



# West China Adventure (ZKX)

Xi'an to Kashgar 22 days, departing 10 Sep 2013

Comfort Zone:      Basic          Luxury

Physical Challenge: Easy          Hard

Trip Style: Overlanding

Route: Xi'an to Kashgar

Length: 22 days

Transport: Overland expedition vehicle.

Accommodation: 30% camping, 70% hotels. A Mixture of hotels, guesthouses, yurts and camping.



## Ratings for this trip

### Comfort Zone: Basic / Adventurous

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

### Physical Challenge: 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

### China

As one of the world's largest countries and the most populous there is so much to discover in China.

Understanding the history of China is key to understanding modern China. The people are proud of it's past, and keen to share it's heritage with the world. In a country that defies superlatives the words 'vast', 'astonishing' and 'variation' don't really seem to cover it - China really does have it all. Jungle in the south, mountains in the west, desert in the north and 21st century cities.. well... almost everywhere.

Beijing is the hub of political and international focus. With the 2008 Olympic games providing funds to modernise huge ares of the city, it is a truly modern city. However most visitors are most struck by it's old elements from celebrated site such as the Forbidden Palace to simple, traditional hutongs.



There's a lot of China to see and most of it is changing rapidly, so what are you waiting for? Get out there are discover it for yourself.

## Daily Itinerary

### Day 1: Xi'an

Tue 10 Sep 2013

Free time to explore the historic city of Xi'an. There will be a group meeting at 18:00 hrs.

Hotel for the night: Xi'an Garden Hotel  
No. 40 Yanyin Road (to the East of Dayan Pagoda)  
Xi'an  
Shaanxi Province  
710061  
China  
Tel: +86-29-87601111

Activity	Approximate Cost
Bell and Drum towers, Xian	USD 6
Great Mosque, Xian	USD 3
Shaanxi History Museum, Xian	USD
Folk house, Xian	USD 2
Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Xian	USD 8
Bicycle rental on city wall, Xian	USD 3
Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xian	USD 4

### Xi'an

The imperial centre of China for 2,000 years, Xi'an is now a vibrant, modern city dotted with many interesting historical sites. A monument pays homage to the fact that this was the start of the famous



ancient trading route of the Silk Road and the city is still surrounded by city walls which you can climb and walk or cycle along, a unique way to experience the city. For a different view, haul yourself to the top of the Bell or Drum Towers in the centre of the city. Thanks to Xi'an's long and colourful history, the city is full of beautiful temples and museums and interesting cultural and historic sites, the most famous of which are probably the 2000 year old Terracotta warriors. Home to many Hui people, an ethnic Muslim minority, the city also has a unique Islamic flavour, particularly in the streets surrounding the Great Mosque, best explored by foot. Once you've worn yourself out with a hard days sightseeing, you can head out to the night markets to try some of the many tantalising local specialties on offer. Pao mo is a lamb broth that you break flat bread into, or try hand pulled noodles or hot pot. Later on, try your luck at karaoke, hugely popular here, or head down to the South Park to live it up with

the locals as they dance, practice martial arts, play games, fly kites and watch the world go by.

### Day 2: Xi'an

Wed 11 Sep 2013

This morning we travel on the truck to the place that has perhaps made Xi'an most famous around the world - the site of the Terracotta Warriors. It takes around an hour to get there and we'll hear all about this incredible archaeological find. Once the guided tour is over we will travel back to Xian. The evening is free to explore, perhaps a walk down to the night market to buy souvenirs or catching a cultural show over a dumpling banquet.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Luxury in Xi'an: civilisation, a great hotel and guided tour of the Terracotta Warriors	Included in tour

### Day 3: Pingliang

Thu 12 Sep 2013

In the morning we set off towards Pingliang in China's Gansu Province.

The main reason to visit Pingliang is Mount Kongtong, during our time here we will have the opportunity to explore the mountain.

Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the stunningly beautiful Mt. Kongtong and its temples	Included in tour

### Pingliang

The streets of Pingliang are lined with wonderful shops and you can spend hours exploring them, but the main attraction of this city is the mountain range, which contains the Kongtong mountains, which has been used as a mythical meeting point in the past. If you have the opportunity to climb this mountain, do so, as the views from the top are beautifully rewarding.

