

# EXPLORE!

## Tour Notes



### Europe's Last Frontier (AB 2015)



TOUR DURATION  
**14**  
DAYS



**Tour Style:** Classic  
**Tour Pace:** Moderate

**Tour Type:** Small Groups  
**Tour Comfort:** Standard

**tour Code:** AB

#### Tour Highlights - Europe's Last Frontier

- ✓ Tirana - Explore Albania's colourful capital on foot
- ✓ Ohrid - Spend time in this atmospheric and historic town, overlooking the famous lake of the same name
- ✓ Permeti - Enjoy picturesque walking trails from this highland town in the heart of the White Mountains
- ✓ Butrint - Discover one of the great archaeological sites of the Balkans
- ✓ Llogora National Park - Explore one of the most unspoilt areas in the Adriatic

#### Tour Essentials

**Accommodation:** 2 nights Hotel  
11 nights Standard Hotel

**Included Meals:** 13 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners

**Start Point:** Join tour: Tirana  
**End Point:** Tour ends: Kruja  
**Transport:** Bus  
**Countries:** Albania, Macedonia

## Europe's Last Frontier

Still emerging from isolation, Albania and Macedonia are overflowing with well-kept secrets waiting to be discovered. On this tour, we uncover the remains of past civilisations, from Illyrian tribes and ancient Greeks to the Romans and Ottomans. As we travel from the Adriatic Coast across the White Mountains to Lake Ohrid, we experience unspoilt natural beauty and a traditional rural lifestyle.

### 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 Tirana

We check-in to our hotel in Tirana, where we will spend the next two nights. The rest of the day is free to explore Albania's lively and colourful capital in your own time. There has been a fortress on the fertile Plain of Tirana since Roman times, although the city only really came in to its own in the 18th century. It became the capital in 1920 in an effort to provide a powerbase in the geographical centre of the country.

Overnight: **Hotel**

**Single Room Available**



 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 2 Visit to Petrela Fortress and walking tour of Tirana

This morning we will visit the National Museum of History, before driving a short distance to the Fortress of Petrela. The fortress' tower is one of the oldest structures in Tirana, dating back to the 5th century AD. Later this afternoon, we will take an escorted walking tour of the government buildings and the mosque, ending with an opportunity to visit the Sky Tower, where we can enjoy wonderful views of the city. Sometimes the visit to the National Museum of History in Tirana may not be possible due to events taking place. In this instance you'll instead visit Kamenica Tumulus archaeological site, which dates back to the Bronze Age, on day 5 of your holiday.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 3 We cross the border into Macedonia to explore Ohrid

This morning we drive to Elbasan to visit the fortress before crossing the border into Macedonia. Our destination this afternoon is famous Ohrid. This beautiful and atmospheric town has played its part in history since Roman times and we will see examples of its turbulent past on our sightseeing tour of the city this afternoon. Overlooking one of Europe's deepest lakes, of the same name, people flock to this area to enjoy its pretty beaches, pristine nature and inspiring character. Our final visit of the day is to the Eastern Orthodox Monastery of Saint Naum before we transfer back into Albania and to nearby Pogradec for the night.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 4 Drive to Korca via the Medieval town of Voskopoja

This morning's journey takes us to Voskopoja - once a grand Medieval town, famous for its 24 churches, which were adorned with many exquisite frescoes. Today, only seven survive. After lunch, we continue on to Korca, where we will spend the night. Famous for its folk songs and cooking traditions, our tour of the city includes a visit to its impressive cathedral and Medieval museum.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 5 Drive to Permeti on one of the most scenic routes in Albania

This morning, our journey takes us through the southern highlands to Permeti, where we will spend the next two nights. Travelling along one of the most scenic routes in Albania, we pass through the small town of Erseka in the foothills of the Gramos Mountains before reaching the Barmash Pass (1757 metres). From here, we can enjoy sweeping views of the Nemercka Mountains, which are snow-covered for most of the year and form the border with Greece. On the final leg of our journey, we twist through the mountains to the small highland town of Permeti, situated on the Vjosa River in the heart of the White Mountains.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 6 Enjoy Raki with the locals and a traditional BBQ lunch on our walk in Benja

