

## ULTIMATE CENTRAL AMERICAN OVERLAND, (CMP)

**Panama City to Mexico City 55 days, departing 24 Mar 2020**



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## TRIP OVERVIEW

- Trip Style:** Overlanding
- Route:** Panama City to Mexico City
- Duration:** 55 days
- Transport:** US style school bus, Boat, Flight
- 20% 80%
- Accom:** Hotels, Hostels, Campsites, Homestays, Chalets

### Physical Challenge:

EASY      HARD

Depending on the trip, activities may include treks of 3-4 hours at altitude or across hilly terrain, multi-day treks at sea level, horseback riding, canoeing and other adventurous activities.

### Lifestyle Challenge:

EASY      HARD

This trip has a bit of everything.

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## ROUTE MAP



## COUNTRIES VISITED

### Belize



### A UNIQUE OVERLANDING DESTINATION

Belize is a small English-speaking enclave on the Caribbean coast, and has its own unique culture and atmosphere. Despite its small size, there are several amazing places in Belize to visit - near the town of San Ignacio there are some of the finest Mayan ruins in Central America including the ancient cities of Caracol and Cahal Pech, as well as several flooded caves and forest to explore.

### Costa Rica



### AN ADVENTURE PARADISE

Costa Rica is every outdoor-adventurist's dream, and is packed full of spectacular scenery, incredible wildlife, and fascinating culture.

Costa Rica is one of the most bio-diverse countries on Earth, and is home to many iconic

## TURQUOISE SEAS & BREATHTAKING NATURAL WONDERS

Off the coast is the wonderful [Caye Caulker](#), a lively island surrounded by glittering turquoise ocean which provides some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world! From here you could take a scenic flights over one of the world's most breathtaking natural wonders - The Great Blue Hole, a 300-metre-wide underwater sink hole formed into a perfect circle. Belize is a fantastic addition to our trips in Central America and a very unique place to visit!

## El Salvador



## OVERLANDING IN CENTRAL AMERICA'S STUNNING EL SALVADOR

El Salvador (meaning "The Saviour" in Spanish) is one of the smallest but most friendly and exciting countries in Central America - perfect for an overland adventure.

El Salvador has some stunning scenery, from the relaxed Pacific coastlines of Los Cobanos to the coffee-growing cool hills in the interior. The [Cerro Verde National Park](#) contains some of the most breathtaking volcanic scenery on the continent, and provides excellent opportunities for trekking.

With some of the most beautiful areas in the

animals such as hummingbirds, quetzals, tree frogs, monkeys, sloths and sea turtles. This is evident on a trek through the atmospheric cloud forests of [Monteverde](#), or on an exploration of the spectacular beaches of Manuel Antonia National Park.

## EXPLORE STUNNING NATURAL SCENERY OVERLAND

Complimenting this is some of the most wonderful natural scenery, including incredible coastlines, forests, lakes and volcanoes. One of the most breathtaking sights is the active volcano of Arenal, which looms over the town of La Fortuna! Costa Rica is also home to some of the best outdoor activities in the world, with a plethora of opportunities for rafting, trekking, canyoning and horse riding throughout the country.

Costa Rica has gained a wonderful reputation for tourism in recent decades, and this reputation is certainly deserved!

## Guatemala



## VOLCANOES, LAKES & MAYAN RUINS

With breathtaking mountains, volcanoes and the amazing Lake Atitlan setting the landscape, Guatemala is a perfect place to get out and explore some stunning natural scenery.

The country is bursting with vibrant culture, and nowhere is this more perfectly illustrated than in the old colonial capital of [Antigua](#), not far from the modern capital of Guatemala City. A small cobblestoned city that is overflowing with historical buildings and colonial heritage, it is a stunning place to explore, full of music, galleries

whole of Central America, El Salvador is one of the most captivating places to visit.

and restaurants, and is an excellent base to trek up some of the surrounding volcanoes.

### EXPLORE LAKE ATITLAN

Lake Atitlan is one of Central America's most picturesque spots - surrounded by towering volcanoes and dotted with tiny traditional village along its coast, it is a wonderful place to take a boat trip and explore. Not far is the village of Chichastenango, with its famous, colourful and evocative local markets.

Guatemala's most famous draw is the truly incredible [ruined city of Tikal](#). The site was a major settlement of the Mayan civilisation between the 5th-9th Centuries CE, and contains some of the finest ancient ruins in the world! There are several colossal and well-preserved pyramids and temples all majestically located within the dense rainforest - it's a magical place to explore and is full of fascinating history.

A favourite of many who travel through Central America, Guatemala is a beautiful and fascinating country with an incredible density of highlights!

## Honduras



## ONE OF CENTRAL AMERICA'S HIGHLIGHTS

Honduras is an often-overlooked country in Central America, but has some of the continent's most fantastic highlights. One of these highlights is the amazing coastline spanning hundreds of kilometres along the Pacific - with some of the whitest beaches and clearest ocean in Central

## Mexico



## DISCOVER MEXICO OVERLAND

Mexico is a country full of culture, history, and spectacular landscapes. Home to the Mayan and Aztec Empires, the architecture and legacy left behind is nothing short of magical - amongst the incredible ruins are the massive pyramids of Teotihuacan, the overgrown cities of Monte Alban and Palenque, and of course the phenomenal [Chichen Itza](#), one of the New Seven Wonders of

America, the Bay Islands is the perfect place for snorkelling, scuba diving and relaxing on the idyllic shores. The Mesoamerican Barrier Reef is the second longest in the world, and submerged below the clear waters lie unspoilt coral and an array of colourful underwater life.

### ADVENTURE TO THE MAYAN CITY OF COPÁN

Another fantastic highlight is the ruined [Mayan city of Copán](#), which was a major centre of the Classic Era between the 5th-9th Centuries CE. The site features many remarkably-preserved buildings and temples, and is especially famous for its sculpted monuments and stelae. Away from the coastline are the fantastic mountains that soar above the country.

There is some amazing scenery in Honduras which we have the privilege to overland through, making it a marvellous inclusion in our Central American trips.

## Nicaragua



The rugged beauty of Nicaragua makes it one of the most interesting places in Central America to visit.

The landscape is lined with stunning volcanoes which you can climb and explore, such as the scenic crater of Masaya and the challenging trek up Volcán Concepción on Ometepe Island. The country is full of many other outdoor activities, such as mountain biking, sandboarding, horse

the World.

However, although Mexico's ruins and history are a major draw, there is much more to the country. Mexico has a vibrant culture, from its famous mariachi bands, the stunning artwork of Diego Garcia and Frida Kahlo, and the unique customs and way of life of the Tzut'zil Mayan people in San Cristóbal de las Casas.

### MMMM MEXICAN FOOD...

The food of Mexico is iconic all over the world, and you'll be able to sample burritos and chili con carne alongside more unusual dishes such as mole sauce made from cocoa beans, and of course Oaxaca's favourite snack of fried grasshoppers! Mexico is also famous for tequila, made from the blue agave plants that are ubiquitous in the central regions.

If that wasn't enough, Mexico is one of the most stunning countries in the world, with the cactus-filled deserts of the north, the colossal Sumidero Canyon, the jungles of Palenque and Yaxchilan, and the pristine idyllic beaches of Tulum. Mexico is high on the list of many travellers' favourites list, and has many wonderful and varied highlights to explore!

## Panama



Panama is the southernmost country of Central America, where the continent narrows to its tiny join with [Colombia](#) and [South America](#). This piece of geography made Panama the perfect location for the world-famous and controversial Panama Canal, which was completed in 1914 and has a massive impact on world trade and history.

riding and discovering the beautiful beaches of the Pacific coast.

### EXPLORE NICARAGUA'S COLONIAL HISTORY

You can also explore the incredible colonial towns of Granada and León, and their churches, cathedrals and many art galleries. Some of the continent's most ornate and beautiful colonial legacy can be found in these two atmospheric towns, and they are wonderful places to spend some time.

Nicaragua is the forgotten treasure of Central America and is a perfect place to explore.

### EXPLORE PANAMA CITY & ITS SURROUNDINGS

The capital of Panama City is a bustling metropolis full of culture and with a buzzing nightlife. It contains several fantastic museums and an atmospheric old town as well as the modern business centre and marina. The county also has some amazing mountainous and coastline scenery, a myriad of exhilarating outdoor activities, incredible wildlife and wonderful coffee plantations.

