

Tonga Whale Encounters

Country(ies): Tonga

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minibus/car, flights & boat

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 6

Days: 10 Days

Start location: Tongatapu, Tonga

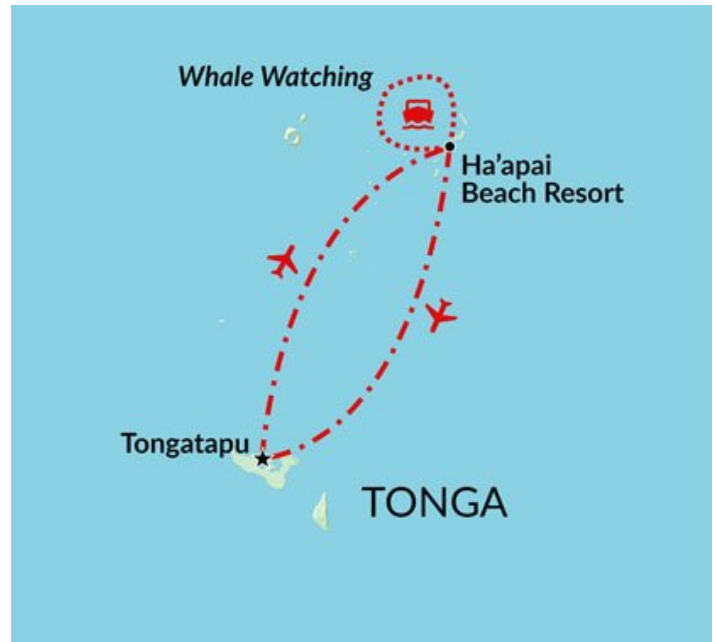
End location: Tongatapu, Tonga

Departs On: Thursday

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 6, Dinners - 7

Highlights: Swimming with humpback whales, Snorkelling, Scuba-diving options, Cultural shows and feast, Island tours and ancient history

Places Visited: Tongatapu & Ha'apai



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Tonga, transfer to hotel

Upon arrival in the Kingdom of Tonga you'll use the free hotel airport shuttle service to transfer you to the Scenic Hotel, located just a few minutes from the airport. The rest of the day is free.

OVERNIGHT: Tongatapu hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Premium whale swimming || Extra day in Tongatapu - pre-tour

Day 2: Fly to Ha'apai. Free time

After breakfast you will be transferred to the domestic terminal for your scenic flight to the beautiful and remote islands of Ha'apai. The Resort team will be waiting at the Ha'apai airport to transfer you 1.3km to your beachfront fale, home for the next 7 nights. As flights to Ha'apai tend to leave early in the morning, breakfast is not included in your hotel, but after you arrive in Ha'apai instead.

The rest of the day is free to settle in, explore, try some snorkelling off the beach and attend an informative whale briefing in preparation for your excursion tomorrow. In the evening, watch the sunset from the Ocean view restaurant and bar, just meters from the sand.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: Swim with the Humpback whales

After breakfast we board our traditional Tongan fishing vessel at 9am for a 6-hour trip on the water. Your professional guides are eager to introduce the majestic Tongan Humpback whales. Our aim is to take you into the water for memories that will last a lifetime. Lunch is served onboard and all equipment is provided. Arriving back at around 2.30pm allows time to relax and look at your photos, take a walk along the beach and enjoy a cold drink from the bar. BBQ dinner served just after sunset.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: Day of rest and reflection in Tonga

King George Tupou I pledged The Kingdom of Tonga and its people to heaven making Sunday a strict day of rest in the kingdom. It is actually illegal to work on the Sabbath. You can chose to begin your day by visiting a local church to hear the angelic voices of the choir or simply enjoy a day of your choice. The resort is open all day and swimming, snorkeling, cycling, kayaking, eating and drinking are all options for this restful day in Tonga.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Swim with the Humpback whales

