

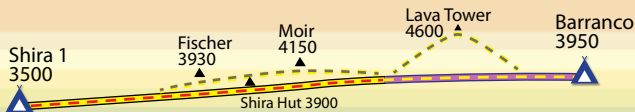
Time (average)	spread over two days, could take from 7-12 hours walking
Altitude gained	450m (1480ft) net gain, but Lava Tower is at 4600m (15,090ft)
Grade	easy to moderate, but steep descent from Lava Tower
Terrain	mainly firm paths with some rocky sections
Summary	two days spent exploring the fascinating Shira Plateau, with many options and lots of variety, a great prelude to the serious climb from Barranco

It takes two days to hike from Shira 1 to Barranco. There's a wide choice of intermediate campsites with confusingly similar names. From Shira 1 you may head for Shira Hut/Shira 2 (3850m), or Fischer (3930m) or stop for lunch at Fischer *en route* to camp at Moir Hut (4150m). (These camps lie north and north-east of New Shira as used by Machame.) The altitude gain from Shira 1 might be anything from 400m to 650m, but much less than yesterday's.

The hike features gentle ascent across the plateau, with the attraction of constant views of Kibo and its glaciers if the weather is clear. After 4km, the 4x4 track from Londorossi Gate (used mainly for emergency evacuation) joins from the left. You'll soon see Simba Cave picnic site (*simba* means lion) with an attractive pool nearby.

Rock pool near Simba Cave





The trail divides 1.5km after Simba Cave, where you'll either bear left for Fischer and Moir Camps or right for Shira Hut. Moir Camp has a fine situation, framed by the Lent group and with good views of Kibo to the right, beyond the Oehler Ridge.

The next day's destination is Barranco (3950m) with negligible altitude gain (perhaps even loss) – great for acclimatisation. The trails from the three campsites head south or south-east, and converge at about 4300m. Shortly you pass the grave of a Canadian hiker who was taken ill with AMS at Barranco and died before he could be evacuated. This is a sobering reminder of the importance of taking care – both of yourself and of other team members.



Near Fischer Camp

Within 1 km, at 4400m the Machame trail rises to join you along a ridge from the right (south-west), and 500m later there's a further junction. Some groups go direct from this trail junction almost south toward Barranco, but many opt for extra acclimatisation with an excursion to the dramatic Lava Tower (4600m): see photo on p67. Either way, from Barranco the Lemosho route is identical to Machame: see pp68-71.

Moir Camp

