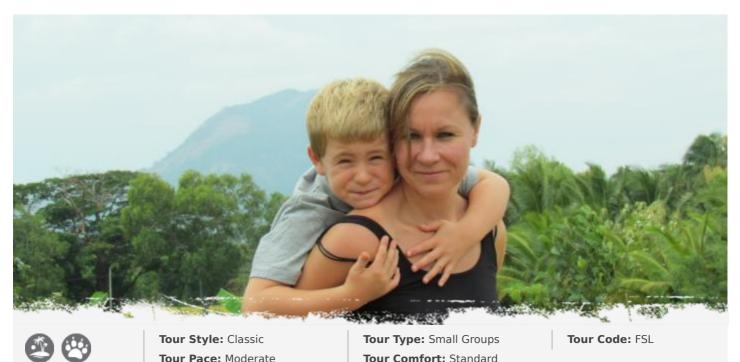


Elephant Odyssey (FSL 2014)

PERSONAL MANAGEMENT



TOUR **DURATION** 13



- Habarana Ride an elephant around the lake side on the look out for birds
- Polonnaruwa Explore this deserted ancient city and see the huge reclining Buddha
- Sigiriya Climb to the top of Lions Rock for incredible views
- Elephants search for groups of wild elephants in Minnerriya or Kaudulla National Park
- Kandy See the flying foxes in Peradeniya Botanical Gardens and visit the Temple of the Tooth
- Belihuloya Walk through paddy fields and bathe in rock pools before chilling out at the campsite
- Hikkaduwa Relax on the beaches

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 11 nights Standard

Hotel

1 night Standard

Camping

Included Meals: 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch,

1 dinner

Start Point: Join tour: Negombo **End Point:** Tour ends: Negombo **Transport:** 4WD, Rickshaw, Bus,

Bicycle

Countries: Sri Lanka From 5 years Minimum Age:

Elephant Odyssey

This exciting journey across Sri Lanka offers a little bit of everything for all the family: we explore dense jungles, discover Buddhist relics and enjoy a fun-filled few days on beautiful sandy beaches. Elephant safaris, tractor tours and game drives are all part of the adventure in this tropical paradise known as 'Buddha's Island'.

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

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.

Tour Comfort: 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: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

Your tour 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.

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.

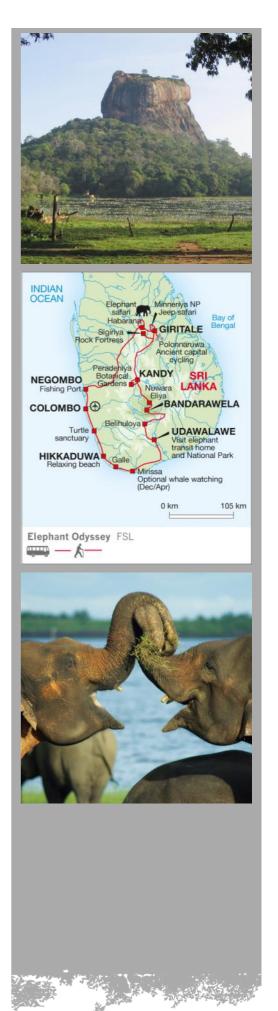
Join tour Negombo

Check-in at our hotel in Negombo (situated close to Colombo airport). The afternoon is free to relax after the flight.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝











Drive to Habarana; elephant back safari; drive to Giritale

Boarding our minibus we drive inland to Habarana. En route we stop in Negombo Village before driving on to watch the toddy tappers climbing tall coconut trees and collecting sap from the flowers to make Arrack, a local whisky type spirit. We then drive on via Kurunegala to Habarana for our Elephant back safari through the shrub jungles & across the Habarana ponds - here we should encounter a variety of small wild animals and birds amidst fascinating plants and flowers. We continue in our coach to Giritale.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝





Included Meals: Breakfast



In Giritale; explore the nearby countryside and villages

In the morning we use the most common & versatile mode of transport used by the villagers of nearby farming communities, a 'Land Master' (a two wheeled tractor with a trailer). We will visit a nearby village where we can experience the day to day life of a typical Sri Lankan village and also visit a chena or paddy cultivation of a local farmer. This afternoon, we explore the ancient city of Polonnaruwa by bike (with the option to travel in our bus), which reached the pinnacle of its glory in the 12th century. The city still has many interesting and spectacular buildings and monuments. There is the Royal Palace Group with its Audience Hall, Bathing Pool and Quadrangle-a very compact collection of ruins. Close by is the Circular Relic House, a curious round structure with a beautifully preserved 'moonstone' carved at the foot of a flight of steps. Another famous feature of the deserted city is the group of carved images of the Buddha known as Galvihara. Here there are four colossal figures, all of which are hewn out of solid granite. The Reclining Buddha is no less than 14m long!

