

## THE YANGTZE & MEKONG EXPLORED, (EXO)

**Bangkok to Xi'an 46 days, departing 14 Mar 2021**



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### TRIP OVERVIEW

<b>Trip Style:</b>	Overlanding
<b>Route:</b>	Bangkok to Xi'an
<b>Duration:</b>	46 days
<b>Transport:</b>	Overland expedition vehicle, Private bus, Tuk-tuk, Boat, Ferry, Overnight boat
	 5%  95%
<b>Accom:</b>	Hotels, Hostels, Guesthouses, Wild Camps, 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

You may be camping some of the time but the pace of the trip is fairly relaxed and the facilities and road conditions are generally of a high standard.

## ROUTE MAP



## COUNTRIES VISITED

### Cambodia



If you want to experience some of the most inspiring and incredible sights of South East Asia, look no further than Cambodia. **So much more than just a holiday**, a visit to Cambodia will not only bring you to some of the world's best ancient sites, but will envelop you in a warm and welcoming atmosphere, a fascinating culture and a slice of real South East Asian life.

### China



### ENDLESS HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE OVERLAND TRAVELLER

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

Understanding the history of China is key to understanding modern China. The people are

## THE BEST OF CAMBODIA'S HIGHLIGHTS

The country's **most famous attraction is Angkor Wat**, the largest religious complex ever built and ancient capital of the Khmer empire. It was built in the 12th Century CE and without doubt one of the most awe-inspiring ancient sites on Earth. It's Cambodia's most visited site and features on the country's flag. We spend a good amount of time exploring the site and taking part in the plethora of optional activities in nearby Siem Reap.

[Phnom Penh](#) is a capital full of life. Lying on the edge of the Mekong River, Phnom Penh is the perfect place to relax after an adventurous day and is a fine place to be to see picturesque sunsets over the city's lake. Here is where we can learn about Cambodia's recent tragic history of the brutal Khmer Rouge dictatorship and the resulting genocide, at the Tuol Sleng Museum and Killing Fields memorial.

## EXPLORE RURAL CAMBODIA

Getting into rural Cambodia is a great opportunity to see the **rice paddies and sugar palms** of Cambodia. The landscapes here are second to none, and as you venture further into the provinces you can discover a slice of true Cambodian life.

With the Mekong River flowing through the country, there is also a chance to see some of the only freshwater dolphins left in this part of the world!

proud of its past, and keen to share its heritage with the world. In a country that defies superlatives, the words 'vast', 'astonishing' and 'variation' don't really seem to cover it - China really does have it all!

## STUNNING NATURAL SCENERY

From the phenomenal karst rock formations and mountains of the south, the vast deserts of the west, the high plateau and towering mountains of Tibet, and the incredible rolling landscapes of the east, China contains some of the most stunning and varied scenery to be found in all of Asia. The entire country is teeming with beautifully-chaotic modern cities juxtaposed with thousands of years of fascinating history and heritage. Throughout the country, China's unique culture, music, architecture, history, cuisine and society shines through, and we immerse ourselves in it through every journey through it.

Beijing is the hub of political and international focus - it is truly a magnificent modern city merged with the ancient heritage and architecture of the past, such as its celebrated sites of the Forbidden Palace and the Summer Temple.

## ANCIENT CHINA & HOLY TEMPLES

China has endless highlights such as the world-famous Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, the incredible scenery of the Tian Shan mountains near Kashgar, the Buddhist caves of Dunhuang, Dazu and Datong, the incredible holy mountain temples of Wudang Shan, Wutai Shan, Kongtong and Emei Shan, the stunning traditional towns of Pingyao, Lijiang and Dali, and of course the phenomenal Great Wall of China, one of the world's great sights!



## Laos



### FOR A SMALL COUNTRY, LAOS IS ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE PLACES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

Laos is graced with many serene and relaxed towns, a product of the country's Buddhist traditions of peace and respect. The wonderful city of Luang Prabang is no exception, with its vibrant market, ornate monasteries and the nearby Kuang Si waterfalls, it's a place most visitors spend at least a few days.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF LAOS

Other highlights include the peaceful northern village of Luang Namtha, the base for some **incredible treks** and optional adventure activities in the forests and rivers of Nam Ha National Park. Vang Vieng, in the heart of the country, is another incredible town and known for its outdoor activities such as trekking, cycling and rock climbing!

Like the landscapes, the food is also beautiful. The typical Laotian dish of Laap is rich in marinated meat and aromatic herbs. It is a perfect treat after a day of exploring. With a distinct taste, the dish is best enjoyed with sticky rice and lashings of fish sauce.

Laos is a country that offers a friendly welcome, and you're sure to have a wonderful time whilst enjoying the landscapes and culture of this gem of South East Asia.

## Thailand



Thailand lies deep in the heart of South East Asia, and is a country brimming with culture - one of the reasons it has long been a favourite destination for adventurous travellers.

The capital of Bangkok has an amazing skyline of glorious buildings, and is the perfect amalgamation of ancient and modern. As well as the incredible Buddhist temples, museums and fabulous Royal Palace, there are atmospheric markets, great shopping, and of course the city is famous for its buzzing nightlife.

### TASTE PAD THAI AT ITS BEST

Thai cuisine is popular throughout the world and concentrates on including five tastes - spicy, sweet, sour, salty and bitter. The blend of these are important and many dishes concentrate on the right balance to make the perfect meal. A traditional dish of Pad Thai consists of chilli spices and lime juices infused with chicken, peanuts and garlic on a bed of stir-fried noodles.

There is a welcoming feel to this country, and a wonderful blend of the exotic and the familiar. With so much to explore and so many activities to try, there is something for everyone in the fascinating country of Thailand.

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# DAILY ITINERARY

## Day 1: Bangkok ( Sun 14 Mar )

**Border Information:** If joining in Bangkok, you will most likely enter Thailand at Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport (IATA code: BKK).

