

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Blue Nile and Lalibela (ET 2017)



TRIPDURATION
14
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: ET

Trip Highlights - Blue Nile and Lalibela

- ✓ Lalibela - Explore impressive churches carved in rocks.
- ✓ Bahar Dar - Walk to the top of Tississat Falls, the Water that Smokes.
- ✓ Axum - Obelisks, temples and palaces in the final resting place of the Ark of Covenant.
- ✓ Simien Mountains - Rugged and spectacular mountain scenery.
- ✓ Gondar - Exceptionally well preserved castles from the 17th Century.
- ✓ Harar - A medieval walled city and the cradle of Islam in Ethiopia.
- ✓ Awash Saba - A National Park dominated by a dormant volcano, home to mammals and predators.

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 2 nights Simple Hotel
6 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 8 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Addis Ababa

End Point: Trip ends: Addis Ababa

Transport: Bus, Boat, Flight

Countries: Ethiopia

Blue Nile and Lalibela

Join us for a journey through one of Africa's least explored countries. As we travel along the Historic Route, we visit rock-hewn churches, ancient obelisks and the forbidden Medieval town of Harar. We also see many of the country's astonishing natural wonders, from the dramatic Tississat Falls to the rugged Simien mountain range.

Why Book this trip

This tour is for travellers who want to get to grips with Ethiopia and really understand the culture of this fascinating country. Many other operators just visit the highlights in Ethiopia, but on this tour you will also explore Harar and Awash National Park, a great opportunity to get off the beaten track and witness untamed Ethiopia.

Please note that Sue Guthrie will be leading trips departing on 28th October, 11th November, 25th November and 16th December 2017.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

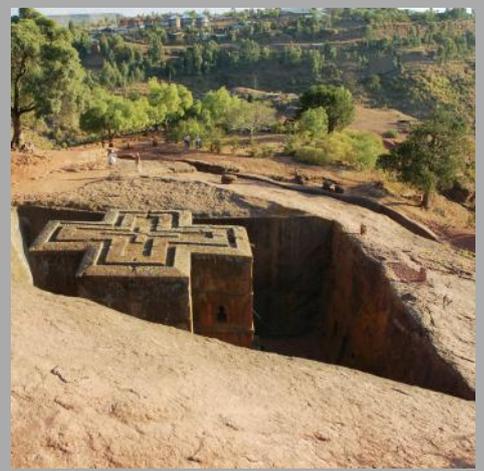
While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Addis Ababa, fly to Dire Dawa and drive on to Harar

Sitting at an altitude of 2438 metres, Addis Ababa is a modern African city which is far more developed than you might imagine. Barely more than a century old it is home to some elegant buildings set along wide streets, dispersed with plenty of green space. Our trip starts here in the morning. We have a few hours to acclimatise and freshen up in day rooms before returning to the airport for our afternoon flight to Dire Dawa. Upon arrival there is a real sense we have arrived in Africa, as



monkeys hang in the trees and vultures fly overhead. It is an hour's drive on to Harar, our home for the next two nights. Nestled into a hillside, Harar is a rarely visited walled city which is pierced by five gates and topped by 25 towers.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 In Harar; exploring the medieval city on foot

Harar is the cradle of Islam in Ethiopia and by the Middle Ages had become known as the fourth most sacred city in the Islamic world. It remained closed to outsiders for centuries. Our hotel is located within a short distance from the city walls and we spend today exploring the markets on foot and walking within this great maze of colour, noise and smells. It is a true assault on the senses as we share the narrow alleyways with market traders, goats and donkeys. The locals are incredibly friendly and children walk alongside us practising their English and giggling amongst each other. We return back to our hotel for lunch before venturing out again in the afternoon, this time our bus will drive us a little way outside of the town so we can appreciate the views of this walled city from a distance. We also visit a beautiful traditional Harari House and learn about life here from our local guide.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Awash Saba; visit Awash National Park

