Patagonia & Tierra Del Fuego (ZSU)

Ushuaia to Santiago 23 days, departing 17 Feb 2013

Comfort Zone: Basic Luxury
Physical Challenge: Easy Hard
Trip Style: Overlanding
Route: Ushuaia to Santiago
Length: 23 days
Transport: Overland vehicle, boat
Accommodation: Mainly campsites, with some bush camps and hotels/hostels.

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

Argentina

Argentina is a vast country which has a staggering diversity of climates and landscapes. With vibrant cities, the pampas, jungles and wind swept Patagonia it is a country with a very special character all of its own. Its initial appearance is fairly western but this disguises a long history of its own cultural heritage.

Buneos Aires is the capital of Argentina, lying at the mouth of the River Plate, it is a real viberant city. Full of life, from great local restaurants to local street markets and dances, showing the amazing local tango dance, Buenos Aires is the heart and soul of Argentina. Also home to some exquisite wine bars and an amazing nightlife, Buneos Aires is a must see city if you visit Argentina.

On the pampas the Gaucho people of Argentina spend their days working, riding their horses and protecting their cattle. This has resulted in worldwide export for beef, sunflower oil and wheat, making the Argentina Pampas famous for agriculture.

Deep in the south of the country is Patagonia. This beautiful area is known for its breathtaking landscapes, magnificent lakes and beautiful glacial scenery. It is a great place for outdoor activities, such as, trekking, horse riding, kayaking and mountain biking.

Patagonia is also full of culture, with the Welsh language kept alive for generations, and although it is starting to die out, there are many Welsh communities in Patagonia, especially around the Chebut river.

Heading further south is Tierra del Fuego. Lying across from the Magellan Straights, "The Land of Fire" is mainly in Chile, but 30% of it, including Ushuaia, the most southerly city in the world, belongs to Argentina.

Argentina is also the home to some beautiful wildlife. The Valdez Peninsular, in the Atlantic ocean, is a protected area which is the habitat for whales, penguins and seals. At certain times of the year, there is a chance to see the killer whale. This is also the home for land animals such as the Patagonian fox, guanacos and hairy armadillos.

To the north of Argentina is the Esteros del Ibera reserve in an area of swampland. Near to the borders of Paraguay and Brazil, this is one of South America's most important wilderness areas and is also the place to spot the rare marsh deer, maned wolf, howler monkeys, capybara and over 350 different species of birds.

Chile

With some of the most diverse landscapes in the world, Chile has the beauty of it all. From the driest deserts in the world, to the breathtaking sites of huge glaciers, this country is made for the outdoor enthusiast. Chile is a country full of volcanoes, lakes, rivers and beaches, and there is always an exciting adventure waiting to be found. If you venture off the beaten track, be prepared to make friends for life out of the welcoming locals.

A visit to Chile has to include a trip to the amazing capital of Santiago. This city stands at an amazing 1700 feet above sea level, and it is another place full of amazing landscapes and a gorgeous Mediterranean climate.

With so many locations to visit, the culture of Chile can be exposed through the sound of the music. Ranging from traditional folk music, to popular and classic sounds, the tradition of Chile is seeped into every area of the country.

Seafood is Chile's main cuisine and with so many dishes to try, it is an opportunity not to be passed upon. With 2700 miles of astounding coastline, Chile is the perfect location for the variety of dishes available.

So make friends with strangers, feel the vibe of Chilean music, and let Chile get into your pores.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Ushuaia

Sun 17 Feb 2013

Border information: If you are starting in Ushuaia, enter Argentina at Ushuaia Airport.

Today is an arrival day with a pre departure meeting at 18:00 hrs. There are no activities planned so you can arrive at any time. Your leader will leave a note in 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. Accommodation is in a lovely hostel in central Ushuaia.

Hotel for the night: Hostal Los Cormoranes
Hostal Los Cormoranes
Kamshen 788, esquina Alem
Ushuaia
Tel: +54 02901 423459

Ushuaia

Ushuaia lies at the southernmost tip of the Americas, the most southerly city on the island of Tierra del Fuego and often referred to as "the city at the end of the world". The town itself is low-lying and unassuming, centred around one main street and a waterfront that overlooks the Beagle Channel. Originally Ushuaia was little more than a remote outpost, first colonised by a British-funded mission in the late 1800's and subsequently used by the Argentinian government as a penal colony. What was once a sleepy small town has grown rapidly in recent years, much of which is due to tourist development and particularly to the increasing number of Antarctica trips calling to port here.