Today will be a free day to explore the incredible city of Bangkok until the evening. There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader on arrival at the joining hotel with more information about this important meeting.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Bangkok 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 Bangkok.

In Bangkok we will stay in a centrally-located hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Royal Princess Hotel  
**Royal Princess Larn Luang Hotel**  
269 Larn Luang Road  
Pomprab  
Bangkok 10100  
Thailand  
Tel - +66 2281 3088

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the sights of the bustling Thai capital of Bangkok, including the Grand Palace, Wat Pho and Wat Arun, and the countless temples and parks

Free

Learn all about Thai history and culture at the Bangkok National Museum, the largest and most comprehensive museum in South East Asia

THB 40

Climb the steps of the Golden Mount to see the panoramic view of Bangkok from the Wat Saket temple

Free

Freely explore the vast royal complex of the Grand Palace, including the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (the most sacred temple in Thailand)

THB 250

### About Bangkok:

The chaotic pace of Bangkok is a far cry from an idealised vision of the exotic capital of Siam - scattered with high-rise buildings of concrete and glass, the city is a sprawling metropolis that's home to a population of at least nine million people, and it often feels even bigger!



But under the shadow of the skyscrapers you'll find a heady mix of frenetic markets, busy streets that are buzzing with life and activity, as well as hushed golden temples and early-morning alms-giving ceremonies. And of course, the nightlife of this bewildering city is nothing short of legendary! One way or another, the place will probably get under your skin - and if you don't enjoy the challenge of roaming the busy streets, you can spend time exploring the impressive temples, museums and Royal Palace, and exploring the canals that weave through the town's districts.

## Day 2: Aranyaprathet, Siem Reap ( Mon 15 Mar )

Today we start our journey with a drive on locally chartered transport out of the capital and through the Thai countryside to the border town of Aranyaprathet. There is a large border market in the north of the town that is interesting to visit where we will stop for lunch.

**Border Information:** Exit Thailand at Aranyaprathet, enter Cambodia at Poipet.

In the afternoon we will cross the border into Cambodia, proceeding through the Thai immigration office then crossing the bridge by foot to the Cambodian immigration office. Once all of the border formalities are complete, we will join our overland truck who will be waiting to meet us on the other side and continue to Siem Reap, home to the Angkor Wat temple complex.

In Siem Reap we will stay in a good quality guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time - 8 -9 hours. (please note that all drive times given here are approximate estimates only and are given with the best intentions - however please be aware that 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 Siem Reap:** The small town of Siem Reap is the base for visiting the world-famous temples at Angkor Wat. The town itself is a very pleasant spot to visit in its own right - a visit to the old market is a must and the silks, cottons, sarongs, silver and statues are a riot of colour and a feast for the eyes. There's also a long tradition of shadow puppetry in the region, and if you're lucky you might catch a show at one of the local restaurants in the evening.

## Day 3 to 4: Angkor Wat, Siem Reap ( Tue 16 Mar to Wed 17 Mar )

Today we will have an early start for our included guided trip to the incredible and awe-inspiring 12th-Century Khmer temples of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom. We will have a full day to explore the vast site and then watch the sunset over the temples, a truly magical experience.

On the following day we will have free time to explore Siem Reap and to do Optional activities, or simply relax and soak up the atmosphere.

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**





Full day tour of the incredible temples at Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom

Included in Kitty

### About Angkor Wat:

Angkor Wat really is as spectacular as all the guidebooks and newspaper articles have led you to believe, and nothing can quite prepare you for your awe-inspiring first glimpse of the temple's five majestic towers!

Angkor (known as Yaśodharapura in ancient times) was the ancient capital of the mighty Khmer Empire, that flourished in the area between the 9th and 15th Centuries CE. Angkor was established in the 12th Century CE, and was the world's largest pre-industrial urban centre during this time.

Filled with an incredible heritage and a multitude of temples, such as the magnificent Bayon and Na Phrom (famous for being partially enveloped by the surrounding trees), the highlight and centrepiece of Angkor is undoubtedly the phenomenal temple of Angkor Wat. The largest religious site ever built on Earth, it is the most impressive temple within the complex, both in terms of its grandeur and its sheer magnitude. As you approach, the intricacy of the layout becomes apparent, and close up, every nook and cranny reveals itself to be filled with fine detail - around every corner a new feature surpasses the last. Throughout the day the colours of the stone seem to change, the spires golden in the dying light at dusk.

### Day 5: Kompong Thom ( Thu 18 Mar )

This morning we have a fairly short drive to Sambor Prei Kuk, Cambodia's most impressive group of pre-Angkorian monuments. We will have plenty of time to explore the ruins before driving on to Kompong Thom, where we spend the night in the house of a local family.

The accommodation is basic and some bathrooms are outside, but experiencing traditional home-cooked food and spending time with people of the village is truly a special experience.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

#### Activity

Explore the amazing pre-Angkorian temple complex of Sambor Prei Kuk

#### Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty

### Day 6: Phnom Penh ( Fri 19 Mar )

Today we will have breakfast with our hosts at the Komphong Thom homestay, and then drive on to Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh.

In Phnom Penh we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.



### Activity

2 nights in Cambodia's chaotic capital Phnom Penh

### Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty

### About Phnom Penh:

Cambodia's hot and dusty capital had a reputation for being chaotic and noisy, but it has become far more pleasant and relaxed in recent years. Wandering through the broad tree-lined boulevards dotted with old colonial villas, you'll find that the city has managed to retain much of its original charm. Life in Phnom Penh centres around the lively riverfront area, where in the evening the locals come to stroll, snack on the street-hawker's food and enjoy the impromptu waterside entertainment along the long grassy promenade.

### Day 7: Phnom Penh ( Sat 20 Mar )

This morning we will have a very moving visit to the infamous Tuol Sleng Prison Museum and the Killing Fields Memorial. We will then return to Phnom Penh and have a free afternoon to explore Cambodia's capital.

