

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Historic Baltic Republics (HB 2015)



TOUR DURATION
15
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard

tour Code: HB

Tour Highlights - Historic Baltic Republics

- ✓ Three Baltic capitals - Explore the historic Medieval centres of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius on foot
- ✓ Saaremaa - Discover timeworn windmills, sturdy churches and juniper groves on Estonia's largest island
- ✓ Rundale Palace - Visit the impressive 18th century palace, built by a Russian Empress for her lover
- ✓ Curonian Spit National Park - Search for moose and wild boar in this spectacular setting
- ✓ Regional cuisine - Enjoy the lively atmosphere and hearty food of local restaurants and cafes

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 14 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join tour: Tallinn

End Point: Tour ends: Vilnius

Transport: Bus, Ferry

Countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Historic Baltic Republics

Discover the historic Baltic Republics on this trip through Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. We explore the maze of cobbled streets in Tallinn, visit lively local markets in Riga and admire beautiful architecture and baroque churches in Vilnius. We also visit picturesque fishing villages, stunning countryside and sample delicious local cuisine on the way.

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.

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.

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 in Tallinn (Estonia)

Our tour starts in Estonia's enchanting capital of Tallinn. After checking in to our hotel and meeting the rest of the group, there may be time to explore some of the city at our leisure. With just half a million citizens, Tallinn is not a sprawling metropolis. This adds to its charm, as it is easy to explore on foot, with minimal traffic. Famed for its medieval architecture, the Old Town is one of the best preserved Hanseatic town centres in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city also boasts a vibrant cafe, restaurant and nightlife culture, which you may choose to experience this evening.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Morning walking tour of Tallinn with a free afternoon

Only 57 miles across the water from Helsinki and midway between St Petersburg and Stockholm, Tallinn has come under several different cultural influences since the first stronghold was built in the 10th century. Linguistically and economically, Estonia's closest ties are to Finland, despite the best efforts of other nations. In 1561, as a coveted trading port, it was seized by the Swedes and held for 150 years until the Russians took over and industrialised much of the medieval town. Perched on a hill overlooking the sea, we'll explore the cobbled Old Town on foot this morning. The colourful houses of the crooked streets reflect the German, Scandinavian and Russian periods of Tallinn's history. We'll walk through the quarter where merchants once traded and take in the historical and architectural highlights. The busy town square is a hectic mix of pavement cafes and shops, dominated by the 14th century gothic Town Hall. The pink Parliament buildings and Toompea Castle lie near the imposing deep yellow Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, which is topped with 11 bells. This afternoon has been left free for you to explore further at your own pace. Estonia is well known for its traditional handicrafts. Keen shoppers might enjoy browsing for knitted mittens and lacy woollen shawls, along with colourful hand embroidered linen products.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Tour of Saaremaa Island including Kaali Meteorite Crater

Today we drive towards the Gulf of Riga, heading for the largest of the offshore islands, Saaremaa, reached by a short ferry ride from the mainland. The island remained isolated during the years of Soviet domination as it was a strategic military outpost and was perceived to be a possible escape route to the west. It therefore retains its own culture, traditions and simple way of life. En route, we'll break our journey on Muhu Island, where you will have the option to visit Koguva Museum - a fascinating ethnographical open air museum, providing a great insight into the old way of life. There is also the chance to view the 4000-year old Kaali Crater - created by a meteorite with an impact comparable to the Hiroshima bomb, incinerating forests around it. Moving on, we will stop at the Karja Church, with its rich medieval stone sculpture decoration, as well as the photogenic Angla Windmills.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Explore Kuressare including St Laurentius Church

Highly regarded by Estonians for its reputation as a crime free society, Saaremaa naturally attracts many summer visitors from the mainland. We plan to spend the day on this relaxed and fertile island, where long-standing windmills, solid churches and juniper groves provide an appealing landscape. Kuressare is the main town, with a fine 14th century castle and picturesque centre. During our time on the island, we'll visit the Town Hall and St Laurentius Church. In your free time, you have the option to visit Bishop's Palace - one of the best preserved medieval castles in Europe.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Travelling to Tartu, the oldest town in Estonia

Today we take a short ferry ride to Tartu, the oldest town in Estonia and the country's second city. On the way, we will stop at the old town of Parnu for a lunch break and a chance to stretch our legs. Our free evening in Tartu allows us to explore this vibrant and leafy university city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Morning walking tour of Tartu including Toomemagi Hill

A walking tour allows us to explore the 18th century classical architecture of this cultural city, including the town square of Raekoja Plats, with its now famous 'kissing students' statue. We'll also visit Toomemagi Cathedral Hill, an Estonian stronghold in the 5th and 6th centuries and now the site of several university buildings alongside a beautiful park. Later you will have some free time to explore further. You may choose to return to Raekoja Plats, with its many shops and restaurants.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 See Cesis and Sigulda en route to Riga (Latvia)

