



Trans Himalayan between Kathmandu and Xi'an (DHTC)

Kathmandu to Xi'an 31 days.

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- Route: Kathmandu to Xi'an
- Length: 31 days
- Transport: Overland expedition vehicle.
- Accommodation: A Mixture of hotels, guesthouses (60%), camping and wildcamping (40%)

Countries Visited

China



As one of the world's largest countries and the most populous there is so much to discover in China.

Understanding the history of China is key to understanding modern China. The people are proud of it's past, and keen to share it's heritage with the world. In a country that defies superlatives the words 'vast', 'astonishing' and 'variation' don't really seem to cover it - China really does have it all. Jungle in the south, mountains in the west, desert in the north and 21st century cities.. well... almost everywhere.

Beijing is the hub of political and international focus. With the 2008 Olympic games providing funds to modernise huge ares of the city, it is a truly modern city. However most visitors are most struck by it's old elements from celebrated site such as the Forbidden Palace to simple, traditional hutongs.

There's a lot of China to see and most of it is changing rapidly, so what are you waiting for? Get out there are discover it for yourself.

Nepal



Wrapped around the Himalayan mountain range is the remarkable country of Nepal. It is the birthplace of the Buddha and is a land of legend and beauty. Within its narrow confines Nepal contains an utterly spectacular variety of culture and landscapes. Nepal has a stunning natural beauty and a simple charm.

Situated on the banks of the Bagmati River, Kathmandu is the hub of life in Nepal. A small medieval city, it is easy to get around on bicycles which can be hired very cheaply by the day or week. Worth visiting are Durbar Square, the Temple of the Living Goddess, the Royal Palace, Pashupatinath (Hindu Temple), Bodnath (Buddhist Stupa) and Swayambunath (Monkey Temple) - and all set against the magnificent Himalayan backdrop.

While many urban restaurants in the country have tables and chairs for meals, there's a chance to eat the traditional Nepalese way. Sit or squat on the floor as food is served. Eating is always done with the right hand, which is washed before and after each meal, while the left hand can only be used for holding cups. Try a traditional millet beer with your meal. The Tongba drink is an icon for the local Limbus people, and from the storing of the millet to the drinking of the beer can take 6 months, but the wait is worth it. Nepal is full of culture and this continues into the music scene. With a country of over 50 ethnicity's there is a wide variety of choice. The amazing Dolhori style of music is a rhythmic style of conversation and with quick thinking, the song can carry on.

With traditional culture and diverse landscapes, this country has something for everyone, and added to the friendly atmosphere, it makes Nepal a memorable place to visit.

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Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu

Border Information: if joining in Kathmandu, you will most likely enter Nepal at Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport.

Please note that our trips between Kathmandu and Xi'an travel through extreme environments and these itineraries WILL NOT NECESSARILY RUN AS PUBLISHED. We will adjust trip itineraries depending on weather, altitude effects, group make up and road conditions. This day by day itinerary is provided as a rough guide only.

Please also note that the Chinese government have on occasion changed their visa rules without any notice, which provides a level of uncertainty for how our northbound Tibetan trips can run.

Sometimes we may need to change the ending of our trip to allow more time in Xi'an to get our group visa split there rather than in Lanzhou. While there is always a way around these kind of these problems, and can be looked at as being all part of the fun of travelling through such areas (and can retrospectively be a great story to tell!), please note that with any visa-splitting issues we may need to hire a local agent which will incur extra charges - your understanding and co-operation with such procedures will be absolutely essential and much appreciated.

Today we have a group meeting at 10:00am in our hotel in Kathmandu - please look for a note from your tour leader when you arrive at the hotel giving more details about this important meeting. We will need to arrange all the paperwork for the Chinese/Tibetan group visa at this meeting for submission at the Chinese Consulate tomorrow, so please bring along your passport.