Today is one of our longer days of driving (approx. 6 hours) as we depart Harar and head towards Awash National Park which is situated in the savanna of the Rift Valley. The journeys in Ethiopia are a real highlight, the scenery and road conditions may be very different from what you imagine. The roads are predominantly smooth tarmac whilst the landscape is lush and green. Today we drive through rolling countryside dotted with small villages; we may pass by caravans of camels and children walking to school. Our first stop is in the town of Aweday which is home to the country's largest chat market (a mildly stimulating plant). Our visit is met with enthusiasm and interest from the locals as they are unused to seeing tourists here. We arrive at Awash National Park around mid-afternoon. The skyline of the park is dominated by the jagged edges of Mount Fantelle - a dormant volcano whose crater towers above the surrounding bush. We start our exploration at the Awash Falls, located near the park entrance, where crocodiles are often seen lazing by the water's edge. We will then take a game drive through the park; the most visible large mammals are the Beisa oryx, Soemmering's gazelle, warthogs and the Slat's dik-dik whilst the birdlife is also impressive. We return back to our hotel after sunset.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Drive to Addis; afternoon orientation tour

This morning is spent driving back to Addis. Travelling through the Great Rift Valley we make a stop at Lake Baseka and also an extinct volcanic crater before arriving back into the capital. We aim to arrive around lunch time before taking a tour of the main highlights of the city. This includes the Church of the Holy Trinity, whose large dome and slender pinnacles make it a landmark in the city, and the Ethnographic Museum which is located in the attractive grounds of Addis University. We end our tour with a visit to the National Museum which houses "Lucy". The partial remains of one of human kind's earliest ancestor discovered in Ethiopia in 1974 and believed to be 3.2 million years old. Tonight is free to experience one of the many restaurants in the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Fly to Bahar Dar, afternoon boat trip to Zeghie Peninsula

We have a very early start this morning as we take a flight north to Bahar Dar, capital of the Amhara region and situated on the shores of Lake Tana. After checking into our hotel we take a one hour cruise across the lake to the Zeghie Peninsula. Here we disembark and are met by friendly locals selling handmade crafts. We then take a 30 minute walk along a rough pathway up to Ura Kidane Meret Church and it's Museum. This impressive circular building dates back to medieval times and contains valuable murals and religious treasures. After our visit we make our way back across the lake arriving at our hotel around mid-afternoon, and have the rest of the day free to enjoy the surroundings. Our hotel is positioned right on the shore line and provides a wonderful setting for a sundowner. We can also walk around the lake and into town from here, visiting the local market or relaxing in one of the coffee houses where we hope to see a traditional coffee ceremony.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Sightseeing in Axum

We have a full day exploring Axum by bus and on foot with our local guide. Evidence of its former importance now lies in several places in or near the town. Ruined fortresses, palaces and churches, plus an abundance of giant obelisks, or 'stelae', stand as mute reminders of its former glory. We clamber down numerous steps into dark tombs, one of which is believed to be that of King Balthazar, one of the Three Wise Men; whilst we also visit Axum Cathedral, the chandelier here a gift from Queen Elizabeth in the 1960's. Axum claims to be the final resting place of the sacred Ark of the Covenant, but while its local guardians continue to celebrate the legend, the object of their veneration is kept strictly under wraps. There may be some free time at the end of the day to take a stroll through the town visiting the large market square and browsing the shops.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Fly to Lalibela; visit rock cut churches

Today we fly to Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the world's most remarkable historic sites. Deemed 'The New Jerusalem' it is believed to have been constructed some 800 years ago by King Lalibela as his capital city. Lalibela is home to 11 medieval rock cut churches and although churches carved in rock are found in other parts of the world, the ones here are particularly significant. Excavated on all sides of a rectangle, a large block of granite was left, isolated in the centre. This rock was then shaped and formed both inside and out and the carvings show extremely skilful workmanship. This afternoon's tour around the churches involves a certain amount of scrambling along uneven paths and through a labyrinth of tunnels. The churches stand in two main groups on either side of a stream, known locally as 'The River Jordan'. The most impressive and well known of these is "Bet Giorgis". Carved in the form of a Greek cross it is approached through a passage in the rock. Between them, these rock-cut churches are one of the great wonders of the world. We spend the afternoon visiting a handful of the churches and will return to see the rest tomorrow.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 In Lalibela; mule trek

