

## VOODOO & VIBES OF WEST AFRICA, (ZAA)

Accra to Accra 21 days, departing 28 Dec 2020



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### TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

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**Route:** Accra to Accra

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**Duration:** 21 days

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**Transport:** Overland expedition vehicle, Pirogue (dugout canoe)

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**Accom:**  70%  30%  
Hotels, Campsites, Wild Camps

#### Physical Challenge:

EASY  HARD

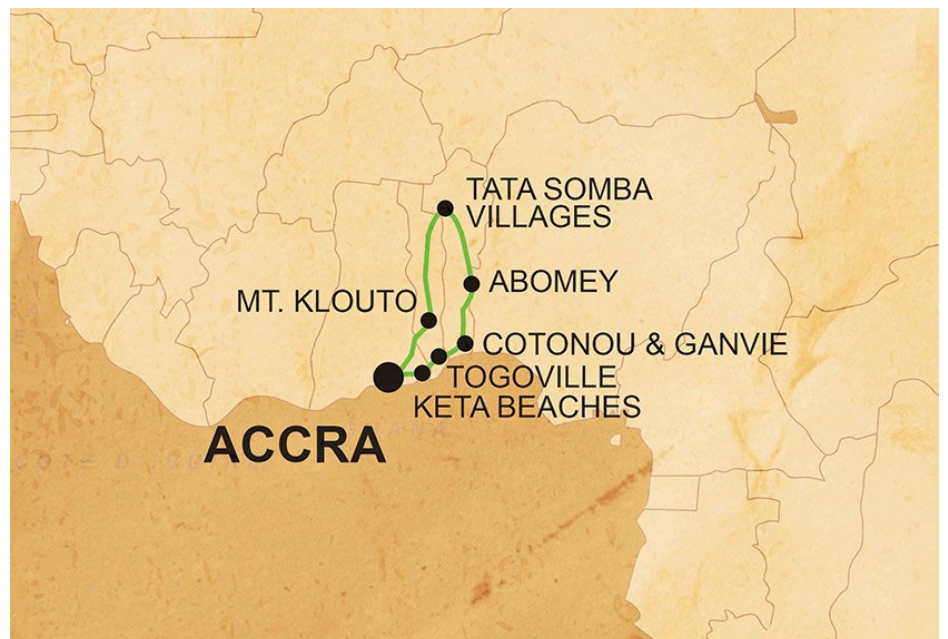
Your itinerary may include easy-paced day walks, bike rides, and other activities that are not too strenuous.

#### Lifestyle Challenge:

EASY  HARD

This trip has a bit of everything.

### ROUTE MAP



## COUNTRIES VISITED

### Benin



#### WEST AFRICA'S VOODOO CAPITAL

Although small, Benin contains a myriad of incredible highlights and more than punches above its weight! Benin is probably most famous for the traditional vodun (voodoo) culture, which is widely practiced across the country - in the tiny coastal village of Grand Popo we often are lucky enough to witness an energetic and magical vodun celebration, where the whole village comes out to the sounds of drumming and singing.

Further down the coast we find the historic town of Ouidah, which still bears the legacy of the tragic history of slave trading with its crumbling Fort of São João Baptista de Ajudá and haunting Point of No Return memorial. Further inland we find the phenomenal floating village of Ganvie, where a whole society has emerged living on stilt huts in the middle of Lake Nokoué and has developed a fascinating and unique way of life.

#### SEE LOCAL TRIBES, RUINS & WILDLIFE

Further still inland we discover the town of Abomey, the ancient capital of the once-mighty Dahomey civilisation and home to its ruined Royal Palace and museum. At the far north of Benin we find the incredible double-storey mud huts of the Tata Somba people and the remote National Park of Pendjari, one of the best reserves of wildlife to be found in [West Africa!](#)

### Ghana



#### WEST AFRICA'S CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Ghana was the first African country to gain independence from Britain, and today it is a proud and welcoming place. It has had a chequered post-colonial history, but certainly now appears to be forging ahead both economically and politically. It is a very friendly country, and the wonderful people are ever smiling and welcoming. Its beaches are the envy of all West African nations, its history and Ashanti culture is fascinating and it has some excellent National Parks. Internationally Ghana is acclaimed for its music, with Ghanaian artists such as Kofi Ghanaba giving concerts across the western world.

