

# EXPLORE!

## Outdoor Alaska

14 days

USA - Trip code AKH



## Outdoor Alaska

The Alaskan wilderness offers some of the most pristine and untouched landscapes in the world. We discover unspoilt views of snow-capped mountains, sparkling rivers and emerald-green glacial lakes, searching for whales, grizzly bears, moose and caribou on the way. The glaciers of the Kenai Fjords National Park and the spectacular views of Mt McKinley are just some of the highlights of this adventure into the great outdoors.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Denali National Park** - One of the planet's truly inspiring wilderness areas containing Denali, the highest mountain in North America, spectacular hiking trails and abundant wildlife
- ★ **Wrangell St. Elias National Park** - Home to nine of North America's 16 highest peaks, stunning hikes, breathtaking scenery and a range of optional activities
- ★ **Seward** - Gateway to the spectacular landscapes of Kenai Fjords National Park
- ★ **Valdez** - Fabulous ferry ride across Prince William Sound
- ★ **Hatcher's Pass** - Stunning mountain landscapes and old gold mines

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:**

**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:**

**8 - 13**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join tour in Anchorage

Join tour Anchorage and check-in at the hotel.



**Accommodation: Ramada Downtown** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Drive to Portage Valley for guided hike, continue to Seward

Leaving Anchorage this morning we turn south taking the Seward Highway and following the coastline of Turnagain Arm, through the Chugach and Kenai Mountains. This stunning setting affords us an opportunity to take a short, guided hike that takes in the dramatic scenery of the Byron Glacier Creek and ends in a permanent snowfield under a hanging glacier. From here we continue south to the town of Seward, a picturesque port ringed by a stunning landscape of mountains and glaciers, lying alongside the rich waters of Resurrection Bay. Founded at the turn of the 20th century by engineers building the railroad to the interior, it benefited from its status as an ice-free port, prospering during the early years of the Nome gold rush and going on to become the gateway port for cruises into the spectacular Kenai Fjords National Park. On arrival we will make our way to our hotel, where we will spend the next three nights amidst this majestic landscape.



**Accommodation: The Breeze Inn** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 3 - Discover Kenai Fjords National Park

This morning we drive to Exit Glacier in the Kenai Fjords National Park. The park is the site of the immense Harding Icefield, a gigantic expanse of nearly 500sq km that feeds some 40 glaciers, making it the largest icefield within the territories of the United States. The fjords have been created by the retreat of these mighty glaciers, leaving behind an awe-inspiring vista of dramatic cliffs covered in nesting seabirds, whilst the tidewater glaciers on the coast regularly calve huge icebergs into the icy waters. Depending upon the interests of the group there may be a possibility to enjoy a walk at the glacier, or perhaps even make a day of it by exploring something of the Icefield. Those not wishing to partake in the walks today may like to check out Seward's impressive SeaLife Centre, a remarkable project partially funded by the Exxon Valdez disaster that combines a unique mix of research and education and affords an opportunity to watch stellar sea lions, harbour seals and puffins in their natural underwater environments.



**Accommodation: The Breeze Inn** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 4 - Free day; optional sea kayaking or cruise to National Park

Today has been left free for you to enjoy as you see fit. We would recommend either a cruise within the Kenai Fjords National Park, a 580,000-acre wonderland of towering peaks, glaciers and coastline that is home to a rich diversity of marine wildlife, including puffins, sea otters, stellar sea lions, orcas, humpbacks and dall porpoises. Here over 30 named glaciers plunge directly into the salt water along the coast. Sea kayaking or fishing is also possible.



**Accommodation: The Breeze Inn** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 5 - Drive and ferry to Valdez via Portage Glacier and Whittier

Departing Seward this morning we follow the railway through the Chugach forest and through Moose Pass, so named because in 1903 a mail carrier driving a team of dogs had considerable trouble gaining right of way from a giant moose! Heading for Portage Glacier Visitors Centre, we then continue through the old mountain tunnel to Whittier, at the western end of Prince William Sound. From here we board a ferry to take us to Valdez, the northernmost ice-free port in the western hemisphere, ringed by the snow-capped peaks at the end of the Valdez Narrows. During the crossing you may be able to catch a glimpse of the Columbia Glacier. Valdez is the terminus of the 800 mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline which begins in Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic Ocean. This astounding feat of engineering traverses the Brooks Range, crossing rivers and valleys, above and below ground, before finally feeding its oil into the waiting tankers. The economy of the town depends very much on the oil industry and salmon fisheries, and is our base for tonight. Please Note: The final itinerary is subject to confirmation of the ferry schedules between Seward and Valdez. Ferry schedules are only published in February each year. Occasionally the new timetable may not fit with our planned itinerary and/or ferries are occasionally cancelled. In either event, we shall divert the tour inland and drive from Seward to McCarthy National Park.