There's plenty to do in Ushuaia and the surrounding area. The town itself is home to an interesting museum where you can learn more about the history of Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego and the indigenous people who originally lived here. There surrounding scenery is also impressive, so it's worth getting out on a boat-trip into

the Beagle Channel, which will give you some great views of town with the Martial range in the background. You can also explore Tierra del Fuego National Park, another beautiful spot with some spectacular lake and mountain scenery.

The area is famous for its biting winds, so remember to pack your thermal undies if you're heading here, whatever time of year you're going to be visiting!

Day 2: Ushuaia, Tierra Del Fuego

Mon 18 Feb 2013

Today is a non-driving day and a chance to explore Tierra del Fuego National Park. We stay for a second night in the same hostel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Beagle channel boat trips	USD 40
Light plane flights over Ushuaia	USD 100
Guided tour of Tierra del Fuego National Park	Included in tour

Tierra Del Fuego

Tierra del Fuego ("Land of Fire") is a large island separated from mainland South America by the Magellan Straits. Most of the island belongs to Chile, but 30% of the archipelago is in Argentina, including Argentina's southernmost town, Ushuaia. This is Patagonia at its most remote,with a landscape of windswept plains, forests and swamplands, home to Rheas, Condors, Buzzard Eagles, Seals and Sealions, all of which thrive in these conditions. Originally the home of theYamana and Ona Indians, sadly there are not any indigenous communities left here. The people who inhabit Tierra del Fuego today are the descendants of the colonial settlers who came here from Europe in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mostly from Britain, Spain and Yugoslavia.

Day 3: Magellan Straits

Tue 19 Feb 2013

We head north driving 430 kms, including a ferry crossing of the infamous Magellan Straits, into Chile where we bush camp for the night.

Border information: We exit Argentina at San Sebastian and enter Chile at San Sebastian.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Follow in Darwin's footsteps across the Magellan Straits	Included in tour

Magellan Straits

Separating Tierra del Fuego from mainland Argeninta are the infamous Magellan Straits. This treacherous stretch of water is about 500km long and takes it's name from the explorer Magellan who first navigated these waters in 1520. It was the only ship out of a total of 17 attempting the passage that sucessfully managed to reach the Pacific. Before the Panama Canal was built, the Straits provided a useful route between Chile, Peru and Europe, and though they are less important as a major shipping route today, they still see a fair amount of traffic.

Day 4: Torres Del Paine National Park

Wed 20 Feb 2013

500 kms drive to Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia. This is one of the most outstanding areas of beauty in Chile and the highlight of the trip for many passengers. We camp for the night at a lakeside site

Torres Del Paine National Park

Parque Nacional Torres del Paine is home to what is undoubtedly some of the most spectacular scenery in all of Patagonia, if not all of South America. Rising up high above the Patagonian steppe are the 3 impressive granite towers that give the park it's name, surrounded by towering mountain peaks, the most famous of which are Los Cuernos and Paine Grande. The park is a magical natural wonderland full of deep lakes, sparkling glaciers and cascading waterfalls, and it's also an important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife including the Patagonian rhea and guanaco, as well as flamingoes, condors and other birds.

The best way to explore is definitely to get out there on foot or perhaps on horse-back. The park is criss-crossed by a good network of trails, making it possible for you to see all the main sights either by doing a series of day hikes, or by doing a circular hike like the W-walk, taking a few days and stopping off at the parks refugios or camping along the way. Horse-riding and kayaking can also be arranged locally, and boats and catamarans offer trips across Lago Grey and Lago Pehoe in season.

Day 5 to 8: Torres Del Paine National Park

Thu 21 Feb to Sun 24 Feb 2013

These are non-driving days, free to explore the many activities and trekking opportunities on offer, including the famous ‘W’ walk. We will camp at the same lakeside site unless you are doing the ‘W’ walk

Activity	Approximate Cost
4 days to explore and trek the rugged Torres del Paine National Park	Included in tour

Day 9: El Calafate
Mon 25 Feb 2013

270 kms drive to El Calafate, crossing the border back into Argentina. We stay in dorm accommodation at a hostel.

