

EXPLORE!

NEW

Remote St Helena - A Recce Trip
10 days

- Trip code BSH



Remote St Helena - A Recce Trip

'Isolation' is the word most synonymous with this remote and rugged British outpost marooned in the middle of the South Atlantic. Such is its remoteness, almost equidistance between Brazil and Angola, that St Helena was chosen as the place of exile for its most famous resident - Napoleon Bonaparte. Taking advantage of a newly-built airport, we discover together the remote wilds of the UK's second-oldest Overseas Territory. Well-placed for the old East India Company shipping route, the island has a rich history, rugged wind-swept coastlines and a forested interior home to endemic flora and fauna. Small towns dot the island and the welcome received from the 4,000 'Saints' that live here is legendary.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Napoleon's Tomb** - Visit two of the houses where Napoléon saw out his last days, as well as his original tomb in the 'Valley of the Willows'
- ★ **Jamestown** - Our base for the week, discover 'Jacob's Ladder' and experience warm hospitality in this charming English-style village.
- ★ **Rich History** - Explore the 18th Century Longwood house, learn about the island's role in prisoner detention and exile, as well as the liberation of slaves.
- ★ **Flora and Fauna** - Walk along rugged coastlines and through lush sub-tropic forests, with the chance to spot dolphins, endemic birdlife and indigenous plants.

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:

Relaxed

You can enjoy easy-going activities and experiences on these Relaxed pace tours, with opportunities to absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings, but still come home feeling relaxed and refreshed.

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 - Arrive in Johannesburg and drive to hotel. Afternoon tour of Soweto

We begin our trip in Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa. After meeting our Explore leader and fellow group members we spend the afternoon in Soweto, the huge township on the outskirts of Johannesburg where 40% of the city's inhabitants live. Soweto, originally an acronym for South Western Townships, played a prominent part in the fight against the former apartheid regime, notable the Soweto Uprising of 1976; when mass protests erupted and the government shot at the crowd, killing many innocent protestors. We will take a tour of the township and meet local people to understand how life has changed since the end of apartheid. We will visit the Hector Pieterse Memorial, a museum that honours the vital role that the youth of South Africa played in the struggle. Hector Pieterse was one of the first students to be killed during the uprising when he was just 13. We will also visit the Mandela House Museum, situated in Nelson Mandela's former home which tells the story of Mandela and his family.



Accommodation: Aero Guest Lodge (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Morning flight to St Helena. Afternoon orientation of Jamestown

We will transfer back to the airport this morning for our flight to St Helena. The idea to build an airport on St Helena came to fruition in 2010, where the British Government invested £285 million pounds of public money to fund the building project. At that time the only way to get on and off the island and transport produce was by ship, the 5-day journey to Cape Town aboard the RMS St Helena. The airport was set to start welcoming commercial flights in 2016, but the project was delayed due to windshear. Additional safety

measures were put in place and on the 14th October 2017 St Helena welcomed its inaugural flight - the SA Airlink Embraer running a weekly service from Johannesburg. It is hoped that this flight will boost the tourism industry, providing vital jobs and a source of additional income, as well as increasing the ability to transport provisions to the remote island. Upon arrival into St Helena we will make the short drive to Jamestown, the island's capital and our base for the week. This afternoon we set off for a gentle stroll around lower Jamestown to orient ourselves and as an introduction to the island and its people. We will stop by the Castle, St James Church (the oldest Anglican Church in the Southern Hemisphere) and see Jacob's Ladder - a 699 step pathway that climbs steeply out of the valley Jamestown sits within. The afternoon ends with a telling reminder that we are in a British Overseas Territory, with a nice cup of tea!



