



# ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

## WALL, WARRIORS & NORTHERN LAOS WANDERER, (EBP)

Luang Prabang to Beijing 45 Days, departing 30th March 2022



## OVERLANDING - HOW DOES IT WORK?

### WHO TRAVELS WITH DRAGOMAN?

Our groups are made up of people from around the world, and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split between 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 (or 7 on our Family Trips), as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the wonderful aspects of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and the variety of people that you will meet.

### 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. On some departures there may be more than one truck doing the same route. This means that you will be in the same hotel or campsite as another Dragoman group on some days. To ensure that you are not always at the same place at the same time as another group, your itinerary will most likely be slightly altered from the itinerary advertised on the website and in the Trip Itinerary. Even on the majority of our trips where there is only the one truck, you may from time to time meet up with other groups at points on the road, and may partake in activities jointly with other groups on these occasions.

Please note that there is an overlap of 2 trips in Cuzco and during the Inca Treks. This means a group starting a trip in Cuzco will embark on the Inca Trail at the same time as a group finishing in or travelling through Cuzco. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Cuzco and on the Inca Trail at the same time.

Please note that there is also 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 a group starting their trip in Zanzibar. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

### MEALS AND GROUP PARTICIPATION

On an overland journey you are more than just an individual passenger - you're part of the team. You are expected to pitch in to set up camp, shop for food, cook and generally help out. As part of your trip you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting water and firewood, sweeping out the truck, loading the back locker, etc. While camping on overland journeys, the meals are included in the price. This means that you will have to work together to cook for everyone in your group. You will be divided into smaller units of 3-4 people and take it in turns to cook for the whole group according to a rota system. When it is your group's turn to cook you will have to plan the meal, shop for the ingredients in local markets or supermarkets and then prepare the meal for the whole group. The secret to cooking for 20+ people using a basic camping kitchen is to keep it simple! (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck; however you will still be required to help them to prepare meals).

An example of a typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, fruit and cereal as well as tea and coffee. When time allows it will also be possible to serve something hot such as eggs or pancakes. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto or 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.

### DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and tell your crew at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible. However, it must be remembered that it may not always be possible and the variety of dishes may be severely limited in comparison to those available to others. If

there is anything in particular you require in your diet, that you would miss from home, or because of an allergy would miss out on, it would be best to bring this with you. Depending on your particular requirements, you may need to allow yourself some extra spending money to allow you to purchase extra food items.

## OUR CREW AND GUIDES

Our crew are passionate about travel and are always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all the overland companies, spending 8 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK, and then up to 6 months on the road as a trainee. Our crew are trained to manage and operate the trip safely and efficiently and their duties include: planning the trip according to the itinerary, driving and maintaining the truck, securing services of local guides, general logistics, health and safety, liaising with bureaucracy, dealing with issues where needed and offering advice and support to our customers. In addition they have a basic knowledge of the places visited and will be able to offer suggestions of things to do and see. Dragoman endeavours to provide the services of experienced crew, however, due to the seasonality of travel, situations may arise where your tour leader is new to a particular region or training other crew who are new to the area.

On all Dragoman overlanding trips, we usually have 2 western crew but please be aware that there may be times when one crew member has to leave the trip due to unforeseen circumstances such as visa issues, illness of a group member, etc. On some of our trips we have 1 western crew and 1 local driver instead of 2 western crew. On trips south of Nairobi 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.

On the majority of our trips in Ethiopia, Sudan, Central Asia, China and South East Asia, in addition to our crew we will have a local guide on board who will travel with us for the entire duration of our time within one country. In these cases, the local guide becomes a third crew member and is able to offer their local knowledge as well as an insight into their country and the lives of the local people.

In most other areas of Africa, the Americas, India and Turkey, in addition to our crew we will employ local guides in specific locations of interest (for just a few hours up to a few days).

Your crew have a duty of care to all members of the group and therefore they have the authority to ask you to leave the trip if you require serious medical assistance, you 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.

## TIPPING

Tipping may not be customary to you and is entirely voluntary - however it can be of great significance to the people who take care of you during your trip.

The Dragoman crew may be travelling with you for many weeks or months 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 are happy with the service and feel you would like to tip them, they certainly would appreciate it.

On some trips we have local guides who live and travel with you through their home country. It is usual to tip these guides and we recommend USD1 to USD4 per person per day, but feel free to check with your crew for an appropriate amount. We also employ local guides and porters on certain activities and you may feel it appropriate to tip a higher daily amount for these guides as they will be with you for a shorter period of time.