**Accommodation: Valdez - Downtown B and B** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 6 - Journey to McCarthy via Keystone Canyon

Our route today takes us through some of the most spectacular scenery in Alaska, as we drive through forested hills and past cascading rivers, fed by small glaciers on the Chugach Mountains. The numerous rivers in this area are full of fish. Five species of salmon are found in Alaska. The midsummer spawning season is a major event for all the animals, with bears and birds waiting to catch the weakened fish, exhausted from their spawning runs. The views are even more dramatic as we reach Keystone Canyon, where sheer cliff walls covered in lime green moss present cascades of crystal water tumbling over the edge to the river below. 'Bridal Veil' and 'Horsetail' Falls evocatively describe the scene. The canyon is steeped in history from the gold rush period and this was once the scene of a bloody gun battle, whilst the remains of the sled trail used in the early days are still visible. Crossing Thompson Pass we head towards the Worthington Glacier, heading east through Chitina and onto the McCarthy road. Stopping at the Copper River, we then cross the Kuskulana River on a narrow railroad bridge high above the water and continue through a vast expanse of untouched wilderness, following an unpaved road through the remote forests. At the end of the road we reach the small town of McCarthy (pop 42), which grew to serve the Copper mine at Kennicott, located 4.5 miles up the valley.



**Accommodation: Hotel Ma Johnson** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 7 - Walk in Wrangell St Elias National Park

Nestling amongst the wild landscapes of the Wrangell St. Elias National Park, McCarthy presents us with an ideal base from which to explore this stunning setting further. Less accessible than Denali, Wrangell St Elias contains the largest concentration of glaciers on the continent and some 13.2 million acres of the park system have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage area. Shaped by volcanoes and ice, the park has nine of the 16 highest peaks in the United States, including Mount St Elias, the second highest in the US. Mount Wrangell (4318m) erupted as recently as 1930 and its thermal mud springs are evidence of continued volcanic activity. Mountain goats and Dall sheep with long curly horns can be found on the upper slopes while wolves, black bears, coyotes, bison and caribou range through the interior of the park. There will be an opportunity today to walk the Bonanza Mine trail, a 16km, straightforward, but fairly strenuous walk that follows the ridges and tram lines to the old mine, taking in the magnificent panoramas of the Chugach Mountains, Mount Blackburn and the Kennicott Glacier along the way. The road is steep, climbing to an elevation of some 1200m as the path negotiates the trail from the mill town to the old mine, affording a unique glimpse of part of this country's fascinating history, as well as its breathtaking landscapes. From the ridge above the mine there are some spectacular views across to the University Range in the St Elias Mountains. Return to Kennicott via the same path and head back to the hotel.



**Accommodation: Hotel Ma Johnson** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 8 - Free day; optional hike along the Kennicott Glacier or rafting

Today has once again been left free for you to enjoy at your leisure. You may like to try some of the other spectacular walks through

the park, perhaps taking an optional hike along the Kennicott Glacier, or undertaking some optional ice-climbing (accompanied by professional guides). Scenic flights over the park are also available - without doubt one of the most spectacular outings to be had in Alaska. Also the powerful rivers present some exhilarating rafting opportunities, which offer breathtaking scenery. Those looking for some more sedate activities might like to explore the old mining town of Kennicott. Designated as a National Historic landmark and considered the finest remaining example of an early 20th century copper mine anywhere, the town remains a fascinating monument to a long forgotten era of America's pioneering past.