Border information: Exit Chile at Cerro Castillo and enter Argentina at Rio Don Guillermo.

El Calafate

El Calafate is a small town on the southern shore of Lago Argentino in Patagonia. Originally a sheep station and trading outpost, today the town has developed a bustling small town atmosphere thanks to a growing tourist trade. Most people base themselves here whilst visiting the nearby Perito Moreno Glacier, located a short distance away at the southern reaches of the Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. Interestingly the town takes its name from the Calafate berry, and locals claim that if you eat one of these and make a wish, you are guaranteed to return to Patagonia.

Day 10: El Calafate
Tue 26 Feb 2013
Today is a non-driving day with a guided visit to view the stunning Moreno Glacier. Second night at the same hostel

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided full day trip to Moreno Glacier	Included in tour
Glacier trek, hikes and horseriding in Los Glaciares National Park	USD 20
Boat trip beneath the Moreno Glacier	USD 15

Day 11 to 13: El Chalten
Wed 27 Feb to Fri 01 Mar 2013
200 Kms drive to El Chalten in Los Glaciares National Park. Here we have two full days to explore the Fitzroy range, with a range of activities from hiking and glacier trekking to horse riding. A boat trip on Viedma Lake is also possible. We camp here for 3 nights

El Chalten

The clouds that form around the summit of the surrounding mountains were mistaken for smoke, which gave the name "Chalten" which means volcano. The picturesque landscape is a perfect place for hiking, as there is so much to explore and the rewards of constant beautiful sights gives a perfect reason to hike.

Day 14 to 16: Carretera Austral, Rio Pinturas
Sat 02 Mar to Mon 04 Mar 2013

We cross back into Chile and if time allows visit the Cave of Hands at Rio Pinturas beforehand. We will spend 3 days overlanding through magnificent scenery, visiting glaciers and generally exploring this area of outstanding natural beauty. We will drive a total of approximately 500kms bush camping as we go.

Border information: On the second day we exit Argentina at Chile Chico and enter Chile at Chile Chico.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the UNESCO site Cueva de las Manos at Río Pinturas	

Carretera Austral
The Carretera Austral or Southern Highway is a fantastic route that passes between Puerto Monte and Coyhaique, through vast tracts of untouched wilderness, past soaring snow capped mountains, glaciers, glass-green fjords and staggering, beautiful valleys. This is Chile at its best and is a perfect area to explore by overland vehicle. You need to have a flexible itinerary and to be able to camp in the wilds, as settlements are few and far between. The attraction of this are are the wide-open spaces and the national parks. We spend our time either on small ferries or driving through magnificent scenery, hiking, visiting glaciers and generally exploring this area of outstanding natural beauty.

Day 17: Carretera Austral, Chaiten
Tue 05 Mar 2013
We will head towards Chaiten driving 200 kms through the Chilean Fjords via the Colgante Glacier where there is an optional walk on the glacier. We will camp the night near Chaiten

Day 18: Puerto Montt
Wed 06 Mar 2013

Depending on sailing date, today we should board a ferry for a spectacular crossing of the Golfo de Corcorvado from Chaiten to Puerto Montt. On arrival in Puerto Montt we will camp for the night. We can't guarantee you will be travelling during the day due to the few ferry running.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Cross the Golfo de Corcovado to Chaiten	Included in tour

Puerto Montt

Puerto Montt lies on the northern shores of the Seno de Reloncavi. It was founded in 1853 on the site of a Mapuche community known as Melipulli, meaning four hills, as part of the German colonisation of the area. Its port is used by fishing boats and coastal vessels. The John Paul II Municipal Museum is worth a visit as there is a wide range of a natural history collection of flora and fauna and you can see some that are now extinct. The buildings in South America are outstanding, and the churches are fascinating. If you get a chance, go to one, because the delicate architecture is awe inspiring.

