EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Velo en Provence (CVP 2015)

CYCLING

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Moderate
tour Code: CVP

Tour Highlights - Velo en Provence

- ✓ Orange - Discover the 1st century AD Roman treasures, from the Arc de Triomphe to the superb Roman theatre
- ✓ Dentelles de Montmirail - Cycle beneath the towering rock formations; Alpine foothills rising up from the edge of the Rhône valley
- ✓ Food and wine - Visit Châteauneuf du Pape, sample the wines and some of the region's gastronomic highlights along the way
- ✓ St-Rémy-de-Provence - Wander the streets of this delightful market town at the foot of the Alpilles mountain range and one time home to Vincent Van Gogh
- ✓ Cycle the Luberon - Visit the beautiful 8th century village of Gordes

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Avignon TGV Train Station
End Point:	Tour ends: Avignon TGV Train Station
Included Bike:	21 gear Trek T10 Navigator hybrid bikes
Transport:	Taxi, Bicycle
Countries:	France

Vélo En Provence

Riding our bikes through the heart of Provence, we visit ancient vineyards, hilltop villages and discover the landscapes that inspired Vincent Van Gogh to paint here. We cycle past the ancient 'bories' (stone houses) in Luberon, the Roman remains in Orange and St-Rémy-de-Provence, maybe stopping to visit the region's elegant Romanesque abbeys. Making frequent stops to enjoy mouth-watering Provençal cuisine and local wines.

Why Book this tour

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 238 km over six days (an average of 40 km per day) with further more challenging optional rides available. One of the more challenging options is the classic Tour de France climb of Mont Ventoux. We use quiet, undulating roads although there will be several steeper sections. Maps are provided to cycle individually or in groups while the tour leader drives the support vehicle, except on circular routes when the tour leader will cycle with the group. We have graded the route as moderate.

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.

Cycling Grade: Moderate

Medium length rides are suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. You'll be cycling mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

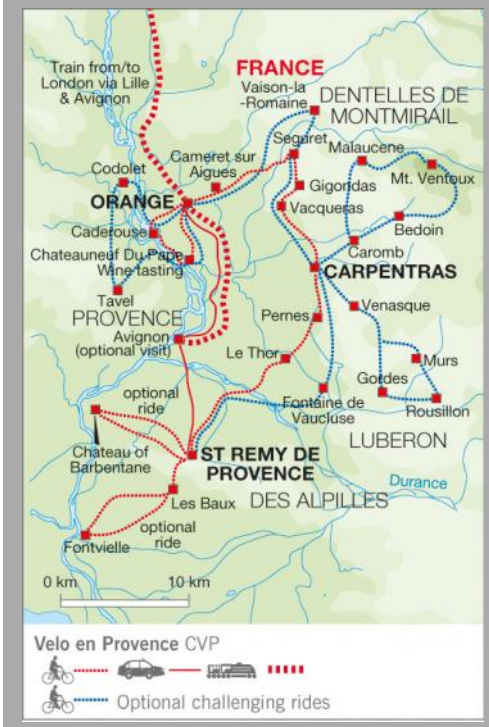
Your tour itinerary

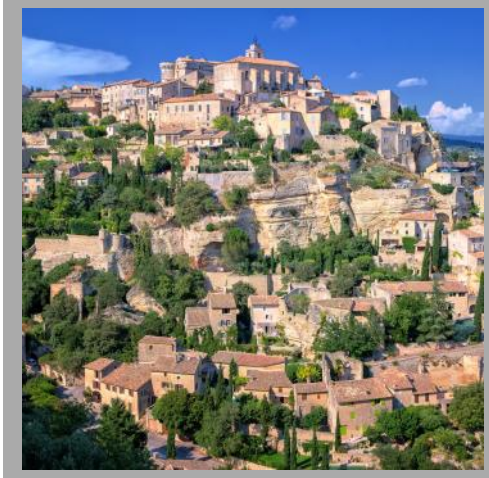
Tour itinerary notes

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 Avignon train station

We join our tour at Avignon TGV train station and then take a short drive to the pleasant Provençal town of Orange. Steeped in history dating from the early 1st century AD, there are many treasures to see, including the recently restored Arc de Triomphe to the still used Roman theatre.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Optional Ride to Châteauneuf du Pape, circular route back to Orange

