EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Snowshoeing in the Picos de Europa (SPC 2016)

WALK & TREK

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Moderate
tour Code: SPC

Tour Highlights - Snowshoeing in the Picos de Europa

- ✓ Winter Wonderland - Snow shoeing through some of the most dramatic landscapes in northern Spain
- ✓ Covadonga - Visit the imposing Basilica Santa Maria and walk around the stunning glacial lakes of the Western Massif
- ✓ Fuente De - Ride the longest unsupported cable car in the world for dramatic views over the valley 1,834m below
- ✓ Bulnes - Remote and picturesque high mountain village
- ✓ Garganta del Cares - Dramatic one kilometre deep, twelve kilometre long gorge

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	1 night Comfortable Hotel 6 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 6 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Asturias Airport
End Point:	Tour ends: Asturias Airport
Transport:	4WD, Bus
Countries:	Spain

Snow-shoeing in the Picos de Europa

This snowshoeing adventure takes us through the dramatically beautiful snow-capped mountains of Picos de Europa National Park. We experience a variety of mountain scenery on snowshoe routes in the Eastern, Western and Central Massifs. As a fitting finale we leave the snow behind and trek along cliff-cut pathways through the imposing Cares Gorge. Snowshoeing is fun and easy, and doesn't require previous experience.

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

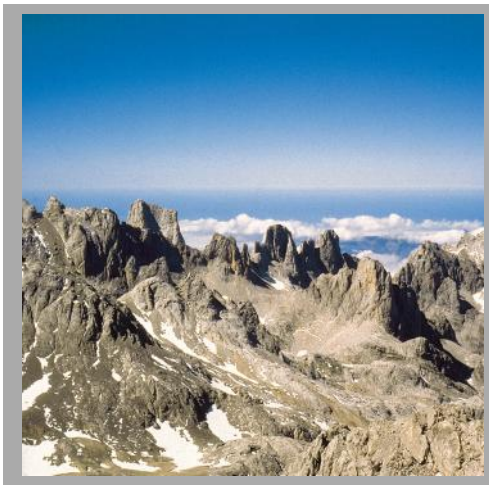
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

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.

Trek Grade: Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.



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 organization 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 Asturias Airport. Drive to Benia de Onis

Meeting at Asturias airport we then drive by minibus to the small village of Benia de Onis for our first night. This evening there is an opportunity for us to enjoy a relaxing spa (not included).

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2 Snow shoe from Lago Covadonga to Vegarredonda Refuge; Drive to Sotres

Departing Benia de Onis this morning we drive to Covadonga, the site of the first significant victory by the Christians over the occupying Moors in the 8th century. We pay a visit to the town's Catholic Basilica, before then driving on to the Lagos Covadonga. Lying in the western massif of the Picos de Europa National Park or 'El Cornion', these glacial lakes provide us with a beautiful backdrop for today's hike up to the Vegarredonda Refuge (1,460 metres). Following our walk we then drive on to Sotres, at 1,045 metres the highest village in the Picos National Park. Walking time: four hours. Distance: 10 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 Snow shoe up to the Refugio Andara (1,700 metres)

The Picos de Europa National Park boast the highest, and arguably, the most spectacular mountain landscapes in the whole of Spain. This morning we explore the eastern massif or Andara Range on a walk from Sotres to Collada de Antesoles and up to Refugio Andara (1,700 metres). From the high-point of our climb we then descend to Jito de Escarandi (1,291 metres), from where we return to Sotres by bus. Walking time: five hours. Distance: 8 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 Explore the Teju and Nevandi Valleys

Today we walk from Sotres to Espinama, lying at the southern edge of the Picos, through valley systems that bisect the central and eastern massifs. We begin the day walking up the Teju Valley, before following part of the course of the Nevandi River down to the village of Espinama, where we spend the night. The trail today takes us from a little over 1,000 metres and up a 500 metres incline, offering us some great views across the Picos before we descend back into the valley. Our luggage for an overnight stay will be transported on to Espinama by car. Walking time: five hours. Distance: 18 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5 Ride the Fuente De cable car. Snow shoe back to Sotres via the Aliva Valley