Day 19: Puerto Montt, Pucon

Thu 07 Mar 2013

Depending on the date of sailing from Chaiten to Puerto Montt today will either be a 340kms drive day to Pucon or spent on the ferry. Either way will camp for the evening

Activity	Approximate Cost
Discover the Chilean Lake District	Included in tour

Pucon

Southern Chile's lake district boasts some lake and mountain scenery comparable with the best the Swiss Alos or New Zealand have to offer. Beautiful deep blue lakes are flanked by majestic forest-clad mountains with snowy peaks to provide picture-postcard views, a perfect spot for walking and camping. The attractive small town of Pucon is located at the heart of the northern Chilean lakes, a great place to stop for a few days so you can explore the area and get involved in some of the many adventure activities on offer here. At certain times of year it's even possible to do a day climb of the nearby Villarrica volcano, a challenging trek, but one that anyone who is reasonably fit should be able to manage - and you're rewarded with some fantastic views of the surrounding area from the summit. Infact the whole area is great for trekking and there are plenty of options to do some great self-guided walks.

Alternatively Pucon offers great horse riding, white-water rafting and mountain-biking opportunities. And if alll this talk of activity just sounds a little too much, there are also some great thermal springs to relax in nearby, the natural pools at Pozones have a beautiful setting, a great place to go and soak your weary limbs in the evening.

Day 20: Pucon

Fri 08 Mar 2013

Today is a non-driving day with a range of activities available from hiking to hot springs. We stay for a second night in the same camp site

Activity	Approximate Cost
Trek up the snowcapped volcano Mt Villarica	USD 90

Day 21: Salto De Laja

Sat 09 Mar 2013

We head 300kms north to the wine growing region of Salto de Laja where we camp for the night

Salto De Laja

Salto de Laja is a small resort town named after the four impressive arch-like waterfalls formed here by the cascading Laja river. It is easy to see the waterfalls by crossing a bridge from the main road through town, or if you have time you may be able to experience the spray from below on a river-boat trip during Chilean holiday season. Salto de Laja town is a small place, popular with Chilean tourists during the summer months, so there are lots of campsites, hotels and cabanas here. It's a pleasant place to break the journey between Santiago and Pucon, gateway to the Chilean lake district and Patagonia.

Day 22: Santiago

Sun 10 Mar 2013

Today is an all day drive to Santiago broken up by a visit to a vineyard at San javier. On arrival in Santiago we will stay in a centrally located hotel for the night.

Hotel for the night: Happy House Hostel
Located on the famous Moneda Street in the downtown of the city, just 15 minutes walk from the historic center of Santiago and the Government house, major museums, the Plaza de Armas, between other turist attractions. In the Brasil neighborhood, the hostel offers a warm and entertaining enviroment.It has a nice garden, a large swimming pool and a comfortable terrace.

Santiago

Bisected by the Mapocho River, Chile's capital is a large, modern city with a very European atmosphere. In the centre of the city wide tree-lined boulevards lead to pleasant plazas and leafy parks and on a

clear day the snow-capped peaks of the Andes provide a magnificent backdrop to the Santiago skyline

Much of the centre is pedestrianised, which together with the wide streets and efficient metro system make Santiago an easy city to explore on foot. There are plenty of interesting museums where you can learn more about Chilean history and culture, from the City of Santiago Museum which chronicles the city's history to the Natural History Museum and Museum of Pre-Colombian Art. The city's many wonderful parks are also worth a visit, particularly O'Higgins and San Cristobal which offers great views of the city from Cerro San Lucia.

As you would expect from a capital city of this size, Santiago is full of busy bars and restaurants and has some lively nightlife to offer. For cheap eats, full of local flavour, head to the Mercado Central (central market) which is packed full of food stalls and simple cafes and restaurants. For a real treat, you might want to head out to one of the more upmarket neighbourhoods like Bellavista or Providencia, home to some really world-class restaurants and great bars. Barrio Brasil is also worth a look, this old neighbourhood attracts an arty and bohemian crowd and there are often interesting events going on here.

If you have the time, there's also plenty to do in the area surrounding the city. Santiago is right in the middle of Chile's wine producing region, so it is relatively straightforward to arrange full day or half day tours out to the local wineries. You may also be interested in visiting the seaside town of Valapariso, which can be visited as a day trip from Santiago.

Day 23: Santiago

Mon 11 Mar 2013

Today is a free day for activiites in Santiago.

