

# EXPLORE!

## Tour Notes



### Village Folklore and the Danube Delta (TD 2015)



TOURDURAT  
**11**  
DAYS



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

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

**tour Code:** TD

#### Tour Highlights - Village Folklore and the Danube Delta

- ✓ Bucharest - Explore the city including the Village Museum
- ✓ Transylvania - Visit Bran Castle and walk in the Transylvanian Alps
- ✓ Brasov - Explore Medieval Old Brasov on foot
- ✓ Maramures - Remote area with traditional villages, exploring on foot and by bus
- ✓ Bucovina - Visit the monasteries of Moldovita, Sucevita and Putna
- ✓ Borsa - Historic train journey and walk through the forested Vaser Valley
- ✓ Danube Delta - 2-night cruise in this famous birdwatchers' paradise - explore the wildlife sanctuary by boat and on foot

#### Tour Essentials

**Accommodation:** 8 nights Standard Hotel  
2 nights Simple Boat

**Included Meals:** 10 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners

**Start Point:** Join tour: Bucharest

**End Point:** Tour ends: Bucharest

**Transport:** Bus, Train, Boat

**Countries:** Romania

## Village Folklore and Danube Delta

Enter a land of remote villages, ancient customs and beautiful scenery on this Romanian adventure. We visit painted monasteries in the Bukovina hills, take a historic steam train journey through the remote Vaser Valley and walk in the forested Carpathian Mountains. We also unravel the myths of Dracula's legendary Transylvania and cruise along the backwaters of the Danube Delta - a bird watcher's paradise.

### Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

### Tour Comfort: Standard

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

### Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

### Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

## Your tour itinerary

### Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

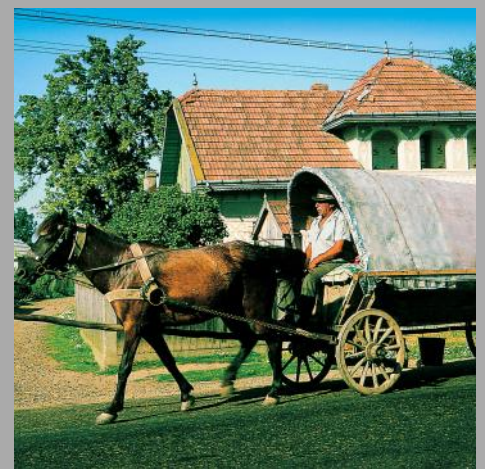
### Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

### DAY 1 Join tour Bucharest

Arrive Bucharest and meet the group. Known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards, glorious Belle Époque buildings and a reputation for the high life (which in the 1900s earned its nickname of 'Little Paris'), Bucharest, Romania's largest city and capital, is today a bustling metropolis. Romanian legend has it that the city of Bucharest was founded on the banks of the Dambovitza River by a shepherd named Bucur, whose name literally means 'joy'. His flute playing reportedly dazzled the people and his hearty wine from nearby vineyards endeared him to the local traders, who gave his name to the place.

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



 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 2 In Bucharest and drive to Moieciu

This morning we make a tour of Romania's capital, a remarkable blend of turn of the century elegance and communist excess. Situated on the Danube plain and set amid a series of lakes and spacious gardens, remnants of more gracious days still exist to charm the visitor. We visit many of the older parts of the city to see some of the buildings that have earned it the reputation as the 'Paris of Eastern Europe'. We also make a visit to the fascinating Village Museum, which has assembled wooden churches, windmills and peasant dwellings from different regions of the country. After the city tour we drive to Moieciu. Time allowing, we will visit Pelisor Palace (optional), a fine exhibition of an Art Deco and Art Nouveau interior and after the visit we continue to nearby Moieciu village where time permitting we can do a short walk in the Bucegi mountains whose forests are now protected as a nature reserve.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 3 Drive to Bistrita

Today we start our day with a short drive to the castle at Bran. The truth behind 'Dracula's Castle' is even more fascinating than its myths! Earlier this century it was the home of the remarkable British born Queen Marie of Romania, grand daughter of Queen Victoria. Vlad the Impaler, the heroic 15th century ruler of Wallachia never lived here and there is no connection with the excellent novel by Bram Stoker - who never came near Transylvania. Perched on a crag in a valley between two high mountain ranges, it controlled an international trade route, but is now a rural back-water. We continue to the medieval city of Brasov. The old town still has its medieval walls, town hall and several churches dating from the 14th- 18th centuries. There are also the ruins of an old citadel. Brasov is one of the most historic cities of Transylvania. The town is a gem of old buildings, cobbled streets and local atmosphere, all clustered within the medieval fortifications and overlooked by a magnificent 15th century Gothic cathedral. We have an option to visit the Black Church here. We then continue our journey to Bistrita with a short stop en route at a medieval town on hill top, Sighisoara, an UNESCO World Heritage Site.