### Activity

Discover the world's largest collection of Khmer art at the National Museum of Cambodia

### Approximate Cost

USD 5

Learn about Cambodia's history at the "Killing Fields" and Tuol Sleng Prison Museum

Included in Kitty

Visit the beautiful Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda in Phnom Penh

USD 7

### Day 8 to 9: Kratié ( Sun 21 Mar to Mon 22 Mar )

Today we continue our journey to Kratie, situated in the northeast of Cambodia on the banks of the Mekong River. The area is famous for its sunsets, and we hope to spot Irrawaddy dolphins swimming in the river!

In Kratie we will stay with local families in their homes. The accommodation is fairly basic but this will be a fantastic local experience.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

### Activity

Head out on a guided trip to the Mekong River in search of the freshwater dolphins

### Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty





that inhabit the area

Visit the beautiful 16th-century Hundred Pillar Pagoda near Kratie      Included in Kitty

Hire bikes to explore the area, visit the basket weavers in the surrounding villages, or head to nearby Trong Island for the sunset      USD 2

### About Kratié:

Kratié is a small town in Cambodia lying on the banks of the Mekong River - one of Asia's great rivers, the Mekong rises in China and flows down the Thailand-Laos border, through Cambodia and Vietnam on its journey to the South China Sea. This section of the Mekong is famous as being the habitat for the fascinating and rare Irrawaddy Dolphins, which we hope to see on our visit! The town itself is a pleasant place to explore, with a central marketplace surrounded by French colonial buildings.

## Day 10: Don Khon, Si Phan Don (4000 Islands) ( Tue 23 Mar )

**Border Information:** Exit Cambodia at Dom Kralor, enter Laos at Voeung Kam.

Today we have an early start to cross the border into southern Laos. If we have been using a chartered bus in Cambodia, we will rejoin our overland truck and meet our co-driver again once through the border. We will then continue to Si Phan Don, otherwise known as the 4,000 Islands. We will transfer by boat to one of the larger islands in the area, Don Khon, and visit the Li Phi waterfalls.

We will also have some free time where we have the option to explore the island on bicycles.

In Don Khon we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### About Si Phan Don (4000 Islands):

The Si Phan Don (4,000 Islands) is an archipelago of islands in the Mekong River in southern Laos. Half of the islands become submerged with the river floods, and the area is home to several schools of the rare Irrawaddy Dolphin. Some of the islands have some impressive waterfalls which are wonderful to trek to.

## Day 11: Don Khon ( Wed 24 Mar )

Today we will have a free day in Don Khon for Optional activities and relaxation.

## Day 12: Pakse ( Thu 25 Mar )

This morning we will have some more free to further explore the islands before continuing our journey to Pakse. This afternoon we will have an included visit to the magnificent Wat Phou, a ruined Khmer temple complex located at the base of Mount Phu Kao.

In Pakse we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Enjoy a traditional massage in one of Pakse's excellent massage centres	LAK 35000
Visit the incredible 10th-century temple of Wat Phou	Included in Kitty

### About Pakse:

The town of Pakse started life as an administrative outpost for the French colonial rulers in 1905, before becoming the capital of the semi-autonomous Lao Kingdom of Champasak until the whole country became an independent monarchy in 1947. Pakse is the gateway to the ruins of Wat Phou, a ruined Khmer Hindu temple complex dating from the 11th to 13th Centuries CE.

## Day 13: Thakhek ( Fri 26 Mar )

Today we have a full day's drive to the area of Thakhek.

Tonight we will wild camp near to Thakhek.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

## Day 14 to 15: Vang Vieng ( Sat 27 Mar to Sun 28 Mar )

Today we will have a full day's drive to the town of Vang Vieng.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-9 hours.

On the following day we will have a free day in Vang Vieng to relax, enjoy the stunning landscapes surrounding the village and take part of the many optional activities available in the area. Popular activities here include trekking, renting a bicycle or rock climbing.

In Vang Vieng we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Free time available for optional activities in laid-back Vang Vieng	USD 30
Head out for a rock climbing trip in the ideal crags near Vang Vieng	USD 40

Kayak through the stunning scenery of the Nam Song River, and stop off in some of the Khmu villages en route	USD 40
Trek around the fantastic limestone hills and stunning caves near Vang Vieng	USD 20
Explore the scared ethereal Tham Phu Kham Caves and Blue Lagoon just outside Vang Vieng	LAK 20000

### About Vang Vieng:

Vang Vieng is nestled in a valley of on the banks of the Nam Song river, surrounded by misty jungle and craggy karst limestone peaks. Being up in the hills, the town enjoys a cooler climate than much of the surrounding area, and together with its breathtaking mountain views and laid-back feel, this has made it a popular backpacker haunt in recent years. The area is renowned for its many caves, many of which are easily accessible from the town - perhaps the most famous is the cave of Tham Chang, a beautiful cavern fed by a natural spring making it a perfect spot for a refreshing swim. There are a multitude of outdoor activities available in Vang Vieng - from trekking to cycling and from rafting to rock climbing, the town has something for everyone!

## Day 16 to 17: Luang Prabang ( Mon 29 Mar to Tue 30 Mar )

Today we will travel via the spectacular mountainous roads of northern Laos to the beautiful city of Luang Prabang.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

On the following day we have a short drive to a small Hmong hill tribe village called Ban Long Lao. This Hmong village is where we begin our 4-hour trek to the stunning Kuang Si waterfalls. This afternoon you have time to relax and swim in the many warm turquoise pools. We will return to Luang Prabang in the late afternoon.