Border information: If you are leaving in Santiago, exit Chile at Santiago Airport.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore and discover the streets of Santiago	

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.

Torres del Paine National Park and the W walk

You will spend at least 4 nights and 4 full days in the Torres del Paine National Park, allowing plenty of time for hiking, trekking and other optional activities - such as the 4 day W-walk, a popular route taking in 3 of the most famous features of the park.

The W involves 4 full days trekking and at least 3 overnight stays away from the truck - either staying in the parks Refugios (hostels) or camping along the way. When you are considering whether or not this trek is for you, it is important to bear in mind that you will have to carry all of your own equipment for the duration of the trek, e.g. clothes for 4 days, toiletries, snacks, water etc, plus a tent, food etc if camping. NB: You can hire lightweight camping equipment locally - but it is subject to availability.

You should also note that it is possible to visit nearly all of the areas of the park that the W passes through as day hikes from the main campsite where the truck will be based.

Optional W Walk with Dragoman

Many of our customers find difficult organising the W Walk on their own before hand. The Refugios in high season get filled up very quickly. For this reason for the 2013/14 season for the first time Dragoman will be including in his itinerary the first night of the W Walk as mentioned above. The local guide will be provided by Dragoman, and your kitty will include the first night at Refugio Paine Grande. Your boat across Lake Pehoe will be included, and following your local guide you will be trekking up the view point of Glacier Grey, before trekking back down at Refugio Paine Grande where you will be staying for the night. Dragoman is the only Overland company which includes this great opportunity on their trips.

The following day you will be leaving early with your local guide as far as the French Valley, where you will be leaving your guide and hike back to the ferry for the 18.30 departure back to the campsite.

But if you are interested on keep going all the way Dragoman is offering you the optional of adding the next 2 nights and give you the opportunity to complete the all W Walk. If you really want to take up this option please contact our sales team and they will be delighted to help you through the booking process.

Alternatively if you think you want to do it on your own just read on.

The W walk: suggested day plan

The day plan set out below is a suggested itinerary for walking the W based on feedback from previous passengers and crew. You can spend your first night in the park with your group and the truck - starting the trek early the next morning.

Day 1: Start point: Port Pudeto (nr Camping Pehoe)
Night stop: Paine Grande Lodge

Get dropped off at Puerto Pudeto on Lago Pehoe and catch the Pehoe Catamaran across the lake. The first catamaran of the day usually leaves at 9am - but your leader can check the times for you on arrival in the park. The catamaran will drop you off near hostel Paine Grande Lodge, where you can drop off your bag/s if you wish, as this is where you will return to stay the night. Heading off up the winding path towards Mirador Grey to see the Grey Glacier and Lago Grey. Stop to take in the view before retracing your steps and returning to Paine Grande Lodge.
Approximate walking time: 7-10 hrs depending on speed/fitness

Day 2: Start point: Paine Grande Lodge
Night stop: Refugio los Cuernos

You'll want to get up early to make the most of today's long trek. The day begins with a fairly easy-going 2 hrs walk from Paine Grande Lodge past Lago Skottsberg and across a rope bridge, after which you arrive at the base of Valle Frances. From here you head up the valley with its blue hanging glaciers, surrounded by towering peaks until you reach the uppermost viewpoint - where you can take in the breathtaking views of the Cuernos and Torres. You then return to the foot of the valley, from where it's a further 2 hrs walk east to your stop for the night, Refugio los Cuernos.
Approximate walking time: 8-11 hrs depending on speed/fitness

Day 3: Start point: Refugio los Cuernos
Night stop: Refugio Chileno

With shorter distances to cover today you can afford a more leisurely start, taking time to enjoy the view from the Refugio over breakfast. You then follow the "Paso de Los Cuernos" east, which takes you Lago Nordenskjold as well as a number of smaller lakes and lots of birdlife. There are a few small river crossings to navigate which involve a bit of rock hopping as there are no bridges in place. You then head north, beginning the ascent up the Rio Ascensio gorge towards the Torres del Paine lookout, stopping at Refugio Chileno for the night.
Approximate walking time: 5-6 hrs depending on speed/fitness

