Moroccan Explorer (ZLL)

Casablanca to Casablanca 21 days, departing 12 Oct 2013

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury
Physical Challenge: Easy Hard
Trip Style: Overlanding
Route: Casablanca to Casablanca
Length: 21 days
Transport: Soft-sided safari overland vehicle, camel
Accommodation: Hotel (9 nts), campsites (9 nts), wildcamp (1 nt), Desert Nomad Camp (1 nt) Upgrades from camping to rooms usually available on the road. 20 Breakfasts, 14 Lunches, 9 Dinners

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

Morocco

Morocco is a country with a very diverse landscape. Sitting on the coast of the Mediterranean sea and on the edge of the Western Sahara desert, there is so much culture and life to be found.

The capital of Rabat is located on the beautiful shore of the Atlantic Ocean and has some wonderful places to visit. With theatres, art galleries and museums spread over the city centre, the history of Morocco is easy to find. Venture into a maze of a city in Marrakesh. Exploring here is a must and where better to start than the markets. With the amazing cultural stalls including snake charmers, the day can just drift away and you could find yourself with many mementos of your trip. Step into history and walk along the ancient city walls of the Medina of Marrakesh. Exploring can be tiring, but sitting down and having a meal can be an adventure in itself. The popular dish of cous cous can come in a range of flavours. Cinnamon, cumin, ginger and paprika are just some of the lip-smacking tastes that hit you in these dishes. The creation of the soothing flavour of green tea with mint is considered an art form and drinking it with family and friends is a ritual. This is a wonderful chance to revel in the culture.

The magical sounds of the Morocco can be found all over the country, with many regions having their own sound. The range is magnificent and with folk music and influences from Africa and beyond, there is a taste for everyone. So pick your sound, pick your food and pick your own adventure of Morocco.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Casablanca
Sat 12 Oct 2013

Border information: If joining in Casablanca, enter Morocco at Casablanca Airport

Today is a free day until the group meeting at 18.00hrs. Your leader will leave a note at reception telling you where this important meeting will take place. Your leader will collect your kitty and check your passport and insurance details at this meeting. After the group meeting there is the option of joining the group for dinner.

Tonight we stay in a comfortable hotel in down town Casablanca not far from the old Medina

Hotel for the night: CasablancaCasablanca
Hotel Guynemer
2 Rue Mohammed Belloui
Casablanca
Morocco

Casablanca
Casablanca, Morocco's largest city, is a curious blend of the traditional and modern. It has all the hallmarks of a brash western metropolis, with a hint of the decadent langour that marks any of the Southern European cities that it resembles. But alongside these are the flowing robes of the old djellabah and burnooses of traditional Morocco. One of the highlights of the city is the enormous Hassan II Mosque but you still shouldn't miss out on the old medina.

Day 2: Rabat
Sun 13 Oct 2013

After breakfast we have a short drive of approx. 130 Kms to Rabat, the 3rd largest city in Morocco for a free afternoon exploring the Old quarter and Rabat Medina.

Tonight we will stay in a well equipped campsite.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the Medina & walk up Kasbah Oudaias	Included in tour

Rabat

The great walls of Rabat enclose a largely modern city, but there remain several quarters to remind you of its rich past.

The city is located on the Atlantic Ocean at the mouth of the river Bou Regreg and has a relaxed atmosphere with virtually none of the hustle and hassle of Morocco's larger tourist attractions. It is a fascinating place to explore with it's history.

Day 3: Moulay Idriss
Mon 14 Oct 2013

Today we head approx. 130km to the sacred pilgrimage of Moulay Idriss to explore the old medina.

Tonight we will stay in the home of a Moroccan family inside the walls of the Kasbah with several private rooms to choose from.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the medina of Moulay Idriss	Included in tour
Stay in the home of a Moroccon family inside the walls of the Kasbah of Moulay Idriss	

Moulay Idriss
Moulay Idriss is named after the great-grandson of the Prophet Mohammed and he is also considered the country's most revered saint. Moulay is a term equal to “Prince” or “Lord”.and is considered the holiest town in Morocco

He came to Morocco from Mecca in the late 8th century AD where he was being persecuted by the Abbasid Caliphate who was based in Baghdad. He settled at Volubilis and converted the locals to Islam. He became their leader and also established Morocco's first imperial dynasty.

