EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

The Antarctic Peninsula and Weddell Sea - M/S Expedition (AWS 2014)

POLAR

TOUR DURATION **15** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Relaxed
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Comfortable
Tour Code: AWS

Tour Highlights - The Antarctic Peninsula and Weddell Sea - M/S Expedition

- ✓ Follow in the footsteps of famous polar explorer Ernest Shackleton
- ✓ Journey deep into Antarctica, territory trodden by only a few lucky explorers
- ✓ Take Zodiacs beneath huge icebergs and towering glaciated peaks
- ✓ See whales, seals and vast penguin colonies

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	1 night Comfortable Hotel 13 nights Comfortable Boat
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 12 lunches, 14 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Ushuaia
End Point:	Tour ends: Ushuaia
Transport:	Zodiac, MS Expedition
Countries:	Antarctica Region, Argentina

The Antarctic Peninsula and Weddell Sea - M/S Expedition

Into the Weddell Sea
Journey far south, into this less visited region of Antarctica. The Weddell Sea is a pristine area of wilderness, reserved only for the luckiest of polar travellers. It boasts huge tabular icebergs and an uncompromising environment reserved for rare and unique wildlife. It was here
that polar explorer Ernest Shackleton, travelled on his quest to conquer this inhospitable environment. On this voyage, you'll have the chance to learn more about the historical value of this region, as well as observe seals, whales and birds at close quarters.

Wildlife

Whales
Thanks to the abundance of the small, shrimp like krill as the basis of the food chain, many species of whales make the water south of the Antarctic Convergence their summer home. Some of the species found in the frigid southern waters include: the Humpback Whale who consumes over a ton of krill each day; the Southern Right Whales easily identified by the whitish callosities on the jaws and forehead; the Sperm Whales made famous in Moby Dick; the Killer Whale which is actually not a whale at all but the largest of the dolphin family; the Sei Whale which can achieve speeds up to 55 km/h over short distances; the playful Minke Whales very common in the peninsula area; the Fin Whale who can attain a length of 25 to 27 meters making them the second largest whales; and the Blue Whale which is not only the largest whale in the oceans but also the largest animal that has ever lived.
Penguins
The common name for all flightless, aquatic birds, penguins are only found south of the equator. Penguins have been grouped into 18 species and 6 genera, with most making their homes in Antarctica and the sub Antarctic islands, though others are native to the coasts of Australia, South Africa, South America, and the Galapagos Islands. Penguins are speedy and agile swimmers, but extremely slow on land. The regions we visit aboard MS Expedition are inhabited by 6 different species including the giant King Penguin who can grow up to 1 metre in height (found only on South Georgia Island); the Adelie Penguin named after French explorer Dumont d'Urville's wife; the Chinstrap Penguin identified by the distinctive black line connecting the black cap to below the chin; the Gentoo Penguin with its orange bill and white flash above and behind its eyes; the Macaroni Penguin (Only on South Georgia Island) who number roughly 12 million and are easily identified by the orange tassels meeting between the eyes; and the Rockhopper Penguin (Only in Falkland Islands) who are similar to the Macaroni in appearance but slightly smaller and have yellow tassels.

Ship Description

At a nimble 105 metres (345 ft) in length, with a capacity to hold 132 guests, M/S Expedition is an ideal vessel to ply polar waters. M/S Expedition is large enough to provide stability, speed, spacious cabins and ample public space, but small enough to manoeuvre in remote areas and get you close to the action. Ship stabilisers ensure a smooth ride in rough waters, such as the infamous Drake Passage, allowing you to enjoy more of your time at sea. A fleet of ten zodiacs allows passengers to get out and actively explore the remote shores of our destinations. M/S Expedition is a speedy vessel. A top speed of 16 knots means you'll spend less time getting from A to B, and more time to explore your surroundings.

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: Comfortable

Hand-picked and chosen for their character, location or local importance, these properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

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: Relaxed

Easy paced tours with plenty of time to relax and absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings.

