

## OTTOMAN & PERSIAN EXPLORER, (IIA)

Ashgabat to Istanbul 26 days, departing 22 Sep 2019



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## TRIP OVERVIEW

<b>Trip Style:</b>	Overlanding
<b>Route:</b>	Ashgabat to Istanbul
<b>Duration:</b>	26 days
<b>Transport:</b>	Overland expedition vehicle
	 10%  90%
<b>Accom:</b>	Hotels, Hostels, Campsites, Homestays

### Physical Challenge:

EASY  HARD

Your itinerary may include easy-paced day walks, bike rides, and other activities that are not too strenuous.

### Lifestyle Challenge:

EASY  HARD

This trip has a bit of everything.

[Itineraries](#)  
[British Foreign Office Travel Advice and Warnings](#)  
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[Safety & Security](#)  
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## ROUTE MAP



## COUNTRIES VISITED

### Iran



## OVERLAND ADVENTURE TOURS IN IRAN

Travel beyond the headlines and discover a world of culture, fascinating Persian ruins and famously-welcoming local people.

### Turkey



## TRAVEL THE SILK ROAD FROM ISTANBUL

Turkey is a rapidly-modernising secular state - it has its religious roots firmly entrenched in Islam,

In the heart of the country lies one of the largest cities in Western Asia, [Tehran](#). It is a city full of amazing sites to admire, including the Milad Tower which stretches up to a fantastic height of over 400 metres, making it one of the tallest freestanding structures in the world. Its octagonal base is a traditional symbol of Persian architecture. Another fantastic example of Persian architecture is the Golestan Palace, one of the most extravagant and beautiful buildings in Iran.

## IRAN'S FAMOUS SITES

Tehran boasts art galleries and restaurants galore - perfect for trying Iranian specialities such as the national dish, Ghormeh Sabzi, made with curried vegetables and served with Tadik (crunchy rice).

One of the main cultural highlights in Iran is [Persepolis](#), former ceremonial capital of the ancient Achaemenid Empire. Built around 500 BCE by King Darius I, its wealth and opulence became legendary. Alexander the Great destroyed the city in 330 BCE, but even today its past splendour is easily appreciated from the ruins that remain.

Iran's other cities have a wealth of sites to explore. The incredible Naqsh-e-Jahan square and its nearby mosques and palaces in the old Persian capital of Esfahan, the wonderful mosques and citadels of Shiraz, the ancient bazaars of Tabriz, and the Zoroastrian Fire Temples and 'Shaking Minarets' of Yazd - all incredible sites that we will visit on our journey through this unique land.

[Take a look at some more of Iran's highlights>>](#)

## A PROUD HISTORY & PROMISING FUTURE

Iran is a country full of pride and history. It is the birthplace of the sport polo, which dates back to the 1st Century CE and was used as training for the king's troops. The music in Iran is also another part of their proud history, and it dates back thousands of years - today's music industry is very diverse, from traditional folk music to a thriving hip-hop scene.

however the religion does not dominate the culture as it does in some of Turkey's neighbours. The Turks are friendly to visitors, the cuisine is a savoury surprise, and the cities are dotted with majestic old buildings. Turkey's topography ranges from Mediterranean coast to the high rugged mountains of Eastern Turkey. The country combines stunning scenery, immense history and wonderful beaches.

Turkey's largest city is the [exotic land of Istanbul](#) - once the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, and then the centre of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul is a bewildering city packed full of archaeological sites and culture. It is home to the fabulous Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, and the Topkapı Palace. There are restaurants, galleries, bars and clubs that scatter across the city, and of course home to the bewildering Grand Bazaar and several traditional Turkish bath houses.

## CAPPADOCIA'S 'FAIRY CHIMNEYS'

In the heart of Cappadocia is the town of [Göreme](#). Known as the Enchanted Valley, this is a fantastic region of cones, needles and columns fashioned by nature from erosion of the rock. It is honeycombed with caves scooped out to make churches and dwellings that are known as fairy chimneys and castles.

The most interesting are the rock chapels and frescoes of Göreme, the monastic complex of Zelve and the fairy chimneys of Avcılar. Nearby are the remains of underground cities used by the Early Christians to avoid persecution, the most extensive of which housed up to 50,000 people at any one time.

## Turkmenistan



### OVERLANDING TURKMENISTAN - WHAT TO EXPECT

Turkmenistan has some of the remotest scenery on Earth. Most of the country is covered by the inhospitable Karakum Desert. The indigenous people are the Turkmen who mainly live outside the urban centres, many of whom still live a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life. The rural Turkmen are a hospitable people whose culture and way of life has altered little in hundreds of years.

In the unique capital of Ashgabat there are many beautiful marble palaces and gleaming golden domes. It is a strange modern city that has been extensively rebuilt in the years since independence, and its futuristic and outrageous public buildings are an extraordinary sight! Little is now left of the original Russian Imperial city that was destroyed by a massive earthquake in the 1940s.

#### THE DARVASA GAS CRATER

One unusual attraction is the famous Darvasa Gas Crater, lying deep in the deserts of Turkmenistan. Initially the result of an industrial accident by Soviet gas prospectors, it is a huge burning crater that has been on fire for decades by being kept alight by the natural gas in the ground. It's a bewildering and mesmerising sight, especially after dark!

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# DAILY ITINERARY

## Day 1: Ashgabat ( Sun 22 Sep )

**Border Information:** if joining in Ashgabat, you will most likely enter Turkmenistan at Ashgabat International Airport (IATA code: ASB).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your leader at the reception of the joining hotel upon arrival with more details about this important meeting.

After the meeting we will have an included tour of the city of Ashgabat using local minibuses.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Ashgabat before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Ashgabat. If arriving at Ashgabat airport you will also need to have a confirmed arrival transfer and representative from our local supplier to meet you at the airport. Please contact your sales agent for prices and to book.

In Ashgabat we will stay in a decent quality local hotel.

*\*Important note - any tobacco products are practically illegal in Turkmenistan, so please do not bring them or use them in Turkmenistan. Also please do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details.\**

Hotel for the night: Ak-Altyn Hotel

### Ak Altyn Hotel

141/1 Magtymguly Avenue  
Ashgabat  
744000  
Turkmenistan  
Tel - +9931236 3700

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the unique and bizarre Turkmen capital of Ashgabat on a guided tour of the city      Included in Kitty

### About Ashgabat:

Ashgabat is a unique modern city that has been extensively rebuilt since the country gained independence in 1991. Little is left of the original Russian Imperial city as most of it was destroyed in a massive earthquake in 1948, and today the city centre is a bizarre mix of futuristic and outrageous public buildings that are an extraordinary sight - these include many ornate marble buildings and extravagant golden statues of the president.

Ashgabat's Sunday Market is famous along the whole Silk Road - this wonderful market stretches for hundreds of acres into the desert.



Carpets, camels, clothes, pigs, jewellery, goats, cars, chickens, hats and ex-Soviet military paraphernalia are readily available.

