ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

The Garden Route - 5 days

COUNTRY(IES)	South Africa
TOUR TYPE	Shoestring
TRANSPORT	Minibus/coach
GROUP SIZE	Min: 4 | Max: 12
DURATION	5 days
STARTS	Cape Town, South Africa
ENDS	Port Elizabeth, South Africa
MEALS	Breakfasts - 3, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 4

TOUR ROUTE MAP **5 Days**



ROUTE: **Cape Town** (Start) → **L Agulhas** → **Oudtshoorn** → **Sedgefield** → **Gqeberha** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Cape Agulhas, Route 62 wine tasting, Oudtshoorn, Klein Karoo ostrich farm, easy canoeing in Wilderness NP, Knysna Heads viewpoint, Sedgefield beaches, Tsitsikamma NP, Big 5 safari in Addo Elephant Park

Itinerary

DAY 1 — Depart Cape Town. Betties Bay, Hermanus, Shark Cage Diving (Optional), Cape Agulhas

Travel approximately 249 kilometres from Cape Town towards Cape Agulhas, with around three hours of driving. Stop at Betties Bay for the penguin colony, while travellers taking the optional shark cage dive leave earlier and miss part of the group journey. Whale watching remains seasonal and optional. Later, continue to Cape Agulhas and visit Africa's southernmost tip.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Cape Town to Betties Bay**
  Depart Cape Town and travel eastward along the scenic coastal route to Betties Bay. Enjoy dramatic ocean

views and mountain landscapes along the way.

- **Explore Penguins at Betties Bay**
  Visit the African penguin colony at Betties Bay, home to one of the country's most memorable wildlife experiences. Watch for endangered birds along the rocky coastline.
- **Drive from Betties Bay to Hermanus**
  Continue along the coastline to the coastal town of Hermanus. Enjoy views of rugged cliffs and bays as you approach this popular seaside destination.
- **Drive from Hermanus to Cape Agulhas**
  Travel from Hermanus to Cape Agulhas, the southernmost point of Africa. Pass through small coastal settlements and rural landscapes before reaching your destination.
- **Explore Cape Agulhas Southernmost Point**
  Visit the official southernmost tip of Africa, where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. Enjoy ocean views and photo opportunities at this landmark location.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cape L'Agulhas/Struisbaai Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse	Dinner

DAY 2 Route 62, Winery Stop, Ostrich Farm

Today we leave Cape Agulhas and travel along the famous Route 62 towards Oudtshoorn. This is the longest wine route in South Africa, and we take full advantage by stopping at a local winery for lunch and a wine-tasting. We then continue onto Oudthsoorn, a famous town in the Klein Karoo that is known as the Ostrich Capital of the World. Our accommodation for the night is on a working game farm. In the evening you can enjoy a visit to an ostrich farm, whilst taking in the views of the Outeniqua and Swartberg mountain ranges in the background. Included activities : Local wine tasting, Ostrich farm visit Travelling : Approx. 330km; 4 hours

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Cape Agulhas to Route 62**
  Depart Cape Agulhas and begin traveling inland onto the famous Route 62. Enjoy mountain ranges, vineyards and winding open-road scenery.
- **Local Wine Tasting in Route 62**
  Stop at a local winery along Route 62 for a tasting of regional wines. Learn about the area's viticulture and savour some of the country's distinctive flavours.
- **Drive from Route 62 to Oudtshoorn**
  Continue through the semi-arid Klein Karoo on Route 62 to Oudtshoorn. This region is known for small towns, farmlands and dramatic mountain backdrops.
- **Explore Ostrich Farm in Oudtshoorn**
  Visit a working ostrich farm to learn about these remarkable birds and the local farming traditions. Enjoy scenic views of the Outeniqua and Swartberg ranges surrounding the area.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Game Farm in Oudsthoorn area	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 3 Wilderness National Park, Sedgefield