Panama is an excellent place to start or end your Central American adventure with Dragoman!

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## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1: Panama City ( Tue 24 Mar )

**Border information:** if you are starting in Panama City, you will most likely enter Panama at Panama City Tocumen International Airport (IATA code: PTY).

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

Until the meeting, the rest of the day is free to explore the bustling Panamanian capital. Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Panama City 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 Panama City.

If you are continuing on from Cartagena today then your leader in Colombia will assist you with transport to the airport for your included flight to arrive in Panama in time for the joining meeting.

In Panama City we will stay in a local hostel in the old city.

Hotel for the night: Hospedaje Casco Viejo  
Hospedaje Casco Viejo  
C/ 8a con Avenida A. Casa 8-31, San Felipe.  
Panama City

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

Visit Panama City's Museum of Contemporary Art, one of the best collections of works by local artists in Panama

USD 5

Freely explore the unrestored ruins of Panama Viejo, the original colonial

Free



settlement that was founded in 1519 and sacked by pirates in 1671

Freely explore the streets and beautifully-restored colonial buildings of Casco Viejo, the old district of the modern city of Panama and a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Free

See the Panama Canal Museum in the city centre, featuring excellent exhibits about the famous waterway

USD 5

Visit the phenomenal Biodiversity Museum in Panama City, a striking and iconic building containing a wonderful celebration of the flora and fauna of Panama

USD 22

### About Panama City:

The bustling modern Panamanian capital has a long history - the original city was founded in 1519 by Spanish conquistadors, acting as an important stopover for the ships taking gold and silver from the Americas to Spain. It was also a base for several expeditions to explore and conquer areas of South America. This original city was burned down in 1671 by the Welsh pirate Henry Morgan, one of the most infamous and ruthless pirates operating on the Spanish Main. The city was rebuilt in 1673, just 8kms from the original settlement, around which the modern metropolis has evolved - the ruins of the original city are known as Panama Viejo, and can still be visited today.

**Panama** is perhaps most famous for the Panama Canal, located near to the capital. The 78km-long canal links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans via a narrow section of the Isthmus of Panama, allowing ships to pass between the oceans without having to traverse around the entire continent of South America. Completed by an American-led team in 1914, the canal has had a massive and controversial effect on worldwide trade, maritime, and international politics - in fact Panama owes much of its independence from Colombia to the USA backing separatist rebels in return for an agreement that they could set up a US-administered zone along the new canal they would build, a deal which caused a lot of tension between the USA and Panama throughout the 20th Century, with Panama only gaining full control over the canal in 1999.

### Day 2: Panama City, Camino Real ( Wed 25 Mar )

Today we will drive to the Miraflores Visitor Centre at the world-famous Panama Canal, learning all about its controversial history and incredible role in shaping trade and world politics in the 20th century.

We will then continue to Chagres National Park and explore the Grandfather of the Panama Canal: the Camino Real, a cobblestoned



road from the Caribbean to the Pacific through the rainforests of Panama, established as the transport route of Gold and Silver by Spanish conquistadors in the 16th Century. The Camino Real was rediscovered only recently, and we will visit and stay overnight at a community, which worked together with researcher Christian Strassnig to identify the original route of the Camino Real in the jungle.

At Alajuela Lake we take a dugout boat to observe the remains of the Camino Real at the lakeshore, before heading to our Community stay to enjoy a typical Panamanian lunch and see then a presentation of authentic folklore. We will then hike some of the Camino Real, see the original cobblestone and be fascinated by stories of the mule trains, gold and pirates.

Approximate walking distance: 3km Estimated time: 2hrs

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

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**

We will have an included hike on the Camino Real, and a community based overnight stay, with all meals included.

Included in Kitty

Visit the world-famous Panama Canal at the Miraflores Visitors' Centre, and learn all about the fascinating history of this controversial structure

Included in Kitty

**Day 3 to 4: Boquete ( Thu 26 Mar to Fri 27 Mar )**

After early morning coffee we can go for an optional birdwatching hike on a trail with plenty of tropical birds, followed by a hearty breakfast. Afterwards we will drive up into the Chiriqui highlands, arriving at the town of Boquete.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

On the following day we will have a free day to take part in some of the many optional outdoor activities which the town is famous for, including the opportunity to take the strenuous trek to the 3,478m summit of Volcán Barú, the highest point in Panama.

In Boquete we will stay in a local hostel, with a mixture of private rooms and dormitories.

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**





Head out on an exhilarating white-water rafting expedition on the Chiriqui Viejo river near Boquete, one of the world's best rafting areas with 35 world-class runs to choose from

USD 65

Head out on a tour of some of the fascinating coffee plantations around the Chiriqui Highlands near Boquete

USD 30

Trek up to the summit of Volcán Barú, at 3,478m the highest point in Panama - please note this is a strenuous trek and usually takes approximately 8-12 hours, so you will need to be in decent physical condition to participate

USD 80

Take a dip in the excellent Caldera hot springs near Boquete

USD 3

Freely explore the beautiful gardens and parks around Boquete and its surroundings

Free

Take a day trip out to Boca Brava on the Pacific coast, where you can swim, kayak, snorkel and relax on some of the stunning beaches there

USD 75

Head out on a quad bike tour of the mountains, forests and coffee plantations near Boquete (driver's licence required)

USD 55

Go on a half-day rock climbing trip to the basalt cliffs near Boquete, one of Panama's best climbing destinations

USD 45

Take a fascinating bird-watching trip into the Chiriqui Highlands, one of the most abundant areas of birdlife in the Americas

USD 50

Enjoy a fantastic short canyoning trip through the gorges of Gualaca near Boquete

USD 25

Trek the famous Quetzal Trail through the

USD 35



cloud forests of the Chiriqui Highlands, or trek to various waterfalls in the rainforest

Explore the spectacular Caldera Highlands around Boquete on horseback, riding through rainforests and local farms and coffee plantations USD 35

Head on an excellent 12-line zip-lining course through the cloud forests near Boquete USD 65

### About Boquete:

Boquete is a picturesque small town in the stunning green hills of western Panama, close to the Costa Rican border. Its cool climate attracts many visitors, and its incredible forest scenery is some of the most beautiful in Panama. The area has gained a fantastic reputation for exciting outdoor activities such as rafting and forest treks, and is the base for a challenging day-trek up to the summit of Volcán Barú, Panama's highest peak at 3,475m - on a rare clear day it is possible to see the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea at the same time from the summit!

## Day 5 to 6: Manuel Antonio National Park ( Sat 28 Mar to Sun 29 Mar )

**Border information:** Exit Panama at Paso Canoas, enter Costa Rica at Paso Canoas

Today we will drive across the border into Costa Rica, and arrive at the spectacular beaches of Manuel Antonio National Park on the Pacific coast.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following day we will have an included guided walk through some of the beautiful trails within park, learning all about its flora and fauna and immersing ourselves in the idyllic landscape. We will have free time in the afternoon to take part in some optional activities or relax on the wonderful beaches.

In Manuel Antonio we will stay in a hostel near the beach, with a mixture of private rooms and dormitories.

### Activity Approximate Cost

Head out on a wonderful quad biking trip through the tropical countryside of Manuel Antonio and Quepos USD 40

Take a guided walk through the stunning USD 16

trails of Manuel Antonio National Park, finishing at the world-class tropical beaches where you can swim and relax

Take an exhilarating trip to the rainforests near Quepos to enjoy an incredible zip lining course USD 40

Explore the ocean on a catamaran sailing trip, heading out in search of dolphins, tropical fish and turtles and witnessing an unforgettable offshore sunset USD 40

Explore the mangroves of Manuel Antonio by boat or by kayak, in search of rainbow boas, crocodiles and various water birds USD 20

Head on an exhilarating guided jet ski trip on the Pacific Ocean near Manuel Antonio USD 40

Explore the stunning cattle ranches, fruit plantations and palm trees of the countryside near Manuel Antonio on a horse riding trip USD 30

Go on an incredible white-water rafting trip on the Naranjo and Savegre rivers near Manuel Antonio National Park USD 40

Take a paddle-boarding lesson to explore the secluded beaches of Manuel Antonio National Park USD 20

Explore the rainforest canopy and its incredible wildlife and landscapes on a wonderful canopy bridge course near Manuel Antonio USD 30

Join a scuba diving trip to explore the reefs and underwater volcanic rock formations in the oceans near Manuel Antonio USD 50

Try your hand at surfing on a short lesson in Manuel Antonio National Park USD 10

### About Manuel Antonio National Park:

Manuel Antonio National Park is one of Central America's most spectacular spots - stunning sandy beaches between the calm ocean waters and lush rainforests, complete with lots of walking, paddle-boarding, fishing and boating opportunities. There are plenty of animals to spot in the area, such as capuchin monkeys, iguanas, coatis and sloths - the park is a vertiable paradise, and it's possible to find some beautiful secluded beaches despite it being one of Costa Rica's most visited places.