The capital of Ghana is the bustling coastal city of [Accra](#), home to some fascinating museums, urban beaches, and many bars and restaurants to check out Ghana's delicious food and exciting nightlife.

#### EXPLORE BEACHES, JUNGLES & NATIONAL PARKS

The central town of [Kumasi](#) is the centre of the Ashanti culture and home to one of the world's biggest markets where you can shop for all sorts of handicrafts and the colourful textiles that West Africa is famous for. On the coast there are the spectacular beaches of Elmina, the incredible jungles and canopy walkways of Kakum National Park, and the colossal old fort of Cape Coast, a haunting reminder of West Africa's slave-trading

past.

Ghana has a welcoming feeling and a unique and lively culture, and is perfect to start or end your West African adventure in!

## Togo



### TOGO OVERLAND TOURS

A tiny narrow country tucked between Ghana and Benin, Togo is one of the most vibrant countries in West Africa and the traditional home of the vodun (voodoo) religion.

Near to the sprawling capital of Lomé is the small village of Togoville, a historically significant settlement which is an incredible place to wander and get a taste of Togolese life. Togoville is a very important centre of the vodun religion, and you'll see many creepy 'fetishes' dotted throughout the town and may even get to meet a genuine vodun priestess!

### EXPLORE BEAUTIFUL TOGO LANDSCAPES

Further inland you'll find beautiful and peaceful landscapes dotted with tiny villages. Near the highland town of Klouto there are some fantastic walks to take in the views and search for the colourful butterflies that inhabit the area. Klouto is also home to a talented drumming group who perfectly capture the energetic rhythms of life in Togo.

## DAILY ITINERARY

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## Day 1: Accra ( Mon 28 Dec )

**Border information:** if you are joining in Accra, then you will most likely enter Ghana at Accra Kotoka International Airport (IATA code: ACC).

There will be an important group meeting at 10:00am at the joining hotel - please look out at the hotel reception for a note from your leader with more details about this important meeting. Your leader will collect your kitty and check your passport, visas, and insurance details at this meeting.

The afternoon will be free to explore the city of Accra.

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

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

Hotel for the night: Roots Hotel Apartment

### Roots Hotel Apartment

F97/2

15th Lane

Osu

Accra

Ghana

Tel: +233 30 701 3276/8

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the fascinating and chaotic Ghanaian capital city of Accra

GHC 5

Learn all about the history and culture of Ghana in the National Museum

GHC 40

Visit the famous Labadi Beach situated on the outskirts of Accra

GHC 5

Freely explore the huge Independence Square and Black Star Arch in Accra, where independence was celebrated in 1957

Free

Freely explore the area of Jamestown, Accra's oldest district and a vibrant fishing area

Free

Visit the outside of the famous Osu Castle, the seat of power in Ghana since the 1600s

Free



### About Accra:

Ghana's sprawling capital of Accra is a bustling coastal city boasting a lively atmosphere and some busy urban beaches full of musicians, acrobats and souvenir sellers.

The Perpetual Flame at the Cenotaph in Revolution Square is worth a look, and the National Museum houses one of the best collections in all of West Africa. Next to the museum you will also find a good craft market, perfect for a bit of souvenir shopping.

In the evening you can sample Accra's lively nightlife, heading out to one of the many bars and restaurants that can be found all over this surprising city.

### Day 2: Akosombo ( Tue 29 Dec )

This morning, we will apply for Togo visas at the Togolese Embassy in Accra. Once they are issued, we will leave Accra and head north to the village of Akosombo.

In Akosombo we will stay in a campsite next to the River Volta.

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

### About Akosombo:

The small town of Akosombo lies on the serene banks of Lake Volta, one of the world's largest artificially-created lakes. It was formed in the 1960s after the construction of the nearby Akosombo Dam, which supplies around 70% of the country's electricity demands.

### Day 3: Lake Volta, Akosombo ( Wed 30 Dec )

Today we will have an included visit to the nearby Akosombo Dam, a major project built in the 1960s to provide almost all of Ghana's energy needs. The rest of the day will be free to relax at our campsite in Akosombo.

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

Visit Akosombo Dam, the colossal 1960s project that provides almost all of Ghana's energy needs and created Lake Volta, one of the world's largest man-made lakes

Included in Kitty

### About Lake Volta:

Lake Volta in Ghana spreads over a massive 3275 square miles and



runs for over 320 miles from the most northern point, to the most southern point. The White Volta River and The Black Volta River combine to form the Volta River which eventually flows into the Atlantic Ocean. There are tropical temperatures most the year round, which has created the opportunity to find many local fisheries.