We have a thrilling day out in the wilderness ahead of us today. We make our way towards Wilderness National Park, crossing through the Outeniqua Mountain Pass as we do so, a stunning sight. We arrive at the national park, which features a variety of habitats and an abundance of biodiversity. We explore this natural wonderland by boat and on foot. First, we make our way down the Touw River via canoe, a unique and tranquil experience. We then go for a short 2km hike along a boardwalk up to a wonderful waterfall and rock pool area. We then depart for Sedgefield, where the pristine beaches are perfect for rounding off the adventures of the day. Included activities : Canoeing and hiking in Wilderness National Park Travelling : Approx. 144 km; 2 hrs

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Oudtshoorn to Wilderness National Park**
  Travel over the Outeniqua Mountains towards Wilderness National Park. The route offers impressive landscape shifts from dry plains to lush coastal forests.
- **Canoeing and Hiking in Wilderness National Park**
  Explore Wilderness National Park by canoe along the Touw River followed by a short hike to a waterfall and rock pool. Enjoy diverse habitats rich in birdlife and natural beauty.
- **Drive from Wilderness to Sedgefield**
  Continue from Wilderness to the coastal town of Sedgefield. Arrive near pristine beaches, ideal for relaxing after a day of outdoor adventure.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Sedgefield Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 4 Knysna, Tsitsikamma National Park, Bloukrans Bungee (Optional)

This morning, we will head to the famous town of Knysna via the beautiful Lake District of the Garden Route. Whilst in Knysna we'll visit the viewpoint, where we'll be rewarded with magnificent views of the Knysna River estuary and towards the Indian Ocean. Our next destination is Tsitsikamma National Park. On our way, we make an important stop: Bloukrans Bridge, where we find the world’s highest bungee jump. The adrenaline junkies in our group will have the chance to experience this once-in-a-lifetime activity; the rest of us continue on towards the park. Inside Tsitsikamma National Park, there are a variety of exciting activities on offer. Explore the beautiful beaches and forests, go hiking and swimming, and walk across the famous suspension bridge, which spans a river mouth. Later, we depart for Addo. Included activities : Entrance to Tsitsikamma National Park Optional activities : 216 M Bloukrans bungee jump Travelling : Approx. 320km; 4.5 hours

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Sedgefield to Knysna**
  Travel from Sedgefield into the scenic lake district of the Garden Route to reach Knysna. The journey offers views of lagoons, forests and coastal scenery.
- **Explore Knysna Viewpoint**
  Enjoy panoramic views from the Knysna Heads viewpoint, overlooking the lagoon, river mouth and Indian Ocean. Capture the dramatic landscape that defines this coastal town.
- **Drive from Knysna to Tsitsikamma National Park**
  Continue eastward to Tsitsikamma National Park, passing coastal forests and rugged coastline. This protected area is one of the Garden Route's most scenic wilderness zones.
- **Explore Tsitsikamma National Park**
  Explore Tsitsikamma National Park, known for its forests, beaches and river-mouth suspension bridge. Walk, hike or enjoy the scenery of this dramatic coastal landscape.
- **Drive from Tsitsikamma to Addo**
  Leave Tsitsikamma and travel inland toward Addo. The landscape transitions from forested coastline to open farmlands and bush areas.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Addo Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 5 Addo Elephant National Park, Port Elizabeth

Spend time on safari in Addo Elephant National Park, a vast wilderness with a rich variety of habitats and wildlife. Look out for members of the African Big Five, including elephants, buffalo, lion and black rhino, along with warthog, zebra, eland, kudu, hartebeest and many other species. Enjoy a 2 to 3 hour game drive through the park before continuing to Port Elizabeth, arriving in the early afternoon. A longer version of the tour continues over additional days back towards Cape Town. You can also extend your stay in Port Elizabeth, spend extra time at lodges near Addo, or add a stay at a private game reserve in the Eastern Cape. Private game reserve extensions can be arranged with round-trip transport from Port Elizabeth. An optional 2-hour open-vehicle game drive with an Addo field guide is also available.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Addo Elephant National Park**
  Enjoy a wildlife safari through Addo Elephant National Park, home to over 600 elephants and diverse species including buffalo, lion and various antelope. Experience one of South Africa's most important conservation reserves.
- **Drive from Addo to Port Elizabeth**
  Travel from Addo to Port Elizabeth after your safari experience. Arrive in time for afternoon flights or onward travel arrangements.
- **Tour Ends in Port Elizabeth**
  Your tour concludes in Port Elizabeth. Continue independently with onward travel or any additional stay

