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Kibo Peak looms beautifully in the distance. Kibo is a dormant volcano and is the highest point in Africa. The ice cap is visible in this photo, but in a decade it could be gone due to global warming. This would deprive surrounding villages of a vital water source.

# Mount Kilimanjaro: 25 fun facts

1. Johannes Rebmann, a German missionary, is credited with discovering Mount Kilimanjaro in 1848. He explored the lower slopes and sent the Royal Geographical Society his findings, including a description of a snow-capped summit. Experts at the time doubted the possibility of a snow-capped mountain located near the equator.
2. The first successful summit occurred in 1889. It took six weeks. Today the average climber can do it in five or six days.
3. Some of the camps on the mountain sell beer.
4. Mount Kilimanjaro stretches 5,895 metres into the sky, making it the world's tallest free-standing mountain. It's also the highest point in Africa.
5. The snow caps are rapidly diminishing, having lost over 80 per cent of its mass since 1912, likely due to climate change. They could be entirely gone by 2020.
6. On June 29, 2009 eight blind climbers made it to the top of the mountain in an effort to raise funds for 52 blind babies in Arizona.
7. South African Bernard Goosen was the first person to scale Mount Kilimanjaro in a wheelchair. He did it twice. First in 2003 (nine days), and then again in 2007 (six days).
8. Famed humourist Douglas Adams, author of the legendary *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series, once ran up the mountain dressed in a rhinoceros suit.
9. Justin Timberlake, along with singer Kenna and rapper Lupe Fiasco are planning to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in the fall of 2009 to raise awareness for the worldwide water crisis.
10. Mount Kilimanjaro is actually a massive stratovolcano that was formed by repeated lava flow. It has three volcanic cones, two of which are extinct. The third cone, Kibo, is the highest point on the mountain and is dormant.
11. There are six distinct ecological systems on the mountain: cultivated land, rainforest, heath, moorland, alpine desert and finally the arctic summit.
12. Coffee is grown on the lower slopes and is a major export.
13. Ernest Hemmingway wrote a short story entitled *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* where he captured the beauty of the mountain in the following passage describing the mountain "...as wide as all the world, great, high and unbelievably white in the sun."
14. Most porters are hired from villages surrounding the mountain. They make anywhere from U.S\$3.00 to \$6.00 a day, not including tips. Porters carry much of the luggage on their heads.
15. Over 20,000 people attempt to climb Mount Kilimanjaro a year.
16. There are six established routes that climbers can take up the mountain. The most popular is the Marangu Route, which has been dubbed the "Coca-Cola" route.
17. Altitude sickness is a hazard of mountain climbing. It occurs when a person ascends too quickly to acclimatize to higher altitudes. Mild symptoms include headaches, lethargy and insomnia, thus slow ascents are recommended.
18. Around 10 people die each year trying to climb the mountain.
19. A porter from the first successful summit lived to see the centennial of that climb. At the time of the anniversary he was 118 years-old.
20. The oldest person to summit Mount Kilimanjaro was an 87 year-old Frenchman named Valtee Daniel.
21. The fastest verified ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro occurred in 2001 when Italian Bruno Brunod climbed the Uhuru Peak from Marangu Gate in 5 hours, 38 minutes and 40 seconds. The fastest roundtrip was accomplished on Boxing Day in 2004, when native guide Simon Mtuy went up and down the mountain in 8 hours and 27 minutes.
22. The meaning of the word "Kilimanjaro" is shrouded in mystery, but some experts believe it means "White Mountain."
23. It is estimated that out of every 1,000 tonnes of water that trickles down the mountain, 400 are directly from the ice caps.
24. As part of a water conservation strategy, Shamsa Mwangunga, the National Resources and Tourism minister announced last May that 4.8 million indigenous trees will be planted around the base of the mountain to help prevent soil erosion and to guard water sources.
25. Mount Meru is an unofficial training ground for climbers preparing to take on Africa's tallest point. It is located 70 kilometres west of Mount Kilimanjaro and measures 4,566 metres high.