His tomb, located in Moulay Idriss, is a pilgrimage site for Muslims where the faithful gather to pay homage to the founding father of Islam in Morocco at the 8th century mausoleum. The town has been open to non-Muslims for over 70 years although they cannot enter the shrine.

In 2005 the Moroccan government decided to allow locals to convert their homes to guesthouses and begin to allow non-muslims to sleep overnight in the town which up until then had been forbidden.

The town is famous for its' nougat candy which is sold at stands all around the square and near the mosque. It also has the only cylindrical minaret in all of Morocco.

Day 4: Fès, Volubilis

Tue 15 Oct 2013

Leaving the homestay after breakfast we head back down through the country side to make our way to Fes, approx. 100Km, visitng the the Roman ruins at Volubilis en route.

Tonight we stay in a well equipped camp site.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 night stay at the historic Royal Medina city of Fes	Included in tour
Guided visit of the ancient Roman ruins of Volubilis	Included in tour

Fès

Fès, the second largest city of Morocco, is the capital of the Fès-Boulemane region and has always dominated Morocco's trade, culture, religion and education, and at one time it was the third most holy city of Islam.

Today Fès is one of the few surviving medieval Arabic cities. All around are scenes expressing Arabic history, culture and customs. Fès, the former capital, is one of the country's four "imperial cities," the others being Rabat, Marrakech and Meknes. It comprises three distinct parts, Fès el Bali (the old, walled city), Fès-Jdid (new Fès, home of the Mellah) and the Ville Nouvelle (the French-created, newest section of Fès).

Fès el Bali is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its medina, the larger of the two medinas of Fès, is believed to be the world's largest contiguous car-free urban area.

A guide is essential in the medina to avoid losing your way amongst the labyrinthine alleys. You can visit the dye pits, where the smell of skins is so overpowering that you are given a sprig of mint to hold to your nose as you walk past the rancid pools. There are scores of mosques in the medina, most notably the Kairaouine Mosque, which houses the oldest university in the world.

Volubilis

Volubilis is home to the largest and best preserved Roman ruins in Morocco. They were built in the First Century AD and are famed for their magnificent mosaics and column-lined streets.

Day 5: Fès

Wed 16 Oct 2013

Today we have a full day city tour with a local guide and lunch. In the evening we have the option to go out to a traditional show with dinner.

Ou second night will be in the same camp site.

Activity	Approximate Cost
City tour of Fes with local guide and lunch	Included in tour
Moroccan dinner and evening show	EUR 26

Day 6: Fes to Merzouga Wild Camp

Thu 17 Oct 2013

Today is a drive day of approx. 450Kms where we will aim to wild camp on the way to Merzouga.

Day 7: Merzouga & Sahara

Fri 18 Oct 2013

Leaving our wild camp we head to Merzouga to embark on our overnight camel ride into the Sahara. We will arrive to our desert camp slightly exhausted, but after eating a full traditional Berber celebratory dinner, listening to Berber drumming and lying on Berber rugs looking up at the crystal clear Saharan sky at night, you realise what a fantastic experince this really is.

Tonight we will sleep on beds laid out on rugs on the sand with a gentle breeze blowing the tops of the palms.

Merzouga & Sahara

Merzouga is a small village in south-eastern Morocco. The village is most famous for Erg Chebbi one of Morocco's most beautiful and only genuine desert areas. Vast sand dunes tumble across the desert floor forming a massive sea of sand. The dunes are a scene of constant change and fascination as sunlight transforms them from pink to gold to red.

