

# EXPLORE!

## TRIP NOTES



### Loire Valley Cycling (LV 2017)



TRIP DURATION  
**8**  
DAYS



**Tour Style:** Classic  
**Accommodation**  
**Grade:** Standard

**Tour Type:** Small Groups  
**Cycling Grade:** Easy

**Trip Code:** LV

#### Trip Highlights - Loire Valley Cycling

- ✓ Châteaux of the Loire Valley - Explore the magnificent chateaux by bike in the 'Garden of France'
- ✓ Food and Wine - Experience fine local cuisine and optional wine tasting
- ✓ Montrichard - Bustling market town with a rich Medieval heritage
- ✓ Chateau of Chenonceau - The Ladies' Chateau spanning the Cher river and is among the most photographed of the Loire

#### Trip Essentials

**Accommodation:** 6 nights Standard Hotel  
1 night Simple Hotel

**Included Meals:** 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

**Start Point:** Join trip: Chenonceaux

**End Point:** Trip ends: St. Pierre-des-Corps Train Station

**Included Bike:** 21 gear Trek Navigator hybrid bikes

**Transport:** Taxi, Bicycle

**Countries:** France

## Loire Valley Cycling

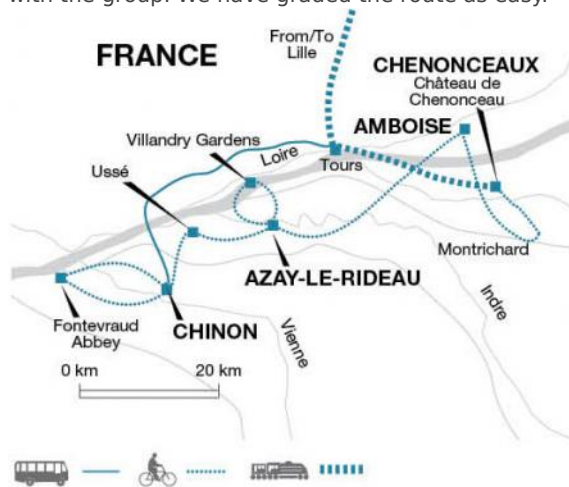
Bountiful vineyards, fruit orchards and delightful villages all explain why the beautiful Loire Valley is known as 'The Garden of France'. On this relaxed ride we follow quiet country roads from Chenonceaux to Chinon: we explore the medieval château perched on an island in Azay-le-Rideau, visit Leonardo da Vinci's final home at Clos Lucé and discover the elegant Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou.

### Why Book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

### Cycling Information

On this trip we cycle 235 km over six days (an average of 39 km per day) with further optional rides available. Two of the cycling days are circular routes and therefore optional. We cycle mainly on tarmac country lanes and gravel tracks. Maps are provided to cycle individually or in groups while the Explore Leader drives the support vehicle, except on circular routes when the Explore Leader will cycle with the group. We have graded the route as easy.



### 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

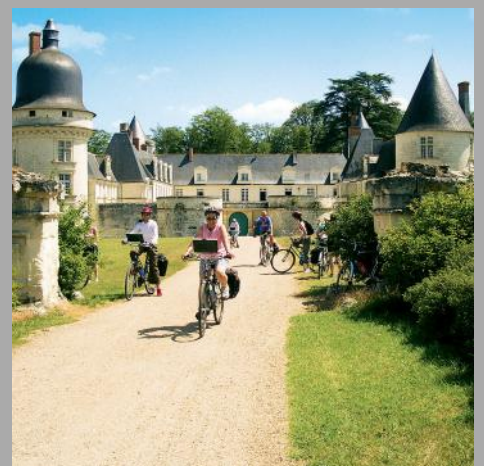
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

#### 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.

#### Cycling Grade: Easy

Suitable for cyclists who enjoy easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.



## 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

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

### DAY 1 Join trip Chenonceaux

We start our trip in the tiny village of Chenonceaux, home to one of the most famous and beautiful chateau in France. We are able to offer private transfer from Tours Airport. Please contact Explore for more information. If you wish to drive to the start of the trip please ask us for parking details.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** None

### DAY 2 Circular ride to Montrichard for wine tasting or chateau visit

Having had a chance to familiarise ourselves with our bikes, we start by exploring the area around Chenonceaux. There is the opportunity to cycle east of the village to Montrichard where we can taste the local wines of the Cher region, or visit the 17th century chateau of Gue Pean, a gentle introductory ride. Alternatively, you can just follow the local backroads through small, quiet villages. In the afternoon you may like to tour the large Monmousseau winery or visit the Mushroom Museum or a troglodyte dwelling. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres (Total 83 metres ascent and 86 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

### DAY 3 Cycle along forest paths to Amboise

After an optional visit to the chateau we pedal through the village of Chissay. We cycle through the tranquil forest and several pretty villages to our overnight stop at Amboise. On arrival you may choose to visit Clos Lucé, the house where Leonardo da Vinci spent his last 3 years and now a museum dedicated to his life and work and the Royal chateau on the banks of the Loire. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres (Total 161 metres ascent and 164 meters descent)

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

### DAY 4 Pedal a cross country route to Azay-le-Rideau

A longer days' cycling on cross country routes via St Martin-le-Beau and Nitray to Cormery, a town famous for its macarons, and then along the River Indre, with optional visits to Pont-de-Ruan and Sache, home of Balzac and now the site of an excellent museum of literature. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 59 kilometres (Total 210 metres ascent and 222 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