In Luang Prabang we will stay in a comfortable local guesthouse.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Enjoy the tranquility of beautiful colonial city Luang Prabang	Free
Visit the Royal Palace in Luang Prabang, a fascinating blend of Lao and French architecture	LAK 30000
Witness the sunrise from the panoramic viewpoint at the summit of Phou Si hill	LAK 20000



Explore the temple of Wat Xieng Thong, the oldest and one of the most beautiful temples in Luang Prabang	LAK 20000
Learn how to prepare some local Lao specialities at one of Luang Prabang's excellent cooking classes	USD 25
Visit the incredible site of Kuang Si and explore its beautiful waterfalls and pools	Included in Kitty
Learn all about the traditional art and lifestyles of Laos's many diverse ethnic groups at the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre	LAK 25000

### About Luang Prabang:

The enchanting city of Luang Prabang is anchored at the junction of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers in northern Laos. Home to a spellbinding array of gilded temples, art deco shop fronts and weathered French colonial buildings, it is a fascinating and beautiful city to wander around. For all its magnificent architecture, it actually feels more like an easy-going provincial town - saffron-robed monks amble silently through the streets collecting offerings from the city's residents in the early morning, and when the evening comes old men lounge in chairs outside their homes while children play out in the streets.

There's plenty to explore here, from the Royal Palace and the town's many temples to the sacred caves of Pak Ou a short distance outside the city. You can also make the steep climb up Mount Phousi - the spiritual and geographical heart of the city, and a great spot to watch the sunset over the Mekong.

## Day 18: Luang Prabang ( Wed 31 Mar )

**Border Information:** If joining in Luang Prabang, you will most likely enter Laos at Luang Prabang International Airport (IATA code: LPQ).

Today will be a free day to explore the beautiful city of Luang Prabang until the evening. There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader on arrival at the joining hotel with more information about this important meeting.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Luang Prabang 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 Luang Prabang.

In Luang Prabang we will stay in a comfortable local hotel

Hotel for the night: Sunway Hotel  
**Sunway Hotel**

Souphanouvong Street  
Muenna Village  
Luang Prabang  
Laos  
+85671213062

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Enjoy the tranquility of beautiful colonial city Luang Prabang	Free
Visit the Royal Palace in Luang Prabang, a fascinating blend of Lao and French architecture	LAK 30000
Learn how to prepare some local Lao specialities at one of Luang Prabang's excellent cooking classes	USD 25
Explore the temple of Wat Xieng Thong, the oldest and one of the most beautiful temples in Luang Prabang	LAK 20000
Witness the sunrise from the panoramic viewpoint at the summit of Phou Si hill	LAK 20000
Visit the incredible site of Kuang Si and explore its beautiful waterfalls and pools	LAK 20000
Learn all about the traditional art and lifestyles of Laos's many diverse ethnic groups at the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre	LAK 25000

## **Day 19 to 21: Luang Namtha ( Thu 01 Apr to Sat 03 Apr )**

This morning we drive through the stunning countryside of northern Laos to the small town of Luang Namtha.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours (please note that all drive times given here are approximate estimates only and are given with the best intentions - however please be aware that the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

In Luang Namtha we will have two free days to enjoy the many optional activities available in and around Luang Namtha and the nearby Nam Ha National Park. Popular activities here include hiking and trekking in the National Park.

In Luang Namtha we will stay in a local guesthouse.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Cross the border into Laos and relax in peaceful Luang Nam Tha	USD 35
Optional rafting, kayaking and trekking in Nam Ha National Park	USD 25
Get into the heart of the Nam Ha national park by trekking deep into the forests and mountains of the area (1 or 2 day treks available)	USD 20
Take a relaxing river boat cruise down the Nam Ha or Nam Tha River to explore the beautiful national park from the water	USD 20
Learn how to prepare several unique northern Lao dishes at a cooking class in Luang Namtha	USD 30

### **About Luang Namtha:**

Luang Namtha is a laid-back town on the banks of the Nam Tha river in northern Laos. It's the most ethnically diverse area in the whole of the country, home to more than 35 minority groups, including the Lanten, Hmong, Khmu and Tai Dam.

The nearby Nam Ha Protected Area is a conservation area covering over 200,000 square kilometres - it's a beautiful, remote, mountainous area, home to a wide array of wildlife including the black-cheeked crested gibbon, tigers and clouded leopards, as well as over 300 species of birds. Whilst we are staying in Luang Namtha it is possible to arrange trekking, mountain-biking, kayaking and rafting trips that will take you right in to the heart of this protected region.

## **Day 22: Mohan ( Sun 04 Apr )**

**Border Information:** Exit Laos at Boten, enter China at Mengla.

This morning we will cross the border into China and begin our journey through the southern Chinese region of Xishuangbanna. We spend the next few days overlanding through this beautiful area, stopping off at towns, villages and local markets along the way.

Tonight we will stay in the border town of Mengla while your crew finalise the paperwork to enter our truck into China.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-2 hours.

## **Day 23: Xishuangbanna ( Mon 05 Apr )**



Today will be a full day's drive through Yunnan province towards Kunming, most likely reaching the town of Mojiang or Yuxi en route.

Tonight we will stay in a local hotel en route.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-9 hours.

#### **About Xishuangbanna:**

Xishuangbanna, an area located in China's deep south in the province of Yunnan, is a remote region characterised by its lush, tropical landscapes, virgin rainforest, plantations and paddy fields. The area takes its name from the Chinese approximation of the original Thai "Sip Sawng Pann" which means "12 rice growing districts".

Passing through the small villages and tropical forests you'll realise just how far removed from the rest of provincial China you are - Xishuangbanna has a real laid-back, South East Asian feel, more akin to its close neighbours Laos and Myanmar. The area is also home to a large number of indigenous minority groups like the Dai people, with their distinctive colourful dress and customs.

### **Day 24: Shilin Stone Forest ( Tue 06 Apr )**

This morning we will complete our drive to the incredible Shilin Stone Forest. We will have a free afternoon exploring the stunning and bizarre rock formations of the Stone Forest.