arrangements.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
N/A	None	Departure airport transfer in Port Elizabeth

INCLUDED

- Complimentary Pickup on day 1 from a Central Cape Town location of your choice
- 4 nights accommodation in Backpacker Hostels or Deluxe Guesthouses/Hotels
- All transport in AC minibuses
- All activities and highlights as mentioned in the itinerary
- Experienced & qualified local driver/guide
- Local wine tasting
- Klein Karoo ostrich farm
- Canoeing and hiking in Wilderness National Park
- Hiking in Tsitsikamma National Park
- Game viewing safari in Addo Elephant National Park
- Meals as stated in the itinerary

EXCLUDED

- International Flights (available on request)
- Visa fees if required
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for guides & drivers
- Entrance fees and activities not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional tours in Cape Town and elsewhere
- Airport Transfers
- Cape Town Accommodation
- Any other items not mentioned above

Tour Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements , full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Extra Night in Cape Town pre-tour (dorm)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hostel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Prices shown are per person per night based on dorm accommodation.

Note: Seasonal pricing applies

Extra Night in Cape Town pre-tour (backpacker single/twin/double)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same backpacker accommodation as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing 1 room in backpacker level accommodation.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Cape Town pre-tour (deluxe guesthouse)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Gqeberha post-tour (backpacker single/twin/double)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing 1 room in backpacker level accommodation.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Gqeberha post-tour (deluxe guesthouse)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing 1 room in deluxe guesthouse accommodation.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Important Notes

1 **Accommodation**

As is typical on our Shoestring level tours, more than one level of accommodation is available on this trip. All options have been selected based on their cleanliness, service levels, setting and atmosphere. We also select places close to each other so often it is just a short walk between them. Included dinners are generally taken together at the backpacker lodge, though you are welcome to eat elsewhere if you prefer.

Backpacker Lodges:

The standard level of the tour is based on staying in good quality backpacker style lodges. These have a friendly, social vibe, and are ideal for younger travellers looking for a bit of an atmosphere. They often have a bar or bonfire area for socialising. Although available at a budget price, the standard of backpacker lodges in South Africa is generally very high. We offer options of shared dorms or private en-suite twin/double rooms within the Backpacker lodges. These can often surprise you with the level and quality of accommodation provided.

Deluxe Guesthouses / Boutique hotels:

If you would prefer some more comfort then we offer an upgrade option to stay in some really lovely deluxe guesthouses and small boutique style hotels instead of the backpacker lodges. These provide a more private, quieter and luxurious experience and can be fabulous places to stay, full of character and with beautiful gardens, friendly hosts, and great views. Accommodations most often used for the guesthouse upgrade are shown on the accommodations tab. Alternative properties of a similar standard may be used on some dates.

Addo National Park

At Addo both levels stay in a working citrus farm near the park (Avoca River Cabins) which has a unique location and style of accommodation and is a nice upgrade if you've chosen the Backpacker level.

Notes:

- Single, twin and double rooms are available in all locations.
- Heating or air conditioning is not provided as standard in most backpacker lodges, guesthouses or small hotels, just because it is not normally needed in South Africa! However, fans or extra blankets are always available on request if you need them.
- Accommodation providers are subject to change without notice. The properties listed are our preferred options, but sometimes due to availability or other issues with the property, we may substitute another property of similar standards.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

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2 Transport

The transport used for this tour is an air-conditioned minibus which can comfortably seat 14 adults including the driver/guide. Seats in the 14-seater minibuses can be compared in size to an airplane seat – if that setup is uncomfortable for you then please enquire about a private tour where different vehicles can be used.

