EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Camino de Santiago (CDS 2015)

WALK & TREK

TOURDURAT
12
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Moderate
tour Code: CDS

Tour Highlights - Camino de Santiago

- ✓ The legendary Camino de Santiago route - Walk through beautiful scenery and historic towns along the best parts of the route to claim a pilgrim's certificate
- ✓ Astorga - Magnificent Bishop's Palace designed by Antoni Gaudi
- ✓ Cruz de Ferro - The famous iron cross at the highest point of the Camino
- ✓ O Cebreiro - Charming mountain village with cobbled streets, round stone thatched houses and picturesque valley views
- ✓ Santiago De Compostela - Lively historic town and holy shrine of pilgrims

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	11 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	11 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 1 dinner
Start Point:	Join tour: Asturias (Oviedo) Airport
End Point:	Tour ends: Asturias (Oviedo) Airport
Transport:	Bus
Countries:	Spain

Camino De Santiago

Following in the footsteps of countless pilgrims since the 9th Century, we follow the legendary route to Santiago de Compostela - the resting place of Saint James, where we claim our pilgrims' certificate. We walk along the most scenic sections between Leon and Santiago: across the high plains of the Castilian Meseta and into the Galician mountains. We discover Gothic cathedrals, pass through medieval villages and climb to the Iron Cross (1482m) along the way.

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.

Trek Grade: Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

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 organization 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 Tour starts at Asturias (Oviedo) airport.

Our tour starts at Asturias airport, from where we travel due south by charter bus to our hotel in Leon. Leon is a great city with a wonderful sense of history reflected in it architecture. It is also an important waypoint on the famous Camino de Santiago.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Tour of Leon. Commence trek with walk to Astorga

We start today with a guided walking tour of Leon. The city's main attractions are its beautiful Gothic cathedral with its unique stained glass windows and the Romanesque San Isidoro church. However there is lots more to discover, including the picturesque old quarter and the brass scallop shells set in the pavement that mark the route of the Camino de Santiago through the city. We obtain our Pilgrim Passports and after an early lunch (optional) we drive to Hospital de Orbigo, famous for its 13th century bridge. We commence our trek from here, with a walk on the Meseta (the Castilian high plateau) to Astorga where we spend the night. Astorga is home to the magnificent Bishop's Palace designed by Antoni Gaudi. Our first walk covers 16 kilometres over approximately four hours. The terrain is gently undulating.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Ascend to the Iron Cross (1482 m). Descend to Molinaseca

We leave the high plateau of the Meseta behind us as we drive a short distance into the mountains to the near- abandoned village of Foncebadon. From here we walk, following the scallop shell markings, up to the famous Cruz de Ferro (Iron Cross), the highest point of the Camino at 1482m. This is one of the most significant points on the route, for centuries pilgrims have left a stone brought from home, an offering they hope will give them protection for the rest of the pilgrimage. From here we can see the mountains of Galicia in the distance. The rest of our day is spent gently descending and we finally arrive in the small village of Molinaseca with its impressive Roman bridge. Here we meet our bus and transfer the short distance to our hotel in Villafranca del Bierzo. Villafranca del Bierzo was once an important medieval town and is home to some spectacular churches, including the Romanesque Church of Santiago. Today our walk covers 19 kilometres over approximately four and a half hours. We ascend to 1482 m then gently descend along mountain trails.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Walk to the pretty mountain village of O Cebreiro

After a short drive to the start of today's walk we continue along the Camino, following the course of the Valcarce River through the valley. This has been the route between Galicia and Castile since ancient times, passing through the small hamlets of Las Herrerias and Ruitelan to the border between Galicia and Leon. Here we come to one of the highlights of our walk, the unusual village of O Cebreiro, a tiny wind battered settlement of stone houses set high above a patchwork quilt of green valleys. The village is famous for its 'pallozas' - traditional circular, thatch-roofed houses. Once in O Cebreiro we have time to relax and explore the village before meeting our bus for the drive to Sarria. En route there is the option to visit Samos Monastery, still an active retreat, and a landmark of the Camino. Our walk is gently uphill almost all day today and far away from road access. We walk for 12 kilometres over approximately four hours. The terrain is unmade mountain paths.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Pass the famous 100 km landmark