After breakfast this morning we drive the short distance to Fuente De, where we take the cable car up the start of today's walk. The 900 metres ride to the upper station is said to be the longest unsupported cable ride in the world, lifting us out the giant rock amphitheatre that is Fuente De, to reach the alpine meadows that sit perched some 1,834 metres above the valley below. From here we can see out across the beautiful Liebana Valley and, as we trek through the open spaces of the Aliva Valley we enter a world that is home to chamois, eagles and even wolves.Walking time: five hours. Distance: 18 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6 Snow shoe to Pandebano, Bulnes and Poncebos via the Texu Gorge

Starting from Sotres we walk this morning to the small village of Pandebano (1,212 metres), the site of another clash between the Christian armies and the Moors in 718 AD. From here we then head down to Bulnes, where we stop for lunch. Until the 2001 underground funicularwas built, Bulnes was an isolated and picturesque high mountain village that was only accessible by foot. This afternoon sees us heading into the dramatic landscapes of the Texu Gorge and on to Puente Poncebos (218 metres), where we rendezvous with our transport for the short drive back to Sotres. Walking time: five hours. Distance: 12 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Walk the Garganta del Cares Gorge

This morning we drive back down to Puente Poncebos, to where its medieval bridge spans the Cares River. This marks the starting point for our walk through the stunning Garganta del Cares, a dramatic gorge that drops over 1,000 metres and stretches for some 12 kilometres. Today's walk is a low altitude hike, so will not require us to use snow shoes. It is however considered one of the highlights of any visit to northern Spain and our path takes us along a traverse that has literally been blasted out of the canyon walls. Walking time: six to seven hours. Distance: 24 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 Tour ends Asturias Airport

We drive back to Asturias Airport today, where our tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Situated in the heart of the region's highest village of Sotres, Casa Cipriano is a small family-run hotel perfectly located as a base for exploring the spectacular and little known Picos de Europa mountain range in the heart of northern Spain's Asturias region. A walk through the village leads to a viewpoint of the surrounding peaks.

The hotel features a bar as well as a restaurant serving home cooked food - not to be missed is the traditional and very delicious La Fabada Asturiana, a hearty soup made with beans, chorizo and black pudding. In winter an open log fire makes for a comfy nook in the bar, whilst in summer the terrace outside is a popular spot for guests and locals alike. Next door the family also runs a small shop, selling everything from small locally made souvenirs to cheeses and cured hams.

Rooms are simple yet cosy and feature tiled floors, wooden furniture and an en suite bathroom with a shower over a small bath tub. Central heating during the winter ensures a comfortable stay. There is a TV and hairdryer in all rooms.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches,6 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.

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.

Spain

Lunch £: 8.00

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.

Spain

Bottle of Beer £: 2.5

Water £: 1.40

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

Spa - From 15€

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.

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

Spain

ATM Availability: In cities and most major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended.

Local Currency: Euros

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We recommend you take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