For general tipping in restaurants and on excursions, it can be useful to hold on to your smaller notes and coins to make tipping easier.

## OUR OVERLAND TRUCKS

Dragoman's fleet is truly unique. We use rugged and sturdy Mercedes-Benz trucks (known for their durability) that will take you off road and off the beaten track. They are specially modified at our workshop in Suffolk, UK, into our custom designed overland vehicles. Features such as our integrated cabs are unique to Dragoman trucks, and our customers regularly say that they make our trucks the best on the road. With their distinctive orange and white livery and their personalised names, our trucks have become iconic. All of our trucks are affectionately named and have their own individual personality. Many of our passengers remember the name of their truck many years after their trip!

Our trucks are fully equipped for self-sufficient wild camping, and have comfortable coach-style seating. All Dragoman trucks are owned and maintained by us, and our crew follow a strict maintenance schedule - this means we can manage the quality and safety of our fleet. We currently have 26 overland trucks (and 1 overland bus) on the road worldwide, and the fleet is growing all the time!

# OUR TRUCKS

What's in a Dragoman truck...



We are always striving to improve our trucks and since 2012 have been undertaking an entire fleet upgrade. Each of our vehicles is unique and features will differ between each truck, but most of our trucks feature the following:

- An integrated cab - so you are always with your crew rather than being separated
- Coach style seating - forward-facing apart from four seats facing backwards around two tables
- A side awning for sun/rain cover
- Luggage locker
- A drinking water tank of approximately 350 litre capacity, plus 60-80 litre jerry cans
- Long range fuel tanks
- Audio equipment with MP3 player connection
- 12v charging points (some models only)
- A hidden safe for money and passports
- An integrated fridge
- Large equipment storage areas for food, cooking utensils, expedition equipment, etc.
- Bookshelf/library
- Map board

Standard equipment on each truck:

- Dome-shaped or A-frame tents with integrated mosquito nets
- Emergency medical kit
- Camping stools and tables
- Cooking equipment, gas, and eating utensils
- Camping lights
- Full range of mechanical tools and spares
- Sand mats in case of bogging

## ACCOMMODATION ON TOUR

Dragoman's overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels or hostels, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Whilst our crew will do their best to accommodate couples travelling together in twin rooms, all our travellers should expect to stay in multi-share accommodation when staying in hostels, gers or yurts.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available at the time; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be single sex, twin-share, but in South America many rooms are triple/quad-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share and may be mixed sex.

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 camp away from the tourist crowds. Occasionally on some of our trips we are able to stay in villages or local homestays allowing us to get close to the indigenous population and ensuring that our money stays within the local community.

## ACTIVITIES

You will have the opportunity to take part in many exciting activities and excursions, some of which are included (e.g. hiking the Inca Trail, trekking to see Mountain Gorillas, visiting the Taj Mahal, etc.), whilst others are optional (e.g. white water rafting in Uganda, zip-lining in Costa Rica, etc.). The included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. All other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

Some of the activities require a certain level of fitness, so it's important that you read through the itinerary thoroughly and make your own conclusions as to whether you feel that you are fit and healthy enough to enjoy the trip and its activities to their fullest. Some activities may have higher risks than you are used to and you must judge whether or not you wish, and have the physical ability, to take part. Also always make sure that your personal travel insurance covers you for any activity you are planning to take part in. For more information about insurance and activity safety, please see the Insurance and Safety and Security paragraphs in the Preparing for Your Trip section of these notes.



## PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

### PASSPORT

Your passport details are required to complete your booking. If you change your passport, please remember to inform us as soon as possible - however, please be aware that changing your passport can cause big problems if you need to apply for visas or permits (such as the Inca Trail or Gorilla Trekking) in advance.

As a general rule most countries expect that your passport is valid for 6 months after the end of your trip and will refuse entry to anyone with shorter validity. A temporary or 'visitor's' passport is not valid on our trips. Please ensure the name on your passport matched the name on your booking and flight tickets. Bring a copy of the main passport page with you on your trip and leave another copy at home with family or friends.

### GENERAL VISA INFORMATION

Many countries require visas to enter; some must be 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. If you require any supporting documentation for your visa applications, Dragoman will obtain this on your behalf as part of your trip price - we will contact you to request additional information in order to make this application for you.

For visas that are needed in advance, you may wish to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy or consulate. However, for trips that involve multiple visas, you may find it beneficial to use a specialist visa agency to assist you with your applications. While this does sometimes increase the cost, it usually makes the process much easier for you.

Visas can take several weeks to process so make sure you familiarise yourself with any requirements as soon as you have booked your trip to allow for processing time. As you will often 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.