Having had a chance to familiarise ourselves with our bikes, we start by exploring the area around Orange. There is the opportunity to cycle south of the town through world famous vineyards to the small village of Chateuneuf du Pape. There will be ample time to sample some of the regions' famous wines and explore the ruins of the chateau which was built as a summer residence for the Popes of Avignon. After lunch we can return to Orange following the course of the mighty Rhone taking a break in the village of Caderouse, where ramparts encircle the village. Today provides for a gentle introductory ride, but alternatively you can just follow the local back roads through small, quiet villages. Later this afternoon you may like to visit the large and well preserved Roman theatre and triumphal arch. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 33 kilometres (Total 112 metres ascent and 113 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Cycle through stunning countryside and vineyards; ride to Carpentras

We leave Orange, cycling east through the interesting village of Cameret-sur-Aigues and vineyards to Séguret at the foot of the Dentelles de Montmirail. Séguret is an open balcony on the Rhône Valley, sat beneath the medieval castle remains surrounded by vineyards which produce a very respectable Côte du Rhône. Inhabited since prehistoric times and enriched in Gallo-Romano times, today's village was built in the 10th century and belonged to the Papacy before becoming part of France revolution in 1793. Continuing on our way towards Carpentras we pass through the villages of Gigondas and then Vacqueras, birthplace of the troubadour poet Raimbaud. Along this section of the ride there are some excellent views of the limestone pinnacles and the opportunity to try some of the best Grenache wines produced in the foothills of the Dentelles. This is one place where you can view the lavender fields if travelling in July (Optional longer rides available). Our total cycling distance today is approximately 47 kilometres (Total 269 metres ascent and 215 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Free day or optional circular cycle route via Gordes back to Carpentras

With two nights in Carpentras you may wish to take the opportunity to take a day off from cycling in which case, there are plenty of things to do and see in this historic and attractive town. The town is situated in an area where, in the 14th and 15th centuries, Jewish communities were protected, benefitting from the presence of the Popes in Avignon who granted them the freedom to worship and live peacefully, having been banished from the Kingdom of France. The Synagogue was built in 1367 and is one of the oldest in France. The Hotel Dieu in the town is an 18th century hospital with a well-preserved collection of apothecary jars, decorated walls and ceilings. Antique lovers will enjoy the Rue de Porte Mazan and the town's glass-covered shopping street. A short bus ride away is the city of Avignon and the amazing Palace of the Popes. For those that would prefer to ride, options include the strenuous climb up Mont Ventoux, or riding east of Carpentras to find some of the Luberon's prettiest villages. Three of them have made it into the list of the 'Les plus beaux villages' (most beautiful villages) of France, an association of 144 villages selected on the quality of their architecture, environment and patrimony. Riding through the lavender-hued vale, passing the simple Cistercian abbey of Senanque we continue south-east to arrive at Gordes where there may be time to experience the local street market. On the flanks of the Vaucluse plateau, just across the Luberon barrier, Gordes is a typical Provençal A maze of intricate lanes leads up to St Firmin's church and to the massive hulk of a Renaissance château perched on the top of the village (Optional longer rides available). Our total cycling distance today is approximately 64 kilometres (Total 934 metres ascent and 934 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Crossing the river into the Bouche du Rhône; ride to St Rémy-de-Provence

For those who cycled on day 4 and would like a day off today, it is possible to leave your luggage with the support vehicle as usual and use public buses to visit Avignon, travelling to St Rémy-de-Provence after the visit. The cycling route takes us southeast through the market gardens of the Vaucluse and Bouche du Rhône regions following lanes across flat farmland and through delightful old villages. It is possible to make a short detour to the Grottes de Thouzon en route. These caves offer an easy walk along a horizontal gallery via the fossil bed of an underground river where you can discover the delicate beauty of the only natural cave developed for tourism in Provence. Our route crosses the Durance River to Noves, a typical village with two 14th century gateways and a 12th century church. Our destination for today is St Rémy-de-Provence the birthplace of Nostradamus and one time home to Van. (Optional longer rides available) Our total cycling distance today is approximately 52 kilometres (Total 84 metres ascent and 119 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Free day or optional circular cycle route via Les Baux back to St Rémy-de-Provence

Riding west we cycle around the base of the Alpilles, passing Mas-Blanc-des-Alpilles, the smallest village in the department and surrounded by former agricultural land now used for market gardening and fruit trees. Close by we can visit the Barbegal Mill, a sixteen wheel water powered device constructed in the 3rd or 4th century. We continue cycling through olive groves, to visit Les Baux-de-Provence, another of France's most beautiful. Perched on a rocky spur, the village overlooks some staggeringly beautiful countryside. We finish with a delightful descent back into St Rémy-de-Provence. (Optional longer rides available) Our total cycling distance today is approximately 41 kilometres (Total 286 metres ascent and 285 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Free day or optional circular cycle route via Barbantane back to St. Remy-de-Provence