Today, we can look forward to the opportunity of walking through the scenic Benja countryside and bathing in hot springs. Strolling alongside the scenic Vjosa River, we pass vineyards producing some of the best wine in the country. After we've worked up an appetite we'll stop in a village and enjoy a drink of raki with the locals before heading to a nearby village restaurant to enjoy a traditional Albanian roast lamb barbeque. The pace of life is slow here, following nature's rhythm and today we'll get the chance to sample it.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch



## DAY 7 Drive through the picturesque mountain scenery to Gjirokastra

Today we will visit the village of Leusa and its 11th century church, before beginning our journey to Gjirokastra. Our route takes us through the White Mountains via the magnificent Kelcyra Gorge, carved by the Vjosa River on its way to the Adriatic Sea. The scenery in the mountains is breathtaking, with rolling valleys covered with some of the most exuberant wildflowers you are likely to see anywhere in Albania. When Lord Byron visited southern Albania in 1810 he described the early morning view of the landscape in his poem Childe Harold - 'morn dawns and with it stern Albania's hills, robed half in mist, bedewed in snowy rills'. As we travel, look out for eagles soaring in the thermals above us. Albania's mountains are home to many animal species now rare in other parts of Europe. Wolf and jackal can be found in the low oak and beech forests, while brown bear, lynx and weasel inhabit the higher pine-clad slopes. Later, we arrive in Gjirokastra - a delightful city with beautiful buildings that epitomise Albanian architecture and perhaps the Albanian soul too. This afternoon we take a walking tour through its cobbled streets. Highlights include a visit to Gjirokastra Castle and the ethnographic museum in the house where Enver Hoxha was born.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 8 Explore Butrint, one of the greater archaeological sites in the Balkans

This morning's drive takes us to the pleasant Ionic town of Saranda. Because of its close proximity to Corfu, ten kilometres away, it has a more cosmopolitan feel than the other places we have visited thus far. Along the way to Saranda we'll stop at a karstic spring known as 'the blue eye' to marvel at the brilliant blue, clear waters. This afternoon, we visit Butrint - one of the great archaeological sites of the Balkans. Excavations have revealed an early Neolithic settlement, but the site was later occupied by the Illyrians and then colonised by the Greeks in around the 5th century BC. For the next two thousand years the city flourished as a naval base and granary station. Under the Romans it became an early Christian centre and later the Normans plundered the city. By the Ottoman period Butrint lay abandoned. Its oldest section dates back some 2500 years, but all periods are represented. Of particular note are its Roman theatre, Roman house and thermal baths, as well as a fine baptistery with fabulous mosaic floors. After spending time absorbing this fascinating site, we return to Saranda for the evening. Later, we suggest enjoying a stroll along the promenade to watch the sun set behind Corfu.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 9 Visit Ali Pasha Tepelena Fortress; afternoon drive to Llogara National Park

Once again, today we can look forward to an extremely scenic drive as we travel along the coast from Saranda to Llogara National Park. Along our route, we pass terraces planted with citrus groves and olive trees and enjoy breathtaking views of the mountains, sea and forest. We break our journey at the fortress of Ali Pasha Tepelena at Porto Palermo before descending to our lunch spot at Himare, where we can relax on a quiet beach. The town was once an orthodox stronghold, obtaining a bishopric in the 9th century. Later this afternoon, we traverse the Llogara Pass at an altitude of 1027 metres to reach the Llogara National Park. Lying along the Cikes Range, its peaks are bare limestone while its mountain slopes covered with black pine. On arrival, you may choose to join a walk to Caesar's Pass. Alternatively, you may prefer to relax in the beautiful surroundings of the national park, where we will spend the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 10 Morning walk in Llogara National Park; drive to Vlora on the coast