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝





Included Meals: Breakfast



Drive to Sigiriya; visit Sky Fortress

We drive to Sigiriya (approximately 40 mins) for a morning climb up to the Sky Fortress. The ruins of this 5th century fortress are one of Sri Lanka's major attractions, a stupendous sight to behold and a feat of consummate engineering skill. A switchback series of steps (sometimes very steep) ascends to the top. Halfway up, tucked beneath a sheltering overhang of rock, are the famous frescoes - the Sigiriya Damsels, their colours still glowing. Magnificent views can be enjoyed from the summit of the rock palace (200m high). On our descent we board the bus for a short drive to Giritale. In the afternoon we visit to nearby Minneriya or Kaudulla National park where we take a jeep safari on the look out for wild elephants in their natural habitat.

Overnight: Standard Hotel







Included Meals: Breakfast



Visit Dambulla Caves; drive to Kandy

Leaving Giritale in the morning we drive to Dambulla, where a great series of caves have been turned into temples (dating from the 1st century BC). We will visit five separate caves, which contain a large number of Buddha images and a few sculptures of Hindu Gods. This World Heritage Site is visited by crowds of worshippers. We then board our bus for our 2- hour drive to Kandy. On the way we stop to visit a spice garden. Lying in the mountains, 112km northeast of Colombo, Kandy is in climatic terms, a world apart due to its altitude of 500m above sea level. The town was captured by the British in 1815, and is known more for its cultural and spiritual importance rather than its history. Buddhists from all over the world come to this delightful old highland town specifically to visit the Temple of the Tooth, the Dalada Maligawa. The costly jewelled shrine of the holy tooth (said to be 3.5cm long by 1cm thick and Buddha's left canine) is kept in the upper floor of the original building. This relic was brought from India 1,500 years ago and every year, at the time of the August full moon, it is paraded round the town with great pomp and circumstance. During this ten night festival of Perahera, the tooth (or a replica) is borne along on a richly decorated elephant, surrounded by saffron-robed monks and Kandyan dancers. Kandyan dancers can be seen performing every night at one or two locales around town. The evenings sight-seeing includes attending the Temple of the Tooth Ceremony.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝





Included Meals: Breakfast



In Kandy with visits to Peradeniya, gardens and markets

After breakfast, we drive to Peradeniya, located just outside the city, where we wander through the lush Royal Botanical Gardens. Afterwards, we will get rickshaws to the University complex before joining our tour leader for a walking tour of Kandy which will include visiting the town's colourful and interesting markets. The rest of the day is free for personal exploration. You may wish to continue



shopping at the Kandyan Art Association's workshops, which has plenty of brassware, batik, lacquer work and other craft items which make excellent souvenirs or presents.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝





Included Meals: Breakfast



Drive via Nuwara Eliya to Bandarawela

This morning we head off across the highlands visiting a working tea factory en route to the hill station of Nuwara Eliya. We take a look around this little town, known as 'Little England', famous for its lake, golf and race course and well-manicured gardens. We drive through the mountains and around green rolling hills covered in tea plantations. In the late afternoon we arrive at the bustling market town of Bandarawela.

Overnight: Standard Hotel



Included Meals: Breakfast



Visit Elephant sanctuary and game drive in Udawalawe National Park

Our road takes us through a pass and down the escarpment to the lowlands, offering fantastic views of the plains and the mountains above us. A short drive brings us to Belihuloya, a very picturesque and romantic hamlet situated about 160km east of Colombo in the historic 'Sabaragamuwa' province. This zone is a climatically transitional area linking the wet and dry zones with the hill country and the low country. This very important location has made it one of the areas of the country with the highest level of bio-diversity. We explore the surrounding villages on foot (a very easy walk), walking through paddy fields down to the nearby lake. On return to Belihuloya we may have time to bathe in the natural rock pool and have lunch. This is a unique place where two streams namely Belihuloya and Galagamaoya meet, creating a natural swimming area with clear unpolluted water that flows down from Horton Plains 2200 meters above sea level. We leave in the early afternoon drive to our camp on the Eastern border of Udawalawe National Park stopping on the way to visit the orphaned elephants at the Elephant Transit Home. Designated a national park in 1972, Udawalawe covers some 31,800 hectares and, surrounded by mountains, is a mix of rolling grasslands, teak plantations, rainforest and scrub. Renowned for its large herd of elephants (this is in fact one of the best places in Sri Lanka to see them), the park is also home to deer, wild boar, buffalo, jackal, even the odd leopard. Its resident bird population is also second to none, including a magnificent collection of birds of prey, chief amongst them being the impressive white bellied sea eagle. This afternoon we will drive into the National Park to take a game drive by jeep. Whilst it cannot be guaranteed, we hope to see some of the animals which can be found here including, of course, elephants. We finish off the day with a relaxing BBQ and campfire under the stars.