Our "luggage trailer" is specifically designed for each passenger to have one suitcase and one carry-on sized piece of luggage – a laptop bag, backpack, or similar. Suitcase size is limited to the dimension of 67 cm (26 in) by 45 cm (18 in), and carry on is limited to the dimension of 48 cm (19 in) by 32 cm (13 in). There are generally no porters or staff available to assist with luggage – luggage should be of a size and weight you can comfortably manage yourself. Hard or soft suitcases are fine.

Some game safaris may be carried out using 4x4 jeeps/safari vehicles - see your tour itinerary for details. These may be open-roofed or enclosed. You must not leave the vehicle or lean out through windows without express permission from the guide.

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3 Group Size / Tour Leaders / Guides

Group size & makeup:

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. Despite this being a 'Shoestring' level tour, the maximum group size is just 12 people, with the minimum number set at 4. We do share this tour with other operators and agents and this means that guests can join the group from all over the world. Most travellers come from the UK, America, Canada, Australia & New Zealand and various European countries. Average ages are mid 30s. Due to the active and group nature of the tour we set a minimum age of 14, and maximum age of 65 years - we are able to make exceptions to the upper age limit as long as you are relatively fit are are confidently able to walk a minimum of 3 hours, partake in the activities included in the itinerary and able to carry your own luggage.

Tour leaders:

A fully qualified driver/guide will run the tour and do both the driving and guiding. This is different to some countries where we may have a separate driver and guide, but common practice in South Africa. The guides have a wealth of knowledge about the places you'll be visiting and travelling past, and many travellers note them as one of the highlights of their tour.

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4 Tour Style

This is an active tour and is best suited to travellers who like to keep on the move and see and experience a lot of a country in a relatively short time. You must be able to comfortably walk, carry luggage, get in and out of the vehicle frequently, etc.

There are some easy and short hikes, and a gentle canoeing experience included in the itinerary. These can be missed out if you wish. There are also opportunities for the more adventurous in the group to get their adenalin fix, with the tour passing the highest bridge bungee jump in the world from Bloukrans Bridge and time available to have a jump if you love that type of excitement! Those not jumping will continue to Tsitsikamma National Park and the group will rejoin together later in the day.

All tours are run in English. If this is not your first language, you will need to understand and be able to speak a certain amount of English and we request that while you are with the group you make an effort to speak English so that everyone can be included in the conversation. We also ask that everyone brings an open, positive, easy-going and interactive attitude to the tour. This will help make it a good experience for everyone.

Because of the distances we need to cover, and the number of places and activities we want to include, these tours run to a tight schedule. Please ensure you are on time for all departures.

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5 Local Options

On all our Shoestring tours we strive to strike a balance between including plenty of meals, tours and activities and being accessible and affordable.

The main tour price covers all your accommodation, transport, most meals and a range of tours and activities. In addition, there are further **Locally Available Options** on this tour. These have been chosen to give you more of a

taste of what is available in the region and sometimes to offer an adrenaline rush during a relatively sedate tour. All these local options are offered and operated by professional local activity providers and Encounters Travel is not responsible for your booking or time while taking any of these options. Prices for these options are given on our website, but please bear in mind that are given as a guide only and may very seasonally and can change from time to time. Availability is subject to seasonal daylight hours and our time-keeping that day.

Please check the itinerary for more information and prices. The Cape Winelands and Cape Peninsular group tours available during your time in Cape Town are based on joining set departures with other travellers not booked on our trips. These should be booked and paid for before you arrive in South Africa. The Shark Cave diving should also be reserved before joining the tour to guarantee your spot, but your final booking and payment is made to the local operator while on the tour. Other options should be finalised and paid for during the trip.

