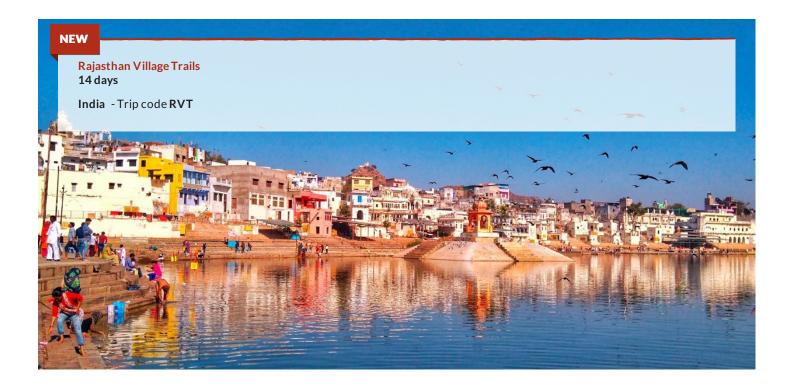
EXPLORE!



Rajasthan Village Trails

Discover Rajasthan's rich culture and natural splendours on a walking holiday through its historic cities, remote villages, hills and deserts. Visit majestic forts, opulent palaces and exquisitely carved temples. Immerse yourself in the vibrant street life on carefully planned heritage walks and encounter rural life up close, hiking through tribal heartlands. In the sublime peace of the Aravalli Hills, trek through the forests of the Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary with the chance to spot chinkara, wild boar, monkeys and other wildlife.

Trip highlights

- **Heritage walks** Discover the hidden sights and lively street life of Agra and Jaipur
- **Palaces and forts** Visit spectacular monuments to the might of the Mughals and Rajputs
- ★ Off beat encounters Explore rural Rajasthan on foot, observing village lives up close
- **Aravalli Hills** Hike forested hills, through a wildlife sanctuary and tribal villages
- Udaipur Relax in this historic city on the shores of Lake Pichola

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.

WALKING GRADE:

Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

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 - Trip starts in Delhi; stroll in Lodhi Gardens

The trip starts today in the Indian capital Delhi. By way of a leisurely introduction to the city, we head out this afternoon to stretch our legs in the peaceful surroundings of New Delhi's Lodhi Gardens. On our drive there we pass by the iconic India Gate (war memorial designed by Sir Edward Lutyens) and imposing Presidential Palace. One of the city's most beautiful and popular parks, this 90 acre garden contains 15th century tombs, mosques and bridges and a rich variety of trees and birds. Popular with Delhiites as a place to stroll, we plan to join the locals for a cup of chai (strong and sweet milky tea) at a tea shop in the middle of the gardens.



DAY 2 - Explore Old Delhi by cycle rickshaw; drive to Agra

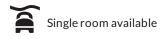
By way of complete contrast, we immerse ourselves this morning in the frenetic streets and alleys of Old Delhi on a guided cycle rickshaw tour. The Old City is much closer to the image conjured up by Rudyard Kipling. Weaving our way through the crowds we take in Dariba Kalan (the silver market) and Paranthewali Galli (Lane where Paratha flat breads are made) followed by visit to the Sikh Gurdwara, Sees Ganj Sahib and the Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India. In the afternoon we depart the capital and drive south to Agra, a journey of around four hours.



Accommodation: Hotel Pushp Villa (or similar)

Standard Hotel

Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

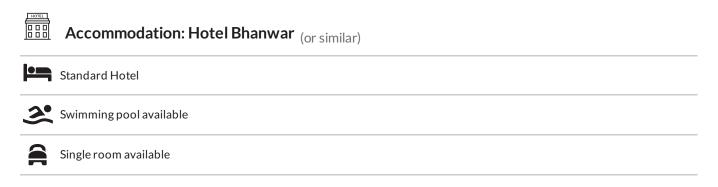
DAY 3 - Visit Taj Mahal at sunrise and Agra Fort; afternoon guided heritage walk

