EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Northern Spain by Rail (RSP 2016 PREMIUM)

RAIL JOURNEYS

TRIPDURATI
12
DAYS

Tour Style: Premium
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation Grade: Premium

Trip Code: RSP

Trip Highlights - Northern Spain by Rail

- ✓ Rail Journeys - Crossing the Basque region and Cantabria by steam, diesel and narrow gauge railways
- ✓ Bilbao - Visit the extraordinary Guggenheim Museum and the Basque Railway Museum in Azpeitia
- ✓ Picos de Europa - Walking amongst the beautiful landscapes of Spain's oldest national park
- ✓ León and Santiago de Compostela - Two of Spain's most historic holy cities.

Trip Essentials

Accommodation:	9 nights Hotel 2 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	11 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 2 dinners
Start Point:	Join trip: Bilbao
End Point:	Trip ends: Bilbao
Transport:	Bus, Train
Countries:	Spain

Northern Spain By Rail

This very special collection of narrow gauge rail journeys takes us along the spectacular coast of northern Spain and through the Picos de Europa mountain range. At the Basque Railway Museum we ride aboard an historic steam train and from Poncebos we climb high into the rugged mountains by funicular. We also enjoy Bilbao and the medieval cities of Santiago de Compostela and Leon.

Why Book this trip

If you're looking to ride the rails along northern Spain's spectacular coastline and through the Picos de Europa mountain range then this is the tour for you. As well as seeing some of the country's most captivating scenery, on this tour you also have the option of upgrading your stay by travelling on one of our Premium departures, where you can unwind after a busy day exploring in comfortable hotels for the majority of nights of your holiday. Please select the 'RSP 2016 PREMIUM' itinerary on the drop down menu for further details.

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: Premium

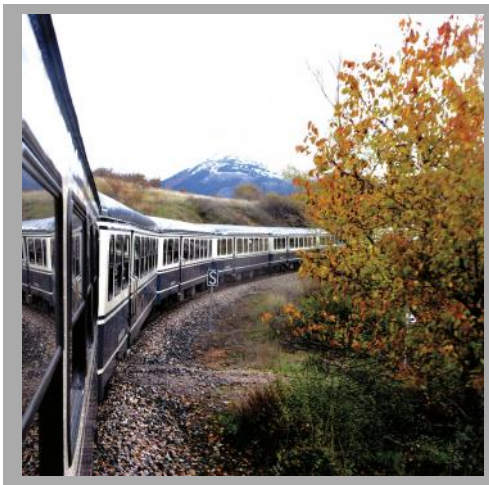
Our comfortable accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service.

Tour Style: Premium

These tours are perfect if you want to combine an original, off-beat classic adventure with the added comfort of hand-picked accommodation chosen for its character, location or local importance. Revel in adventurous days followed by relaxing nights.

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 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.

DAY 1 Join tour in Bilbao

Arrive in Bilbao and check-in at the hotel. Situated on the banks of the Nervión River, on the northern edge of the Iberian Peninsula, Bilbao is home to the iconic magnificence of the Guggenheim, one of the world's most famous museums and one of its most spectacular architectural creations. Lying amongst the verdant landscapes of Vizcaya Province, the city is the largest and most culturally dynamic in the Basque region, providing us with the perfect start to this incredible journey.

Sercotel Coliseo
The hotel was formerly an opera house and still retains its historical facade whilst offering a contemporary interior. It's in the centre of Bilbao and just a short walk from the train station. Facilities include free Wi-Fi access, a terrace, reading room, lounge and gym. All rooms are air conditioned with a television, safe and mini bar.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Bus to Azpeitia to visit the Basque Railway Museum

Early this morning we take a bus to the Basque Railway Museum, located in the old station at Azpeitia. The museum is considered one of the finest railway museums in Europe, its 25,000 square metres of tracks and pavilions housing a fascinating collection of rail memorabilia; with some 70 different vehicles on display, as well as an exhibition of railway clocks and one of the few remaining mechanical workshops to survive from the early years of the 20th century. Returning to Bilbao this afternoon, you will have free time to visit the Guggenheim museum.