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6 Destination Guides

Oudtshoorn – Ostrich Capital of the World

The town of Oudtshoorn is situated in the Western Province of the beautiful South Africa and is known and loved by many local holidaymakers around the country. Originally the area was occupied by Bushmen and this can be seen by the large number of rock paintings which can be found in the caves surrounding the Swartberg Mountains. The first farmers settled in the area during the 1700's and the first large permanent structure – the Dutch Reformed Church – was built in 1839 and the town started growing around this church.

The town of Oudtshoorn is especially known for its ostriches and many ostrich farms surround the town. The ostrich craze in the Karoo started with the fascination the town's people had with the feathers as they were used as a fashion accessory. Ostrich feathers where obligatory items of high fashion just before world war one. The great feather boom began around 1870. At its height there were more than 750 000 domesticated ostriches in the little Karoo area and feathers where being exported at the rate of about 450 000kg's a year. Then came world war one and then austerity became a way of supporting the war effort. Many farmers went bankrupt in this time. In later years the industry revived with the demand for ostrich leather, biltong, eggs and feathers. At present there are about 90 000 ostriches in the Little Karoo

Cango Caves

The Cango Caves is one of South Africa's most beautiful hidden treasures. Just 17km outside of the Klein Karoo town of Oudtshoorn, the Cango Caves are one of the Garden Routes most exciting and beautiful tourist attractions. Here, guests can explore the unseen beauties of South Africa and will be astounded by the sheer size and length of the caves. The Cango Caves are primarily dripstone caverns which lie in a limestone ridge which runs parallel to the Swartberg Mountains. Together the chambers and tunnels of the Cango Caves extend over 4km, placing them among the largest caves in the world. The largest chamber, Van Zyl's Chamber, was named after an explorer who apparently come across the caves in the 1770s, however there is no record of a man named Van Zyl being in the area during that time and there is evidence that the caves have been known to man since the Stone Age; recent finds – of some tools left behind in ancient hearths in the Cave mouth – prove that humans have lived and sheltered here for at least 80 000 years.

The Cango Caves was the first tourist attraction in South Africa to employ a full-time tour guide, ensuring that each person who visited the caves could do so with a professional. In fact, you can only visit the caves today as part of a tour group. The standard tour will take you to the main chambers and front parts of the cave, however adventure

tours can be embarked on which take guests into the narrower and in depth parts of the Cango Caves.

Knysna

Today’s highlight is the Knysna Lagoon, a perfect spot for water sports or simply relaxing and admiring the striking beauty of The Heads. The town of Knysna, voted South Africa’s favourite holiday town, nestles in the 4 lagoon basin. It is protected by The Heads - two towering sandstone cliffs flanking a deep channel through which the tides flow. There are spectacular views and a cosy restaurant at the Eastern Head and the Western Head is a privately owned nature reserve – Featherbed Bay.

The Knysna Lagoon is one of the few places in the world that supports an oyster hatchery and the town is well-known for its fresh oysters, as well as its beer, made locally at Mitchell’s Brewery. Rich in history, Knysna’s museums are well worth visiting: the Millwood House Museum, and the Angling Museum in the Old Gaol. There are many other attractions, from the lush surrounding rainforests, the nearby Buffalo Valley Game Reserve, Featherbed Nature Reserve and Noetzie beach to a wide selection of restaurants and craft markets. The forest, one of the largest areas of indigenous trees left in South Africa, is very dense and in some areas impenetrable.

Knysna was originally founded by George Rex in the 19th century as a port for the timber trade. The forest was nearly decimated as a result of logging but escaped devastation due to far-sighted conservation policies introduced in the 1880s. The herds of forest elephants that once roamed the forest have not been so lucky, they have all disappeared and one lone female is said to remain today. The beautiful and elusive Knysna Loeries can still be seen in the area, as well as a large variety of other birds and a few small antelope.