The rest of the day is free to explore this fascinating city, staying overnight in our comfortable hotel located in the district of Thamel.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Tibet

Hotel Tibet

Lazimpat Road

Kathmandu 44600

Tel: +977 14429085

Activity

Approximate Cost

Time to explore the sights of Kathmandu
Discover Kathmandu on a guided city tour

Included in Kitty

Kathmandu



Kathmandu is not only the capital of Nepal, it is pretty much the only city in the country. Situated on the shores of the Bagmati river, it's a lively, bustling place where ancient collides with modern to create an exhilarating melting pot of sights, sounds and smells. Today's modern jumble of concrete buildings and busy streets has built up around the medieval old town, where wandering through the winding alleyways is like taking a step back in time.

The heart of the old city is the magnificent Durbar Square, where Nepalese Royalty used to be crowned, and today it's a good spot to sit and watch the world go by. The buildings here date from the 17th and 18th centuries, although many of the original structures were even older and many suffered from earthquake damage in the 1930's. Other sights worth visiting are the Temple of the Living Goddess, the Royal Palace, the Pashupatinath Hindu temple, Bodnath Buddhist stupa and Swayambunath (the Monkey Temple), all of which are set against the magnificent Himalayan backdrop.

When all the sightseeing gets a bit too much, you can kick back and relax in the numerous cafes and bars around the tourist areas of Thamel and 'Freak Street'. If you can afford the time, it's also worth allowing yourself at least a couple of days to explore the surrounding area of the Kathmandu Valley.

Day 2 to 3: Dhulikhel

Today we have a free morning in Kathmandu before starting our journey with a short drive to the town of Dhulikhel.

Drive time - 2 hours (please note that all drive times given here are approximate estimates only and are given with the best intentions - however please be aware that the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, borders and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

On Day 3 we will have a free day here where we will have the opportunity to hike and explore the surrounding countryside and visit some local monasteries.

In Dhulikhel we will stay in a local hotel.

Day 4 to 5: Kodari

Today we will continue our journey to reach the cliff-top gorge resort of Kodari on the Nepalese side of the Tibetan border.

We will stay for 2 nights, allowing us plenty of time for a range of optional activities from bungee-jumping to bridge-swinging and canyoning - or just to sit back and relax and enjoy the amazing views.

In Kodari we will stay in a well equipped campsite.

Drive time - 4 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 nights at a stunning mountain resort, nestling in the foothills of the Himalaya	Included in Kitty
Time for optional adventure activities, canyoning, cycling & rope-walking	

Day 6: Zhangmu

Border information: Exit Nepal at Kodari, enter China at Zhangmu

Today we drive along the Arniko Highway, zigzagging on poor roads past steep gorges up to the Chinese border. It can be a very time-consuming crossing the border from Nepal into the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, typically taking the whole day to get across the border so some patience may be required!

Tonight we will most likely stay in the small town of Zhangmu on the Chinese side of the border in a

basic local hotel.

Drive time - 1 hour (not including the time spent at the border, which could be all day).

Zhangmu

Zhangmu is the border town in Tibet. It clings precariously to the sheer mountainside and is separated from Nepal by a cascading river, which spans the famous Friendship Bridge. This is the real frontier between the two countries.

Day 7 to 8: Friendship Highway

We will spend the next 2 days climbing high into the mountains over the Lalungla Pass (5050m) up into the Himalayas. This is part of the famous "Friendship Highway", cutting through gorges, across plateaus and over high passes. On all the passes that we cross you will see the ever present pilgrim prayer flags, cairns and scattered "wind horse" papers.

We will travel slowly taking time to acclimatise to the altitude and wild camping along the way. We may sometimes back-track on ourselves, enabling us to sleep at lower altitudes than we have climbed to during the day, as this helps the body to acclimatise to the conditions. It is possible that we will reach Baipa (Old Tingri) on Day 8 if everybody is acclimatising well.

Drive time - 5-8 hours each day.