### Day 7 to 8: Monteverde ( Mon 30 Mar to Tue 31 Mar )

Today we will drive to the town of Tilarán, where we will leave our overland vehicle behind and transfer by taxi to the dense cloud forests and coffee plantations of Monteverde, a stunning area offering an incredible diversity of flora and fauna.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

On the following day we will have an included guided walk on the trails of the Monteverde Cloud Forest National Reserve, followed by a free afternoon to visit some of the town's highlights or enjoy some adventurous activities such as canyoning or horse riding.

In Monteverde we will stay in a local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Take a guided trek to explore the stunning forest trails of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, learning all about the fascinating and beautiful ecosystem there	USD 20
Explore the stunning forests and banana plantations of Monteverde on a horse riding trip	USD 25
Fly above the cloud forests and valleys of Monteverde on an exhilarating zip-lining course	USD 50
Explore the incredible cloud forests of Monteverde at the tree-top level on a 3km canopy bridge circuit	USD 30
Learn all about the cultivation and processing of the world-renowned coffee of Costa Rica at one of the many incredible coffee plantations near Monteverde	USD 35

Head out to the cloud forests of the Santamarias Reserve to explore the area by night, when much of the elusive local wildlife comes out USD 23

Take a spectacular canyoning tour near Monteverde, including abseiling down 6 different waterfalls! USD 50

Visit the fantastic Butterfly Gardens of Monteverde, and learn all about the abundant bug-life of Costa Rica's cloud forests USD 10

Learn about Costa Rica's spectacular amphibians at the Monteverde Frog Pond USD 13

Visit the Bat Jungle exhibition in Monteverde, learning all about the various bat species of the area from an expert guide USD 10

Explore the magnificent Monteverde Orchid Gardens, home to over 400 species of orchids found in the region USD 10

Take an exhilarating off-road quad biking trip around the stunning countryside of Monteverde (driving licence required) USD 70

### About Monteverde:

Monteverde and the cloud forests which surround it are considered one of the top destinations to visit in Costa Rica, and certainly one of the top eco-tourism destinations in the world. The bulk of Monteverde's rainforest and cloud forest can be found in the Reserva Biológica Bosque Nuboso Monteverde, which attracts huge numbers of naturalists each year and the area is one of the best in Central America to try to spot the indigenous birdlife such as the Resplendant Quetzal.

The cool hills of the area is perfect for the growing of coffee, Costa Rica's most famous export - it is possible to visit several plantations around Monteverde to learn more about the process of coffee cultivation. The beautiful rich cloud forests are also perfect for trekking, canopy walks, and other activities such as zip-lining through the valleys and treetops!

### Day 9 to 10: La Fortuna ( Wed 01 Apr to Thu 02 Apr )

Today we will continue by taxi and boat to La Fortuna, a stunning town under the shadow of the mighty Arenal volcano.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

On the following day we will have a free day to take optional treks through the incredible surrounding volcanic landscapes or forest canopies, or get involved in many different adventure activities such as zip-lining, white-water rafting, and canyoning. La Fortuna is also famous for its outstanding hot springs, which we will have the opportunity to visit.

In La Fortuna we will stay in excellent cabanas outside of town.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Witness incredible views of the famous Arenal volcano, looming high above the town of La Fortuna	Free
Take a fantastic white-water rafting trip on the Balsa or Sarapiquí rivers near La Fortuna, some of the best rafting areas in Costa Rica	USD 69
Take a kayaking trip on Lake Arenal, giving you the best views of the behemoth volcano of Arenal and an opportunity to spot many species of birds	USD 65
Head out for an evening at the spectacular volcanic hot springs complex of Baldi near La Fortuna	USD 34
Explore the breathtaking forests and volcanic landscapes of La Fortuna on several mountain biking trails in the area	USD 75
Take a intense canyoning trip into the rugged gorges of the jungles near Arenal, including several waterfall abseils	USD 100
Learn all about the intricacies of Costa Rican cuisine on a cooking class in La Fortuna	USD 45
Learn all about the plants, animals, traditions and agriculture of Costa Rica on a visit to the El Bosque Eco-Farm near La Fortuna	USD 45

Explore the stunning countryside and lush forests of the Arenal region by foot, where there many excellent guided trekking options USD 55

Visit the hanging bridge courses through the rainforest canopies near La Fortuna USD 67

Explore the magnificent countryside and waterfalls around the Arenal volcano by horseback USD 65

Head out on an incredible zip lining course in the rainforests surrounding La Fortuna USD 55

### About La Fortuna:

The small town of La Fortuna is dominated over by the huge conical volcano of Arenal. The town was founded in the 1930s, and was renamed to "La Fortuna" (meaning "fortune") in 1968 when the previously dormant volcano unexpectedly erupted and engulfed nearby villages - the current name was given to it to mark the good fortune that it was not also buried by the eruption. Between 1968 and 2010 Arenal was one of the world's most active volcanos, and could be relied upon to erupt on most days - however in 2010, the volcano suddenly stopped erupting and has been dormant once more since then!

La Fortuna is a beautiful and serene town, with the mighty volcano as its iconic backdrop. It is one of Costa Rica's most popular spots, and visitors are absolutely spoiled for choice when it comes to optional activities - there are forest treks to the 70m-high Catarata de la Fortuna waterfalls, whitewater rafting trips, zip-lining, canopy walks, horse riding, amongst many other options. After all this activity, you can enjoy a relaxing evening at one of the area's excellent volcanic hot springs.

## Day 11 to 12: Ometepe Island ( Fri 03 Apr to Sat 04 Apr )

**Border information:** Exit Costa Rica at Peñas Blancas, enter Nicaragua at Peñas Blancas

This morning we drive across the Nicaraguan border and to the small town of San Jorge on the shores of Lake Nicaragua, Central America's largest lake. Here we will board a ferry to the stunning volcanic island of Ometepe, where we base ourselves in the port village of Moyogalpa and enjoy free time to explore on arrival.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-6 hours.

On the following day we will have free time to explore and take part in optional activities such as the challenging trek to the summit of the

Concepción volcano that dominates the island, or seeing some of the mysterious ancient petroglyphs that are dotted through the landscape.

On Ometepe we will stay in a small local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Climb to the summit of the Madera volcano on Ometepe Island (please note that although this is an easier trek than up Concepción volcano, it is still a very strenuous hike and you need to have a high level of fitness to complete it - the trek usually takes between 7-9 hours)	USD 42
Head on a guided walk around Ometepe, and see some of the natural springs, beaches, and small villages on the island	USD 30
Trek to the summit of the iconic Concepción volcano that dominates over the island of Ometepe (please note that this is a very strenuous trek that will only be possible for those with a high level of fitness and in good shape - the trek is over 1000m of ascent and descent on rugged terrain, and will take between 9-12 hours).	USD 40
Trek up to the stunning San Ramón waterfall in the forests near Madera volcano	USD 40
Learn about the fascinating history and geology of the island at the Ometepe Museum in Altagracia village	USD 3
Freely explore the mysterious pre-Columbian petroglyphs scattered around the island Ometepe	Free
Visit the mystical and serene emerald-green lagoon of Charco Verde	NIO 20

### **About Ometepe Island:**

The serene island of Ometepe is beautifully located in the middle of Lake Nicaragua and is formed of the volcanoes Concepción and Madera, which rise from the lake. The name of the island literally means "two volcanoes" in the Nahuatl language, from "ome" (meaning two) and "tepetl" (meaning mountain). The island's wonderful hourglass shape is home to great beaches, deep jungles, beautiful



lakes and fantastic waterfalls, which are wonderful to explore on some treks around the island. For the fit and the daring, you can even try to trek to the summit of Concepción itself!

