Historic Ethiopian Highlands (ZGA)

Addis Ababa to Gondar 21 days, departing 11 Mar 2013

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury
Physical Challenge: Easy Hard
Trip Style: Overlanding
Route: Addis Ababa to Gondar
Length: 21 days
Transport: Overland vehicle, trekking, boats
Accommodation: Basic hotel (14 nts), camping (5 nts), Wildcamp (1 nts) Upgrades from camping to rooms usually available on the road. 20 Breakfasts, 14 Lunches, 6 Dinners

Ratings for this trip

Comfort Zone: Basic / Adventurous

Basic comfort levels. Expect to rough it every now and again. On OVERLAND TRIPS be prepared to have some nights wild camping, campsites with basic facilities as well as some basic hotels, often on a multi-share basis. Some of the roads we travel along may be poor. On our ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS you will stay in simple, budget (1-2 star) accommodation with some shared facilities. Some accommodation may be on a multi-share basis and transport will be mainly local.

Physical Challenge: Strenuous in parts

STRENUOUS IN PARTS: These are physical tours; we may well be travelling at high altitudes, across deserts or through hot and steamy tropical countries. Physically it can be quite tough, but not necessarily all the time and there will be plenty of rest days and time to relax as well. The fitter you are the more you will enjoy the trip.

Countries Visited

Ethiopia

With a friendly atmosphere, a country brimming with history, tribes and national parks. Ethiopia is a country that is as diverse as you can get in Africa.

Along the Sudanese frontier it changes from semi-desert to high mountains. The highland area and the Simien Mountains are known as the Roof of Africa and are home to the ancient Ethiopian Christian kingdom. In the far east of the country is a vast desert, home to Islamic nomads. In the south is the Rift Valley with stunning lakes and flora and fauna. To the south-west are the unique tribal lands of the Omo Valley and Mago National Park.

The principle national park is the Simien Mountains National Park, and with the range of wildlife in the park and great mountain vistas, it is nothing short of amazing. The parks most famous inhabitants are the Gelada Baboons.

Ethiopia is an ancient Christian kingdom and has architecture unusual in this part of Africa as a result. The rock churches of Lalibela and the forts of Gondar are completely unique in East Africa.

It is a country full of life and colour, and this is expressed through the sound of music. It is very diverse, as so many cultures across the country have their own sound. Most of Ethiopia's music is folk inspired and is influenced from other

North African countries. The range of sound is diverse and there are many traditional instruments. Chordophones, Aerophones, Idiophones and Membranophones are the most common sounds used in traditional music.

Vegetables and meat are the basis of many of the dishes in Ethiopia. Berbere is an ingredient used in many dishes. A cross between chilli powder and other spices give dishes a distinct taste when added to beautiful stews. Food brings Ethiopians together, and the act of Goorshsa shows this. This is the act of ripping off a piece of injera bread, rolling it in the sauce and placing it in a friend's mouth. This is an act of friendship and the larger the injera, the greater the friendship.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Addis Ababa

Mon 11 Mar 2013

Border Information: If Joining in Addis enter Ethiopia at Addis Airport.

There will be a group meeting at 18.00hrs.

We stay for 2 nights in a comfortable hotel with good facilities in Addis Ababa.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Taitu
Itege Hotel Taitu
Downtown (Piazza)
Addis Ababa
Tel: +251 11 1 560787
0.0Km from the City Centre
7 Kms from Bole International Airport

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa	Included in tour

Addis Ababa

Referred to more commonly as "Addis", Addis Ababa (220 km, approx 7-8 hours) lies amongst wooded hills at an altitude of about 2300 metres, giving it a pleasant climate. Addis has many sights to offer visitors and we have free time to explore the sites. Get a fascinating glimpse into Ethiopia's many tribal groups at the Ethnological Museum, see the stunning fossil collection at the National Museum, and don't miss the chaotic bustle of the Merkato (local market). All manner of arts and crafts can be found in the souvenir shops on Churchill Avenue.