## Day 4: Mont Klouto ( Thu 31 Dec )

**Border information:** Exit Ghana at Klouto, enter Togo at Klouto.

Today we will have a full day's drive to the spectacular Mont Klouto, crossing the border into Togo.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

In Mont Klouto we will stay in a campsite, with the option to upgrade to dorm accommodation.

### About Mont Klouto:

Hidden away in mountains of central Togo is the serene village of Mont Klouto - only a couple of hours north of Lomé, it is a welcome relief from the heat of the coast. The mountains here are covered in dense forest, punctuated by gently cascading streams and waterfalls. A nature reserve has been established in the area because Klouto is an important habitat for butterflies - over 500 different species can be found here, many of them incredibly beautiful. It's an ideal place for doing some short hikes, and you can take a guided walking butterfly safari through the forests with a local naturalist guide.

## Day 5: Mont Klouto ( Fri 01 Jan )

Today we will have a free day around the beautiful Mont Klouto region, with the opportunity to head out on optional forest walks or to visit Kpalimé town nearby.

In the evening, we will head to the village centre to see a spectacular show of drumming and dancing from the local villagers.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

An evening of energetic drumming and dancing from the local villagers in Mont Klouto

Included in Kitty

Guided walks around Mont Klouto looking for butterflies and enjoying the beautiful forest scenery

XOF 8000

## Day 6: Central Togo ( Sat 02 Jan )

Over the next 2 days we will drive up the length of Togo, all the way through the remote northern border with Benin. We will wild camp for 1 night en route.



Estimated Drive Times - 6-7 hours each day.

## Day 7: Tata Somba region ( Sun 03 Jan )

**Border information:** Exit Togo at Ketao, enter Benin at Ouaké.

Today we will cross the border into Benin, before continuing our journey to the Tata Somba region close to the town of Tanguiéta.

In Tanguiéta we will stay in a basic local eco-lodge.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

### About Tata Somba region:

The Somba people (also known as the Tammari people) are an Oti-Volta-speaking people in the far north of Benin and Togo. They are famous for their two-storey fortified houses, known as Tata Somba ("Somba house"). The ground floor is used for housing livestock at night, internal alcoves are used for cooking, and the upper floor contains a rooftop courtyard and is used for drying and storing grain as well as sleeping quarters. These evolved by adding an enclosing roof to the clusters of huts joined by a connecting wall that are typical of Gur-speaking areas of West Africa.

## Day 8: Tata Somba region ( Mon 04 Jan )

This morning we will go on an included walking tour of the nearby Tata Somba villages with some of the local villagers. This is a fascinating visit to an area rarely visited by tourists, where we will learn a lot about the local traditional way of life and explore the famous two-storey mud huts of the area.

In the afternoon, there is the option to walk through the stunning area to some nearby waterfalls.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out on a guided walk through the beautiful scenery in the hills of the Tata Somba region to visit some local waterfalls

XOF 2500

Go on a guided tour of the Tata Somba villages of northern Benin, learning about the traditional culture and way of life and visiting their incredible 2-storey 'mud castle' homes

Included in Kitty

## Day 9 to 10: Pendjari National Park ( Tue 05 Jan to Wed 06 Jan )

From the Tata Somba region we have a short journey north to the beautiful Pendjari National Park.

We will stay for two nights wild camping in the National Park, where we



will have freedom to explore and head out on game drives in the truck in search of wildlife.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours to the park, then as much time as required on game drives.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit the stunning landscapes of Pendjari National Park, famous for being one of the best wildlife reserves in West Africa	Included in Kitty

### **About Pendjari National Park:**

The Pendjari National Park is situated in north western Benin, adjoining the Arli National Park in Burkina Faso. The park is named after the Pendjari River and is known for its wildlife. It is home to some of the last populations of big game in West Africa, and if you're very lucky you may spot elephants, hippopotamuses, buffalo, baboons, various antelopes, and even West African lions! Even if you're not lucky enough to spot some of the larger wildlife here, the park is also famous for its richness in birdlife and it is one of the most scenic areas of West Africa.

## **Day 11: Central Benin ( Thu 07 Jan )**

Today we have a full day's drive heading south through Benin. We will wild camp somewhere en route between the towns of Natitingou and Abomey.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours.