For trips that are not yet guaranteed, you may find yourself in the position whereby you will need to start the visa application process prior to your trip being guaranteed - in this situation we still advise you not to purchase flights until your trip is guaranteed. However, you can start your visa application process, ensuring that when applying for your visas or letters of invitation that you allow several days before and after your entry into the country to allow for delays, availability of flights, etc.

The information provided here is given in good faith and was correct at time of writing; however please visit the relevant consular website of the country or countries you are visiting for detailed and up-to-date visa information specific to your nationality. Please be aware that rules surrounding visas do change, often suddenly, and without prior warning.

### TRANSIT VISAS

If your flight has a layover you may need to obtain a transit visa, even if you are not leaving the airport. The requirements will vary depending on the layover country, the nationality of your passport and the length of the layover. Therefore always check visa requirements with the embassies of the countries you are passing through. Most nationalities will require a transit visa for the USA and Canada, as per the below info.

If your flight goes via the USA, then you must obtain an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before travel (except for citizens of Canada, who will not require this). Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and most EU countries are part of the USA's Visa Waiver Scheme and are eligible to obtain an ESTA.

Similarly, if your flight goes via Canada, then you must obtain a Canadian Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) before travel (except for citizens of the USA, who will not require this). Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, most EU countries, South Korea and Japan are part of Canada's Visa Waiver Scheme and are eligible to obtain an eTA.

### VISA INFORMATION FOR LAOS

#### LAOS

CITIZENS OF THE UK, IRELAND, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, USA, CANADA AND MOST EU COUNTRIES WILL NEED A VISA TO ENTER LAOS AS A TOURIST FOR UP TO 30 DAYS. CITIZENS OF SWITZERLAND, LUXEMBOURG, RUSSIA SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN WILL NOT NEED A VISA.

THE EASIEST WAY TO GET A VISA IS TO OBTAIN IT ON ARRIVAL. THIS IS AVAILABLE FOR ALMOST ALL NATIONALITIES AT MOST LAND BORDERS AND AIRPORTS INTO LAOS (INCLUDING THOSE USED ON DRAGOMAN TRIPS) - THE COST VARIES ACCORDING TO NATIONALITY, AND YOU WILL NEED 1 PASSPORT PHOTO.

CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES SHOULD CHECK WITH THE RELEVANT CONSULATES AS TO WHETHER A VISA IS REQUIRED, AND WHETHER IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO OBTAIN A LETTER OF INVITATION (ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF NATIONALITIES NEED TO OBTAIN A LETTER OF INVITATION).

A VALID YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION CERTIFICATE IS REQUIRED FROM TRAVELLERS COMING FROM [AREAS WITH RISK OF YELLOW FEVER TRANSMISSION](#) (INCLUDING TRANSITING THROUGH AN AIRPORT IN AN AREA OF RISK).

## VISA INFORMATION FOR CHINA

### CHINA

**VERY IMPORTANT - DRAGOMAN WILL REQUIRE A CLEAR COLOUR SCAN OF YOUR PASSPORT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER BOOKING FOR ALL TRIPS IN CHINA, PLEASE SEND THIS TO US AS SOON AS YOU CAN. PLEASE NOTE IT MUST BE CLEAR, WITH NO SHADOWS AND SHOW THE ENTIRE PASSPORT PAGE AS WELL AS THE ADJACENT PAGE. THIS MUST BE AN ACTUAL SCAN OF YOUR PASSPORT AND PHOTOS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. WE WILL ALSO REQUIRE AN ID PHOTO AND A SCANNED COPY OF YOUR CHINA VISA AT LEAST 8 WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL AT THE CHINESE BORDER.**

CITIZENS OF THE UK, IRELAND, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, USA, CANADA AND ALL EU COUNTRIES WILL NEED A VISA TO ENTER CHINA AS A TOURIST FOR UP TO 90 DAYS. YOU WILL NEED A LETTER OF INVITATION FROM A CHINESE AGENT IN ORDER TO MAKE THE VISA APPLICATION, AND YOU MUST OBTAIN THE VISA IN ADVANCE. YOU CANNOT OBTAIN THE VISA AT THE BORDER IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.

FIRSTLY YOU WILL NEED TO APPLY FOR THE LETTER OF INVITATION THROUGH DRAGOMAN - WE WILL CONTACT YOU REQUESTING FURTHER INFORMATION IN ORDER FOR US TO MAKE THIS APPLICATION ON YOUR BEHALF, A SERVICE THAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TRIP PRICE. THESE CAN TAKE SEVERAL WEEKS TO ISSUE, AND WILL BE EMAILED TO YOU ONCE THEY ARE READY.