Our cycle route today heads north of St Rémy-de-Provence through the herb scented, fragile landscape of La Montagnette to the village of Barbentane. Along the way we pass through Maillane, birthplace of the writer Frederic Mistral. Close to the hotel, Glanum is an archaeological site where excavations have taken place since 1921, unearthing a city from between 4th century BC and 3rd century AD. This site retains vestiges of its outstanding town planning and religious monuments. Another non cycling option offers the opportunity to visit Arles by public bus. Once a metropolis of Roman Gaul, Arles became a symbol of ardent Christianity as can be seen through the arena, the Alyscamps burial grounds, the amphitheatre and the Roman baths of Constantin. (Optional longer rides available.) Our total cycling distance today is approximately 43 kilometres (Total 87 metres ascent and 102 meters descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Tour ends Avignon train station

After breakfast we drive from St-Rémy-de-Provence to the TGV train station in Avignon where the tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

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.

Food & Drink

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

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

France

Lunch £: 11.00

Dinner £: 23.00

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.

France

Bottle of Beer £: 4.00

Water £: 1.30

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

Orange - Roman Theatre - and other similar sites Approx. €5 each.
Avignon from Carpentras or St Arles from St Remy De Provence - Approx. €12-14 per person return (depending on train type).

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Foreign Exchange

France

ATM Availability: In cities and most major towns

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants (make sure you have informed your credit card company that you are travelling abroad as some companies will reject payments)

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques are no longer commonly accepted and can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change.

Local Currency: Euro

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change. Please change currency into Euros prior to arriving in France.

Where to Exchange: Bureau de Change can only be found in major cities and large airports. Many French banks no longer exchange Foreign currency.

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

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

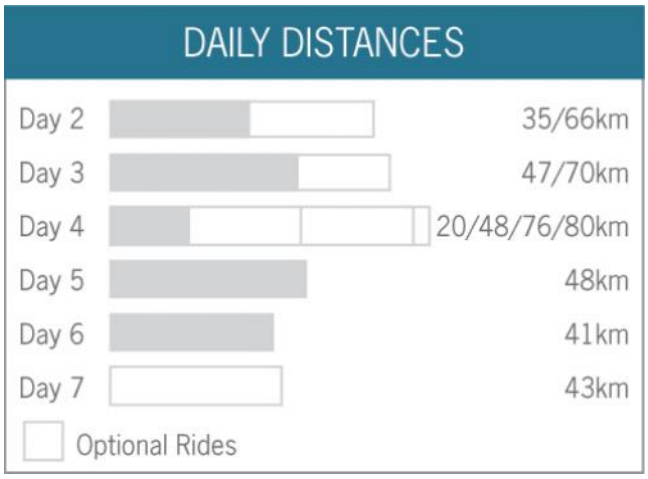
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

France

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. 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



Bike Details

Your included bike is a 21 gear Trek T10 Navigator hybrid and will be the correct frame size for your height. A 16-litre pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle carries the luggage from point to point and is driven by the tour leader. Maps are provided to cycle individually or as a group. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Climate

France

Across France, from April - August, weather conditions are generally warm and pleasant with moderate rainfall; Autumn temperatures are a bit lower and the winter months (though colder) remain mild. The summer months on the Mediterranean Coast in the south tend to be warmer than the rest of France and have less rainfall, and also more mild winters; freezing conditions are nearly unheard of. The mountainous areas of the Alps, Juros and Pyrenees can be quite different. During summer the morning and evening temperatures are considerably cooler and it becomes much colder in winter with heavy snowfall. Western France, along the English Channel, there can be very strong winds and frequent rain during the winter months Nov - Apr. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather. However, you must bring a warm sweater or jacket for cycling on cool days and for wearing during the evenings. In case of rain, waterproofs are essential. Also, a pair of long trousers or tracksuit bottoms are useful for cycling along hedgerow-lined footpaths.

Equipment

We strongly advise that you bring your own helmet with you, as helmets cannot be provided locally. Cycle glasses (to protect against dust, insects, pollen, sun etc) , cycle gloves (padded for more comfort) and a water bottle or water delivery system (eg camelback or platypus). You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling.
Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage: On Tour

Unfortunately it does occasionally happen that luggage does not always reach its destination on the same flight as its owner, or possibly it may be damaged in transit. If you are unlucky enough for this to occur, it is important that you file a PIR (Property Irregularity Report) with the airline before leaving the airport. This is essential when you come to make a claim either against the airline or from your travel insurance company
One main piece of luggage and a daysac. Total allowance: 44lbs/20kgs.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

France

Population: 65,821,885

Size of Country: 674,843 sq km

Major Language: French

Religion: Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

France

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.

These tour notes were printed on 03/05/2015 22:36:37