EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Cycle Albania (CAB 2016)

CYCLING

TRIPDURATI
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Moderate to Challenging

Trip Code: CAB

Trip Highlights - Cycle Albania

- ✓ Cycle Albania - Stunning scenery, peaceful, traffic-free roads and great local food
- ✓ Albanian Riviera - Picturesque trails and villages
- ✓ Gjirokaster - Discover this historic UNESCO listed town
- ✓ Butrint - Visit the beautifully situated roman city
- ✓ Llogora National Park - Pine forests, mountain and sea scenery
- ✓ Lake Ohrid - Mountainous setting and access point to remote town of Germenj

Trip Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 3 dinners
Start Point:	Join trip: Tirana Airport
End Point:	Trip ends: Tirana Airport
Included Bike:	24 gear Specialized CrossTrail or Ariel hybrid bikes with lockable front suspension
Transport:	Bus, Bicycle
Countries:	Albania

Cycle Albania

Discover the highlights of this fascinating, little visited destination from the saddle. Cycle along the shores of Lake Ohrid into the heart of the Grammoz Mountains and the tranquil Germenj valley. Descending through the spectacular Vjosa gorge we reach the Ionian Sea and start our exploration of the turquoise Albanian Riviera. Along the way we visit the UNESCO listed sites of Gjirokaster, Butrint and Berat and explore Albania's rich cultural heritage through its archaeological ruins and local traditions.

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 316 km over six days (an average of 53 km per day). We mainly use quiet, undulating roads although there will be several steeper sections on tarmac. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the trip. We have graded the route as moderate to challenging.

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: Moderate to Challenging

Combining moderate grade rides with some challenging days in the saddle, this grade is ideal for reasonably fit cyclists who want to challenge themselves.

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 at Tirana Airport. Drive to Pogradec on Lake Ohrid

We meet at Tirana Airport and drive for approximately 2 hours to our hotel in Pogradec, located on the shores of Lake Ohrid.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Cycle from Lake Ohrid to Korça

Once equipped and fitted with our bikes we start cycling from lake Ohrid, climbing to an elevated plateau with some great views over the blue waters of this splendid lake surrounded by mountains. The road then continues towards Korça pedaling alongside vast fields and past small farms. We check into our hotel upon arrival into Korça. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 55 kilometres (Total 382 metres ascent and 217 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Climb into the heart of the Gammoz Mountians to Germenj

This morning when we retake to our bikes we leave behind the agricultural plateau of Korça, climbing steadily into the border mountains through a landscape of barren rock interspersed with wild flowers. Numerous cols and valleys lie ahead, climbing into the heart of the Grammoz Mountains and over the Barmash Pass (1159m) to Germenj lying in its own tranquil valley. We spend the night in wooden bungalows 'Ferma Sotir' in Germenj. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 72 kilometres (Total 1160 metres ascent and 1041 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4 Ride through Vjosa Valley; drive onto Gjirokaster

We climb out from Germenj on our bikes to a high grassy plateau surrounded by soaring peaks before reaching the source of the River Vjosa and descending through its spectacular gorge to Leskovik. The route continues with a descent to Çarshove before following the cornice route high above the river to Permet situated on a bluff above the river. A short but dramatic drive of about one hour will bring us to the historic town of Gjirokastër, another UNESCO Heritage site that is home to some truly stunning Ottoman architecture. Gjirokastër is magnificently set between the towering Gjerë Mountains and the Drino River, providing us with a beautifully scenic arrival by vehicle from Permet as we pass through the Drino Valley and the Kelcyra Gorge. After checking in to our hotel, we have a chance to explore its historic heart, taking in its beautiful 18th and 19th century buildings and the dominating presence of its Ottoman citadel, believed to be the second largest in the Balkans. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 53 kilometres (Total 691 metres ascent and 1431 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5 Cycle to Saranda via Butrint archaeological treasure