Sercotel Coliseo
The hotel was formerly an opera house and still retains its historical facade whilst offering a contemporary interior. It's in the centre of Bilbao and just a short walk from the train station. Facilities include free Wi-Fi access, a terrace, reading room, lounge and gym. All rooms are air conditioned with a television, safe and mini bar.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Train to Puente San Miguel; free afternoon in Santillana del Mar

Heading west this morning, we leave Bilbao and take a train towards the mountainous landscapes of Cantabria. Today's journey will take us to Puente San Miguel and from here we travel a short distance to Santillana del Mar. There are many historical building to enjoy, including the Merino and Don Borja Tower, which are said to be the oldest buildings in the town. You may also wish to visit the collegiate church of Santa Juliana, which is considered to be one of the best examples of Romanesque architecture in Cantabria. The church was built at the centre of the town and has now been declared a National Monument.

Parador Santillana
Located in the main town square this attractive hotel is in an ideal location. Facilities include a courtyard and bar and a restaurant serving traditional local cuisine. Free Wi-Fi access is available throughout. Rooms are equipped with a mini bar, television, telephone, hairdryer and safe.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Train to Unquera and funicular to Bulnes; walk in the Picos de Europa

This morning we continue west, following the coast of the fertile Costa Verde towards the old fortified port of Llanes. On arrival to the small village of Unquera we will make a direct transfer by bus up into the Picos de Europa, the beautiful mountain landscapes that lie to the south, whose towering peaks were the first comforting sight beheld by returning sailors to the European mainland. Arriving in the small village of Poncebos we then take the funicular railway (rack railway) up towards the remote community of Bulnes, where we can bask in the expansive grandeur of these mountains and take in the dominating heights of the Naranjo de Bulnes, at 2,519m one of the highest peaks in the national park. Spain’s first national park, the Picos are made up of three distinct massifs that extend across Cantabria, Asturias and Castilla y Leon, offering a grand expanse of mountains and canyons that are home to a wealth of flora and fauna, including wolves, the last remaining brown bears in Western Europe and the ever-present chamois. We’ll take an easy walk through this spectacular setting before returning down to Poncebos on the Funicular. Alternatively there is the chance to walk down into the valley through the dramatic Canal de Tejo Gorge (1,5h, 400m descent). Later in the afternoon we drive back on bus to Llanes to our hotel for an overnight stay.

Hotel Don Paco
This hotel is a restored convent dating back to the 17th century. It's located beside the old town walls in the beautiful village of Llanes and is a short walk from the seafront promenade. Facilities include a lounge, bar and terrace and a restaurant set in the impressive old chapel building. Rooms have a television, hairdryer, safe and telephone.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Train to Gijon; afternoon free to explore

This morning, there is some free time for you to explore Llanes before the next stage of our journey takes us on to Gijon. On our arrival, we will take a taxi to our accommodation where we can check-in before a free afternoon for your own exploration. One of the

highlights is the Asturias Railway Museum, built on the site of the old Renfe (Spanish railways) station that dates back to the 1870's. The museum was conceived to preserve the railways unique history in the region and its exhibits provide a fascinating insight into the relationship between the railway and the cultural and economic development of Asturias over the past 150 years.

Parador Gijon
Previously a mill set in Isabel la Catolica Park it's an especially peaceful place to stay and the beach is only a 10 minute walk away. Facilities include a terrace, bar and a restaurant serving traditional cuisine. Rooms are equipped with air conditioning, a safe, hairdryer, television, telephone and mini bar. Wi-Fi access is available throughout.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Free day in Gijon; chance to visit Asturias Railway Museum or Oviedo

With more free time today you may chose to continue exploring Gijon or perhaps take a journey to Oviedo. Oviedo was one of the few regions of Spain that didn't fall under the influence of the Moors and its medieval heart is still littered with examples of pre-Romanesque architecture that dates back to the 8th-10th centuries. The grand Plaza Alfonso is a fine example of the city's past grandeur and includes finely preserved palaces and the Gothic facades of its cathedral. The cathedral's exquisite interior contains the tombs of the Asturian nobility, as well as a superb 9th century chapel, the Camara Santa, which contains a dazzling wealth of Asturian art and golden relics. The city contains an excellent art gallery and archaeological museum, whilst its outskirts are dotted with superb pre-Romanesque churches, including the magnificent Santa Maria des Naranco and the 9th century Church of San Julian de los Prados, which is believed to be the largest of its kind left in Spain.