## **Day 12 to 13: Abomey ( Fri 08 Jan to Sat 09 Jan )**

Our journey today continues to Abomey, the ancient capital of the Dahomey kingdom. On arrival we will take an included tour of the Dahomey Palace and Museum. We will then have a free day to explore the local area.

In Abomey we will stay in a campsite, with the possibility to upgrade to rooms for 2 nights.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
A guided tour of the capital of the ancient Dahomey empire, including the Dahomey Palace and Museum.	XOF 3800

### **About Abomey:**

Abomey is the ancient capital of the Dahomey Kingdom, once one of the most powerful empires in Africa.

The Dahomey Empire developed on the Abomey plateau in around the year 1600 CE, becoming an important regional power in the 18th



Century after conquering key cities on the Atlantic coast. The Dahomey economy was built around conquest, slavery and international trade, and the civilisation was one of the most important practitioners of the Vodun religion in Africa. They were defeated by French colonial forces in 1894.

You can still see some of the original Dahomey palaces and treasures here, and the Musée Historique d'Abomey is a great place to learn about the history of the region. The palace is full of gold, silver, thrones, and tapestries of bloody battles, a testament to the prodigious wealth of this once-great kingdom.

### **Day 14: Ganvie ( Sun 10 Jan )**

This morning we will drive to Abomey-Calavi (a port on the outskirts of Cotonou), where we say goodbye to the truck for the night and jump aboard motorised pirogues to Ganvie, a fascinating town built entirely on stilts in the middle of Lake Nokoué.

In Ganvie we will stay in a basic hotel in the stilt village itself!

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours.

#### **About Ganvie:**

Ganvie is a phenomenal feat of human ingenuity - home to more than 20,000 people, the village is built entirely on stilts in the middle of the large Lake Nokoué and can only be reached by pirogue (dug-out canoe). The ancestors of the Tofinu people used the lake as a refuge from slave traders from the Fon and Dahomey tribes in the 17th Century and the Tofinu have lived on the lake ever since - the stilt village has slowly grown over the past few hundred years. The largest lake village in the whole of Africa, the local people here depend on fishing and fish farming for their livelihoods.

### **Day 15: Ouidah, Ganvie ( Mon 11 Jan )**

Today we will start with an included tour of the stilt town of Ganvie, exploring deeper on our pirogues and soaking up the unique way of life in the floating village. Following this, we will head back to land to re-join the truck and drive along the coastal road to Ouidah, where we may hopefully see many of the local fishermen bringing their catch in.

In Ouidah we will camp at an auberge on the beach.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-3 hours.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Visit to the incredible stilt village of Ganvie, where an entire community of fisherman live in a town entirely built on stilts in the middle of Lake Nokoué near Cotonou

Included in Kitty

Half-day tour of Ouidah, including the

Free

museums and exhibitions at La Maison Bresil, learning about the history of slavery on the 'Route des Esclaves' and the Point of No Return, and a visit to the voodoo Snake Temple.

See the Vodun Temple of Pythons in Ouidah, dedicated to the voodoo snake diety Dangbe and home to hundreds of revered pythons! Free

Visit the Point of No Return, the UNESCO-built memorial to the thousands of slaves that last departed Africa at that point - there is also the option to walk the 4km route from the fort to this point, known as the Slave Route Free

Visit La Maison du Brésil, an excellent exhibition of modern sculpture, paintings and photos, as well as a museum of voodoo culture and objects related to the African diaspora Free

### About Ouidah:

Benin is a country that takes the Vodun religion very seriously - it is recognised as an official religion and is practiced by over 60% of the population. Vodun is spread over wide areas of West Africa and spawned the related beliefs of Candomble in Brazil and Voodoo in the Caribbean. The tiny town of Ouidah is one of the centres Vodun culture, and hosts many voodoo festivals and celebrations throughout the year.

The town also has a fascinating and colourful history, and was an important port town during the days of the Atlantic slave trade. The "Route des Esclaves" is a 4km road between the Ouidah's History Museum and the beach, and is probably the same road along which thousands of slaves travelled on their way to board the slaving ships for the New World. The Portuguese, English and French all constructed forts here to protect their trading interests - the old Portuguese Fort of São João Baptista de Ajudá now houses a museum that gives you a unique glimpse into the terror and destruction that the slave trade wreaked on this part of the world - interestingly the 5-hectare fort was once the smallest recognised enclave in the world, as it was officially part of Portugal until its final annexation in 1961 which expelled the last two occupants.

