



# West Africa between Freetown and Accra (DZFA)

Accra to Freetown City 28 days.

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- Route: Accra to Freetown City
- Length: 28 days
- Transport: Overland expedition vehicle, boats
- Accommodation: Mainly local hotels and guesthouse with camping at campsites and wild camps

## Countries Visited

### Côte d'Ivoire



Ivory Coast is wonderfully rich in culture and natural attractions. The national anthem describes the country as a land of hope which is indicative of the positive attitude of its people. Always friendly and welcoming, the good nature of the Ivorians will be encountered wherever you go.

It's really the modernity that sets Côte d'Ivoire apart from other West African nations. Abidjan is one of the most modern cities in West Africa, and its shimmering skyscrapers will astound. Yamoussoukro in the centre of the country is famous for its basilica, an astonishing replica of Rome's St Peter's, which epitomises the Houphouët-Boigny era, as does the Presidential palace not far away. The north is decidedly less developed, a region where you can experience a more traditional way of life and the customs that go with it, set amongst the beautiful landscapes that dominate this part of the country.

Security note: Ivory Coast is moving on from its recently troubled past with the election of a new President. We will be monitoring the Foreign & Commonwealth Office advice before we set off and when we are on the road. We also have contacts on the ground who will let us know if the situation changes further ahead and we can re-route accordingly. We are happy to say that there have been no travel restrictions in place for any of our route through Ivory Coast for some time now.

### Ghana



Ghana was the first African country to gain independence from Britain, today it is a proud and friendly place. It has had a chequered post colonial history, but certainly now appears to be forging ahead both economically and politically. It is a very friendly country, which surprisingly has close ties to its French speaking northern neighbour, Burkina Faso. Its beaches are the envy of all West African nations, its Ashanti culture is fascinating and it has one or two excellent national parks. Internationally Ghana is acclaimed for its music, with Ghanaian artists such as Kofi Ghanaba giving concerts across the western world.

The capital of Ghana is Accra, and is on the coast. It is home to some of the most amazing museums in the country and is the place to learn about Ghana from the prehistoric times to the present day.

The music is ever present in Ghana, with many of the regions have their own personal sound. All over Ghana, the local communities want people to hear their sounds, and love welcoming visitors to join in their celebrations. Dance is the same. If there is a chance to dance, then the Ghanaians will dance. From celebrations, to funerals and even storytelling. Ghana is a country to try new experiences. The food has to be experienced and each region like to give dishes their own personal touch. The variety of flavours all over the country, make the range of dishes so diverse. Many dishes are usually served with a stew or a soup and a lot are rice based. With many exotic tastes available, it is clear to see Ghanaians like to express their culture through food.

The textiles in Ghana are extremely important as cloths are used to make different clothes. The different colours and patterns have different meanings and are usually worn for important social and religious occasions. A written language and history is represented through the beautiful Kente cloth. This is yet another area in which the Ghanaians are very proud of.

Ghana has a welcoming feeling, and with the chances to join in with the amazing culture, it is the country to visit if you want to experience West African hospitality.

## **Guinea**



Guinea, a country few travellers ever get to visit, can boast of some of the most beautiful landscapes in the whole of West Africa, a strong musical tradition, and friendly peoples.

You will be awed by the expansive savannahs, stunning highlands in the Fouta Djallon region, numerous waterfalls, and the jungles of the forest region, noted for its resident populations of forest elephants and chimps. Vine bridges over rivers and canyons are a particular highlight in parts of Guinea.

Guinea is diverse with more than 300km of flat coastline that becomes even more spectacular with mountainous landscapes as you move inland. Due to this majestic beauty, Guinea is often called the 'Switzerland of Africa.' Lower Guinea is covered with undulating plains, which provides some of the best trekking terrain in West Africa.

Rich in culture and tradition, Guinea offers the traveller a wonderful insight into everyday life of the various ethnic groups which make up the country.

## **Sierra Leone**



If you are old enough to remember the classic 'Taste of Paradise' Bounty bar commercial, you'll have a good idea of just how impressive the beaches in Sierra Leone are. The advert was filmed on River Number Two Beach, just outside the capital, Freetown. Lush mountains meet white sand and turquoise tropical waters. This stunning shoreline fits many people's idea of perfection.

However, many perceptions of Sierra Leone are quite different. With a sad history including slavery and civil war, Sierra Leone has endured its fair share of problems. Today the country has a functioning democracy and is moving on from a troubled past. The tenacity, affection and spirit of the people of Sierra Leone is what really defines the country. The capital Freetown is fast becoming a must visit city in Africa and the lively bars and clubs are abuzz with the latest sounds and locals dancing with an infectious lust for life long into the night.

Sierra Leone (or Salone as it's known by its inhabitants) offers much more than just paradise beaches and buzzing nightlife; for the more adventurous, highlights include climbing West Africa's highest peak, Mount Bintumani. You can take a river tour of Tiwai Island Reserve in canoe or motorboat, watching birds fly overhead, river turtles surface, or take night tours in search of the elusive and extremely rare pygmy hippopotamus. Gola forest reserve is a diverse ecosystem set in a beautiful location nestled in the mountains, with some great trekking opportunities to take in the stunning views and look for wildlife. Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary is only a few miles outside Freetown and home to 99 rescued chimps, where you can sleep in a thatched hut or tree house in the jungle canopy.

Sierra Leone has huge potential for eco-tourism projects and investment is booming - now is the time to visit this fascinating and beautiful country - before the crowds get there

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## Daily Itinerary

### Day 1: Accra

**Border information:** if joining in Accra, you will most likely enter Ghana at Accra Kotoka International Airport.

Today is an arrival day with a pre departure meeting at 10:00am.

Your leader will leave a note in reception telling you where this important meeting will take place. Your leader will collect your kitty and check your passport and insurance details at this meeting.

The afternoon will be free to explore the city of Accra.

Tonight we stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities

Hotel for the night: Niagara Plus

Niagara Plus Hotel

14th Lane (Behind Koala Osu)

Osu

Accra

+233 21 772404

Please note that in Accra there are 3 Niagara hotels: Niagara Hotel, Niagara Inn and Niagara Plus Hotel. the Niagara Plus is located in an area of Accra known as Osu. This is where our groups stay.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Explore the fascinating and chaotic Ghanaian capital city of Accra	USD
Visit the various sites of Accra such as National Museum, the Nkrumah Memorial Park and Independence Square.	USD 5
Spend time at Labadi Beach or the quieter Coco Beach, both situated outside of Accra	

## **Accra**

Accra, Ghana's sprawling capital, is a bustling coastal city with a whole load of beaches that would please even the most discerning sun worshipper. Some of the beaches are more touristy than others and they can all get very busy on Saturdays and Sundays; and whenever you go you should expect to be entertained by an endless stream of musicians and acrobats and pursued by souvenir sellers. Away from the beach, the Perpetual Flame at the Cenotaph in Revolution Square is worth a look, plus the National Museum houses one of the best collections in all of West Africa. Next to the museum you will also find a good craft market, perfect for a bit of souvenir shopping. In the evening you can sample Accra's lively nightlife, heading out to one of the many bars and restaurants that can be found all over this surprising city.