Where to Exchange: We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

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

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

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

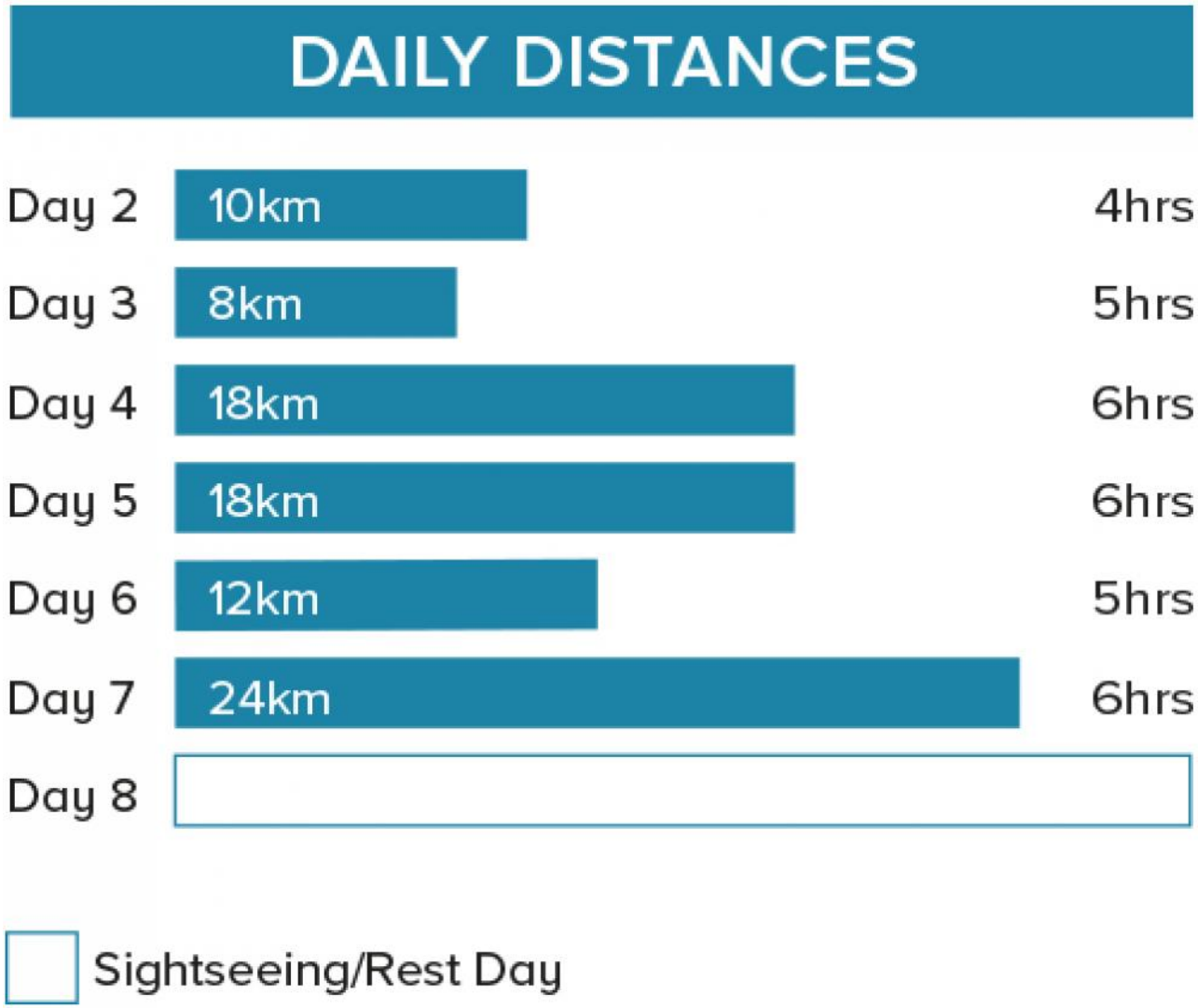
Under 18 immigration guidance

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.

Vaccinations & Protection

Spain

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. 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. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.



Trekking Details

This is a 6-day trek with an average of 4 to 6 hours snowshoeing each day. The final walk is without snow shoes. We have graded this trek as moderate. Snowshoeing is suitable for beginners, snow shoes and walking sticks are provided. We recommend you bring gaiters.

Climate

Spain

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a Spanish trip - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The high central plains suffer from fierce extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round.

Equipment

Small Rucksack/Daypack with straps (SPC only): In any mountain region the weather can change rapidly and you must be equipped for this eventuality. The straps will be useful if you have to remove and carry your snow shoes (SPC only). Your daypack should carry the essentials and therefore, be large enough to carry the following: waterproofs, sweater, long trousers (if walking in shorts), warm hat and gloves, sun hat, sun cream, water bottle (at least 1litre), tissues and your packed lunch. Most people normally find that this adds up to about 3 to 4kg. Camera equipment can be heavy so think carefully when deciding what to take.

Other optional items in a daypack might be binoculars, a diary or a book to read at lunch time. Please note that cooked meals and bottled drinks are available in the refuges, so it is not necessary to carry food and drink for your stay.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. We recommend a daypack with external straps to be able to attach and carry snowshoes when not wearing them. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Spain

Population: 46,030,109

Size of Country: 504,782 sq km

Major Language: Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Spain

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 & 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 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 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: 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 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 www.explore.co.uk/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 LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â 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: 2016 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2016. 2017/18 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2017.

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