Friendship Highway

The Friendship Highway is the name given to Route 318 between Lhasa and Kathmandu. The route is a rough road through some of the remotest parts of our planet. It cuts through gorges, across plateaus and over high passes. It passes some of the most stunning scenery on Earth. Just in case you think this is an exaggeration, try to imagine what Mt. Everest really looks like from the Tibetan side on a sunny day. There are a number of high passes that we will have to cross and altitude may become a problem for some. To give you an idea of the passes that we will cross, below we record some of the passes Between Golmud and Lhasa Dangjin Shankou Pass 3519 m, Kunlun Pass 4849 m, Fire & Wind Pass 4930 m, Tanggula Pass 5231 m, Kyogche La Pass 4900 m, Between Lhasa and Shigatse Shogula Pass 5300 m, Between Shigatse and Kathmandu Tropu La Pass 4950 m, Gyatsola Pass 5200 m and Lablungla Pass 5050 m.

Day 9: Baipa

Arriving in Baipa (also known as Old Tingri), we meet the junction for the road to Everest Base Camp on the Tibetan side.

We will stay here overnight in a local guesthouse, allowing us a time to explore and to acclimatise further before our onward journey.

Drive time - 4-6 hours.

Baipa

Baipa, also known as New Tingri is a small town in Tibet. This is the junction of the road to Everest and trips to the mountain can be arranged. It is one of the most fascinating spots in the world. Be prepared to be in awe of one of the most famous wonders in the world.

Day 10: Rongbuk

From Baipa we make the journey to the Rongbuk Monastery and Everest Base Camp.

The drive is not an easy one, passing over another 5200m pass, but the views are sensational and (weather permitting) we should have excellent views of Mount Everest.

Once we have reached the Rongbuk Monastery, it is about a 2 hour walk further to Everest Base Camp (please note that this is the Base Camp from the northern Tibetan side, not the famous southern equivalent on the Nepalese side that lends its name to the popular trek).

We will usually camp here in Tibetan tents with pot-bellied stoves which take six to eight people.

Drive time - 6 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight at Everest Base Camp, crossing Tibetan passes of 5200 metres en route.	Included in Kitty

Day 11: Baipa

This morning we have some more time at Base Camp - hopefully when you open up in the morning, there will be a spectacular view of Mount Everest! We will drive back down to Baipa and stay in the nearby town of New Tingri this afternoon.

In New Tingri we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Drive time - 4 hours.

Day 12 to 13: Shigatse

Today we continue our journey with a drive over some more high mountain passes to reach Shigatse, Tibet's second biggest city. This is usually a fairly long day's drive, but the stunning views and scenery make this one of the world's most visually fantastic journeys!

On Day 13 we will have a free day in Shigatse, and an included trip to the Tashilhunpo Monastery and Market.

In Shigatse we will stay in a friendly local hotel.

Drive time - 10 hours.

Activity

Stopover in Shigatse and visit to Tashilhunpo Monastery

Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty

Shigatse



Shigatse is Tibet's second biggest city and an important cultural centre. Having been the capital of Tibet from 1565 to 1642 the city is home to some fantastic architecture including monasteries, fortresses and palaces. The most famous is the Tashilhunpo Monastery - the seat of the Panchen Lama, the second most important spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism behind the Dalai Lama. Perhaps the most impressive building is the monastery, the Chapel of Jampa, which houses the world's largest gilded statue. Standing at 26 metres high, the image of Jampa (the future Buddha) took four years to complete and used a remarkable 300kg of gold in it's construction.

Day 14: Gyantse

Today we will continue to the town of Gyantse. In the afternoon we will have a included visit to the Baiju Temple and time for an optional visit to the Gyantse Fort.

In Gyantse we will stay in a friendly local hotel.

Drive time - 4 hours.

Activity

Visit to the stunning town of Gyantse and Baiju Monastery

Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty

Gyantse



Gyantse is a small agricultural town set at 3950m above sea level, famed for its wool carpets. It has a very traditional feel to it and everyday Tibetan rural life continues here much as it has done for centuries. There are a number of interesting buildings in the town, including the Pelkhor Chode Temple complex, a unique structure built in 1414, with five stories representing the five steps to enlightenment.

Day 15: Lhasa

Today we have a short journey on the Friendship Highway over Kampa La Pass (4794m) to the famous and evocative city of Lhasa, where we will be staying for the next 3 nights.