## **Day 2 to 3: Kumasi**

Leaving Accra behind us, we journey north for 2 nights in Kumasi, allowing lots of time for exploration of the town and museums. Kumasi is the home of West Africa's largest market and was the centre of the Ashanti Kingdom.

We will stay in a local guesthouse in Kumasi.

Drive time - 7 hours. (Please note that all drive times are approximate estimates only - these times will vary due to road conditions, weather, roadworks, road closures, traffic jams, police checks, and

many other mitigating factors - flexibility is an absolute necessity when travelling in West Africa!)

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit to Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti kingdom and culture	
Explore the bustling centre of Kejetia, the largest market in West Africa	USD
Visit the National Cultural Centre, Prempeh II Jubilee Museum and Manhyia Palace	USD 5

## **Kumasi**

Kumasi was once the ancient capital of the Ashanti Empire. Now it is a thriving, bustling, provincial city with a lively atmosphere. It has the largest market in the whole of West Africa which is well worth exploring if you have the time. This city is one of the main centres of West Africa's cultural heritage and the National Cultural Centre and Museum are well worth a visit to see the famous Ashanti drums. Traditionally these drums were used to communicate over vast distances and today they are an integral part of modern Ghanaian music. The drums usually come in a set with different sizes. Boma drums are the biggest drums in West Africa and give the music that deep, melodic, festive feel.

## **Day 4: Kakum National Park**

Today we will drive south to Kakum National Park where we can go on an evening walk in the rainforests in search of wildlife, bugs and snakes! We may also have the chance to visit a small animal sanctuary en route.

We will camp tonight in the grounds of the National Park HQ.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit to the stunning jungles of Kakum National Park and walk through the rainforests at night	Included in Kitty

## **Kakum National Park**



Kakum National Park is in southern Ghana; 350 square kilometres of tropical rainforest protecting the very rare and endangered Mona-meercat, as well as pygmy elephants, forest buffalo and an

incredible array of birdlife. In the park we walk along towering canopy walkways through the tops of the trees, offering a unique and unobtrusive way for travellers to experience the forest. The park is also an important habitat for a variety of rare tropical plants, including many that are used by local people for medicinal purposes.

## **Day 5 to 6: Kakum National Park, Cape Coast, Elmina (Brenu Akynin)**

Today we have an early start with a morning visit to the Kakum National Park canopy walkways. These are a long series of hanging bridges at the forest canopy level that gives us a unique perspective of the rainforest - and at that time of the morning we will have the place to ourselves!

We will then head back south to the Atlantic coast and into Cape Coast for a fascinating and moving tour of the old slave fort there.

We will then move to our stunning beach resort in Brenu Akynin, near Elmina where we will camp for 2 nights. In Elmina we will get involved with a local community project, have time to visit Elmina castle and of course relax on the beautiful beaches there.

Drive time - 3 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Discover the rainforest canopy on the suspended bridges in Kakum National Park	Included in Kitty
Learn all about the appalling history of the slave trade with a tour of Cape Coast Castle	Included in Kitty
Visit and explore the historic Elmina Castle	
Relax and unwind on the stunning Brenu Beach on Ghana's Gold Coast	
Help out at the Sabre Trust School project	Included in Kitty

### **Cape Coast**



The Ghanaian coast was made to relax on. Its atmosphere is great, laid back, warm, ethnic, without the tourist infrastructure that plagues much of the East African coast and it has a long, long history. We spend a lot of time on the coast at a variety of different places. There is tons of stuff to see and do. Eighty kms outside Accra we stop at Big Millie's Backyard, a beautiful spot surrounded by coconut palm. This little gem of a place sits right on the beach with a funky bar, great cocktails and an awesome restaurant, serving the tastiest lobsters. What could be better than watching the local fishermen bringing in today's haul in their nets before settling down for a massage; you will never feel the same again. Just up the road is a tiny reggae recording studio; think Bob Marley and his mates in a tin hut at mega decibels. Here the locals musicians (and boy they are musicians) will



teach you the basics of Ashanti drumming. Wax Lyrical time "Sit out in the shade of a palm tree, with Ghanaian dudes and drum to you hearts content - dreaming about the lobster and cold beer tonight." End of Wax Lyrical. There were numerous forts built on this coast over 300 years ago by Europeans to protect their interests in the trading of ivory, precious metals and slaves. Many of these forts still survive and some, (such as the one at Elmina) have undergone considerable restoration. It is well worth taking a thought provoking, if somewhat harrowing visit to the same cells where unfortunate slaves were subdued by being deprived of food and water for three days in order to prevent them from causing trouble as they were being loaded onto ships.

### **Elmina (Brenu Akynin)**



Brenu Akynin is a small village right on the beach just outside the town of Elmina. The local people here rely heavily on fishing and cultivating coconuts, pineapples and groundnuts to make a living. The one small school here is located just a few metres from Brenu Beach, a stunning location for tourists, but far from ideal for the school children. They are distracted from their studies by the vehicles that pass through the school to access the beach, and often cut class in order to sell goods to the tourists or assist their parents with the farming and fishing.

Over the last few years, Dragoman have got involved with a local grass-roots charity, the Sabre Trust, which is working to improve education for all of the children here. Originally the school here was in a terrible state of disrepair and extremely under-resourced, but gradually this is beginning to improve.

On Dragoman overland trips we stay in Brenu, allowing us time to get involved in a variety of projects at the school. Depending on your groups skills and the school's needs, you could be getting your hands dirty helping out with small building projects, participating in educational workshops, or even helping with the teaching. Getting involved at the school is a great opportunity to lend a hand and give something back to the local people here, albeit in a small way. It's also a great chance to experience everyday Ghanaian life at first hand, getting to know the local children and their families.

### **Day 7 to 8: Grand Bassam**

**Border information:** Enter Cote d'Ivoire at Elubo

Leaving Ghana behind us, we head south to the old French colonial capital of Grand Bassam situated east of Abidjan.

We stay here for 2 nights in a local hotel allowing time for you to explore the old colonial town and to relax on the beautiful beaches around our hotel.

Drive time - 7 hours.

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Explore the sites of Grand Bassam, the original French capital of Ivory Coast.

### **Grand Bassam**



This town was the original French capital in Ivory Coast before being moved due to outbreaks of disease. Grand Bassam allows for time to explore the old colonial town, watch local artists at work, or simply kick back and relax on the serene beaches

### **Day 9 to 10: Yamoussoukro**

Today we will drive to Yamoussoukro, the tiny and bizarre capital of Cote d'Ivoire. Yamoussoukro was the birthplace of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, the first president of independent Cote d'Ivoire, and is also the location of the colossal and breathtaking Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, the largest Christian church in the world.

We will stay here for 2 nights in a local hotel, allowing lots of time to explore the sites on offer.

Drive time - 7-8 hours.

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Marvel at the opulence of the Basilique de Notre Dame de la Paix, the largest Christian place of worship in the world

Included in Kitty

### **Yamoussoukro**



The capital of Ivory Coast in name alone; Yamoussoukro was the hometown of long serving post-independence President, Felix Houphouet-Boigny who spent exorbitant amounts of money to make it the new spectacular capital.