After breakfast we head out for our second day into the crystal clear waters of Ha'apai to join the Humpback whales for further adventures and memories of a lifetime. Excellent food is provided in our ocean front restaurant as we share our experiences of the day.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Swim with the Humpback whales

After breakfast we head out for our final day into the crystal clear waters of Ha'apai to join the Humpback whales for further adventures and memories of a lifetime.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Free day. Optional Guided Island Tour

Your day is free today to relax at the resort. We keep this free in case any of your earlier whale swims need rescheduling due to weather issues. If all has gone to plan, then your day is free and you could ride a bike, hire a car and explore the island's resorts, other snorkeling spots, beaches or the local cafe. Or you may simply relax at the resort - scuba diving, sea kayaks or snorkel the reef in front of the resort are options. An additional whale swimming trip may also be booked with the resort (subject to existing bookings and space on the boat). An optional guided tour around the island is also available. During this tour you can learn the whole truth about coconuts and their uses; hear the local history of the island including Captain Cook, Mutiny on the Bounty and the Port of Prince; and visit various historical and special spots around the island.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 8: Ha'apai. Free time

Your day is free today to relax on the beach, go cycling or kayaking, scuba diving or snorkelling. We also keep today free in case poor weather or other reasons have meant we need to reschedule one of our earlier whale safaris.

Excellent food is provided in the resort's ocean front restaurant and a farewell bonfire is lit as the Milky Way falls across the night sky.

OVERNIGHT: Ha'apai Beach Resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Fly to Tongatapu, free time

This morning we fly back to the main island of Tongatapu and transfer to our hotel near the airport.

Options are available through your hotel to book a half day island tour. Here you can learn more about Tongan lifestyle, culture, heritage and traditions, see demonstrations and learn about the customs and stories of the old times and visit the busy Tongan Market where the locals throng to purchase and sell their produce. The market provides a great opportunity to purchase handicrafts, local fruit and take photos. Tours also visit the Royal Tombs

where the late King George IV is laid to rest, along with the Royal Palace, and the Eastern Side of Tonga with Captain Cook's Landing, the Ancient Burial Tomb's and the Ha'amonga Trilithon, a stone arch which was said to have been built 1200AD, an impressive movement of 80 tonnes of stone and a story of a warrior king.

In the evening you could visit the Ohelei Beach Resort for a Tongan feast, cultural show and live music to make you feel right at home in with the Tongan culture and history.

OVERNIGHT: Scenic Hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 10: Free day, transfer to airport

Free time until transferring to the airport for your international departure flight. You may wish to revisit the main Tongatapu market today, as Saturday tends to be the busiest time of the whole week, a great chance for a final taste of Tonga and some souvenirs.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Included

- Meals as stated in the itinerary
- Domestic flight tickets
- 2 nights accommodation at the 3-star Scenic Hotel or similar
- 7 nights accommodation at the Ha'apai Beach Resort - in basic fales
- 3 boat trips to swim with the whales
- Wetsuits & snorkelling equipment
- Island tours as stated in the itinerary
- 24-hour return airport transfers

Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not included in this Itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses
- Any tips or gratuities for your tour leaders/guides
- Any other items not mentioned above

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.

Premium whale swimming

Min numbers: 1 Adult

Price: \$600.00

The whale safari boat holds 8 guests and no more than 4 may swim with the whales at once. This option guarantees that you will join the guide and go into the water on all of the swims during your 3 whale safaris, rather than sitting some out in the boat.

You may contact us to check the number of guests on the boat during your tour before booking this option. But please be aware that replies from Tonga may be delayed during the busy season and numbers do change when new bookings come in.

The whale swimming experience is still excellent even if you do not choose this option, with several swims with the whales included on each boat trip.

Extra day in Tongatapu - pre-tour

Min numbers: 2 Adults

Price: \$80.00

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. Single room supplements apply.