On our journey into Latvia, we pass through an area which has many protestant links - one of the legacies of its German connections from the days of the Crusaders. On their return from the 13th century Holy Wars in North Africa, the Knights of the Sword were sent to convert the pagan Baltic people. Northwest Latvia provides some of the most attractive scenery in the country. This area is rich in archaeological sites, agricultural land and tranquil villages, dotted with rivers, forests and lakes. We will stop off at Cesis in the Gauja National Park where you have the chance to visit the ruins of the 13th century Order of Knight's Castle, as well as the soaring gothic tower of the 13th century Church of St. John. We will also have the opportunity to take in the evocative ruins of Sigulda Castle, once a formidable knight's stronghold. Before arriving in the capital, Riga, our base for the next two nights we visit Turaida Castle. The medieval castle is on the opposite bank of the Gauja River from Sigulda and the red brick structure is an imposing sight amidst the trees.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Walking tour of Riga's historic old town

Although one-third of Latvia's population live in Riga, most of the important sites are concentrated in a small area and so a walking tour is the most effective way to explore. The old Hanseatic city on the banks of the Daugava River is arguably the most beautiful in the Baltics. Its skyline is pierced with spires, towers and weather vanes, making the streets a joy to amble through. We will take in the Freedom Monument, Gunpowder Tower, St. Jacob's Church and the city's cathedral. Buildings have been painstakingly restored over the last twenty years and solemn gothic buildings are juxtaposed with baroque architecture. Art nouveau from the turn of the century reflects that period's affluence, with decorative architecture making every corner a delight. Riga also has a lively market, which sells traditional produce, such as smoked fish, sauerkraut, pickled garlic and crusty cheeses.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Free day in Riga or the chance to visit Jurmala

Today has been left free for you to enjoy Riga at your own pace. You may choose to relax and enjoy a long lunch at one of the many restaurants. Latvian cooking, as in other Baltic states, is wholesome, making use of the abundant dairy products, such as sour cream and yoghurt. Caraway seeds are often used, but otherwise food is hardly spiced. Cheese and meat filled pastries served with wild berry preserves are popular, especially when washed down with the local beer, which is sold from the tanker to the jar, bucket or bottle! Later in the day, we suggest a drink at one of Riga's lively street cafes. Alternatively, you may decide to visit Jurmala - a series of coastal villages with long sandy beaches and pretty cottages. The fascinating ethnographic museum of wooden architecture is also worth a visit.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Rundale Palace and the Hill of Crosses en route to Klaipeda (Lithuania)

Heading south, we'll visit Rundale Palace, built in the 18th century by Anna, Empress of Russia, for her lover, Count Biron, later Duke of Courland. The architect, Bartholomeo Rastrelli, also built the Hermitage in St Petersburg. The 138 room palace is richly decorated with some fine paintings and exquisite furniture and represents a classic example of the fusion of German and Russian society. The over ambitious Duke had to wait more than two decades to see the completion of the palace, as he was banished to Siberia on the Empress' death. We then cross into Lithuania, the largest of the three republics and distinguishable from its neighbours by its Catholicism, which acted as the mainstay of Lithuanian nationalism. Although Lithuania converted to Christianity almost 200 years later than its northern neighbours, the Church retained its power and today most people are devoutly religious. On our travels, we are likely to see many wooden shrines and lavish churches. We visit the 'Hill of Crosses' near Siauliai where a vast number of rosaries and crosses adorn a small hill. In more modern times, German and Soviet troops tried to crush this symbol of national and religious fervour, but images of the Virgin and literally thousands of crosses always reappeared. We continue to Klaipeda, a major port and the third largest city in Lithuania, where we will spend the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

EXPLORE! The Adventure Travel Experts available online 24/7

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Visit Curonian Spit National Park with time on the beach

We spend the morning exploring the area around Curonian Spit National Park, where the forests are inhabited by moose, wild boar and many bird species. We visit the wooden sculptures at the 'Hill of Witches' and the little fishing town of Nida, situated on drifting sand dunes. Its constant movement has meant that the community has had to move with nature over the centuries. Walking along the beaches, you may be lucky enough to find a piece of amber, especially after a storm. Depending on the weather, we can either spend more time at the beach or drive back to Klaipeda to explore more of the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Walking tour of Kaunas including the castle ruins

Today we journey to Kaunas - the country's temporary capital between 1920 and 1939 when Vilnius was forcibly annexed by the Poles. Situated in the heart of Lithuania, it is often regarded as the most typical city in the country. Many of its buildings date back to the 17th century, when the Jesuits bought tracts of land here and built a large monastery. Some buildings are older, with impressive examples of gothic architecture. After a tour of the town, the rest of the day will be free to relax and enjoy our surroundings.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Vilnius via Pazaislis Monastery and Trakai Castle

Our drive to the capital of Vilnius takes us via Trakai, the former capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Set on an island in a lake, the splendid red brick castle dates back to the 14th century. The castle houses some interesting museums, including an exhibition on pre-war Lithuania. We will also visit the Pazaislis Monastery, the largest monastery complex in the country and a fine example of baroque architecture. After checking in to our accommodation in Vilnius, the rest of the evening is free to start exploring the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Tour of Vilnius including the Chapel of the Dawn

The Catholic influence on Vilnius is very evident from the numerous baroque churches. By the turn of the last century, Vilnius also had an 80,000-strong Jewish community. However, by the end of World War II, the community was completely decimated. During our morning sightseeing of the capital, we'll visit the ancient university founded by the Jesuits - a centre of the Counter Reformation and a source of Lithuanian culture. In the newer part of Vilnius lies the main shopping street with the opera, cafés and parliament building. This afternoon has been left free to explore at your own pace.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 15 Tour ends in Vilnius

Our tour ends in Vilnius this morning, after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners 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.