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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 4 Drive to Borsa

Leaving Bistrita this morning, we make our way through high forested hills and fertile valleys dotted with orchards and meadows. We visit the village of Sapanta, to see the 'Merry Cemetery', another UNESCO World Heritage Site, where each grave has a humorous caricature and short poem about the deceased. Later we visit the Monastery of Barsana then continue our drive to Borsa, a small winter ski resort in the Rodna mountains.


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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 5 Train through Vaser valley and hike to Moisei

There are few settlements in Europe that remain so untouched that bears still roam freely in the forests. Today we enter such a region, as we take the narrow gauge railway from Viseu de Sus up the Vaser Valley to Novat. We chug slowly through the valley passing huge expanses of beech and spruce forest, that echo with the sound of mountain rivers rushing through them. We then walk up a forested valley along lonely trails, enjoying the stillness and freshness of the forest. After a stiff climb of over 600 m, we reach a ridge where there are spectacular views across the Viseu Valley. We descend through hay meadows and scattered copses to Moisei, where we meet our bus (5 to 6 hours walk). (Please note that if the railway is closed we will take an alternative route to walk in this beautiful area.)

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 6 Hike in Rodna mountains; drive to Sucevita via Moldovita

Leaving Borsa by chairlift, we walk (initially steeply up onto the mountain ridge) along the top of a ridge, if possible we will stop at a shepherd's hut where we may be invited to sample some fresh sheep's cheese, washed down with tuica, the fiery local plum brandy. After a couple of hours of walking we meet our bus and drive east across the Carpathians to Moldavia and the northern region of Bucovina. Here we discover the remarkable medieval monasteries, founded during the reign of Prince Stephen the Great (1457-1504)

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and his successors. Whilst most Romanian churches have frescoes inside, what makes these so astonishing are the fantastic frescoes on the exterior walls. These vivid Biblical images were used to educate the medieval population in an exciting graphic fashion. Painted during the 16th century, the frescoes are a fusion of formal Byzantine style, with colourful folk art. The monasteries are now UNESCO World Heritage sites, but also house thriving religious communities of nuns and monks. We stop at Moldovita, which nestles beneath the forests of the Obcina Mare ridge. Among the most interesting scenes pictured here are the 'Siege of Constantinople' and the 'Last Judgement'. We drive up to the Ciumirna Pass, and continue through the forest to our accommodation near Sucevita.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 7 Hike to Putna and drive to Bacau

We include a visit to Sucevita monastery, the largest of the monasteries in the Bucovina region, with massive towers and stone walls protecting the inner buildings, which are decorated with portraits of historical legends and biblical scenes. There is an excellent small museum showing some of the treasures of the monastery, the most valuable items being 17th century embroideries, icons and gold work. We then hike through the romantic countryside along paths and old cart tracks, in the lovely valley north of Sucevita. First we take a trail through the beech woods to emerge in a grassy valley dotted with the houses that form the rambling village of Putna, close to the Ukrainian border. The walk is moderately easy and we have plenty of time to complete it (5 to 6 hours walk). Putna monastery (founded in 1466) is the oldest in Moldavia, and inside is the tomb of Stephen the Great. We meet our vehicle and drive to Bacau where we spend the night.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 8 Drive to and cruise in Danube Delta

This morning we drive to the ancient port of Tulcea, the so-called 'Gateway to the Delta'. From here we board our pontoon - a bargestyle vessel resembling a large house boat - that will serve as both our transport and our floating accommodation while in the delta. Though simple, it has a sun-deck and twinberth cabins on the lower deck and provides an innovative and flexible way of seeing the abundant birdlife of the delta. From this base we can reach the smaller waterways and reedy channels and visit the tranquil and beautiful lakes hidden in the backwaters.