We will stay in a local hotel tonight near to the Shilin Stone Forest.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Explore the maze of limestone pinnacles in the Stone Forest

Included in Kitty

#### **About Shilin Stone Forest:**

The Shilin "Stone Forest" is an intriguing maze of towering grey karst limestone pillars, the tallest of which is 30 metres high. The tall rocks are in the shape of stalagmites, with many looking like petrified trees and creating the illusion of a forest made of stone. The pinnacles and peaks were created from centuries of erosion by the wind and rain, and have formed into bizarre and fanciful shapes. Walking through the forest is like strolling through a surreal and otherworldly labyrinth, and the rock formations here are nothing short of magical!

### **Day 25: Kunming ( Wed 07 Apr )**

Today we will drive to Kunming, the vibrant, modern capital of Yunnan province. We will have a free day to explore the city's sights.

In Kunming we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Overnight stay in Yunnan's laid back capital, Kunming CNY 6

Visit the Yunnan University Wu Mayao Museum of Anthropology in Kunming, and learn all about the history of the province Free

Learn all about the area's minorities at the Yunnan Provincial Museum, and visit the nearby markets Free

### About Kunming:

Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, is known in China as "the city of eternal spring" due to its temperate climate. It's a thoroughly modern city, and home to a population of about 6 million people - but despite its size it's actually pretty laid-back and has some beautiful parks to while away an afternoon. The Yuantong temple is definitely worth a visit - at over 1,000 years old it is the largest Buddhist temple complex in Kunming.

## Day 26: Kunming ( Thu 08 Apr )

**Border Information:** if joining in Kunming, you will most likely enter China at Kunming Changshui International Airport (IATA code: KMG).

There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting.

The rest of the day will be free to explore the city of Kunming, its museums and its parks.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Kunming 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 Kunming.

In Kunming we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Hong He Hotel

### **Hong He (Red River) Hotel**

204 Chuncheng Road

Guandu District

Kunming, 650041

Yunnan Province

China

Tel - +86 871 6626 5666

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Overnight stay in Yunnan's laid back capital, Kunming CNY 6

Visit the Yunnan University Wu Mayao Free

Museum of Anthropology in Kunming, and learn all about the history of the province

Learn all about the area's minorities at the Yunnan Provincial Museum, and visit the nearby markets

Free

## Day 27 to 28: Dali ( Fri 09 Apr to Sat 10 Apr )

Today our journey begins with a morning drive to the beautiful Naxi town of Dali, where we will stay for 2 nights.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 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!).

On the following day we will have a free day to fully explore the area and for optional activities such as some short treks in the nearby Cangshan mountains or hiring bicycles to ride around the Dali lake.

In Dali we stay in a friendly hostel or guesthouse with good facilities.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Time for sightseeing in the lakeside town of Dali, home to the minority Bai people	CNY 40
Learn how to make dumplings and traditional Yunnanese cuisine at one of Dali's fantastic cooking classes	CNY 150
Discover the ornate 9th-century Three Pagodas of Chongsheng, some of the tallest pagodas in China's history and the symbol of Dali	CNY 120
Head out by bicycle to explore the region in depth and visit various Bai villages and Qing Dynasty bridges en route	CNY 50
Experience the incredible ancient art of cormorant fishing with the fishermen of Xizhou on Lake Erhai	CNY 100

### About Dali:

Everybody loves Dali - aside from the beautiful setting and its stunning



mountain backdrop, the town is home to the minority Bai people which makes for some colourful history and culture, not to mention its traveller-friendly western-style beer gardens and restaurants. With its temperate climate, ancient pagodas, and beautiful natural setting, it's the perfect place for some rest and relaxation - be it cormorant fishing on Lake Erhai, cycling around the scenic landscapes, or enjoying a traditional Chinese massage.

## Day 29 to 31: Lijiang, Tiger Leaping Gorge ( Sun 11

Apr to Tue 13 Apr )

Today we drive further north through Yunnan province to the beautiful 'Old-China'-style town of Lijiang, the base for visiting the world-famous Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following 2 days we will have free time to explore the town of Lijiang and its surroundings. One very popular excursion here is to go on a 2 day/1 night trek along the high trail above the Tiger Leaping Gorge - this is by far the best way to see the gorge from some truly incredible vantage points, and we will have the opportunity to take this trek during our time here (staying in a local guesthouse on the trail on the first night and returning to Lijiang for the second). For those that don't want to do the full trek, your crew will also be able to arrange a trip to the low sections of the gorge, where there is a flat walkway to various viewpoints.

In Lijiang we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the beautiful natural scenery and traditional buildings in the Black Dragon Pool Park	CNY 80
Head out for a day of trekking around the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, taking in some of the most incredible scenery in China on a clear day	CNY 80
Explore the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain area by cable car	CNY 280
See the incredible 'Impressions Lijiang' cultural show, demonstrating the traditions and lifestyles of the Naxi, Yi and Bai peoples of the area	CNY 270
Freely explore the area by bicycle and discover the Naxi villages surrounding Lijiang, such as the beautiful village of Baisha	CNY 20

Head out for a 2-day self-guided trek along the high ridge of the sensational Tiger Leaping Gorge CNY 200

Go on a shorter trek along the flat base of Tiger Leaping Gorge to enjoy the scenery from below CNY 125

### **About Lijiang:**

Nestled in a beautiful valley dominated by the ice-capped massif of Yulong Xue Shan (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain), Lijiang is a small town in north-west Yunnan province and capital of the Naxi Kingdom. The old town is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and one of the most atmospheric places in all of China - a maze of cobbled streets threads in and out of a network of ancient waterways supplied by the nearby mountain streams, all delicately lit by coloured lanterns.

Explore the Mu Palace, enjoy a traditional Naxi music culture show, or wander around the old town. The Naxi are one of China's many minority groups, descended from a race of Tibetan nomads who settled in the region some time before the start of the 10th Century CE.