AFTER YOUR LETTER OF INVITATION HAS BEEN ISSUED, YOU CAN USE THIS TO APPLY FOR THE VISA IN ADVANCE AT A CHINESE EMBASSY IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY. YOU CAN EITHER APPLY YOURSELF DIRECTLY TO THE EMBASSY, OR HIRE A SPECIALIST VISA AGENCY TO MAKE THE APPLICATION ON YOUR BEHALF (WHICH IS RECOMMENDED, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR SEVERAL VISAS). DRAGOMAN WILL ALSO PROVIDE A LETTER CONFIRMING YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE TRIP AND A LIST OF OUR HOTELS, WHICH YOU MAY NEED FOR THE APPLICATION - IN SOME CASES THE CHINESE EMBASSY MAY ASK FOR A DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY WITH THE HOTELS LISTED, WHICH WE CAN PROVIDE WHEN NEEDED.

YOU WILL NEED TO APPLY AT THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY, AS YOUR APPLICATION IS FAR MORE LIKELY TO BE APPROVED. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO OFFICIAL REASON WHY YOU SHOULD NOT BE ISSUED A VISA AT ANY CHINESE EMBASSY, THEIR CONSULAR OFFICIALS ARE NOTORIOUS FOR CONSTANTLY CHANGING THEIR MINDS ABOUT WHETHER THEY WILL APPROVE A VISA FOR 'NON-RESIDENT' APPLICANTS, AND IT DEPENDS HEAVILY ON THE POLITICAL CLIMATE OF THE TIME. PLEASE NOTE IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR A CHINA VISA IN THE UK YOU WILL ALSO NOW NEED TO ATTEND AN APPOINTMENT IN LONDON TO HAVE YOUR FINGERPRINTS TAKEN.

**IMPORTANT NOTE - PLEASE NEVER MENTION KASHGAR, URUMQI, TURPAN, LHASA, XINJIANG OR TIBET ANYWHERE ON YOUR CHINESE VISA APPLICATION FORM - THIS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY RESULT IN YOUR APPLICATION BEING REJECTED. WHEN FILLING OUT YOUR CHINESE VISA FORM, PLEASE ONLY DECLARE THE PLACES THAT ARE LISTED ON YOUR CHINESE LETTER OF INVITATION ONCE IT IS ISSUED.**

IF YOU ARE ASKED TO PROVIDE A HOST IN CHINA ON YOUR VISA FORM, PLEASE USE THE DETAILS OF THE CHINESE AGENT THAT ISSUED YOUR LETTER OF INVITATION (THIS WILL BE PRINTED ON THE LETTER).

YOU WILL NOT NEED A CHINA VISA IF YOU ARE ENTERING TIBET FROM NEPAL (NORTHBOUND TIBET TRIP), BUT YOU WILL NEED A CHINA VISA IF YOU ARE GOING TO TIBET FROM XI'AN (SOUTHBOUND TIBET TRIP). PLEASE SEE THE TIBET NOTE FOR DETAILS ON THE VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAVELLING THROUGH TIBET.

A VALID YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION CERTIFICATE IS REQUIRED FROM TRAVELLERS COMING FROM [AREAS WITH RISK OF YELLOW FEVER TRANSMISSION](#) (INCLUDING TRANSITING THROUGH AN AIRPORT IN AN AREA OF RISK).

## PHYSICAL PREPARATION

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.

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. There are some high altitudes in places and many places where walking around for several hours is the only way to explore (e.g. The Great Wall of China, walking tours in Uzbekistan, exploring the historical sites of India, etc.). By and large, our Asia trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

## HEALTH

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with our style of travel. To help you assess if a trip is suitable, please refer to the physical challenge and lifestyle challenge ratings. The ratings for each trip give a good indication of how challenging the trip is. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Dragoman reserves the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip without a refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. You are required to declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase.

## ALTITUDE

Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude, the tour leader will issue you with a self-assessment altitude questionnaire which allows you to monitor how you are coping with the altitude and informs you of danger signals so that you can reports these as soon as possible, either to the tour leader or a medical professional.