Marvel at the Presidential Palace (where the late President was buried), and his showpiece, the Basilique De Notre Dame De la Paix.

Despite such a low percentage of the population actually being Catholic, the President spent hundreds of millions of dollars on a grand Basilica, almost an exact replica of St Peter's in Rome! The town itself also boasts 6 lane highways that lead nowhere, grand hotels and monuments on a par with any other capital city of the world but all in a relatively small settlement of 250,000 people. A surreal place that has to be seen to be believed!

### **Day 11 to 12: Korhogo**

Today we will move to the northern Ivorian town of Korhogo and stay here for 2 nights, famed for the multitude of crafts that are made there. We will get a chance to visit many of the craft artists in the area, from painters to bead-makers to cloth weavers, and also to enjoy some walks around the surrounding area.

We stay in a small local hotel.

Drive time - 6 hours.

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Guided tour of the artisan villages in and around Korhogo

Included in Kitty

### **Korhogo**



The northern town of Korhogo is famed for cloth weaving, jewellery and antiques. Visiting the surrounding area will give you a fascinating insight into the life of the Senoufo people. Le quartier des sculpteurs in Korhogo is definitely worth a good look around for souvenirs - be prepared to haggle!

French Roman Catholic missionaries established a church and school in the town in the late 19th century. Korhogo's Senuofo wood sculptors, practitioners of a traditional art utilized by the Poro secret society, also create artifacts for the tourist market in Abidjan.

### **Day 13 to 14: Cote d'Ivoire wild camp**

The next 2 days are spent driving through central Cote d'Ivoire and then crossing the western border into Guinea. These days take us through some very remote areas and some very poor quality dirt roads, so a great deal of flexibility is needed as our progress will largely be determined by the state of the roads.

Both nights will be spent wild camping en route.

Drive times - 7-9 hours each day.

### **Day 15 to 16: Forested Guinea, Nzerekore**

**Border information:** Enter Guinea at Gbakoré.

Today we'll cross the border into Guinea. We'll base ourselves for 2 nights in the small town of Nzerekore in the heart of Guinea's Forest Region, where we will have free time to explore the town, the nearby villages and the surrounding forests.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Time to explore the forested region of Guinea on foot

Walk to visit one of the famous vine bridges in the forested region of Guinea      Included in Kitty

### **Forested Guinea**

Forested Guinea, or otherwise known as Guinée Forestière, is a forested mountainous region in southeastern Guinea, extending into northeastern Sierra Leone.

It is one of four natural regions into which Guinea is divided and covers 23% of the country.

It is known for its diverse ethnic population, including the Toma and Lissi groups, and also shelters a large number of refugees from the Sierra Leone Civil War, the Liberian Civil Wars and the Côte d'Ivoire Civil War.

We take the opportunity to trek and explore the Forested Region on foot and learn about the fascinating culture and peoples of the region. The area also has rich fauna and flora making beautiful walking trails to waterfalls.

## **Day 17 to 18: Macenta, Gueckedou, Faranah**

Over the next 2 days we will travel through the mid region of Guinea, stopping for a night in one of the towns en route (depending on how the drive goes it may be Macenta or Gueckedou), and then arriving at Faranah near the Sierra Leonean border. On the way we will visit one of the famous vine bridges (Pont de Liana).

We will aim to stay in small locally run hotel or guesthouse on both nights.

Drive times - 7-9 hours each day.

### **Faranah**

We will stop in the town of Faranah to stock up on food and water, before leaving Guinea and driving further south into Sierra Leone. This road is going to be a serious test. At times it is very narrow, with deep ruts and corrugations. We will have to ford rivers if the bridges are not strong enough for the truck. This is truly off the beaten track - overlanding through a remote part of West Africa. We will allow for 2 days of driving between Faranah and Kabala- the first major town we get to in Sierra Leone.

## **Day 19 to 20: Faranah region wild camp, Kabala**

**Border information:** Enter Guinea Sierra Leone at Gberia-Fotombu.

The next 2 days are spent travelling from Guinea over to Sierra Leone through the remote border near Kabala, driving through scenic areas very rarely visited by tourists.

The road conditions in this area can be pretty tough going and unpredictable, and progress can be greatly affected by the weather conditions, so flexibility is very important over these days.

Kabala is famous for being an oasis of cool air in the hills of northern Sierra Leone, and for its traditional Ronko dyed clothes - shirts or gowns made of strips of cloth, typically dyed a rusty reddish-brown using local pigments.

We will wild camp en route, and stay in a local guesthouse in Kabala.

Drive times - 5-8 hours each day.

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**

Explore Kabala and the surrounding villages, or walk to the top of Gbawuria Hill nearby

**Kabala**



We will spend 2 nights in Kabala where you'll have the opportunity to trek in Wara Wara Mountains that lie just to the northwest of the town. Kabala is also famed as the centre of the cattle-tending area of the largely Muslim north - and its climate puts it among the best sources of fresh produce in the country.

**Day 21: Makeni**

Today we start our journey south through Sierra Leone.

We aim to wild camp near the town of Makeni en route, or we may stay in a local guesthouse depending on the size and wishes of the group.

Drive time - 6-8 hours.

**Day 22 to 23: Tiwai Island Sanctuary**

Today we will arrive at the Tiwai Island Sanctuary, one of Sierra Leone's largest inland islands.

We will stay here for 2 nights sleeping in tents perched on covered platforms.

On our full day on Tiwai Island we will enjoy various nature walks through the webs of trails that weave through the Tiwai forest. We'll be in search of the rare and colourful primates that inhabit the sanctuary, and if we're very lucky we may spot a very rare pygmy hippo!

Drive time - 6-8 hours.

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**

Nature walk through Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary

Included in Kitty

Take an optional canoe or motor boat tour through Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary

USD 10

## Tiwai Island Sanctuary

Tiwai has one of the highest concentration and diversity of primates in the world. Some of them are rare and endangered species like the colobus monkeys (black & white, red and olive) and the Diana monkey. Tiwai is also host to wild chimpanzees, who use stones as hammers and tree roots as anvils to crack open hard nuts.

Over 135 different bird species, including 8 types of hornbills and the white breasted Guinea fowl, can be found on Tiwai.

Webs of trails weave through the Tiwai forest, allowing visitors and researchers to explore up to 50 km of walking paths. If you move silently through the forest, you can glimpse some of the rarest & most colorful primates in the world, such as the diana & colobus monkeys.

Tiwai is a community conservation programme, managed by the Tiwai Island Administrative Committee (TIAC), which represents both communities, government, Universities & conservation organizations. All funds raised go towards running the project as well as supporting the Community Development Fund, to help finance community initiated programmes.

## Day 24 to 26: Freetown

Today we have a big drive across Sierra Leone to spend 3 nights exploring the beaches of Freetown Peninsular. There are a few different options for which beaches we could choose to visit, our favourites being River Number 2 Beach and Bureh Beach.

On the beaches there will be chance to go fishing, take a boat to explore the Banana Islands, get to know the local communities and of course relax on the beach!