In Lhasa we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

Drive time - 4 hours.

Lhasa



Lhasa sits at a lofty 11,850ft above sea level and has a pleasant climate. This is the religious, cultural and economic centre of Tibet and home to many interesting buildings include the Potala Palace (the 13 story - 1000 roomed palace of the Dalai Lama), Jokhang Temple, Norbulingka (Ruobolink or summer palace of the Dalai Lama), Barkhur Street and the Drepung Monastery.

Day 16 to 17: Lhasa

We will have 2 full days to explore the Tibetan city of Lhasa. There will be organised visits to the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Temple, as well as the options to visit the Drepung and Sera Monasteries and the Summer Palace. There will be lots of opportunity for free exploration of the city as well.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore the Potala Palace, Lhasa	Included in Kitty
Guided tour of the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa	Included in Kitty
Guided tour of the Sera Monastery, Lhasa	Included in Kitty
Norbulingka (Summer Palace), Lhasa	USD 10
Ganden Monastery, Lhasa	USD 15
Drepung Monastery, Lhasa	USD 10

Day 18 to 19: Amdo

Leaving Lhasa, we head out across the Tibetan Plateau once again. We will spend the next 3 days overlanding, crossing the famous Tanggula Pass (5220m) and wild camping along the way.

Drive time - 7-8 hours each day.

Amdo

Stretching from the Yellow River, to the Yangtze River is one of the three traditional states of Tibet, Amdo. The dialect of the traditional Tibetan language changes from tribe to tribe but is still written the same. In Amdo there is many great monasteries, including Kumbum Jampa Ling, Labrang Tashi Khyil and the Kirti Monasteries. It is a state brimming with history, and one to explore!

Day 20: Golmud

Once we have crossed the Tanggula Pass, we will have left Tibet behind, entering the Qinghai Province of 'mainland' China. Our destination is the small town of Golmud, where we will stay overnight in a small basic hotel.

Drive time - 10 hours.

Golmud

Golmud is a mining town, high up on the Tibetan Plateau. The views in this area are stunning, vast mountains surrounding open grassland. Outside the town itself there are few settlements up here and the only people you are likely to encounter are yak-herding nomads.

Day 21: Qinghai Hu

For the next 2 days we will be overlanding through Qinghai province through an area that is a giant basin surrounded by high mountains, and en route we will pass the vast and starkly beautiful Qinghai Hu Lake. The population of this part of the Tibetan Plateau is thinly spread and mainly comprises of Kazakhs, Moguls and Hui.

We will be stopping off and wildcamping along the way.

Drive time - 9 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Journey west through the lower realms of the Tibetan Plateau to the remote Qinghai Lake	Included in Kitty

Qinghai Hu

Qinghai Hu Lake is a vast and starkly beautiful place. This lake occupies an area of over 4,500 square kilometres and is situated at over 3200m. The water is saline and teems with fish, with a resulting sea bird population. Here, yak graze the grass and the icy blue waters stretch as far as the eye can see. The population of this part of the Tibetan Plateau, is thinly spread and mainly comprises of Kazaks, Moguls and Hui.

Day 22: Lanzhou

Today we will arrive into the chaotic city of Lanzhou, with time to explore in the afternoon.

In Lanzhou we will stay in a local hotel.

Drive time - 5 hours.

Lanzhou



Lanzhou is the capital of Gansu Province, but holds little of interest for the traveller. It is a sprawling Chinese Town but does have a number of interesting sites in the surrounding area. The most appealing of these are the caves and carvings at Bingling Si. Here, a set of Buddhist grottoes are carved into the cliff of a 60 metre high gorge. They are most impressive especially because they are surrounded on one side by the waters of the Liujiaxia Reservoir. Bingling Si is yet another of the numerous Thousand Buddha Caves that can be found in China, but it is very special. They contain 694 statues and 82 clay sculptures. The highlight of the cave is the 27 metre high seated statue of Maitreya Buddha. Indeed this cave complex is one of the best in China and yet because of its relative isolation, it is less visited than the main Chinese sites.

