New DelhiChennai (WLH)

Delhi to Chennai 39 days, departing 24 Dec 2012

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury
Physical Challenge: Easy Hard
Trip Style: Overlanding
Route: Delhi to Chennai
Length: 39 days
Transport: Overland expedition vehicle
Accommodation: Mainly local hotels and hostels, some nights community homestay, a few nights camping and wildcamp.

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: Everyday Activities

EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES: Suitable for most fitness levels. Your itinerary may include easy-paced walks or bike rides, horse riding and other non-strenuous activities. On overland trips you will be camping at least some of the time.

Countries Visited

India

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Delhi

Mon 24 Dec 2012

Today is a free day until the group meeting at 18:00hrs. We stay overnight in a local hotel.

Hotel for the night: Florence Inn
Florence Inn
15 A/6 WEA
Ajmal Khan Road
Near Karol Bagh Metro Station
Opposite Puja Park
Karol Bagh
New Delhi-110005
+919871632007
Please note: There is a sister hotel in Delhi called the Hotel Florence. This is a different hotel a few blocks away. Please make sure you go to the Florence Inn.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Experience the hustle and bustle of Delhi	Included in tour

Delhi

New Delhi is the India's intriguing capital and is the country's third largest city. Perhaps the best way to get your bearings is by starting with a city tour of Delhi's many historic sites and buildings. The Lok Sabha (parliament building), President’s Palace, India Gate and the Rajpath are a good place to start, impressive reminders of the splendour of the old British Indian Empire. Other sites of interest include Qutab Minar, a soaring tower and fine example of Afghan architecture and Humayan's tomb, an example of Mogul building style and allegedly a forerunner of the Taj Mahal. If you have the time, you may also want to consider visiting the magnificent Red Fort and Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India.

Bustling and lively Delhi is also a great place to indulge in shopping and people watching. In the old town you'll find Chandni Chowk, a colourful shopping bazaar and fascinating market. The market is one of the most popular in India, taking it's name from the words meaning "moonlight square". Finally, if you're interested in learning more about India's history, The Gandhi Museum is an absolute must, dedicated to the life and work of Mahatma Ghandi.

Day 2: Bikaner

Tue 25 Dec 2012

After breakfast we leave Delhi for the journey 400Kms to Bikaner. The drive will take us most of the day, stopping en route for lunch. In Bikaner we will either stay in a local hotel, or at an eco-lodge a short distance outside the city.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overland into the Thar Desert via the colourful city of Bikaner	Included in tour
Witness the holy rats in the Karni Mata rat temple near Bikaner	Included in tour

Bikaner

Bikaner is a desert town in north west Rajastahn, protected from the encroaching sands by it's high city walls and gates. The atmospheric old town is built out of the same pinky-red sandstone as many of the buildings in nearby Jaipur. A royal city, Bikaner is home to Junagarh Fort and Lalgarh Palace, still home to the Bikaner royal family, although part of the palace is now also used as a hotel. Close to Bikaner you will find the bizarre temple of Karni Mata, where holy rats are worshipped. Thousands and thousands of holy rats (they look very much like unholy rats) known as kabas, scurry around the temple, over your feet, between your legs, up the walls and on the furniture. If you choose to visit it is important you observe the sacred rituals and eat some of the holy food offerings spat upon by the holy rats. This will bring you immense good luck (and probably a few interesting medical conditions).

Day 3: Jaisalmer

Wed 26 Dec 2012

Morning drive of 385Kms from Bikaner to the ancient Rajasthani city of Jaisalmer, arriving early afternoon stopping at the Karni Mata (Rat Temple) en-route. We base ourselves in Jaisalmer for the next 3 nights, staying in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights at Jaisalmer to explore the medieval streets, the fort and the desert	Included in tour

Jaisalmer

The city of Jaisalmer is one of the old Rajasthan capitals and dates back to 1156 AD. The city is dominated by the old fort, built on a hill which gives it a commanding view over the Thar Desert, and has been the scene of many battles. Built of beautiful yellow sandstone, the fort's walls are a tawny beige colour during the day, fading to honey-gold as the sun sets. The moumental walls are ornately designed with imposing parapets and towers at every turn, covered in intricate stonework - and in the old town the havelis (houses of once important Jaisalmer families) look like small palaces with facades covered in fine carvings and highly decorated balconies.