Drive time - 10 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Relax on some of the best beaches in the world	
Take a boat trip to explore the fascinating Banana Islands	
Visit the orphan chimpanzees at Tacaguma Chimpanzee Sanctuary outside of Freetown	USD 10
Head out with the locals in their boats to try your hand at fishing	

## Freetown



Freetown is a city sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and the mountains. There are countless beautiful beaches within a short cab ride from the city centre and a journey to the hill tops that surround the city provides truly breathtaking views.

The lively capital of Sierra Leone is steeped in history and culture. In 1787, British philanthropists founded the "Province of Freedom" which later became Freetown, a British crown colony and the principal base for the suppression of the slave trade. By 1792, 1200 freed slaves from Nova Scotia joined the original settlers, the Maroons.

As in virtually all parts of Sierra Leone, the Krio language (a native language of the Creole people who only make up 5% of country's population) is by far the most widely spoken language in the city. The Krio language is spoken as a lingua franca by the entire population in the city of Freetown

## Day 27: Freetown City

Today we will have a short drive up the western side of the Freetown Peninsular to arrive in the Aberdeen district of Freetown City., the capital of Sierra Leone.

You have plenty of time to head out and explore the sites in and around Freetown, before heading out for a final group meal together!

We stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Drive time - 3 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in the Capital of Sierra Leone, Freetown	Included in Kitty
Visit the 500 year old Cotton Tree in the heart of Freetown	
Visit to the Sierra Leone National Museum in Freetown	USD 5
Visit the King's Yard Gate and the Old Wharf Steps, reminders of Freetown's slavery past	

## Day 28: Freetown City

Today is your final day and there are no activities planned.

No accommodation is provided for tonight, unless you are continuing on with us, however we are able to book you additional accommodation in Freetown. Please ask at the time of booking.

**Border information:** If you are leaving at Freetown, you will most likely exit Sierra Leone at Lungi Airport.

The fastest and most reliable way to the airport from Freetown is by water-taxi, as Lungi is across a bay from the city. Our hotel in Freetown is a 200m walk to the jetty where the water-taxis depart from - the departure times for the water-taxis are linked to every flight in and out of Lungi airport (usually around 4 hours before the time of the flight). We advise that when the trip arrives in Freetown, you go to the jetty to check the timetable for the water-taxis for your flight and purchase a ticket in advance (USD40 or EUR35) - your trip leader will be able to assist with this. The ticket counter at the jetty is open 24 hours a day.



You should arrive at the jetty 30 minutes before the departure time, as you have to check in your large bags and take a luggage ticket. The water-taxi takes approximately 30 minutes, then you take a minibus for another 15 minutes to arrive at Lungi airport. Your large bags will be waiting for you at the water-taxi office on the left-hand-side of the airport entrance, just hand in your luggage ticket to get them back.

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## Important Notes

**The routes, activities and places visited described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.**

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, information and kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

We update these notes regularly and so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our basic planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, often without western infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to western safety standards.

### **Exploratory notes / Warning - this is a new trip for us!**

While we have thoroughly researched this area to put together this trip, it still must be remembered that this is a relatively new trip for us. To be frank, we expect some things to go wrong. When we head to new destinations, we usually find there are more pleasant surprises in store than unpleasant ones, but the warning is sincere. If it concerns you then we recommend that you wait for a year until we get any bugs ironed out.

## Physical Preparation

### **Physical preparation for West Africa Itineraries**

Roads in these parts of Africa can be very rough, which makes for long bumpy travel days. You may be travelling across deserts, through jungles and through wild Africa savannah lands... It is however all worth it for the spectacular scenery and for travelling through regions that very few other westerners go (OK, Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman perhaps, but we were there first)! Where there are public campsites or hotels, the bathroom facilities can be very basic, and may be non-existent in the case of many of the bush camps on this itinerary. There is never toilet paper provided and shower facilities, if existing, often consists of a bucket of cold water and a jug. Once again, the spectacular serenity and chance to sleep so close to nature makes a little inconvenience all

worthwhile and part of the African overlanding experience. Note that not all campsites are as basic as this description; it's just to make sure there are no surprises for you. There will be plenty of nice surprises along the way! Lastly, the step up into the overland vehicle, while not overly high can become tiring and you need to judge yourself to be physically fit enough to haul yourself up and down at least 8-10 times a day, as can the constant setting and packing up of camp.

## Visa Information

Many countries that we visit on our travels will require visas to enter. Some are best obtained before you leave home, and others can be obtained en-route. Whilst the ultimate responsibility for obtaining visas is yours, we will endeavour to assist you wherever possible.

The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. The information provided is given in good faith and we do try to keep the visa information as up to date as possible. Please be aware though that rules do change, often without prior warning, which is why it is important that you check for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance, you can choose to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy or consulate. However, our recommendation is that you use a visa agent to assist you with your applications. While this does increase the cost, it will make the process much easier for you. Dragoman have teamed up with 'The Visa Machine' to create a safe, secure, hassle-free way of obtaining visas and visa advice. Our unique link within their website is designed to make the visa process as straightforward as possible. Simply go to <https://dragoman.thevisamachine.com> and click on your region of travel followed by your trip route and 'The Visa Machine' will advise you about not only the required visas but also the dates by which you should apply. 'The Visa Machine' can then assist you in the actual visa application, thus taking all the worry and hassle out of the process. This should apply for ALL nationalities and countries of residence.

As you will often need to submit your passport together with your applications, we recommend that you avoid making any travel plans in the weeks leading up to your departure. However if you do need to travel in this period please let us know as soon as possible so that we can help you work out the options for your visa application process.

### Ghana

We recommend you obtain your visa **in advance**. These allow for a stay of up to 60 days and can be single-entry or multiple-entry.

You may be asked to provide references for your visa application of which you can use the following:-

**The Stumble Inn, Elmina, Ghana, +235 4146 2733 and**

**Aubrey Malcolm Green, Sabre Trust Project, Elmina, Ghana**

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required to enter Ghana.

If you flying into Ghana you can only obtain a single entry visa on arrival in Ghana if you have received pre-approval from the Director of Ghana Immigration at least 48 hours beforehand. You

must hold a letter of pre-approval, which should contain the visa number and passport number to check in for your flight. If you don't hold a visa or pre-approval, you will not be allowed onto your flight. The visa costs USD100 on arrival and you will need to present your return flight tickets.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you are on our trip that goes through Togo and Benin and then returns to Accra, **or** our trip that loops through Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire and returns to Accra, you must obtain a **multiple-entry visa**.

## **Cote d'Ivoire**

You must apply directly to your closest embassy or consulate for this visa. For British Nationals please go to <http://ivorycoast.embassyhomepage.com/ivorycoast-visa-information.htm> for information on how to apply for the visa. Citizens of Australia can use a visa agency for this visa.

Visas for Cote d'Ivoire require quite a lot of documentation.

Generally 2 visa application forms, 2 passport photos, employment letter, proof of departure showing round trip travel and onward travel (e.g. travel itinerary), plus a copy of confirmed hotel reservation.