## YELLOW FEVER

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home. It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

## MALARIA & OTHER OTHER MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES

There is a risk of contracting malaria in some areas which we travel through. If your trip goes to a areas with malaria it is always best to get expert advice before travelling about the types of malaria pills available, whether they are recommended, and take any that are prescribed as instructed. Consult your GP or travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever, dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and are becoming a bigger problem around the world. Mosquito bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases, as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus. For more information about Zika please visit:

- WHO: [www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zika-virus](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zika-virus)
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/zika](http://www.cdc.gov/zika)

The Anopheles mosquitoes that transmit malaria usually bite between the hours of dusk and dawn, whereas the Aedes mosquitoes that transmit yellow fever, dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika bite both during the day and the night. To prevent being bitten, it is recommended to cover up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light-coloured and buttoned at the wrists. Do not sleep without closing your windows, tent door, etc. and use a mosquito net in hotels or if sleeping outside where there are mosquitoes present. Use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing. Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permethrin solution also provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights and in hotel rooms, but cannot be used inside the tents. For more advice on how to avoid bites please see: [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance)

## VACCINATIONS

Recommended vaccinations and other health protections vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest specific health advice on the regions and countries you are planning to travel in, so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel. The following websites are also a helpful resource: [www.nathnac.net](http://www.nathnac.net) and [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

## INSURANCE

Comprehensive travel insurance with cover for medical expenses and emergency repatriation for Covid-19 is compulsory for all our trips. You will not be allowed to start the trip without showing the trip leader evidence of valid travel insurance including the insurance company's 24-hour emergency contact number.

In the case of credit card travel insurance we will require details of the participating insurer, the insurance policy number and emergency contact number rather than just the bank's name and credit card details. Please contact your bank before travel to obtain these details. Also ensure that your credit card travel insurance policy has the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas and many are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

Make sure that your insurance policy:

- is designed for adventure travel and that it covers any activity that you may wish to participate in (whether included or optional), such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc.
- has a 24-hour emergency assistance company that is experienced in handling situations in developing countries – for example, they should have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes
- covers your age group (some policies have age limits)
- covers travel to high altitude if your trip goes to altitude

We recommend that any policy has a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £5,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000 (or the full cost of your trip). We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance at the same time as you book your trip, as you will only be insured for trip postponement or cancellation purposes once you have travel insurance in place.

Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones, iPods, etc. Please note that Dragoman is not responsible for your personal effects and is not insured for their loss.

## OUR LIABILITY INSURANCE

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger vehicle liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £5,000,000 and £10,000,000 per incident respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

## MONEY MATTERS

### PERSONAL SPENDING

You know your spending habits better than we do, so please budget a sensible amount for things like drinks, shopping, optional activities, tipping and laundry. Remember to also budget for any visas to be obtained en route.

We appreciate that it's hard to know exactly how much money you will need when you're travelling through new countries and areas. To make budgeting a little easier we have included some guidelines below. The Trip Itinerary also gives approximate costs for some optional activities and by reading the itinerary thoroughly you will know what's included and what isn't. As a general rule, it's always better to bring a little more than you think you'll need!

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on our trips, we give the following approximate recommendations:

- Central Asia, China & Mongolia - equivalent of USD15-30 per day
- India, Nepal & Bhutan - equivalent of USD10-20 per day
- South East Asia - equivalent of USD10-20 per day
- Africa - equivalent of USD10-20 per day
- North & Central America - equivalent of USD20-40 per day
- South America - equivalent of USD15-30 per day (this amount is normally lower in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru but slightly higher elsewhere)

### CASH OR CARD?

We recommend bringing a sensible mix of cash and cards on your trip. A small amount of local currency can be handy when you first arrive to your destination but 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. Travellers cheques have become increasingly difficult to change around the world. For this reason we no longer accept them on our trips and do not recommend that you bring them for your personal spending money.

More and more people are choosing to travel with prepaid travel cards or currency cards in addition to, or as an alternative to, debit or credit cards. 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. Please note that while ATMs are widely available in most areas, in more remote areas they are few and far between and in some countries you cannot use foreign cards at all. ATMs are also not always reliable and we therefore do not recommend that you rely on them as your only source of funds. Cards are accepted as payment in some major cities, but be prepared for high commission charges depending on your bank/card provider.

Cash can be changed in many places where ATMs are not available and you will sometimes get a better exchange rate as well. Make sure any USD and EUR notes are no more than 8 years old, clean and in good condition. Worn or damaged notes or any that have been written on are often refused by money changers. Please also bring a mix of denominations; the majority of the money you intend to change should be in large denominations (USD/EUR100 and 50 notes) as the exchange rate is often much better than for smaller notes. However, it is a good idea to have some smaller notes as well, as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over USD/EUR50.

Both USD and EUR are commonly changed throughout Asia. Please note that due to restrictions on currency conversion for foreigners in many Asian countries, it may not be possible to change leftover local currency back into USD or EUR after your trip, so please plan your budget well by withdrawing/exchanging what you need as you go.