EXPLORE! The Adventure Travel Experts available online 24/7

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.

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.

Estonia

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 15.00

Latvia

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 15.00

Lithuania

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 15.00

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.

Estonia

Bottle of Beer £: 2.40

Water £: 0.50

Latvia

Bottle of Beer £: 3.0

Water £: 0.50

Lithuania

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

International Departure Taxes

Airport Embarkation Tax

Local Departure Tax is levied on all passengers from Vilnius Airport: 60 Lithuanian Litas.

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

In Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius, it may be possible to attend an evening performance at the ballet, opera or a concert (except during July & August when the majority of the companies are on tour abroad); please check with your tour leader on arrival - allow 6 Pounds per performance.

You should also allow 10 Pounds for optional museums and 5 Pounds for optional walks.

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 recognised 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. Accordingly you should allow approximately 20 Pounds for tips. 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.

Foreign Exchange

Estonia

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn from ATM's in most cities.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are generally accepted only in the larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques are not always easy to exchange.

Local Currency: Euros.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: EUR, GBP or USD

Where to Exchange: US Dollars, GBP Sterling and Euros can be changed in most places.

Latvia

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn from ATM's in all major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants and shops.

Travellers Cheques: Are very difficult to cash on this tour.

Local Currency: Euro

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We suggest you take most of your spending money in cash (in small denominations). US Dollars and Euros are more easily converted than Pounds Sterling. N.B. US\$ notes should be in good condition (not torn or marked). Notes prior to 1990 (of any currency) are often not accepted.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Lithuania

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn from ATM's in most cities.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are generally accepted only in the larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques are not always easy to exchange.

Local Currency: Litas.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: EUR, GBP or USD

Where to Exchange: US Dollars, GBP Sterling and Euros can be changed in most places.

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

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.

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>.

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

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.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Lithuania: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Latvia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Estonia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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

Visa regulations in the Baltics are often subject to frequent change to check before you go. During this tour we enter Estonia and Latvia twice and Lithuania once, so please ensure your visas are valid for the required number of entries.

Vaccinations & Protection

Estonia

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus and hepatitis A. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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.

Latvia

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Consult your travel clinic for further advice. tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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.

Lithuania

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus and hepatitis A. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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

Estonia

Summer days in the Baltics are warm though changeable and only light clothing is needed. Temperatures can reach the mid 30's in the summer (though usually in the mid to high 20's). At night temperatures can drop, so bring a warmer sweater. Being a maritime climate it can rain at any time of the year so make sure you have a waterproof or umbrella.

Latvia

Summers in Latvia are generally hot and sunny and less humid than in Central Europe, with temperatures reaching 30°C. In fact, the early autumn period is often to be compared with a true Indian Summer, dry and sunny. The first snows usually start in November. Late August, early September can, however, be quite cold.

Lithuania

Summer days in the Baltics are warm though changeable and only light clothing is needed. Temperatures can reach the mid 30's in the summer (though usually in the mid to high 20's). At night temperatures can drop, so bring a warmer sweater. Being a maritime climate it can rain at any time of the year so make sure you have a waterproof or umbrella.

Clothing

Lightweight clothes during the day plus some warmer clothes for colder nights. Take a lightweight rain-jacket. Ladies should take a headscarf for entering churches. There are plenty of chances for a swim in the sea, so you may like to bring a swim suit and towel.

Equipment

Insect repellent. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies. Sunglasses. Eye masks for sleeping during white nights.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals for relaxing and walking shoes for walking tours and optional walks.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack for personal items. Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Estonia

Population: 1,340,194

Size of Country: 45,227 sq km

Major Language: Estonian

Religion: Evangelical Lutheranism

Time Difference to GMT: +2

Latvia

Population: 2,245,357

Size of Country: 64,589 sq km

Major Language: Latvian

Religion: Christian

Time Difference to GMT: +2

Lithuania

Population: 3,203,857

Size of Country: 65,200 sq km

Major Language: Lithuanian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +2

Electric Supply & Plugs

Estonia

2 Pin Round

Latvia

2 Pin Round

Lithuania

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, 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 appetite.

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 traditions, 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), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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

- [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.

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 2014 and 31st December 2015.

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: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

These tour notes were printed on 02/03/2015 13:34:01