



# Kolkata to Kathmandu (ZAK)

Kolkata to Kathmandu 16 days, departing 24 Oct 2012

Comfort Zone: Basic   Luxury

Physical Challenge: Easy   Hard

Trip Style: Overlanding

Route: Kolkata to Kathmandu

Length: 16 days

Transport: Overland expedition vehicle and 4x4s

Accommodation: A mixture of Hotels, guesthouses and some campsites.



## Ratings for this trip

### Comfort Zone: Moderate

Moderate Comfort Level. These trips allow you to get off the beaten track with a few of your home comforts. On OVERLAND TRIPS expect there may be some wild camps, but with a predominance of campsites with good facilities (often with upgrades to rooms available) or staying in small hotels. Hotels will range from basic up to reasonably comfortable. Sharing will be on a 2, 3 or 4 person basis. On ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS we will have standard style accommodation, usually budget or tourist-class (2-3 star) accommodation with private facilities. Some accommodation may be on a multi-share basis. Transport will be a mixture of local and privately hired.

### Physical Challenge: Moderate Fitness

MODERATE FITNESS: You will travel through areas that may be physically challenging. For example you may be at altitude some of the time. Depending on the trip, activities may include treks of 3-4 hours across hilly terrain, horse-riding and other adventurous activities. A moderate level of fitness is required.

## Countries Visited

### India

India has shared so much of its wonderful culture with the rest of the world, so a visit to this diverse country is a chance to experience where it all began. India has so much to offer: from the beautiful landscapes of the Himalayas, to the amazing temples and coastlines, rich culture, not to mention the food!

Although India might be famous for its flavours, often the wildlife is forgotten about. India is home to the Asian elephant, Bengal tiger and the Indian rhinoceros. It is also a hot spot for smaller beasts such as the praying mantis.

India's music scene is beautifully crafted, and the range is quite incredible. The range of folk music spreads across the country and it is also the genre which Bangra music falls into. This is possibly the most famous music to come out of the country. Although regions have their own style of music, there are types that bring the country together as a whole. The national anthem of "Jana Gana Mana" translates as "Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people".



New Delhi, the capital is a lively place and hosts many festivals throughout the year, including the idiosyncratic International Mango Festival - where over 500 different types of mangoes are found. Mangoes are only the start of the wonderful taste India has to offer. The blend of herbs, spices and other vegetables can create the aromas known all over the world. Across the country there are different assortments that are associated with each region. In the north,

milk is the main ingredient which creates the wonderful bread, and the samosa is popular here. Deep in the south is where rice dictates the main proportion of a meal. Into the east you will find the places where popular Indian desserts are from. Finally, in the west of the country, rice and coconuts are just two of the ingredients that make their dishes so distinct.

Foremost a visit to India is probably best remember by the welcome you are likely to receive this combined with the seemingly endless variety is what brings travellers returning time and time again.

## Nepal

Wrapped around the Himalayan mountain range is the remarkable country of Nepal. It is the birthplace of the Buddha and is a land of legend and beauty. Within its narrow confines Nepal contains an utterly spectacular variety of culture and landscapes. Nepal has a stunning natural beauty and a simple charm.

Situated on the banks of the Bagmati River, Kathmandu is the hub of life in Nepal. A small medieval city, it is easy to get around on bicycles which can be hired very cheaply by the day or week. Worth visiting are Durbar Square, the Temple of the Living Goddess, the Royal Palace, Pashupatinath (Hindu Temple), Bodnath (Buddhist Stupa) and Swayambunath (Monkey Temple) - and all set against the magnificent Himalayan backdrop.



While many urban restaurants in the country have tables and chairs for meals, there's a chance to eat the traditional Nepalese way. Sit or squat on the floor as food is served. Eating is always done with the right hand, which is washed before and after each meal, while the left hand can only be used for holding cups. Try a traditional millet beer with your meal. The Tongba drink is an icon for the local Limbus people, and from the storing of the millet to the drinking of the beer can take 6 months, but the wait is worth it. Nepal is full of culture and this continues into the music scene. With a country of over 50 ethnicity's there is a wide variety of choice. The amazing Dolhori style of music is a rhythmic style of conversation and with quick thinking, the song can carry on.

With traditional culture and diverse landscapes, this country has something for everyone, and added to the friendly atmosphere, it makes Nepal a memorable place to visit.