Parador Gijon
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Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Train to Ferrol in Galicia and bus on to Santiago

Boarding the early morning train to Ferrol we head next for Spain's remote northwestern corner and the fertile landscapes of Galicia, a region whose inhabitants are fiercely proud of their Celtic origins and whose traditions and language offer an interesting contrast to much of the rest of mainland Spain. Arriving in Ferrol this afternoon (interestingly enough, the birthplace of General Franco) we then continue our journey by bus to the beautiful city of Santiago de Compostela, a city that during the Middle Ages was (after Jerusalem and Rome) the most important place of pilgrimage anywhere in the Christian world. On arrival we will transfer to our hotel, after which the rest of the afternoon is free to perhaps enjoy something of the elegant ambience of this historic city. Please note, on our 11th June 2016 departure we will be staying at 'Hotel Virxe de Cerca' in Santiago de Compostela for two nights instead of 'Parador Santiago'. Hotel Virxe de Cerca is located in the old town centre and this charming boutique hotel is housed within what was formerly an 18th century bank and a more modern adjoining building. The hotel is located next to the Plaza de Abastos Market and just a short five minute walk from the cathedral. The hotels traditional decor features stone walls, wood beamed ceilings and antique furniture. All rooms are air-conditioned, offer free Wi-Fi and are equipped with a television, hairdryer, radio, telephone, safe and minibar.

Parador Santiago
Considered to be the oldest hotel in the world, the Parador de Santiago de Compostela has a history dating back to 1499 where the building was originally used as a royal hospital and provided shelter for pilgrims making their way to Santiago. Today it's a luxurious hotel still featuring many of the buildings original features including vaulted ceilings, tapestries and stone archways. Guest rooms are spacious and comfortable, decorated with traditional designs and furnishings. The hotel also features two restaurants specialising in Mediterranean and Galician cuisine.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8 Free day to explore Santiago; you may like to visit the Folk Museum

Today has been left free to explore more of this most enigmatic of cities at your own pace, its historic centre being small enough to explore on foot. The 12th century Baroque cathedral, towering over the surrounding city streets amidst the majesty of the Praza do Obradoiro, is one of Christendom’s holiest of shrines. Lying at the end of the famous pilgrim route of the Camino de Santiago, its crypt is believed to hold the tomb of St. James himself and the building’s rich fusion of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque styles is truly a work of the most exceptional architectural craftsmanship. Alternatively you may prefer to wander the city’s narrow streets and visit some more of the myriad of architectural treasures that are dotted around the city. In the Convento de Santo Domingo de Bonaval you will find a folk museum dedicated to the Galacian region, whilst the Monasterio de San Martiño Pinario and the Palacio de Gelmirez are just two of the other jewels in this dazzling crown. And, at the end of the day, what better than to relax with a reviving drink on the Praza das Praterias and watch the world pass by.

Parador Santiago

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Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9 Train to Ponferrada; option to visit the Templar castle

Taking a taxi to the railway station we will board the morning train to Ponferrada in the Castilla Y Leon region, a landscape of expansive plains and rolling hills dotted with historic castles. Ponferrada's name stems from pons ferrata, a medieval bridge (reinforced with iron) that was constructed to aid the passage of pilgrims travelling along the Camino de Santiago towards the sacred city. Its imposing fortress, constructed by the Knights Templar between the 12th and 14th centuries, was built to protect the pilgrims, and in its time was considered one of the largest citadels in northwest Spain. Arriving this afternoon affords us an opportunity to take a walk along part of the pilgrim route after lunch, enjoying something of the idyllic landscape and quite villages as we walk in the footsteps of the countless devotees whose feet have trodden these trails for centuries.