From Merzouga, camels take you for an overnight stay in the desert where a truly magnificent scene is awaiting you. The black Berber tents are surrounded by green swathes of date palms and camel enclosures dwarfed by the surrounding dunes. Away from the light you really appreciate the immense clarity of the desert sky and the brilliance of its stars

Day 8 to 9: Todra Gorge

Sat 19 Oct to Sun 20 Oct 2013

After our breakfast in the desert we head back to the truck and then on to Todra Gorge, approx. 300km.

We will stay for 2 nights near Todra Gorge at a well equipped camp site where you will have plenty of opportunity for hikes and walks in the gorge.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights to explore the vast Todra Gorge, to hike and to visit the palmery	Included in tour

Todra Gorge

The Todra Gorge is situated on the remote east side of the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco. The huge fault dividing the high atlas from the Jebel Sarho is at some points just wide enough for a tiny glacier stream to flow through leaving it hard to imagine that the river once filled the gorge. It is relatively easy to hike in the gorge and the scenery is spectacular. Local people live in the area and can be seen going about there daily business with their small donkeys, or herding camels.

Day 10: Ait Benhaddou

Mon 21 Oct 2013

We head off after breakfast to Ait Bennhaddou, approx. 215Kms. Arriving in the afternoon we have free time to explore the beautiful examples of Kasbahs Ait Bennhaddou has to offer.

Tonight we will camp in the garden or on the terrace of a hostel where there is also opportunity to upgrade to rooms.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight at and wander through the stunning Ait Benhaddou Kasbah	Included in tour

Ait Benhaddou

Aït Benhaddou is a 'fortified city', or ksar, along the former caravan route between the Sahara and Marrakech in present-day Morocco. This whole area is scattered with the most exotic and best-preserved kasbahs in the entire Atlas region. Aït Benhaddou has attracted film makers for may years and has been used for scenes in as many as 20 films. Unfortunately over the years the population of Aït Benhaddou has decreased and is now under UNESCO protection.

Day 11: Taliouine

Tue 22 Oct 2013

Today is a drive day of approx. 233Kms to Taliouine where we stay overnight in a well equipped Camp site.

Day 12: Ouirgane, Taliouine

Wed 23 Oct 2013

Leaving after breakfast we stop at a Saffron community project for an hour then it's an all day drive up the Tizi-n-Test pass ino the High Atlas Mountains. We aim to stop and have lunch at the top of the pass and descend visiting the Tin Mal Mosque en route to Ouirgane, approx. 283Kms.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the Tin Mal Mosque Ourigane	EUR 1
Visit to the Saffron Community project	Included in tour

Ouirgane

Nestled 1,000m in the tranquil foothills, surrounded by views of the Toubkal range and a wide variety of birdlife of the High Atlas Mountains in the heart of the Toubkal National Park lies the pretty small Berber village of Ouirgane.

Day 13: Imlil

Thu 24 Oct 2013

For those that chose to trek Mount Toubkal, trekkers will leave Ouirgane early in the morning in the truck to go to Imlil to meet the trekking guide for briefing. Trekkers will stay this night at the Neltner Hut refuge at base camp.

Non trekkers will have a free morning in Ouirgane and will then head onto Imlil in the truck once it has returned from Imlil. Non trekkers will stay in Dorm style Berber Salons at the Kasbah Du Toubkal.

Imlil

Imlil is a small village in the high Atlas Mountains of Morocco. It is located 1740 meters above sea level. Imlil is the most important village in the Ait Mizane Valley and it is the start of most of the walks in this area. It is close to the mountain Jebel Toubkal, the highest peak in Northern Africa. Imlil makes a good base for attempting to summit Toubkal.

Day 14: Imlil

Fri 25 Oct 2013

For the trekkers today is the second day trekking Mt Toubkal arriving at the Kasbah Du Toubkal late afternoon.

For the non trekkers today is a free days for Berber village visits and walks.

