

ROOF OF AFRICA

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Kilimanjaro Treasures.

Home to the Masai and Chagga tribes, the region around the world's tallest free-standing mountain is famed for its accessible grandeur as well as its wealth of wildlife and natural preserves. The N Magazine invites you on a romantic tour of Kilimanjaro.

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TRAVEL&MORE



The tribespeople of Kilimanjaro lead a traditional rural lifestyle. The beautiful countryside is home to many animals including the great black-and-white Colobus monkey.

There are few places on earth more steeped in myth and romance than Kilimanjaro. In ancient times, the tribes living on the volcanic slopes below told stories of demons and evil spirits guarding fabulous treasure. One tale has an ancient chief Mawenzi sending his younger brother Kibo, both the names of two of Kilimanjaro's peaks, to fetch fire to light his pipe – perhaps referring to volcanic activity in prehistoric times. Today the snow-capped peaks of Africa's highest mountain are famous the world over and hold a special allure for travellers who come in their thousands to trek to the summit. It is not for nothing that "Kibo!" is also an expression of surprise. The mountain is frequently hidden behind veils of cloud but when it reveals itself, the monolithic presence rises suddenly from the plains and dominates the landscape.

More than 15,000 people attempt to climb Kilimanjaro every year. Although the route does not require technical mountaineering skills, many trekkers are thwarted by altitude sickness and most guides recommend taking at least five days, preferably six or seven, to minimise this risk. Kilimanjaro is home to the Chagga tribe and an important coffee growing region but most of the mountain is national park, brimming with wildlife such as monkeys, birds, elephant and buffalo.

There are several paths up Kilimanjaro but all ascend through tropical rainforest, heath, moorland, alpine desert and glaciers. Yet the mountain is not the only reason to visit the Kilimanjaro region. The region is renowned for its safari parks, including Arusha and Manyara to the south-west and the Tanzanian Serengeti further afield and north-west of Kilimanjaro. The closest is Arusha National Park, home to Mount Meru, another free-standing volcano and at 4,566 metres (14,990 feet) Africa's fifth highest mountain. The park is relatively small, at 137 square kilometres (53 square miles), but the ecology is very diverse, especially since the climate changes rapidly with ascent of the mountain. The roads



Coffee growing provides a livelihood for the Chagga of Kilimanjaro (top left), while Masai tend cattle on the plains below (top centre). Football is the favourite pastime of most young males in Tanzania.

meander through grassy meadows filled with buffalo, giraffe and zebra, and past the Momela lakes filled with thousands of pink flamingo and the occasional hippopotamus. A detour up Mount Meru heads deep into the cloudy rainforest with views of Kilimanjaro and the surrounding countryside and the chance to spot monkeys, baboons, deer, leopards and even elephants.

Slightly further afield but still possible as a day trip is Lake Manyara National Park, which is bigger and offers the tantalising possibility of seeing the legendary tree-climbing lion. Canoeing is available at Manyara depending on the time of year and the rainfall. The Kilimanjaro region, which has its own international airport, is also the perfect jumping off point for a safari to the world-famous Serengeti. This is the

place to go for big cats, including lions and cheetahs, and is especially exciting during the annual migration when some six million zebra, gazelle and wildebeest traverse the plains in search of fresh grazing.

Mountain scenery and wildlife are not the only reasons to visit Kilimanjaro; there is also the human and cultural aspect. The grasslands stretching for hundreds of miles around Kilimanjaro are home to the fearsome Masai warriors. The Masai traditionally believe God appointed them guardian of cattle and their religious duty involves herding and taking care of the great “milk beasts”. They rarely eat the meat of the cattle but do drink their milk and blood and despite a diet that largely excludes vegetables, most Masai are healthy and strong. Life is changing for the warrior tribe – they have greater contact with the market economy than ever before and most of their children now attend school and learn Swahili. The sight of the Masai clad in their vividly coloured traditional dress and adorned with distinctive body piercings and jewellery is vividly memorable – and woe betide anyone who gets on the wrong side of a Masai spear.

The foothills of Kilimanjaro are the site of fertile farmsteads, brimming with food crops such as beans, maize and banana, and producing some of Africa’s best coffee.