This morning's early start is rewarded with the spectacular sight of the sun rising over the Taj Mahal during our visit. Over 300 years have elapsed since the construction of what is arguably the world's most perfect and poetic building, yet its beauty and symmetry seem unscarred by age. Created by Shah Jahan as a funerary monument to his favourite wife, Mumtaz, it took 22 years to build. The Great Moghul lies beside his beloved under the white marble dome. We return to our hotel for breakfast before heading out to visit Agra Fort, a magnificent blend of Rajput and Mughal architecture; it contains the beautiful Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque) with its three domes of white marble. In the afternoon we set out on a guided heritage walk to discover both Agra's past and present. Our route begins at the gigantic Jama Masjid, before heading to join the throngs at the ever-lively Hindu Mankameshwar Mahadev Temple, dedicated to the God Shiva and famed for its silver lingam (abstract phallic symbol of Shiva's energy). From here we follow the narrow lanes of the city and head to the spice market of Rawat Para and Namak Ki Mandi, where artisans beat gold and silver foils for use in ayurvedic medicine. Stopping at the 16th century Akbari Mosque, we then follow the stone paved streets to the colourful shops of the Kinari (wedding) Bazaar. Today's three kilometre guided heritage walk is expected to take approximately two hours.



DAY 4 - Drive to Karauli via Fatehpur Sikri; walk in Karauli

Heading west this morning, we soon reach the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri. Founded in 1569 and abandoned scarcely 16 years later, it is a perfectly intact example of Akbar's imperial court. Among the many noteworthy buildings is the five-storied Panch Mahal, probably a pleasure pavilion for the ladies of the harem. In the centre of the courtyard is the Pachisi Board, where the emperor played a game like chess, with dancing slave girls as pieces. Perhaps the finest structure of all though is the lotus-shaped carved central pillar of the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience). Continuing to Karauli, our drive takes us deep into rural Rajasthan passing through many small villages along the way. Karauli is a holy town which has been strongly fortified by its rulers throughout history and you can still see the remains of its walls in places. Legend has it that the ruling family were descendants of Lord Krishna, one of the most loved gods of Hindu mythology. We stay at the family-run heritage hotel, Bhanwar Vilas Palace. The former home of the Maharajah of Karauli - its antique furnishings and decor create an ambience that feels like we have stepped back in time to the days of the Raj. In the afternoon to walk from our hotel into the centre of Karauli where we visit the City Palace. Also used as a residence by the royal family until 1950, it has now been abandoned. Few travellers make it to Karauli and we're likely to have this beautiful building all to ourselves. There's a great view from the palace roof out over Karauli and the surrounding countryside.After visiting the palace we head off on a guided walk around the streets and sights of the town including a visit to its most important temple, the Madan Mohanji Temple, dedicated to the Hindu God Krishna, it is renowned for its ancient idols of Krishna and Radha. Today's three kilometre town walk is expected to take approximately two hours.



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Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Mamchari Lake Walk; optional cookery demonstration

Today we enjoy a hike in the countryside and villages outside of Karauli, heading to Mamchari Lake. Formed by the Mamchari dam and a vital source of water in this arid region, there's a chance to spot crocodiles and various species of bird which live here. After our walk the rest of the day is free to explore Karauli further or simply relax in the atmospheric surroundings of our heritage hotel. There is also the option to attend a cooking demonstration. Focusing mainly on Rajasthani specialties, there will also be the chance to try some of these delicious (and very spicy!) dishes at the end of the session. Today's 12 kilometre walk is expected to take approximately four hours.

	Accommodation: Hotel Bhanwar (or similar)
	Standard Hotel
3.	Swimming pool available
	Single room available
!O !	Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Drive to Jaipur; afternoon 'temples and havelis' heritage walk

This morning we head for the city of Jaipur, a drive of around four hours. Sometimes called the Pink City, Jaipur was first painted terracotta pink by Maharajab Sawai Ram Singh to celebrate the visit of Prince Albert in 1853. In the afternoon we\ll be introduced to the city on a guided heritage walk. Designed to reveal some of this walled city's hidden architectural gems as well its street life we\ll visit temples, artisans\workshops and markets along our route. Today's three kilometre heritage walk is expected to take approximately two-and-a-half hours.

