

HOW TO DRESS FOR KILIMANJARO

It is said that the trek from the gate to the peak of Kilimanjaro is like walking from the equator to Antarctica. The temperatures you may encounter on Mount Kilimanjaro can be over 100 degrees to well below zero. Therefore, it is important for all climbers to understand how to best dress to cope with the mountain weather. By following the provided gear list, you already have everything you need to stay comfortable and warm.

Layering is a systematic, logical approach to wearing multiple layers of clothing. The advantages of layering are that it is versatile (a climber can add or remove layers to adapt to changing weather, activity level and body temperature), thermally efficient (multiple thinner layers are warmer than an equal thickness single layer), and space efficient (takes up less space in your backpack).

You should follow the layering principle when you suit up for Kilimanjaro. Technical clothing can be categorized into the following types of layers: base layer, mid layer, and outer shell.



Base Layer

A base layer is moisture-wicking item that is worn against the skin. By moving sweat away from your body, the base layer should keep you dry and provide some insulation. They are available in different thicknesses, although light-weight is recommended for its versatility over medium-, heavy-, and expedition-weight clothing. Base layers can be worn alone in warm weather, and can be doubled-up (worn on top of one another) during cold weather. Several types of fabric or blends of fabric are used to construct base layers, including silk, wool, and polypropylene, which are usually sold under registered trademarks by outdoor gear companies.

Cotton is not a good base layer material! It does not have any moisture-wicking properties, does not dry quickly, and will actually increase your heat loss when wet.

2 – Long Sleeve Shirt, light-weight, moisture-wicking fabric

1 – Short Sleeve Shirt, light-weight, moisture-wicking fabric

1 – Long Underwear (moisture-wicking fabric recommended)

3 – Underwear, briefs (moisture-wicking fabric recommended)

1 – Bandana (optional)

1 – Balaclava

3 – Sock liners, tight, thin, synthetic, worn underneath to prevent blisters

1 – Gloves, light, thin, synthetic, worn underneath for added warmth (optional)

1 – Arm Warmers, synthetic (optional)



Mid Layer

The primary purpose of a mid layer is to provide warmth. Therefore, while searching for mid layers, you should look for those that have good insulating qualities. Insulation is best created by materials that trap tiny air pockets, or dead air, between you and the elements. Wool or synthetic fabrics can be used as a mid layer in cool weather. However, for cold conditions, use fleece, down or heavier synthetics.

Fleece provides good insulation because it is relatively thin, fast-drying, comfortable, and light-weight, but lacks wind protection. Down is the most efficient insulating material, with respect to its warmth per ounce ratio, but loses its insulating qualities when wet. It is very compressible for packing, but bulky when worn. Therefore, select lightweight down products when used as a mid layer. Synthetic insulated jackets are not as warm or light as down, but they function even when wet.

1 – Soft Jacket, fleece or soft-shell

1 – Insulated Jacket, synthetic or down

1 – Fleece Pants

3 – Socks, thick, wool or synthetic

2 – Hiking Pants* (convertible to shorts recommended)

1 – Shorts* (optional) *considered mid layers simply because they are worn on top of the base layer (underwear).



Outer Layer

The outer layer is designed to provide protection from the wind, rain and snow. Some outer layers have built in insulation, but I recommend obtaining each layer separately for greater versatility.

- 1 – Waterproof Jacket, breathable with hood
- 1 – Waterproof Pants, breathable (side-zipper recommended)
- 1 – Knit Hat, for warmth
- 1 – Brimmed Hat, for sun protection
- 1 – Gaiters, waterproof (optional)
- 1 – Hiking Boots, waterproof, broken-in, with spare laces
- 1 – Gym shoes, to wear at camp
- 1 – Gloves (waterproof recommended)

With the above listed gear, you should be able to withstand whatever weather conditions Mount Kilimanjaro has in store for you. It is important that you be cognizant of changing conditions as you hike and adapt accordingly (unzip/shed layers before you sweat, zip up/add layers before you get cold, wear waterproof gear before you get wet, etc.)