German missionaries first brought coffee to the area in the late 19th century, and there are huge coffee trees surviving from this era and still bearing a healthy crop year after year. Over a century later, coffee is an important source of income for the region, especially for the small farmers who grow it alongside food crops on family plots an acre or two in size. The climate and volcanic soils are perfect for coffee but the area under cultivation is limited by the park boundaries and the size of the mountain. As a consequence the quantities of true Kilimanjaro coffee are small and the product very exclusive. One of the biggest coffee farms actually on Kilimanjaro itself is Lyamungo Coffee Estate, near the sleepy market town of Moshi. Lyamungo was originally three adjoining farms but is run by Mufindi Tea Company, Nespresso’s supplier in the region, as one estate, with 290 hectares under cultivation. Coffee grows best between temperatures of 12° C and 30° C and the climate at Lyamungo delivers exactly that, with two rainy seasons a year and rich, volcanic soils. Mufindi manages Lyamungo on behalf of the local farmers’ co-operative, ensuring jobs and a steady income for the local community.

Paul Bebbington, general manager of Mufindi’s Moshi branch, says the company pays \$US33,000 annual rent plus a share of royalties, and this money has funded the construction of a brand new high school near the farm.

Lyasikika Secondary School currently has 210 pupils from first to third form and is expanding by one form every year, with hopes to offer an A-level programme (year 12 matriculation) within a few years. Bebbington says the farm has transformed the local economy with job creation as the greatest benefit. There are about 300 permanent staff and casual work for up to 1,000 people during harvest. “When we came here at the beginning of 1999 there were no shops around the farm and no real local economy going,” Bebbington recalls. “It’s changed so much and I get people coming to say ‘Thank you, you’ve changed our lives’ – there are shops going again, their kids are going to school. All our workers live around the farm in walking distance.”

Half the coffee trees on the farm are traditional Kent and Bourbon varieties, while the other half are new varieties, obtained using traditional methods of breeding, which are better adapted to the local conditions and require minimal use of chemicals. The farm is surrounded by forest and on a clear day the white peaks of Kilimanjaro loom dramatically over the rows of coffee.

This is a land blessed with more than its fair share of breathtaking natural beauty and fertile countryside. Although Kilimanjaro may not be inhabited by evil spirits, it seems the ancients were right about the fabulous treasure. 🍷



Kilimanjaro teenagers attend a brand new school funded from coffee growing in the region, while giraffes enjoy the sanctuary of nearby Arusha National Park.



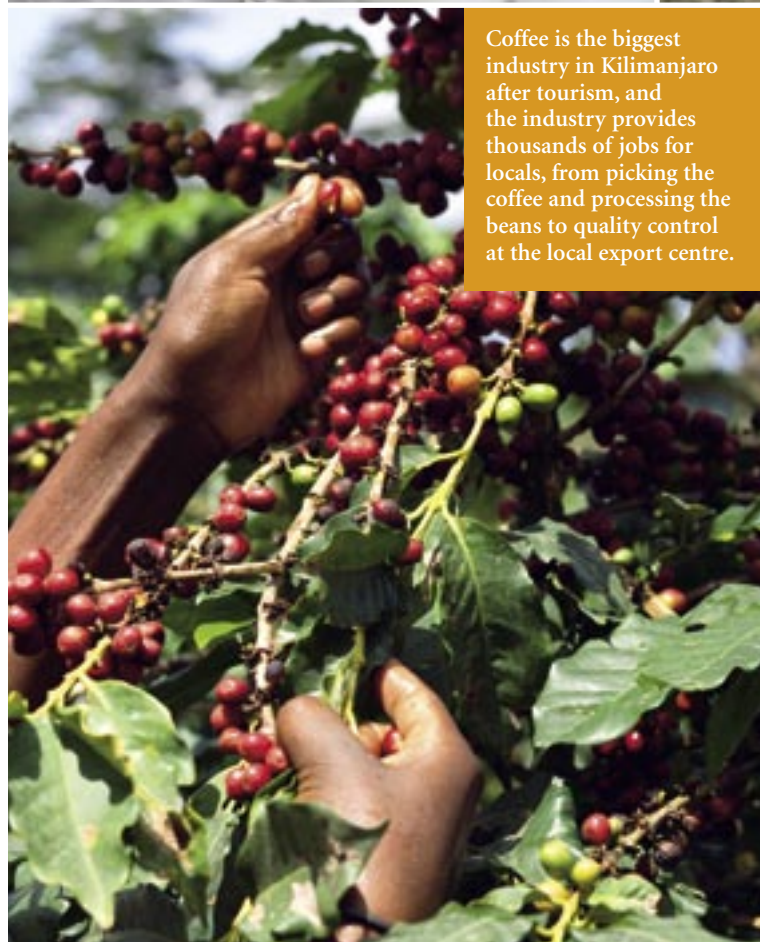
Protea Hotel Aishi is ideally situated on the Machame ascent to the summit of Kilimanjaro and only 20 minutes from Moshi towards the airport. Accommodation is in African-style villas set in a beautiful garden with a swimming pool. Email: proteaahireservations@satconet.net; Telephone: +255 (0) 27 275 6948/6941