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 Arrive Ushuaia

Arrive into Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. Make your way to your hotel and enjoy the evening at leisure.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**

DAY 2 Embarkation

This afternoon, you will board the M/S Expedition and enjoy your first evening on board your home for the next thirteen nights.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 3 Cross the Drake Passage

Your adventure begins with a 400-mile crossing of the passage that bears the name of the 16th century English explorer Sir Francis Drake. As you make the passage, there will be time to become acquainted with the ship and we'll also begin our lecture program, learning more about the extraordinary human and natural history of the Antarctic region.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 4 Cross the Drake Passage

During your second day at sea, you will cross the Antarctic Convergence - a meeting of cold polar water flowing north and warmer sub-antarctic water moving in the opposite direction. It is the largest biological barrier on earth and is marked by a change in temperature, salinity and nutrient levels. Wandering, black-browed and light-mantled sooty albatross, plus Prion's and Cape petrels are among some of the seabirds that may join you in your journey into Antarctica.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 5 Into the Weddell Sea

This is a unique voyage, which gives you eight days to explore the Great White Continent. Weather and ice conditions permitting, you will navigate southwards making stops in the South Shetland Islands and into the lesser-visited eastern side of the peninsula, the Weddell Sea; hopefully, you'll enjoy two excursions each day.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 6 Weddell Sea

This special voyage allows the flexibility to navigate into the less-travelled region of the Weddell Sea, named after the British sealer and explorer James Weddell who first visited in 1822. Navigation in the Weddell sea is notoriously difficult due to the large amounts of sea ice generated by the Larsen, Finchner and Ronne Ice Shelves; hopefully, you'll be able to set foot on some of the more remote landing sites on the Antarctic Peninsula. This area has numerous historical associations, including the famous expedition hut from the Swedish Nordenskjöld expedition, which still stands at nearby Snow Hill. Although we can't get into Snowhill, as it is only accessible by a Scientific Icebreaker ship, you will be able to travel deep into this region and fully appreciate what Shackleton and his men were up against. You will learn more about the Shackleton story through our on-board lectures, as it was in the Weddell Sea that the crew of the Endurance had to abandon their ship, after it was engulfed by the ice.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 7 Weddell Sea

If you are extremely fortunate, you might catch sight of an emperor penguin. These elusive birds breed far from the sea, but occasionally they can be seen on passing ice floes, drifting in the sea. You will also enjoy spotting numerous other sea birds and seals, along the way.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 8 Weddell Sea

During your voyage, you will learn about the history of exploration in this region. Arguably, the best-known adventurer is Sir Ernest Shackleton. On his attempt at the South Pole his ship,was captured by pack ice in the Weddell Sea on January 19, 1915. The ship was destroyed by heavy ice, forcing him and his men to travel over the ice and sea to Elephant Island. However, because the island was uninhabited, Shackleton and his five made the 1300 km voyage for help to South Georgia, amazingly arriving at Stromness Harbour whaling station on May 20, 1916.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 9 South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

The Antarctic Peninsula and the South Shetland Islands abound with wildlife activity; penguins gather with their fast-growing chicks, whales are seen in great numbers, seals haul out onto ice floes and beaches, and numerous seabirds trail in our wake. There is plenty of time to enjoy the sheer beauty and breathtaking scenery of ice-choked waterways, blue and white icebergs, impressive glaciers and rugged snow-capped mountains.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 10 South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

Thanks to the abundance of the small, shrimp like krill as the basis of the food chain, many species of whales make the water south of the Antarctic Convergence their summer home. Some of the species found in the southern waters include humpback whales, southern right whales, sperm whales and killer whales which is actually not a whale at all but the largest of the dolphin family. You may also spot sei whales, playful minke whales and fin whales.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 11 South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

Of course, the main reason most people travel to Antarctica is for the penguins - the places visited on this trip are inhabited by three different species including Adelie, chinstrap, gentoo. You will soon become an expert on spotting your favourite kind !

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 12 South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

We have one final full day's exploration of this frozen land. Marvel in the scenery and take a mental picture of this truly magical place. There really is nowhere else quite like it in the world.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 13 Drake Passage

Today, we head back across the Drake Passage, on our route to Ushuaia.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 14 Drake Passage

This is your last chance for bird and whale watching, listening to lectures and swapping tales of your Antarctic adventures with fellow travellers.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 15 End Ushuaia

Disembark in Ushuaia in the morning, after breakfast.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 12 lunches,14 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.

Cabins

Prices are based on the use of outward facing, category one cabins on the lower deck. Category one cabins are triple or quad share. They are comfortable with a private toilet and shower, and porthole. The MS Expedition has a number of different cabin categories, all outside facing and with two beds (apart from suites which have queen size beds). Some have larger windows. We can also offer single occupancy, subject to availability. Call us for details on the cabin choice to fit your requirements.

Ship Dining

Onboard our expedition ship you'll find a diversity of gourmet international cuisines prepared and catered by professional chefs; all meals are included in the price of your expedition. Dining is casual, tables are unassigned and the dining room is capable of seating the entire passenger compliment at one time. There is always a selection of different meals available, and vegetarians will find plenty of options. Special dietary requirements can be accommodated with advance notice; please advise us at time of confirmation. Coffee, tea and water are all provided free of charge. All other beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are not included and can be purchased in the dining room, pub or in the lounge.