Until very recently, Naxi society was organised around matriarchal lines - and in many ways the women still seem to be the ones running the show, especially in and around old Lijiang. Traditionally the Naxi have practiced a shamanistic religion known as Dongba, a blend Animism, Taoism and old Tibetan traditions, and pantheistic murals still decorate many of the temples in and around the town.

### **About Tiger Leaping Gorge:**

About 100kms north of Lijiang, the upper reaches of the Yangtze River cut spectacularly through the famous Tiger Leaping Gorge. Set at 2,500 metres altitude, the 16km long gorge is flanked on its southern side by a range of ash grey mountain peaks that rise over 3km above the river's rapids. The gorge was so-named due to an ancient myth in which tiger jumped across the gorge to escape a hunter.

It is usually possible to organise a 2-day trek along the top of the gorge, staying overnight in one of the local guesthouses - a beautiful trek that is achievable by most active people and incredibly scenic and peaceful place. A short day trek along the base of the gorge is a great alternative!

## **Day 32: Panzhihua ( Wed 14 Apr )**

Today we have a long drive north through stunning mountain scenery towards China's Sichuan province.

Tonight we will stay in a comfortable local hotel en route.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-9 hours.

## **Day 33 to 34: Emei Shan ( Thu 15 Apr to Fri 16 Apr )**

Today we will continue our drive to the small town of Emei Shan.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore Emei Shan Mountain, one of the holiest sites in Chinese Buddhism and the site of hundreds of temples and an incredible golden statue of the deity known as Samantabhadra. It is possible to walk all the way up the stairs from the base of the mountain, joining the many pilgrims in their journey to the temple complex at the mountain summit, or take the cable car up instead!

In Emei Shan we will stay in a local guesthouse.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Day trek up the lush mountain of Emei Shan, one of the most important pilgrimage treks in China	Included in Kitty
Take a cable car ride to the top of Emei Shan	CNY 120

#### **About Emei Shan:**

South of Chengdu in Sichuan province lies Emei Shan, one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Chinese Buddhism. At just over 3,000m high, this mountain has been a centre of pilgrimage for Buddhists for over 1,800 years - in Buddhism it is believed to be the home of the Bodhisattva of practice and meditation, Samantabhadra.

The lower slopes of the mountain have some great hiking trails through dense lush green vegetation. The most common trek is to follow the route of the pilgrims to the phenomenal Buddhist temples on the mountain's summit - a variety of glittering golden statues and buildings await you on the top, as does an incredible view over the surrounding mountains.

#### **Day 35 to 36: Chengdu, Leshan ( Sat 17 Apr to Sun 18 Apr )**

Today we continue our journey north to the town of Leshan to visit to the Leshan Grand Buddha - at 71m tall, this statue is the largest Buddha rock carving in the world!

After our visit we will continue to the incredible city of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, where we will stay for 2 nights. On arrival we will have a free afternoon to explore the city's parks, streets, and museums, and visit the fascinating and incredibly photogenic Jinli Old Town.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following day we will have an included visit to the fantastic Chengdu Panda Breeding Centre. We'll then return to Chengdu for another free afternoon to further explore the city.

In Chengdu we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
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Visit to the Giant Panda breeding centre in Chengdu Included in Kitty

Explore the Jinsha Archeological Site, the capital of the Bronze Age Shu Kingdom who were one of the most ancient civilisations to settle in the area CNY 80

Freely explore the narrow streets of the atmospheric Jinli Ancient Street and visit the nearby Wuhouci Shrine CNY 60

Explore the cobbled streets of historic Lijang CNY 85

Explore the mountain complex of Qingcheng, one of the ancient cradles of Taoism in China CNY 190

Visit the impressive Tang Dynasty Buddhist temple of Wenshu, containing more than 450 Buddha statues CNY 5

Head out for an evening performance of a traditional Sichuanese Opera CNY 220

See the colossal Dafo Great Buddha in Leshan, the world's largest rock-carved Buddha statue Included in Kitty

### About Chengdu:

Chengdu has a surprisingly laid-back feel for a big city, and has a good variety of things to see and do. For wildlife lovers, an absolute must is a visit to the Giant Panda Breeding Centre. Sichuan province is home to the majority of the few pandas that are left in the wild, as the Yangtze Basin eco-region is an important habitat for the animals. Because their numbers are so depleted, it is virtually impossible to see a panda in the wild - and so this centre offers a convenient, responsible and educational way to get up close to these amazing animals.

Chengdu also has numerous historical and cultural sites to explore such as the Marquis of Wu's Temple, a number of famous Buddhist sanctuaries and Qingyanggong, the best-preserved memorial temple of Lao Zi, father of Taoism. The Jinli Old Street is a wonderful and atmospheric slice of 'old China' in the heart of the modern city.

If you're feeling brave, Chengdu is also a good place to sample Sichuan cooking - even by Asian standards, the Sichuanese heap a phenomenal amount of hot spices onto most dishes. Chengdu is also a great place to sample the unique art form of Sichuanese opera!

### About Leshan:

The small town of Leshan, on the banks of the Min River, contains one of the most incredible sights from ancient China - the 71m-tall Dafo Great Buddha, built in the 8th Century CE during the Tang Dynasty.

The statue took over 90 years to build and incorporated ingenious water ducting canals to reduce weathering and water erosion. It's a truly impressive sight, peering out over the river through half-lidded eyes with its vast bulk towering over the small boats - it is still the largest stone-cut Buddha in the world and was by far the largest pre-modern statue in the world. You can get an incredible view from its base, and an even better one from a boat trip on the river opposite.

### **Day 37: Dazu ( Mon 19 Apr )**

From Chengdu we will continue to the small village of Dazu, where we visit the Bei Shan and Baoding Shan caves, famous for their brightly-coloured freizes and carvings.