Llogara National Park is an area of great natural beauty and one of the most unspoilt regions in the Adriatic, with mountains plunging sharply into the shimmering sea. We plan to spend this morning walking in the Karaburun Peninsula area of the park before heading to the town of Vlora. On arrival, we will visit the Independence Museum, Flag Square, the market and Muradi Mosque. The rest of your afternoon is free to use as you wish. You may choose to visit the Kanina Fortress. Set in a commanding position in the Shushica Mountains, it provides great views of the Karaburun Peninsula and Sazani Island.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 11 Visit ancient Apollonia en route to Berat

This morning, we visit the ancient settlement of Apollonia. Founded in 585 BC by settlers from Corinth, this wonderful site was dedicated to Apollo. The ruling Greek class traded in slaves and controlled the Illyrian serfs, imposing their culture and philosophy

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on them. The city achieved fame and wealth and Apollonia was incorporated into the Roman Empire to become Caesar's stronghold during the civil war with Pompey. It maintained its status until an earthquake in the 3rd century altered the course of the Vjosa River, leaving the area marshy and unproductive. The most impressive feature of the site is the Bouleuterion - a facade with six Corinthian columns, which probably dates from the 2nd century AD. Much remains to be excavated, but with so few other visitors, it is possible to imagine the time when the city supported 55,000 free men and Octavia (later Emperor Augustus) was one of its students. This afternoon, our journey continues to Berat, where we spend the next two nights.

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



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY

12

**Walking tour of Berat including the fortress and Red Mosque**

Situated over a gorge next to the Osumi River and shadowed by Mount Tomori, Berat's white buildings sprawl up the hillside towards the fortress. New construction is strictly regulated in order to guard the city's character. Exploring on foot this morning, we head up to the fortress and see the superb painted icons and frescoes in the church of Saint Mary, one of seven churches within the citadel's walls. We also visit the oldest mosque in Albania, the Red Mosque, and the Onufri Icon Museum. The afternoon is left free for you to explore at your own pace, perhaps visiting one of the town's museums or the old neighbourhoods of Mangalem and Gorica.

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



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY

13

**Visit the Roman Amphitheatre at Durrresi and Kruja Fortress**

Leaving Berat, we drive to Durrresi - one of Albania's main ports. With regular ferries to Trieste and Bari in Italy, it has an upbeat feel, with new development along the beach. Durrresi was founded by Epidamnos in 627 BC and became an independent city state. It was seized by the Illyrians in 232 BC who then allied themselves with Rome. The Romans used the port as the starting point for the Via Egnatia. As the invading Normans, Crusaders, Venetians and Serbs plundered and conquered, a new city was built from the old. There are many reminders of its history as you wander around the town, for example we'll visit the Roman amphitheatre, which isn't far from the modern city's main square. We'll visit the Archaeological Museum whilst we're in the city. After our visit, we head northeast to Kruja, where we spend the last night of the tour. The main highlight here is the citadel, from where Albania's greatest hero, Skanderbeg, led the resistance against the Ottoman domination. He succeeded in ousting the Turks in 1443 and Albania was free for the next 30 years. Today the fortress is a place of pilgrimage and inspiration for Albanians. It enjoys a classic setting high on a ridge staring out to the Adriatic coast. We'll also enjoy a walking tour of Kruja's main sights and visit the Ethnographic Museum this afternoon.

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



**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY

14

**Tour ends in Kruja**

Our tour ends in Kruja after breakfast.



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## Accommodation and Meals

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 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.

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## Albania

**Lunch £:** 4.00

**Dinner £:** 10.00

## Macedonia

**Lunch £:** 4.00

**Dinner £:** 8.50

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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.

## Albania

**Bottle of Beer £:** 1.50

**Water £:** 0.50

## Macedonia

**Bottle of Beer £:** 2.00

**Water £:** 1.00

## Other Sightseeing & Activities

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

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

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## Optional Excursions

Ohrid - Saint Kaneo Church entrance fee 2.00 Euros; Saint Kliment Church entrance fee 2.00 Euros.