Day 4: Jaisalmer

Thu 27 Dec 2012

This morning is free for you to explore more of Jaisalmer, before we head out on a camel safari into the Thar Desert in the late afternoon. Exploring the desert with local Rajasthani camel drivers is the most authentic way to experience the area. Tonight we camp out in the desert, sleeping under the stars.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Trek into the Thar Desert on an overnight camel safari with Rajasthani camel drivers	Included in tour

Day 5: Jaisalmer

Fri 28 Dec 2012

Returning from our camel safari in the morning, we have the rest of today to relax or explore more of Jaisalmer and the surrounding area. Overnight in comfortable hotel.

Day 6: Jodhpur, Sambhali Trust

Sat 29 Dec 2012

This morning we drive approx. 285Kms from Jaisalmer to another famous Rajasthani city, Jodphur. En route to Jodphur we will make our visit to the Sambhali Trust project where we will learn abou the efforts of the project and make a group donation from the kitty.

After our visit we will make our way to our local guest house in Jodphur where will spend the night.

Jodhpur

Jodhpur, situated on the edge of the Thar Desert is affectionately known as "the blue city" because of the many indigo coloured houses in the old town. These are best seen from the ramparts of the mighty Meherangarth Fortress, which looms above the bustling city. Built in the 1400's, Meherangarth is the largest fort in the whole of Rajasthan and has never been taken by force. The fort complex itself is huge, housing the Maharaja's palace a number of temples and extensive gardens.

Elsewhere in the city, Nai Sadak is the place to head for shopping, lined with shoe and sari shops, or check out Sardar Market, a riot of sights, sounds and smells that's a baffling assault on the senses. Close nearby are the historical sites of Jaswant Thada, built at the end of the 19th century and constructed entirely out of sheets of marble; and Mandore, the ancient capital of Marwar.

Day 7: Jodhpur

Sun 30 Dec 2012

Today we will be in and around Jodphur. In the morning we visit the Meherangarh Fort & Palace, before splitting up into small groups of twos or threes for our community homestay. Overnight in local family homes.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the blue city of Jodhpur and the mighty Meherangarh fort	Included in tour
Community homestay to experience true Indian hospitality	Included in tour
Visit & donation to the Sambhali Trust, Jodphur	Included in tour

Day 8: Pushkar

Mon 31 Dec 2012

Short morning drive of 215Kms from Jodphur to the holy town of Pushkar. Afternoon free to explore. Overnight in local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in one of Indias oldest cities, Pushkar	Included in tour

Pushkar

The small town of Pushkar is perhaps most famous for its huge camel fair held in October or November every year. It is also an important pilgrimage site for Hindu's as it's considered a very holy place, and there are a lot of temples here, including one of the few Brahman temples in all of India. Situated around a lake, most of the buildings are low and white-washed and the streets are small and narrow, giving the town a wonderfully mellow atmosphere. This is a great place to kick-back and take it easy for a while. Wander the streets, relax with a drink while you watch the sunset over the lake and indulge in a spot of souvenir shopping.