Dragoman will be applying for the hotel reservation letter for you approximately 3 months in advance of the trip and once received will forward this to you. In order for us to be able to do this you must provide Dragoman with your passport details in advance. The application for this letter can only be made once we have received passport details from everyone in the group so any delay in us receiving these details will delay when this letter is received.

Please note that this letter can take some time to issue and Dragoman cannot guarantee a specific date for receiving this letter. We therefore recommend that you wait until you have received this letter before making any appointments at the Cote d'Ivoire Embassy or consulate.

## **Guinea**

Most nationalities require a visa for Guinea. We recommend that you check with your respective embassy, consulate or visa agency for the latest information.

It is recommended that you obtain this visa **in advance**. In an emergency, it has been possible in the past to obtain Guinean visas in 1 day in Accra and Abidjan (for Westbound trips), Dakar (for Eastbound trips) and Freetown (for trips starting in Freetown), however please be aware that the rules on this are notoriously subject to change, so it would be much better to obtain the visa before you travel rather than relying on this.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you are our trip that starts in Dakar and finishes in Accra (or vice versa), then you must obtain a **double entry visa** to Guinea.

## **Sierra Leone**

Most nationalities require a tourist visa for Sierra Leone. You can apply directly with your respective embassies or consulates, or use a visa agency.

You must apply **in advance** for the visa - and it takes approximately 10 working days to obtain and is valid for 3 -12 months.

You will need a copy of a Hotel confirmation letter for the visa application of which Dragoman will provide.

## Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US\$10 and a maximum of US\$20 per day.

This will covers expenses such as your optional activities, drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

## What else you need to know

### Currencies & Cash

**Euros not Dollars** - In North and West Africa (Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo & The DRC) we use Euros and not US Dollars. Please note that although we do quote kitties, personal spending and other items in US Dollars (because we operate globally), for trips passing through these countries, you will want to use Euros rather than Dollars for the kitty, tipping and for personal spending. As the exchange rate is variable, the trip leader will confirm the exact exchange rate between Dollars and Euros to be used for the kitty at the pre departure meeting.

It is very easy to change your money into local currencies at borders and in most towns, so it is not really worth trying to buy local currencies before you travel. Do also bear in mind that many countries have strict regulations about the amount of their own local currency you are allowed to import - if you are found with amounts in excess of the allowed amounts, it may well be confiscated!

For obvious security reasons we hesitate to recommend you bring lots of cash with you, but in West Africa travellers cheques are almost impossible to change so for that reason we recommend a mix of cash and ATM cards. Please note that most ATMs only take Visa cards NOT Mastercard.

You should take a mixture of denomination notes. Banks and moneychangers in most countries will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are dated from 2006 or later. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Cash machines are readily available in most areas but are not always reliable therefore we recommend that you do not rely on them as your only source of cash. Credit cards such as Visa and American Express are the most commonly accepted, but be prepared for very high commission charges. Please do not rely on cards for daily use, as they are not always accepted outside of larger towns and cities. Please bring the majority of the money you intend to change in large denominations (USD/EUR100 and 50 bills) as the exchange rate is often significantly worse if you try to change smaller bills; however, it is also a good idea to have some smaller bills as well, as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over USD50.

## Overland Lifestyle and Trip Suitability

Dragoman has 32 years experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose built iconic expedition vehicles on an off the beaten track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up close. Your journey will be overland across vast distances so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity. On an overland journey you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores etc.

Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out!

We are looking forward to welcoming you on one of our overland journeys but before we do there are a few things we would like to draw to your attention:

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## Who Travels with Dragoman?

Our groups are made up of people from around the world and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that overlanding should be open to as many people as possible and so although we have a minimum age limit of 18 (or 7 on our Family Trips), as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the beauties of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

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## Group Size

The maximum group size we take on our overland journeys ranges from 19 to 22 depending on the geographical location; however the average number of passengers is more likely to be around 16.

Please note that there is an overlap of 2 trips in Zanzibar. This means a group starting a trip in Nairobi, for example, will visit Zanzibar at the same time as group starting a trip in Dar es Salaam. In practical terms this means there could be up to 44 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

Please also note that on some departures there may be more than one truck doing the same route. This means that you will be in the same hotel or campsite as another Dragoman group on some days. To ensure that you are not always at the same place at the same time as another group, your itinerary will most likely be slightly altered from the itinerary advertised in these trip notes.

## Our Crew and Guides

Our crew are passionate about travel and are always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all the overland companies, spending 10 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK, and then up to six months on the road as a trainee. On all Dragoman overlanding trips, we usually have 2 western crew. The crew are responsible for the group and the overall organisation of the trip. On our trips in East and Southern Africa we either have 2 western crew or 1 western crew and 1 local

driver. While not being guides in the traditional sense, you can expect them to have a broad knowledge of the places visited and for them to offer suggestions of things to do and see.

On trips south of Nairobi in East and Southern Africa we will also have an African camp master/cook who is in charge of running the camp and organising all of the meals. Their knowledge of the local produce makes shopping at the markets great fun and you will learn how to prepare and cook some unusual dishes.

In the rest of Africa, South America and the majority of Central Asia and China we use local guides who may stay with us for just a few hours or will actually travel with us for some or the entire journey. In these cases they become a third crew member and are able to offer their local knowledge as well as a real insight into the lives of the local people.

Dragoman endeavours to provide the services of experienced crew, however, due to the seasonality of travel, situations may arise where your crew is new to a particular region or training other crew. Your crew have a duty of care to all members of the group and therefore they have the authority to ask you to leave the trip if you require serious medical assistance, you are behaving in an anti-social manner or refuse to comply with local laws and customs. In all matters relating to the trip, the leader's decision will be final and we appreciate your respect of this.

## **Accommodation on Tour**

Dragoman's overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying hotels, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip and whilst our crew will do their best to accommodate couples travelling together in twin rooms, all our travellers should expect to stay in multi-share accommodation from time to time.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary depending on what options are available in each of the areas we travel through and the nightstops on our routes; The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges or even tree-houses.

Equally, the type and standard of hotel accommodation will vary greatly depending on what is available in the area; hotels can vary from very basic multi-share rooms without electricity or running water all the way to high standard hotels with good facilities!

One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will wild camp; this allows us to get far away from the tourist crowds to some beautiful, secluded spots. Occasionally on some of our trips we are able to stay in villages or local homestays, this allows us to get close to indigenous populations and ensures our money stays within local communities.

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## **The Kitty**

In addition to the trip price on our overlanding trips, you will also be required to pay a kitty specified for your trip (please note that there is no kitty on our Family Trips). The kitty is payable in installments at the start of each section of the trip for combination trips, and in full at the start of the trip for individual trips. Each customer joining a trip pays their kitty into a central fund. The fund is managed by the Dragoman crew and the kitty accounts can be viewed by all throughout the trip.

The kitty covers all things that the whole group does, such as:

- Hotel accommodation and campsite fees
- Meals whilst camping (not in hotels)
- Activities listed as included (e.g. National Park entrances, excursions and local guides).