### 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 will be required to contribute the additional costs involved and therefore we ask you to bring the equivalent of USD400 as a contingency fund. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you bring 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 in some instances only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.



# LUGGAGE

Although you will not have to carry your main bag for long distances, you will need to help load and unload bags 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 truck's luggage locker which will be inaccessible during a drive day, 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. Please be aware that due to the constant dust and vibrations your luggage bag will be subject to extreme wear and tear.

The size of baggage that can be brought is limited by the locker space on the truck. We recommend that your bag be no larger than a large rucksack with a capacity of about 80 litres (approximately 70cm high, 40cm wide and 40cm deep). The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is a maximum of 20kg.

# WHAT TO PACK?

Your 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 if your trip includes camping nights.

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. And remember that even when it's warm during the day it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

## KIT LISTS

For a general idea of what you need, the lists below provide a guide. The lists are NOT exhaustive.

### General

- Sleeping bag, sleeping bag liner, sleeping mat and small pillow - if your trip includes camping nights
- Sandals or flip flops
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Waterproof jacket
- Warm sweater or fleece
- Swimwear
- Comfortable travelling clothes and a set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out
- If visiting places of worship on the trip, men should bring a pair of full length trousers and women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf
- Towel - quick dry, lightweight travel towels are best
- Toiletries including bio degradable wet wipes, sanitary products, hand gel, sun cream and insect repellent
- Day pack - essential for keeping things handy when on the truck, on short hikes, walking around cities, etc
- Assorted dry bags - to protect your kit from dust and damp
- Pouch or money belt
- Water bottle (at least 1 litre) - we carry drinking water on all of our trucks and actively encourage our customers to use the water supplied. Whilst away from the truck we encourage the use of a filter water bottle and we are able to offer Dragoman customers a 25% discount on Water to Go bottles and filters using the code DRAGOMAN25 on the link <https://www.watertogo.eu/dragoman>
- Head torch with spare batteries and bulbs
- Camera with spare battery and extra memory cards
- Electrical accessories such as charger, power bank, adapter, etc
- Carbon monoxide detector
- A good book, a diary or notebook and pen, a fun game for travel days
- Personal medical kit - see notes below

### Cold Weather

For trips going through mountainous areas, deserts, high altitude regions and Patagonia, you should be prepared for cold weather, especially at night. Ensure you bring:

- 3/4 or 4/5 season sleeping bag with liner - see note on sleeping bag ratings below
- Thermal base layers

- Winter jacket
- Hat, gloves and scarf
- Warm socks

### **Hot Weather**

For trips going through tropical areas you should be prepared for hot and humid weather. Ensure you bring:

- Loose fitting clothes with long sleeves and legs
- Mosquito repellent
- Mosquito net – not essential as our tents have mosquito netting but can be handy for hotels and hostels or sleeping under the stars

### **Trips with trekking**

For trips including treks, ensure you bring:

- Lightweight walking clothes suitable for the general climate
- Waterproof trousers
- Sturdy walking boots
- Walking stick(s) – not essential but can help in steep terrain; sticks can generally be hired or purchased en route

## **SLEEPING BAGS**

A sleeping bag's rating typically indicates the lowest temperature at which it will keep the average sleeper warm enough to sustain them but not necessarily make them warm enough to feel comfortable. For example, with a 0°C bag, you should be able to stay in 0°C temperature but you will not necessarily be able to sleep comfortably.

For European sleeping bags there are the following standards:

- The upper limit is the highest temperature at which a 'standard' adult man is able to have a comfortable night's sleep without excess sweating.
- The comfort rating is based on a 'standard' adult woman having a comfortable night's sleep.
- The lower limit is based on the lowest temperature at which a 'standard' adult man is deemed to be able to have a comfortable night's sleep.
- The extreme rating is a survival-only rating for a 'standard' adult man. This is an extreme survival rating only and it is not advisable to rely on this rating for general use.

The transition zone, in between the comfort and lower temperature, is usually considered as the best purchase guideline.

## **ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT**

Your vehicle will usually be equipped with a 12 Volt socket, so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12V 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 adapter for your specific charger.

For mobile phones, please note that most countries in the Americas operate at 850 MHz and 1900 MHz which is not the same frequencies used in Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. Most modern tri-band and quad-band mobile phones will be able to operate on these frequencies but please check your mobile phone specifications before travelling to ensure that you'll be able to use your phone in the Americas.

