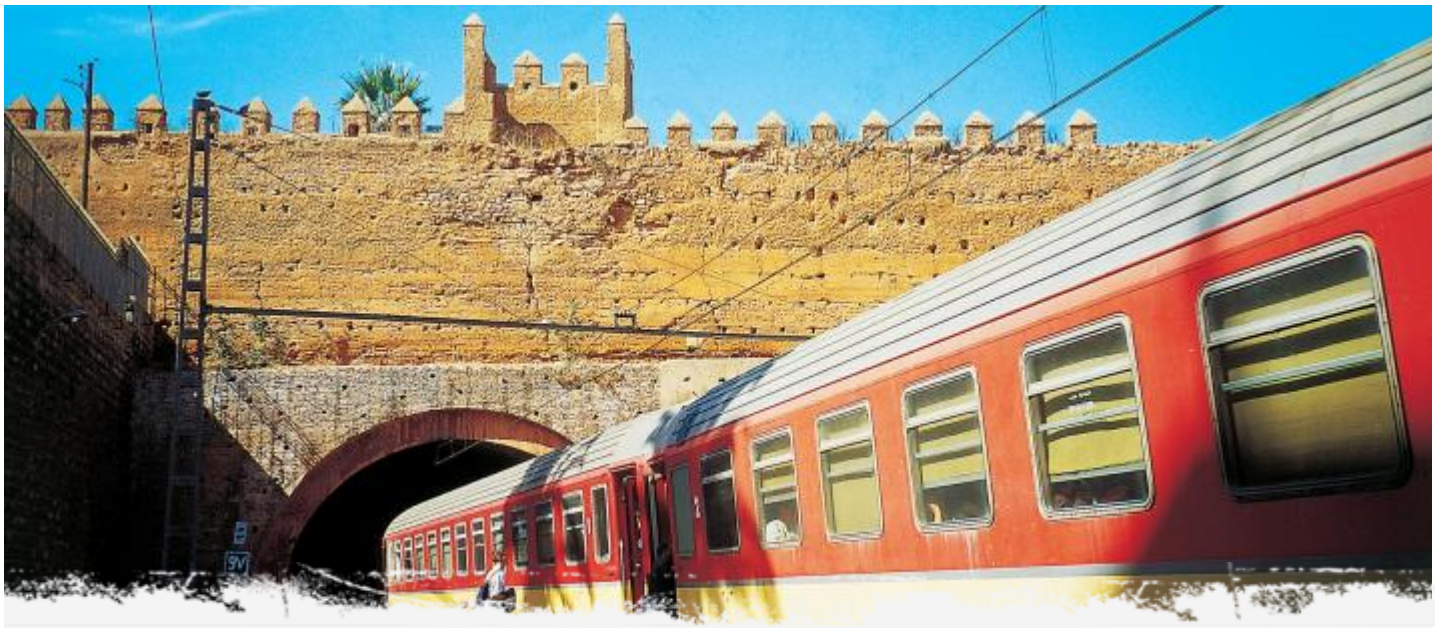
EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Marrakech Express (QMR 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS



Tour Style: Simply
Tour Pace: Moderate
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Simple
tour Code: QMR

Tour Highlights - Marrakech Express

- ✓ Travel with the locals - An exhilarating journey by train and bus to discover the highlights of Morocco.
- ✓ Tangier - Morocco's bustling port where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic Ocean.
- ✓ Fes - The atmospheric Medina also known as Mecca of the West.
- ✓ Rabat - Morocco's historic capital and the intriguing Kasbah des Ouidas.
- ✓ Marrakech - The enchanting 'Red City' and the vibrant Djemma-el-Fna Square.

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	5 nights Simple Hotel 2 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Tangier
End Point:	Tour ends: Marrakech
Transport:	Bus, Train, Public Bus, Taxi
Countries:	Morocco

Marrakech Express

On this journey through northern Morocco we visit the great historic cities of Fes and Marrakech. We explore the maze of backstreets and alleyways and discover snake charmers, acrobats, musicians and storytellers in the lively Djemma-el-Fna square, in Marrakech. We also travel to the less-visited Rif Mountains, and to the Andalucian walled town of Chefchouan.

Why Book this tour

This tour is perfect for travellers who want to experience Morocco like a local - on public transport. Many feel that this is the real way to get to grips with culture of the country and on this journey you will see how Moroccans live their lives. This a fantastic tour for the adventurous or those travelling on a budget.

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: Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, typically with en suite facilities.

Tour Style: Simply

If your idea of adventure travel is to experience everyday local life in a country then try one of our Simply Explore tours. These grassroots adventures are flexible, affordable and fun

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

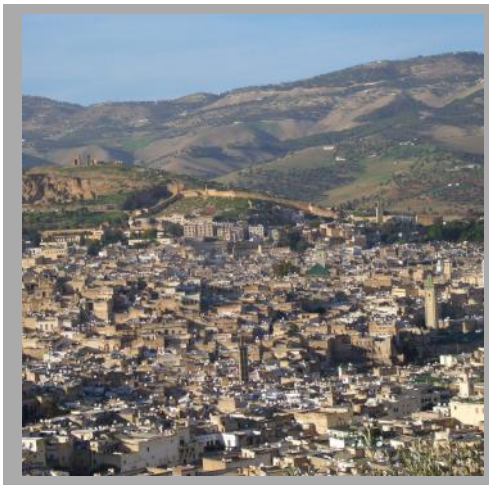
Tour itinerary notes

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.