Day 23 to 24: Xiahe

We will visit the PSB office in Lanzhou today (the Chinese immigration police) to get our group visa split into individual visas. Please note that we may have to continue to Xi'an earlier than planned if the rules have changed so that the visa cannot be split here.

From Lanzhou we will drive on to the enchanting Tibetan town of Xiahe, where we will be staying for 2 nights.

Drive time - 7 hours.

On Day 24 we will have a free day to explore the incredible Labrang Monastery or the surrounding grasslands.

Whilst in Xiahe we will stay in a basic guesthouse.

Activity	Approximate Cost
2 night detour to the Tibetan town of Xiahe, one of the main pilgrimage sites for Tibetan Buddhists	Included in Kitty

Xiahe



Xiahe has been described as "one of the most enchanting places to visit in China". Certainly it has a wonderful tranquil atmosphere and a beautiful setting. Many Tibetans come here on pilgrimage - and the combination of the many monasteries, saffron-robed monks, fluttering prayer flags and spectacular scenery make this small town feel very like Tibet as well. Indeed, in all but name, you are in Tibet; Xiahe is right up on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau and the population here is over 45% Tibetan.

Day 25: Bingling Si

Leaving Xiahe, we drive on to Liujiaxia, arriving in the late afternoon or early evening. We will have free time to explore upon arrival.

Tonight we will be staying in a friendly local hotel.

Drive time - 6 hours.

Day 26: Bingling Si, Lanzhou

This morning we will have an included visit to the phenomenal Bingling Si Buddha Caves, returning to Liujiaxia for lunch. In the afternoon we have a short drive back to Lanzhou.

In Lanzhou we will stay in a local hotel.

Drive time - 2 hours.

Activity

Approximate Cost

Visit to the vast Buddha and caves at Bingling Si.

Included in Kitty

Day 27 to 28: Pingliang

Today we head for the small town of Pingliang where we will be staying for 2 nights.

Drive time - 7 hours.

On Day 28 we will have an included day visit to the holy mountain of Kongtong, where we can freely trek and explore the incredible area and visit all the temples built on impossibly steep mountain sides.

In Pingliang we will stay in a local hotel.

Please note that if we have to head to Xi'an early for visa splitting purposes, then we will likely skip Pingliang entirely and visit the similar site of Huashan Mountain as a day trip from Xi'an.

Activity

Approximate Cost

Explore the stunningly beautiful Mt. Kongtong and its temples Included in Kitty

Pingliang

The streets of Pingliang are lined with wonderful shops and you can spend hours exploring them, but the main attraction of this city is the mountain range, which contains the Kongtong mountains, which has been used as a mythical meeting point in the past. If you have the opportunity to climb this mountain, do so, as the views from the top are beautifully rewarding.

Day 29: Xi'an

Today we have a full day's drive from Pingliang to the incredible city of Xi'an, the end of the ancient 'Silk Road'

In Xi'an we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Drive time - 7 hours.

Xi'an



The imperial centre of China for 2,000 years, Xi'an is now a vibrant, modern city dotted with many interesting historical sites. A monument pays homage to the fact that this was the start of the famous ancient trading route of the Silk Road and the city is still surrounded by city walls which you can climb and walk or cycle along, a unique way to experience the city. For a different view, haul yourself to the top of the Bell or Drum Towers in the centre of the city. Thanks to Xi'an's long and colourful history, the city is full of beautiful temples and museums and interesting cultural and historic sites, the most famous of which are probably the 2000 year old Terracotta warriors. Home to many Hui people, an ethnic Muslim minority, the city also has a unique Islamic flavour, particularly in the streets surrounding the Great Mosque, best explored by foot. Once you've worn yourself out with a hard days sightseeing, you can head out to the night markets to try some of the many tantalising local specialties on offer. Pao mo is a lamb broth that you break flat bread into, or try hand pulled noodles or hot pot. Later on, try your luck at karaoke, hugely popular here, or head down to the South Park to live it up with the locals as they dance, practice martial arts, play games, fly kites and watch the world go by.