## Daily Itinerary

### Day 1: Kolkata

Wed 24 Oct 2012

**Border Information:** If Joining in Kolkata, enter India at Calcutta Airport.

Free day to explore the sights, sounds and flavours of Kolkata until the group meeting at 18.00hrs. Staying overnight in hotel.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Comfort Inn

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in Kolkata, India's most enigmatic and bewildering city	Included in tour

some of the best restaurants in India and a thriving arts scene. Bengali theatre, dance, poetry, art, music and film are all showcased here, and there's usually plenty to choose from on at the cities many venues. This was the capital of colonial British India, so it's interesting to visit the Victoria Memorial. A beautiful domed white marble edifice set in tranquil gardens, the monument was built to commerate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Kolkata is also home to the Sister's of Charity Motherhouse, the mission where Mother Teresa did much of her work. There is a small museum at the Motherhouse displaying Teresa's worn sandals and battered enamel dinner-bowl and upstairs 'Mother's room' is preserved just as it was for all the years that she slept here, a crown-of-thorns above her simple bed. Finally, if all the hustle and bustle is getting too much for you, take refuge in the beautiful botanic gardens along the banks of the Hooghly River.

### Kolkata

Kolkata is India's second biggest city and is regarded by many as the intellectual and cultural capital. At first you are assaulted by the noise and chaos of this bustling metropolis, but take the time to explore and you'll discover some impressive colonial architecture,



### Day 2: Sultanganj

Thu 25 Oct 2012

Leaving Kolkata we head north towards Sikkim. Today is a travel day and we will be driving across the Ganges, the huge holy river that is the lifeblood of this region. Tonight we will wildcamp along the way, possibly near Sultanganj.

### Day 3: Siliguri

Fri 26 Oct 2012

Our journey to Silguri (Approx. 340Kms) takes us to the foothills of the Himalaya where we will camp tonight at the Ganga Ram tea Plantation.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight camping at a Tea Plantation	Included in tour

#### Siliguri

### Day 4: Darjeeling

Sat 27 Oct 2012

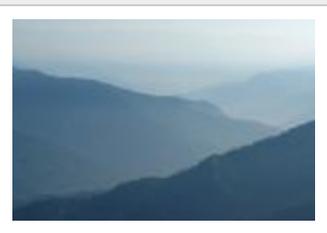
Due to the narrow, steep and winding roads of this particular area today we wave good bye to our overland truck as we load up our 4x4s that we will stay with for the next few days.

From Siliguri it's a relatively short journey of approx. 90Kms to Darjeeling, a town that is really more a collection of villages situated on a high ridge, linked by a series of steps and winding lanes and surrounded by rice and tea terraces. The rest of the day is free for you to explore and tonight we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights stay in Darjeeling to explore the surrounding hills	Included in tour

#### Darjeeling

Situated on a high ridge and surrounded by terraces of rice, tea, quinine and fruit trees, Darjeeling is a collection of villages linked by steps and lanes so steep that they appear to almost be built on top of each other. The views are fantastic from here, looking down on to the rivers below with Mount Kanchenjunga in the background - and on a clear day even Mount Everest can be seen in the distance. For the very best view, take a pre-dawn excursion to Tiger Hill, where you can see the magnificent sunrise over the Himalayas, definitely worth the early start. The cool climate and slow pace of life here are an abrupt contrast to the rest of India. It's a pleasant place to explore, with monasteries and tea plantations to visit and Tibetan craft shops and markets to browse through.



### Day 5: Darjeeling

Sun 28 Oct 2012

Today is a free day in Darjeeling for you to relax and explore more of the surrounding area.

At some point today your leader will assist you in arranging your Sikkim permit of which you will need to provide a photocopy of your passport.

Our second night is in the same comfortable hotel.

### Day 6: Karmi Farm

Mon 29 Oct 2012

This morning we leave for Karmi Farm, a tea plantation located in a remote rural area about 3 hours from Darjeeling. We will travel in our 4x4s to Karmi Farm however, if you would prefer to do a bit of trekking, it may be possible to organise for you an optional trek to the farm, taking in some spectacular scenery. We will stay at Karmi Farm for three nights, in guest lodge accommodation with stunning views.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights stay soaking up the amazing views from Karmi Farm	Included in tour

#### Karmi Farm

Karmi Farm was originally known as Karmi Estate and is the home of the Pulger-Frame family who have been associated with the area for over 200 years. Ronald Frame was a Scottish tea planter who came to this area in 1950 and met local Deki Pulger, marrying her 10 years later. Ronald managed a tea estate in the area in Darjeeling until 1967, bringing up his young family there - but then the family left India, although they did return for family holidays over the years. Today Ronald's son Andrew has returned to Karmi, offering travellers the opportunity to visit the farm and gain a fascinating insight into the lives of the hill farmers who live here and in the surrounding area. The farm itself is spectacularly situated with amazing views and a unique atmosphere, the perfect place for a bit of rest and relaxation. Bird-watching, trekking and sometimes yoga are also all on offer here, depending on your own particular interests.