Day 2: Addis Ababa

Tue 12 Mar 2013

Why not take the chance to head to one of the city's many restaurants for the chance to eat some local food and perhaps listen to some traditional music.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit "Lucy" at the National Museum, Addis Ababa	
Stroll through the Mercato one of the largest markets in Africa, Addis Ababa	
Visit Africa Hall - a symbol of African independence and optimism, Addis Ababa	
St George's Cathedral (Giorgis Cathedral) built to commemorate Ethiopia's victory over the Italians, Addis Ababa	
Visit the Menelik Mausoleum, built to serve as the tombs of emperors and princes, Addis Ababa	

Day 3: Dejen

Wed 13 Mar 2013

We spend a night in Dejen (260 km, approx 7-8 hours), visiting the Blue Nile Gorge en route.

We cross the dramatic Blue Nile Gorge which is 1 km deep, taking a couple of hours to drive down to the bottom, cross the river and drive back up the other side.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overland journey into the immense Blue Nile Gorge	Included in tour

Day 4 to 6: Bahir Dar

Thu 14 Mar to Sat 16 Mar 2013

Travel on to Bahir Dar (270 km, approx. 6-7 hours), where we have a 3 night stay. Located on the shores of Lake Tana and only a few hundred metres from the source of the mighty Blue Nile, this is a fascinating place.

In Bahir Dar we stay in a hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Boat trip on Lake Tana from Bahir Dar to visit the monasteries	Included in tour
Witness the stunning Blue Nile Falls	Included in tour
3 nights at Bahir Dar	Included in tour

Bahir Dar

A few kilometres down the river from Bahir Dar are the spectacular Blue Nile Falls - locally known as Tissisat Falls (literally translating as 'water that smokes'). After walking around the falls, we use local reed boats to cross the river upstream. On the lake itself are a number of monasteries on islands and peninsulas and we take the opportunity to visit two on our boat trip. These churches feature the traditional murals and decoration of the Orthodox Church. We cross the dramatic Blue Nile Gorge which is 1 km deep, taking a couple of hours to drive down to the bottom, cross the river and drive back up the other side.

Day 7 to 9: Lalibela

Sun 17 Mar to Tue 19 Mar 2013

Full day journey of 310 km to the medieval town of Lalibela where we stay for 3 nights in a Local, friendly hotel.

We walk with a local guide who is able to unlock the fascinating history of both the churches and Lalibela itself.

In Lalibela we stay in a basic hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of rock churches, monastery and visit to a local school at Lalibela	Included in tour

Lalibela

Hidden in the hills of northern Ethiopia is the small town of Lalibela. This medieval village has grown up around 13 monolithic churches hewn from rock in the 12th Century. It's an awe-inspiring feat of engineering which must have taken many years and thousands of men to complete. Fortunately the village is underdeveloped as a tourist site and still has its original Ethiopian charm.

Each of the churches is unique in design and beautifully carved. Legend has it that King Lalibela completed all the work in 12 days with the help of a band of angels who carved the rocks for him day and night.

The church of Asheten Mariam is hidden in the rugged hills behind the village. You may like to trek there on foot or take a mule to this fascinating monastery and enjoy the incredible views on the way.

Day 10: Woldiya

Wed 20 Mar 2013

Leaving the town behind we travel around 170 km (approx 7-8 hours) before bushcamping for the night.

Day 11: Mekele

Thu 21 Mar 2013

From our bush camp it is a full day's journey to Mekele (266 km, approx 8-9 hours).

Mekele is the base for exploring the intriguing rock-hewn churches of Tigray. Sculpted into cliff faces or pre-existing caves, there are at least 120 churches with many of the churches located in clusters; the most famous being Gheralta, Takatisfi, Tembien and Atsbi.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the Tigray rock-hewn churches at Mekele	Included in tour
Visit the Debre Demo Monastery around Mekele	

Mekele

Mekele is a cultral town famous for its churches and desert landscape. Historians date Mekele to be founded in the 13th century and it is a place with a colourful history. Derg The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front Monument is one of the most famous points and can be seen from nearly any place in the town. The palace of King Yohannes IV is a chance to see so much of Mekeles history during the reign of this king. The churches are worth a visit, as they are just beautiful.