DAY 1 Join tour Tangier

Our tour starts today in the vibrant city of Tangier. Depending on the schedule of your flights, you may be able to start exploring the city independently, before meeting your group and Tour Leader at the hotel.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Optional guided tour of Tangier; bus to Chefchouan

Colonised by the Romans and Phoenicians, fought over by the Byzantines and the Visigoths and finally taken by the Arabs in the 8th century, Tangier has at heart always been Berber. Its turbulent history saw it become a pawn in the conflicts between the Portuguese, the British and the despotic Moulay Ismail, who finally saw it returned to Moroccan control at the end of the 17th century. This morning there will be an opportunity to explore something of the city with an optional tour of the Medina in the company of a local guide, before we board a public bus south, towards the dramatic setting of Chefchouan. Sandwiched between the Rif Mountains to the north and the Djebala Ranges to the south, the mountain stronghold of Chefchouan has always held sacred importance to the Muslims and, until early years of the 20th century, was considered off limits to any Christian outsiders. Isolated for generations and fiercely independent, Chefchouan was originally founded by the shereefian as a base from which to strike out at the European invaders, and for a good while it controlled much of the northwest corner of the region. It was not until 1920 that a force of Spanish soldiers finally ended the town's Muslim hegemony (up until that point only three other westerners had ever visited the town – one was poisoned, another lasted an hour and the third, the journalist Walter Harris, escaped only by the skin of his teeth). Today the old town and the Medina still evoke the unique atmosphere of its Arabic and Jewish origins, with Chefchouan's weavers and carpet makers still working to designs that have remained relatively unchanged for centuries, whilst the Kasbah is still reminiscent of the turbulent days of Moulay Ismail, the great Sultan whose reign heralded one of Morocco's golden eras.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Bus to Fes

Boarding another public bus this morning we continue our journey south, crossing through the Djebala Mountains and across what was once the old border separating the governed territories from the untamed wilderness. Our journey today takes us into Morocco's cultural heartland to the city of Fes, probably the oldest of the imperial cities, whose fascinating history is rich with wars, murders and political intrigue. At the centre of Moroccan life for countless generations, Fes has played an important part in the country's trade, culture, religion and politics, as well as being an important seat of scientific thought, for centuries. The nightlife is centred mainly around the Avenues Hassan II and Mohammed V in the new town, and with two nights here we have ample chance to experience the whole range of the city's cultural attractions – both ancient and modern. There may be an opportunity today to enjoy a traditional Hammam visit (optional).

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 In Fes

Taking in the mosques and souks of the Fes el Bali (Old Fes) on foot affords the ideal opportunity to explore the souks that line the backstreets of the town, wandering past aromatic spice stalls and taking in the opulent majesty of the 14th century Attarin Medersa, whose intricate decoration and elegant design makes it one of the city's most captivating medieval colleges. One of the city's most impressive monuments is the spectacular Medersa Bou Inania, the 14th century Merenid structure built by the Sultan Abou Inan, whose exquisite carvings and tile work is considered amongst the most exceptional examples of its kind anywhere in Morocco. The afternoon is then free to enjoy at your leisure what is in essence one of the most engaging, and certainly one of the most undiminished, medieval cities anywhere in the Arab world.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Train to Rabat; optional city tour

Transferring to the railway station this morning we catch the morning train west towards the Atlantic Coast and the city of Rabat. The 3-hour journey should get us in to the city around lunchtime and, after we have transferred to the hotel and had a chance to freshen up, the afternoon affords an opportunity to join an optional guided tour of the city. Rabat was established as the capital of the French protectorate in 1912 and since independence has served as the capital of a modern Morocco. Rabat's history stretches back as far as 8BC, when settlers arrived in what is now the Chellah area, a district that went on to become a prosperous Roman town, before being transformed by the Merinids into a cemetery. The tour will take in something of the city's historic heart, exploring the area around the Hassan Tower and the Mausoleum of Mohammed V, before wandering through the engaging Kasbah des Oudaias, originally a fortified town that is now infused with a distinctly Andalusian flavour.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Train to Marrakech; free afternoon