## Day 2: Ashgabat ( Mon 23 Sep )

Today we will arrange to obtain our Iran visas at the Iranian Consulate in Ashgabat for all members of the group - please note that citizens of the UK, USA and Canada will need to attend the Consulate in person along with your trip leader so that they can take fingerprints as part of the application.

The rest of the day is free to further explore Ashgabat.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Learn about the history and culture of Turkmenistan at the huge National Museum in Ashgabat USD 10

Visit the huge Turkmenbashi Ruhy mosque on the outskirts of Ashgabat, built in 2004 as the mausoleum of Saparmurat Niyazov, the first president of Turkmenistan after the fall of the Soviet Union Free

See a myriad of incredible and impressive hand-woven carpets in the Ashgabat Carpet Museum (if open) USD 10

## Day 3: Shirvan ( Tue 24 Sep )

**Border Information:** Exit Turkmenistan at Gaudan, enter Iran at Bajgiran.

Today we will pick up our passports from the Iranian Consulate and head straight across the border to the small town of Shirvan.

In Shirvan we will stay in a basic local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

### About Shirvan:

Shirvan is famed for its natural beauty, tranquil gardens, small waterfalls and natural springs. Shirvan has a long history - Zoroastrian graves show that it was inhabited long before the Islamic conquest of the 7th Century CE. Due to its proximity to Iran's northern borders, the



town has Turic influences in its local dialect and customs.

## Day 4: Damghan ( Wed 25 Sep )

Today we will drive to the historical town of Bastam and visit the Sufi complex in the centre. After this we will continue to the town of Damghan.

In Damghan we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the ancient town of Bastam, containing monuments dating from the Ilkhanate Period when Iran was controlled by the Mongol Empire

Included in Kitty

Visit the splendid ancient brick building of Imamzadeh Jafar in Damghan, which has an appearance similar to a North African castle

Included in Kitty

See Damghan's Jameh Mosque and it's fine brick minaret dating from the mid-11th century

Included in Kitty

Visit the partially-ruined Tarikhuneh Mosque which features 18 rear columns dating from around 760CE, making this one of the oldest mosques in Iran

Included in Kitty

### About Damghan:

Damghan was an important city in the Middle Ages, capital of the province of Qumis. Today it is a sleepy, historic town. It's main attraction is the claim to have what may be Iran's oldest surviving mosque - the Tarikhaneh Mosque that was constructed in the 8th Century CE, only 100 years after the arrival of Islam in Persia.

## Day 5: Khor ( Thu 26 Sep )

This morning we will take a walking tour of the ancient town of Damghan, including the Tarikhuneh Mosque which features columns dating from the year 760CE.

Following our visit we will continue our journey to the desert city of Khor, where we have the option to take an evening jeep trip into the nearby salt flats to have dinner.

In Khor we will stay in a beautiful hotel in the style of a desert





caravanserai.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

*\*Please note that with small groups and at certain times of the year we may be able to stay in a local homestay in the nearby village of Mesr\*.*

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the ancient desert town of Khor and see its beautiful palm trees and ruined castle

Included in Kitty

### About Khor:

Khor is a small village located in the central desert of Iran, (known as Dasht-e-Kavir in Persian). Close by are the central mountain ranges of Iran, which create a stunning and isolated landscape. The town's only water supply comes from a spring that flows out of the foothills of the mountains quite close to the heart of the village. This is the only source of life for the beautiful gardens and date palm orchards that make this oasis such a special place.



## Day 6 to 7: Yazd ( Fri 27 Sep to Sat 28 Sep )

Today we will explore the town of Khor before driving to the ancient desert town of Yazd, one of the oldest extant towns in Iran.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

On the following day we will have an included walking tour of some of the main highlights of Yazd, including the incredible Jameh Mosque, the Old Town and the Amir Chakhmaq complex.

In Yazd we will stay in a local hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the stunning ancient Jameh Mosque of Yazd, built in the 12th century and a fantastic example of Azari architecture

Included in Kitty

Learn all about the intriguing and ingenious historical methods of getting water to the desert town of Yazd at the Yazd Water Museum

Included in Kitty

Freely explore the huge city square and mosque at the Amir Chakmaq complex, built in the 15th century

Included in Kitty

Discover the atmospheric winding streets and beautiful adobe architecture of Yazd's Old Town, one of the oldest towns in the

Included in Kitty



world

See the fascinating centuries-old practice of Varzesh-e Bastani at the Yazd House of Strength, a curious blend of strength training, martial arts and wrestling, accompanied by traditional music

IRR 10000

### About Yazd:

Yazd is a tranquil and rustic old city, complete with streets paved in sun-baked tiles, a unique little bazaar and lots of small shops selling interesting trinkets and souvenirs.

The town is the centre of Iran's oldest religion, Zoroastrianism. With the Islamic conquest of Iran in the 7th century CE, Zoroastrianism lost its position as the dominant religion and many remote shrines were abandoned and forgotten. The mountainous region around the city of Yazd became the last remaining stronghold of Zoroastrianism, and today it's one of the few places where these ancient traditions are still practiced.

## Day 8: Zein-o-din, Yazd ( Sun 29 Sep )

Today we have an included visit to two important Zoroastrian sites in Iran - the Fire Temple and the Towers of Silence. After this we will take a short drive to the famous Caravanserai of Zein-o-Din, an atmospheric 16th-century guesthouse originally built to accommodate merchants travelling on the Silk Road.

In Zein-o-Din we will stay overnight at the old caravanserai.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-2 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Stay overnight in the incredible restored Safavid-era circular caravanserai in the remote deserts south of Yazd

Included in Kitty

See the Zoroastrian Towers of Silence outside Yazd, used until the 1960s to place bodies of the deceased so that they did not touch and pollute the sacred elements of fire or earth

Included in Kitty

Visit the Zoroastrian Fire Temple of Yazd, where they keep a sacred fire that has supposedly been continuously burning since 470CE, the only Zoroastrian eternal flame of its type outside of India

Included in Kitty

### About Zein-o-din:

Zein-o-Din, about 60km south of Yazd, is one of the world's most well-preserved ancient caravanserais - inns set up to accommodate merchants and travellers journeying along the Silk Road. Zein-o-Din is one of 999 caravanserais constructed in the 16th Century CE during the reign of Shah Abbas I. Today it is still open to travellers, and is a fabulous, atmospheric and historical stop on our journey through Iran.

## Day 9: Persepolis, Shiraz ( Mon 30 Sep )

Today we will drive south to the city of Shiraz. En route we will visit the phenomenal ancient ruins of Persepolis, once the capital of the mighty Achaemenid Persian Empire until it was conquered by Alexander the Great in 330BCE.