Ometepe has some unique petroglyphs dotted throughout the island, traces of the mysterious Niquirano civilisation that once occupied the island - the oldest of these date back to around 300 BCE, and many can be seen on your explorations of the island.

### **Day 13 to 14: Granada ( Sun 05 Apr to Mon 06 Apr )**

Today we will take the ferry back to San Jorge to rejoin our overland vehicle and take a short drive to Nicaraguas's oldest city of Granada, a beautiful town which oozes with colonial charm! We will have free time to explore the city upon arrival.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

On the following day we will have free time to explore the historic streets of Granada's old town, or take part in some of the myriad of optional activities that are available here.

In Granada we will stay in a centrally-located hostel, which has a mixture of private and dormitory rooms.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit the incredible San Francisco Convent and Museum in Granada, the oldest building in Central America dating from 1585	USD 2
Freely explore the spectacular buildings and atmospheric streets of the old colonial city of Granada	Free
Trek up the beautiful dormant volcano of Mombacho near to Granada, exploring its rugged terrain and dwarf forests	USD 55
Learn about the cultivation of cocoa and its manufacture into chocolate at the Choco Museo in Granada	USD 13
Take a boat or kayak trip around the beautiful Isletas de Granada, in search of the local birdlife and the magnificent views of the surrounding volcanoes	USD 25

#### **About Granada:**

Granada is the oldest European-built city in the Americas, having

been founded in 1524 - it was named after its counterpart in Spain, in honour of the recapture of the city from the Islamic Moors by the Catholic monarchy in 1492, which marked the end of the Moorish occupation of Spain. Being an important economic centre, the city saw many battles from English, French, Dutch and American pirates looking for supremacy over the area. Following Nicaragua's independence, the city entered into a bitterly-fought rivalry with León over which city should be the capital of the new country - in the end a compromise was agreed and the new city of Managua was constructed mid-way between the two!

Granada is a fantastic place to visit and explore, and has many exciting optional activities within reach.

## Day 15 to 16: León, Masaya National Park ( Tue 07

Apr to Wed 08 Apr )

Today we drive to the university town of León. En route we will have an included visit to the traditional markets in the small town of Masaya, and witness the incredible active caldera of the nearby Masaya volcano (if its volcanic activity isn't too high).

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

On the following day we will have free time to explore the town's wonderful colonial architecture or to take part in the many optional activities available here.

In León we will stay in a centrally-located hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Freely explore the charming colonial city of León and its incredible old buildings including the Cathedral of the Assumption, the largest cathedral in Central America	Free
Visit León's many museums and galleries, such as the world-class Ortiz-Gurdián art museum, the Gallery of Heros and Martyrs, and the Museum of Legends and Traditions	NIO 20
Enjoy a fun and unique trip out to 'sand board' down the ash slopes of the Cerro Negro volcano	USD 30
See the bizarre volcanic mud pools of San Jacinto near León	USD 18
Trek up the impressive active Telica volcano near León (please note that this is	USD 50

a fairly strenuous trek and you will need to be in good physical shape to participate - the trek usually takes about 6-7 hours)

Head to the fantastic modern visitor centre at the world-famous Flor de Caña rum factory USD 35

Visit the ancient ruins of León Viejo, the original settlement built by the Spanish before the town was moved in 1610 USD 35

Explore the stunning mangroves and wild sandy beaches of the Juan Venado Natural Reserve on a kayaking trip out of León USD 35

Head out on a horse riding trip in the stunning countryside near León, including views of the impossibly-circular crater of El Hoyo volcano and the beautiful Asososca lagoon USD 40

Visit the dramatic crater rim of the active Masaya volcano between León and Granada Free

Visit the traditional markets in Masaya village, famous for its local handicrafts Free

See a fascinating workshop in the village of San Juan de Oriente, demonstrating various local pottery-making techniques Free

### About León:

The original town of León was founded by the Spanish in 1524, but was moved to its current location in 1610 after the original site suffered from a series of earthquakes - the ruins of the original site (now known as León Viejo) can be visited and are one of Nicaragua's most incredible historical sites. The city has an abundance of old colonial buildings and an extraordinary array of old churches, including the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of León, a Baroque-era cathedral that is the largest in Central America and has a very distinctive style. As well as this fantastic heritage, the city is a lively university town, and has a bewildering choice of optional activities available in the surrounding volcanic countryside - as such it is a fantastic stop on our trips through Nicaragua

### About Masaya National Park:

In the stunning volcanic landscapes between León and Granada lies the incredible sight of the Masaya caldera. Formed by an eruption around 2,500 years ago and growing larger ever since, the caldera is a massive crater with a glowing red lava fire at the bottom, with pungent sulphurous fumes being almost continuously pumped out. It is a 'sub vent' into the colossal Las Sierras shield volcano that covers a wider area, and volcanic rocks and ashes still cover the area surrounding the caldera giving the place a very haunting atmosphere!

### **Day 17: Somoto ( Thu 09 Apr )**

This morning we will drive to the Somoto Canyon, where we will have an included Canyon tour, or village tour if you prefer.

We will stay in dorm rooms within a small village.

Approximate Driving Time - 212km / 5hrs

#### **About Somoto :**

The Somoto Canyon had not been explored systematically until a group of scientists from the the Czech republic and Nicaragua "discovered" the canyon in 2004. The canyon is believed to have formed 5 to 13 million years ago.

### **Day 18: Lake Yojoa ( Fri 10 Apr )**

**Border information:** Exit Nicaragua at Las Manos, enter Honduras at Las Manos.

Today we will have a a full day's drive across the border into Honduras and to the beautiful countryside of Lake Yojoa.

In Lake Yojoa we will camp for the night in the grounds of a lodge and brewery.

Estimated Drive Time - 9-11 hours.

### **Day 19 to 21: Roatán ( Sat 11 Apr to Mon 13 Apr )**

Today we will take a short drive to the town of San Pedro Sula and board a short local flight to Roatán, the largest of the famous tropical Bay Islands. On arrival we will transfer to the area of the West End Bay, where we base ourselves for our stay.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

On the following 2 days we will enjoy lots of free time to take part in the wealth of optional activities available on Roatán, and of course to relax and swim on the stunning Caribbean beaches here!

In Roatán we will stay in a local hotel near the beach.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Head out scuba diving to the beautiful coral reefs off the coast of Roatán	USD 50
Head on an epic underwater expedition in a unique private submarine, exploring the dark depths hundreds of metres under the surface of the ocean	USD 500
Rent sea kayaks to explore the magnificent Caribbean waters surrounding Roatán island	Free
Go on a spectacular snorkelling trip around the highlights of Roatán, such as the Blue Channel and St. Anthony's Key	USD 30
Head out on a guided tour of Roatán, seeing some of the most beautiful spots on the island and learning all about its history	USD 65
Sail out on a deep sea fishing trip in the Caribbean waters near Roatán (price for the entire boat with a maximum occupancy of 4 passengers)	USD 90
Go out horse riding across the stunning island of Roatán, through its wonderful ecosystem of cacti, palms and orchids	USD 40
Take an exciting zip lining course on Roatán island	USD 45

### About Roatán:

Roatán is the largest of the Bay Islands, the famous islands in the Caribbean off the coast of Honduras and one of Central America's most scenic spots. This archipelago of coral islands set in the sparkling Caribbean is known for its laid-back atmosphere, and the culture of the seafaring islanders is very distinct from that of the mainland. The scuba diving and snorkelling around the reefs is said to be some of the best in the world and extremely good value, and there are a wealth of activities available here such as kayaking and simply relaxing on the superb beaches.

### Day 22 to 23: Copán ( Tue 14 Apr to Wed 15 Apr )

Today we will start early to transfer back to Roatán's airport and catch our flight back to the mainland, rejoining the bus! We will then continue

our journey west through Honduras, arriving at the small village of Copán.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

On the following day we will have an included guided visit to the spectacular Mayan ruins of Copán, followed by a free afternoon to explore some of the other highlights in the area.