Day 9: Udaipur

Tue 01 Jan 2013

After breakfast we set off from Pushkar for a 300Kms drive to Udaipur, arriving mid-afternoon. We will have 2 nights here, giving us plenty of time to discover this amazing, romantic Rajasthani city. Overnight in comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights to discover the stunning white city of Udaipur	Included in tour

Udaipur

Udaipur is arguably the most romantic city in all of Rajasthan, an evocative and magical place on the shores of Lake Pichola. The city boats several royal palaces, the most spectacular of which is probably the floating Lake Palace, made famous in the Bond film "Octopussy". This palace is now home to a luxury hotel and it's sometimes possible to take a short boat trip out onto the lake to see it. Back in the city itself, the huge City Palace towers over the rest of the buildings here, not surprising seeing as this is the largest palace complex in Rajasthan. Its many balconies, towers and cupolas offer fine views over the lake and city. Now a museum, the City Palace is home to the "Mor Chowk" with its beautiful mosaics of peacocks - a sacred bird not only to the people of Udaipur but also to all Rajasthanis.

Day 10: Udaipur

Wed 02 Jan 2013

Free day to explore the sites of Udaipur or relax on one of the many roof-top terraces. Second night in comfortable hotel.

Day 11: Ratlam

Thu 03 Jan 2013

Leaving Udaipur we have a local cook join us on board who will accompany us over the next few days whilst we are wild camping.

Today will mostly be spent travelling approx 220Kms on the backroads of rural Rajasthan. We are well off the tourist trail here and tonight we will wildcamp, perhaps on the edge of a local village.

Day 12: Mandu

Fri 04 Jan 2013

Morning driving of 200Kms, continuing our route through rural villages and towns. Our destination is Mandu - an extensive and mainly deserted hill-top fort. In the afternoon we will have time to explore the palace and tomb. Tonight we will either stay in a local guesthouse, or camp.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the deserted hilltop ghost city of Mandu	Included in tour

Mandu

Mandu was founded as a fortress and retreat in the 10th century by Raja Bhoj. It was conquered by the Muslim rulers of Delhi in 1304. After the victory of Mughals in the early 16th century on Delhi, Mandu came under the administration of Afghan Dilawar Khan, the Governor of Malwa. Hoshang Shah, son of Dilawar Khan, transferred his capital to Mandu. Until 1561, it remained under the Afghans when Akbar defeated Baz Bahadur, one of the Afghan chieftains ruling a part of central India. Baz Bahadur fled Mandu instead of facing the Mughal army. During the administration of Marathas, the capital of Malwa was shifted back to Dhar and Mandu became a ghost city for some time.

An extensive deserted hilltop fort on the edge of the Vindhya hill ranges, the town was once known as "the city of joy". Today the atmosphere is one of mystery and romance. The views from the fort are quite stunning, it's a great spot to take in the vast plains below - and if you find Echo Point, when you clap you'll be able to hear the sound you make echoing all the way down the valley. It's interesting to wander around and explore the old buildings, in particular the royal enclave, which includes some charming palaces built by the sultan for the ladies of his hareem. You can also see the Hindola Mahal, or "Swinging Palace", which takes it's name from it's sloping sided walls that look like a swing.

Day 13 to 14: Ajanta, Ellora
Sat 05 Jan to Sun 06 Jan 2013

From Mandu we take and early morning drive of approx. 250Kms to Ajanta.

Over the next couple of days we will have a guided tour of both the Ajanta and Ellora Caves.

Both nights will be spent camping.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided visit to the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain rock-cut temples and monasteries of Ellora	Included in tour
Journey to the Buddhist and Hindu caves and temples of Ajanta and Ellora	Included in tour
Guided visit to the buddhist rock caves and paintings of Ajanta	Included in tour

Ajanta

Hidden in a rocky escarpment, the caves at Ajanta were discovered in 1819 by a British hunting party that stumbled upon them. Their isolation has contributed to the fine state of preservation we find them in today. In all there are twenty nine caves nestling in the curve of a stunning deep gorge, all dating from around 200 BC to 650 AD. The caves are beautifully decorated with paintings and sculptures telling the story of Buddha and illustrating tales from Buddhist fables and jatakas. The frescos are amazingly colourful and considered by many as amongst the finest examples of Buddhist art in India.