This morning we meet our mules and muleteers for an adventurous ride up the mountainside to Ashatam Maryam Church. The going is steep in places and we need to hang on, but its great fun and the views across Lalibela and beyond are incredible. We ride for around an hour before dismounting and making the rest of our way on foot. The church is reached along steep shale pathways and good footwear is a must. There is the option to forego your mule for the bus and join the rest of the group at the start of the walk if you prefer. Vertigo sufferers or people with a low level of fitness may choose not to partake in this activity, your tour leader can advise you. Our return ride back down into town takes us through a small village where we may enjoy coffee with a local family. This afternoon we return to Lalibela, allowing more time to explore the rock-cut churches.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 In Lalibela, fly Addis, tour ends

This morning we take a flight back to Addis Ababa, where the tour ends.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 8 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Ethiopia

Lunch £: 3.00

Dinner £: 6.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Ethiopia

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 1.00

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Addis Abba - National museum £1

Bahar Dar - Sunrise boat trip £7 (minimum 5 people to operate)

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$50 for tipping of local drivers, guides, boat crew and for any miscellaneous tipping of hotel staff.

Foreign Exchange

Ethiopia

ATM Availability: Very Limited.

Credit Card Acceptance: Limited.

Travellers Cheques: Very difficult to exchange and are not recommended. Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currencyexpress.com/explore/>

Local Currency: Ethiopian Birr.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: It is advisable to take your spending money in Sterling, Euros or US Dollars cash (high denomination notes usually get better exchange rates). Please note that any pre- 1999 or torn US Dollar bills will not be accepted in Ethiopia. Please keep any receipts as you may be able to change back any unused local currency.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour leader will advise you.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Ethiopia: Visas for UK nationals can be obtained on arrival, although this can change at short notice, and you should be prepared to queue on arrival. Please ensure you have 2 recent passport sized photos with you when applying on arrival, these may or may not be asked for.

For a single entry visa you can apply via the e-visa website: <https://www.evisa.gov.et/#/home>. You will need to print a copy of your evisa approval letter and present this with your passport at immigration upon your arrival. The approval letter will take a minimum of

3 days to be processed so we strongly advise for you to apply within plenty of time before your departure. You will be permitted to stay within Ethiopia for upto 30 days or upto 90 days depending on which single entry visa you request. We strongly recommend for you to read the Help section on the e-visa website before applying.

Should you wish to apply for a visa prior to departure, please note that a single entry visa is valid for 30 days from the date of issue, so you must submit your application no more than two weeks prior to departure. It is also possible to apply for a multi-entry visa which is valid for 3 months from issue.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

Ethiopia

We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid and polio. Although the risk is low you may also consider immunisation against rabies and meningococcal meningitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is generally pleasant and warm, but varies with altitude. The long rains usually arrive mid- June to early September and the short rains between mid-February and April although this pattern has been completely erratic in recent times. After the rains, the highlands of northern Ethiopia are usually green and thus particularly scenic. The temperature all year round rarely falls below 18°C. Night-time temperatures in the mountains can be cold and can drop below freezing at higher altitude. There is a strong risk of sunburn at high altitude in Ethiopia. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Clothing

Daytime temperatures are mainly warm and comfortable but evenings in the highlands can be cold. We recommend a thick jumper or warm fleece and lightweight wind/waterproof clothing. Take a sun hat.

Equipment

Bring sun cream, a torch and memory cards for your camera. An insect repellent against fleas could be useful for the churches at Lalibela.

Footwear

Comfortable, good walking shoes with ankle support are strongly recommended as well as comfortable sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Please note that there is a weight restriction of 7kg for hand luggage/daypack for international and internal flights.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Ethiopia

Population: 96,633,458

Size of Country: 1,104,300 sq km

Major Language: Amharic, English

Religion: Christian, Islam

Time Difference to GMT: +3

Electric Supply & Plugs

Ethiopia

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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