

## 3.4 Kibo Hut to the summit

Marangu

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Map</b>             | panel 2   |
| <b>Time (average)</b>  | 6-10 hours  |
| <b>Altitude gained</b> | 985/1195 metres (3230/3920 feet) to Gillman's Point/<br>Uhuru                                     |
| <b>Terrain</b>         | a steep, rough ascent on loose scree and rocks to the<br>crater rim; gentler gradients thereafter |
| <b>Summary</b>         | by far the most strenuous stage of the route, normally<br>attempted between midnight and dawn     |

You will be woken around midnight to walk through the night. This is mainly because you need the time to try to reach the summit but still descend in daylight. To reach your next night's accommodation via Uhuru, you need not only to gain 1195 m of vertical height, on a slope averaging some 27%, but also to lose 2195 m (Section 3.13). Also, in some ways walking at night is easier as the scree is firmer when cold or frozen and the snow less slushy in the early morning.

On waking, slip into as many layers of clothing as you have: you will be cold, perhaps very cold, to start with, but may need to shed layers after you have been climbing for a while. Alternatively, if a high wind gets up, you may become colder than ever, especially your hands, feet and ears.

*Sunrise behind Mawenzi, summit ascent*



Eat and drink whatever is on offer. Check that your drinking water and snacks are handy and that the water will not freeze. When your head-torch is switched on, take care not to dazzle others by looking directly at them. If there is moonlight, you may not need the head-torch.

The first half of this ascent is on a steep, winding rocky path. Try to maintain a very slow, but steady pace, rather than constantly stopping for short pauses. Shorten your stride on steeper scree, and don't be afraid to hang back if the pace is too fast for you. Many people get into a trance-like rhythm, trudging up rhythmically through the starlight. You may have a proper rest at Hans Meyer Cave, which at 5150 m is halfway in altitude to Gillman's Point, but the section above the Cave takes longer because the path becomes steeper as it zig-zags up towards the crater rim.

This is by far the most difficult section of the route, and mental strength is important as Gillman's Point mysteriously never seems to get any closer. Simply plod on and don't be discouraged: if you are determined, and escape altitude sickness, you will get there in the end. Your feet may slip back on the scree: try pushing harder on those poles, and edge in with your boots. As you near or reach the crater rim, the sun will raise your morale and body temperature. Pause to enjoy what many people consider the finest sunrise on earth.

From Gillman's Point, it takes another 1½ to 2 hours to Uhuru Peak, although the gradients are much gentler and the terrain easier. There's no point in making a colossal effort to reach the summit unless you are also still capable of getting yourself down: read Section 3.13 carefully ahead of time. You may find that the achievement of reaching the summit gives you a rush of energy that sees you through this, perhaps the longest day of your life.

*Summit glacier seen from crater rim*