#### Karmi Farm charity project

Through the generations Karmi has always been a place for the local people to go for help. Before the jeepable roads reached the area it was at least a 3 hour walk to get to the nearest hospital so there was seen to be a real need for some simple health care for the local community. With help from friends in the UK the clinic started up in September 2001. Donations came from friends and guests staying at the farm with volunteer doctors and nurses coming out from the UK.

For further information on the project and for details of how you can either donate or find out the which supplies you can bring out on your trip for the clinic. Please go to:

<http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/pages/charity-project>

### Day 7 to 8: Karmi Farm

Tue 30 Oct to Wed 31 Oct 2012

We will spend the next couple of days at Karmi Farm, allowing time for more optional trekking and our visit to the Karmi Farm Clinic charity project.

Alternatively you might prefer to just kick-back and relax at the lodge, lounging on the terrace and taking in the amazing views. Karmi Farm is also a great place for bird-watching if you're in to your wildlife.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the Karmi Farm charity project	Included in tour
Trekking in the foothills of Darjeeling	USD 30

### Day 9: Gangtok

Thu 01 Nov 2012

After breakfast we leave Karmi Farm in our 4x4s to continue our journey of approx. 200Kms on to Gangtok, the hilltop capital of Sikkim. We will stay in Gangtok for 3 nights in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights in Gangtok to explore the mountains of Sikkim	Included in tour

#### Gangtok

Gangtok, is the capital of Sikkim, an Indian state that was an independent kingdom until 1975 and considered to be one of the last Himalayan Shangri-La's. In recent years the region has seen ever increasing numbers of tourists and Gangtok in particular has seen a lot of development. Fortunately though, the landscape here makes building roads quite difficult, so you don't have to go too far to get off the beaten track. In Gangtok itself you might be interested in visiting some of the towns many temples, monastery or the Institute of Tibetology. Also nearby is an orchid sanctuary, where some 450 species of local orchids can be observed, particularly spectacular if you happen to be there during their flowering season. An excursion to Tsomgo Lake for yak riding or trekking in the amazing mountain scenery also makes for an awesome excursion. If you've still got time on your hands for exploring, on the other side of the valley from Gangtok is the Rumtek monastery, an important centre for the Kagyu-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Here you can get a good insight



into the workings of the religion, or simply to sit and drink tea whilst admiring the amazing Tibetan murals.

### Day 10: Gangtok

Fri 02 Nov 2012

This morning we take a guided visit of the nearby Rumtek Dharma Monastery leaving the afternoon free for you to explore Gangtok.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the colourful Rumtek Monastery in Gangtok	Included in tour

### Day 11: Gangtok

Sat 03 Nov 2012

Free day in Gangtok today to further explore the surrounding area by taking an optional trip to Tsomgo Lake or just relax and take it easy.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Ride a yak at beautiful Tsomgo Lake in Sikkim	USD 20

### Day 12: Siliguri

Sun 04 Nov 2012

Today we re trace our steps back to Siliguri, Approx. 135 Kms, where we meet back with our Overland truck and camp overnight at the Ganga Ram Tea plantation.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight camping at a Tea Plantation	Included in tour

### Day 13: Barhara

Mon 05 Nov 2012

**Border Information:** Exit India Kakarbhitta, enter Nepal at Kakarbhitta.

Today will mostly be spent travelling, Approx. 280Kms, as we continue our journey from Siliguri, crossing the border in to Nepal.

Tonight we will aim to wildcamp in the Himalayan foothills, possibly near to a place called Barhara.

### Day 14: Khatauti Khola

Tue 06 Nov 2012

This morning we continue our journey, approx. 465Kms, on to Khatauti Khola, home to the Royal Beach Camp eco-adventure camp in the Nepalese mountains.