Ellora

Ellora is known for it's remarkable sculptures. The 34 cave temples at Ellora are mainly Hindu and Jain. The Hindu caves are the most dramatic and the sheer size of the Kailasa Temple is overwhelming. It covers twice the area of the Parthenon in Athens and is 1 and a half times as high. It was carved out of solid rock from the top down, and it is estimated that it entailed removing 200,000 tonnes of rock.

Day 15: Mumbai
Mon 07 Jan 2013

Setting off early we say good bye to our local cook and we have approx. 400Kms Drive from Ajanta and Ellora to Mumbai arriving mid to late afternoon.

Tonight we stay in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in one of Indias' most cosmopolitan cities	Included in tour

Mumbai

Mumbai is on the west coast of India and is probably the most cosmopolitan city in the country. It's also home to the largest film industry in the world, Bollywood. So if you've never seen an Indian movie before, this is the place for it. Full of high-drama, romance, suspense, music and dancing, Bollywood films are all-singing, all-dancing extravaganzas. It's pure, straightforward and unadulterated entertainment and escapism, so even if you can't understand the language, they still make an interesting spectacle. Combine India's version of LA with a hefty dose of traffic, busy streets, lively bazaars, briefcase clutching businessmen cutting international deals in soaring skyscrapers and some impressive colonial architecture, and there you have Mumbai. The city is a mad mixture of horrific poverty standing side-by-side with prolific consumerism; this is the financial capital of the sub-continent and it has the shopping centres, bars and restaurants to match - but more than half the inhabitants live in the slums.

Mumbai can be a bit of a shock to the sytem and an assault on the senses. But once you get your head around it, you'll begin to appreciate all the city has to offer. There's tons to do here, wander the streets and discover some of the beautiful old colonial architecture and Art Deco buildings, treat yourself to a meal in one of the country's best restaurants, and shop until you drop in the bazaars. In the evening, you can visit Chowpatty beach where colourful crowds of people mill about in the cooler evening air. Palmists, balloon sellers, magicians and acrobats all compete for your attention, vying to show you the magic of Mumbai.

Day 16: Mumbai
Tue 08 Jan 2013

Group meeting at 18.00hrs in Mumbai, otherwise today is free to explore the sights and sounds of Mumbai.

Overnight in a good quality hotel.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Supreme
Hotel Supreme
4 Panday Road
Cuffe Parade, Colaba
Mumbai 4000
Tel: 0091 22 22155105

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in one of Indias' most cosmopolitan cities	Included in tour

Day 17: Ganpatipule

Wed 09 Jan 2013

We leave the hustle and bustle of Mumbai very early this morning to aviod the rush hour traffic and head 375Km along the Konkan Coast to the little coastal town of Ganpatipule. Depending on what time we arrive at Ganpatipule we will either visit the The Ganpati Temple (Ganesha Temple) this afternoon or the following morning.

Tonight we will stay in basic beach side resort with facilities.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the Ganpati Temple at Ganpatipule	Included in tour

Ganpatipule

Ganpatipule is a sleepy hamlet in the Ratnagiri district of southwest Maharashtra in India, around 375 km off Mumbai by road. Untouched by commercialism, the pastoral beauty of the village is enhanced manifold by the six kilometers of virgin beach on the breathtaking Konkan coastline. The locals believe that Ganpatipule is blessed. They say that in an age when men were devout and miracles were the norm, the scriptures talked of four Dwardatas (welcoming deities) to the sub-continent, and they marked Ganpatipule as the western deity.

According to a local folklore, the Hindu god, Ganapati (Ganesha), taking umbrage by a remark made by a native lady, moved to Pulé (a few km ahead of the town) from his original abode of Gulé. Thus the region was named Ganpati-pulé. A 400 year old Ganpati image at Ganpatipule is said to have sprung up from the soil. This deity faces the West, so as to guard the western gates, unlike deities in other Indian temples who face the east. The temple is at the base of a hill, and pilgrims walk around (*pradakshina*) the hill as a mark of respect.