In Dazu we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Side trip to see the amazing sleeping Buddha in the Dazu Caves

CNY 135

#### **About Dazu:**

The rock carvings near the village of Dazu are some of the most beautifully-preserved and colourful Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian sculptures in China. The oldest caves here date back to 650 CE and the Tang Dynasty, although most of the carvings are from the late 9th Century CE (during the Five Dynasties period) or 12th Century CE (during the Song Dynasty). There are many rock-cut caves full of statues and shrines, but there are also many reliefs cut right into the open rock face - these have some of the best preserved paintwork of any ancient sculptures in China.

The site was off-limits for many years, and was finally opened to visitors in 1980 - fortunately due to the remote location the caves escaped the destruction of religious art during Mao Tse Tung's Cultural Revolution.

### **Day 38: Chongqing ( Tue 20 Apr )**

Today we will drive on the Chongqing, where we will have time to explore the city and prepare for tomorrow's ferry cruise on the mighty Yangtze River!

We will most likely stay in a local hotel in Chongqing tonight, but on occasion our ferry may need to depart tonight, in which case we will have a spare day later in the trip that we can use at our discretion.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

#### **About Chongqing:**



One of China's emerging 'mega-cities', Chongqing has a staggering population of over 30 million people, making it the most populous municipality in the country. The city is officially abbreviated to 'Yu', which is the old name for a nearby section of the Jialing River that feeds into the Yangtze. The city has a wealth of history and is the economic centre of the Yangtze Basin. Chongqing was the wartime capital of China during the Second World War between 1937 and 1945 (known as the Second Sino-Japanese War in China).

## **Day 39 to 41: Wanzhou, Three Gorges, Badong, Yichang** **( Wed 21 Apr to Fri 23 Apr )**

Today we embark on our Yangtze River Cruise. We travel on a local ferry boat used by local people, a much more authentic and interesting way of travelling than on a tourist cruise. We stay in shared cabins (4 members of the group to each cabin) with private bathrooms and air conditioning where possible.

The journey itself usually takes 3 days/3 nights and heads through some areas of stunning scenery, especially near the Three Gorges - the Qutang, Wu and Xiling Gorges. The boats usually stop at the Fengdu (Ghost City), Shibaozai Tower, home to the Lanruo Dian (Orchid Temple) and at the three Lesser Gorges at various points on the trip. However due to local conditions, stops cannot always be guaranteed.

We will arrive in the city of Yichang and disembark our ferry to rejoin our truck and co-driver and have some free time to explore Yichang and the surrounding area.

We will most likely have an included visit to the incredible Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydroelectric dam in the world, on the last day.

In Yichang we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Cruise down the mighty Yangtze River for 3 nights on a local sleeper ferry	Included in Kitty
Stop off at the White Emperor City, a very scenic spot featured on the Chinese 10 Yuan banknote!	CNY 180
Stop off to take a boat ride through the stunning Three Mini Gorges	CNY 220
Stop off to visit the 1700-year-old Zhang Fei temple, famous for its exterior red-light decoration	Included in Kitty
The cruise visits the main sites of the Three Gorges & new Yangtze Dam	Included in Kitty

### **About Three Gorges:**

A boat trip along the Yangtze River offers a unique insight into the life and scenery along the river. The most popular section of the river to travel along is between Yichang and Chongqing - travelling between these two towns on a local river ferry, you will pass through the most stunning scenery of the Three Gorges: Qutang, Wu and Xiling. The boats usually also stop at the Fengdu (Ghost City), Shibaozai Tower and Lanruo Dian (Orchid-like Temple), and the three Lesser Gorges, although the exact itineraries vary depending on time of year and local conditions.

#### **About Yichang:**

The town of Yichang is situated in a curve on the northern banks of the Yangtze River. An ancient city whose history can be traced back 4,000 years, today the town is best known as a gateway to the Three Gorges section of the Yangtze and as the home of the incredible Three Gorges Dam project, the world's largest hydroelectric dam producing nearly 100 TWh per year.

### **Day 42: Xiang Fan ( Sat 24 Apr )**

This morning we will have some free time in Yichang or visit the Three Gorges Dam if we did not have time yesterday. After lunch we will drive to the town of Xiang Fan, en route to Wudang Shan.

In Xiang Fan we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### **Day 43 to 44: Wudang Shan ( Sun 25 Apr to Mon 26 Apr )**

Today we will continue our journey with a drive to the beautiful Wudang Shan Mountain Reserve, the birthplace of the martial art of Taichi and the location of the filming of 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon'. We will also try to stop at the Purple Cloud Monastery en route if time allows.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-4 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore the mountain's sights, temples and martial arts schools.

In Wudang Shan we will stay in a local hotel.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Trek up the Tianzu Peak to visit the Taoist martial arts school and numerous temples on Wudang Shan

Included in Kitty

#### **About Wudang Shan:**

Wudang Shan is one of the most important sites for followers of Chinese Taoism - it is a 1,600m mountain covered in atmospheric bamboo forests and liberally dotted with Taoist temples. The Taoist philosophy concentrates on the balance of nature and man's place within it, and not acting in a way that contrasts nature.

The temples of Wudang Shan are an incredible place to explore on foot, and is always buzzing with Taoist pilgrims. Wudang Shan is also famous for its martial arts - Kung Fu is widely practised here, and Wudang boxing was created here and subsequently developed into the modern Tai Chi.

## Day 45: Xi'an ( Tue 27 Apr )

Today we will drive to the amazing city of Xi'an, the ancient capital of Shaanxi province and the end of the 'Silk Road'! We will have a free afternoon on arrival to explore the city of Xi'an, its famous walls, bell and drum towers, pagodas and Muslim Quarter.

In Xi'an we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### About Xi'an:

The imperial centre of China for 2,000 years, Xi'an is now a vibrant, modern city dotted with many interesting historical sites. Xi'an was the start of the famous ancient trading route of the Silk Road and the city is still surrounded by its original city walls which you can climb and walk or cycle along, a unique way to experience the city. For a different view, haul yourself to the top of the Bell or Drum Towers in the centre of the city. Home to many Hui people, an ethnic Muslim minority, the city also has a unique Islamic flavour, particularly in the streets and markets surrounding the Great Mosque, best explored by foot.