## **PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT**

All of our trucks have a standard motorist's first aid kit on board for use in emergency situations only. The first aid kit is in compliance with UK standards for first aid provision within motor vehicles, and contains supplies to treat road side injuries. We do not carry prescription medications, therefore in addition to this we recommend that you purchase your own personal medical kit.

## **SAFETY & SECURITY**

### **GOVERNMENT TRAVEL ADVICE**

Dragoman follows the British Foreign Office Travel advice when deciding where and where we are unable to travel. We will base our decisions on itineraries and alterations to published routes based on their advice rather than the advice of other governments. We will advise you of any significant changes in advice before travel or whilst you are overseas.

However, we recommend you check the latest travel advisories from your own government for the country you are travelling to before you book and prior to departure. If there are any travel warnings present for the region you will travel to, as well as considering whether you are happy to travel despite the warning you must also check to ensure that it is not invalidating your travel insurance. Here are a few useful addresses:

- UK - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)
- Australia - [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)
- New Zealand - [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)
- United States - [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)
- Canada - [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca)
- We also recommend that you check the UK Travel Aware website before you travel at <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/>. This website offers straightforward travel advice, top tips, and up-to-date country information to help you plan a safe trip.

## JOURNEY SAFE

The safety of our customers is of primary importance to us. Our safety management system, Journey Safe, has the principal aim of promoting good practice safety across the globe where our customers go on adventures. We and the majority of our customers will recognise and acknowledge that the standards of safety we enjoy at home are generally superior to those which may be expected overseas and that, in general terms, the further afield they go the greater the differences may be. However as a tour operator we have made the decision to try and raise the profile of safety management overseas. Through our Journey Safe programme we work to ensure that safety management for both our suppliers and ourselves is always high on the agenda and hope to thereby raise the standard of safety as well as the quality of our adventure holiday programmes.



**JOURNEYSAFE**

Safety across the Globe

## SAFETY INFORMATION AND TIPS

Your safety is of paramount importance to us and we will do our best to ensure that your travel is safe and trouble-free, but we do ask that you take that little bit of extra care whilst you are away and take some time to understand about the nature of this style of travel. Part of the enjoyment of travel is experiencing a different way of life and cultures but this may also mean experiencing different safety and hygiene standards than those you are normally used to. Therefore, please take note of the following safety tips and follow any local safety advice or briefings delivered by your crew and any third-party suppliers we use during your trip.

### Transport safety

- Our own vehicles have fully-fitted seat belts; make sure you always belt up. If you find a safety belt inoperable or missing on one of our vehicles, please inform the crew immediately.
- Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that other vehicles we may use or recommend in some countries will be fitted with seat belts on every seat as it is not a legal requirement in much of the world.
- Please remain seated on board vehicles at all times when the vehicle is in motion.
- Never place luggage in the aisles or foot wells.
- Ensure you know where your nearest emergency exit is; this may be a designated emergency exit, a window, a door, or a roof hatch.
- Check the location of the fire extinguisher and first aid kit.
- Follow any safety instructions provided by the crew/driver.
- Some of our vehicles are fitted with roof seats which can be used in certain conditions, such as when driving at low speeds, off main tarmac roads, etc. The roof hatches can only be opened and the roof seats used with the express permission of the crew and you must never sit in the roof seats without seat belts.

### Road Safety

- Traffic in some countries travels on the opposite side of the road to what you may be used to, so ensure you look both ways before crossing the road.
- In many countries vehicles do not automatically stop at crossings and driving styles may be very unpredictable, so

please remain very vigilant when near roads and vehicles.

- Crash helmets are often not provided with mopeds and motorbikes overseas – we do not recommend you hire these vehicles.

### **Hostel/Hotel/Homestay safety**

- Ensure you know where your nearest fire exit is and check to ensure that it is operative.
- Check the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.
- Study the fire instructions in your room if available.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.
- Proceed to an assembly point well away from the building.
- Electrics in hotels in many of the places that we visit will not be up to the same standards as at home. Please ensure that you check rooms, especially bathrooms and are aware of any issues that look unsafe. If in doubt inform the crew who will endeavour to sort the situation out if possible.
- Staircases and stairwells are often built to a very different design than under western building standards. There may be no guard rails, be excessively steep, have dangerous gaps between the stairs and the wall, etc. At all times be aware and take appropriate and prudent care.
- We often stay in homestays and farmstays. These may range from a traditional yurt through to a tree house or a town house. As these are traditional homes, they may well not adhere to our western standards of safety and so it is important that you make yourself aware of potential risks.
- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with the hotels/hostels or homestays.