Accommodation: Suryaa Villa (or similar)
Standard Hotel
Swimming pool available
Single room available

DAY 7 - Visit Amber Fort, hike from Amer. Sightseeing in Jaipur

After breakfast, we drive to the town of Amer, 11 kilometres from Jaipur, it is famous for the massive Amber Fort perched high on a hillside with impressive views back down to the town and surrounding hills. We first pay a guided visit to the fort before setting out on a walk exploring both Amer's rich heritage and the natural beauty of Aravalli mountain range. Along our route we meet the local Meena tribal community who live here and learn about their daily lives. Our walk ends at Sagar Lake where we can see the mysterious 'floating palace' of Jal Mahal in the middle of the lake. Four of the palace's five floors are actually submerged beneath the water. Returning to Jaipur we will visit the most famous sights of the city this afternoon; the splendid City Palace, a dazzling fusion of Mughal and Rajasthani design, the unique majesty of the Hawa Mahal which is famous as the ' Palace of the Winds' and the remarkable 18th Century observatory of Jantar Mantar. Today's four kilometre walk is expected to take approximately two-and-a-half hours.



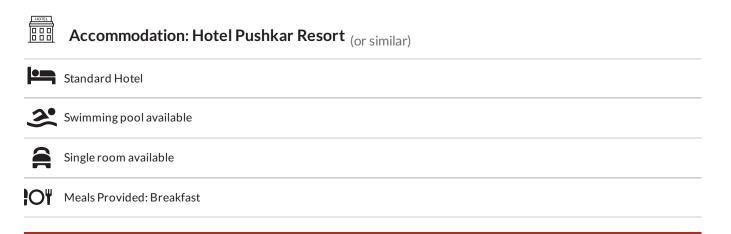
DAY 8 - Drive to Pushkar; optional camel cart ride through villages

Today we drive to Pushkar, a small town located on the edge of the desert with a tranquil lake, small hills with temples on top and a world famous Brahma Temple which is an important pilgrimage spot for Hindus. In the afternoon there is the option to take a camel cart safari, riding on sandy tracks through some of the small villages near to Pushkar, it's a great opportunity to experience this popular form of local transport and interact with local people.



DAY 9 - Hiking in and around Pushkar; enjoy desert views from Savitri temple

We start our walk this morning with an ascent to the top of Ratnagiri Hill where the Savitri temple, dedicated to Brahma's wife Savitri, is located. We will need to climb a long series of steps to reach the shrine from where there's a fantastic panoramic view of Pushkar with its beautiful lake and surrounding villages. After descending from hill we continue our walk through the town and local markets to the lakeside area. Said to have been created by the tears of Shiva after the death of his wife Shakti, the lake is surrounded by ghats (steps) and many pilgrims come here to bathe. Pushkar is also known for its colourful camel and livestock fair which takes place over five days every autumn. We will walk across the festival ground on our way back to the hotel. Today's five kilometre walk is expected to take approximately two-and-a-half hours.



DAY 10 - Drive to Kumbhalgarh; free afternoon to visit fort

Departing Pushkar today, we head to the village of Kumbhalgarh in the heart of the Aravalli hills, a journey of around five hours. One of the oldest ranges in the world, the Aravallis are the eroded stub of an ancient range running for almost 700 kilometres from near Delhi to Gujurat. The range has a high point of 1,722 metres at the hill station of Mount Abu in the south of Rajasthan. The highest point of our trip is here at Kumbhalgarh, an altitude of some 1,100 metres This afternoon is free to relax and explore and a visit to the imposing Kumbhalgarh Fort is highly recommended. One of the finest defensive fortifications anywhere in Rajasthan, the fort was built by in the 15th century and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its massive walls have a total length of 38 kilometres and the view from its ramparts of the surrounding hills and plains below is outstanding.



DAY 11 - Trek through the Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary to Ghanerao

The hills surrounding the fort comprise the 578 square kilometre Kumbhalgarh wildlife sanctuary; our trek today descends gradually through the dry deciduous forest of the Sanctuary. Wildlife present in the Sanctuary includes panther, wolf, bear, four horn chinkara, monkeys and wild boar and many species of birds although we are unlikely to see the larger mammals which are incredibly shy. Our route passes through a Bhil tribal village and stops at a small water reservoir called the Crocodile Lake where, as the name suggests, we can try and spot a couple of crocodiles sunbathing on the reservoir wall. We plan to stop for lunch at the Muchala Mahavir Jain Temple where we will see a lot of black faced langur monkeys. After lunch we continue walking out of the Sanctuary then through a number of hamlets populated by another Rajasthani tribe, the Garasiya. Our trek ends in the village of Ghanerao where we stay in our second heritage hotel of the trip, the Ghanerao Royal Castle which is still the home of the local royal family. Today's 16 kilometre trek is expected to take approximately six hours.