Tsitsikamma National Park

'Tsitsikamma' is a khoi word meaning ‘place of abundant or sparkling water’ – an apt name considering the abundance of bubbling natural rivers and streams decorating the region. The Tsitsikamma region stretches from the sweeping Bloukrans River in the west all the way to the Eerste Rivier in the east. Bordered on the north by the majestic Tsitsikamma Mountains and the tepid Indian Ocean on the south, the sought-after destination is flanked by incredible natural scenery every direction you look.

The lush park covers an 80km stretch of sweeping coastline with popular holiday destination Nature’s Valley resting on the western end and the world-famous Storms River Mouth at its epicentre. The protected area is covered in a thick blanket of indigenous forest along with the odd commercial plantation and an abundance of natural Fynbos. Deep river gorges fork between the plateau as they rush down towards the sea, resulting in a dramatic spectacle of tumbling waterfalls and deep kloofs. A mild all-year-round climate affords visitors the opportunity to engage in a myriad of fun outdoor activities encouraged by the region’s bustling tourism industry, while a high rainfall ensures the natural greenness that the area is renowned for. With exceptional hiking trails and unparalleled coastal scenery, Tsitsikamma is a top destination for eco-tourists and avid adventurers.

The Otter Trail is a hiking route along the Garden Route coast and is not only the most popular route in the Tsitsikamma National Park, but is widely regarded as one of the finest in the world. Stretching from Storms River Mouth to Nature’s Valley, the full trail takes a total of five days and exposes hikers to some of the most exquisite natural beauty, including imposing coastal mountains, dense gallery forest and sweeping white-sand beaches.

Addo Elephant Park

The Addo Elephant Park is situated about an hour outside of the city of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and is recognised as one of South Africa’s most popular national parks and game reserves. It is sanctuary to over 550 elephants in just 120 000 hectares. It is also the third largest national park in South Africa and is the only one to

incorporate a marine area into its conservation strategy.

The history of the park is an uncomfortable one. In 1919 the administration of the Cape Province decided to cull the elephant population in the Addo region and hired a Professional hunter, Major Jan Pretorius, to destroy the entire herd that inhabited the area at the time. It took him a year to kill 120, before he was stopped due to public outcry. Only 16 traumatized Addo elephants remained, wounded, frightened and unable to coexist with humans. In 1931, when only 11 elephants were left alive in the area, it was proclaimed a National Park. The elephants, however, were still hostile - destroying crops and attacking anyone who came near them. Finally, in 1952, one of the farmers of the area suggested that a fence be erected around the park. This kept the Elephants secure and out of the surrounding farming area. Black rhino was reintroduced in 1961- the first in the Cape for a hundred years. Today the Park is a sanctuary to over 450 elephants, Cape buffalo, a variety of antelope species, as well as the flightless dung beetle, found exclusively in this area. Addo elephants are unique in that although they belong to the same species as the African Elephant, they are smaller with more rounded ears and the females generally have no tusks. The marine section extends to invite guests to observe the southern right whales, dolphins and sea life in the Indian Ocean coast next to the park.

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7 Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please contact us if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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8 Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see our website or booking conditions for more information.

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9 Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage

and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

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10 Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

https://x.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

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11 Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not

provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? World Nomads Travel Insurance offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

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12 Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current official government travel advice for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's 'Travel Aware' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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13 Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can’t fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon’s efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you’ll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!

- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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14 Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please contact us.

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15 Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

South Africa: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.
Namibia: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.
Botswana: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted or travelled through an infected area.
Zimbabwe: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.
Zambia: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if

arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Malawi: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Tanzania: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Kenya: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Poliomyelitis, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

Uganda: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid, Yellow Fever. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

Sudan: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid, Yellow Fever. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area. A certificate may also be required for those departing Sudan.

Morocco: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria not normally present. Yellow Fever certificate not required.

Tunisia: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria not normally present. Yellow Fever certificate not required.

The above information can change at short notice. For up to date health information & vaccination requirements we recommend that you contact your medical practitioner or a travel clinic.