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Full day exploring the main sights of St Helena, including St Paul's Cathedral and Ladder Hill Fort

Completely un-inhabited until 1502 when it was discovered by the Portuguese, the volcanic island of St Helena was established as a British territory in the 1600's to serve as a stop off on the main East India Company shipping routes. Aside from a very short-lived occupation by the Dutch, the island has remained under British rule for over 350 years. Its isolated location lent itself as an ideal detention centre for some of the British empire's most-feared enemies, including Zulu warriors, several thousand Boers from the Boer War and of course the island's most famous captive, Napoleon Bonaparte. British colonial influence is evident everywhere on the island, and today we set off to explore some of St Helena's main sights. We start at St Paul's Cathedral, and with at a capacity of 450 people it is rather smaller than its London name-sake, but is a charming church serving the local community. Moving on we visit the Boer Graves, a cemetery located in a peaceful wooded glen dedicated to the Boer prisoners that were shipped to the island during the Boer War. We stop for packed lunch in a scenic spot where the lush peaks loom over us. We then visit SHAPE - a not-for-profit organisation that supports vulnerable adults and disabled people, where a variety of handicrafts are made from local and recycled materials. At Prince's Lodge we find a fascinating Castel collection of old prints and photographs, offering a window into the past of this British outpost, and depicting the many people that have visited here over the years. Here we break for afternoon tea. The day ends with a stop at Ladder Hill Fort, the old Fort atop of Jacob's Ladder keeping watch over Jamestown in the valley below.



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 4 - Morning boat trip seeing coastal fortifications and bird spotting. Afternoon tour to Rupert's Valley

Located in the middle of the South Atlantic, St Helena is one of the most remote islands on earth, some 1,900 kms from the coast of Angola to the east, and 2,800 kms off the coast of Brazil to its west. Its location in the sub-tropics provides ideal waters for a rich marine eco-system, and today we take to the waters around St Helena to discover this. We hope to spot a variety of marine birds today, such as the Red-Billed Tropic bird, fairy terns and brown noddys, as well as seeing some of the early coastal fortifications put in place to see off foreign invaders. As we cruise the western coast of the island, there is a good chance to spot dolphins playing in the water, as numerous pan-tropical dolphins swim in these waters, as well as small numbers of bottlenose and rough-toothed dolphins. This afternoon we visit Rupert's Valley, known for its coastal fortification and links to the slave trade. In 1833 the British Empire abolished slavery, but at that time it still existed in the United States of America. In an effort to suppress the trans-Atlantic slave trade, a naval station was deployed on St Helena and many ships were subsequently intercepted, with thousands of liberated slaves being brought to the island to recover. Sadly the conditions on the ships were so appalling that many were already dead, or dying when they were rescued, so Rupert's Bay is now the site of mass graves. It is estimated that St Helena liberated nearly 25,000

slaves, some of whom decided to stay on the island to work and make a life in St Helena.



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Morning visit to Plantation House, afternoon walk along western St Helena

The official home of the Governor of St Helena, Plantation House is a beautiful 18th Century mansion. Built in the style of a colonial summer house, its sashed and shuttered windows look out onto extensive gardens habituated by Jonathan the roaming tortoise, and its 24 rooms contain a wealth of period furniture, memorabilia and a considerable amount of history from over the years. We spend time exploring this former governor's residence with the house's expert guide. This afternoon we set off west, stopping for a packed lunch en-route. Our afternoon walk hugs the coastline along the peaceful and isolated western part of the island, and ends at the South West Point looking out to Speary Island and the vast South Atlantic Ocean beyond. The walk will be a total of 8kms, which we anticipate to take us around four hours of gently undulating terrain.



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Morning exploring the eastern side, including Deadwood Plain. Afternoon visit to High Knoll Fort

This morning we drive out to Deadwood Plain, the site of one of the largest Boer camps on island. From 1900-1902, St Helena was selected to host nearly 6,000 Boer prisoners of war. Many of these were based in large encampments on Deadwood Plain, although once they were established many were given jobs around the island, with some of them even moving in with the locals to act as servants and maids! Deadwood Plain is also the main habitat of the island's only endemic land bird, the St Helena Plover, or 'Wirebird' as it is known locally. Prior to human occupation St Helena was home to 9 endemic birds, but since goats and other outsiders were brought to the island, many of the endemic plants and wildlife were wiped out, with the endangered Wirebird the only unique land species left. We drive across the plain where there will be a very good chance of spotting the bird with the help of our National Trust guide. During the late 18th and early 19th Century, St Helena became a site for a series of conservational experimentation, with extensive reforestation of endemic plants, and attempts were made to boost rainfall artificially. This intervention has been closely linked with establishing the roots of environmentalism, and this afternoon we visit Millennium Forest, where trees are being planted to re-establish an ancient forest. Here, we join the cause and have the opportunity to plant a tree of our own, personally helping to revive St Helena's ancient forests. After lunch we visit High Knoll Fort, the largest military installation on St Helena, and at 584 metres it is a prominent feature as you travel around the island. The fort is substantial in size with wells, living quarters, stables and of course, a number of gun emplacements. Ironically, the fort never had the chance to fulfil its purpose as since its construction St Helena was never invaded. Aside from housing some of the more unruly Boer War prisoners, it has remained unused, acting only as a deterrent, and now, a place of interest.