### Day 4: Lanzhou, Gansu Corridor

Fri 13 Sep 2013

Today we drive 240kms to Gansu's capital, Lanzhou. Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel.

## Lanzhou

Lanzhou is the capital of Gansu Province, but holds little of interest for the traveller. It is a sprawling Chinese Town but does have a number of interesting sites in the surrounding area. The most appealing of these



are the caves and carvings at Bingling Si. Here, a set of Buddhist grottoes are carved into the cliff of a 60 metre high gorge. They are most impressive especially because they are surrounded on one side by the waters of the Liujiaxia Reservoir. Bingling Si is yet another of the numerous Thousand Buddha Caves that can be found in China, but it is very special. They contain 694 statues and 82 clay sculptures. The highlight of the cave is the 27 metre high seated statue of Maitreya Buddha. Indeed this cave complex is one of the best in China and yet because of its relative isolation, it is less visited than the main Chinese sites.

## Gansu Corridor

Gansu is one of the most rugged of China's provinces, and it is along the Gansu Corridor (the province is long and narrow) that the Silk Route ran. Historically it is a very important area. Travellers, armies and traders all had to pass through Gansu and so the trading oases and towns were highly important areas. The highly valuable Chinese Silk trade passed through these places and the Town of Jiayuguan is the western end of the Great Wall.

## Day 5: Xiahe

Sat 14 Sep 2013

In the early morning we head to the enchanting Tibetan town of Xiahe. We will arrive in the early evening and settle in to our rustic guesthouse.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 night detour to the Tibetan town of Xiahe, one of the main pilgrimage sites for Tibetan Buddhists	Included in tour
Climb up onto the lower slopes of the remote Tibetan Plateau	Included in tour

## Xiahe

Xiahe has been described as "one of the most enchanting places to visit in China". Certainly it has a wonderful tranquil atmosphere and a beautiful setting. Many Tibetans come here on pilgrimage - and the combination of the many monasteries, saffron-robed monks, fluttering prayer flags and spectacular scenery make this small town feel very like Tibet as well.



Indeed, in all but name, you are in Tibet; Xiahe is right up on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau and the population here is over 45% Tibetan.

## Day 6: Xiahe

Sun 15 Sep 2013

Today is free to explore this beautiful town and surrounding grasslands. Options include a guided visit to the Labrang Monastery where Tibetan monks can be seen doing their daily rituals and chants. There may also be a chance to go horse riding in the surrounding grasslands visiting Tibetan families and perhaps trying the local yak butter tea.

## Day 7: Liujiaxia, Bingling Si

Mon 16 Sep 2013

Today we continue our journey to Liujiaxia visiting the Binglingsi Caves en route.

Overnight in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Continue your journey west, stopping overnight in Liujiaxia.	Included in tour
Visit to the vast Buddha and caves at Bingling Si.	Included in tour

## Liujiaxia

Liujiaxia is located at the junction of Qinghai and Gansu, Lanzhou City, Gansu Province from the southwest at about 80 kilometers. The Binglingsi Buddhist Grottoes are situated nearby.

## Day 8: Zhangye Wildcamp

Tue 17 Sep 2013

Today we will drive to towards Jiayuguan Wild camping en route.

## Day 9: Jiayuguan

Wed 18 Sep 2013

Full day drive to Jiayuguan.

Jiayuguan is the location for the western end of the Great Wall. Tonight will be spent Wild camping at the Great Wall of China.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Journey down the Gansu Corridor to Jiayuguan Fort, our first stop at the Great Wall	Included in tour

## Day 10: Dunhuang

Thu 19 Sep 2013

In the morning we will visit the Great Wall and the old fort. Once our visit to the wall is complete we will

then head off in the truck towards Dunhuang. This is the perfect base to explore the amazing Mogao Caves tomorrow. Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Stopover and time to explore historic Dunhuang	Included in tour

### Dunhuang

Dunhuang is one of the largest and historically most important of Gansu's oasis trading towns. Surrounded by fertile agricultural fields, an oasis in an otherwise barren desert, offset by distant sand dunes and mountains, the setting is spectacular and a good enough reason to travel here alone. However most visitors make the long journey to the city to see the fantastic Buddhist art in the nearby Mogao Caves. This is an extraordinary site even by Chinese standards and yet it's visited by very few tour groups.