A short drive after breakfast will bring us to the beginning of the cycling section that starts with a downhill ride from Muzina Pass. The ride then encircles the lagoon of Butrint National Park where we will visit the archaeological site. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Butrint is one of the county's most important archaeological treasures, tracing its origins back to the Greeks and the Romans. In the afternoon we continue our ride onto Saranda and spend the evening at the waterfront. The gateway to southern Albania, Saranda lies along the Ionian coast, sandwiched between the high mountains and the sea and close to the ancient remains of Butrint. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 64 kilometres (Total 560 metres ascent and 1089 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Ride the Albanian Riviera to Qeparo

A roller coaster of a ride awaits us this morning as we make our way along the Albanian Riviera passing through the small villages of Piqeras and Lukova en route to Qeparo. Leaving as the mist is burnt off by the sun, climbing steeply out of Saranda to a rocky plateau. From here we pedal over cols into bays and around headlands, always with the stunning mountain scenery to the right and sea to the left before descending to the long beach and bay of Qeparo where we spend the night in the seaside village of Qeparo on the Albanian Riviera. The afternoon is left free to enjoy the beach and relax. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres (Total 965 metres ascent and 918 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Cycle to Dhermi beach then drive to Berat

We continue our route into the valley heading north before climbing over several cols, through woodlands, little gorges, forests and around hairpin bends. Along the way we pass the old fortress of Ali Pasha of Tepelena, Palermo Bay, the Monastery of St. Theodore and Gjipe Bay and the coastal town of Himara. Our cycling adventure ends with a descent to the picturesque village of Dhermi, nestling amongst the rocky slopes of the Ceraunian Mountains. After lunch we drive 120 km to Berat, enjoying the great mountain and sea views of Llogora National Park enroute. Home to black pine, Eurasian otter and golden eagles, the park is a scenic expanse of protected woodland that encompasses the forests on the northern side of the Llogora Pass. Berat is perhaps the most beautiful town in Albania. Explore the cobbled alleys between the white walled houses and visit the citadel high above. Staying in a traditional hotel in the historic neighbourhood of Mangalemi, we should have some time to explore this World Heritage site before dinner. Time permitting, there is an optional visit to the Onufri Iconographic Museum, located in the sanctuary of St Mary's Church in the inhabited quarter of Berat Castle. Home to a remarkable collection of religious paintings, the museum is named after a famous 16th century icon painter whose works were characterised by post-Byzantine and Venetian influences. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 32 kilometres (Total 809 metres ascent and 812 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8 Trip ends Tirana Airport

We make our way by bus to Tirana Airport, located about 200 km from Berat, where our tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

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,3 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.

Albania

Lunch £: 4.00

Dinner £: 10.00

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.

Albania

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

International Departure Taxes

N/A

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

Onufri Iconographic Museum, Berat - 200 Lek (approx 1.20 GBP)

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

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 Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip. Accordingly, you should allow approx. 20 Euros for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Albania

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

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.

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.

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.

Visa Information

Albania: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

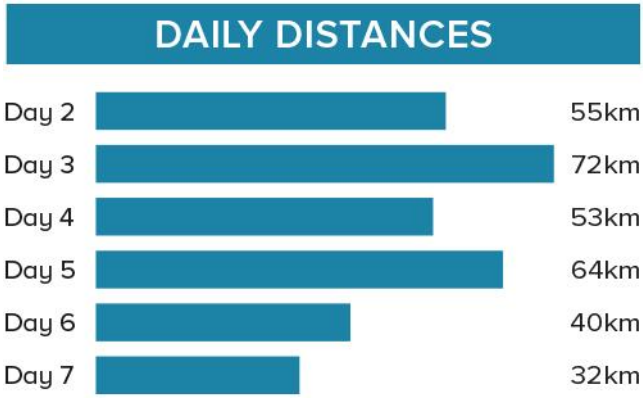
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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.

Preparing for your Trip



Altitude Description

N/A

Bike Details

Your included bike is a 24 gear Specialized CrossTrail or Ariel hybrid bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. A water bottle holder is included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the trip. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

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.

Clothing

Pack for hot conditions. Bring cycle shorts, gloves and quick drying cycle tops. 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

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.

Luggage: On Tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. 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 trip: 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

ATM Availability: Most larger towns.

Religion: Muslim, Albanian Orthodox, Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Albania

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, 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, 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 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: 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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