Thanks to Xi'an's long and colourful history, the city is full of beautiful temples, museums and interesting cultural and historic sites, the most famous of which are probably the ancient Terracotta Warriors. The collection of over 8,000 life-sized model warriors and 700 horses was discovered by farmers digging a well in 1974. Dating from the late 3rd Century BCE, they were built by Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China, to protect his tomb in the afterlife.

## Day 46: Xi'an ( Wed 28 Apr )

**Border Information:** if leaving in Xi'an, you will most likely enter China at Xi'an Xianyang International Airport (IATA code: XIY).

This morning we head out of Xi'an on the truck to the site of the world-famous Terracotta Warriors, where we have an included visit and a guided tour. We'll return to Xi'an in the afternoon and have some more free time to further explore this incredible city!

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Xi'an. 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.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Wander through the atmospheric Muslim

CNY 30

Quarter and visit the Xi'an Great Mosque, the first mosque constructed in China

Learn about the fascinating history of the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an at the Shaanxi History Museum, without doubt one of the finest museums in China

CNY 30

Explore the world-famous site of the Terracotta Warriors, an army of 8000 life-size figures built to protect the Emperor Qin Shi Huang in the afterlife

Included in Kitty

Visit the impressive Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi'an's most famous landmark dating from the Tang and Ming Dynasties

CNY 90

Walk or cycle around the Ming Dynasty Xi'an City Wall, the largest city wall in the world

CNY 90

Visit the ornate 14th-century Bell and Drum towers, which originally marked the sunrise and sunset

CNY 50

Visit the mind-blowing Tomb of Emperor Jingdi of the Han Dynasty, containing 50,000 doll-sized terracotta figures

CNY 90

Visit the Forest of Stelae Museum, a collection of 3000 stone tablets of Chinese calligraphy that has been collected here since 1057

CNY 75

Visit the huge former Tang Dynasty royal palace of Daming, and explore its vast parks and gardens

Free

## 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.

## **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.

## CHINA

**VERY IMPORTANT - Dragoman will require a clear colour scan of your passport as soon as possible after booking for all trips in China, please send this to us as soon as you can. Please note it must be clear, with no shadows and show the entire passport page as well as the adjacent page. This must be an actual scan of your passport and photos will not be accepted. We will also require an ID photo and a scanned copy of your China Visa at least 8 weeks prior to your arrival at the Chinese border.**

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will** need a visa to enter China as a tourist for up to 90 days. You will need a Letter of Invitation from a Chinese agent in order to make the visa application, and you must obtain the visa **in advance**. You cannot obtain the visa at the border in any circumstance.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through Dragoman - we will contact you requesting further information in order for us to make this application on your behalf, a service that is included in the trip price. These can take several weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready.

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa **in advance** at a Chinese Embassy in your home country. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas). Dragoman will also provide a letter confirming your participation in the trip and a list of our hotels, which you may need for the application - in some cases the Chinese Embassy may ask for a day-by-day itinerary with the hotels listed, which we can provide when needed.

You will need to apply at the Chinese Embassy in your home country, as your application is far more likely to be approved. Although there is no official reason why you should not be issued a visa at any Chinese embassy, their consular officials are notorious for constantly changing their minds about whether they will approve a visa for 'non-resident' applicants, and it depends heavily on the political climate of the time. Please note if you are applying for a China Visa in the UK you will also now need to attend an appointment in London to have your fingerprints taken.

**IMPORTANT NOTE - Please NEVER mention Kashgar, Urumqi, Turpan, Lhasa, Xinjiang or Tibet anywhere on your Chinese visa application form - this will almost certainly result in your application being rejected. When filling out your Chinese visa form, please only declare the places that are listed on your Chinese Letter of Invitation once it is issued.**

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

You **will not** need a China visa if you are entering Tibet from Nepal (Northbound Tibet trip), but you **will** need a China visa if you are going to Tibet from Xi'an (Southbound Tibet trip). Please see the Tibet note for details on the visa requirements for travelling through Tibet.

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

## LAOS

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most EU countries **will** need a visa to enter Laos as a tourist for up to 30 days. Citizens of Switzerland, Luxembourg, Russia South Korea and Japan **will not** need a visa.

The easiest way to get a visa is to obtain it **on arrival**. This is available for almost all nationalities at most land borders and airports into Laos (including those used on Dragoman trips) – the cost varies according to nationality, and you will need 1 passport photo.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required, and whether it will be necessary to obtain a Letter of Invitation (only a small number of nationalities need to obtain a Letter of Invitation).

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

## CAMBODIA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will** need a visa to enter Cambodia as a tourist for up to 30 days.

The easiest way to get a visa is to obtain it **on arrival**. This is available for almost all nationalities at all land borders and airports into Cambodia. At the time of writing (2015), the cost of a single-entry visa is USD25 for all nationalities, and you will need 1 passport photo.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required, and whether it will be necessary to obtain it in advance (only a small number of nationalities need to obtain visas in advance).

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

## THAILAND

Citizens of the UK, USA, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia **will not** require a visa to enter Thailand as a tourist for up to 30 days. Citizens of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and most 'western' EU countries **will not** require a visa to enter as a tourist for up to 30 days if arriving by air, or up to 15 days if arriving through a land border. In all cases, this may be extended for 30 days at the immigration department in Bangkok once in the country.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. Please note that certain Eastern European nationalities (whether members of the EU or not) will need a visa, but some nationalities can obtain the visa **on arrival** while others will need to obtain it **in advance** – please check carefully what the situation is for your nationality. If you are travelling on our Yangon-Bangkok section and you do need a visa, you will have to obtain it **in advance**, as they don't yet issue visas on arrival at the Htee Khee border with Myanmar that we use.

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

## 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.

## 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 wild 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.

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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 21/08/2019