In Shiraz we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out on a guided tour of the incredible historic ruins of the ancient Persian capital of Persepolis, founded by Cyrus the Great in 550BCE and invaded by Alexander the Great in 330BCE

Included in Kitty

Visit the phenomenal site of Naqsht-e Rostam near Persepolis, the cross-shaped tombs of four of the great Emperors of Persia chiselled into the cliff face

USD 10

### About Persepolis:

Darius I built the city of Persepolis in around 500 BCE as the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, and its wealth and opulence soon became legendary. In ancient Persia, Persepolis was called Parsa, meaning "The City of the Persians" (the name Persepolis was given to the city by the ancient Greeks). It was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 330 BCE, but even today its past splendour is easily appreciated from the ruins that remain, and the incredibly well-preserved marble carvings within.

### About Shiraz:

The ancient Iranian city of Shiraz is located in an attractive valley, once well known for the wine that was produced here. The area has been inhabited since at least 2000BCE, but rose to prominence during medieval times and became the capital of the Islamic world during the Zand Dynasty between 1750-1800CE.

Shiraz is widely considered to be the intellectual capital of the country and the heart of Persian culture and tradition. The city has been the home of many important Persian poets and there is still a vibrant arts scene here today.

Wandering the streets here can be an enjoyable way to discover the

city, getting lost in the Bazaar and admiring the impressive architecture, particularly some of the incredible mosques and shady gardens. The Nasir Ol Molk Mosque has one of the most colourful interiors in the whole of Iran.

## Day 10: Shiraz ( Tue 01 Oct )

Today we will have an included walking tour of some of the highlights of the old city of Shiraz, including the beautifully-coloured Nasir ol Molk Mosque, the incredible mirrored interior of the Shah Cheragh Mosque, and the historical house of Narenjestan.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the stunning Shah Cheragh Mosque, a major pilgrimage site for Shia Muslims	Included in Kitty
Explore the 19th century Nasir ol Molk Mosque, famous for its extensive coloured glass art	Included in Kitty
Visit the Narenjestan Palace in Shiraz, the former home of the wealthy Qavam family of merchants	Included in Kitty
Visit the tranquil site of the tomb of Hafez, a famous 14th-century Persian poet whose collected works are regarded as the pinnacle of Persian literature	IRR 60000
Explore the stunning citadel of the Arg of Karim Khan in Shiraz, built by the emperor Karim during the Zand Dynasty in the late 18th century	IRR 20000

## Day 11 to 13: Esfahan ( Wed 02 Oct to Fri 04 Oct )

Today we will have a full day's drive to the stunning old Safavid-era capital of Esfahan.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours.

On the following day we will have an included walking tour of the central highlights of Esfahan, including the showpiece central square of Naqsh-e Jahan and its surrounding mosques and royal palaces, the old bazaar, and the beautiful Jameh Mosque, one of the oldest in Iran.

On our second full day here, we will have free time to explore more of Esfahan's incredible sites, such as its ancient bridges, the curious 'Shaking Minarets', the Armenian Vank Cathedral, or the evocative



Martyrs' Cemetery.

In Esfahan we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit the magnificent and colossal city square of Naqsh-e Jahan, the centrepiece of the Safavid-era city of Esfahan	Included in Kitty
Explore the Shah Mosque, the public mosque of Esfahan built by Shah Abbas I and a masterpiece of Persian architecture	Included in Kitty
See the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, once a private mosque for the emperor and his harem and home to some of the world's most beautiful and masterful internal tilework	Included in Kitty
Explore the grand palace of Ali Qapu and discover the stunning wall paintings of the former residence of the Safavid emperors	Included in Kitty
Wander the streets of Esfahan's old bazaar, dating from the 17th century	Included in Kitty
Walk around Esfahan's historical centre and visit the five iconic Safavid-era bridges across the Zayandeh river	Free
Visit the Vank Cathedral, a beautiful Orthodox church set up by the Armenian diaspora in the 17th century	Free
Visit the stunning Jameh Mosque in Esfahan, one of the oldest mosques in Iran and an amalgamation of several different styles of Persian architecture	Included in Kitty
See the curious 14th-century 'Shaking Minarets' in Esfahan, famous for the effect that if one minaret is shaken, the other will shake as well	IRR 5000
Visit the very moving Martyrs' Cemetery of Esfahan, a patriotic tribute to soldiers who	Free

died in the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s

Explore the site of the ancient Zoroastrian Fire Temples near Esfahan, where you get incredible views over the city and the surrounding valley IRR 40000

### About Esfahan:

The friendly and beautiful city of Esfahan is often described as "the Jewel of Persia". The city rose into prominence when it was made the capital in 1598CE during the Safavid era and the reign of Shah Abbas I. During the 17th-Century, some of the most beautiful and inspiring architecture in the Islamic world was constructed in Esfahan. The cool, blue tiles of the buildings contrast perfectly with the hot dry Iranian countryside around it - and as you wander the city's streets, get lost in the bazaar and relax in the beautiful municipal gardens, it won't be long before you find yourself falling in love with this magical place.

A good place to start your explorations is Imam Square, with the Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Ali Qapu Palace and Chehel Sotun Palace all located nearby. From the Ali Qapu Palace you can get excellent views of the bustling Imam Square and Esfahan's enormous covered bazaar, which houses over 5kms of narrow winding alleyways. The bazaar is famous for its brass work, miniature paintings, block-printed cloth and, of course, carpets. The nearby Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque has some of the finest interior tilework to be seen in the whole world. Other sights worth seeking out are the Friday Mosque and the many magnificent river bridges.

### Day 14: Tehran ( Sat 05 Oct )

Today we will have a full day drive to the chaotic Iranian capital of Tehran.

In Tehran we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours.

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

Explore the former royal complex of Golestan Palace, a huge site built in the 16th century and Tehran's oldest monument Included in Kitty

Learn all about Iran's rich and fascinating history at Tehran's National Museum of Iran Included in Kitty

Visit the Iranian Artists' Forum in Tehran, a large gallery for the country's best young artists to feature their work Free

Explore the S'ad Abad Museum in the spectacular mountainside near Tehran, once a royal summer home during the Pahlavi period

USD 4.5

Visit the shocking Ebrat Museum, once the prison used by the Shah's brutal secret police before the revolution of 1979

USD 5

See some of Iran's most precious treasures at the Treasury of National Jewels, including the 182 carat Darya-ye-Nur (Sea of Light) which is thought to be the world's largest uncut diamond, and the phenomenal 34kg Globe of Jewels, made with over 51,000 precious stones

USD 4.5

Visit the Laleh Park in central Tehran, an oasis of calm and a well-designed green space to observe local life pass by

Free

Visit the viewing tower at the top of the iconic Milad Tower, one of the world's tallest towers at a height of 435 metres

USD 8

See Tehran's iconic Azadi Tower, the inverted Y-shaped memorial built in 1971 to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the first Persian Empire

USD 2.5

### About Tehran:

Iran's massive capital of Tehran is a sprawling city at the foot of the Alborz mountain range. With a population of approximately 15 million people, it is the largest city in the Middle East and a cultural melting pot full of interesting museums, historical palaces, art galleries, cultural centres and lively cafes and restaurants, not to mention some of the most friendly and welcoming people you are ever likely to meet.