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vacinnation is often required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this US CDC information about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate organised in advance and with you and to hand during the trip.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.
If you are travelling on an Overland tour or your trip includes wildlife safaris then please bear in mind that you may be travelling on bumpy roads and/or rough ground for several hours at a time. This can be very uncomfortable or painful if you have a bad back, and make such conditions worse. Please contact us if you have any concerns.

Health Declaration: As many of our Africa tours travel through very remote regions, where medical facilities are limited, we are asking all of our travellers 65 years and over who are joining one of our Africa Overland Adventures to complete the attached medical questionnaire. The information provided to Encounters Travel and our local operational partners will be held to the strictest confidence and will be used only to the extent to provide necessary emergency medical care and/or evaluate physical health and fitness for travel.

We will request this from you approximately 30 days before your trip starts, so that your GP can sign your form based on your current health conditions. Please don't submit this several months in advance, as it is important for us to know you are fit for travel just before the trip departs.

16 Passports and Visas

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities. Encounters Travel will not be held responsible if travellers are denied entry because they are not in possession of the relevant visas. We therefore recommend you re-check requirements with the relevant embassy/consulate around 4 weeks before travel.

You should also be in possession of a valid onward or return flight ticket, or proof of other means of transport enabling you to leave the country that your tour passes through or finishes in. In addition you should carry proof of sufficient funds to cover you during your time in the country (eg. credit card).

Should your tour be re-entering a country, please ensure that you have a multiple entry visa that allows this. Some countries have a visa on arrival service which can be more convenient and cheaper. However, for peace of mind and to speed up the border crossing process, Encounters Travel advises that you to get your visas prior to your trip if possible.

17 Tipping

In general tipping in restaurants is expected and is around 10% for good service, more if you have received exceptional service, and, feel free not to tip at all if you received poor service. Tipping taxi drivers etc is really at your own discretion and not always expected. If in doubt please ask your guides. It is expected to tip porters and car guards etc. Ask your guides how much is appropriate in local currency. The recommended amount for Serengeti and Masai Mara guides is around USD5-7 per client per day.

Our guides do work hard but they are also paid at (and often above) industry levels for this work. Our Crew can be tipped if you feel that they have done a good job and/or gone above and beyond the call of duty. The best way to arrange tips is to elect one person in the group to collect the money. On Small Group & Shoestring tours we recommend around USD 3-5 per person per day per guide as a fair tip. On longer Overland tours we recommend USD1-2 per day per person, per guide as a fair tip. So if you have 2-crew on a tour, we would recommend that 2 envelopes are used and each crew member’s name written on one. Place what you feel is fair into each envelope and the elected person can give these to the crew at the end of the tour. If you do not feel that the crew deserve a tip, please, do not tip them. You must remember that tipping is only for exceptional service and is not at all compulsory or expected.

18 International Flights and Airport Transfers

International Flights: We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people living in different places and with varying travel plans, except on some Escorted Tours and package promotions, we don’t include your international flights in the main tour price. We are

however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

The vast majority of our tours are designed such that you can arrive and depart at any time on the first and last days of the set tour itinerary, with your arrival and departure airport transfers included in the tour price. However, on our **Overland tours,** you should not arrange your onward international flights or other travel for the day the tour is due to end (unless the final day does not involve any travelling and finishes after breakfast). Similarly, many of our Overland tours depart their first port of call on the first morning, and you will therefore need to plan for any flights to arrive at least one day beforehand.

Airport Transfers:

Arrival and departure airport transfers are included on most of our Small Group, Shoestring (excluding the 5 & 6-day Garden Route tours where Airport Transfers are not included, however a pickup from a Central Cape Town location is included on day 1 of the tour) and Tailor-made tours but available as extra options on all our African Overland tours, as long as you have accommodation booked with us on that day. If you add extra accommodation before and/or after the tour that you do not book with us, then you will also need to arrange your own airport transfers.