Day 4: Starting point: Refugio Chileno
Night stop: Re-join group & truck

It's definitely worth making another early start this morning, continuing your ascent towards the Mirador Las Torres viewpoint, initially passing through a relatively flat forested section of the trail. The final ascent involves some scrambling across scree and boulders before you arrive at the final lookout, where you'll be able to take in an awesome close-up view of the park's namesakes, the granite towers of the Torres del Paine. You then return via the same route, passing Refugio Chileno and heading further down the valley to Hosteria Las Torres - from where you can catch a minibus transfer across the Guarderia Amarga, where you will be able to arrange with your leader to meet up with the rest of your group and the truck.
Approximate walking time: 8-11 hrs depending on speed/fitness

Booking accommodation for the 'W' Walk

As mentioned above, you may choose to camp rather than stay in hostels overnight. Camping does not need to be pre-booked, but you will need to hire lightweight camping equipment to carry with you, for example tent, stove, etc. Your leader will stop off in a local town, Puerto Natales, before you enter the park where you will be able to hire any equipment you need, but you should note that availability cannot be guaranteed, particularly in high season.

If you are keen to do the W-walk we STRONGLY advise you to make reservations for your Refugio accommodation as far as possible in advance to avoid disappointment!

All of the Refugios can be booked online, so they are easy to book yourself.

You can access more detailed information and make your reservations by visiting the websites below:

Vertice Patagonia (for Paine Grande Lodge) - http://www.verticepatagonia.com/precios-y-reservas/

Fantastico Sur (for Refugio Chileno and Refugio Los Cuernos) - http://www.fantasticosur.com/en/mountain-lodges/

Ferry from Puerto Montt to Chaiten and v.v.

On this trip there is a ferry crossing across the Golfo de Corcovado from Puerto Montt to Chaiten or vice versa depending on which direction the trip travels. The ferry crossing is listed in the daily itinerary however the ferry company actually only sails between 1-3 times a week. This means that although we hope the ferry crossing will be on the date stated in the daily itinerary, this can not be guaranteed as the ferry bookings are generally only usually opened about a month before sailing. Because of this it may mean that your trip will be spending more time in one destination and less in another to compensate but we hope this will not happen.

Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for South America Itineraries

South America is diverse continent from high altitude, to the steamy Amazon, to baking deserts. You should therefore be prepared for the full gambit of climates. There will be time for hikking and other activities such as horse riding and you will need to be reasonably fit. Overland travel 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 the South America trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

Note on camping kit for South America

There is a miss conception about being cheaper to buy camping equipment in South America. Every where in South America is easy to find good quality camping kit if you want to fly light, but prices are very similar to UL if not more. Please keep this in mind when you are planning your trip.

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.

Argentina

Nationals of most countries including Australia, USA, the EU, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK do not need a visa for tourist visits of limited duration to Argentina.

The Argentine government has recently introduced a reciprocity tax which applies to Canadian, US and Australian citizens. The amounts are as follows:

ARGENTINA RECIPROCITY TAX:

The Argentine government charges a reciprocity tax which applied to Canadian, US and Australian citizens. The amounts are as follows:

Australians - US$ 100 (multiple entry for up to 1 year from date of issue)

Canadians - US$75 (single entry) or US$ 150 (multiple entry for up to 5 years from date of issue)

Americans - US$40 (multiple entry for up to 10 years from date of issue)

Fee can be paid on line through the following websites:: www.migraciones.gov.ar orwww.provinciapagos.com.ar. For instructions on how to process this payment, please visithttp://cnyor.mrecic.gov.ar/userfiles/Online_payment_instructions_0.pdf

IMPORTANT: Up to June 2013 computers will be made available at Ezeiza International Airport and Jorge Newbery Airport (Aeroparque) to facilitate this online payment to travellers who fail to make this payment prior to arrival. We expect this will potentially cause long delays to those travellers so we strongly advise to pay this fee before arriving to Argentina.

Chile

Nationals of most countries including Australia, USA, the EU, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK do not need a visa for tourist visits of limited duration to Chile

Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on trips in South America, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US$15 and a maximum of US$30 per day. This amount is usually lower in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru but slightly higher elsewhere.
This will covers expenses such as your drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

What else you need to know

Currencies & Cash

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

For obvious security reasons we hesitate to recommend you bring lots of cash with you, a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is best. 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.