In Copán we will stay in a local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Enjoy a guided tour of the magnificent ancient Mayan ruins of Copán	Free
Visit the Macaw Mountain Bird Sanctuary in Copán, home to many rescued birds such as macaws, toucans and kingfishers	HNL 200
Visit the beautiful old Mayan stone carvings of Los Sapos, with fantastic views over the town of Copán	HNL 30
Visit the Copán Butterfly Gardens, a serene garden bursting with tropical plants and dozens of moths and butterflies flitting about!	HNL 115

### **About Copán:**

The ancient ruins of Copán are the southernmost of the great Mayan sites for which Central America is famed. The area was populated by Mayans coming from the region of Tikal, and the city flourished as a major Classic period kingdom between the 5th and 9th Centuries CE. Copán developed a distinctive sculptural style, and the site is unique due to the 21 columns that have been found there that are heavily carved with reliefs depicting the passage of time and the lives of the Royal families. There are also a number of small pyramid-shaped temples and excavated vaults to explore on our visit there.

### **Day 24 to 25: Suchitoto ( Thu 16 Apr to Fri 17 Apr )**

**Border information:** Exit Honduras at El Florido, enter Guatemala at El Florido. Exit Guatemala at Anguiatú, enter El Salvador at Anguiatú.

Today we will have a full day drive into Guatemala and then through to El Salvador, arriving at the beautiful town of Suchitoto.

In Suchitoto we will stay in dormitory rooms at the Centro Arte Para La Paz community centre, which runs many programs for the local communities to build cultural identity, unity, teaching skills, self-sufficiency, environmental equality and a culture of peace.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours.

On on second day we will have the chance to explore the town with its cobbled streets and whitewashed houses.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Spend the night at the wonderful community centre of Centro Arte Para La Paz in Suchitoto, which runs many workshops and projects for the locals in the area

Free

### About Suchitoto:

Suchitoto is a reminder of El Salvador's past - a beautiful colonial town with painted houses and cobbled streets, it is a world away from modern El Salvador. The town overlooks the lake of Embalse Cerrón Grande, which is a haven for migrating birds, particularly falcons and hawks.

## Day 26: Cerro Verde National Park ( Sat 18 Apr )

Today we will drive to the stunning Cerro Verde National Park, where we will be surrounded by awe-inspiring volcanoes and countryside. In the afternoon we will take a guided hike up the Santa Ana Volcano.

In Cerro Verde National Park we will camp with basic facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the spectacular volcanic landscape of Cerro Verde National Park, one of El Salvador's gems

Free

Trek up to the summit of Santa Ana, El Salvador's highest volcano in the heart of Cerro Verde National Park

Included in Kitty

### About Cerro Verde National Park:

The centrepiece of El Salvador's Cerro Verde National Park is the towering peak of Cerro Verde, an extinct volcano which last erupted around 2,500 years ago. On the top of its crater there is one of the few cloud forests in the country, located at 2,030 meters above sea level. Cerro Verde, along with the volcanoes of Santa Ana and Izalco, form one of the most impressive landscapes in El Salvador. These volcanoes can be viewed from lookout points inside National Park, and there are some wonderful treks enabling you to see some fantastic views of northern El Salvador.

## Day 27: Antigua ( Sun 19 Apr )

**Border information:** Exit El Salvador at La Hachadura, enter Guatemala at Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado.

Today we will cross the Guatemalan border to arrive in the stunning colonial city of Antigua. The rest of the day is free to explore the beautiful colonial city and its dramatic surroundings.

In Antigua we will stay in a delightful colonial hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Take a trek up to the famous active volcano of Pacaya near Antigua	USD 79
Visit the Choco Museum of Antigua, learning all about the history of the culinary use of cocoa ever since the Mayan period	GTQ 120
Walk up to the Cerro de la Cruz viewpoint to get unrivalled vistas over the town of Antigua	Free
Visit the old Jesuit church of Santo Domingo, an iconic building in Antigua and home to six fascinating museums	GTQ 40
Learn all about the culture and history of Antigua at some of its museums, such as the Museum of Ancient Books and the Museum of Colonial Art	GTQ 30
Take a tour of the nearby small village community of San Lorenzo, and visit its schools and traditional handicrafts (only available on Tuesdays and Thursdays)	GTQ 250
Head out on an exciting exploration of the forests and farmlands surrounding Antigua on a mountain biking trip	USD 45
Head on a challenging trek up the Fuego or Acatenango volcanoes near Antigua (please note that both these treks are very strenuous and only those in excellent physical shape will be able to participate)	USD 59 - 99



Visit a traditional coffee plantation in the cool hills surrounding Antigua GTQ 200

Participate in a local handicrafts workshop in a village near Antigua, learning traditional weaving, cooking, or woodworking skills GTQ 200

### About Antigua:

Antigua is the commonly-used name for Antigua Guatemala, the old colonial capital founded in its present location in 1543 with the original name of Santiago de los Caballeros. The delightful historic city boasts a wealth of well-preserved colonial buildings in a Spanish Baroque style, so much so that the whole historical centre has been granted UNESCO World Heritage status. Antigua is also exquisitely located in the central highlands of Guatemala, surrounded by the towering volcanoes of Fuego, Agua and Acatenango.

Antigua is only a short distance from the modern capital of Guatemala City, and remains the cultural centre of the country - its old buildings and cobbled streets juxtapose wonderfully with its lively mix of Indian markets, indigenous marimba music and many bars and restaurants, creating a fantastic and unforgettable atmosphere. There are also countless optional adventure activities to be enjoyed here, including a possible excursion to the nearby active Pacaya Volcano.

## Day 28: Antigua ( Mon 20 Apr )

**Border information:** if joining in Antigua, you will most likely enter Guatemala at Guatemala City La Aurora International Airport (IATA code: GUA).

There will be an important group meeting at 18:00 at the joining hotel - please look out at the hotel reception for a note from your leader with more details about this important meeting.

The rest of the day is free to explore the beautiful colonial city and its dramatic surroundings, and to take part in some optional activities. Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Antigua 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 Antigua.

In Antigua we will stay in a delightful colonial hotel.

Hotel for the night: Posada La Merced

**Posada La Merced**

7a Avenida Norte 43

Antigua

Guatemala

Tel - +502 7832 3197

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Take a trek up to the famous active volcano of Pacaya near Antigua	USD 79
Visit the old Jesuit church of Santo Domingo, an iconic building in Antigua and home to six fascinating museums	GTQ 40
Learn all about the culture and history of Antigua at some of its museums, such as the Museum of Ancient Books and the Museum of Colonial Art	GTQ 30
Head out on an exciting exploration of the forests and farmlands surrounding Antigua on a mountain biking trip	USD 45
Participate in a local handicrafts workshop in a village near Antigua, learning traditional weaving, cooking, or woodworking skills	GTQ 200
Visit a traditional coffee plantation in the cool hills surrounding Antigua	GTQ 200

## Day 29 to 30: Panajachel, Lake Atitlan, Chichicastenango ( Tue 21 Apr to Wed 22 Apr )

Today we will head off on a short drive to Panajachel, situated on the shores of the beautiful Lake Atitlan.

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

On the following day we will have free time to enjoy some optional activities such as a boat on the lake out to some of the small local villages along the shoreline. If possible, we will include a visit to the famous Chichicastenango Market during these days, depending on the weekday. *Please note that the market is only open on Thursdays and Sundays so you may not be able to visit during your trip.*

In Panajachel we will stay in a nice local hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out on a boat trip to visit the traditional Mayan villages dotted along the coast of Lake Atitlan USD 30

Take a tour through the spectacular highlands surrounding Lake Atitlan and Panajachel, visiting picturesque villages and hot springs USD 45

Visit the bewildering Mayan markets at Chichicastenango, taking in the incredible sights, smells, and atmosphere (provided it is running while we are in the area) Included in Kitty

### About Panajachel:

The beautiful sparkling waters of Lake Atitlan can change colour from emerald and azure to lapis and olive, all in one day. The lake is perfectly set amongst forest-clad hills with three volcanic peaks on its far shores, making it one of the most scenic lakes in the world! All around the lake's edge are small villages where the local Indian life has changed little for hundreds of years - the people from each village have their own typical dress, and make all the textiles themselves in designs passed down through generations. The largest settlement of Panajachel is an ideal base to explore the lake and its villages - you can walk to the nearest village, Santa Catarina Palopo, where you can watch the women weaving their huipiles, or perhaps take a boat to the further villages of Santiago Atitlan or San Pedro la Laguna. Santiago is known for its colourful markets, whereas San Pedro has a very tranquil atmosphere.