The kitty system is very unique to overlanding and we believe it allows us to have flexibility and transparency on our trips. You can see exactly how your money is being spent and ensure that you are getting the best value by buying locally. It also helps to keep the costs competitive and save on administration costs so that we can pass the saving on to you. Dragoman makes NO PROFIT on kitties, as they are the group's fund. We constantly update the kitty prices on our website and the kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Prices can go up or down with no notice, and exchange rate fluctuations will affect costs. If there is money left in the kitty at the end of your trip, then this is divided between the group and you receive a refund.

Once you book your trip it is very important that you check our website on a regular basis and just before departure for any changes to the kitty amount.

The kitty is payable in full at the start of your trip (in installments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips) or via our new scheme where you can pay in advance 3-4 weeks before the start of your trip (please see [http://www.dragoman.com/files/Kitty\\_doc\\_v1.pdf](http://www.dragoman.com/files/Kitty_doc_v1.pdf) for more details - this letter will also be sent in your final documents upon booking a trip).

If you are bringing the kitty out in cash, please try to pay in the specified currency on the website (US Dollars, or Euros in West Africa). Your tour leader will be able to accept some of the kitty in local currency if needed, and they will let you know the exchange rate locally - in most destinations you can withdraw local currencies from ATM machines, using either a cash passport or a credit/debit card. Please bear in mind that most cards have a maximum withdrawal amount per day, local ATMs may run out of cash, and your bank could block the card despite you warning them of your travel plans, so it could be impractical to try to get the entire kitty out from an ATM.

Traveller's cheques are becoming increasingly difficult to change around the world with passengers and our leaders are experiencing frustration and numerous hours spent trying to find a bank which will change travellers cheques. For this reason we no longer accept TCs on our trips. As an alternative, in most destinations you can withdraw local currencies from ATM machines and use either a cash passport or a debit card.

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## **Meals and Group Participation**

On an overland journey you are more than just an individual passenger - you're part of the team. You are expected to pitch in to set up camp, shop for food, cook and generally help out. As part of your trip you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting water and firewood, sweeping out the truck, loading the back locker, etc. While camping on overland journeys, all meals are included in the kitty. This means that you will have to work together to cook for everyone in your group. You will be divided into smaller units of 3-4 people and take it in turns to cook for the whole group according to a rota system. When it is your turn to cook you will have to plan the meal, shop for the ingredients in local markets or supermarkets and then prepare the meal for the whole group. The secret to cooking for 20+ people in a basic camping kitchen is to keep it simple! (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck; however you will still be required to help prepare meals).

An example of a typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, fruit and cereal as well as tea and coffee. When time allows it will also be possible to serve something hot such as eggs or pancakes. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto or pasta dish and there is always the chance to try some local cooking. Generally our passengers find the more they put into a trip, the more they benefit from it.

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## **Dietary Requirements**

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your crew at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible. However, it must be remembered that it may not always be possible and the variety of dishes may be severely limited in comparison to those available to others. If there is anything in particular you require in your diet, or would miss from home, or because of an allergy would miss out on, it would be best to bring these with you. Depending on your particular requirements, you may need to allow yourself some extra spending money to allow you to purchase extra food items.

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## **Itineraries**

Our itineraries are our intention but travel in more remote areas of the world is unpredictable - borders can close, there can be extreme adverse weather, strikes or maybe mechanical issues that affect the running of your trip but equally due to the nature of our trips we can often spontaneously include a local festival or event into the itinerary. This being said, the safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a priority for Dragoman. With this in mind we monitor world events very closely. By the very nature of the adventure travel that we take, there are risks and hazards that are inherent in our itineraries. Dragoman makes operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources:

- The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice
- Reports from other travel companies and local suppliers
- Leaders reports from off the road
- Local contacts we have built up over 33 years of experience

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## **British Foreign Office Travel Advice and Warnings**

Dragoman follows the British Foreign Office Travel advise when deciding where and where we are unable to travel. We will base our decisions on itineraries and alterations to published routes based on their advise rather than the advise of other governments.

However we recommend you check the latest travel advisories from your own government for the country you are travelling to before you book and prior to departure. Check to ensure that no travel warning is invalidating your travel insurance Here are a few useful addresses:



UK [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

Australia. <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>

New Zealand. <http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

United States. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

Canada. [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/menu-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp)

Dragoman has also teamed up with the UK Foreign and commonwealth office (FCO) in their 'Know before you go campaign' [www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo](http://www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo). This website offers straightforward travel advice, top tips, and up to date country information to help you plan a safe trip. We recommend you check this out before you travel. We will advise you of any significant changes in advice before travel or whilst you are overseas.

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## **Health**

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with our style of travel. To help you assess if this trip is suitable, please refer to the physical rating. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases you should be prepared for some long driving days and possibly limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Dragoman reserves the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip without a refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. We also advise you to declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase.

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## **Altitude**

Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude, the tour leader will issue you with a self assessment altitude questionnaire which allows you to monitor how you are coping with the altitude and informs you of danger signals so that you can reports these as soon as possible, either to the tour leader or a medical professional.

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## **Yellow Fever**

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate. It's also quite common for your home country to

request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

### **Malaria & other mosquito-borne diseases**

Get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your GP / travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Fever and Chikungunya are continuing to spread and becoming a bigger problem around the world. Bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available.

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists, can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, tent doors or, if sleeping outside, use a mosquito net. Use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing.

Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permetherin solution provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights and in hotel rooms but cannot be used inside the tents.

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### **Vaccinations**

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel.

We also recommend you check out any specific health advice for the country you are travelling to either via your GP or the following websites: [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org) or [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

In the UK, we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive, up-to-date vaccination and health information. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

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### **Safety & Security**

At Dragoman your safety is of paramount importance and we will do our best to ensure that your travel with us is safe and trouble-free but we do ask that you take that little bit of extra care whilst you are away and to understand about the nature of this style of travel.

We want you to have an enjoyable time but you must also remember that part of the enjoyment of travel is experiencing a different way of life and cultures. This may also mean experiencing different safety and hygiene standards than those you are normally used to.

Therefore, please take note of the following safety tips and follow any local safety advice or briefings delivered by our crew or any third party suppliers we use during your trip.

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## **Transport Safety**

- Our own vehicles have fully fitted seat belts; make sure you always belt up.
- If you find a safety belt inoperable or missing on one of our vehicles, please inform the crew immediately.
- Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that other vehicles we may use or recommend in some countries will be fitted with seat belts on every seat as it is not a legal requirement in much of the world.
- Please remain seated on board vehicles at all times when the vehicle is in motion
- Never place luggage in the aisles or foot wells
- Ensure you know where your nearest Emergency exit is; this may be a designated emergency exit, a window or a roof hatch.
- Check the location of the fire extinguisher and first aid kit.
- Follow any safety instructions provided by the crew/driver
- Our vehicles are fitted with roof seats which can be used in certain conditions, such as when driving at low speeds, off main tarmac roads, etc. They can only be used with the express permission of the crew and you must never sit in them without seat belts.