### Day 11: Dunhuang

Fri 20 Sep 2013

We begin our day with a visit to the Mogao Caves. The afternoon is free to explore this amazing town and its surroundings, options include a camel ride along the sand dunes or perhaps a bicycle ride out to the White Goose Pagoda. Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of the Mogao caves, Dunhuang	Included in tour
Take a camel ride to Crescent Moon Lake, Dunhuang	USD 20

### Day 12: Hami Wildcamp

Sat 21 Sep 2013

We set off in the truck in the early morning and drive approximately 7 hours towards the oasis town of Turpan we will bush camp en route.

### Day 13: Turpan

Sun 22 Sep 2013

We arrive into the oasis town of Turpan in the early evening, the rest of your evening is free. Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel

### Turpan

East of Urumqi lies one of the hottest places on Earth, the Turpan Basin. Nestling between the Northern and the Southern Tian Shan Mountains, this dry dusty bowl is the lowest basin in China. The oasis town



of Turpan was crucial to the traders on the Silk Route providing a staging post and a market place for the traders to exchange goods and to re-equip their caravans. Although Turpan is the hottest place in China the lack of humidity makes the atmosphere pretty bearable. The town is a very relaxed, tranquil place and there are numerous things to do and see around the area. We will visit the Gaochang ruins, the irrigation channels and the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves, which will prove interesting but unfortunately are now very damaged.

### Day 14: Turpan

Mon 23 Sep 2013

We spend the day exploring the surrounding sites including the famous Jiaohe ruins. Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Exploration of the oasis and the Jiaohe ruins at Turpan	Included in tour
Emin Minaret, Turpan	USD 3
Grape Valley, Turpan	USD 9

### Day 15 to 16: Urumqi & The Heavenly Lake

Tue 24 Sep to Wed 25 Sep 2013

In the morning we drive towards the Tian Shan mountain range, and onto Heavenly Lake. Accommodation at the lake is in Yurts with basic facilities for 2 nights. This is a great opportunity for some relaxation time and there may be an opportunity for horse riding in the area.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Stopovers along the silk route include a tranquil Yurt stay at Heavenly Lake.	Included in tour

### Urumqi & The Heavenly Lake

Urumqi is the capital of Xinjiang, but for the overland traveller it has little of interest. We do not stop in the city but head north into the beautiful mountains to the Heavenly Lake. Here, a deep blue lake set on a mountain in a desert, provides us with a well earned rest. We will stay with the local Kazak herders in their yurts.

## Day 17: Bayanbulak Wildcamp

Thu 26 Sep 2013

We leave Heavenly Lake and begin our 2-day overland journey skirting the edge of the Taklamakan Desert towards Kashgar, wild camping en route.

## Day 18: Aksu Wildcamp

Fri 27 Sep 2013

Today is our second day overlanding towards Kashgar. We will set up a wildcamp en route.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Journey along the Northern Silk Route around the Taklamakan Desert.	Included in tour

## Day 19 to 21: Kashgar

Sat 28 Sep to Mon 30 Sep 2013

We arrive into Kashgar Early in the morning. There is free to explore and we visit the animal market just outside of town and then the famous Kashgar Sunday Bazaar. You will have plenty of free time to explore the town, perhaps heading off to the main landmark of the town, the Id Kah Mosque and its surrounding square. Accommodation is in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore Kashgar's Sunday market and Animal market.	Included in tour
Id Kah Mosque.	USD 3
Silk Road Museum.	USD 2
Tomb of Abakh Hoja.	USD 2