Extra day in Tongatapu - post-tour

Min numbers: 2 Adults

Price: \$80.00

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

Single room supplement

Min numbers: 1 Adult

Price:

\$665.00

If you are a single traveller, or travelling with a friend but don't want to share a bed, then a single room will be provided throughout the tour without any extra supplement being payable. This will include a single en-suite room in the Scenic Hotel, and a small single room with shared bathroom in Ha'apai Beach Resort.

However, if you would like some more space and comfort at Ha'apai then please select this option which will provide a single en-suite room in the Scenic Hotel, and single use of a larger double en-suite room at Ha'apai Beach Resort.

Tour Notes

1. Accommodation

Accommodation is based on single or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will be given a private double room. Twin rooms are not available at Ha'apai Beach Resort.

If you are a single traveller, or travelling with a friend but don't want to share a bed, then a single room will be provided without any extra supplement being payable. This will include a single en-suite room in the Scenic Hotel, and a small single room with shared bathroom in Ha'apai Beach Resort.

If you are a single traveller (or travelling with a friend but not sharing a bed) then a single room supplement is available. This will cover a single en-suite room in the Scenic Hotel, and single use of a larger double en-suite room at Ha'apai Beach Resort.

Tongatapu - Scenic Hotel

The Scenic Hotel Tonga (previously called the Royal Tonga International Hotel) is a comfortable mid-range hotel located near the Kingdom of Tonga's capital Nuku'alofa. The hotel is situated on approximately 16 acres of beautiful Tongan countryside, surrounded by native flowers and trees to create a relaxing atmosphere. It is close to sandy beaches, limestone caves and dramatic cliff walks. The picturesque drive to the capital, Nuku'alofa, takes about half an hour.

Ha'apai - Ha'apai Beach Resort

Ha'apai Beach Resort is a year round destination nestled right on the beach, overlooking the turquoise waters and surrounding islands. You can experience a unique and special slice of paradise - the real and remote Tongan Islands. Ha'apai Beaches were voted in the top ten beaches to visit by Lonely Planet in 2014.

Ha'apai Beach Resort offers friendly, basic and comfortable, beach-front accommodation conveniently located on Lifuka Island, only 5 minutes from Pangai town and the airport. The beach houses are located in a lush tropical garden overlooking the white sandy beach at the former Niu'a'Kalo Beach Motel. Despite the proximity to town you have the tranquillity you expect from a beach holiday, a clean beach with a snorkelling reef on your doorstep and lots of wildlife to be discovered. The beach houses are perfect for those wishing to stay on the beach at a reasonable price without having to travel to a different island. All rooms are fully insect screened and furnished with comfy beds (queen size in double rooms), closets, power points, fresh linen and towels. Cold drinking water and Wi-Fi access are included in the room price.

The resort has a small library with English and German books and magazines, a variety of games and lots of informational material on diving, the whales and Tonga. There is even a telescope to view the clear night skies.

Besides scuba diving, whale watching and snorkel trips, there is plenty to do to keep you entertained. The resort has bikes and snorkelling gear available free for guests and sea-kayaks for hire, allowing you to explore Ha'apai above and below the water on your own terms. If you just wish to spend a relaxed day at the beach, swing yourself into one of the hammocks to enjoy that good book or treat yourself to a fresh green coconut.

2. Transport

Private vehicles are used for all airport transfers and other transfers. Domestic flights are included for the return journey between Tongatapu and Lifuka Islands. A fully licensed safari boat is used for the whale swimming trips.

3. Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour airport meet & assist service in Tongatapu airport, your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers.

You will be met on your arrival in Tongatapu airport, after you have passed through immigration and collected your luggage. Please exit the building and turn left where you'll find a driver from the Scenic Hotel Tonga holding a board with your name(s) displayed. Please look out for them and introduce yourself. They will then transfer you on to your hotel. Please call the contact numbers on your voucher if you do not find them straight away.

On Day 2 you will need to arrange your transfer to the airport through the hotel reception (their shuttle bus travels very regularly as the airport is very close by). On arrival in Ha'Apai you'll be met and transferred to the resort for breakfast. We will send you your e-tickets and flight numbers for the Tongatapu - Ha'Apai flights; you will need to check in yourselves. Please be ready to leave the hotel 2 hours before your flight departure to Ha'Apai.