## **Road Safety**

- Traffic in some countries travels on the opposite side of the road to what you may be used to, so ensure you look both ways before crossing the road.
- In many countries vehicles do not automatically stop at crossings.
- Crash Helmets are often not provided with mopeds and motorbikes overseas - we do not recommend you hire these vehicles.

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## **Fire & Other Safety - Hostels/Hotels/Homestays**

- Ensure you know where your nearest fire exit is and check to ensure that it is operative.
- Check the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.
- Study the fire instructions in your room if available.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.

- Proceed to an assembly point well away from the building.
- Electrics in hotels in many of the places that we visit will not be up to the same standards as at home. Please ensure that you check rooms, especially bathrooms and are aware of any issues that look unsafe. If in doubt inform the crew who will endeavour to sort the situation out.
- Staircases and stairwells are often built to a very different design than under Western building standards. There may be no guard rails, be excessively steep, etc. At all times be aware and take appropriate and prudent care.
- We often stay in homestays and farmstays. These may range from a traditional yurt through to a tree house or a town house. As these are traditional homes they may well not adhere to our western standards of safety and so it is important that you make yourself aware of potential risks.
- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with the hotels/hostels or homestays

### **Fire Safety - Campsites**

- Ensure you know where the nearest source of water or fire extinguisher is.
- Know how to raise the alarm.
- Extinguish all camping fires fully before retiring to bed.
- Observe any regulations regarding fires and bushfires in dry conditions.
- Proceed to an assembly point away from the tented accommodation/affected campsite.

### **Other Campsite Safety & Security**

- Familiarise yourself with the campsite and any known hazards.
- Group tents around our vehicle wherever possible.
- No open flames, smoking or flammable liquids in or near the tents.
- Ensure cooking area is well away from the tents.
- Ensure all water for cooking and drinking is purified first.
- Ensure any soil toilets are min 50m away from tents & cooking area.
- All food waste should be burnt or buried - min 100m away from the site.
- Ensure local advice is followed concerning any wildlife.
- Keep valuables locked in the vehicle.
- Be aware of any local security issues that might be important.
- Do not set out tents close to perimeter fences which may be a security risk.
- Be aware of the security arrangements and local guards for campsite and if in doubt ask them where and where not to pitch tents.

- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with campsite.
- When wild camping, ensure that you do not wander away from the camp alone. If you do leave camp ensure that you have notified the leader or other members of the group. Food Safety We prepare many meals during the tour and our crew are hygiene trained; however, some general tips can help in order to avoid the possibility of stomach upsets;
- Make sure your food has been thoroughly cooked.
- Hot food should be hot, cold food should be cold.
- Avoid any uncooked food, except fruit and vegetables, (notably those you can peel or shell yourself).
- In many countries you should only drink bottled water or purified water and ensure any seal is intact when purchasing bottles.
- On the Dragoman vehicles we have a tank of drinking water that is kept purified by the crew.
- Avoid ice in drinks as this can cause upset stomachs in hot climates.
- Make sure you wash your hands in antibacterial product when preparing and/or eating food.
- Restaurant Food: This is grassroots travel and many of the restaurants that you will eat in, either as a group or as individuals, will NOT have the same standards of food hygiene as we have in the Western World. Unfortunately this is part of travel in these regions. Therefore think carefully about what food you order and be aware of the risks.

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## **Personal Safety**

One of the real advantages of overland travel is that the vehicle provides a very real level of security when travelling. There is no doubt that a properly equipped overland vehicle, with safes, fully lockable doors and windows is an obvious advantage when travelling in much of the world. We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt whilst travelling for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items (although most of these can be locked in the safe whilst you are on the trip) and advise you to leave any valuable jewellery, watches, etc, at home. Generally speaking, you will not be travelling on local public transport and will have the added security of travelling in a group with experienced crew on hand to offer advice. We have come up with a few pointers that we recommend you follow:

- Follow the crew's specific safety advice in each destination.
- Be aware, stay away from situations where you do not feel comfortable.
- Avoid carrying too much money.
- Use of a money belt / neck wallet or is encouraged at all times while travelling for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items.
- Avoid walking in poorly lit areas.
- Ensure your valuables are left secure when you go out.

- In any hostels/hotels, place all valuables in a safety deposit box, where available or with reception or locked away by the crew.
- Do not take any valuable jewellery/watches etc. away with you.
- If possible avoid walking around on your own; it is always safer to explore with others.

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## **Activity Safety & Optional Activities**

You will have the opportunity to take part in many exciting activities and excursions, some of which are included, whilst others are optional (i.e. hiking The Inca Trail, trekking to see Mountain Gorillas). These require a certain level of fitness, so it's important that you read through the trip notes thoroughly and make your own conclusions as to whether you feel that you are fit and healthy enough to enjoy this trip to its fullest.

Some activities may have higher risks than you are used to and you must judge whether or not you wish to, or have the physical ability to take part.

Optional activities mentioned by Dragoman are not included in the trip price or kitty and do not form part of your contract with Dragoman. As such you accept that any assistance given by Dragoman crew members or local representatives in arranging optional activities does not render us liable for them in any way. The Dragoman crew are assisting you in arranging these activities for your added enjoyment whilst on your trip. The operators of these services and optional extras are local suppliers who contract directly with the Client 'on the road' subject to and in accordance with their own terms and conditions. Dragoman accepts no liability for any action or activity undertaken by the Client which is arranged independently of Dragoman while on tour. Crew may take part in an optional activity but do so as private individuals and not as company representatives.

Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time.

Ensure that you use the appropriate equipment on optional activities, including life jackets, helmets, etc. This is especially important on activities such as horse riding, white-water rafting, etc.

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## **Included Activities**

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

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## **Optional Activities**

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide only. Prices are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. It may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. Optional activities are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Dragoman nor included in the price of this trip. If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own

decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

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## Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip.

We recommend that any policy has a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £5,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £5,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000. Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, I pads, phones etc. Please note that Dragoman is not responsible for your personal effects and is not insured for their loss.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel and make sure it covers any activity you intend to undertake. As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding and that the 24 Hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries - for example, that they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. On activities or side trips that are not recommended by us please ensure you are happy with the safety of the activity before participating.

Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas.

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## Our Liability Insurance

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger vehicle liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £5,000,000 and £10,000,000 per incident respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

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## Emergency Contact

We have a dedicated 24 hour telephone number which should only be used once you have left the UK and in the event of a real emergency. Should you need to call the number, we will do what we can to help but please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled, please let us know and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in these trip notes. If you cannot get through leave a message and a contact number as these will be regularly checked and the crew informed if necessary.

**Emergency Number: +44 (0) 7985106564**

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## Luggage & Kit List

Although you will not have to carry your main bag long distances, you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip your main luggage will be kept in the back locker, so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use. Please be aware that due to the constant dust and vibrations your luggage bag will be subject to extreme wear and tear.

The size of baggage that can be brought on this tour is limited by the locker space on the truck. Different trucks have different-sized lockers, however to be safe we recommend that your bag be no larger than 66cm deep, 30cm wide, and 30cm high. The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is a maximum of 20kg. Backpacks should not have an external frame unless it can be easily removed and stored separately to avoid damaging other people's luggage.