Hotel Bierzo Plazana
The hotel is in the centre of town. Rooms are en suite and equipped with air conditioning and a mini bar. Free Wi-Fi access is available. Facilities include a bar/cafe and two restaurants.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Train to Leon; opportunity to visit the cathedral and historic centre

This morning there is an opportunity for a stroll through Ponferrada before we board the late morning train to Leon, a city that once lay at the heart of the region's reconquest from the Moors during the 11th century. Once the centre of Christian Spain, during the time that two thirds of the peninsula was under Muslim rule, the two central buildings of the city are its great Gothic cathedral and the equally superb Romanesque Basilica de San Isidoro, both of which are without doubt two of the finest examples of their kind to be found anywhere in Spain. This afternoon there will be an opportunity to explore these remarkable edifices, along with the historic heart of the city. The cathedral is unique for the quality and magnificence of its stainedglass windows, which span seven centuries of history and cover subjects as diverse as religion, mythology and even medieval life, whilst San Isidoro is the final resting place of dozens of Christian kings and noble families, buried over centuries, beneath the stunning 12th century frescoes. Radiating out from the Plaza Mayor, the narrow streets are also filled with cafes, churches and old houses that provide a diverting choice of options for an afternoon of fascinating sightseeing.

Parador Leon
Founded in the 12th century it was originally a monastery, provided sanctuary to pilgrims travelling to Santiago, and is now a luxury hotel. The original building was demolished in the 16th century and rebuilt as the magnificent building you see today; one of the most prestigious Renaissance buildings in the whole of Spain. All guest rooms are en suite and equipped with a telephone, television, safe and mini bar. The hotel also features a restaurant serving local dishes, a bar, gift shop and a garden.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Free morning in Leon before taking the narrow gauge train to Bilbao

After a free morning we will take the narrow gauge railway (the Ferrocarriles Espanoles de Via Estrecha) that runs from Leon and into the Basque region back towards Bilbao. The FEVE network encompasses the most extensive metre gauge system in mainland Europe and this section of the journey takes us some 7 hours, crossing through Vizcaya and Burgos and a small stretch of Cantabria as we make our way across the Basque country to journey's end back in the port of Bilbao. The line was opened in 1894 and brought coal from the Castilian mines around La Robla to the thriving Basque industrial centres. The spectacular scenery is very mountainous with the highest point being at 700m altitude before the train gradually descends towards the coast.

Sercotel Coliseo
The hotel was formerly an opera house and still retains its historical facade whilst offering a contemporary interior. It's in the centre of Bilbao and just a short walk from the train station. Facilities include free Wi-Fi access, a terrace, reading room, lounge and gym. All rooms are air conditioned with a television, safe and mini bar.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12

Tour ends in Bilbao

Tour ends after breakfast. If there is time you have another chance to explore some more of this vibrant city, perhaps visiting the famous Guggenheim Museum.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 0 lunches,2 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.

Spain

Lunch £: 6.00 - 10.00

Dinner £: 12.00 - 16.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Spain

Bottle of Beer £: 2.50

Water £: 1.40

Other Sightseeing & Activities

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

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

Optional Excursions

Bilbaon - Guggenheim Museum - €13.00; special exhibits €13.00
Oviedo - Asturias Railway Museum - €2.40
Leon - Cathedral entrance fee - €5.00; guided visit (including entrance) - €10.00or walk along section of Camino de Santiago - €25.00 (depending on numbers)

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided.Accordingly, you should allow approximately €10-20 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.

Foreign Exchange

Spain

Major Language: Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

ATM Availability: In cities and most major towns.

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

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended.

Local Currency: Euros

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

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

Joining your 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

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

Vaccinations & Protection

Spain

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Spain

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

Clothing

Lightweight cotton clothing is best from June to September, light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, but especially after the start of September, and a warm fleece/light jacket is recommended for cooler evenings and nights at the beginning and end of the season. Don’t forget a swimming costume.

Equipment

A water bottle, sunhat and high factor sunscreen are all essential. A head torch (for use on day 4 of the tour) may be useful to bring, however is not essential.

Footwear

Good comfortable trainers or lightweight walking shoes. Sandals for relaxing.

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 trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Spain

Population: 46,030,109

Size of Country: 504,782 sq km

Major Language: Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

ATM Availability: In cities and most major towns.

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Spain

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, 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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