Aside from its clean beach and clear waters, Ganpatipule is rich in flora, including mangroves and coconut palms. Here, you can leave the hectic world behind as you laze around on golden sands or explore the many trails that lead from the beach.

Day 18 to 19: Goa

Thu 10 Jan to Fri 11 Jan 2013

Our journey continues 235Kms along the coast to Goa. We will stay for two nights at the relaxed beaches of Vagator in the North. Most travellers are drawn to Vagator for the stunning sunsets, the laid back atmosphere and the proximinity of some other quieter beaches in the area such as Arambol and Anjuna.

We will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities close to the beach.

Activity	Approximate Cost
4 nights to unwind on the stunning beaches of Goa	Included in tour
Guided tour of the Old Potuguese Capital of Goa	Included in tour

Goa

To many people, Goa is all about the beaches; and it's fair to say that the soft white sand and sparkling blue water of the Arabian Sea are definitely one of the main attractions here. But this is also an area rich in history and culture. The coastal state retains much of it's old Portuguese colonial architecture, traditions, religion, and lifestyle, particularly in the old capital of Old Goa, where there are several churches, a cathedral and lots of great local markets all well worth exploring. Relax under a palm trees on the beach, watch the dhows sailing out into the sunset and see the fishing boats landing their catch, or wander around the local spice plantations revelling in their heady scent, there's something here for all kinds of different travellers. The locals say that time moves more slowly in Goa, so if nothing else it's a brilliant stop for a few days, a great chance to enjoy a bit of tranquility in an often frenetic country. Goa is also home to some fantastic cuisine, including many fish-based curries, classic Goan pork vindaloo and Feni, a local spirit made from coconut and cashew nuts.

Day 20 to 21: Goa, Old Goa

Sat 12 Jan to Sun 13 Jan 2013

After a couple of nights on the northern beaches of Goa we head off in the truck to the southern beaches visiting the site of Old Goa en route.

We will stay for 2 nights in beautiful beach huts on the stunning beach of Agonda which is a perfect place to just sit back and watch the fishing boats landing their catch and sampling the delicious local cuisine or visit the nearby beach of Palolem with its many bars and restaurants.

Old Goa

Old Goa is a historical city in North Goa district in the Indian state of Goa. The city was constructed by

the Bijapur Sultanate in the 15th century, and served as capital of Portuguese India from the 16th century until its abandonment in the 18th century due to plague. The remains of the city are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The population was roughly 200,000 by 1543. Malaria and cholera epidemics ravaged the city in the 17th century and it was largely abandoned; only having a remaining population of 1,500 in 1775. It was then that the viceroy moved to Panjim. It continued to be the de jure capital of Goa until 1843, when the capital was then shifted to Panjim. The abandoned city came to be known as "Velha Goa" (in Portuguese, 'Old Goa'), to distinguish it from the new capital Nova Goa (Panjim). Velha Goa was incorporated into the Republic of India in 1961, together with the rest of Goa.

Old Goa contains churches affiliated to various congregations, including the Se Cathedral (the seat of the Archbishop of Goa), the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the Church of S. Caetano, and notably, the Basilica of Bom Jesus which contains the relics of Saint Francis Xavier, which is celebrated every year on 3 December.

Day 22: Hampi

Mon 14 Jan 2013

Leaving the beaches of Goa behind us we set off on a long drive day, approx. 400Km crossing into the state of Karnataka to the village of Hampi located within the ruins of Vijayanagara, the former capital of the Vijayanagara Empire.

Tonight we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Hampi

The city of Hampi bears exceptional testimony to the vanished civilization of the kingdom of Vijayanagar, which reached its apogee under the reign of Krishna Deva Raya (1509-30). The type of structure illustrates a significant historical situation: that of the kingdoms of South India which, menaced by the Muslims, were occasionally allied with the Portuguese of Goa.