There are all sorts of optional activities on offer here such as kayaking, rafting, hiking and mountain biking. Tonight we will set up camp at the Royal Beach Camp.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay at the Royal Beach Camp outward Bound centre in the Himalayas	Included in tour
Whitewater rafting, kayaking and other mountain adventures in the Himalayas	USD 20

### Khatauti Khola

Khatauti Khola lies in the Royal Beach Camp in Nepal. It is the perfect location to learn water sports or take the faster waves if you feel you are a bit more of an intermediate. There is white water rafting, kayaking and canoeing to try your hand at and for the truly daring, there is an opportunity to jump into a gorge with the plummeting waters dropping over you. Whatever you decide to take part in, you are sure for an enthralling day.



### Day 15: Kathmandu

Wed 07 Nov 2012

This morning is free for adventure activities, then after lunch we drive approx. 85Kms to Kathmandu, where we stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in the Nepali capital of Kathmandu	Included in tour
Trekking & rafting, Kathmandu	USD 100

### Kathmandu

Situated on the banks of the Bagmati River, Kathmandu is the hub of life in Nepal. A small medieval city, it is easy to get around on bicycles which can be hired very cheaply by the day or week. Worth visiting are Durbar Square, the Temple of the Living Goddess, the Royal Palace, Pashupatinath (Hindu Temple), Bodnath (Buddhist Stupa) and Swayambunath (Monkey Temple) - and all set against the magnificent Himalayan backdrop. The wonderful Indra Jatra Festival takes part here and the colours and chariots travel through the city.



The giant of Mount Everest lies on the border with China and with a chance to visit the base camp, it will feel like you have started to conquer one of the most enthralling challenges in the world. As soon as you set

sight on this country you'll see that it was made for trekking. The pulse raising activities range from mountain biking and white water rafting, to the jaw dropping effects of one of the country's many national parks.

While many urban restaurants in the country have tables and chairs for meals, there's a chance to eat the traditional Nepalese way. Sit or squat on the floor as food is served. Eating is always done with the right hand, which is washed before and after each meal, while the left hand can only be used for holding cups. Try a traditional millet beer with your meal. The Tongba drink is an icon for the local Limbus people, and from the storing of the millet to the drinking of the beer can take 6 months, but the wait is worth it. Nepal is full of culture and this continues into the music scene. With a country of over 50 ethnicity's there is a wide variety of choice. The amazing Dolhori style of music is a rhythmic style of conversation and with quick thinking, the song can carry on.

With traditional culture and diverse landscapes, this country has something for everyone, and added to the friendly atmosphere, it makes Nepal a memorable place to visit.

Kathmandu is not only the capital of Nepal, it is pretty much the only city in the country. Situated on the shores of the Bagmati river, it's a lively, bustling place where ancient collides with modern to create an exhilarating melting pot of sights, sounds and smells. Today's modern jumble of concrete buildings and busy streets has built up around the medieval old town, where wandering through the winding alleyways is like taking a step back in time. The heart of the old city is the magnificent Durbar Square, where Nepalese Royalty used to be crowned, and today it's a good spot to sit and watch the world go by. The buildings here date from the 17th and 18th centuries, although many of the original structures were even older and many suffered from earthquake damage in the 1930's. Other sights worth visiting are the Temple of the Living Goddess, the Royal Palace, the Pashupatinath Hindu temple, Bodnath Buddhist stupa and Swayambunath (the Monkey Temple), all of which are set against the magnificent Himalayan backdrop. When all the sightseeing gets a bit too much, you can kick back and relax in the numerous cafes and bars around the tourist areas of Thamel and 'Freak Street'. If you can afford the time, it's also worth allowing yourself at least a couple of days to explore the surrounding area of the Kathmandu Valley.

### Day 16: Kathmandu

Thu 08 Nov 2012

**Border Information:** If finishing in Kathmandu, exit Nepal at Kathmandu Airport.

Free time in Kathmandu.

### Visa Information:

## Important Notes

### **The routes, activities and places visited described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.**

We intend following the planned route but exact night stops cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our basic planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. By their very nature overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, often in areas without western infrastructure. You should expect that some these areas do not adhere to western safety standards.

## Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for Asia Itineraries

In Asia you will need to be healthy enough to cope with extremes of climates from the hot deserts through to the colds of the high mountains. Overland travelling can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions can be challenging to some. You will need to be fit enough to help every day with the camp chores (cooking, washing up, general camp set up) as well as putting up and taking down your own tent. There are some long driving days and some early morning starts. The step up into the overland vehicle, while not overly high can become tiring and you need to judge yourself to be physically fit enough to haul yourself up and down the step at least 8-10 times a day. By and large our Asia trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

## Visa Information

Most countries we visit on our travels will require visas. Some are best obtained before you leave home and others can be obtained en-route. Whilst the ultimate responsibility for obtaining visas is yours, we will endeavour to assist you wherever possible.