You shouldn't miss the Golestan Palace - this extravagant building was historically the royal Qajar complex, the seat of the Shahs of Persia. The many museums here are also well worth a visit if you're interested in learning more about the history and culture of Iran, in particular the National Museum, Carpet Museum of Iran and Niavaran Palace Complex. Tehran is also home to the Iranian Imperial Crown Jewels, claimed to be the largest, most dazzling and valuable jewel collection in the world, which includes crowns and thrones, 30 tiaras, jewel-studded swords and shields and a vast number of loose precious gems.

## Day 15: Tehran ( Sun 06 Oct )



**Border Information:** if joining in Tehran, you will most likely enter Iran at Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport (IATA code: IKA).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your leader at the reception of the joining hotel upon arrival with more details about this important meeting.

After the meeting we will have an included tour of the stunning Golestan Palace and the fascinating National Museum of Iran.

In Tehran we will stay in a local hotel.

*Please note that due to restrictions on citizens of the UK, USA and Canada being permitted to remain unaccompanied in Iran, we would only be able to book one extra night of accommodation in Tehran for these nationalities before the trip starts. You will also be required to book an airport transfer in advance via us. Please ensure the correct dates for your plans are clearly stated on all your visa applications.*

Hotel for the night: Mina Hotel

**Mina Hotel**

No 82. Somayeh Junction  
South Mofatteh Street  
Tehran  
Iran  
+982188106700

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Explore the former royal complex of Golestan Palace, a huge site built in the 16th century and Tehran's oldest monument	Included in Kitty
Learn all about Iran's rich and fascinating history at Tehran's National Museum of Iran	Included in Kitty
Visit the Iranian Artists' Forum in Tehran, a large gallery for the country's best young artists to feature their work	Free
Explore the S'ad Abad Museum in the spectacular mountainside near Tehran, once a royal summer home during the Pahlavi period	USD 4.5
Visit the shocking Ebrat Museum, once the prison used by the Shah's brutal secret police before the revolution of 1979	USD 5
See Tehran's iconic Azadi Tower, the inverted Y-shaped memorial built in 1971	USD 2.5

to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the first Persian Empire

See Tehran's Museum of the Islamic Period and its interesting collection of artifacts from various stages of Iran's history (when open) USD 3

Visit the viewing tower at the top of the iconic Milad Tower, one of the world's tallest towers at a height of 435 metres USD 8

Visit the Laleh Park in central Tehran, an oasis of calm and a well-designed green space to observe local life pass by Free

See some of Iran's most precious treasures at the Treasury of National Jewels, including the 182 carat Darya-ye-Nur (Sea of Light) which is thought to be the world's largest uncut diamond, and the phenomenal 34kg Globe of Jewels, made with over 51,000 precious stones USD 4.5

## Day 16: Zanjan ( Mon 07 Oct )

Today we will set off from Iran's chaotic capital and head west to the impressive Dome of Soltaniyeh, where we have an included visit. The 14th-century mausoleum is the 3rd largest dome in the world.

After our visit, we will continue our drive to the small town of Zanjan, where we have free time to explore and possibly visit the fascinating historical laundry hall of Rakhathshor-Khaneh.

In Zanjan we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the spectacular Dome of Soltaniyeh, the huge mausoleum of the Ilkhanate (Mongolian) emperor Öljeitü built in the

Included in Kitty

14th Century and the 3rd largest dome in the world behind the Cathedral of Florence and the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul

Visit the historical underground hall of Rakhathshor-Khaneh, once used as the entire city's laundry-place Free

### About Zanjan:

Zanjan is located in the North-west of Iran in a region known locally as the 'Iranian Azerbaijan'. Zanjan city is the provinces capital and lies roughly 330Km of Tehran. This thriving town is know throughout Iran for its beautiful handicrafts such as knives, traditional sandals called charoogh and malileh.

Zanjan is also known for its stainless and sharp knives and can be found today in the lively bazaar and its many shops along the main streets. However perhaps its most famous exports are the stunning carpets that come from this region. Many villagers are traditional carpet weavers so this certainly would be a great place to bargain for that Persian rug you have always dreamed of.

## Day 17: Tabriz ( Tue 08 Oct )

Today we will drive to the western Iranian city of Tabriz, where we will have free time to explore some of the sights of the old town.

In Tabriz we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Wander through the ancient bazaar of Tabriz, once one of the most important commercial centres on the Silk Road and the largest covered market in the world Free

Visit the Constitution House of Tabriz, where the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1907 was launched, which established the Qajar Dynasty and the country's parliament Free

Learn all about the vast history of Tabriz and the Iranian province of East Azerbaijan in the Azerbaijan Museum Free



Visit the beautiful Blue Mosque of Tabriz, built in 1465 and refurbished in 1973 Free

See the grave of Shahriar, the beloved local poet whose Azeri-Turkish and Persian literature has been translated into more than 30 languages across the world Free

### About Tabriz:

In the far north western corner of Iran is province known as East Azerbaijan. The region's largest city is Tabriz, which was once the capital of the Ilkhanid Empire after the Mongol invasion in the 13th-Century. Surviving multiple invasions, massacres and devastating earthquakes throughout its history, today it is an interesting place with a distinctive culture. Its most famous sites are the historic Blue Mosque and the ancient bazaar (the largest covered market in the world!)

## Day 18: Doğubayazıt ( Wed 09 Oct )

**Border Information:** Exit Iran at Bazargan, enter Turkey at Gurbulak.

Today we will drive across the border to Turkey and the Kurdish town of Doğubayazıt. En route we will have an included visit to the Ishak Pasha Palace and enjoy the spectacular views of the surrounding landscapes and the nearby Mount Ararat.

In Doğubayazıt we will stay in a basic local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit to Ishak Pasha Palace near Dogubayazit on the Iranian Border

Included in Kitty

### About Doğubayazıt:

Doğubayazıt is a small town in eastern Turkey situated at the foot of Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark reputedly came to rest after The Flood in the biblical tale. On a hill behind Doğubayazıt is the Ishak Pasha Palace. This fortress was built from 1685CE and was home to a Kurdish chieftain. In its heyday, it stood complete with huge golden gates, which remained in place until a Russian raid in 1917 - they are now housed in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

## Day 19 to 20: Erzurum, Sivas ( Thu 10 Oct to Fri 11 Oct )

Over the next two days we will travel through the stunning landscapes in eastern Turkey towards the central Cappadocia region.

We will aim to wild camp or stay at a basic local campsite near Erzurum on the first night, and near Sivas on the second.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-7 hours each day.

## Day 21: Göreme ( Sat 12 Oct )

Today we will complete our drive to Göreme, a small enchanting town in the heart of the Cappadocia mountains.

In Göreme we will stay in a well-equipped hostel - please note that dorm beds are sometimes used here.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-7 hours.

### About Göreme:

Göreme is a small town in the heart of Cappadocia in Turkey. Known as the Enchanted Valley, the cones, needles and columns fashioned by nature here form a unique and surreal landscape. The area is riddled with caves, scooped out of the rock to house churches and dwellings that are known as fairy chimneys and castles. Perhaps the most interesting are the rock chapels and frescoes of Göreme, the monastic complex of Zelve and the fairy chimneys of Avcilar.