## 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.

## Kashgar

Kashgar was immortalized in the antics of the British and the Russians during the Great Game, (the first Cold War). Both nations established consulates or listening posts in Kashgar to try to extend their



own influences over the vast realms of Central Asia. These missions are now hotels and are well worth a visit. Kashgar has managed to keep an exotic atmosphere under the ubiquitous mantle of Chinese modernity. This is mainly due to the ethnic mix of Uyghurs, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz and is amply portrayed throughout the old town, with blacksmiths, silversmiths, cobblers and others working in ways that have not changed for hundreds of years. The highlight of the week for the local populous and for the visitor is the massive Sunday market. 50,000 people migrate for the day into the town. The Chinese have split the market in two and moved the animal market out of town. This is a must for the visitor, as it exemplifies the daily life of the indigenous people. The noise, smells, the animals, the traders, the junk, toot, cloths, rugs, jewellery, tapes and ghetto blasters. Horses, cows, donkeys, sheep and goats all awaiting the inevitable sale. In Kashgar we will stay in a comfortable tourist style hotel.

## Day 22: Kashgar

Tue 01 Oct 2013

Free day for activities.

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.

### **Kashgar to Xi'an Visas**

In order to make the visa process as easy as possible we have teamed up with The Visa Machine.

Please click on [Kashgar to Xi'an Visa Information](#) link where you will be able to view all the visa cut off dates and all your visa information for ALL departures.

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### **China**

Please apply in advance for your visa. The visa is valid for 3 - 6 months from the date of issue and has a validity of 30, 60 or 90 days. All nationalities should check with the respective embassies for more information and costs.

You require a single entry tourist visa for either 30, 60 or 90 days depending on your trip.

It is advised that you do not mention Kashgar, Urumqi, Turpan or Tibet anywhere on your Chinese visa application form as this may lead to your application being rejected.

**Please note Dragoman will require a clear photocopy of your passport as soon as possible after booking.**

For further information and details of how to fill out your application form please visit <http://dragoman.thevisamachine.com/> and search for your trip.

### **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.

### **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

## Money Exchange

### China

The official currency in China is the yuan or renminbi (CNY). 1 renminbi (yuan) = 10 jiao (mao). We strongly advise against bringing travellers cheques as in China they can be extremely difficult or impossible to change. ATMs are widespread, so the easiest way to access cash on your trip is to bring a credit card. Please check with your bank about overseas withdrawal fees before you depart. Some banks will allow a cash advance against a major credit card which will incur a service charge of 5% or more. Currency exchange is available at major banks and some hotels. The easiest foreign currencies to exchange are USD and EUR, however please be aware of the security risk of carrying large amounts of cash. In any case, some money should be taken as cash in case of emergencies - we recommend around US\$400 per person. Commission is sometimes charged for currency exchange. Check the rate before you exchange and carefully check the amount you are given and ask for a receipt.

Please note that due to restrictions on currency conversion for foreigners in China it may not be possible to change left over CNY back into foreign currency, so please plan your budget and spending money well by withdrawing/exchanging what you need as you go.

## 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](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

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

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

### Emergency contact

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

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

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

### Insurance

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

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

### Issues on the trip

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

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

### Passports

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

### Luggage & Kit List

Although you will not have to carry your main bag long distances you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip

your main luggage will be kept in the back locker so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Water

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

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

## Personal medical kit

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

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

## Electrical equipment

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

## The kitty

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Continuing your trip

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

## Contingency emergency fund

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you should be prepared to contribute towards the costs and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of

emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

### Tipping

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

Flying to/From Kashgar, China There are no direct flights to Kashgar (or Kashi in Mandarin), flights to/from Kashgar are normally via Urumqi. Urumqi Diwopu International Airport has domestic flights to many of the major cities in China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Shijiazhuang, Guiyang, Yinchuan, Wuhan, Chengdu, Kunming and Xi'an, as well as flights to many international destinations including Almaty, Ashgabat, Baku, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Islamabad, Istanbul, Moscow, Tbilisi, Tehran and Seoul. There are several flights daily between Kashgar and Urumqi. The flight takes one and a half hours For flights to / from Kashgar please visit <http://www.elong.net> or contact your sales agent. The Kashgar airport is 11 km from the city center and there are regular bus services from the airport to the city for RMB 6 or a taxi should cost approximately RMB 30.

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 25/05/2013