Day 30: Xi'an

Today we will have an included visit to the awe-inspiring world-famous Terracotta Warriors. We will have a free afternoon to explore the incredible city of Xi'an.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Luxury in Xi'an: civilisation, a great hotel and guided tour of the Terracotta Warriors	Included in Kitty
Visit to the early Ming temple complex Zixiao Gong, the Purple Cloud Palace	
Bell and Drum towers, Xian	CNY 50
Folk house, Xian	CNY 20
Bicycle rental on city wall, Xian	CNY 80
Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Xian	CNY 50
Shaanxi History Museum, Xian	CNY 25
Great Mosque, Xian	CNY 25
Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xian	CNY 80

Day 31: Xi'an

Border information: if leaving in Xi'an, you will most likely exit China at Xi'an Xianyang International Airport.

Today will be a free day in Xi'an. Please note that today is the final day of the trip and there is no accommodation included tonight.

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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.

Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for Asia Itineraries

In Asia you will need to be healthy enough to cope with extremes of climates from the hot deserts through to the colds of the high mountains. Overland travelling can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions can be challenging to some. You will need to be fit enough to help every day with the camp chores (cooking, washing up, general camp set up) as well as putting up and taking down your own tent. There are some long driving days and some early morning starts. 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 the step at least 8-10 times a day. By and large, our Asia trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

Altitude

Altitude Warning - this trip goes above 2800m

Please note that this trip spends time above 2800 metres/9200 feet where it is possible for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude, potentially including Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

Because of this it is very important that you make yourself aware of the cause and effects of travelling at altitude and monitor your health during this trip.

[For further information please click here to download our AMS information sheet](#) or refer to the following website: www.high-altitude-medicine.com

Your leader will also hand you a copy of the AMS information sheet during your trip as well as holding a short meeting prior to travelling to altitudes above 2800m/9200ft for the first time.

If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival.

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 read the information very carefully to make sure everything is clear and you

aware of what you need to do. Please also be aware that rules surrounding visas do change, often suddenly, and without prior warning. This is why it is important that you also double-check the information we provide for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance, you may wish to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy or consulate. If you require any supporting documentation for your visa applications, please complete the 'Visa Support Form' available at this link:

<http://dragoman-visa-support.thevisamachine.com/visa-support>.

However, for trips that involve multiple visas, 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. The visa service is not always available for all nationalities or non-UK residents, depending on the requirements of each specific embassy. The Visa Machine will advise you what they can and cannot provide for your specific circumstances.

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.

Most countries require that your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your entry into the country.

Nepal

Citizens of all countries (except India) **will** need a visa to enter Nepal as a tourist for up to 90 days.

The easiest way to get a visa is to obtain it **on arrival**. This is available for almost all nationalities at all land borders and airports into Nepal. At the time of writing (2015), the cost of a single-entry visa is USD25 for 15 days, USD40 for 30 days, or USD100 for 90 days – these costs are the same for all nationalities.

You will need to provide one passport photo (this can be obtained at Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport for those joining the trip in Kathmandu).

Tibet

Tibet is officially a 'Special Administrative Zone' of China, and as such the entry requirements are different to the rest of China. These requirements are notorious for being changed at a moment's notice.

Southbound trips (Xi'an to Kathmandu) – please obtain a China visa as normal (see the China visa note). **It is very important that you do not mention Tibet on your Chinese visa application**, but follow only what is listed on your Chinese Letter of Invitation. We will apply for special Tibet permits that should be issued in time for your arrival in Xi'an.

IMPORTANT NOTE - We will need a colour scan of your Chinese visa in order to get the Tibet permit, as well as the scan of your passport photo page. If you are on a Southbound Tibet trip, please send us a scan of your Chinese visa as soon as it issued - this must reach us 2 weeks before your arrival in Xi'an, at the absolute latest.