The town is also home to the fascinating Temple of the Python - the serpent deity Dangbé has been revered in the Ouidah area for centuries, and this temple in his honour is home to dozens of the sacred pythons which freely roam the grounds.

## Day 16: Grand Popo, Ouidah ( Tue 12 Jan )

Today we will take a very interesting half-day tour of the sites in Ouidah, including the Voodoo Python Temple, the "Route des Esclaves" (Slave Route), La Maison du Brésil art gallery and the Ouidah Museum of History in the old Portuguese Fort of São João Baptista de Ajudá.

After this, a short drive from Ouidah brings us to Grand Popo, where we have 2 nights of well deserved relaxation on the beaches!

In Grand Popo we will camp at an auberge.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-2 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the Vodun Temple of Pythons in Ouidah, dedicated to the voodoo snake diety Dangbe and home to hundreds of revered pythons!

Included in Kitty

Half-day tour of Ouidah, including the museums and exhibitions at La Maison Bresil, learning about the history of slavery on the 'Route des Esclaves' and the Point of No Return, and a visit to the voodoo Snake Temple.

Included in Kitty

### About Grand Popo:

Grand Popo, located in the far south west corner of Benin, is a great place for a bit of rest and relaxation on the beach. The town was originally a colonial port, although coastal erosion has destroyed most of the old buildings. It is a pleasant coastal village with a strong Vodun culture and some mangroves to explore nearby.

## Day 17: Grand Popo ( Wed 13 Jan )

Today we will have a free day at Grand Popo for relaxing on the beach or taking a pirogue trip around the nearby ocean and mangroves.

There is also an option this evening to visit an incredible local vodun (voodoo) ceremony in the nearby village, complete with very energetic dancing and incredible magic tricks! It may also be possible to take a night walk in search of Atlantic turtles, which lay their eggs on the beaches between November and March.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out at night to walk to the remote beaches where Atlantic Green Turtles are often seen laying their eggs between November and March (please note that sightings of turtles are not guaranteed, and the chances of seeing them are more like 50-50!)

XOF 5000

Observe a local voodoo celebration in the nearby village of Grand Popo, watch the hypnotic drumming and dancing of the 'Nightwatchman', and see some mind-blowing black magic!

USD 20

Explore the rivers, mangroves and villages of Grand Popo on a pirogue trip around the local area

XOF 5000

## Day 18: Agbodrafo ( Thu 14 Jan )

**Border information:** Exit Benin and re-enter Togo at Hilla-Condji.

Leaving the beach behind, our journey continues over the border from Benin and back into Togo. We will head to the small quiet town of Agbodrafo on the southern shores of Lake Togo.

This afternoon we will take an included pirogue trip to Togoville, the centre of Vodun culture, where you will have a guided city tour and church visit.

In Agbodrafo we will camp in the grounds of an auberge on the lake shore.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Trip in a local non-motorised pirogue across Lac Togo to Togoville, where you can explore the town and learn all about it's history and culture	Included in Kitty
Relax on the beach of the stunning Lac Togo at Agbodrafo	Free

### About Agbodrafo:

Only 30 minutes east of the Togolese capital of Lomé is the small town of Agbodrafo, a quiet and serene town on the shore of Lake Togo. The lake is surrounded by a number of small villages, and fishermen drift on the waters in their dug-out canoes. As well as enjoying the lake and the beach, a highlight of our stay is to ride across the lake in a pirogue to the old German town of Togoville with the local fishermen.

## Day 19: Keta ( Fri 15 Jan )

**Border information:** exit Togo at Lomé, enter Ghana at Aflao.

Today we will cross back into Ghana and head for Keta, where we will visit the very atmospheric and evocative ruins of the abandoned Fort Prinzenstein, built by the Danes 300 years ago as a transit point for

transporting slaves to the Americas.

In Keta we will stay in a small local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the ruins of the small Danish slave fort of Fort Prinzenstein, and take in its haunting and moving atmosphere

Included in Kitty

### About Keta:

Keta is a coastal town lying in the Volta estuary region, a wetland in the south east of Ghana which comprises of several small islands and a complex of lagoons along the coast. The town has some pleasant beaches and contains the haunting ruins of the Danish Fort Prinzenstein.