The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. The information provided is given in good faith and we do try to keep the visa information as up to date as possible. Please be aware though that rules do change, often without prior warning, which is why it is important that you check for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance you can choose to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy /consulate. However our recommendation is that you use a visa agent to assist you with your applications. While this does increase the cost it will make the process much easier for you. Dragoman have teamed up with 'The Visa Machine' to create a safe, secure, hassle-free way of obtaining visas and visa advice. Our unique link within their website is designed to make the visa process as straightforward as possible. Simply go to <https://dragoman.thevisamachine.com> and click on your region of travel followed by your trip route and 'The Visa Machine' will advise you about not only the required visas but also the dates by which you should apply. 'The Visa Machine' can then assist you in the actual visa application thus taking all the worry and hassle out of the process. This should apply for ALL nationalities and countries of residence.

As you will need to submit your passport together with your applications, we recommend that you avoid making any travel plans in the weeks leading up to your departure. However if you do need to travel in this period please let us know as soon as possible so that we can help you work out the options for your visa application process.

## India

All foreign nationals require a tourist visa to enter India. There is no visa on arrival in India- Visas MUST be obtained in advance.

Indian visas can be obtained either through Travcour UK or by going directly to <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk> issued in the UK are valid for 6 months from the date of issue.

You must provide either a travel itinerary or flight tickets to obtain more than a single entry visa. Your photos MUST be 50mm x 50mm or your application will be rejected. The photos must be in colour and have a plain white background. Computer generated photos will be rejected. Please paste one photo to the front of your application and leave the other loose. You must sign under the photo on page one and the declaration on page two.

Unless visiting neighbouring countries (see paragraph below), tourists leaving India will receive a stamp in their passports indicating that they may not re-enter India for two months, regardless of their length of stay prior to departure. Tourists wishing to return to India before the two month period has passed will now have to visit the Indian High Commission or Consulate in the country to which they travelled and present their case for re-entry.

The authorities in all Indian Immigration Check Posts have, however, been authorised to allow tourists to make two or three entries, based on production of an itinerary and documentation (ticket bookings) substantiating the need for tourism related travel to neighbouring countries.

You must have a passport valid for at least 6 months from date of travel and with at least two blank pages. Tourist visas cannot be extended in India.

Referees in India:-

Eugene Pram  
Pram Tours  
436 Barkat Nagar  
Tonk Phatak  
Jaipur  
302015  
Rajasthan  
India  
Tel: +91 (0)141 2594205

Accommodation in India:-

Hotel Supreme

4 Panday Road

Colaba

Mumbai

Tel +91 22 2218 5608

If travelling to Sikkim your permits will be arranged in Darjeeling with your tour leader.

Please bring 10 photocopies of your passport and Indian Visa (on the same page). These will be used for hotel check-in. Please also bring 2 passport photos.

If you are travelling on the 'Chennai to Kolkata' trip - please note that all permits for Odisha will be arranged on trip, In order for permits to be issued each person will need to provide an additional 2 passport photos as well as a copy of your passport and Indian visa no later than 10 days before the trips starts.

## Nepal

All foreign nationals (except Indians) require a visa to enter Nepal.

Visas are obtainable from embassies abroad, at land borders and on arrival at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport. If getting the visa at the airport be prepared for long queues. There have been instances when passengers were asked to show return flight tickets. You will also need to provide one passport photo and the following fees in US dollars cash only:

single entry visa valid for 15 days - US\$25  
single entry visa valid for 30 days - US\$40  
single entry visa valid for 90 days - US\$100

Please note if you are staying in Nepal for less than 24 hours while in transit a transit visa can be issued on presentation of your international flight ticket, there is a nominal charge of US\$5 and one photo is required.

## Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US\$15 and a maximum of US\$30 per day for Central Asia, China and Burma and between a minimum of US\$10 and a maximum of US\$20 for India, Nepal and South East Asia.

This will cover individual expenses such as drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

**Please note:** For trips in Southern India that occur over Christmas and New Year please allow approximately \$130USD extra on the kitty for seasonal increases in accommodation costs

## What else you need to know

## Pre and post trip accommodation and connecting flights

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of your joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay. Dragoman can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on.