Tonight everyone will meet up again for an evening meal and overnight at the Kasbah Du Toubkal.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 day/1 night Trek up Mount Toubkal (Must be pre booked please see comments)	GBP 160
Berber village visit in Imlil	EUR 10
Berber walks and treks in Imlil	EUR 10

Day 15 to 16: Essaouira

Sat 26 Oct to Sun 27 Oct 2013

Leaving the Atlas Mountains behind us we head to the coast to the stunning coastal town of Essaouira, approx. 250Kms, where we base ourselves for 2 nights at a beautiful riad style hotel.

Your time in Essaouira is free for optional activites, exploring or simply relaxing.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 night stay in the Medina beach town and colourful port of Essaouira	Included in tour
Boat trips from Essaouria	EUR 10

Essaouira

Along the Atlantic coast, the temperature drops to a beautiful maritime temperature. The small Moroccan resort of Essaouira is a charming town, nothing like the tourist beaches at Agadir, with a distinct Moroccan feel to it. This is where the locals come for their holidays. The old Medina town is completely ringed by restored city walls, and the small streets inside are lined with a plethora of shops and restaurants. This is one of the best places in Morocco to buy wooden objects, such as boxes made of sandalwood and inlaid with patterns of different coloured woods. Haggling is not necessary, as prices tend to be far more reasonable than in Marrakech. Carpet shops, metal work, shoe shops, everything that you will find in Morocco, is available in the Medina. The local food is exceptional with excellent fresh seafood. It is well worth visiting the seafood market and street restaurants on the way down to the port. It is a charming town full of white buildings with blue windows and doors huddled around the city walls and fishing port. The beaches are an experience too, vast expanses of windblown sand scattered with local holidaymakers and internationals alike and if it is a windy day then you can watch the kite or windsurfers doing their stuff.

Day 17 to 19: Marrakech

Mon 28 Oct to Wed 30 Oct 2013

A drive of approx. 260Kms brings us to the "red city" of Marrakech, Morocco's 2nd largest city.

We base ourselves in a comfortable hotel for 3 nights allowing plenty of time for sightseeing and adventure activities.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights in Marrakech to soak up the exotic atmosphere	Included in tour
Hamam & Market Urban Adventure, Marrakech	EUR 50
Marrakech City Discovery Urban Adventure	EUR 60
Medina, Palaces & Tombs Urban Adventure	EUR 35
Tajine cookery class, Marrakech	EUR 50
Le Jardin Marjorelle, Marrakech	EUR 5
Half day and full day quad biking in Marrakech	EUR 60
River Tubing in Marrakech	EUR 60
White Water rafting in Marrakech	EUR 295

Marrakech

Marrakech known as the "Red City", is the 2nd largest city in Morocco and the most important former imperial city in Morocco's history. Like many North African cities, the city of Marrakech comprises both an old fortified city (the médina) and an adjacent modern city (called Gueliz) Crowded with Arabs and Berbers, the old city of Marrakech is fascinating.

You can watch craftsmen busy at their leatherwork, metalwork and carpet making. To escape the heat of the day, you may visit the Saadian tombs, intricately carved mausoleums with elaborate arches containing the graves of kings, queens and princes dating back to the Fifteenth Century. Surrounded by high walls and shaded by palms and shrubs, it seems as much a pleasure garden as a cemetery.

Marrakech has the largest traditional markets or Souks in Morocco and also has one of the busiest squares in Africa and the world, Djemaa El-Fna. The square bustles with acrobats, story-tellers, water sellers, dancers and musicians. By night food stalls open in the square turning it into a huge busy open-air restaurant.

Marrakech is also a centre for trekking into the High Atlas and other adventure activities.

Day 20: Marrakech to Casablanca

Thu 31 Oct 2013

Leaving Marrkech after breakfast we set off back to Casablanca, approx. 300kms, aiming to arrive at around lunctime to allow time for exploring the many sites on offer.

Tonight we will go out for a group meal and stay in a comfortabel hotel.

Day 21: Casablanca

Fri 01 Nov 2013

Today is the end day of the Morocco trip so there is nothing planned for this day.

However if you are continuing on to either Cairo or Dakar then your leader will assist you with getting to the airport for your included flight. You will overnight tonight in a comfortable hotel in Casablanca, Cairo or Dakar (depending on the flight times and availability).