4. 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 with varying travel plans, 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.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Our Tonga tours start and finish at Fua'Amotu International Airport on Tongatapu island (TBU). Air New Zealand flies to Tongatapu from Auckland 6 times per week and can be used to fly to Tonga from a wide range of international airports. Virgin Australia offer a limited service to Tonga from New Zealand and Australia, and Fiji Airways flies from Nadi to Tongatapu.

5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

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. Also, in Tonga we need to restrict the number of people in the group to fit the size of the whale watching boat and to ensure that the whale swimming experience is managed responsibly for both whales and guests (a maximum of 4 swimmers plus guide are allowed in the water with the whales at any one time). This tour therefore has a maximum group size of 8 travellers (min 1). You may join with other travellers on the whale safaris.

While on Tongatapu your travel is essentially independent, with the hotel shuttle providing your transfers to and from the airport for your international flights and your flights to and from Ha'apai.

While on Ha'apai the owner/managers at Ha'apai Beach Resort will be your hosts and manage your time there. Matt Haling and Jodi Hawley originated from Australia and New Zealand and were drawn to The Kingdom of Tonga in 2012 by the humpback whales and the idyllic island lifestyle. These avid sailors sailed their yacht 2800 nautical miles from Australia to settle in the paradise that is Ha'apai. Matt began diving in 1989 and has a special understanding and bond with the marine life. He has taught underwater photography and video around the globe, spending over 6000 hours underwater, professionally filming and photographing its wonders. Jodi is a skilled sailor, amazing cook and a passionate whale guide who has an affinity with the whales. Their partnership makes for your perfect holiday experience at the resort and on the water as they welcome you into the island lifestyle.

6. Swimming with the Whales

Every year from mid July to mid October the serene islands of Ha'apai provide safe haven for one of mother nature's most captivating creations - the majestic Humpback Whales. Tonga is one of only a few countries in the world where you are allowed to actually swim with Humpback Whales, and with our guides and the tropical paradise of Ha'apai it is simply the most beautiful and tranquil place to do it. The whales come from the Antarctic to the calm warm waters of Ha'apai to breed, birth and socialise. Mothers spend the time until their departure, nursing their young and courting a potential mate. It's a very important and sensitive time in their annual cycle and the most exciting time to watch and interact with them.

Every day of whale watching is different with a vast array of interesting behaviour to witness - from the "blow" shaped like a love heart, a graceful spy hop, powerful fin or fluke slaps to continual full body breaching and inquisitive approaches to the boat. Using our hydrophone (waterproof microphone) we can sometimes listen to their magical love songs even when they are out of sight. Swimming with the Humpback Whales is the ultimate marine experience, even life changing for some. So come with us, strap on your mask and fins and glide into the blue for your experience of a lifetime swimming with Tonga's Humpback Whales!.

Our whale watching trips depart at 8.30 am from the main wharf in Pangai. For your safety you will be informed about the vessel, whale behaviour and how we conduct swimming with the whales then begin our search for the playful giants. Depending on the events of the day, we will have lunch at anchor, allowing you to snorkel on one of Ha'apai's wonderful coral reefs, or on a beach of one of the many islands. The afternoon will be spent looking for more whales before we make our way back home around 2.30 pm.

We use a fully licensed and professional whale swim operator who strives to swim on every trip. However, be aware that whales are wild animals and you will be observing them in their natural environment. Swimming may or may not be possible depending on the whales' behaviour, their reaction to us and the weather conditions. Only 4 swimmers, plus a guide, are allowed in the water with the whales at any one time. The boats we use carry up to 8 people so you should expect to take turns with the whale swims. These are kept short enough though so that everyone gets as much time with the whales as is possible and responsible. A Premium Whale Swimming option is available which guarantees that you go into the water on every swim and don't need to sit any out on the boat.