While Dragoman is happy to assist with booking your pre and post trip accommodation, it is important that you understand you may be able to book your own room at a cheaper rate directly through the hotel or on the internet.

Our additional accommodation prices are based on the hotel's rate plus an administration fee. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival, however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer as not all hotels offer this service.

## Accommodation on tour

Dragoman overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip, in accommodation ranging from twin to multi-share. The type and variety of accommodation is determined by conditions on each of our routes. The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges or even tree-houses. One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will wild camp. This allows us to get far away from the tourist crowds to some beautiful, secluded spots. We will also arrange as many village or local homestays as possible, allowing us to get close to indigenous populations and ensures our money stays within local communities.

## Group size?

The maximum group size we take on our overland journeys ranges from 19 to 22 depending on the geographical location, however the average number of passengers is more likely to be around 16.

Please note that there is an overlap of 2 trips in Zanzibar. This means a group starting a trip in Nairobi for example will visit Zanzibar at the same time as groups starting their trips in Dar es Salaam. In practical terms this means there could be up to 44 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

## Who travels with Dragoman?

Our passengers come from around the world and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that overlanding should be open to as many people as possible and so although we have a minimum age limit of 18, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the beauties of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

## Our Community

At any time before or after you book you can join our community - Dragoland. This is a great place to ask questions before you travel and catch up with your fellow travellers once your trip has finished. You can share photos, videos and stories You can also download a selection of free travel apps. See the home page to sign in, it's free and easy.

We also have a Facebook page where travellers regularly swap info with each other - you can [join here](#)

## Our crew and guides

Our crew are passionate about travel and always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all overland companies, spending 10 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK and then up to six months on the road as a trainee. On all Dragoman overlanding trips two western crew who are responsible for the group and the overall organisation will accompany you. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad knowledge of the places visited and to offer suggestions of things to do and see. In East and Southern Africa we will also have an African camp master/cook who is in charge of running the camp and organising all of the meals. Their knowledge of the local produce makes shopping at the markets great fun and you will learn how to prepare and cook some unusual dishes. In the rest of Africa, South America and the majority of Central Asia and China we use local guides who may stay with us for just a few hours or will actually travel with us for some or all of the journey. In these cases they become a third crew member and are able to offer their local knowledge as well as a real insight into the lives of the local people.

(If travelling in East & Southern Africa, also please see the note about our code-share crew)

Your tour leader has a duty of care to all of their passengers and therefore they have the authority to ask passengers to leave the trip if they require medical assistance, are behaving in an anti-social manner or refuse to comply with local laws and customs. In all matters relating to the trip, the leader's decision will be final and we appreciate your respect of this.

### Medical conditions

We ask all of our passengers to declare any pre-existing medical conditions and in some cases you will be asked to complete one of our medical questionnaires. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude we also require all passengers to complete an altitude questionnaire. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases passengers should be prepared for some long driving days and possible limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns.

### Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to region and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in. It is essential that you check with either your doctor or a travel clinic in good time before you travel.

In the UK we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive, up to date vaccination and health information. Dragoman customers will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at [Nomad Travel clinics](#).

A good source of up to date information is the World Health Organisation - <http://www.who.int/en/>

### Malaria

Get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your vaccination centre for the most up-to-date requirements

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wear long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, tent doors or, if sleeping out, use a mosquito net. Wear repellent applied directly to the skin or soaked into clothing.

Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permethrin solution provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights, in hotel rooms but cannot be used inside the tents.

### Meals and group participation

On an overland journey you are more than just a passenger, you're part of the crew, pitching in to set up camp, shop for food, cook and generally help out. We operate a rota system, dividing the group into smaller units of 5 or 6 people, so that these duties are shared equally amongst the group. These jobs will include things like collecting water and firewood, loading the back locker, supervising the kitty and food stores etc. While camping on overland journeys, all meals will be included in the kitty and this means that you will be working as a group to prepare meals and cook for your group. (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck, however you will still be required to help prepare meals). If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your crew at your welcome meeting. A typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, cereal and something hot such as eggs or pancakes as well as tea and coffee. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto, pasta dish and there is always the chance to try some local cooking. Generally our passengers find the more they put into a trip, the more they benefit from it.