Nearby you can also see the remains of a number of underground cities, the most extensive of which housed up to 50,000 people at any one time. These cities were used by the early Christians, and could be closed in the event of an invasion and the population kept safe below ground until the invaders departed.

More modern attractions include a local winery and the workshops of local craftsmen who produce skilled onyx carving and pottery. In Ürgüp, near Göreme, you can also enjoy a traditional Turkish bath, sip tea while playing backgammon with the local men, or enjoy a walk through the unique scenery.

We can also arrange a group evening out perhaps to one of the underground nightclubs hollowed out of the soft rock. Entertained by local Cappadocian folk dancers, you can sample traditional foods washed down with some of Turkey's excellent wines, beers and of course raki.

## Day 22 to 23: Göreme ( Sun 13 Oct to Mon 14 Oct )

We will have a 2 full days to explore Göreme, including a guided tour of the enchanted valley of Cappadocia. There will be an opportunity for a magical optional balloon ride over the valley during our time here.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Take a hot air balloon flight over Cappadocia	USD 180
Guided tour of Cappadocia and underground troglodyte cities and caves	TRY 5

Explore the ancient pre-iconoclastic Byzantine rock monastery of Zelve	TRY 15
Learn how to make the traditional Central Turkish dishes of dolma and sarma at a Turkish cooking class	EUR 65
Take an Oriental Dancing (belly dancing) class to learn the techniques of this beautiful form of dance	EUR 70
Drive through the stunning landscape of Cappadocia on an ATV quad biking trip	USD 65
See the harvesting of the grapes and learn all about the process of making the local drink of pekmez (September to mid-October only)	EUR 50
Discover the incredible scenery of Cappadocia on horseback	EUR 45
Explore the Early Christian underground cities of Derinkuyu or Kaymaklı, used as a hiding place from persecutions for centuries	Included in Kitty
Walk through the beautiful ancient valley of Ihlara, containing the beautiful rock-hewn churches built by the Cappadocian Greeks during the Byzantine era	Included in Kitty
Discover the ancient techniques of Cappadocian pottery at the village of Avanos	Free
Head out for a fun evening of dinner and various Turkish dancing displays	EUR 30
Witness the hypnotic Sufi Whirling Dervishes ceremony at an ancient caravanserai near Göreme	EUR 35

## Day 24: Istanbul ( Tue 15 Oct )



Today we will have a full day's drive west to arrive in Istanbul, the only city in the world that straddles two continents, Europe and Asia.

In Istanbul we will stay in dorm accommodation in a fantastic hostel with good facilities in the historic district of Sultanahmet, a 5 minute walk from the Blue Mosque.

Estimated Drive Time - 10-11 hours.

### **About Istanbul:**

Istanbul is the only city in the world to straddle two continents, so it will come as no surprise that this vast metropolis is home to a beguiling mix of different cultures and traditions, blending the influences of both east and west.

The city has a rich and intriguing history; originally founded by Greek settlers over 2000 years ago, Istanbul originally went by the name of Byzantium, later renamed Constantinople by the Romans who made it the capital of their eastern empire. The Ottomans took control in 1453CE and renamed the city Istanbul, making it their capital.

Today the city is the largest in Turkey, a bustling mega-city with a population of over 12 million people in total. The old town is a good place to start your explorations. The Grand Bazaar is a paradise for souvenir hunters and you may well find yourself drinking tea with the shopkeepers whilst haggling over prices - it is often thought to be the most-visited tourist attraction in the world! Then there's the Topkapı Palace and Harem, Istanbul's iconic Blue Mosque and the incredible ancient church of Hagia Sophia. The Archaeological Museum which contains the tomb of Alexander the Great is also worth a look.

After all that sightseeing, take a stroll down to the waterfront and maybe take a boat ride up the Bosphorus - this is a great relaxing way to experience the city from a different angle, with excellent views of the minarets and towers that give the city its distinctive skyline. You might also like to visit an authentic Turkish bath, where attendants will pummel your body as though it was a lump of meat and walk over your back as a form of massage!

## **Day 25: Istanbul ( Wed 16 Oct )**

Today we will have a free day to explore the myriad of highlights in the old Byzantine and Ottoman capital. There are many places to visit, such as the spectacular Blue Mosque, the colossal Hagia Sophia, the bewildering Grand Bazaar, the phenomenal Topkapı Palace, and a ferry cruise on the Bosphorus river.

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Guided city tour of Istanbul	TRY 50
Visit the incredible Byzantine cathedral of Hagia Sophia, built in the 6th century	TRY 25
Explore the atmospheric underground	TRY 20

Basilica Cisterns, built by the Byzantines in the 6th century

Explore the majestic Topkapı Palace, the huge palace of the Ottoman Sultans for over 400 years

TRY 35

Visit the Çemberlitas Baths, a traditional Turkish Hammam, for a bath and massage!

USD 20

Explore the phenomenal Blue Mosque, built by the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I - a stunning icon of Istanbul

Free

See the splendour of Istanbul from a boat trip on Bosphorus Strait, which marks the boundary of Europe and Asia

USD 17

Explore the colossal markets of the Grand Bazaar - once the centre of all trading between Europe and Asia, and the most visited tourist attraction in the world

Free

Take a long day trip out to Gallipoli, the site of the infamous battle in World War I

USD 100

## Day 26: Istanbul ( Thu 17 Oct )

**Border information:** if leaving the trip in Istanbul, you will most likely exit Turkey from Istanbul Atatürk International Airport (IATA code: IST).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Istanbul. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight - please contact the Sales Team if you are interested in booking extra nights of accommodation in order to fully explore and take part in some of the optional activities listed below.

### IMPORTANT NOTES

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

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

We update these notes regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our 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, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards.

## EXPLORATORY TRIP WARNING - THIS IS A NEW TRIP FOR US!

Please note that all or part of this trip is a brand new itinerary, and could be going through completely new areas for Dragoman. This is what we call a New or Exploratory trip, and it means that all the passengers on these trips for the first season are the route's pioneers!

However, while we have thoroughly researched all aspects of this new route and put the itinerary together with the best of intentions, please note that your crew will be finding a lot of information out for us on the ground, will be playing a lot of things by ear, and may alter the itinerary slightly in places where it becomes necessary. Most trips will have slight or significant changes made to them after this first season, and frankly we would be very surprised if an Exploratory trip was to run perfectly to the published itinerary. Usually we find that this is rarely a problem but rather an exciting feature, that there are much more pleasant surprises in store than unpleasant ones, and these Exploratory trips are a fantastic opportunity to shape the trip as a group.

However, the warning is sincere and these trips must be viewed as Exploratory - if this concerns you or you would rather stick to a tried-and-tested itinerary, then we recommend that you wait a year or two until we have this itinerary perfected following operating it many times, or of course to consider one of the more established trips in our extensive portfolio.

## VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MEDICATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Please note that as of 2014 all medications containing **tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine, opiates or any containing similar constituent components** have been made illegal in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This includes many over-the-counter medicines that are commonly available elsewhere, such as Nurofen! Please see here for more information - <http://sambuh.com/procedure-psychotropic-substances.html>

It is very important that you do not bring any medications such as this - they will treat this as though you were bringing illegal narcotics into the country. They are very strict about this, and it does not matter if you are only transiting through, and it makes no difference if you have a prescription or a doctor's note - please do not bring these medications to Central Asia under any circumstance, as the customs agents know exactly what they are looking for and the consequences could be huge, not only for yourself but for the tour leaders, for Dragoman's future operation in the region and especially for our local agents and guides.

Please note that we cannot take anyone on these trips who refuses to dispose of such medicines or refuses to co-operate with the tour leaders if they need to inspect any personal medicines - thank you for your understanding in this matter.

If you have any prescription medications that do not come under the above list, please bring the prescription along and declare the medicines on any customs declaration forms throughout your trip.

## 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. 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.).

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.

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available. If you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

## VISA INFORMATION

Many countries that we visit on our travels will require visas to enter. 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 read the information very carefully to make sure everything is clear and you aware of what you need to do. Please also be aware that rules surrounding visas do change, often suddenly, and without prior warning. This is why it is important that you also double-check the information we provide for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance, you may wish to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy or consulate. 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.

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.

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.

Most countries require that your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your entry into the country.

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.

## TURKMENISTAN

Citizens of all countries **will** need a visa to enter Turkmenistan for up to 10 days. You will need a Letter of Invitation from a Turkmen agent in order to make the visa application.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through Dragoman - we will contact you to request additional information in order for us to make this application on your behalf. These support documents can take 4 - 5 weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready. Please note that there is a risk of your Letter of Invitation being rejected by the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs which we have noticed has increased since last season. Unfortunately the decision that the ministry makes is completely out of our control and often they will not provide a reason as to why they have rejected the application, which we understand can be frustrating. If your Letter of Application is rejected and you are



part of a longer trip, we will do our best to help with making alternative travel arrangements until you can rejoin the group, however this will be at your own cost. We would also strongly recommend if flying into or out of Turkmenistan that you purchase flexible flight tickets in the event that your application is rejected.

*Turkmenistan Letters of Invitation are typically issued once a day to the complete group of people that happen to have applied on the same day through the same agent; as such your name, nationality and passport number will appear on a list on the Letter of Invitation alongside other tourists who may be on your Dragoman trip or travelling with other companies, and this list will be shared with everyone on it. As this is a standard practice of the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we do not have any control over this and cannot get around it; if you view this as an unacceptable breach of privacy, then you will be unable to apply for the Letter of Invitation and will not be able to travel to Turkmenistan.*

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa **in advance** at any Turkmen Embassy. 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).

If you are joining the trip in Ashgabat, it is possible to obtain the visa **on arrival at Ashgabat International Airport**. It is also possible to obtain the visa **on arrival at the land border with Uzbekistan at Dashoguz** if you are on a Westbound trip. Both of these options can be very time-consuming on arrival, so it is recommended that you obtain the visas **in advance if possible** – you will need the Letter of Invitation in all cases. You must get your visa **in advance** if you will arrive into Turkmenistan at the **port of Turkmenbashi** after the Caspian Sea ferry on an Eastbound trip, as there are no visas available at the port – you will be denied entry onto the ferry in Baku if you do not have your visa in place. If obtaining your visa on arrival at one of the above locations please note all visa related fees are generally only to be paid in USD cash. Costs will vary for different nationalities as well as entry ports. Besides the visa fee, you will also be charged an immigration fee between 14 USD and 18 USD regardless if you already hold your visa or obtain it on arrival.

If you are asked to provide an address in Turkmenistan on your visa form, please use the address below:

*Ak Altyn Hotel,  
141/1 Magtymguly Avenue,  
744000,  
Ashgabat,  
Turkmenistan  
Tel: +99 312 363 700*

If you are asked to provide a host in Turkmenistan on your visa form, please use the details of the Turkmen agent that issued your Letter of Invitation (this will be printed on the letter).

We will need to register your visa within 3 days of entering the country. Your Dragoman leader can do this on your behalf, but please bring 2 passport photos for the registration process.

## TURKEY

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus and South Africa **will** need an e-visa to enter Turkey as a tourist for up to 90 days. Citizens of all other EU countries **will not** require a visa to enter Turkey.

If you require an e-visa, this must be applied for **online** and in **advance** - please go to <https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/> to apply; it should take 1-2 days to be approved, then they will send a visa approval confirmation to your email address which you must print out to present at the border – the costs vary depending on nationality. It is not possible to get a visa on arrival or at an embassy.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether an e-visa is required.

## IRAN

Citizens of all countries **will** need a visa to enter Iran. You will need an Authorisation Number from an Iranian agent in order to make the visa application.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Authorisation Number – you can do this through Dragoman and we can apply for this on your behalf, but will need to contact you to request additional information. This service is included in the trip price but can take a very long time to process - the Authorisation Number for Iran can take several weeks to issue (please expect it to be at least 45 days for US/UK/CA passport holders), and will be emailed to you once they are ready.

*It is extremely important that you specify which embassy you intend to later apply for your visa at when you fill in your Authorisation Number application above. This cannot be changed once the application is in, and any Authorisation Number that you are issued is only valid at the embassy that you have stated. For example, if you state on your Authorisation Number application that you'll apply for the visa in London, then later change your mind and want to get it in Ashgabat instead, your number will not be valid for Ashgabat and you'll have to start your application again from the beginning! Please also note that the Iranian Foreign Ministry usually closes over the Iranian New Year period (approximately 12 March to 2 April) and will not process Authorisation applications over this time. Please have your visa application in well before this date.*

Please note that you are able to apply for your Iran Authorisation Number independently, provided you are not a passport holder of one of the following countries: United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Jordan, Somalia, Colombia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, as these are excluded.

To do this you will need to apply through the following link: <https://evisatraveller.mfa.ir> . If you do choose this option please email to confirm with us. Please be aware that although this is called an 'e-visa' it is just for the visa authorisation code and you will still need to use this to apply for the visa itself.

After your Authorisation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa at the Iranian Embassy that you have specified. You can apply yourself directly to the embassy and UK citizens will have to attend the embassy in person to make the application.

If you are on a **Westbound trip** and will enter Iran from Turkmenistan, we recommend that you apply for the visa in **Ashgabat** with your trip leader. If you are on an **Eastbound** trip and will enter Iran from Turkey, we recommend that you apply for the visa **in advance** from your home country (or the closest embassy to it), or in **Istanbul** with your trip leader (you would need some extra days in Istanbul before your trip to comfortably have the application completed in time).