The grand site of Hampi was the last capital of the last great Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar. Its fabulously rich princes built Dravidian temples and palaces which won the admiration of travellers between the 14th and 16th centuries. Conquered by the Deccan Muslim confederacy in 1565, the city was pillaged over a period of six months before being abandoned.

As the final capital of the last of the great kingdom of South India, that of the Vijayanagar, Hampi, enriched by the cotton and the spice trade was one of the most beautiful cities of the medieval world. Its palaces and Dravidian temples were much admired by travellers, be they Arab, Portuguese or Italian.

Conquered by the Muslims after the battle of Talikota in 1565, it was plundered over six months and then abandoned. Imposing monumental vestiges, partially disengaged and reclaimed, make of Hampi today one of the most striking ruins of the world.

Day 23: Hampi

Tue 15 Jan 2013

Today we rise early and set off on our guided tour of Hampi.

Our second night is in the local guesthouse.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the lost Kingdom of Vijayanagar in the magnificent city of Hampi	Included in tour

Day 24: Hampi to Mysore Wild Camp

Wed 16 Jan 2013

We set off from Hampi to start our journey to Mysore. We will try and cover approx. 200Km and aim to wild camp along the way.

Day 25 to 26: Mysore

Thu 17 Jan to Fri 18 Jan 2013

From our wild camp we head to Mysore where we will stay for 2 nights in a comfortable hotel. You have a free day in Mysore, one of India's most attractive towns, to explore the city's beautiful gardens or visit one of the many palaces and the Shri Chamarajendra art gallery.

Tonight we will stay in a comfortable hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the amazing Maharaja's Palace of Mysore	Included in tour
2 nights in Mysore, the centre of sandalwood and incense production	Included in tour

Mysore

Mysore is one of India's most attractive towns. Unlike some of India's biggest cities it feels quite manageable in size, and it's beautiful buildings are packed full of history, and the Maharajah's Palace, the Lalitha Mahal (Summer Palace) and Shri Chamarajendra art gallery are all definitely worth a visit. Historically the town was the capital of the mighty Maharaja kingdom of Mysore, ruled by the same family from 1399 until 1947. There was a brief period where the throne was usurped by one of the most colourful of Indian rulers, Hyder Ali and then by his famous son Tipu Sultan. Today the city is the state capital and one of the centres of the silk trade. It's well laid out with wide streets and many gardens, making it a pleasant place to wander around. It is also one of the major incense manufacturers in India - some call it "The Sandalwood City" and you will find yourself enveloped by the aromas of sandalwood, jasmine, rose and musk.

Day 27: Wayanad

Sat 19 Jan 2013

Today we travel 150kms up into the hills, heading for the hillstation of Wayanad, a small settlement surrounded by tea and coffee plantations. Whilst in Wayanad we stay as guests of local families at a local homestay.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Relax at the community Homestay in the hills of Wayanad	Included in tour

Wayanad

The lush hill station district of Wayanad is nestled at the foot of the Western Ghats. Rolling green hillsides, surrounded by misty-clad peaks and dotted with luxurious tea, coffee and spice plantations, the small communities here are the perfect place for a spot of rest and relaxation - the area is famous with locals for it's spectacular natural beauty. Part of the region is designated as a Wildlife Sanctuary in order to protect the many animals that live here and it's possible to trek through the forest reserves. This is one of the few places in India where you're almost guaranteed to see wild elephants, and if you're lucky you may also be able to spot deer, bison and langur monkeys.

Day 28: Wayanad

Sun 20 Jan 2013

A free day to relax and explore the tea and coffee plantations and surrounding hills. Second night at family homestay.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Trekking in the tea and coffee plantations of Wayanad	

Day 29: Cochin

Mon 21 Jan 2013

Leaving Wayanad after breakfast, today is a travel day, driving approximately 260kms to Cochin.