DAY 12 - Walk to Ranakpur Jain Temples; drive to Udaipur

Today we take a short drive to Phota Deval, a small village from where we start our trek through dense forests to the magnificent white marble Jain temples at Ranakpur. Situated in a wooded valley, the temples date back to the 15th century with the carvings depicting scenes from the lives of the Jain Saints at that time. The Adinath temple contains 1444 exquisitely carved pillars, with no two alike. Later we drive to the beautiful lakeside town of Udaipur. Considered by many to be one of Rajasthan's most elegant and sublime settings, Udaipur is a city of temples, palaces and gardens, encompassing some of the finest examples of Rajput architecture anywhere in India. The focal point of the city is Lake Pichola with its island palace (now a hotel) and Jag Mandir Island. Here the future Shah Jahan sought sanctuary from his father after he had been found guilty of plotting against him. The Lakeside is a beautiful place to watch the sunset, either from the shore or on an optional boat trip. Today's 10 kilometre walk is expected to take between three to four hours.



DAY 13 - Walk through villages in the Aravalli Hills; free afternoon to explore Udaipur

Our walk today takes us through some of the small villages scattered in the Aravalli Hills close to Udaipur. This area is populated by Bhils (one of India's oldest indigenous tribes) and Rajputs - a caste of warriors, whom are mostly farmers these days. As well as spending time in the villages, observing daily life we can enjoy panoramic views of the countryside. The walk finishes at two temples; one of them is dedicated to Lord Shiva and the other to the mother goddess Shakti. The afternoon is free to explore Udaipur. You may wish to visit to the City Palace, a fascinating collection of buildings built by various Maharanas (Warrior Kings) after Udai Singh and completed in the year 1725. The nearby Jagdish Temple is the largest and the most beautiful temple of Udaipur and also well worth a visit. Udaipur is one of the more relaxing cities in Rajasthan and a there are also plenty of shopping opportunities for anyone after souvenirs. Today's nine kilometre walk is expected to take between three to four hours



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCE



Walking grade

Easy to moderate

Trek details

Walks on 9 days for between 2.5 to 5 hours. Terrain includes village footpaths, rocky trails in the Aravalli Hills and through city streets. The heritage walk timings include sightseeing.

Max walking altitude (m)

1100



What's included?

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Included meals Breakfast: 14 Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus

Rickshaw



Trip staff Explore Tour Leader / Trek Guide Driver(s) Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

13 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

India Holidays & Tours

Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

Time difference to GMT

+5

Plugs

3 Pin Round

Religion

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

Language

Hindi and English.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Karauli: Rajasthani cookery demonstration - Pushkar: Camel cart ride through desert villages - Kumbalgarh: Visit to fort - Udaipur: Sunset Cruise on lake Pichola - Udaipur: Cookery class in family home -

Clothing

Bring a range of comfortable lightweight clothing that can be layered according to the fluctuating temperature. While between

November and March daytime temperatures are generally warm and comfortable, evenings and nights can be cold and hotels rarely have heating arrangements comparable with the UK. Although the monsoon rainy season is from June through to early October, it can rain outside of this time so a lightweight rain jacket is recommended. Please bear in mind that shorts and tight revealing clothing worn by women can cause offence and unwelcome interest.

Footwear

We recommend you bring lightweight walking boots with ankle support, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack.

Equipment

Bring a 2 litre water bottle, sun cream, sunglasses and head torch. Bring your walking poles if you usually use them. An umbrella is useful for both rain and as a sun shade.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £30 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leader may organise a group tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

India 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 £6 Dinner price £8 Beer price £1.4

Water price £0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Indian Rupee Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been bought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

Where To Exchange

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either

change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

ATM Availability

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

Travellers Cheques

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Rickshaw

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

India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India. The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below - You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India. Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process. It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year. The visa costs \$75. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India. Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £25 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service. If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_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 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.

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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.

Maximum altitude (m)

1100

India Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. 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 **Explore Travel Health** and from your local healthcare provider.