Overnight: **Simple Boat**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 9 On the Danube Delta

The Danube Delta - over 4,000 square kilometres in all - is one of the great glories of Europe. It is a premier wildlife sanctuary and paradise for birdwatchers and photographers alike. We spend the day aboard the pontoon, with the opportunity of closer views of the many species which inhabit the delta. Apart from its rich wildlife, the Delta is simply a beautiful place to relax aboard our vessel. We make our way through a maze of channels fringed by vast reed beds and ancient willow trees. Whilst different birds are seen depending on the month of visiting, most people will see the spectacular White Pelican. Vast quantities of birds congregate here, including grebes, falcons, egrets, swans and cormorants. The marshy conditions make life difficult for the birds' terrestrial predators, making the delta an even more attractive haven and breeding ground. Much of this can be enjoyed from the deck of our pontoon. We will also take time to visit a village in the Delta. These are some of the most remote settlements in Europe, far away from any roads.

Overnight: **Simple Boat**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 10 Cruise to Tulcea; drive to Bucharest

We spend the morning sailing back to Tulcea, and after lunch drive back to Bucharest, arriving late in the afternoon.

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 11 Tour ends Bucharest

Today our tour ends at Bucharest.

## Accommodation and Meals

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 10 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 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.

#### Romania

**Lunch £:** 8.00

**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.

#### Romania

**Bottle of Beer £:** 1.00

**Water £:** 0.70

### 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

There are no optional excursions available to book on this tour.

### 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 10 Pounds for tipping of the driver and the boat crew.

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

#### Romania

**ATM Availability:** In most towns, your tour leader will advise you.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Major stores and restaurants only.

**Travellers Cheques:** It is not possible to exchange Travellers Cheques on the tour.

**Local Currency:** Romanian Leu.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Sterling Pounds, US Dollars and Euros cash can all be exchanged for local currency. Old style £10 and £20 notes are not accepted.

**Where to Exchange:** Please note that the exchange rates at the airport on arrival are particularly low.

## Joining your Tour

### Flight Information

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

### Booking a land only package with Explore

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

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

### Joining Tour Abroad

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

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

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

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

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

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

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

## Important Information

### Travel Insurance

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

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

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

### Visa Information

Romania: Visas are not required by UK, EU nationalities, 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

#### Romania

Nothing compulsory, although we recommend vaccination against tetanus, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. The Foreign Office currently recommend considerations of vaccination against rabies if travelling in rural areas of Romania. 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.

## Preparing for your Tour

### Trekking Details

We walk on four days of this 11 day tour for an average of three hours per day. Walks are graded as easy with some moderate sections.

### Climate

#### Romania

Romania's climate is continental, temperatures being strongly influenced by the physical features of the Carpathians. Temperatures will fall from highs of 18°C (by day) to lows of 6°C (at night) in October; by January they will hover around freezing during the day and go down to -10°C at night. They will then rise to reach October temperatures again by April. Temperatures will generally be lower in the mountains than in Bucharest. Snowfall may occur at any time.

### Clothing

Pack summer clothing, although medium weights are needed for autumn and spring when it can be cold. Temperatures are cooler in the mountains so a fleece is essential plus a windproof/waterproof jacket.

### Equipment

Bring a water bottle, insect repellent, sunscreen, a sunhat and a torch. Binoculars are useful for the Delta. Only small face towels are provided in the hotels, so if you prefer a larger bath towel it is advised that you take your own. Walking poles may be useful. We recommend also taking a personal first aid kit.

### Footwear

Comfortable walking boots are essential. Trainers/sandals for general travel.

### Luggage: On Tour

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

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

## General Information

### Country details

#### Romania

**Population:** 21,904,551

**Size of Country:** 238,391 sq km

**Major Language:** Romanian

**Religion:** Eastern Orthodox

**Time Difference to GMT:** +2

### Electric Supply & Plugs

#### Romania

2 Pin Round

## Why Choose Explore

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

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

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to - and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

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## Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditions, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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## Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

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## Earth Matters

- [The Travel Foundation](#)

Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk)

- [Tourism Concern](#)

Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)

- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

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## Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety>

## Booking Your Holiday

### Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

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### Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

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### 100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

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### Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.



Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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