Arusha Coffee Lodge, near Mount Meru and Arusha National Park, is a luxury hotel in the middle of a working coffee plantation. The private chalets have balconies with stunning views of the mountain and a coffee grinder and in-room percolator to provide the true feel of the coffee estate. Web: www.elewana.com

El Rancho, just outside of Moshi, serves fantastic Indian food in an al fresco dining setting. Sit out on the terrace and enjoy drinks or a hot meal; anything from the barbeque is recommended and particularly tasty. Address: Lema Road, Shanty Town, Moshi; Telephone: +255 (0) 27 275 5115

Climbing Kilimanjaro is the main attraction for most visitors coming to this part of Tanzania. For this reason it is worth taking about a week to climb the mountain to give your body the best chance at acclimatisation. There are numerous tour operators and private guides available - your hotel or travel agent can advise you or you can find a trip online. Web: www.responsibletravel.com. www.go2africa.com

Kilimanjaro International Airport is served by three international airlines: KLM, Ethiopian Airlines and Air Tanzania arriving from Amsterdam, Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Dar es Salaam.



Coffee is the biggest industry in Kilimanjaro after tourism, and the industry provides thousands of jobs for locals, from picking the coffee and processing the beans to quality control at the local export centre.



Limited Edition 2007* COFFEE MARRIAGE

Named for the Swahili “to marry”, the Limited Edition Oâ encapsulates the magical charm of Africa: as legendary as Africa’s highest mountain peaks and as enchanting as the animal paradise that surrounds them. Embark on a gourmet safari.

When the colonial powers of Europe divided up East Africa in the 19th century, the new border separated Africa’s two highest mountains. Kilimanjaro, the continent’s highest mountain at 5,895m and the largest free-standing volcano in the world, fell within German-controlled Tanganyika, now known as Tanzania. Meanwhile, Mount Kenya, slightly smaller at 5,199m, lay inside the British-ruled lands to the north in what is modern-day Kenya. The border between Tanzania and Kenya is straight but for the detour around Kilimanjaro, and the story is that the British monarch Queen Victoria gave the mountain to her grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, as a gift because “Wilhelm likes everything that is high and big”.

Historians dispute this, but whatever the reason, the two mountains share much in common. Joined by the Great Rift Valley, both mountains are surrounded by national park and the summits lie shrouded in clouds, home to the gods in local legend. On the slopes of these now extinct volcanoes, the fierce heat of Africa yields to fresh mountain breezes and nourishing rain, with the perfect climate and soil for growing coffee.

This season’s special blend, Oâ, which is named for the Swahili word “to marry”, draws from this dual heritage with 60 per cent Arabica from Mount Kenya and 40 per cent from Kilimanjaro. Although Kilimanjaro coffee is the highest quality, the scarcity of farmland on the mountain means the produc-

tion of coffee is small. Coffee produced in nearby areas often claims to be from Kilimanjaro, but true Kilimanjaro coffee is exclusive and highly sought after.

The Kilimanjaro Arabica in Oâ comes exclusively from Lyamungo Coffee Estate on Kilimanjaro. Mufindi Tea Company, which manages the Lyamungo farm on behalf of a local cooperative, has planted two classic varieties, Bourbon and Kent, and a hybrid. The ripe beans are picked by hand from April to July, and carefully washed and dried in Mufindi’s facilities in Moshi. This year Nespresso bought almost the entire crop from Lyamungo for use in the new season’s Limited Edition blend, around 300 tonnes of coffee. When looking for a coffee to supplement and complement the Kilimanjaro beans, Mount Kenya was the obvious choice for Nespresso.

The coffees are roasted separately to enhance the fruity and citrus character of the Kenyan coffee and the toasty after-taste notes and the mouth-feel texture of the Kilimanjaro coffee. The resulting blend is a juicy, acidic and soft coffee with fruity, tropical and citrus flavours and a medium to strong intensity. An espresso serving of Oâ produces a thick crema and boasts a delicate flavour with sweet notes, reminiscent of ripe tropical fruits. The coffee is particularly good in a short ice-cold drink.

**The Limited Edition is available only while stocks last.*