From Sarria we continue on foot through Galicia, traversing a terrain of undulating hills in the most verdant of Spain's regions. Passing the hamlet of Brea we reach the famous 100km landmark, for so long a magical moment for weary pilgrims. It is here that they can re-gather their strength, knowing that it was now only another three or four days to go to Santiago. Nowadays this waypoint marks the limit from where one has to walk continuously to Santiago in order to get the 'Compostela', the official pilgrim's certificate. This afternoon we reach Portomarin, once a splendid medieval village, which was relocated by Franco to make way for a reservoir. Remnants of the town's more prosperous days can still be seen amongst its narrow streets, such as the attractive Romanesque San Pedro church. Our walk today covers 22 kilometres over approximately five and a half hours. The terrain is mainly unmade paths through hilly countryside.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Descend to Palas de Rei

Today we start by crossing part of the reservoir on a disused railway bridge. Then the trail continues gradually uphill, passing the 80km mark at Castromaior village. In the vicinity is Casa Carneiro, in medieval times a night stop for 'VIP' pilgrims such as Charles V the emperor who stayed here in 1520 on his way to his coronation, and King Philipp II a few years later on his way to marry Mary Tudor in Coruna. We reach our last high pass (722m) just before Ligonde, and continue on through undulating hills, Eucalyptus trees and Cruceiros (the stone crosses typical of Galicia), to gently descend to our night stop at Palas de Rei, an important pilgrim town. Our walk covers 25 kilometres over approximately six hours. We ascend up to the pass (722 m) and then continuing on unmade paths through gently undulating hills.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Continue through rural Galicia. Cross the medieval bridge to Melide

Leaving the town behind, the Camino now takes us through idyllic rural Galicia, passing farmland and beautiful countryside. We walk through an oak grove to A Coruna, and cross a medieval bridge with four arches to reach Melide where we stop for the night. Today is a good day for trying some traditional Galician dishes, specifically the famous 'pulpo a la Gallega octopus' for which the village of Melide is renowned, and maybe some of the excellent local white wine from the Riberas Baixas near Pontevedra. Today our walk covers 14 kilometres over approximately three and a half hours. The terrain is rural paths through farmland and gently undulating hillsides.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Walk through local villages en route to Arzua

Today you will pass many 'horreos', typical barns of the region that dot this beautiful countryside. We will also start to see more signs that we are nearing Santiago, including many pilgrim villages. Crossing the River Iso we arrive to Arzua where the Camino Frances (French Way) that we have been following, and Camino del Norte (North Way or Camino Primitivo) meet, and where we spend the night. Arzua is also known in the region for its local soft cheese. Today our walk covers 14 kilometres over approximately three and a half hours. The terrain is rural paths and local village roads.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Visit pilgrim sites

Santiago is getting closer! Today we pass many pilgrim sites including pilgrim Guillermo Watt's memorial; he died here whilst on the pilgrimage and his shoes can be found in the stone wall. We can also stop at Santa Irene chapel to see statues of Saint James. We arrive to the small village of Rua* and our hotel along a country road. Our walk covers 18 kilometres over approximately four and a half hours. The terrain is unmade paths and country roads. * Please note that on our 6th May departure we are staying in O Pino instead of A Rua. The total distance walked will be 23 kilometres. The walk on Day 10 will 17 kilometres instead of 23 kilometres.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 10 Arrive to Santiago de Compostela