## Day 20: Accra ( Sat 16 Jan )

The final drive of this trip takes us back to Accra, the chaotic capital of Ghana!

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

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the fascinating and chaotic Ghanaian capital city of Accra

GHC 5

Learn all about the history and culture of Ghana in the National Museum

GHC 40

Visit the famous Labadi Beach situated on the outskirts of Accra

GHC 5

Freely explore the huge Independence Square and Black Star Arch in Accra, where independence was celebrated in 1957

Free

Freely explore the area of Jamestown, Accra's oldest district and a vibrant fishing area

Free

Visit the outside of the famous Osu Castle, the seat of power in Ghana since the 1600s

Free

## Day 21: Accra ( Sun 17 Jan )

**Border information:** if you are leaving in Accra, you will most likely exit Ghana at Accra Kotoka International Airport (IATA code: ACC).

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

### IMPORTANT NOTES

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

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

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

We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards.

### PHYSICAL PREPARATION

#### PHYSICAL PREPARATION FOR WEST AFRICA ITINERARIES

The roads in West Africa can be very rough, which makes for some long bumpy travel days. Much of the area is very hot and humid. It is however all worth it for the spectacular scenery and for travelling through regions that very few other westerners go!

Accommodation in the region tends to be very basic. Where there are public campsites or hotels, the bathroom facilities can be very basic, and may be non-existent in the case of many of the bush camps on this itinerary. There is never toilet paper provided and shower facilities, if existing, often consist of a bucket of cold water and a jug. Once again, the spectacular serenity and chance to sleep so close to nature makes a little inconvenience all worthwhile and part of the African overlanding experience. Note that not all campsites are as basic as this description; it's just to make sure there are no surprises for you.

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.

Lastly, 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 at least 8-10 times a day, as can the constant setting and packing up of camp.

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 travel.

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.

## GHANA

Citizens of all countries (except West African countries) **will** need a visa to enter Ghana as a tourist for up to 30 days.

You must obtain the visa **in advance**, and you cannot obtain the visa at the border except in certain special circumstances - it is highly recommended that you do not try this, and simply get the visa in advance. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas).

**IMPORTANT NOTE** - if you are on our trip that goes through Togo and Benin and then returns to Accra, **you must obtain a Double or Multiple-Entry visa for Ghana.**

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

*The Stumble Inn,  
Elmina,  
Ghana  
Tel: +233 5414 62733*

If you are asked to provide a host in Ghana on your visa form, please use the details below:

*Aubrey Malcolm Green,  
Sabre Trust Project,  
Elmina,  
Ghana*

Tel: +233 2415 90201

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers upon entering the country. If you arrive at Accra Kotoka International Airport without a certificate you will be vaccinated at the airport (at massive expense).

You may require a Letter of Invitation to obtain your visa; if so please contact us as soon as possible and we will require a clear scan of the information pages of your passport.

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

## TOGO

Citizens of all countries (except West African countries) **will** need a visa to enter Togo as a tourist for up to 30 days.

The easiest way to obtain the visa will be **en route** whilst in West Africa, with the help of your tour leader. We have built time into the trip to visit the Togolese Embassy in **Accra, Ghana**, where we will all visit as a group to put the applications in, then collect the passports in the afternoon and continue with our trip. Please bring 2 passport photos for the application. At the time of writing (2018), the cost was approximately USD85 for all nationalities.

Due to the difficulty and expense of obtaining a Togo visa in many countries, we do not recommend trying to get the visa before travel. However, if you do wish to obtain your Togo visa in advance, please make sure you apply for a **Multiple-Entry visa** valid for 30 days.

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

*Hotel Le Galion,  
Rue de Camomilles,  
Lome,  
Togo  
Tel: +228 2222 0030*

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers upon entering the country.

## BENIN

Citizens of all countries (except West African countries and South Africa) **will** need a visa to enter Benin as a tourist for up to 30 days.

You must obtain the visa **in advance**, and you cannot obtain the visa at the border in any circumstance. The best way to do this is via Benin's e-visa system - <https://evisa.gouv.bj/en/>. You can apply up to 90 days before your entry date, it should take up to 24 hours to process however you should always apply at least one week before entry to ensure it is issued in time.

You can also apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas).

It is also possible for most nationalities to obtain a visa in the Benin Consulate in Accra, Ghana, which may be a good option for those arriving early to Accra - this takes between 1-3 working days to process, but please note that there may be additional charges in order to get an express visa in Accra.