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.

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

To add to your polar adventure, take to a kayak for an eye-to-eye view with seals and whales or camp in some of the most remote and beautiful places on earth.
Kayaking is available as an optional excursion on our Antarctica trips for GBP 429 per person.
Camping is available as an optional excursion on our Antarctica trips for GBP 99 per person.
These optional extras are only available if you book prior to your departure and you must book it directly with the ship's operator.

Tipping - Local Crew

Tipping is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. It is an expression of satisfaction. The suggested amount is USD $10 - 15 per person per day spent on board. Of course, tipping is a personal choice and the suggested amount is set only as a guideline. The money is collected by the Hotel Manager at the end of the voyage and distributed among the crew and Expedition Staff. The Officers choose not to participate in the tipping pool.

Foreign Exchange

Antarctica Region

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn on credit or debit cards from ATMs in major cities.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a service charge. The ship accepts Visa and Mastercard.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be difficult to exchange and are not accepted aboard.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: A combination of US dollars cash and cards is best. It is advisable to take a minimum of US$200-500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations (notes should be in good condition).

Where to Exchange: Banks or Forex offices in major cities.

Argentina

ATM Availability: Widely spread in all countries. Recommend to use as much as possible. Although always have some cash as back-up

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change (American Express are the easiest to change).

Local Currency: Peso

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry your funds in US Dollar Travellers Cheques/cash (NOT Sterling, which is almost impossible to change). It is advisable to take a minimum of US$400-$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. When changing money always keep your receipts for changing back money.

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

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

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.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Although no visas are required for citizens of UK, CAN, USA, AUS and NZ visa waivers may apply. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

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

Please note that flights on the tour may transit through the USA. According to US law, passengers will have to disembark, collect luggage and clear immigration before re-boarding for the onward flight.
Holders of the UK, AUS, NZ, CAN and several EU country passports can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) if they hold a machine readable passport. They must also be entering the country by sea or air on a carrier participating in the visa waiver scheme, holding a return/onward ticket. As well as being machine readable, if your passport was issued on or after 26 October 2005, it must contain both a digital photograph of the holder and also an integrated circuit chip that stores biographic information.

All passengers travelling to the USA under the Visa Waiver Programme must provide their details online no later than 72 hours prior to travel. British travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be detained and sent home. In addition to passport information, you must also supply the full address of your first night's accommodation in the USA. This information can be obtained from your joining instructions which are sent out approximately 3 weeks before travel.

Anyone applying for ESTA (Electronic Travel Authorisation) to travel under the Visa Waiver system will be charged a fee of 14USD (9GBP).

For more information, and to apply online, please visit the following website at https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov. Once obtained, the application will be valid for a period of two years, or for the validity of your passport (whichever is shorter).
For more information about who is eligible for the VWP, or any other questions you may have regarding your eligibility, or machine readable passports, please contact your local consular office, or visit www.usembassy.org.uk
Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

Argentina: Although a visa is not required by Australian, American and Canadian passengers to enter Argentina there is a reciprocal payment to be made.
The fee must be paid online prior to entering the country. The receipt generated at the time
of online payment must be printed and given to local migration authorities together with passport upon passengers arrival to Argentina.
These payments are as follows: Australian - US$100; Canadian - US$70; American US$131. The fee can be paid at http://www.migraciones.gov.ar/accesibleingles

Vaccinations & Protection

Antarctica Region

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. 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.

Argentina

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. We recommend protection against yellow fever. There have been very few cases reported, but local authorities do recommend travellers get immunised against yellow fever. 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

Climate

Antarctica Region

Polar Temperatures during Antarctic season: Min.: -15°C; Max. 12°C; Average 0°C.

Argentina

Argentina has a climate that ranges from subtropical in the north to cold in the temperate south. The Andes has erratic rainfall and flash floods from December to May. From June to September spring like sunny days temper the cold nights.