### DAY 5 Spend the day exploring Azay

We spend the day in Azay, where we can visit the chateau and walk in its gardens along the banks of the River Indre. For those wanting to explore further, south-east of Azay is the troglodyte village of Villaines-les-Rochers, now famous for its willow basketweaving. Or north of Azay is Villandry, with its beautifully recreated Renaissance garden, one of the finest in the whole of France. Our total cycling

distance today is approximately 37 kilometres (Total 108 metres ascent and 108 meters descent) or 51 kilometres (Total 164 metres ascent and 164 meters descent) depending on which route chosen.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 6 Cycle to Chinon through the fairy tale scenery

South-west of Azay, en-route to Chinon and situated between the banks of the Loire and the Forest of Chinon, is the Château d'Ussé - a truly romantic château and reputedly the setting for the fairy tale 'Sleeping Beauty'. On the north bank of the river are the vineyards of Bourgeuil, famous for their velvety red wines. A variety of routes to Chinon are possible, depending on your preferences. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 39 kilometres (Total 289 metres ascent and 297 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 7 Cycle the 'Wine Route' of Chinon or explore the town

Today we suggest you walk through the cobbled streets of the old town of Chinon and up to the château, where Joan of Arc identified the Dauphin, or cycle the circular 'Wine Route' of Chinon southeast along the River Vienne experiencing the famous Chinon vineyards as you go. Alternatively, you can take a westerly direction with the option to visit Fontevraud Abbey, which houses the tombs of the Plantagenet Kings including Henry II and Richard the Lionheart. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 32 kilometres (Total 33 metres ascent and 33 meters descent) or 44 kilometres (Total 136 metres ascent and 136 meters descent) depending on which route taken.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 8 Trip ends St. Pierre-des-Corps train station in Tours

After breakfast we drive to St. Pierre-des-Corps train station in Tours where the trip ends. We are able to offer private transfers to Tours Airport. If you would like to arrange this, please contact Explore for more information.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## Accommodation and Meals

### Accommodation Notes

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.

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 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.

### France

**Lunch £:** 11.00

**Dinner £:** 16.00 - 18.00

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## 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.

## France

**Bottle of Beer £:** 4.00

**Water £:** 1.30

## 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.

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## Optional Excursions

Montrichard - Entrance to Keep Euros 5 mornings.

Montrichard - Entrance to Château of Gue Pean Euros 5.

Chenonceaux - Château of Chenonceau Euros 9.

Amboise - Entrance to château Euros 8 and to Clos Luce Euros 12.

Villandry - Entrance to château and gardens Euros 7.50, to gardens only Euros 5.

Usse - Entrance to château Euros 11.

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## Tipping - Tour Leader

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

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## 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 Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

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## Foreign Exchange

### France

**ATM Availability:** In cities and most major towns

**Credit Card Acceptance:** In major restaurants (make sure you have informed your credit card company that you are travelling abroad as some companies will reject payments)

**Travellers Cheques:** Travellers Cheques are no longer commonly accepted and can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change.

**Local Currency:** Euro

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change. Please change currency into Euros prior to arriving in France.

**Where to Exchange:** Bureau de Change can only be found in major cities and large airports. Many French banks no longer exchange Foreign currency.

## 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.

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### 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](http://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>.

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### 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.

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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](http://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 Introducing 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](http://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](mailto: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

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

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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](http://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.

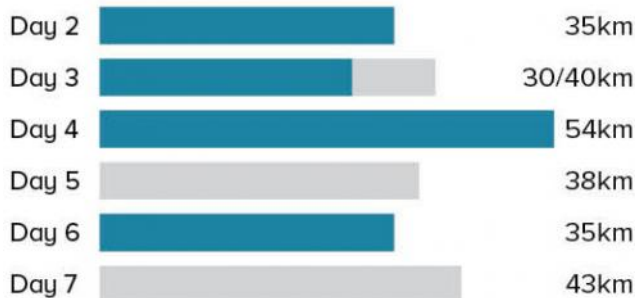
## Vaccinations & Protection

### France

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. 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 Trip

### DAILY DISTANCES



 Optional Rides

### Bike Details

Your included bike is a 21 gear Trek Navigator hybrid and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A 15-litre pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle carries the luggage from point to point and is driven by the Explore Leader. Maps are provided to cycle individually or as a group. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

### Climate

#### France

Across France, from April - August, weather conditions are generally warm and pleasant with moderate rainfall; Autumn temperatures are a bit lower and the winter months (though colder) remain mild. The summer months on the Mediterranean Coast in the south tend to be warmer than the rest of France and have less rainfall, and also more mild winters; freezing conditions are nearly unheard of. The mountainous areas of the Alps, Juros and Pyrenees can be quite different. During summer the morning and evening temperatures are considerably cooler and it becomes much colder in winter with heavy snowfall. Western France, along the English Channel, there can be very strong winds and frequent rain during the winter months Nov - Apr. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

### Clothing

In general pack for warm weather. However, you must bring a warm sweater or jacket for cycling on cool days and for wearing during the evenings. In case of rain, waterproofs are essential. Also, a pair of long trousers or tracksuit bottoms are useful for cycling along hedgerow-lined footpaths. There are some opportunities to swim in the rivers or local swimming pools. Please note that French health regulations require men to wear 'proper' Lycra trunks rather than shorts in the pool.

### Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

### Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trips that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

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## Luggage: On Tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage in a soft rucksack or holdall (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. We are unable to carry excess luggage above this allowance. Any excess luggage should either be left in storage or forwarded by you to the hotel in Chinon. Suitcases are not recommended. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

## General Information

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### Country details

#### France

**Population:** 65,821,885

**Size of Country:** 674,843 sq km

**Major Language:** French

**Religion:** Catholic

**Time Difference to GMT:** +1

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### Electric Supply & Plugs

#### France

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](http://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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