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.

Summer Mount Toubkal Ascent

Guidance notes for trekkers considering climbing Toubkal as an optional activity

Jbel Toubkal is the highest mountain in North Africa at 4165m. It is in the High Atlas mountain range and is a **serious** undertaking for anyone.

This trek operates on a minimum of 2 persons trekking. The trek includes transport, guide, all meals, all equipment, overnight accommodation and mules for luggage.

The over night accommodation will be spent at the Neltner Hut refuge at base camp and you have the choice of either camping or staying in the hut.

The Nelter Hut is a modern mountain hut with bunk beds in communal rooms. There are basic toilet facilities “a la Turk” which are flushed by using a bucket filled from a tap. Toilet paper is put in a bin for disposal later. There are cold showers and sometimes some hot ones. At peak times the facilities would be considered less than adequate by most western standards.

Please specify at time of booking whether you would prefer to camp or stay in the hut.

We recommend that you are prepared both mentally and physically for the climb. This should be done in the following ways:

- **Physical preparation.** Before coming to Morocco, you should ensure that you are physically fit and able to walk the long distance and climb the steep gradients that Toubkal represents. At 4165m, Toubkal is high enough for some, all, or indeed no-one to experience **altitude sickness.** It is impossible to predict who, if anyone, will be affected, but the effects are serious and potentially life threatening, requiring immediate descent. Physical fitness, prior experience at altitude and stamina do not guarantee making the summit, but these will all help and make the experience a pleasure rather than a torment. The descent is notoriously difficult - strenuous with long sections walking on unstable scree. If at all possible, participants should have some experience of walking in mountain areas before hand.
- **Mental preparation.** Jbel Toubkal is a serious undertaking. Even reaching the base camp at the Neltner hut is an amazing achievement! You need to be mentally prepared for a tough expedition involving carrying your own equipment (day sacks), physical fatigue and potentially the effects of altitude. A positive mind-set really helps reach the summit! You should also be mentally prepared not to be able to make the final climb due to deteriorating weather conditions. It can be disappointing not to be able to complete the trek after so much preparation.
- **Equipment.** You must be well equipped for the ascent. We recommend that you bring the following:-
    - Well worn in footwear (walking boots **must** be worn -trainers or similar are in no way adequate)
    - Sleeping bag
    - Waterproofs
    - Warm clothing including a fleece jacket, hat and gloves.
    - Sunglasses and a sunhat
    - Walking poles are extremely useful for both the ascent and particularly for the descent. You can bring your own but they do also have them available upon request (subject to availability) at the Kasbah, and you should practise using them before the trip.
    - You should also bring some snacks such as chocolate or nuts, or even glucose energy tablets, to help get you to the top.
    - Drinking water
    - Money for souvenirs
- **Time taken.** Fit adults undertake the climb in two days. The first day is the ascent to the Neltner hut, the second is the final push to the summit and the descent to Imlil. This can be a very long and exhausting day for the well prepared.

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.

Morocco

Most western visitors do not require visas to visit Morocco as a tourist, and are stamped in on arrival for 3 months, however it is recommended you check with your respective embassies. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months.

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 covers expenses such as your optional activities, drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

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 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.

Currencies & Cash

Euros not Dollars - In North and West Africa (Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo & The DRC) we use Euros and not US Dollars. Please note that although we do quote kitties, personal spending and other items in US Dollars (because we operate globally), for trips passing through these countries, you will want to use Euros and NOT dollars for the kitty, tipping and for personal spending. As the exchange rate is variable, the trip leader will confirm the exact exchange rate between Dollar and Euros to be used for the kitty at the pre departure meeting.

In term of local money 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, but in West Africa travellers cheques are almost impossible to change so for that reason we recommend a mix of cash and ATM cards. Please note that most ATMs only take Visa cards NOT Mastercard.

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 areas but are not always reliable therefore we recommend that you do not rely on them as your only source of cash. Credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard 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.

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 24/05/2013