Northbound trips (Kathmandu to Xi'an) - you **will not** need a normal China visa in advance. Instead, we will need to apply for a group visa (with 'built-in' Tibet permission) at the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. This is the only way that we will be able to enter Tibet from Nepal, and if you already have a China visa (of any kind) then they will cancel it to replace it with the group visa. This will be done as a group at the start of your trip with the help of your tour leader. At the time of writing (2015), the cost to be included on the group visa was USD85 for most nationalities (or USD175 for USA citizens).

IMPORTANT NOTE - We will need a colour scan of your passport photo page at least 2 months before your arrival in Kathmandu in order for us to prepare the group visa in time.

Upon arrival in 'mainland' China (either in Lanzhou or Xi'an), we will need to split the group visa into individual visas to allow people to head off on their own individual travel plans within China and beyond at the end of this trip. This can be a painful bureaucratic procedure, and can involve additional costs of between USD50-100 per person (and more for US citizens). Please note that the laws surrounding this are notoriously subject to sudden change depending on the political situation - Dragoman cannot be held responsible for any sudden changes in the rules of visa splitting!

China

VERY IMPORTANT - Dragoman will require a scan of your passport photo page as soon as possible after booking for all trips in China, please send this to us as soon as you can.

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will** need a visa to enter China as a tourist for up to 90 days. You will need a Letter of Invitation from a Chinese agent in order to make the visa application, and you must obtain the visa **in advance**. You cannot obtain the visa at the border in any circumstance.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through the online visa support documents application form at The Visa Machine - please make this application at the link <http://dragoman-visa-support.thevisamachine.com/> as soon as possible after booking or at least 4 months before your trip departs. This form is used to apply for any Letters of Invitation that are needed for a visa application - the service is completely free of charge. These can take several weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready.

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa **in advance** at any Chinese Embassy. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire The Visa Machine to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas). Dragoman will also provide a letter confirming your participation in the trip and a list of our hotels, which you may need for the application - in some cases the Chinese Embassy may ask for a day-by-day itinerary with the hotels listed, which we can provide when needed.

It is recommended to apply at the Chinese Embassy in your home country, as your application is far more likely to be approved. Although there is no official reason why you should not be issued a visa

at any Chinese embassy, their consular officials are notorious for constantly changing their minds about whether they will approve a visa for 'non-resident' applicants, and it depends heavily on the political climate of the time.

IMPORTANT NOTE - Please NEVER mention Kashgar, Urumqi, Turpan, Lhasa, Xinjiang or Tibet anywhere on your Chinese visa application form - this will almost certainly result in your application being rejected. When filling out your Chinese visa form, please only declare the places that are listed on your Chinese Letter of Invitation once it is issued.

If you are asked to provide a host in China on your visa form, please use the details of the Chinese agent that issued your Letter of Invitation (this will be printed on the letter).

You **will not** need a China visa if you are entering Tibet from Nepal (Northbound Tibet trip), but you **will** need a China visa if you are going to Tibet from Xi'an (Southbound Tibet trip). Please see the Tibet note for details on the visa requirements for travelling through Tibet.

Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US\$15 and a maximum of US\$30 per day for Central Asia, China and Burma and between a minimum of US\$10 and a maximum of US\$20 for India, Nepal and South East Asia.

This will cover individual expenses such as drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

Please note: For trips in Southern India that occur over Christmas and New Year please allow approximately **\$160USD** extra on the kitty for seasonal increases in accommodation costs

What else you need to know

Asia Currencies & Cash

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 trips in Turkey, South East Asia, India and Nepal, a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is best. However, most of our past passengers have said they wished they had been told to bring more cash. Apart from the convenience of being able to change money in many more places, you will sometimes get a much better exchange rate for cash.

For trips in Central Asia, China, Burma and Mongolia you should take a mixture of denomination notes and because of the sensitivity to counterfeit and damaged money, it is most important to follow the guidelines below.

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 2003 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, MasterCard 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 a mixture of small and large denominations 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 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

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

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

United States. http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html

Canada. 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. 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 Permethrin 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 or 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

*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

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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

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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.

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 27/02/2015