

3 Mt Meru

3.1 Why climb Mount Meru?

Mount Meru was created by the same volcanic activity as the Great Rift Valley. About 250,000 years ago a massive eruption tore out its eastern crater wall, leaving a huge horseshoe crater rising to 4566m (14,980ft). Its last eruption was in 1910, six years *after* the first recorded ascent to its summit by Franz Jaeger.

There are good reasons to make Meru a prelude to Kili:

- The expedition makes ideal acclimatisation just before tackling Kili, and the two mountains are only about 50km/31mi apart.
- It's Tanzania's second highest mountain, with some challenging terrain, fine scrambling and dramatic crater views. Summiting Meru will give you more confidence to tackle Kili.
- Arusha National Park is rich in wildlife, and far less busy than Kili, so you see many more animals.
- Meru provides valuable experience of the Tanzanian trekking routine and of organising your kit; even the 2 am start is good practice for Kili.



Climbing Meru obviously adds to the cost and duration of your trip, although the daily cost is lower than Kili, and many outfitters offer discounts if you book the two together. If you can afford to include Meru, avoid the rainy season. The ascent includes a ridge walk (unsuitable if you get vertigo) and three stretches of exposed scrambling. In high wind, snow and/or ice, the terrain makes the crater hike even tougher, perhaps even unsafe, and you might have to settle for Rhino Point. However, your body would still benefit from Meru as a prelude to Kili.

Ignore three-day Meru itineraries: unless already acclimatised, you need four days. Starting from Momella Gate at 1500m, you sleep the first night at 2510m and the second at 3570m, then try for the summit at 4566m. Afterwards, descend only as far as Saddle Huts: you'll benefit from sleeping high and your summit day will be shorter. Many outfits expect you to descend to the lower hut, or even all the way to the Gate – thus losing 3000m of altitude just after you've summited! Confirm the itinerary in advance.

For optimum acclimatisation, set off for Kili straight after descending from Meru, though some groups prefer a full day's rest in between. You might even consider adding an extra night at Saddle Huts to make a five-day Meru trip.