More and more people are choosing to travel with cash passports such as TravelEx cards (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 within each country.

Travellers cheques have become increasingly difficult to change in South America 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.

You should take a mixture of denomination notes. However due to a recent counterfeit scam central banks in several South American countries (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile) have temporarily banned the circulation of $100 notes bearing a series 2001 production date and a serial number starting with the letters CB or CF and ending in B2. The serial number is printed in green on the emblem. 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. If you are taking traveller's cheques, we recommend that you should only take those issued by American Express. Please note that Thomas Cook traveller's cheques may be used in some places, but are becoming more difficult to change. Brazil can be difficult for changing forex, it's handy to have a cash card as backup. Please bring a mixture of small and large denominations as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over $50. Kitty contributions should be at least half in cash and be in the same denominations and currencies as suggested above. Any proportion of kitty contributions paid in travellers cheques should be increased to cover the commission charge incurred in exchanging them.

Pre and post trip accommodation and connecting flights

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

While Dragoman is happy to assist with booking your pre and post trip accommodation, it is important that you understand you may be able to book your own room at a cheaper rate directly through the hotel or on the internet. Our additional accommodation prices are based on the hotel's rate plus an administration fee. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk in rates or internet specials.

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

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

Accommodation on tour

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

Group size?

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

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

Who travels with Dragoman?

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

Our Community

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

We also have a Facebook page where travellers regularly swap info with each other - you can join here

Our crew and guides

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

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

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

Medical conditions

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

Vaccinations

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

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

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

Malaria

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

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

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

Meals and group participation

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

Responsible tourism & code of conduct

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

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

Overland travel and security

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

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

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

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice

Reports from other travel companies and local suppliers

Leaders reports from off the road

Local contacts we have built up over 29 years of experience

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

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

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

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

United States. http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html

Canada. http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

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

Emergency contact

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

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

Emergency Number: +44 (0) 7985106564.

Insurance

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

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

Issues on the trip

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

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

Passports

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

Luggage & Kit List

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Sleeping bag - Check the expected climate en route. Nights in desert and mountain regions can be very cold in winter months
- Mattress or compressed foam
- A day pack is useful for short hikes in the countryside, wandering around cities, etc and also for keeping inside the vehicle for items used during the day
- 2 sets of comfortable travelling clothes (light, easily washable cotton clothes are best)
- 1 set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out. Women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf for visiting places of worship
- 2 pairs of shorts
- Sun hat or warm hat if trekking
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Warm sweater/fleeces
- 1 waterproof jacket with hood
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/boots (or ankle height canvas jungle boots)
- 1 pair of sandals or flip-flops
- Underwear and socks (thermals are also a good idea if you are travelling to altitude or to the desert as it can get very cold at night)
- Swimwear
- 2 small towels
- Washing kit, including a small mirror
- Clothes washing detergent, small scrubbing brush & washing line (just a length of cord)
- Head torch/flashlight with spare batteries & bulbs (only the 3 standard sizes of round 1.5v batteries are widely available en route)
- Passport photos (average of 2 per country for which visas will be applied for en route)
- Good water bottle at least 1 litre
- A pouch or money belt worn inside your clothing, or unobtrusive pocket sewn into the inside of a pair of loose fitting trousers, is a must.
- Alarm clock
- Pocket calculator (useful when exchanging money)
- Writing materials & notebook/diary
- Multi purpose knife
- Cotton sheet sleeping bag (or sheet folded and sewn up on 2 sides). It will help keep your sleeping bag clean, and can be used on its own on warm nights.
- Mosquito net - The tents supplied by us have mosquito netting and you will only need a net if you think you will sleep out under the stars a lot of the time.
- "Wet Ones" (moistened tissues) and hand gel
- Toilet paper – this can be purchased almost everywhere en-route but one roll is worth packing
- Assorted sized plastic bags - protects clothing and equipment from dust and damp

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

Water

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

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

Personal medical kit

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

nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit

Electrical equipment

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

The kitty

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Continuing your trip

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

Contingency emergency fund

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

Tipping

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

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

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

These trip notes were printed on 22/05/2013