If you are flying into Tehran to start your trip, we advise citizens of the **UK, USA and Canada** to apply for the visa **in advance** from your home country or the closest embassy to it. Citizens of most other countries will be able to obtain the visa **on arrival at Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport** (you will still have to have applied for an Authorisation Number) - please note this option is not available for UK, USA and Canada citizens, and a visa on arrival is not available at land borders for any nationality.

Please note that due to Iranian Law British, US and Canadian citizens will need to have a transfer to and from the airport in Tehran booked for by us. We will include this for all passengers in Tehran if you start or end the tour the same dates as the trip. If you require an extra night again this will have to be booked for by us and can only be for a maximum of one extra day. Please contact us for the cost of this.

To obtain your visa, 4 passport photos are required. Women should wear a headscarf, no make-up, jewellery or facial piercings in their visa application photos. Many Iranian embassies (including the embassy in Ashgabat) will only accept payments in Euros, so please make sure you bring this with you from home. Most embassies charge EUR 250-300 for UK, USA and Canada citizens, and approximately EUR100 for others. Citizens of the UK will need to attend the embassy in person to give fingerprints during the visa application.

If you are asked to provide an address in Iran on your visa form, please use the address below:

Mina Hotel,  
82 Mofatteh South St.  
Tehran,  
Iran,  
+98 21 88811861

*Please note that your visa will be flatly refused if your passport contains evidence of travel to Israel (including Egyptian or Jordanian exit stamps at borders with Israel).*

*Please also note that travelling to Iran will usually make you ineligible for the USA's ESTA visa waiver scheme should you plan to travel to the USA in the future. You will still be able to travel to the USA, but will have to obtain a visa (usually the B-1/B-2 temporary visitor's visa) to do so as your ESTA will be denied. There are some exceptions to this, please see the following link for more details - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251577.htm>.*

*A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#).*

## PERSONAL SPENDING

### PERSONAL SPENDING - ASIA

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between USD15-30 per day for Central Asia, China and Burma and between USD10-USD20 per day 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.

For trips in Southern India that occur over Christmas and New Year please allow approximately **USD160** extra on the kitty for seasonal increases in accommodation costs.

## ASIA CURRENCIES AND 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!

Bringing a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is the best way to bring money out, but it's always a good idea to bring plenty of cash that you can change (USD and EUR are commonly changed throughout Asia) rather than relying on cards. 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. ATMs are available in most areas but are not always reliable. You may also find your card doesn't work in all ATM's. Credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard are accepted in some major cities, but be prepared for very high commission charges.

Banks and moneychangers in most countries in Asia will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are **no more than 8 years old**. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Please also bring a mixture of small and large denominations - you may get a better rate for changing larger denomination bills, but in more remote areas it can be difficult to change amounts over USD50.

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 after your trip, so please plan your budget well by withdrawing/exchanging what you need as you go.

## IRAN CURRENCIES AND CASH

The best way to bring money out is in USD or EUR cash, which can be exchanged for local currency once in Iran. It is not worth trying to find local currency before you travel. ATMs are common but will only work with Iranian bank cards.

Banks and moneychangers in Iran will only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are **no more than 8 years old**. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Please also bring a mixture of small and large denominations - you may get a better rate for changing larger denomination bills, but in more remote areas it can be difficult to change amounts over USD50.

Please note that due to restrictions on currency conversion for foreigners, it may not be possible to change leftover local currency back into USD after your trip, so please plan your budget well by exchanging what you need as you go.

## WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Overland Lifestyle and Trip Suitability

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off the beaten track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity. On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc.

Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out!

We are looking forward to welcoming you on one of our overland journeys, but before we do there are a few things we would like to draw to your attention.

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### 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.

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### 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 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 there. In practical

terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

Please also note that 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 in these trip notes.

## **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, 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.

## **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.

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## The Kitty

In addition to the trip price on our overlanding trips, you will also be required to pay a kitty specified for your trip (please note that there is no kitty on our Family Trips). The kitty is payable in installments at the start of each section of the trip for combination trips, and in full at the start of the trip for individual trips. Each customer joining a trip pays their kitty into a central fund. The fund is managed by the Dragoman crew and the kitty accounts can be viewed by all throughout the trip.

The kitty covers all things that the whole group does, such as:

- Hotel accommodation and campsite fees
- Meals whilst camping (not whilst staying in hotels)
- Activities listed as included (e.g. National Park or historical site entrances, excursions, etc.)

The kitty system is unique to overlanding and allows us to have flexibility and transparency on our trips. You can see exactly how your money is being spent and ensure that you are getting the best value by buying locally. It also helps to keep the costs competitive and save on administration costs so that we can pass the saving on to you. Dragoman makes NO PROFIT on kitties, as they are the group's fund. If there is money left in the kitty at the end of your trip, then this is divided between the group and you receive a refund.

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. We constantly update the kitty prices on our website and the kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Prices can go up or down with no notice, and exchange rate fluctuations will affect costs.

The kitty is payable in full at the start of your trip (in instalments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips). Alternatively you can pay in advance via a bank transfer 3-4 weeks before the start of your trip - please see [http://www.dragoman.com/files/Kitty\\_doc\\_v10.pdf](http://www.dragoman.com/files/Kitty_doc_v10.pdf) for more details - this information sheet will also be sent in your booking confirmation upon booking a trip and can be found on [www.dragoman.com/overlanding/planning-your-trip/money](http://www.dragoman.com/overlanding/planning-your-trip/money). Please also note that prepayment is not available for our trips to West Africa, Iran, Tajikistan and any trip in Africa north of Nairobi.

If you are bringing the kitty out in cash, please ensure your USD notes (EUR notes if your trip goes through West Africa) are clean and undamaged and **no more than 8 years old**. If needed, your tour leader will be able to accept some of the kitty in local currency, and they will let you know the exchange rate locally. In most destinations you can withdraw local currencies from ATM machines, using either a cash passport or a credit/debit card. However, please bear in mind that most cards have a maximum withdrawal amount per day, local ATMs may run out of cash, and your bank could block the card despite you warning them of your travel plans, so it could be impractical to try to get the entire kitty out from an ATM.

We cannot accept traveller's cheques on our trips.

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## 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 kitty. 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.

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## 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.

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## Itineraries

Our itineraries are developed and published with the best of intentions, however travel in more remote areas of the world is unpredictable – borders can close, there can be extreme adverse weather, strikes or maybe mechanical issues that affect the running of your trip, but equally due to the nature of our trips we can often spontaneously include a local festival or event into the itinerary. This being said, the safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a priority for us. 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. We make operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources, including the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice, reports from other travel companies and local suppliers, leaders' reports from off the road and local contacts we have built up over many years of experience.

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## British Foreign Office Travel Advice and Warnings

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 - <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>

New Zealand - <http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

United States - <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>

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

We also recommend that you check out 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.

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## 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 this trip is suitable, please refer to the physical rating. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases you should be prepared for some long driving days and possibly limited facilities. 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 must also declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase and provide evidence to us prior to departure that your pre-existing medical condition has been declared to your insurers. Failure to do so will mean that you are unable to join the trip.