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

*Chez Monique,  
Abomey,  
Benin,  
Tel: +229 2250 0168*

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

## PERSONAL SPENDING

### WEST AFRICA CURRENCIES AND CASH

In North and West Africa we recommend bringing Euros and not US Dollars. Please note that although we do quote kitties, personal spending and other items in US Dollars (because we operate globally), for trips passing through these countries it is better to bring Euros as exchange rates are more favourable. It is still possible to change USD if you need to. If you pay the kitty in EUR, the trip leader will confirm the exact exchange rate between USD and EUR to be used for the kitty at the pre departure meeting.

It is very easy to change your money into local currencies at borders and in most towns, so 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, but in West Africa travellers cheques are almost impossible to change so for that reason we recommend a mix of cash and ATM cards. Please note that most ATMs only take Visa cards NOT Mastercard.

You should take a mixture of denomination notes. Banks and moneychangers in most countries will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are **no more than 5 years old**. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Cash machines are readily available in most areas but are not always reliable therefore we recommend that you do not rely on them as your only source of cash. Credit cards such as Visa and American Express are the most commonly accepted, but be prepared for very high commission charges. Please do not rely on cards for daily use, as they are not always accepted outside of larger towns and cities. Please bring the majority of the money you intend to change in large denominations (USD/EUR100 and 50 bills) as the exchange rate is often significantly worse if you try to change smaller bills; however, it is also a good idea to have some smaller bills as well, as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over USD50.

### PERSONAL SPENDING - AFRICA

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on our trips in all of Africa, we recommend you allow between USD10 and USD20 per day.

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

### WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

#### Overland Lifestyle and Trip Suitability

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off the beaten track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are

inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity. On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc.

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

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

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## Who Travels with Dragoman?

Our groups are made up of people from around the world, and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split between males to females, and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that overlanding should be open to as many people as possible, and so although we have a minimum age limit of 18 (or 7 on our Family Trips), as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the wonderful aspects of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and the variety of people that you will meet.

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## Group Size

The maximum group size we take on our overland journeys ranges from 19 to 22 depending on the geographical location; however the average number of passengers is more likely to be around 16.

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

Please note that there is also an overlap of 2 trips in Zanzibar. This means a group starting a trip in Nairobi, for example, will visit Zanzibar at the same time as a group starting their trip there. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

Please also note that on some departures there may be more than one truck doing the same route. This means that you will be in the same hotel or campsite as another Dragoman group on some days. To ensure that you are not always at the same place at the same time as another group, your itinerary will most likely be slightly altered from the itinerary advertised in these trip notes.

## Our Crew and Guides

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

On all Dragoman overlanding trips, we usually have 2 western crew but please be aware that there may be times when one crew member has to leave the trip due to unforeseen circumstances such as visa issues, illness of a group member, etc. On some of our trips we have 1 western crew and 1 local driver instead of 2 western crew. On trips south of Nairobi in East and Southern Africa we will also have an African camp master/cook who is in charge of running the camp and organising all of the meals. Their knowledge of the local produce makes shopping at the markets great fun and you will learn how to

prepare and cook some unusual dishes.

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

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

Your crew have a duty of care to all members of the group and therefore they have the authority to ask you to leave the trip if you require serious medical assistance, you are behaving in an anti-social manner or refuse to comply with local laws and customs. In all matters relating to the trip, the leader's decision will be final and we appreciate your respect of this.

## Accommodation on Tour

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

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

The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges or even tree-houses. One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will camp away from the tourist crowds. Occasionally on some of our trips we are able to stay in villages or local homestays allowing us to get close to the indigenous population and ensuring that our money stays within the local community.

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## The Kitty

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

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

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

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

Once you book your trip it is very important that you check our website on a regular basis and just before departure for any changes to the kitty amount. We constantly update the kitty prices on our website and the kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Prices can go up or down with

no notice, and exchange rate fluctuations will affect costs.

The kitty is payable in full at the start of your trip (in instalments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips). Alternatively you can pay in advance via a bank transfer 3-4 weeks before the start of your trip - please see [https://www.dragoman.com/files/Dragoman\\_Kitty\\_Document.pdf](https://www.dragoman.com/files/Dragoman_Kitty_Document.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, Pakistan, Alaska 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 reports 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.

## 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**

## 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 21/01/2020