### About Chichicastenango:

Chichicastenango is a small village that has perhaps the most colourful markets in all of Guatemala - everywhere you look, your eyes are met by stalls of multi-coloured textiles, local people in their multi-coloured clothes, and by the colours of the fresh produce in the vegetable market. The amazing sights, sounds and smells all contribute to the heady atmosphere of the markets, and its the ideal place to get a slice of local life and pick up all those souvenirs!

## Day 31: San Andres Itzapa ( Thu 23 Apr )

Today we will drive day to San Andres Itzapa, a small village located in the mountains around Antigua. We will spend one night at the community centre of Manos Amigas, run by the Italian NGO 'Mani Amiche' in support of local women who have been abandoned and abused, and who are staying in the centre with their children.

In San Andres Itzapa we will stay in dormitories at the community centre (please note that there is no option to upgrade to private accommodation here).

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

## Activity

## Approximate Cost

Spend a night at the Manos Amigas community project, a centre which has been set up to support local women and their children

Included in Kitty

### About San Andres Itzapa:

San Andres Itzapa is a small village tucked away on the mountains around Antigua, Guatemala. It is the location of one of our supported community projects, Manos Amigas, that works with women and children who have been victims of violence or abandoned. The centre creates a safe space to build their lives while benefitting from some of the health and education projects run by the organisation, such as professional training in craftwork, social sanitary projects, medical and dental treatment, and promotion of sustainable farming practices.

## Day 32 to 33: Rio Dulce, Livingston ( Fri 24 Apr to Sat 25 Apr )

Today we will drive north to Rio Dulce in Guatemala's beautiful central region.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-8 hours.

On the following day we will have an included boat trip to the village of Livingston on the Caribbean coast, before returning to Rio Dulce.

In Rio Dulce we will stay in an eco-lodge.

## Activity

## Approximate Cost

Enjoy a beautiful boat ride down the Rio Dulce to the Caribbean town of Livingston

Included in Kitty

Take a kayak out to explore the beautiful waters around Rio Dulce at sunrise

GTQ 150

Explore deep into the Guatemalan rainforest on foot and trek on the canopy bridges near Rio Dulce

GTQ 135

### About Rio Dulce:

Located in central Guatemala, the stunning river of Rio Dulce flows through dense forests and jungle that comes right down to the water's edge. A boat trip along the river is truly special, with dense foliage and tropical birds nesting in the trees and flying overhead. The river arrives at the Caribbean coast in the small and isolated village of Livingston - with no roads connecting it to the rest of the country, the village has developed its own unique character and laid-back feel.

## Day 34 to 35: Poptún ( Sun 26 Apr to Mon 27 Apr )

Today we have a free morning to enjoy some optional activities in Rio Dulce, before heading on a short drive to our fantastic eco-lodge near Poptún and have a free afternoon.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

On the following day we will have free time to take part in the many optional activities offered at our eco lodge.

In Poptún we will stay in an eco-lodge in a working Guatemalan ranch.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
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Trek out to the incredible River Cave near Poptún, walking through the stunning Guatemalan rural landscape and exploring the underground rivers by candlelight	GTQ 115
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Stay at a wonderful eco-lodge on a working Guatemalan farm near Poptún	Included in Kitty
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Take a day tour out to the nearby Mayan ruins of Ixcun, the comprehensive museum of Dolores and the beautiful waterfall of Mopan	GTQ 150
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## **Day 36: Tikal ( Tue 28 Apr )**

Today we have a short drive to the phenomenal Mayan ruins of Tikal, where we have an included guided tour. We will likely stop briefly in the colonial town of Flores en route.

In Tikal we will camp at a basic campsite close to the ruins.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
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Enjoy a guided tour of the phenomenal Mayan ruins of Tikal, one of the greatest ancient sites in the world	Included in Kitty
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### **About Tikal:**

Tikal is the site of a phenomenal ruined Mayan city, atmospherically located in the dense rainforests of northern Guatemala. Mainly built between the 2nd and 10th Centuries CE, Tikal was one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient Mayans - the city-state conquered much of the surrounding area and dominated the economy, politics, military, and culture of the Yucatán peninsular during this time.

Knowledge of the site was never totally lost amongst the native Guatemalans, but Tikal came to the world's attention again when German expeditions were guided there in the 1850s. Tikal is one of the

most spectacular and well-understood Mayan ruins due to the amount of artefacts and murals found there - a complete lineage of the dynastic rulers has been constructed from the information discovered there, as well as a detailed history of the complex relationships with rival states such as Teotihuacan, Copán and Caracol.

On a visit there, we are able to explore the old religious centre and even climb up some of the iconic pyramids to get an unrivalled view of the area below!

## Day 37 to 39: San Ignacio ( Wed 29 Apr to Fri 01 May )

**Border information:** Exit Guatemala at Melchor de Mencos, enter Belize at Benque Viejo del Carmen.

Today we have a short drive across the border into Belize and on to the village of San Ignacio, home to the country's best archaeological sites and adventure activities!

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

We will have two full days to take part in the many optional activities available in San Ignacio, including trekking, caving, biking, and exploring the excellent Mayan ruins in the area.

In San Ignacio we will stay in a forest eco-lodge.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Actun Tunichil Mukwal Cave, a Mayan archaeological site that includes ceramics, stoneware, and skeletal remains such as the famous 'Crystal Maiden'	USD 95
Head on a horse riding trip around San Ignacio	USD 85
Take a full day tour to the remote ruins of the ancient Mayan capital of Caracol, once twice the size of the modern Belize City	USD 110
Learn about local herbs and plants on a medicinal jungle trail en route to a release program for Green Iguanas near San Ignacio	BZD 12
Explore the ancient ruins of Xunantunich, Belize's most-visited Mayan site and home to the mighty El Castillo pyramid	BZD 10

Visit the stunning ruins of Cahal Pech, atop a hill overlooking the southern outskirts of San Ignacio BZD 30

### About San Ignacio:

San Ignacio is a beautiful town in Belize, close to the Guatemalan border. There are many optional activities in the area such as horse riding, mountain biking and canoeing - however, one of the best and most unique activities here is to head out on a caving trip through some of the incredible caves in the forests surrounding the town.

Close to San Ignacio are some incredible and rarely-visited Mayan sites, including Cahal Pech, Caracol and Xunantunich.

## Day 40 to 42: Caye Caulker ( Sat 02 May to Mon 04 May )

Today we will travel north to Belize City, where we board a speed boat to the island paradise of Caye Caulker.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

We will have two full days of free time to explore and enjoy the many optional activities available here, such as snorkelling, diving or taking a scenic flight over the phenomenal Great Blue Hole.

In Caye Caulker we will stay in a local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Head out to the stunning coral reefs off Caye Caulker on a snorkelling trip	USD 60
Take a scenic flight over the phenomenal natural Great Blue Hole off Caye Caulker	USD 260
Head out on a fantastic scuba diving trip through the colossal coral reefs off the Caribbean island of Caye Caulker (there are many different options and sites available)	USD 65 - 260
Hire sea kayaks to explore the deserted mangroves of Caye Caulker's North Island	USD 20
Go on a half-day fishing trip in the idyllic blue ocean near Caye Caulker	USD 250

### About Caye Caulker:

The Cayes of Belize are a group of idyllic islands off the coast in the Caribbean Sea - many of these are a short boat ride away from the

mainland, and all are stunning places to visit. One of the most popular cayes to visit is Caye Caulker, a laid-back limestone coral island that measures 8kms from north to south. All the action happens on the south side, where there is a superb mix of bars and restaurants all with that unmistakable Caribbean charm.

There are many activities available on Caye Caulker, most notably boat, snorkel and scuba diving trips through the startlingly blue waters and incredible coral reefs of the surrounding oceans. You may also choose to explore the islands mangroves by kayak, visit some of the other cayes, or head out on an unforgettable scenic flight over the famous Great Blue Hole.

## Day 43: Tulum ( Tue 05 May )

**Border information:** Exit Belize at Santa Elena, enter Mexico at Subteniente López.

Today we will head back to the mainland and rejoin the bus in Belize City, before continuing our drive to the stunning coastal village of Tulum.

In Tulum we will camp in a basic campsite near to the Mayan ruins.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-8 hours.