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 7 - Morning walk in the central peaks with lunch at Ladder Hill. Afternoon free.

This morning we set off for a walk to 'Central Peak', located in the island's lush forested interior. There is a good opportunity to spot some of the island's endemic plants, such as cabbage trees, tree ferns, and we hope to see the tiny blushing snail, found only on St Helena and the Ascension Islands. We climb up to the highest point on the island (823 metres), and if the weather is clear we will experience sweeping views of the island below, with most of the landmarks visible from the peak. Please note some sections of this walk are fairly steep, and the terrain can be slippery if wet or misty. The walk is around five kilometres in length, and we anticipate it to take around four hours. We end the walk with lunch at Ladder Hill. The rest of the afternoon is free to relax or further explore the island.



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 8 - Morning discovering Napoleonic sites including his original tomb. Afternoon free to visit Jamestown museum.

After his defeat in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, St Helena was chosen as the place of exile for Napoleon Bonaparte, appearing a much more isolated location than the Isle of Elba, from which he escaped from one year previous. He arrived on the island later that year, and lived out his final years on the island, dying in 1821 at the age of 51. He spent his first few months at Briar's Pavilion, before moving into Longwood house where he remained until his death. It was Napoleon's wish that his remains be brought back to France to be buried on the banks of the Seine, but this was refused, with the then Governor stating that he should be buried in the Valley of the Willows, St Helena. In 1840 however, the French obtained permission from the British government to return Napoleon's remains to France, where they now rest in Les Invalides, Paris. This morning we immerse ourselves in the fascinating last years of the great Emperor's life, visiting both of his residences and his tomb in the peaceful Valley of the Willows. This afternoon has been left free to explore Jamestown, a visit to the Jamestown museum is highly recommended. The museum does an excellent job in charting St Helena's 300+ year history with its collection of informative and visual displays.



Accommodation: Mantis St Helena (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Free morning in Jamestown before flying to Johannesburg. Check-in to hotel.

After a leisurely morning we make our way to the airport for our return flight to Johannesburg, transiting via Windhoek. We'll check into our hotel in Johannesburg, where the rest of the evening is free after the long day of travelling.



Accommodation: Aero Guest Lodge (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Free day in Johannesburg with late afternoon transfer to airport. Trip ends in Johannesburg

Today has been left free in Johannesburg, with a number of optional excursions available. The trip ends this evening in Johannesburg.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Why book this trip

Having never visited St Helena before, this trip will be run in the form of a 'recce tour' where we will explore the island together, and where your feedback will be used to help shape a group trip to be launched later in 2018. This trip is ideal for those who love remote and isolated locations; St Helena only received a mobile network in 2016! Its rugged coastlines and forested interior lends itself for those who enjoy walking and the great outdoors, and its historical role within the empire provides plenty for those interested in history. Please note certain elements of the itinerary are still being finalised and the exact running order of excursions and days may be tweaked to maximise your experience.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 9
Lunch: 2



Transport

Bus
4WD
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel
2 nights standard lodge

Trip information

Country information

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

A light raincoat is recommended, along with trail shoes or walking boots for the various walks on the island, as the terrain can be slippery when wet. The temperature generally hovers around 20-25 degrees centigrade but it can drop at night, so a fleece or jumper is advisable. Whilst there are no beaches, there may be opportunities to swim on the boat trips so packing swimwear is recommended.

Footwear

Trail shoes or walking boots are recommended for the walks.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own baggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We recommend you bring a sunhat and sunscreen as the sun can be strong. A water bottle is essential. A torch, travel towel and an umbrella may come in useful. You may wish to consider walking poles for the various walks available on the island.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

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

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Flight

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](#)

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.