On our **Sebatana Package**, airport transfers for arrival and departure are included, however these transfers operate on a schedule, so a short wait may be required after landing before the transfer departs to the accommodation. To coincide with the transfer departures, your arrival flight should land in Johannesburg before 11am on day 1 and depart after 6pm on day 8. If your flights arrive/depart outside of these times, we would recommend adding an additional night to your trip.

Departure Taxes: Various countries may require that you pay an Airport Departure Tax when departing on an international flight. Please note that all departure taxes must be paid in hard cash currency and US Dollars are normally the best currency to use for this. Departure taxes can vary from US$10 - US$60 depending on the departure point.

Flight inclusive packages: We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do

publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

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19 What to take

LUGGAGE ALLOWANCES: Most international airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 23kg per person of luggage to go in the hold of the plane. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure about luggage allowances on your tour. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover. Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

OVERLAND AND SAFARI TOURS: Please keep in mind that these are adventure tours in an adventure vehicle (truck or 4x4) and luggage should not include any solid Samsonite style suitcases. On our accommodated overland tours most of our trucks have lockers for the luggage (locker sizes: 37,5 cm high, 32 cm wide, 80 cm deep). Only a soft bag will fit in these lockers. A suitcase is far more difficult to store and make secure in our vehicle and this is part of the reason we ask for a backpack or tote bag to be used as your luggage. The other reason is that you need to walk from the truck to the accommodation and often over sand or uneven terrain. Your luggage on our Overland tours is limited to ONE backpack and ONE daypack weighing no more than 20kg. As a general rule, if you cannot lift your own luggage - you've got too much stuff! Most people make the mistake of bringing too many clothes. A quick reminder - **suitcases are not suitable on our overland tours** – especially huge Samsonite-style cases! **Small** wheeled cases are OK for safari tours.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST: Kit for all weather conditions including: • 2/3 shorts/skirts • 1 jacket/anorak • Tracksuit/pullover • 2 pairs of long pants/jeans • 2 pairs of walking shoes/boots/trainers • 1 pair of sandals • 3 or 4 T-shirts/short sleeve shirts or sundresses • 2/3 Long Sleeve Shirts • Smart casual change of clothes • Swimwear • Underwear & socks • Sun Hat – preferably that covers the back of your neck. • Raincoat • Kikoi/sarong

Your clothing should be easy to wash and dry and should preferably not need ironing. Avoid synthetics, which can be very uncomfortable in hot weather. Many people underestimate how cold Africa can be – remember that jersey/jacket! There are also nights that are warm but you must still wear clothes that cover arms and legs from mosquitoes. Take a set of casual but smart clothes for the occasional evening out in a restaurant or club. If you wear glasses (or contacts) it is also advisable to bring a spare pair.

While on wildlife safaris it is important to wear dull coloured clothing - olive, mushroom, brown, khaki, stone are ideal.
You should avoid white (stands out too much), black or blue (attracts tsetse flies), and camouflage (illegal in many countries for civilians)

Additional Items: • Towel & facecloth • Baby wipes/ Wet Wipes • Personal toiletries • Sleeping bag • Torch &

enough spare batteries • Camera & spare batteries and memory cards • Water bottle. (A 2-litre Coke bottle works well...) • Penknife • Insect and Mosquito repellent • Suntan lotion, sun block & after sun lotion • Sunglasses • Watch • Biodegradable laundry detergent • Passport (plus a copy of your passport & visas) • Extra passport photos • Vaccination certificate • Money • Travel plug • Neck pillow • Small sewing kit • Plastic bags • Clothes line and pegs • Small scrubbing brush • a small padlock for your luggage locker in the truck • Small basic First Aid kit (painkillers, band aids, after-sun lotion, eye drops, anti-diarrhoea tablets etc.)

DAY PACKS: Please check the itinerary for your specific tour if you will need a little daypack. For example on our Cape Town to Vic Falls overland tour you will need a smaller bag, big enough to bring basic equipment (toiletries and clothes) for 2 nights. The daypack is for your Okavango Delta Excursion, where you cannot bring your entire luggage.