### About Tulum:

Spectacularly located atop a cliff over the dazzling Caribbean Sea, the ruined Mayan port of Tulum is a fantastically atmospheric and photogenic spot. One of the most well-preserved archaeological sites in Central America, Tulum was one of the most recently built Mayan settlements - it reached its height between the 13th and 15th Centuries CE and was still active 70 years after the start of the Spanish occupation of Mexico, eventually succumbing to diseases carried by the new settlers.

The compact site is centred around El Castillo (a 7.5m-tall pyramid), with the beautiful Temple of the Frescoes and the Temple of the Descending God being some of the more famous highlights. The stunning site sits on the clifftop overlooking the white beach, the palm trees and the turquoise sea. Nearby there are some wonderful beaches and some famous 'cenotes' (natural sinkholes) that visitors can explore.

## Day 44: Tulum ( Wed 06 May )

This morning we visit the Tulum ruins, one of the last cities built by the Maya and one of the best preserved coastal Maya sites. We will have a free afternoon to explore the beaches or take part in some optional activities.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out to explore some of the incredible cenotes (natural water-filled sinkholes)

MXN 100



near Tulum

Explore the phenomenal clifftop Maya-Toltec ruins at Tulum, wonderfully located right on the Caribbean coast

Included in Kitty

Hire snorkel gear on the beautiful beaches of Tulum

USD 10

Go on a scuba diving trip through the ocean reefs near Tulum, or to some of the area's natural cenotes

USD 100

## Day 45: Chichen Itza, Mérida ( Thu 07 May )

Today we will have an early start to drive to the world-famous Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World - we have an included guided tour around this spectacular site before continuing our drive to the beautiful and artistic colonial town of Mérida, the capital of the Yucatan state.

In Mérida we will stay in a colonial hotel in the heart of the city.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the spectacular Chichen Itza Mayan ruins on a guided tour, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World centred around the world-famous pyramid of El Castillo

Included in Kitty

Take a swim in the stunning natural cenote of Ik Kil near the ruins of Chichen Itza

USD 6

### About Chichen Itza:

The world-famous ancient Mayan site of Chichen Itza is one of the major highlights of Central America. The ancient Mayan city, dominated by the iconic El Castillo pyramid, was built between the 8th and 11th Centuries CE and became a major regional capital during this time, dominating political and cultural life in the lowlands of northern Yucatán. It exhibits numerous architectural styles inspired by many different areas of Central America, and is thought to have been the home to one of the most diverse populations in the Mayan world.

Chichen Itza was one of the largest Maya cities, with a relatively dense cluster of well-preserved buildings in the core linked by paved causeways called 'sacbeob'. The colossal pyramid of El Castillo dominates the area known as The Great North Platform - it houses a

huge staircase to an upper crypt housing a throne in the shape of a jaguar, painted red and inlaid with eyes and spots of pure jade. The steps up the exterior of the pyramid famously project a serpent-shaped shadow every spring and autumn equinoxes, thought to be a representation of the Mayan feathered serpent-god Kukulcan.

Nearby there is a Great Ball Court, once used to play a unique ancient game similar to basketball but using knees and elbows to strike the ball. Nearby to this is the Sacred Cenote, otherwise known as the 'well of sacrifice', which offered up treasures of jade, copper and gold as well as many human and animal bones when it was excavated. There are many other fantastic areas of the site to be explored, including the Temple of the Warriors and the Group of a Thousand Columns.

In 2007 the phenomenal Mayan site was declared one of the New 7 Wonders of the World after a worldwide vote.

## **Day 46: Palenque ( Fri 08 May )**

Today we will have a full day drive to the village of Palenque.

In Palenque we will camp in the grounds of a hotel located within the national park.

Estimated Drive Time - 10-11 hours.

### **About Palenque:**

Palenque is a small town in the far west of the Yucatán peninsula, deep in the hot and humid forests. It is the site of some of the most impressive Mayan ruins in all of Mexico, in one of the most atmospheric settings!

Although some of the oldest ruins date as far back as the 2nd Century BCE, the city-state of Palenque reached its height in around the 7th Century CE before declining a few generations later and being abandoned and enveloped by the forest. The city was a mid-sized settlement and much smaller than the huge sites of Tikal, Chichen Itza and Copán, but it contains some of the finest architecture, sculptures and bas-relief carvings ever found across the Mayan world. The hieroglyphic inscriptions found here have allowed archaeologists to construct a detailed history of the city, its rulers, and its complicated rivalries with neighbouring states - the famous tomb of Pachal the Great was found in the Temple of Inscriptions and replicated in the small museum nearby.

Palenque is a marvellous site to explore - whilst walking amongst the ruins it is quite often possible to hear a variety of bird song and the eerie calls of the Howler monkeys echoing from the jungle around us, which gives an added dimension to this magnificent archaeological site.

## **Day 47: Palenque ( Sat 09 May )**

Today we will have an included guided visit to the incredible Mayan ruins of Palenque, which rise out of the thick jungle surrounding

them. In the afternoon we will have free time to go on a jungle tour, visit the on site museum, or travel to the nearby waterfall of Misol Ha.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Take a fascinating guided tour around the magnificent ruined city of Palenque deep in the Mexican jungle, including time to freely explore the excellent on-site museum

Included in Kitty

## Day 48: Frontera Corozal, Yaxchilan ( Sun 10 May )

Today we will have a drive to the remote town of Frontera Corozal, on the Guatemalan border. In the afternoon we will have an included guided visit to the remote ancient Mayan city of Yaxchilán, which is only accessible via a boat trip down the river.

In Frontera Corozal we will camp in the grounds of a hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Take a boat trip out for a guided tour of the stunning and remote Mayan ruins at Yaxchilán

Included in Kitty

### About Yaxchilan:

Yaxchilan, meaning 'green stones' in the Mayan language, is an ancient Mayan city located on the bank of the Usumacinta river in the Lacanja region. Yaxchilan was an important city-state from the 1st Century CE until the 9th Century CE and dominated over smaller nearby sites such as Bonampak. The city had a major rivalry with the nearby Mayan city now known as Piedras Negras, and there is evidence of warring with Tikal and Palenque during its past.

The site is particularly known for its well-preserved sculptured stone lintels set above the doorways of the main structures. These lintels, together with the stelae erected before the major buildings, contain hieroglyphic texts describing the dynastic history of the city. The site contains impressive ruins, with palaces and temples bordering a large plaza upon a terrace above the Usumacinta River. There are no roads to the site, and we will need to take an hour-long boat ride from Frontera Corozal to explore the incredible area.

## Day 49 to 51: San Cristóbal de las Casas ( Mon 11 May to Wed 13 May )

Today we have a full day drive to the stunning old colonial town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, one of Mexico's most beautiful towns. and well known as the heart of the indigenous Tzotzil Maya culture. En route, we may have time for an optional stop at the stunning waterfalls of Agua Azul.

Estimated Drive Time - 9-10 hours.

On the following day we will have a free day for exploration and to take part in some optional activities such as taking a tour to the fascinating Maya village of San Juan Chamula, or exploring the nearby Lagunas de Montebello National Park.

On the next day we will have an included boat trip down the phenomenal Sumidero Canyon, viewing its colossal cliffs from the base and searching for the resident wildlife.

In San Cristóbal de las Casas we will stay in a good hotel in the centre.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Head on a boat trip along the breathtaking Sumidero Canyon	Included in Kitty
Head out on a mountain biking tour through the cloud forests and highlands surrounding San Cristóbal de las Casas	MXN 450
Visit the atmospheric Tzotzil Mayan villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan	MXN 250
Learn all about the traditional medicines of the Mayan people at the award-winning Mayan Medicine Museum	MXN 55
Explore the wonderful botanical gardens of Orchideas Moxviquil, and discover its collection of over 400 species of native plants and orchids	MXN 50
See the incredible showcase of handwoven fabrics from throughout Central America at the Mayan World Textiles Centre	MXN 52

### **About San Cristóbal de las Casas:**

San Cristóbal de las Casas is the cultural centre of the Chiapas region of Mexico, and lies in a valley in the beautiful Central Highlands of the state. The town itself contains some wonderful old colonial buildings and is famous for its amber jewelery. The surrounding area has many Tzotzil Indian villages, where many inhabitants still follow ancient traditions and beliefs juxtaposed with more modern culture and Christianity.

