

Born Free Climb for Conservation 2020: Mount Kenya Expedition

3 – 11 October 2020



About Born Free and the Mount Kenya Trust

Born Free

Born Free works tirelessly to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. As a leading wildlife charity, Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaign to keep them where they belong – in the wild. The charity promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals.

Mount Kenya Trust

Mount Kenya Trust (MKT) works to safeguard a naturally thriving mountain that is rich in biodiversity and sustainable in economic development - where the integrity of the ecosystem is protected for the welfare of all who depend on it. MKT works across a range of areas including wildlife conservation, habitat protection and community conservation to ensure co-existence between people and wildlife.

During the trip we will be visiting the conservation projects you are raising funds for, including a visit to MKT's elephant corridor and tree planting sites.

The Mount Kenya elephant corridor which is a 14km protected channel that provides safe passage for elephants migrating between Mount Kenya and the Ngare Ndare Forest to the Samburu country to the north. The route reflects a traditional elephant migratory pathway, but due to increased human settlements and infrastructure, human-elephant conflict had become a significant issue. Following the installation of the corridor, this has since been reduced, and countless other species have benefitted from its protection, including spotted hyenas, wild dog, leopards, porcupines and warthogs.

Mount Kenya's forests suffered considerably in the past decades, when large areas were cleared to provide timber and land for rapid population growth and urbanisation. MKT works with the Kenya Forest Service and the Community Forest Associations to recover indigenous forest on areas that have been degraded in the past. Over the past decade, MKT have successfully planted over a million trees at several tree planting sites with new sites opening up each year!

Trek Overview

Mount Kenya

Situated in the centre of Kenya in a protected UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mount Kenya rises to a lofty 5199m. Mount Kenya is actually an extinct volcano although the crater has eroded over the centuries to leave numerous valleys and jagged rocky pinnacles radiating from the centre. Mount Kenya is the second highest mountain in Africa, just 696m shorter than its neighbour Kilimanjaro. There are three main peaks on Mt Kenya; two are technical climbing peaks: Batian (5199m) and Nelion (5188m), and the third is the trekking peak, Point Lenana (4985m), which you will summit. As the mountain is surrounded by a National Park, the mountain has a wide variety of flora and fauna including birds, deer, buffalo and even elephants. Although there is no guarantee of animal sightings, trekking quietly on this beautiful mountain gives you a great chance to see some of the native wildlife.

Trek route

You will ascend via the Sirimon route on the north west of the mountain to Point Lenana, and descend via the Naro Moru route on the south west side of the mountain. The Sirimon route is considered one of the best for acclimatisation, due to its relatively gradual altitude gain and therefore your chance of success in reaching the summit is good. Subject to weather conditions you will be treated to stunning views of glaciers, rugged volcanic boulders, sparkling lakes, indigenous flora and the jagged, icy summit of Mount Kenya.

What are the ecological zones of Mount Kenya?

There are five main ecological zones on Mount Kenya:

Lowlands and cultivated zone (up to 2000m): Grassland, scrub, grazing land, cultivation, farming settlements; generally fertile and lush.

Montane forest (1800-2500m): The forest belt encircles the mountain and supports a variety of wildlife including antelope, elephant, buffalo, Colobus monkeys and hyrax. It is generally damp and cloudy with cool nights.

Timberline and heathland zone (2500-3800m): This is a semi-alpine area with heath-like vegetation and wild flowers. Mice, voles, and their predators, eagles, buzzards and kites live in this zone.

Alpine zone (3500m-4500m): A semi desert zone with sub-zero temperatures at night. Giant groundsels, giant thistles and giant lobelias are common in this region. Small mammals such as mice and hyrax live in this area.

Nival zone (4500-5199m): This zone has very little vegetation, with freezing cold nights and lower levels of oxygen. Mt Kenya was completely covered by an ice cap for thousands of years but at present only a small fraction of the glacier remains.

What is the terrain like?

The terrain will vary each day but in general you will experience undulating terrain with an uphill gradient as you approach the summit and a downhill gradient on the way down from the summit. It is essential that your training includes hill walking to include trekking up and down gradients; training on flat terrain will not adequately prepare you. Underfoot the terrain will vary from muddy forests, rocky and dry trails, barren gravelly tracks, scree and possibly even snow. No technical climbing skills are required.

What is the climate like?

Temperatures will depend on the altitude, the weather and wind chill. For the days between 1800-3000m you can expect day time temperatures to range between 5-25°C, and night time temperatures to drop to -10°C.

From 3500-4500m day time temperatures will range from 0-10°C during the day and sub-zero night time temperatures (down to -15°C on average); wind chill may make these temperatures feel colder.

The summit trek to Point Lenana (4985m) may be extremely cold, with cold high winds having an enormous impact on the temperature. Temperatures can range from a relatively balmy -5°C to an Arctic -30°C with wind chill.