Overnight in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights to explore the sites of historic Fort Cochin	

Cochin

Cochin in Kerala is a town split between the mainland and a group of islands just off the coast, so a boat-trip is the best way to tour the main sights, which include the oldest church in India and Vasco de Gama's final resting place. Opposite Fort Cochin you can watch fishermen working their cantilevered Chinese fishing nets, typical to this region. Interestingly the town is also home to a dying Jewish community that has roots going back as far as 1000 AD and there is a synagogue here that was built in the sixteenth century. This is also the home of Kathakali dancing, India's most spectacular dance drama. The hundreds of different arrangements are based on stories from the Ramayan and Mahabharata - the two epic stories of Indian mythology.

Day 30: Cochin

Tue 22 Jan 2013

Today we take a city tour by boat around the coast and islands taking in various sites including the Jewish Quarter, St Francis Church & the Chinese fishing nets.

In the evening we will watch the famous Kathakali dancers, India's most spectacular dance drama.

Our second night is spent in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit Fort Cochin or watch the Kathakali dancers	Included in tour

Day 31: Allepey

Wed 23 Jan 2013

Leaving the bustle of Cochin behind today we embark on our overnight houseboat cruise on the tranquil Keralan back waters to Allepey.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Travel overnight by local boat through the Backwaters and experience the villages of Kerala	Included in tour

Allepey

Allepey is the gateway to the Keralan backwaters. The network of waterways here extends over hundreds of miles, not surprising then that Allepey is sometimes described as "The Venice of the East".The backwaters are best explored by boat as life revolves around the water here, children often learn to swim before they can walk and they row boats before they ride a bike. Jump on board a typical Keralan houseboat and meander down the waterways, try your hand at fishing and just lay back and enjoy this unique landscape.

Day 32 to 34: Varkala

Thu 24 Jan to Sat 26 Jan 2013

Leaving the backwaters behind us we head to the beach resort of Varkala (Approx. 120Kms). There is free time to simply relax or explore the surrounding area. Varkala is well known for it's beaches and there are also lots of great local restaurants where you can sample the justifiably famous Keralan cuisine.

During our time in Varkala we stay at a beach resort.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights to relax on the Indian Ocean beaches of Kerala	Included in tour

Varkala

Varkala sits on India's Keralan coast and is home to some of the whitest and most pristine beaches in the whole country. The sandy bay here is protected by soaring cliffs, the beach sits below the rock face, whilst the town itself sits prettily along the cliff edge above, a string of laid-back bars, restaurants, guesthouses and hotels. It's a great place to just kick back and relax, but if you want to get active, there are plenty of water sports on offer, including surfing, windsurfing and scuba-diving. Sitting on the sand and watching the sun dip below the horizon is the perfect way to end a day here.

Day 35: Kanyakumari, Madurai

Sun 27 Jan 2013

We have a full day journey today to the ancient capital of Madurai (Approx. 400Kms) visiting Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin), the most southern point of India, en-route.

Tonight we stay in local hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Journey to Kanyakumari the most Southern tip of India	Included in tour
Visit to the historical Hindu Meenakshi Amman Temple, dedicated to lord Shiva	Included in tour
Overnight in the Holy City of Madurai	Included in tour

Kanyakumari

Kanyakumari is a town in the state of Tamil Nadu in India. It is also sometimes referred to as Cape Comorin. Located at the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula, it is the geographical end of the Indian mainland.

Kanyakumari takes its name from the Kumari Amman or Kanyakumari Temple, situated in the town, on the sea-shore, the very confluence of the three water-bodies - the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengaland the Indian Ocean

Madurai

Madurai is Tamil Nadu's second largest town and ancient capital. Madurai is recognised as the centres of Dravidian culture with its main attraction the famous Shree Meenaksh Temple in the heart of the old town. Its many gopurams are covered with profusions of multicoloured images of gods, goddesses, animals and mythical figures. The city is a huge non-stop bazaar full of shops, street markets, temples and small industries. It is one of southern India's liveliest cities, yet small enough not to be overwhelming. The views from one of the temple towers are breathtaking.