### Responsible tourism & code of conduct

Dragoman is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We are dedicated to making sure that we adopt a responsible attitude to the areas through which we travel and believe that our trips should benefit the local people and their environment. Dragoman recognises that we are guests of local communities and strive to make these communities our partners, so that they benefit directly from our visit.

You can find full details of Dragoman's responsible tourism policy linked from the home page. All passengers are required to obey all laws of the countries through which we pass. This particularly applies to the smuggling of contraband and possession of narcotic drugs, firearms, antiquities and ivory. Any passenger found contravening such laws or customs may be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

## Overland travel and security

One of the real advantages of overland travel is that the vehicle provides a very real level of security when travelling. There is no doubt that a properly equipped overland vehicle, with safes, fully lockable doors and windows is an obvious advantage when travelling in much of the world. We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt whilst travelling for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items (although most of these can be locked in the safe whilst you are on the trip) and advise passengers to leave any valuable jewellery, watches etc at home. Generally speaking, you will not be travelling on local public transport and will have the added security of travelling in a group with experienced crew on hand to offer advice.

**Please note:** Any personal effects that are left on the truck, even if they are stored in the safe, are left at your own risk and Dragoman cannot be held responsible for any damage or theft that may occur.

The safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a major priority of Dragoman. With this in mind we monitor world events very closely. By the very nature of the adventure travel that we take, there are risks and hazards that are inherent in our itineraries. Dragoman makes operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources:

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice

Reports from other travel companies and local suppliers

Leaders reports from off the road

Local contacts we have built up over 29 years of experience

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. You should always make yourself aware of the travel advice before you book and again before you travel. Below are links to some of the websites

Britain. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country>

Australia. <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>

New Zealand. <http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

United States. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

Canada. [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/menu-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp)

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £3,000,000 and £10,000,000 respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

## Emergency contact

We have a dedicated 24 hour telephone number which should only be used once you have left the UK and in the event of a real emergency. Should you need to call the number, we will do what we can to help but please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled, please let us know and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in these trip notes. If you cannot get through leave a message and a contact number as these will be regularly checked and the crew informed if necessary.

**Emergency Number: +44 (0) 7985106564.**

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel. As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding and that the 24 Hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries - for example they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas. We recommend that any policy has the following minimum levels of cover: Medical (incl. repatriation) £5,000,000 Personal Liability £5,000,000 Cancellation and Curtailment £5,000 Loss of Baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice.

## Issues on the trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on [customer\\_relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer_relations@dragoman.co.uk). You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

## Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or "visitor's" passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

## Luggage & Kit List

Although you will not have to carry your main bag long distances you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip your main luggage will be kept in the back locker so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use.

The size of baggage that can be brought on this tour is limited by the locker space on the truck. Different trucks have different-sized lockers however to be safe we recommend that your bag be no larger than 66cm deep, 30cm wide, and 30cm high. The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is maximum 20kg. Backpacks should not have an external frame unless it can be easily removed and stored separately to avoid damaging other people's luggage.

Your clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats (except on routes between Nairobi and Cape Town where ground mats are provided).

The clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in, which will vary depending on which part of the world you're heading to. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats\*, so you'll need to bring those with you. Think about the climate and altitude of the areas you'll be travelling to, there's nothing worse than being cold at night so it's worth investing in a decent sleeping bag if it's likely to get cold. And remember even when it's warm during the day, it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

*\*Ground mats are provided on our non "in-depth" overland trips that run in South and East Africa, between Nairobi and Cape Town.*

For a general idea of what you need this list provides a guide:

- Sleeping bag - Check the expected climate en route. Nights in desert and mountain regions can be very cold in winter months
- Mattress or compressed foam
- A day pack is useful for short hikes in the countryside, wandering around cities, etc and also for keeping inside the vehicle for items used during the day
- 2 sets of comfortable travelling clothes (light, easily washable cotton clothes are best)
- 1 set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out. Women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf for visiting places of worship
- 2 pairs of shorts
- Sun hat or warm hat if trekking
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Warm sweater/fleeces
- 1 waterproof jacket with hood
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/boots (or ankle height canvas jungle boots)
- 1 pair of sandals or flip-flops
- Underwear and socks (thermals are also a good idea if you are travelling to altitude or to the desert as it can get very cold at night)
- Swimwear
- 2 small towels
- Washing kit, including a small mirror