Weather conditions will vary as the mountain has its own unpredictable weather system. Conditions include bright sunny days with clear skies, overcast days with high humidity, cold dry windy days, rain, snow etc. It's important to be prepared for all weather conditions and temperatures by packing technical non-cotton layers and waterproofs.

How tough is the trek?

This is a very tough trek which we grade *challenging to extreme*. You will be trekking on challenging terrain which is often steep; you will be exposed to altitudes up to 4985m and will stay in basic mountain huts or tents. Each day you will trek up to 8 hours per day.

Summit night is the most challenging part of the trek because it starts in the very early hours of the morning and is a very long day of walking. You trek through the cold and dark of the night up to the summit on a loose scree path with some minor scrambling until you reach Point Lenana around 5-6 hours later. It is an arduous night. You need to stay positive, remember your goal, and keep a very slow, steady pace. The hard work pays off after you reach the summit and enjoy magnificent views. After celebrating your achievement you descend 6-7 hours to Met Station Camp where you will have a well-deserved rest. It could be an 11-13 hour trek day.

Who will accompany us?

This trek is accompanied by English-speaking local guides, and a Different Travel Company UK tour manager. They are first aid trained and will support you throughout your journey. You will also be supported by a team of assistant guides, cooks and porters who together make your journey possible.



Who can take part?

The minimum age is 18 (or 16-17 if accompanied by an adult) and there is no upper age limit. Each participant should arrive in Kenya with a good level of fitness having engaged in suitable fitness training; they should be healthy, have a determined attitude and be willing to be pushed out of their comfort zone.

How fit do I need to be?

Commitment to physical preparation is fundamental for this challenge, to ensure your best chance of success, and enjoyment, during the trek. Your training should replicate the trek as closely as possible so engaging in many multi-day hill walks of 7+ hours per day is the optimal training ground. Hill walks should be supplemented with strength training and cardiovascular exercises such as gym workouts, running, swimming, cycling, boot camps etc. You can download a number of free apps which help you train and track your progress. E.g. MyFitnessPal, MapMyWalk, C25K (couch to 5k run) etc. Attempting to complete the trek without training will make each day more challenging than necessary, being inadequately prepared may prevent you from reaching the summit, and it may hinder the experience of your teammates.

The ascent does not require technical climbing skills but it is a huge mountain at high altitude so you must take your training seriously and not underestimate the scale of the challenge.

We require a medical form to be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues **must** be noted and (if relevant) signed by your GP. Any conditions that develop must be declared and a new medical form completed and signed.

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Trip Cost

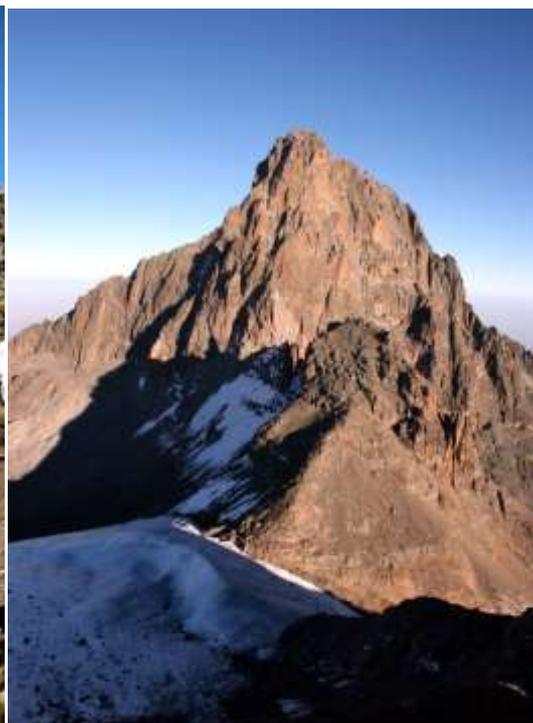
A £300 registration fee is payable at the time of booking and you are asked to fundraise a minimum of £3,200 for Born Free.

Trip Includes:

Return flights from London (inc. airport taxes), all transfers and transport in Kenya, accommodation in a 3 star hotel in Nairobi, a basic lodge in Nanyuki, mountain huts or tents on trek, meals as specified, local English speaking guides, porters and cooks, current Mount Kenya fees and permits, Flying Doctors Service for emergency evacuation cover and a UK Different Travel tour manager.

Trip Does Not Include:

Tips (approx. US\$150/£120 per person depending on group size), Kenya e-visa (current cost US\$51), travel insurance, personal expenses (drinks, souvenirs, etc.), any vaccinations required, malaria prophylaxis, personal trekking kit, any increases in Mount Kenya National Park fees between the time of writing (July 2019) and time of departure, single occupancy room supplement (subject to availability).