Today we complete our pilgrimage. We pass through the village of Lavacolla, where traditionally pilgrims would wash and change into their best clothes for the final stretch of the walk. From here we ascend the final hill to Monte Gozo, from where we finally see Santiago Cathedral in the distance. We are now just five kilometres from Santiago's historic centre and the end of our pilgrimage. As we walk the last hour of the trail we share the emotions and sense of achievement of thousands of pilgrims, ancient and modern from all over the world, as we complete the trail and claim our 'Compostela', our pilgrim's certificate. Our last walk covers 23 kilometres over approximately six hours. The terrain is unmade and unmade paths and roads.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Free day in Santiago; optional visit to Cape Finisterre

This morning we take a guided walking tour of Santiago including a visit to the magnificent cathedral, a stunning architectural landmark with Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque features. We also visit the important local squares, churches and buildings around the cathedral. The afternoon is free to wander the city's narrow streets discovering some of the city's other architectural treasures, and enjoy the local food and wine. It is also possible to take an optional excursion to Cape Finisterre.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Tour ends at Asturias airport

Today we drive to Asturias airport, where our tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Accommodation and service levels in Spain are generally very good. We try to use smaller, family-run hotels and pensions that might not offer the same luxuries as larger chain-style hotels, but they do provide a warm welcome, a comfortable place to stay and the chance to gain a better understanding of local life. One thing to be aware of in Spain is that breakfast tends to be a smaller affair, often just fruit juice or coffee and a pastry.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 0 lunches,1 dinner 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.

Spain

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 15.00

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 £: 2.5

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

Sarria - Visit to Samos Monastery €10
Leon - Cathedral & San Isidoro entrance €8
Santiago - Visit to Cape Finisterre €30 - 50

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly, we recommend approximately 15€ per person for tipping.
10% is recommended at meal times.

Foreign Exchange

Spain

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 Tour

Flight Information

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

Booking a land only package with Explore

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

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

Joining Tour Abroad

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

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

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

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

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

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

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

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not

mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

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

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

Visa Information

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

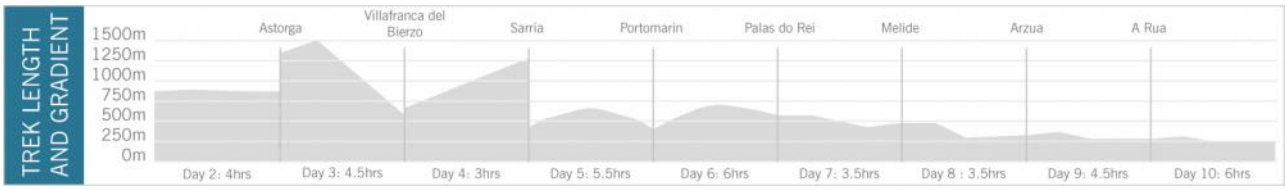
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

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 Tour



Trekking Details

This is a 9-day trek with between 3 and 6 hours walking a day. The route is on the well-defined Camino Frances and reaches a maximum altitude of 1482m. We are accompanied for most of the journey by a support vehicle which also transfers our luggage. We have graded this trek as moderate.

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.

Clothing

A warm sweater or fleece and long trousers are advisable for the evenings especially in early and late season when the weather tends to be cooler. A rain jacket is also recommended.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle, torch, sunblock, sunhat, sunglasses and insect repellent. Gaiters and walking poles may be useful. You may also wish to bring binoculars.

Footwear

A good pair of walking boots are essential, plus comfortable trainers/shoes or sandals for relaxing. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them – should your luggage be lost or delayed, your well broken in boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage: On Tour

Bring one main piece of baggage and a daypack for carrying personal items during our walking days. Total allowance: 20kg (subject to you flight luggage allowance) plus a 25-30 litres daypack. Main baggage will be transported between nightstops.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Spain

Population: 46,030,109

Size of Country: 504,782 sq km

Major Language: Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

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, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

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

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

Cool Earth

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

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

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

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

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

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

Reserving your place

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

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

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

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

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

Tour Itinerary Versions

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

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

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

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