**Accommodation: Hotel Ma Johnson** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 9 - Travel along the Denali Highway to Tangle Lakes

Heading north today we take the Denali Highway towards Tangle Lakes, stopping en route to see the remarkable fish wheels on the Copper River, an ingenious method of catching the abundant salmon that follow the river to spawn. Stopping at the Wrangell St. Elias Visitors Centre for a short visit, we then continue on to Glenallen, our gateway into the beautiful setting of the Tangle lakes, one of the most accessible of Alaska's wild and pristine wilderness areas. This is a region of open tundra, glacial lakes and mountain ridges, blessed with an abundance natural beauty, cultural traditions and spectacular wildlife. On arrival we should have time to enjoy a short walk in the alpine tundra, a haven for caribou, wolves and grizzlies and soon to be the site of controversial platinum strip mining operation. The area is also home to the remnants of ancient nomadic peoples and contains some of the richest concentrations of archaeological remains in the sub-arctic regions of North America.



**Accommodation: Tangle River Inn** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 10 - Continue to Denali National Park

Continuing northwest, the highway takes us over a rugged landscape, where the views are breath taking and, weather permitting, we may get a glimpse of Denali (formerly Mt McKinley), the highest mountain in North America (6188m). The Athabascan Indians called it 'Denali' meaning 'the high one' and this towering pyramid of rock, ice and snow is often shrouded in a blanket of mist and cloud. Denali National Park represents one of the world's last intact ecosystems, over 6 million acres of tundra, glaciers and mountains that present a unique opportunity to observe the natural behaviour of wild animals still unaffected by the often destructive influence of man. The park provides a haven for bears, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, moose, red foxes, wolverine and over 160 species of birds, and is without doubt one of the highlights of our remarkable journey.



**Accommodation: Denali Perch Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 11 - In Denali National Park; search for wildlife on walks

This morning we will drive to the visitors centre on the edge of the National Park and transfer to a shuttle bus for our journey into the park itself. Established as a national park in 1917, the area was designated as an international biosphere reserve in 1976 and contains everything from 1200 pound moose to 1.5 gram shrews. In order to preserve the wilderness for the wildlife, vehicle access is restricted, so these shuttle buses are the only way that visitors can enter this incredible natural treasure trove. The park buses run to either the Eielson Visitors Centre along the route you will see the incredible views of the sheer mountain walls that rise majestically from the plains. Returning to the visitors centre at the park entrance later today, we rendezvous with our maxiwagon to return to the hotel. (Please note guiding is not allowed in the park - walks will be unescorted).



**Accommodation: Denali Perch Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 12 - Morning visit Denali Visitor Centre, afternoon head to Talkeetna

Returning to the Denali Visitors Centre this morning we enjoy a demonstration of the park's sled dogs, which are used for patrolling in the winter season and have been an integral part of Denali for so long that they have become part of the cultural traditions of the area. Their existence here represents an important landmark in the history of the park, signifying a direct link with its native and pioneering heritage. They remain the only sled dogs in the entire U.S. who help directly in the preservation of the park and its wildlife. After our demonstration we head for the town of Talkeetna, an old mining supply station and riverboat port, that since the early 1950s has seen itself become a focus for mountaineers attempting to scale the heights of Denali. Many believe that the best views of the mountain can be seen from here and this afternoon there should be time to enjoy some exhilarating optional excursions from the town, including river rafting and flightseeing trips to take in the majestic views of Alaska's most famous summit.



**Accommodation: Swiss Alaska Inn** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 13 - Visit Hatcher's Pass mine, return to Anchorage

This morning we depart Talkeetna and head for the mountainous landscapes around Hatcher's Pass, where a visit to the gold mine affords us a fascinating glimpse into the pioneering heritage of this great wilderness. Named after Robert Lee Hatcher, who established the first lode claim in Willow Creek Valley in 1906, the top of the pass is the site of the old Independence Mine, today an Historical State Park, but once the property of the Alaska-Pacific Consolidated Mining Company. At the peak of its production the mine employed over 200 men and produced nearly 35,000 ounces of gold, which at today's rates would equate to over \$17 million dollars' worth a year. There may be an opportunity to hike around the area, although if the pass is blocked due to snowfall we will take an alternative route.



**Accommodation: Ramada Downtown** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



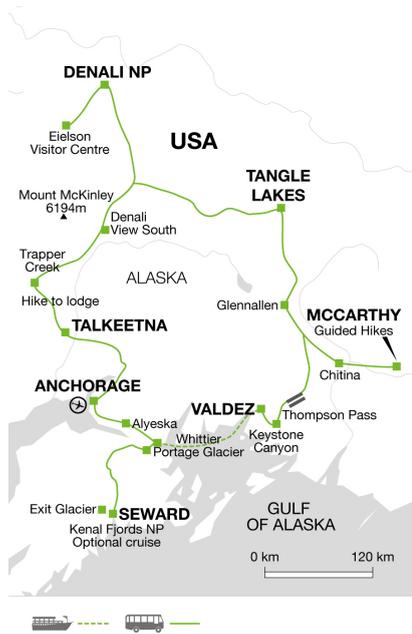
Meals Provided: None

## DAY 14 - Tour ends Anchorage

The tour ends in Anchorage this morning.



