

## FITNESS

Kilimanjaro is the highest point in Africa, and climbers heading to the top will need to be prepared.

### STEP 1

**Fitness.** Being fit is no guarantee for getting to the summit of Kilimanjaro. However fit you are, one thing that is for sure is that the fitter and stronger you are, the more you will enjoy the experience. Starting a regular exercise schedule today will increase your chances of success on the mountain. Aerobic exercise improves the function of your heart, lungs and muscles, which will help your body handle the physical stress of the Kilimanjaro hike. For best results, begin your training program as soon as possible; if you are not in shape, earlier is better.

### STEP 2

**Endurance.** The Kilimanjaro climb involves multiple days of hiking and climbing. To train your body to handle the sustained periods of activity that you will encounter on the mountain, the Mt. Kilimanjaro Travel Guide recommends, "In addition to maintaining aerobic fitness, it is advisable to train by walking long distances on consecutive days, as many as possible up to a week." If you are a long distance runner, you can substitute long runs for long walks. Long periods of activity will help your body gain the endurance and strength you will need on Kilimanjaro.

### STEP 3

**Equipment.** There is nothing worse than getting blisters on the first day of a multiday hike. To ensure that your clothing, backpack and boots do not cause uncomfortable blisters and chafing, use them while training for the climb. Aim to hike at least 25 miles in your boots, and test out any new clothing items to ensure a correct fit and comfort. Try to do extended hikes as often as possible to simulate the long days you will experience on the mountain. Take note of anything that causes pain or discomfort and adjust accordingly so that you will start the Kilimanjaro hike comfortably.

### STEP 4

**Limits.** An enormous part of successfully summiting Kilimanjaro is recognizing your body's limits and learning to stick to them. If you understand your comfortable hiking pace, you will be more comfortable sticking to it when faster hikers in your climbing group speed ahead. When hiking at altitude, pay close attention to your reaction to elevation; before you go, familiarize yourself with the symptoms of altitude sickness with your family physician or the WebMD guide to altitude sickness. On Kilimanjaro, that prior knowledge will help you recognize when to ease up, hydrate, or rest.