### **Campsite fire safety**

- Ensure you know where the nearest source of water or fire extinguisher is.
- Know how to raise the alarm.
- Extinguish all camping fires fully before retiring to bed.
- Observe any regulations regarding fires and bushfires in dry conditions.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.
- Proceed to an assembly point away from the tented accommodation/affected campsite.

### **Campsite safety & security**

- Familiarise yourself with the campsite and any known hazards.
- Group the tents around our vehicle wherever possible.
- No open flames, smoking or flammable liquids in or near the tents.
- Ensure the cooking area is well away from the tents.
- Ensure all water for cooking and drinking is purified first.
- Ensure any soil toilets are a minimum of 50m away from the tents and the cooking area.
- All food waste should be burned or buried a minimum of 100m away from the site.
- Ensure local advice is followed concerning any wildlife in the area.
- Keep valuables locked in the vehicle.
- Be aware of any local security issues that might be important.
- Do not set out tents close to perimeter fences which may be a security risk.
- Be aware of the security arrangements and local guards for campsite and if in doubt ask them where and where not to pitch tents.
- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with campsite.
- When wild camping, ensure that you do not wander away from the camp alone. If you do leave camp, ensure that you have notified the leader or other members of the group.

### **Food Safety**

- Make sure your food has been thoroughly cooked.
- Hot food should be hot, cold food should be cold.
- Avoid any uncooked food, except fruit and vegetables (notably those you can peel or shell yourself).

- In many countries you should only drink bottled water or purified water and ensure any seal is intact when purchasing bottles.
- On the Dragoman vehicles we have a tank of drinking water that is kept purified by the crew.
- Avoid ice in drinks as this can cause upset stomachs in hot climates.
- Make sure you wash your hands in antibacterial product when preparing and/or eating food.
- Many of the restaurants that you will eat in, either as a group or as individuals, will NOT have the same standards of food hygiene as we have in the western world. Unfortunately this is a reality of life in these regions. Therefore please think carefully about where you eat, what food you order and be aware of the risks.

### **Personal Safety**

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. 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. We have come up with a few pointers that we recommend you follow:

- Follow the crew's specific safety advice in each destination.
- Always remain aware and vigilant, and stay away from situations where you do not feel comfortable.
- Avoid carrying too much money.
- Always avoid carrying your passport, driving licence, air tickets, and other valuable items around with you unless this is essential. Instead, keep valuables such as this locked away in the truck's safe, or the safety deposit box in the room or reception of the hotel/hostel.
- If you are carrying cash, cards or valuables, use a money belt or neck wallet which are more easily concealed and more difficult to pickpocket.
- Do not take any valuable jewellery, watches, etc. away with you in the first place.
- Avoid walking in poorly lit areas.
- If possible avoid walking around on your own; it is always safer to explore with others.
- Always try to walk with confidence and purpose, which will help you avoid looking like a lost tourist!
- Take special care when walking to avoid spraining or twisting your ankle on potholes, cobbles and uneven ground.

## **ACTIVITY SAFETY & OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Optional activities mentioned by Dragoman are not included in the trip price, and do not form part of your contract with Dragoman. As such you accept that any assistance given by Dragoman crew members or local representatives in arranging optional activities does not render us liable for them in any way. The Dragoman crew are assisting you in arranging these activities for your added enjoyment whilst on your trip. The operators of these services and optional extras are local suppliers who contract directly with the client 'on the road', subject to and in accordance with their own terms and conditions. Dragoman accepts no liability for any action or activity undertaken by the client which is arranged independently of Dragoman while on tour. Crew may take part in an optional activity but do so as private individuals and not as company representatives.

Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time, taking into account your physical ability to take part and making sure you are happy with the safety aspects of the activity. Ensure that you use the appropriate equipment on optional activities, including life jackets, helmets, etc. This is especially important on activities such as horse riding, white-water rafting, etc.

Always ensure that your travel medical insurance covers you for all included and optional activities that you wish to participate in.

## **RESPONSIBLE TOURISM**

At Dragoman, we are 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 from the link below:

<https://www.dragoman.com/about-us/policies-and-resources/responsible-travel-policy>

## **WATER**

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in the bottle, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 litres 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 sterilised water stored in the purpose-built storage tank on 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 pocket!

Whilst away from the truck we encourage the use of a filter water bottle and we are able to offer Dragoman customers a 25% discount on Water to Go bottles and filters using the code DRAGOMAN25 on the link <https://www.watertogo.eu/dragoman>

## ACCOMMODATION & AIRPORT TRANSFERS

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the 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 service is available for some hotels in joining and finishing cities, 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 that 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.

## CONTINUING YOUR TRIP

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

## FEEDBACK

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 6th March 2021**