Meals Provided: None



## What's included?



### Transport

Ferry  
Maxiwagon



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver



### Accommodation

9 nights standard hotel  
4 nights simple hotel

## Trip information

## Country information

### USA Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

There are great variations in the altitude and terrain of the areas visited and this is reflected in the temperatures. Desert areas can be extremely hot in the summer months (49°), though temperatures can drop dramatically at night. The mountains are cooler and wetter especially in the north of the Rockies. At the beginning and end of the season there may still be some snow around in the high passes and it can be cold, whereas in mid-summer the day time temperatures can soar.

#### Time difference to GMT

-9

#### Plugs

2 Pin Flat

#### Religion

Christian

#### Language

English

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

There are a number of exciting optional excursions you can do on tour. These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract. Seward/Valdez - Sea kayaking US\$ 90-US\$ 260; Glacier cruise US\$ 89-US\$ 195; Dog sledding US\$ 80 McCarthy - Glacier walk full day US\$ 125, half day US\$ 95; Small plane overflight US\$ 150-\$250; Ice climbing US\$ 125; Rafting US\$ 295 including bush flight back to McCarthy; Kennicott Mine US\$ 25

### Clothing

A quality waterproof jacket and trousers, a pair of gloves and a hat are essential. Include some long-sleeved shirts and warm clothing. Thermal underwear is advised for chilly nights all through the summer. Daytime temps can be hot as well, so you can bring swimwear and a sun hat if you like. Be aware that Alaska is notorious for biting insects, so you may wish to bring long trousers, long sleeved tops, and use non smelling soaps and shampoos.

### Footwear

Good quality waterproof walking boots, trainers and/or sandals for travelling.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

Luggage is stored either in the van or a trailer on the back. Please make sure the bag is of a reasonable size and preferably soft nature rather than a hard shell. You will also need a day pack for walking and personal items as your main luggage cannot be accessed during the day.

### Equipment

Bring a water bottle, (head) torch, some plastic bags, to keep things dry, sunblock, insect repellent and binoculars. An umbrella, eye mask for sleeping and mosquito head net may also be useful.

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

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

### Local crew

In North America tipping 15%-20% is a recognised part of life across the service industry, including restaurants, activity suppliers, taxis and guides. Local staff will look to you for personal recognition of particular services provided. Unlike other Explore trips, during our trips in North America our Explore leaders will not operate a tips kitty. However, they will be more than happy to provide guidance throughout the trip on who to tip when and to suggest appropriate amounts.

### Local fees

Beauty always comes at a price and the wonderful isolation of Alaska is reflected in the price of everyday items which normally have to be imported at great costs. The estimates given for Food and Drink are based on the average across USA so when budgeting for your tour you should allow approximately double the amounts stated.

## Country Information

### USA Holidays & Tours

#### Food and drink

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

**Lunch price**

£15

**Dinner price**

£21

**Beer price**

£Varies for different towns, average £4.00

**Water price**

£1.1

#### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

USDollars.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Bring your money in US\$ cash.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities. Your tour leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Widely available.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Widely accepted just about everywhere.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Ferry, Maxiwagon

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Our accommodation in Kennicott and Tangle Lakes is listed as simple, and you will be using shared bathroom facilities during your stay here.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

USA: (Including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). You must apply online for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), here <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip may be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Libya, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen since March 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA. If you are a citizen of a country not included in the VWP you cannot apply for an ESTA. In both cases, you will instead need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (This is not necessary if only transitting through the USA) I-94 - This is only required for completion if entering the USA by land through an official border crossing. For anyone entering by air or sea, you will be advised about this form during your journey if applicable. The i94 is a history of entries and exits to the US. You can get this for free online here: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>. Each i94 accessed is only valid for border crossing for 7 days after printed. Entry requirements for the USA can change regularly, therefore, please ensure you have the most up to date information before you travel by checking the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

#### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a

majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Non refundable permits

## USA Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

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