We are only visitors in their realm and their welfare is our primary concern, always adopting a soft, respectful approach during our encounters. If the whales show signs of being disturbed, we cease contact and continue our search for whales that are more in tune to interacting with us. That being said, our experience with the whales combined with our careful approach technique usually result in exhilarating in-water encounters that leave our guests with unforgettable whale moments in Ha'apai.

Each boat trip includes complete snorkelling gear, a fresh, home-made lunch, tea, coffee and refreshments, with trained professionals to make your day safe, informative and enjoyable.

7. Health, Fitness and Vaccinations

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

Vaccinations:

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:

[Tonga](#): Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus. Malaria is not present unless contracted abroad and brought into the country. Yellow Fever certificates are 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.

Health, Fitness & Dietary info:

You must be able to swim and be confident in the water to join this tour. However you do not need to be a strong swimmer.

You do need a reasonable level of fitness with the ability to climb a moving boat ladder with a maximum capacity of 120kg.

Ha'apai is a remote island with few medical facilities, a limited flight service and unpredictable electricity supply. Please inform us of any pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies, dietary requirements or physical disabilities that you may have. We can then advise you of whether we can accept your booking to visit the island. Our resort hosts' decision on accepting guests is final. Unfortunately vegan menus are not available due to the lack of available produce.

8. 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.

Most nationalities do not need a visa for tourist visits to Tonga for less than one month (including UK, EU, USA, CA, AU, NZ). Other nationalities may need to obtain a visa in advance. For further information on your visa requirements, please either contact us or your local visa agency.

9. Time

The time in Tonga is GMT plus 13 hours. Daylight saving time changes are not applied.

10. Voltage

Sockets are three flat pronged and 240 volts (Type I - the same as used in Australia and New Zealand). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

11. What to take

Tonga is a place where you don't require much in order to be comfortable. It is tropical, sunny and very relaxed, so you only really need to bring a few essentials:

- Valid Passport – with at least 6 months left before expiry.
- Light weight, casual, non-synthetic clothing (cottons and natural fibres are best) which appropriately cover the body, when in company of the local communities. (Please understand local customs and religious requirements relating to dress codes. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it needs to be respectful)
- Cool footwear (sandals are best). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries.
- Swimming costumes – rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
- Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products – Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.

- Prescription medications (if required) – please bring supporting documents.
- Power adapter for phones, laptops etc – see Voltage section
- Underwater camera with sufficient batteries and memory cards (swimming with whales is an amazing experience and its well worth being able to take photos. A waterproof compact camera with a wrist lanyard will generally manage colours better and is more versatile than a GoPro).
- Sun hat (ideally with a chin strap to prevent them blowing off in the wind while on the boat)
- Sunglasses (polarising sunglasses will reduce glare and help you see into the water)
- Light spray jacket to keep out the wind
- Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.

Luggage allowances:

Most international airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 23kg per person of checked in luggage to go in the hold of the plane. However, domestic flights between the main island and Ha'Apai n Tonga have lower personal luggage allowances of 15kg per person (allowances may be combined between 2 or more people if you are travelling on the same ticket - eg. two people could check in one 20kg bag and one 10kg bag).

Most international airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Domestic flights within Tonga are restricted to 4.5kg.

For simplicity we recommend that you bring no more than 15kg per person of checked in luggage and 4.5kg per person of carry on luggage. All luggage must be labelled with your name & address.

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.

12. Dates & Prices

The whale watching season in Tonga runs from late July to mid October. We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on Thursdays throughout the season. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers and a maximum of 8.

Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request. We can also run this tour privately and customise the itinerary if you would rather not join a group or if our group dates do not suit you or are fully booked. Please contact us for more information and prices.

13. 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.

14. 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). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

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.

15. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and an ABTA Member (Y4447) and you can be confident when booking with us that your money is safe and protected.

Financial failure insurance is also provided through Affirma to protect all customers for the land portion of your tour.

Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

16. 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).

17. 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

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

18. 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.



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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