Kamenica - Graveyard 2.00 Euros.

Berat - Please allow approximately 8.00-10.00 Euros if you wish to visit museums/sites in your free time here; wine tasting 10.00 Euros.

Korca - Archaeological Museum 2.00 Euros.

Vlora - Kanina Fortress 15.00 Euros per taxi.

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## Tipping - Tour Leader

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

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## 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 approx. €20 for tipping.

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.

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## Foreign Exchange

### Albania

**ATM Availability:** Most larger towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Credit cards are not widely accepted in Albania.

**Travellers Cheques:** Travellers Cheques are not widely accepted in Albania, though you should take some as a back-up in case of emergencies.

**Local Currency:** Albanian Lek.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Sterling, US Dollars and Euros cash is widely accepted in bureaux de change in major towns and cities. Most transactions in Albania are done on a strictly cash only basis using the Lek.

**Where to Exchange:** Bureau de change in major towns and cities.

### Macedonia

**ATM Availability:** Most larger towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Unreliable

**Travellers Cheques:** Travellers Cheques are accepted at all banks

**Local Currency:** Macedonian Denar.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** US Dollars and Euros cash is widely accepted in bureaux de change in major towns and cities.

**Where to Exchange:** Bureau de change in major towns and cities.

## 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](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>.

### 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](http://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 FCA's website [www.fca.gov.uk](http://www.fca.gov.uk) or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

### Visa Information

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

Macedonia: 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.

### Vaccinations & Protection

#### Albania

We recommend protection against hepatitis A, typhoid, polio and tetanus. Rabies vaccination is recommended by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office due to the large number of stray dogs in Albania. You should seek further advice from your travel clinic.

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. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

### **Macedonia**

We recommend protection against hepatitis A, typhoid, polio and tetanus. Rabies vaccination is recommended by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office due to the large number of stray dogs in Albania. You should seek further advice from your travel clinic. 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.

## **Preparing for your Tour**

### **Climate**

#### **Albania**

Albania has a mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers (ranging from 9 - 11 hours of sunshine a day in Tirana). Temperatures can reach up to 40°C in July. October to April is much cooler and can be wet. Albania is a mountainous country and the high peaks are snow-capped all year. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable.

#### **Macedonia**

Macedonia has a transitional climate from Mediterranean to continental. The summers are hot and dry and the winters are moderately cold. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,700 mm (66.9 in) in the western mountainous area to 500 mm (19.7 in) in the eastern area. There are three main climatic zones in the country: temperate Mediterranean, mountainous and mildly Continental.

### **Clothing**

Weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool, especially at night, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A raincoat is essential at all times in case of the odd shower. You should dress with respect in the rural villages so bring some long trousers. Don't forget your swimming costume.

### **Equipment**

Take a water bottle, a sun hat and suncream. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies.

### **Footwear**

Lightweight walking/trail boots for any optional day walks and comfortable shoes or sandals for visiting the sites and towns.

### **Luggage: On Tour**

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. Please bear in mind there are lots of stairs in Albania and no portarage in the hotels.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

## **General Information**

### **Country details**

#### **Albania**

**Population:** 4,000,000

**Size of Country:** 28,748 sq km

**Major Language:** Albanian, Greek, Vlach, Romani, Slavic dialects

**Religion:** Muslim, Albanian Orthodox, Roman Catholic

**Time Difference to GMT:** +1

#### **Macedonia**

**Population:** 2,055,004

**Size of Country:** 25,713 sq km

**Major Language:** Macedonian

**Religion:** Orthodox Christian

**Time Difference to GMT:** +1



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## Electric Supply & Plugs

### Albania

2 Pin Round

### Macedonia

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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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](http://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](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

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### 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.

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### **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

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### **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.

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### **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.

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