### Extreme Environments

There may be periods of time within your trip when you meet extreme conditions, such as extreme heat, extreme wind, extreme cold, extreme humidity, extreme altitude, extreme crowds etc. Whilst our crew will let you know at the time when you are likely to meet these conditions, please ensure that you have read through the trip notes carefully and researched the local weather conditions at the time and that you feel that you are fit enough to cope with these conditions. If you have any doubts at all, please contact us to discuss your concerns prior to booking, and when on trip, if you find that the local conditions are causing you concern at any time, please be sure to let your trip leader know so that appropriate precautions can be discussed.

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### 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 report these as soon as possible, either to the tour leader or a medical professional.

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### 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 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)

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## 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)

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. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

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## Safety & Security

At Dragoman your safety is of paramount importance and we will do our best to ensure that your travel with us is safe and trouble-free, but we do ask that you take that little bit of extra care whilst you are away and to understand about the nature of this style of travel.

Of course we want you to have an enjoyable time, but you must also remember that part of the enjoyment of travel is experiencing a different way of life and cultures. 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 our crew or any third-party suppliers we use during your trip.

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## 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.
- 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.

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## Fire & Other Safety - Hostels/Hotels/Homestays

- 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.

## Fire Safety - Campsites

- 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.

## Other 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.

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## 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.

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## Activity Safety & Optional 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.). Some of these activities require a certain level of fitness, so it's important that you read through the trip notes thoroughly and make your own conclusions as to whether you feel that you are fit and healthy enough to enjoy this 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, or have the physical ability, to take part.

Please note that riding helmets are mandatory for all optional and included horse riding activities. This is an insurance requirement.

Optional activities mentioned by Dragoman are not included in the trip price or kitty, 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.

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.

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## Included Activities

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 on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

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## Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated - again, these prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator - any prices listed are a guide only and certainly cannot be guaranteed.

Optional activities are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Dragoman nor included in the price of this trip. If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

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## 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.

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). 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. Please note that you should be insured for trip postponement or cancellation purposes immediately upon paying a deposit.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel and make sure it covers any activity that you intend to undertake (whether included or optional). As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc., and that the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries - for example, that they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. On activities or side trips that are not recommended by us, please ensure you are happy with the safety of the activity before participating.

Please note that in the case of credit card travel insurance we will require details of the participating insurer, the insurance policy number and emergency contact number prior to travel rather than just the bank's name and credit card details. It is up to you to ensure that these policies have 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.

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## **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.

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## **Out of Office Hours Contact**

We have an out of office hours number you can call which should only be used once you have left your home country to start the trip 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 you can not get through please leave a message with you name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you.

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.

**Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564**

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## **Luggage & Kit List**

Although you will not have to carry your main bag for 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 truck's back 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 on this tour 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.

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

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

### **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

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## 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.

## 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 contain 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.

In the UK we have teamed up with Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics to produce travel medical kits. They have been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contain everything you would need for any minor incidents and health issues. For more details please visit their website:

**Global Survival Kit** - <http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2712/Global-Survival-Kit>

**Ultimate Medical Kit (POM)** - [http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2909/Ultimate-Medical-Kit-\(POM\)](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2909/Ultimate-Medical-Kit-(POM))

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## Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of your 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 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.

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## Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and 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 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 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, as not all hotels offer this service.

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## 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.

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## 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 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.

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## Responsible Tourism

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 from the link below:

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

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### 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!

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## Electrical Equipment



Your vehicle will be usually 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.

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## A Few Rules

It is one of our core values to treat all people we encounter with respect, including the local people who make our destinations so special. We have therefore set down a number of rules to which our customers must adhere.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, carrying weapons, or engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

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## 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.

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## 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 USD 1 to USD 4 per person per day, but check with your crew for an appropriate amount.

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## 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.

## COUNTRY SPECIFIC NOTES

### IRAN NOTE

Alcohol and pork products are strictly forbidden in Iran and will be confiscated at customs by anyone attempting to bring it into the country. Please do not try to bring alcohol into the country under any circumstances - your leader will ask you to dispose of it before heading to the border.

Iran is a conservative Islamic nation and a strict dress code is enforced throughout the country. Any deviation from the dress code may have you refused entry at the border, or in trouble with the police or locals once inside the country.

Men must wear long trousers at all times - ankles must be covered, but short sleeved shirts are acceptable. Open-toe sandals are fine to wear for both men and women.

Women are required by law to wear long, loose-fitting clothing in public. You must also wear a headscarf (any colour you like, though you will find that local women usually prefer black) in public. There is no rule of the colour of your outfit as long as it is modest and includes a headscarf. Generally female travellers can wear the loose fitting long-sleeved shirts available in many Asian shops that reach down to the thighs - any type of trousers underneath is allowed as long as they cover your ankles. Women are able to wear open-toed shoes and sandals as long as their ankles are not showing.

Please note that any British, US or Canadian citizens that are flying into Tehran to start the trip will need to book an arrival transfer in advance, and this must be done through us according to Iranian law. We strongly recommend that people of these nationalities aim to arrive on the start date of the trip, but if you require pre-tour accommodation in Tehran this must be booked through us and only a maximum of one night can be applied for. All the above also applies to all British, US or Canadian citizens who are leaving in Tehran - you will need to book an airport transfer through us and only a maximum of one night of post-trip accommodation can be applied for if needed.

### TURKMENISTAN NOTE

Please note that any additional accommodation in Turkmenistan must be booked through Dragoman due to the strict controls on foreigners in the country - it is essential that everyone is registered immediately upon their entry to Turkmenistan at accommodation booked by the agent on your visa Letter of Invitation, as such it is not possible to independently arrange your own accommodation here. It is also now compulsory for all passengers arriving into Turkmenistan through Ashgabat airport to be met on arrival by an official representative from our local supplier and have a confirmed transfer to their hotel. These transfers can be booked directly through your sales agent. If you do not have a confirmed transfer upon arrival you may be refused entry into Turkmenistan.

Due to strict Turkmenistan Laws, foreigners are not permitted to travel outside of Ashgabat without being accompanied by an official guide from a registered company. If travelling on a Dragoman Trip and you wish to explore Turkmenistan further any additional time must be booked through our registered supplier as a private tour and we must be notified at the time of booking as it is not possible to travel with 2 different company's in the same visit. Any Additional nights in Turkmenistan must also be booked at a

registered hotel in Ashgabat.

Please also note that there are strict laws against tobacco products in Turkmenistan. Whilst it is not yet completely illegal to possess tobacco, it is strictly prohibited to smoke in any public place, is illegal to sell tobacco, and is illegal to import more than 2 small packs of cigarettes. Breaking these laws even slightly can lead to large fines and even detention in jail. To be safe, it is highly recommended to simply not bring any tobacco products into Turkmenistan and avoiding their use entirely until you have left the country. All the above also applies to vaping, e-cigarettes, etc. Your crew may insist on such material being disposed of before entering through the country on the overland truck, and your co-operation with this is both appreciated and expected.

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

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

These trip notes were printed on 26/08/2019