

Capital Coffee – Kilimanjaro

Kilimanjaro has been a popular coffee spot for about 18 years. Based in the Southside it is regularly teaming with students.

It's definitely one of Edinburgh's liveliest cafes, with seats at a premium. Kilimanjaro started in 2004 as part of a network of specialty coffee houses set up by coffee pioneer Jon Sharp. His coffee shops were part of the original speciality wave in the city. Press Coffee and Thomas J. Walls are two others, also near the University.

One frustration that people often have with coffee shops in Edinburgh is how early they close. Especially now that cafes have become such a common place to work and study (and even conduct Zoom meetings!). This frustration is particularly common among those from many continental European countries, where cafes remain open well into the evening. There was some evidence of a trend towards more 'continental' opening hours. However, the double shocks of Covid and Brexit have created a significant shortage of baristas in the city. Many café owners have therefore had to reduce opening hours. Kilimanjaro is one of the few independent cafes in Edinburgh to open into the evening, generally closing at 8 p.m.



Largely using somewhat battered reclaimed furniture, Kilimanjaro has a casual feel. Physically, the café consists of a wide, open area to the front, with large tables ideal for groups. Towards the rear there is neat diner style seating, suited for pairs and couples (it seems a popular spot for first dates!). These seats also make ideal spots for a bit of secluded study and reading. For those who work best in a general 'hubhub', Kilimanjaro is an ideal place: less so for those who require tranquillity in order to focus. In better weather, there are a few tables outside where you can sip your coffee *al fresco* in one of the liveliest areas of the city.

Opening at 7.30am during the week, they are busy from 8 in the morning most days right through until the evening. But it's not just the long opening hours and the proximity to the university which attract people to it. Kilimanjaro also serves excellent coffee, usually using beans by specialty coffee pioneers [Square Mile Roasters](#), based in East London. They usually use Square Mile 'Red Brick' espresso, which has deep,

lingering fruity notes and a sweet finish. It combines well with milk, making their cortados and flat whites particularly tasty. In my experience, Kilimanjaro does an excellent job of maintaining quality, even at very busy times. This is not something which all cafes are good at, even some highly rated independent ones. Making good coffee is not something which can be rushed; it requires focus and precision, not a slapdash approach.



As well as coffee, Kilimanjaro serves a range of baking. With its early opening time, it's also a popular place for cooked breakfasts with plenty vegetarian, vegan & gluten free options. Later in the day they serve soups, sandwiches, and panini. 18 years on from its founding, Kilimanjaro remains a deservedly popular coffee location.

Kilimanjaro Coffee

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