Day 12 to 13: Axum

Fri 22 Mar to Sat 23 Mar 2013

It is a full day's journey from Mekele to Axum (300 km, approx 8-9 hours).

Once in Axum (Aksum), we take a guided city tour which will take in the main sights of this fascinating town, the site of Ethiopia's oldest city.

In Axum (Aksum) we stay in a basic hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of palaces and temples in historic Axum	Included in tour
Visit the Church of St Mary of Zion at Axum	

Axum

Axum is the site of Ethiopia's oldest city. It has some impressive obelisks carved from single blocks of granite - the tallest still standing is 23 metres high and was probably transported by elephants from a nearby quarry. The scale of the monuments in this Stelae field are testament to the enormous importance that the ancient kingdom of Axum once enjoyed.

Close to the town are the ruins of a palace that is said to have belonged to the Queen of Sheba. There is also a complex of several churches, which have been built over the ages around the same site. The most interesting, is a small unimposing building with a green picket fence that holds the crowns of various former Ethiopian emperors and is said to house the original Ark of the Covenant.

Day 14: Enda Selassie

Sun 24 Mar 2013

Leaving Axum behind we travel toward Debark (255 km, approx 13 hours). it a very long travel day to Debark. Whilst the distance is not to far the roads in this part of Ethiopia are rough. We may choose to break the journey and stop over in Sellassie for the night if the roads are particularly bad.

Day 15: Debark

Mon 25 Mar 2013

Once in Debark we set to arranging our trek into the mountains. The process can take quiet some time as we arrange permits, campsites and scouts and guides.

Debark

Standing at the gateway to the Simien Mountains is the town of Debark. Many people pass through here to experience the wonders that these mountains have to offer. With this beauty in its landscape, Debark has some of the most amazing scenery in Ethiopia.

Day 16 to 18: Simien Mountains National Park, Debark

Tue 26 Mar to Thu 28 Mar 2013

We will trek for the next two days, the route we take and time we trek each day will be decided by you as a group, it is also possible to spilt in to two groups if need be. The adventurous may choose to hire mules to trek even further in search of klipspringer, Walia ibex or the gelada baboon and perhaps if you are lucky a glimpse of an endangered Simien fox. This park is very impressive, with huge volcanic cores jutting up from the plateau to from high altitude plains where only grasses, junipers and giant lobelias grow. There are some fabulous views to be enjoyed.

In the Simien Mountains we stay for two nights at a campsite.

The following day we will return to Debark for the night.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided treks in the Simien Mountains National Park	Included in tour

Simien Mountains National Park

The Simien Mountains are known for their dramatic and spectacular scenery; jagged mountain peaks flank deep valleys and high altitude plains where only grasses, junipers and giant lobelias grow. This is one of the major mountain regions of Africa, home to mountain Ras Dejen (4543m), the fourth highest peak in the continent. The National Park was created primarily to protect a type of wild goat, the Walia Ibex; and the Gelada Baboon and rare Ethiopian Wolf are also found here. Standing on top of a sharp precipice and gazing out over the magnificent landscape here will take your breath away, so it's definitely worth taking a bit of time to explore. The area is a great place to do some trekking, or you can hire mules to go in search of some of the more easily spotted wildlife, like the klipspringer, ibex and baboon.

Day 19: Gondar

Fri 29 Mar 2013

Leaving the mountains behind, we travel on to Gonder (100 km, approx 4 -5 hours).

We spend two nights in Gonder at a small pension.

Gondar

The historic city of Gondar is known as the city of castles and palaces. This was once the capital of Ethiopia in the reign of King Fasilidas who built the first castle. Successive kings added their own castles to the complex. On the outskirts of the town there is also Fasilidas' Bath, which is an interesting building standing in an artificial pool which is still filled for occasional religious ceremonies. At the Debre Berhan Sellassie Church we can see the famous ceiling which is painted with hundreds of faces of angels and hear about the church's fascinating yet violent history.