Itinerary

Day 1 (Saturday 3 October): London - Nairobi

Fly from London to Nairobi on an overnight flight.
Meals: None.

Day 2 (Sunday 4 October): Nairobi

On arrival, transfer to your hotel in Nairobi where you can relax and settle in before a briefing and welcome dinner tonight. Meals: Dinner.



Day 3 (Monday 5 October): Nairobi - Mountain Rock Bantu Campsite (2,700m)

We set off from the hotel early this morning, stopping en route for lunch. We reach our campsite early this afternoon and settle in before taking a short walk (9km / 3 hours) to the Mau Mau cave. The Mau Mau Cave was used by Kenyan freedom fighters as a hideout from British soldiers during the Mau Mau Uprising of 1952 to 1960.

This pleasant walk through wild bushes and indigenous trees is located at the foothills of Mt Kenya and open out to a beautiful waterfall and Burguret River. The area is also home to baboons, Colobus monkeys and other species. After exploring the area we return to camp for dinner.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.



Day 4 (Tuesday 6 October): Mountain Rock Bantu Campsite – Sirimon Gate - Old Moses (3,400m)

After breakfast we take a short drive (approx. 1 hour) to Sirimon gate (2,650m) where we register and commence our trek. From the gate the trail winds uphill through a sparse forest which becomes heathland after about 3 hours. After another hour or two of trekking we arrive at Old Moses camp (3,400m) for dinner and overnight in a mountain hut. Trekking approx. 4-5 hours, 9km, +750m ascent.
Meals: B, L, D.



Day 5 (Wednesday 7 October): Old Moses (3,400m) – Shiptons Camp (4,200m)

After breakfast we begin the trek through heathland following the trail uphill and across the Ontulili River. From here we progress into the moorland, and pass Liki North River located on the floor of a glacial valley. We continue uphill and into Mackinder's Valley and, if the weather is clear, we enjoy spectacular views up the valley towards the main peaks right below Batian and Nelion. Today we will see the changing mountain vegetation including giant lobelia and groundsel. We arrive at Shiptons Camp where once again we stay in mountain huts. Here you are quite likely to spot a rock hyrax, a small fur-covered mammal, which is a very distant relative of the elephant!

Trekking approx. 8hrs, 14km, +900m ascent.

Meals: B, L, D.

Day 6 (Thursday 8 October): Shiptons Camp – Point Lenana (4,985m) – Met Station Camp

It's a very early start this morning (approx. 2am) as we set out to reach our goal of Point Lenana, the third highest peak of Mount Kenya. The climb starts on frozen scree and continues on a rocky track with some minor scrambling. Weather permitting we will enjoy spectacular views of Mt. Kilimanjaro to the south on the horizon. The trek to Point Lenana, 4985m takes approx. 4-5 hours and as the sun rises at around 6am we enjoy the spectacular view before dropping down the ridge of Lenana on the Naro Moru route and trek to Austrian Hut which is about 1 hour below the summit. The ridge is initially quite narrow in sections and we take our time as there will be some minor scrambling but it gets broader as we approach Austrian Hut. From Austrian Hut we continue down to Mackinder's Camp (4,160m) for brunch and a chance to relax before continuing our descent down the Teleki Valley via the infamous 'Vertical Bog' to reach Met Station (3,050m) where we stay in mountain huts overnight. The entire descent takes approx. 7 hours. Trekking approx. 11-13hrs, 18km, +785m ascent, -1935m descent.
Meals: B, L, D.



Day 7 (Friday 9 October): Station Banda – Nanyuki

After an early breakfast we descend for 2-3 hours through the rain forest to Naro Moru Park Gate (2500m), where our vehicle awaits to take us to Nanyuki for a well-deserved rest and shower. This afternoon we will transfer to the Mount Kenya Trust where we will have a briefing on the activities to come.
Trekking approx. 2-3hrs, 10km, -550m descent.
Meals: B, L, D.



Day 8 (Saturday 10 October): Nanyuki

We will enjoy a full day of conservation activities with Mount Kenya Trust on a range of activities, depending on the most urgent need at the Trust at the time of our visit. We celebrate our achievements with a farewell dinner this evening. Meals: B,L,D.

Day 9 (Sunday 11- Monday 12 October): Nanyuki - Nairobi - UK

Depending on flight schedules, we will have brunch in Nanyuki before we transfer to Nairobi for an early dinner and our flight back to the UK. The flight may land on Monday 12 October. Meals: B (L,D).



N.B. This itinerary may change due to flight schedules, weather, the ability of the group, wildlife movements, local bureaucracy and so on. We will do our best to keep to the set itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for changes that might occur outside of our control. In all such circumstances your guide and tour leader will have the final say in the interest of the health and safety of the group.