Your clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in. On overland trips, Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats (except on routes between Nairobi and Cape Town where ground mats are provided).

The clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in, which will vary depending on which part of the world you're heading to. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats\*, so you'll need to bring those with you. Think about the climate and altitude of the areas you'll be travelling to- there's nothing worse than being cold at night so it's worth investing in a decent sleeping bag if it's likely to get cold. And remember that even when it's warm during the day, it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

**IMPORTANT:** Ground mats are provided on all of our overland trips that run in South and East Africa, between Nairobi and Cape Town. This includes our Family trips between Nairobi and Cape Town.

For a general idea of what you need this list provides a guide:

- Sleeping bag\* - Check the expected climate en route. Nights in desert and mountain regions can be very cold in winter months.
- Sleeping bag liner\* (or sheet folded and sewn up on 2 sides). It will help keep your sleeping bag clean, and can be used on its own on warm nights.
- Ground mat or compressed foam\*
- A day pack is useful for short hikes in the countryside, wandering around cities, etc and also for keeping inside the vehicle for items used during the day
- 2 sets of comfortable travelling clothes (light, easily washable cotton clothes are best)
- 1 set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out. Women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf for visiting places of worship
- 2 pairs of shorts



- Sun hat or warm hat if trekking
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Warm sweater/fleeces
- 1 waterproof jacket with hood
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/boots (or ankle height canvas jungle boots)
- 1 pair of sandals or flip-flops
- Underwear and socks (thermals are also a good idea if you are travelling to altitude or to the desert as it can get very cold at night)
- Swimwear
- 2 small towels
- Washing kit, including a small mirror
- Clothes washing detergent, small scrubbing brush & washing line (just a length of cord)
- Head torch/flashlight with spare batteries & bulbs (only the 3 standard sizes of round 1.5v batteries are widely available en route)
- Passport photos (average of 2 per country for which visas will be applied for en route)
- Good water bottle at least 1 litre
- A pouch or money belt worn inside your clothing, or unobtrusive pocket sewn into the inside of a pair of loose fitting trousers, is a must.
- Alarm clock
- Pocket calculator (useful when exchanging money)
- Writing materials & notebook/diary
- Multi purpose knife.
- Mosquito net - The tents supplied by us have mosquito netting and you will only need a net if you think you will sleep out under the stars a lot of the time.
- "Wet Ones" (moistened tissues) and hand gel
- Toilet paper - this can be purchased almost everywhere en-route but one roll is worth packing
- Assorted sized plastic bags - protects clothing and equipment from dust and damp
- Extra batteries for your camera / phone etc as there are only limited opportunities to recharge. For a comprehensive kit list take a look at the Dragoman kit list that Nomad Travel has created. You will receive a 10% discount on all equipment purchased either online or in store. Click to see the kit lists [www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list)

\*For trips with camping nights

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## **Personal Medical Kit**

All of our trucks have a fully stocked medical kit onboard for use in emergency situations only. Therefore in addition to this we recommend that you purchase your own personal medical kit. In the UK we have teamed up with Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics to produce the Dragoman Travel Medical Kit. It has been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contains everything you would need for any minor accidents. For more details please visit their website:

[www.nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit)

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## **Passports**

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or "visitor's" passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

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## **Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Connecting Flights**

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay? Dragoman can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on.

While Dragoman is happy to assist with booking your pre and post trip accommodation, it is important that you understand that you may be able to book your own room at a cheaper rate directly through the hotel or on the internet. Our additional accommodation prices are based on the hotel's rate plus an administration fee. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk-in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival; however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer, as not all hotels offer this service.

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## **Continuing Your Trip**

Having an amazing trip and met a great group of people? Having too much fun to go home yet? If on

your trip you decide that you would like to continue, then why not speak to your trip leader who can advise you of the cost and availability of continuing your journey.

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## **Contingency Emergency Fund**

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you will be required to contribute the additional costs involved and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

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## **Responsible Tourism**

Dragoman is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We are dedicated to making sure that we adopt a responsible attitude to the areas through which we travel and believe that our trips should benefit the local people and their environment. Dragoman recognises that we are guests of local communities and strive to make these communities our partners, so that they benefit directly from our visit. You can find full details of Dragoman's responsible tourism policy linked from the home page.

[www.dragoman.co.uk/about-us/responsible-travel/our-commitment](http://www.dragoman.co.uk/about-us/responsible-travel/our-commitment)

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## **Water**

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in bottles, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 litres of water and 200ml of oil. A large proportion end up in limited landfill or discarded in waterways and natural environments.

Please avoid the purchase of bottled water by using the chemically sterilised water stored in the purpose-built storage tank or in water jerry cans in your overland vehicle. You are free to refill your bottle as many times a day as you like. You are helping the environment and your pocket!

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## **Electrical Equipment**

Your vehicle will be equipped with a 12 volt socket, so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12 volt adapter - the type that can be used from a cigarette lighter in your car. Please be aware that only one piece of equipment can be charged at a time and it will not be allowed if there is a risk of running the vehicle's batteries low. Batteries may

also be recharged from hotel room wall sockets and the majority of the campsites we stay at have electricity points so please bring along your normal charging adapters as well. You will need to ensure that you have the correct country adaptor for your specific charger.

For mobile phones, please note that most countries in the Americas operate at 850MHz and 1900 MHz which is not the same frequencies used in Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. Most modern tri-band and quad-band mobile phones will be able to operate on these frequencies but please check your mobile phone specifications before travelling to ensure that you'll be able to use your phone in the Americas.

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## **A Few Rules**

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs is not only against the law, but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for Dragoman groups. It is one of our core values to treat all people we encounter with respect which of course includes all the local people who make our destinations so special. The exploitation of prostitutes or children is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes or abuse children. Equally Dragoman will not tolerate any violence or threat of violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession, if they use prostitutes, abuse children, use violence or threaten violence, without a refund of the trip price.

We expect you to obey all the laws of the countries through which we pass. This particularly applies to the smuggling of contraband and possession of narcotic drugs (as above), firearms, antiquities and ivory. Any customer found contravening such laws or customs will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

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## **Issues on the Trip**

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on

[customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk).

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

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## **Tipping**

Tipping is entirely voluntary. The Dragoman crew may be travelling with you for many weeks and usually they become good friends with most members of the group. It is sometimes easy to forget that they do work hard to ensure that you do have a great trip. If you feel you would like to tip them, they certainly would appreciate it.

On a number of our trips, we also use a local guide as well as our own Dragoman crew. These guides live and travel with you through their home country and it is usual to tip them when they leave. We recommend USD \$1 to USD \$4 per person per day, but check with your crew for an appropriate amount.

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## **Our Community**

At any time before or after you book, you can join our community - Dragoland. This is a great place to ask questions before you travel and to catch up with your fellow travellers once your trip has finished. You can share photos, videos and stories and you can also download a selection of free travel apps. See the home page to sign in - it's free and easy. We also have a Facebook page where travellers regularly swap info with each other

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## **Feedback**

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.

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These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey, once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, information and kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these Trip Notes

These trip notes were printed on 29/01/2015