- Clothes washing detergent, small scrubbing brush & washing line (just a length of cord)
- Head torch/flashlight with spare batteries & bulbs (only the 3 standard sizes of round 1.5v batteries are widely available en route)
- Passport photos (average of 2 per country for which visas will be applied for en route)
- Good water bottle at least 1 litre
- A pouch or money belt worn inside your clothing, or unobtrusive pocket sewn into the inside of a pair of loose fitting trousers, is a must.
- Alarm clock
- Pocket calculator (useful when exchanging money)
- Writing materials & notebook/diary
- Multi purpose knife
- Cotton sheet sleeping bag (or sheet folded and sewn up on 2 sides). It will help keep your sleeping bag clean, and can be used on its own on warm nights.
- Mosquito net - The tents supplied by us have mosquito netting and you will only need a net if you think you will sleep out under the stars a lot of the time.
- "Wet Ones" (moistened tissues) and hand gel
- Toilet paper - this can be purchased almost everywhere en-route but one roll is worth packing
- Assorted sized plastic bags - protects clothing and equipment from dust and damp

For a comprehensive kit lists take a look at the Dragoman kit list that Nomad Travel have created. Dragoman customers will receive a 10% discount on all equipment purchased either online or in store. Click to see the kit lists [www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list)

## Water

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in bottles, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 liters of water and 200ml of oil. A large proportion end up in limited landfill or discarded in waterways and natural environments.

Please avoid the purchase of bottled water by using the chemically sterilized water stored in the purpose built storage tank or in water jerry cans in your Overland vehicle. You are free to refill your bottle as many times a day as you like. You are helping the environment and your hip pocket!

## Personal medical kit

All of our trucks have a fully stocked medical kit onboard for use in emergency situations only. Therefore in addition to this we recommend that you purchase your own personal medical kit. In the UK we have teamed up with Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics to produce the Dragoman Travel Medical Kit. It has been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contains everything you would need for any minor accidents. For more details please visit their website:

[nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit](http://nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit)

## Electrical equipment

Your vehicle will be equipped with a 12 volt socket so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12 volt adapter - the type that can be used from a cigarette lighter in your car. Please be aware that only one piece of equipment can be charged at a time and it will not be allowed if there is a risk of running the vehicle's batteries low. Batteries may also be recharged from hotel room wall sockets and the majority of the campsites we stay at have electricity points so please bring along your normal charging adapters as well. You will need to ensure that you have the correct country adaptor for your specific charger.

## The kitty

The Kitty is a group fund paid separately from the trip price at the start of your trip which covers all things that the whole group does, such as:

- Hotel accommodation and campsite fees
- Meals whilst camping (not in hotels)
- Activities listed as included (e.g. National Park entrances, excursions and local guides).

It is an amount that each passenger puts into a central fund and is monitored by the Dragoman crew. It's payable in full at the start of your trip, and in instalments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips

The kitty system is very unique to over landing as it allows us to have flexibility on the road. You can see exactly how your money is being spent and ensure that you are getting the best value by buying locally.

The kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Local inflation and costs vary throughout the year and so we review kitties on a monthly basis. Once you book your trip it is very important that you check our website on a regular basis and just before departure for any changes to the kitty amount.

Your kitty can be paid in a mixture of US Dollar cash and local currency and most of our travellers choose to bring a cash passport with them for withdrawing local currency (you can visit [www.cashpassport.com](http://www.cashpassport.com) for further information on these). This is a very secure way of carrying your money whilst travelling. You treat them exactly like an ATM card and draw out local currency from an ATM to give to your leader within each country.

Travellers cheques have become increasingly difficult to change around the world with passengers and our leaders experiencing huge frustration and numerous hours spent trying to find a bank which will change travellers cheques. For this reason we no longer accept them on our trips.

### **Continuing your trip**

Having an amazing trip and met a great group of people? Having too much fun to go home yet? If on your trip you decide you would like to continue, then why not speak to your trip leader who can advise you of the cost and availability of continuing your journey.

### **Contingency emergency fund**

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you should be prepared to contribute towards the costs and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

### **Tipping**

Tipping is entirely voluntary. The Dragoman crew may be travelling with you for many weeks and usually they become good friends with most members of the group. It is sometimes easy to forget that they do work hard to ensure that you do have a great trip. If you feel you would like to tip them, they certainly would appreciate it. On a number of our trips, we also use a local guide as well as our own Dragoman crew. These guides live and travel with you through their home country and it is usual to tip them when they leave. We recommend USD10 to USD15 per person.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey, once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, information and kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these Trip Notes

These trip notes were printed on 23/05/2013