Overnight: Standard Camping



Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Visit a hot spring and a foundation project before arriving in Hikkaduwa

Today we will drive to our next location, Hikkaduwa. En route we will stop at some local hot springs to relax. Further on we will call in at a local lace making project supported by the travel foundation. This is a project which allows women to become self-sufficient and learn a skill to support themselves. You may want to buy a gift here to support the women or just watch while they show you their work.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🕵





Included Meals: Breakfast



Relax on the beach in Hikkaduwa

Today is free to relax on the beautiful beaches Hikkaduwa has to offer.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝





Included Meals: Breakfast



In Hikkaduwa with optional whale watching tour before heading to Galle fort

You may wish to book a whale watching trip leaving from the Harbour in Mirissa and see if you can spot some of the amazing whales of the area. This evening we will head to Galle fort, which dates back over 400 years. You will have the chance to walk around its walls and even watch the sunset over the sea. An optional dinner will be provided at the fort which you can choose to enjoy

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔬





Included Meals: Breakfast



Visit Turtle Hatchery; drive to Negombo

This morning you will have time to relax on the beach before we head back to Negombo. En route to Negombo we visit a Turtle Hatchery at Bentota to see the breeding process of the endangered sea turtle.

Overnight: Standard Hotel

Swimming Pool Available 🔝





Included Meals: Breakfast



Tour ends Negombo

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.



Included Meals: Breakfast

Ability to swim required

Whether in swimming pools, rivers, lakes, the sea or the ocean, participation requires that you are able to swim unaided for your safe enjoyment

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch,1 dinner included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

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

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for quidance 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

Kandy - Cultural Show £2.00.

Hikkaduwa - Whale watching £50

(Please note: whale watching is a popular activity of the region with a significant number of whales inhabiting the coastal area. The best time to see whales is December- April although this is never guaranteed)

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Local Staff: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Although Explore pays most gratuities for the smooth operation of the tour, some local staff will still look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided.

Accordingly, you should allow £20 for tipping. Your tour leader will account to you for any organised tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Sri Lanka

ATM Availability: Yes, usually in major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards can usually be used in most large shops and restaurants. Please note that Foreign Office advice warns about the problem of credit card fraud in Sri Lanka so please consider this when deciding if to pay by card while on tour.

Travellers Cheques: Can be exchanged in most major towns.

Local Currency: Sri Lankan Rupee.



The Adventure Travel Experts available online 24/7

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US\$ and UK£ are equally good

Where to Exchange: In most major towns.

Joining your Tour

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

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

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 joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour. Your insurer may charge an additional premium for certain activities.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Sri Lanka: All foreign nationals who intend to visit Sri Lanka for a short stay of up to six months, including transit passengers, must apply for travel authorization online prior to travel to the country.

To obtain an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) you must visit http://www.eta.gov.lk to apply for it prior to travel. It is strongly recommended that you print and bring a copy of the ETA approval notice with you.

The Sri Lankan authorities require that your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after departure from Sri Lanka.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Lone Parents

Sri Lanka

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the Sri Lankan embassy for further information on exactly what may be required.

Vaccinations & Protection

Sri Lanka

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Good mosquito repellent containing DEET is advisable. 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.



Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Sri Lanka

Year round high temperatures in coastal regions: Colombo averages 27°C. It is much cooler in the hills with Kandy averaging 20°C and Nuwara Eliya down to 16°C. Springlike temperatures in the hill country, but chilly evenings. Two monsoon periods: Apr-Sep when rain is confined to the southwest; and Oct-Mar when it falls in the northeast.

Clothing

Select your clothes carefully, bearing in mind that the climate is tropical and that upland areas are cooler and more temperate. Lightweight rainwear is also essential, and warmer clothing for the highland walks and chilly night temperatures in the mountains. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering your knees and shoulders, and taking off your shoes and hats. (You may benefit from taking along a pair of socks for temple visits as the ground can get very hot!). You will need to bring long trousers, or buy a sarong locally.

Equipment

A water bottle and a torch. Whilst camping we are likely to encounter leeches and you may wish to bring leech socks. All bed linen is supplied on our overnight camp - there is no need to bring any extra equipment or sleeping bags.

Footwear

Lightweight shoes and sandals

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and 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. 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.

Sri Lanka

Lunch £: 4.00 **Dinner £: 8.00**

Drink

Sri Lanka

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 Water £: 0.50

Country details

Sri Lanka

Population: 20,238,000

Size of Country: 65,610 sq km Major Language: Sinhala, Tamil

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +6

Electric Supply & Plugs

Sri Lanka

3 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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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, elephant, 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

Our commitment to the environment

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 and traditional, 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: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation
 - Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern
 - Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

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 http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

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.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% nonrefundable 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 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour 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: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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