A morning train takes us south to Marrakech today, where we'll have the better part of two days to explore a city that has for centuries been a meeting place for the mountain Berbers and the desert peoples of the south. Marrakech is a city like no other, boasting a staggering array of spectacular architecture and wonderful facades, a place where trade and barter amongst the colourful souks still renders its ancient heart a glittering cacophony of noise and colour. Founded by the Almoravids, the city began life as a fortified ksour, before a comprehensive building programme under Ali Ben Youssef saw the city blossom into an imperial capital. It was during the 12th century though that Marrakech enjoyed its golden age, when the Almohad dynasty took control and the city saw an influx of poets and scholars and its streets took on some of the grandeur that we see before us today. It was during this period that the great Koutoubia Mosque was built, but then centuries of war and turmoil followed and the city lost some of its imperial glamour. Since independence though the city has revived some of its old fortunes and today it is a vital trading centre and remains one of the country's most popular tourist attractions.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Morning optional walking tour; Afternoon free

This morning there will be an opportunity to explore something of the rich heritage of Morocco's fascinating Red City with an optional sightseeing tour of the city's old quarter. Like many North African towns, Marrakech is divided into two distinct parts, the Gueliz (the modern French-built city) and the Medina (the Old City) and journeying into this vibrant centre with a local guide affords a chance to discover some of its most enthralling sites. The city's beating heart is the spectacular Djemma-el-Fna, a site not to be missed, where you will find the streets and alleys alive with storytellers and musicians, jugglers and acrobats, snake charmers and clowns. The dominating Koutoubia Minaret, the oldest of the Almohad towers, rises some 70 metres above the surrounding city and presents us with one of the blueprints for future Moroccan architectural design. After the tour the rest of the day is free to continue exploring this amazing city at your leisure. You can wander past vendors selling doughnuts and fried grasshoppers, enjoy the sounds and the smells of the exotic and meander through native markets where Muslim women, their hands and feet dyed with henna, call out to sell their wares.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Tour ends Marrakech

Our tour ends today in Marrakech. Depending on the schedule of your flights, you may be able to spend additional time exploring Marrakech independantly and to buy the last souvenirs in the market.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Morocco is a developing country and as such, the accommodation standards are not equivalent to those in Europe and can be more basic. We generally choose our properties because of their location, cleanliness, traditional style or for their welcoming atmosphere, as we endeavour to provide an authentic Moroccan experience. However, some of the properties might have some outdated or simple furniture and the level of service may vary depending on the location. You may find that availability of hot water is variable or limited in certain locations. Breakfasts are generally continental style. A swimming pool is often available, especially in the cities.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

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.

Morocco

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 8-10

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.

Morocco

Bottle of Beer £: 2.50

Water £: 0.60

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

Tangier - Walking tour of the Medina £4.
Fes - Guided tour of Old Fes £4.
Rabat - Guided tour of Kasbah £4.
Marrakech - Walking tour of Old City £6 (for guide plus entrance fees). Hammam £5
In addition to the above, you should allow approximately £10 for other optional sites and entrance fees in the Imperial Cities.

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 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 Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly, you should allow approx. £20 for tipping of crew and local guides used.

Foreign Exchange

Morocco

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in main towns/cities, though can be unreliable.

Credit Card Acceptance: Not all places.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers cheques are difficult to exchange and are not recommended.

Local Currency: Moroccan Dirham (MAD).

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollars, Sterling and Euros are readily exchangeable. We recommend you take a mixture of cash and credit cards. Scottish bank notes and Australian dollar travellers cheques and cash are NOT normally accepted in Morocco.

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

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

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

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

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

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

Visa Information

Morocco: 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

Morocco

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Morocco

The climate is both Mediterranean and Atlantic. The dry, hot season is from May to October when summer temperatures can reach 38°C and above (if sight seeing is included we will do our best to avoid the heat of the day during this period). Temperatures may drop significantly at times during the night as the day's heat rapidly diminishes. From December to January snow can be expected on mountain passes and it can be wet. In winter, day temperatures will probably be around 18-25°C, dropping to perhaps 0-5°C.

Clothing

Morocco is a Muslim country and it is important to dress with respect for local customs. People may be offended by shorts or revealing dresses, which can attract unwelcome attention. We advise that in general both men and women should cover shoulders, upper arms and knees. Transparent, plunging necklines and tightfitting clothes should be avoided. Women should also cover their heads when entering a sanctuary, though in general, mosques are forbidden to non-Muslims. For those clients on a cycling holiday please bear this information in mind for times that you are not on the bikes. While cycling it is no problem for both men and women to wear your regular cycling gear, tight fitting or not.
Summer: Clothing should be lightweight. However, a warm sweater is also advisable, as the desert can sometimes get cold at nights,

even in the summer.
Winter: Usually days are warm but much thicker clothing is essential for cold nights (Nov-Mar). It is advisable to take warm clothing (eg. track suit or thermal underwear) to sleep in, as the quality of heating in Moroccan hotel rooms can be variable. A waterproof jacket, trousers and fleece are recommended between December and January.

Equipment

A torch, water bottle, sunhat and high factor sunscreen are all essential, whilst we recommend swimming costumes and towels.

Footwear

We recommend you bring sandals and good comfortable trainers or lightweight walking shoes.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Morocco

Population: 32,000,000

Size of Country: 446,550 sq km

Major Language: Arabic, Berber, French.

Religion: Muslim

Electric Supply & Plugs

Morocco

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 http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ 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 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: 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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