Day 20: Gondar

Sat 30 Mar 2013

Today take our tour of Gonder where we gain a fascinating insight into ancient times.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of Castles and Bath complexes in ancient Gondar	Included in tour

Day 21: Gondar

Sun 31 Mar 2013

Border Information: If finishing in Gonder, exit Ethiopia at Gonder Airport.

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Gonder.

For passengers continuing their journey on to Khartoum your night stop will not be in Gonder. Instead today you will have a drive day of approx 400kms crossing the border into Sudan to the Gedaref area where tonight we will aim to Bush camp.

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 the North, East & South Africa and Middle East Itineraries

Travelling in North, East & South Africa or Middle East can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions and basic campsites all provide a challenge. The conditions in the North can be more challenging than in the East or South, where public camp sites and bathroom facilities can be very basic and may be non existent in the case of bush camps. 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. There are some long days driving on rough roads on all itineraries.

Altitude

Please note that this trip spends time above 2800 metres/9200 feet where it is possible for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude, potentially including Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

Because of this it is very important that you make yourself aware of the cause and effects of travelling at altitude and monitor your health during this trip.

For further information please click here to download our AMS information sheet or check out the following website www.high-altitude-medicine.com

Your leader will also hand you a copy of the AMS information sheet during your trip as well as holding a short meeting prior to travelling to altitudes above 2800m/9200ft for the first time.

If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival.

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.

Ethiopia

Most nationalities require a visa for entry to Ethiopia and you must obtain this before travel in your county of residency. Most Embassies or Consulates of Ethiopia only accept visa applications from nationals of the county in which the Embassy is located so for example the Ethiopian Embassy in London will only accept applications from British passport holders or those who hold an appropriate work / residency visa in their passport. Please see this website to find your closest embassy or consulate http://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-of/ethiopia.

Important: If you have not obtained an Ethiopian visa before travel this could result in you having to send your passport back to your country of residency to obtain the visa at an extra personal cost, and could even result in you missing days of the trip waiting for your passport to return.

Please also note: If you are travelling on a long combination trip i.e. starting in Cape Town or Cairo you must apply for a 3 or 6 month visa to ensure the visa is still valid upon entry. The Embassies in Cairo and Nairobi no longer issue visas to non Egyptian or Kenyan residents so you will NOT be able to obtain one in either of these places.

Visa on arrival at Addis Ababa airport

Some tourist visas can also be issued on arrival at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport.

Tourist visas can only be issued on arrival to:
• foreign nationals who are coming from countries where there is no Ethiopian Mission
• foreign nationals who are coming from and are permanent residents in any of the following internationally recognised tourist-generating countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.

If applying for a tourist visa on arrival, visitors will need to bring with them two recent passport-sized photographs and no less than US $20 before their application can be processed.

When applying for the visa the form will ask you for a contact in Ethiopia please put:

Hotel Taitu
Piazza
Addis Ababa
+251 111 560787

Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US$10 and a maximum of US$20 per day.

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

What else you need to know

Currencies & Cash

It is not really worth trying to buy local currencies before you travel. Do also bear in mind that many countries have strict regulations about the amount of their own local currency you are allowed to import - if you are found with amounts in excess of the allowed amounts, it may well be confiscated!

For obvious security reasons we hesitate to recommend you bring lots of cash with you, a sensible mix of cash, travellers cheques, cash passports such as TravelEx cards and ATM cards is best. However, most of our past passengers have said they wished they had been told to bring more cash. Apart from the convenience of being able to change money in many more places, you will sometimes get a much better exchange rate for cash.

You should take a mixture of denomination notes. Banks and moneychangers in most countries will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are dated from **2003** or later. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on.

Cash machines are readily available in most of East and Southern Africa but are not always reliable therefore we recommend that you do not rely on them as your only source of cash. Please note that there are no cash machines in Sudan.

Credit cards such as Visa and American Express are the most commonly accepted, but be prepared for very high commission charges. Please do not rely on cards for daily use, as they are not always accepted outside of larger towns and cities. Please bring a mixture of small and large denominations as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over $50.

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 Permetherin 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

Canada. 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 theses 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. 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 you 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

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

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 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 22/05/2013