There are some excellent activities available here, with one big highlight being a scenic boat trip through the awe-inspiring Sumidero Canyon - formed over the last 35 million years, this incredible narrow canyon has a deep river running all the way through it and towering cliffs up to 1000m high on either side!

## Day 52 to 53: Oaxaca ( Thu 14 May to Fri 15 May )

Today we have a full day drive to the wonderful laid-back colonial town of Oaxaca, famous for its cuisine and indigenous cultures.

Estimated Drive Time - 12-14 hours.

On the following day we will have an included guided visit of the ruined Zapotec city of Monte Alban, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the afternoon we will have free time to further explore the area's highlights.

In Oaxaca we will stay in a good hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the splendid Baroque Dominican church of Santo Domingo in Oaxaca's colonial centre

MXN 50

Take a guided tour around the ruined Zapotec capital of Monte Alban near Oaxaca

Included in Kitty

See the incredible Tree of Tule, which with a circumference of 42 metres has the widest trunk in the world

Free

Visit the remarkably well-preserved Zapotec ruins of Mitla near to Oaxaca

MXN 64

Learn all about the history and cultures of Oaxaca at the incredible Museum of Cultures, one of the best regional museums in Mexico

MXN 64

### About Oaxaca:

Oaxaca is one of Mexico's most beautiful old colonial towns. The Spanish founded the town in 1521 in a valley largely populated by native Zapotec and Mixtec people, and its magnificent arcades and colourful markets are still populated by their descendants who come to sell their colourful woven blankets and shawls in the central square. The incredible old colonial churches, cobbled streets and superb array of museums earned the city UNESCO World Heritage status in 1987.

Also honoured by UNESCO are the nearby ruins of the ancient Zapotec city of Monte Albán - founded as early as 500 BCE, Monte Albán reached the height of its regional dominance between 100 BCE and 300 CE, becoming the most important city in the Oaxacan highlands and having high-level contacts with the city of Teotihuacan (near modern-day Mexico City). By the end of the 6th Century, the city became largely abandoned due to a loss of political influence. This unique site is full of some amazing buildings, ball courts

and magnificent tombs, and a lot of finely-worked gold jewelry was found in the city.

## Day 54: Mexico City ( Sat 16 May )

Today we will have a full day drive to Mexico's incredible bustling capital of Mexico City.

In Mexico City we will stay in a good hotel in the central district of Bellas Artes.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-8 hours.

### About Mexico City:

The colossal, bustling metropolis of Mexico City is the world's largest Spanish-speaking metropolitan area, home to staggering 21 million people! Despite its size the city centre still has a charming colonial feel with a massive Spanish-built cathedral dominating the Zocalo (the main square).

The city was originally founded with the name of Tenochtitlan in 1325 CE by the Aztec civilisation. The original location was on a small island in an inland lake, so chosen as it was said the Aztecs' principal god, Huizilopochtli, marked the site to the people with a vision of an eagle eating a snake on top of a cactus (an image which can still be seen on Mexico's flag!). By the the arrival of the Spanish in 1519, the Aztec Empire spanned between the Pacific and the Caribbean and stretched as far south as Guatemala. The conquistador Hernán Cortés arrived in 1519 and brutally invaded the city in 1521, whereupon the Spanish built over the Aztec temples, proclaimed the city as the capital of New Spain and renamed the city "Mexico" as they found it easier to pronounce.

Little of the Aztec city remains today, except the small site of the Temple Mayor and its museum next to the cathedral on the Zocalo. There are endless sights and highlights to discover in Mexico City, including the colonial palaces and churches of the historical centre and the artistic district of Bellas Artes, the incredible art galleries and countless museums, the wonderful music and food, and the stunning and peaceful Xochimilco floating gardens and Chapultepec Park (with the world-class Anthropological Museum in its leafy grounds). Nearby to the city is the site of Teotihuacan, one of the largest and most spectacular Pre-Colombian cities in Central America.

## Day 55: Mexico City ( Sun 17 May )

**Border information:** if leaving in Mexico City, you will most likely exit Mexico at Mexico City Benito Juárez International Airport (IATA code: MEX).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Mexico City. 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

See Mexico City's famous traditional mariachi bands in the evening around Garibaldi Square MXN 30

Explore the magnificent ancient Mesoamerican ruins of Teotihuacan near Mexico City MXN 75

Visit the beautiful Palacio de Bellas Artes and see it's immense murals by world-famous Mexican artists such as Diego Riviera MXN 70

Freely explore the huge area of the Zocalo in Mexico City's centre, along with its famous Metropolitan Cathedral and the Temple Mayor (the last remains of the old Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan) MXN 75

Explore the vast system of waterways and flower gardens at Xochimilco, possibly including a visit to the creepy Isla de las Muñecas (Island of the Dolls) Free

Freely explore the colossal Chapultepec Park, one of the world's largest urban green spaces and a cultural hotspot where you can often see the pole-swinging 'Volador' dancers Free

Visit some of Mexico City's most important museums and galleries, such as the old house of the iconic artist Frida Kahlo, the former home of revolutionary Leon Trotsky, and the Museo Dolores Olmedo art gallery MXN 250

## 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 CENTRAL AMERICA ITINERARIES

Central America is diverse continent so you should therefore be prepared for the adventure. There will be time for hiking and other activities such as horse riding, and you will need to be reasonably fit to participate in everything on offer.

Overland travel can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions can be challenging to some. You will need to be fit enough to help every day with the camp chores (cooking, washing up, general camp set up) as well as putting up and taking down your own tent. There are some long driving days and some early morning starts.

The step up into the overland vehicle, while not overly high can become tiring and you need to judge yourself to be physically fit enough to haul yourself up and down the step at least 8-10 times a day. The Central America 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.

## PANAMA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit Panama as a tourist for up to 180 days. Certain nationalities will need to buy a tourist card on arrival at the border for USD5.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **in advance**.

## COSTA RICA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit Costa Rica as a tourist for up to 90 days.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **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).

## BELIZE

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit Belize as a tourist for up to 30 days.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **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).

## MEXICO

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit Mexico as a tourist for up to 180 days.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **in advance**. Citizens of Russia, Ukraine and Turkey will need to apply for an Electronic Authorisation before travel.

## NICARAGUA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit Nicaragua as a tourist for up to 90 days. All visitors will need to buy a tourist card on arrival at the border for USD10.

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.

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).

## HONDURAS

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa

to visit Honduras as a tourist for up to 90 days.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **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).

## EL SALVADOR

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit El Salvador as a tourist for up to 90 days. Certain nationalities will need to buy a tourist card on arrival at the border for USD10.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **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).

## GUATEMALA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to visit Guatemala as a tourist for up to 90 days.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **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).

## FLYING TO CENTRAL OR SOUTH AMERICA VIA THE USA OR CANADA

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

An ESTA must be obtained **online** and **in advance** via the following link and paying the appropriate fee - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/> - please note that you will be denied boarding your flight if you do not have this arranged.

If you are not eligible for an ESTA, then you will have to obtain a B-1/B-2 visa for temporary visitors, and you will need to obtain it **in advance**. In this case it would be advisable to book flights that do not go via the USA.

Please note that if you have travelled to Iran, Sudan, Iraq or Syria since March 2011, or hold dual-nationality with one of these countries, then you will not be eligible for an ESTA and must instead apply for a visa. There are some exceptions to this, please see the following link for more details - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251577.htm>.

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

An eTA must be arranged **online** and **in advance** - please go to <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/>, apply and pay the appropriate fee.

If you are not eligible for an eTA, then you will have to obtain a Temporary Resident Visa, and you will

need to obtain it **in advance**. In this case it would be advisable to book flights that do not go via Canada. Please note that several Eastern European nationalities will need a visa.

## PERSONAL SPENDING

### PERSONAL SPENDING - NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on trips in North and Central America, we recommend you allow between USD20 and USD40 per day.

This will cover individual expenses such as drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips, and personal permits.

### NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA 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!

For obvious security reasons we hesitate to recommend you bring lots of cash with you, a sensible mix of cash and cheques and ATM cards is best. However, most of our past passengers have said they wished they had been told to bring more cash. Apart from the convenience of being able to change money in many more places, you will sometimes get a much better exchange rate for cash. ATMs are everywhere through North and Central America so it is very easy to withdraw cash as you go, and throughout this region the US Dollar is king.

## 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