Day 36: Trichy

Mon 28 Jan 2013

This morning we visit the Shree Menaksi Temple in Madurai before a short drive to Trichy (Approx. 140Kms). In the afternoon we make a visit to the famous Rock Fort and Sri Ranganathaswamy temple complex.

Tonight we stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Rock Fort and temples of Trichy	Included in tour

Trichy

The town of Tiruchirappalli, more commonly known as Trichy, is famous for its Rock Fort. Its name means "city of the sacred rock" and if you climb the 434 steps to the temple of Ganesh at the top, you will be rewarded with magnificent views of the town and surrounding plains Even more spectacular is the temple complex of Ranganathaswamy, set on the island of Srivangam and covering some 2½ sq kms, making it the largest complex in India. It consists of 21 gopurams - huge ornately decorated and carved towers - and a number of shrines and temples. It is still very much in use and the gopuram at the entrance was only completed in 1980, though its base dates back several centuries.

Day 37: Pondicherry

Tue 29 Jan 2013

Leaving in the morning we head to the French influenced Pondicherry (Approx. 230Kms). The afternoon is free for time to explore.

We will stay tonight in guest-house accommodation.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in the former French colony of Pondicherry	Included in tour

Pondicherry

The united territories of Pondicherry are unmistakeably and charmingly French, complete with a Hotel de Ville, French consulate and police who wear red "kepis" hats and belts. Pondicherry is also the home of the famous Sri Aurobind Ashram and its offshoot Auroville. The Ashram, founded by Sri Aurobindo in 1926, is one of the most popular in India amongst Westerners, and also one of the most affluent. The town enjoys duty free status and is known for its leather goods and hand-made paper products. With its French influence, many of the shops have a distinctly European feel.

Day 38: Mahabalipuram

Wed 30 Jan 2013

A short drive brings us to Mahabalipuram (Approx. 100Kms). Here we make a visit to the unusual shore temples and pagodas.

Tonight we stay in a comfortable local hotel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the Shore Temples & Pagodas of Mahabalipuram	Included in tour

Mahabalipuram

Mahabalipuram is the second capital and seaport of the Pallava Kings of Kanchipuram. It is famous for its shore temple and the 'Descent of Ganges', a relief carved on a vast rock surface. Mahabalipuram is a small, but very pleasant and easy-going village, consisting mainly of two main streets. It stands at the foot of a low lying, boulder-strewn hill where most of the temples and rock carvings are located. Stone carving is still very much a living craft in Mahabalipuram and a visit to the school of sculpture would be an interesting site to visit.

Day 39: Chennai

Thu 31 Jan 2013

We make a short journey to Chennai, the fourth largest city in India (Approx. 55Kms) stopping at a snake & crocodile farm en-route. The afternoon is free.

Chennai

Chennai (previously known as Madras) was the site of the first major settlement of the East India Company in 1639, and is now the fourth largest city in India. The town grew up around the Fort St George and along Mount Road and some interesting historic buildings can be seen here. It's true that it is busy, noisy and often extremely hot, but in many ways it is a surprisingly efficient and orderly place by Indian standards. The Government Museum is worth a visit if you're interested in the history of the city, and for Motorcycle enthusiasts the Enfield Factory tour is a must - though it only runs on certain days of the week, so check days and times before you make the journey. You might prefer to just wander the streets and soak up the atmosphere, exploring the many temples and bustling local markets.

Visa Information:

Important Notes

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

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

Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for Asia Itineraries

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

Visa Information

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

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

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

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

India

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

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

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

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

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

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

Referees in India:-

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

Accommodation in India:-

Hotel Supreme

4 Panday Road

Colaba

Mumbai

Tel +91 22 2218 5608

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

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

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

Personal Spending

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

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

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

What else you need to know

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 trips in Turkey, South East Asia, India and Nepal a sensible mix of cash 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.

For trips in Central Asia, China, Burma and Mongolia please refer to the money exchange notes.

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.

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 26/05/2013