Clothing

Dress on board is informal. Pack comfortable, casual clothing for all activities. Wind and waterproof outer layers are essential, and themost important piece of clothing you will bring is a parka. Beware of tight clothing that leaves no room for trapped air, which is an excellent insulator. Wool, silk and some of the new synthetic fibres, like polar fleece, retain heat better than cotton.
Parkas
This will be provided by the ship operator. Please register your size with us before travel and we will arrange for your parka to be available in your cabin on arrival.
Gloves
Keeping your hands warm and dry can be a challenge. Thin polypropylene gloves can be worn underneath warm outergloves. This allows you some protection from the cold when removing your gloves to operate your camera etc. We strongly recommend that you bring more than one pair of gloves, in case one gets wet (or lost).
Hat/Cap
Warm, woollen hat/cap to protect your ears, as well as a scarf, neck gaiter or other face protection, such as a balaclava.
Trousers
Water-resistant trousers of coated nylon or, even better, Gore-Tex® are essential for your comfort. They can be worn over your regular clothes to keep you warm and dry. We suggest that you purchase trousers a few sizes larger than you normally wear as you will be wearing them over other clothing. Gore-Tex® or similar fabrics are excellent for keeping out wind and water without trapping excess heat. Rain gear and Gore-Tex® products can be found in any outdoor sport clothing store. In addition to your waterproof trousers, warm ski pants are suggested if you have them. Warm trousers such as jeans, corduroys etc are also good.
Socks
Warm wool socks worn over a thin pair of silk, polypropylene socks should provide enough warmth and insulation for your feet. Bring several pairs of socks, since you will inevitably get your feet wet.
Outer Clothing
Woollen, knit or cotton sweaters/tops, polar fleece tops (medium weight), several cotton turtlenecks and T-shirts for layering on and off the ship.
Underclothing
Thermal underwear is highly recommended as it will keep you warm without adding bulk. Most polar travellers prefer a lightweight version.

Equipment

Sunglasses and sun cream
Personal toiletries
A refilllable water bottle
Books/reading material
Camera and memory cards (and something to protect the camera when out in the elements)
Seasickness remedy
Walking poles
Personal First Aid

Footwear

Complimentary, used waterproof boots will be supplied onboard. However, guests might want to bring their own if they are the following sizes due to the limited quantities onboard:
- men's UK size 12 & 13 1/2
- women's UK size below three & seven and above

Guests must bring their own if they are:
- men's UK size six 1/2 or smaller
- men's UK size 13 1/2 or larger
- women's UK size two or smaller
- women's UK size nine 1/2 or larger

These are rubber, waterproof boots that are just below your knees with a strong, ridged non-skid sole.
You usually have to step from the Zodiac into icy water up to 30 cm high on most landings. Do not bring heavy, cumbersome boots that make it difficult to walk or boots with metal cleats as they cannot be used for landings. For maximum warmth, wear loose-fitting boots and two pairs of socks. Try out your boots before the voyage.

Luggage: On Tour

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

Please note that a 15kgs luggage weight limit is sporadically enforced on the internal flight to Ushuaia, occasionally charges may be levied against passengers taking luggage in excess of 15kgs.

Luggage allowance on tour: 15Kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and 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. 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.

Antarctica Region

Argentina

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 17.00

Drink

Antarctica Region

Water £: The mighty seventh continent is the last true wilderness of significant size and is as far away from human influence as it's possible to get without leaving the planet. Antarctica is the coldest, driest and windiest place on Earth with no trees or rivers. Despite this, for a few weeks each year, its perimeter supports an astonishing array of life. Thriving rookeries of noisy penguins adorn the summer shores patrolled by skua hunting for an easy meal. In the sea, millions of tiny krill support a thriving population of whale and seal species while in the air albatross soar on the ocean breeze. Antarctica has a stark beauty which is without comparison. Ice-choked channels and snowy landscapes provide ever-changing scenes of beauty which are without comparison. Giant tabular icebergs calved from the edges of the ice shelf float majestically through the waves, their perfectly flat tops resembling giant aircraft carriers of epic proportions. This icy land has long been a draw for adventurers and explorers. In the early 20th century the likes of Scott, Amundsen, Oates and Shackleton all pitted their wits and strength against the harsh conditions. Some of these famous explorers were to pay for their curiosity with their lives. Today, with the advent of polar-rated expedition vessels, it is now possible for adventurous travellers to reach the edges of this remote region. To travel here is a real privilege; it's a journey that those with an interest in the natural world should strive to do at least once.

Argentina

Bottle of Beer £: 2.0

Water £: 1.30

Country details

Antarctica Region

Size of Country: 14,000,000 sq km

Time Difference to GMT: -3

Argentina

Population: 40,117,096

Size of Country: 2,766,890 sq km

Major Language: Spanish is the main language throughout this region, along with a number of indigenous dialects, of which Quechua, Aymara, Quichua and Guarani are the most popular

Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic.

Time Difference to GMT: -3

Electric Supply & Plugs

Antarctica Region

2 Pin Round

Argentina

3 Pin Flat

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 & 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: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

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 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.

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.

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 2013 and 31st December 2014.

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: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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