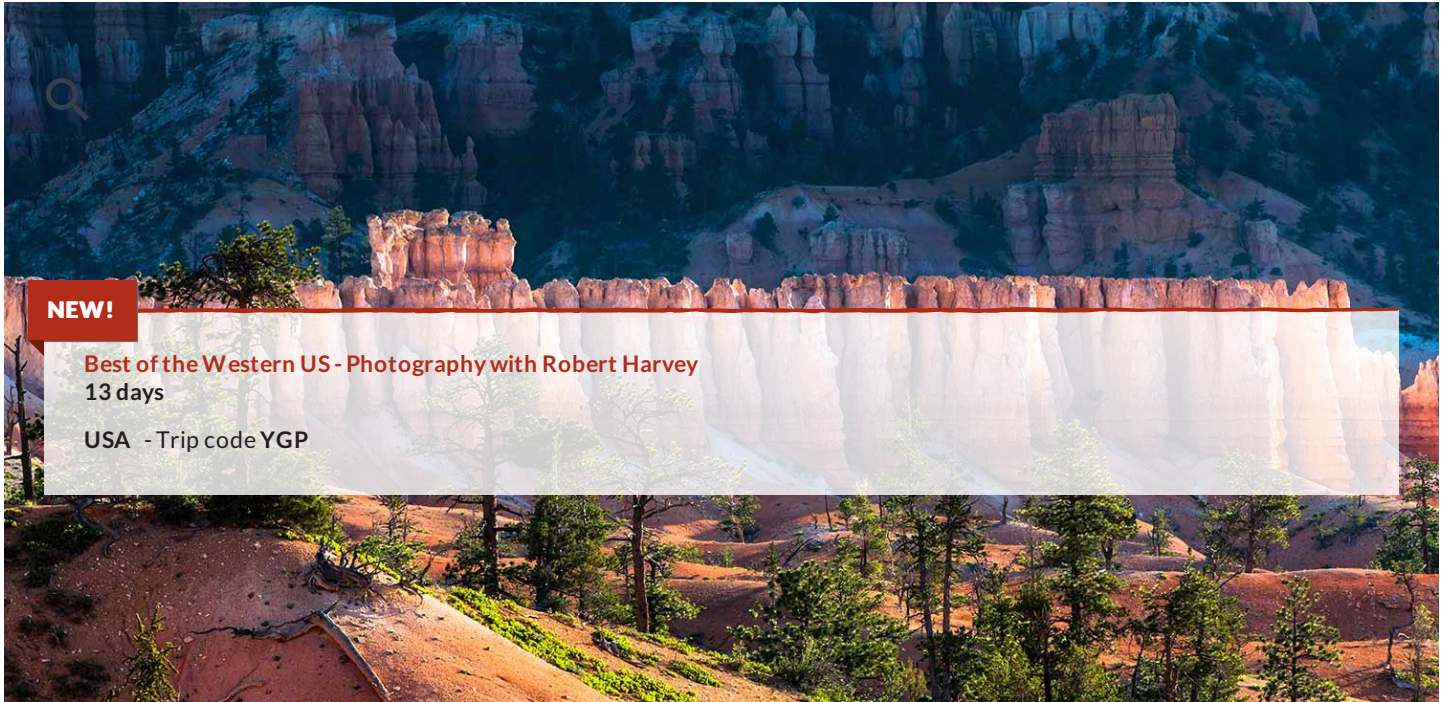


EXPLORE!



NEW!

Best of the Western US - Photography with Robert Harvey
13 days

USA - Trip code YGP

Best of the Western US - Photography with Robert Harvey

This trip is a great way to see and photograph America's vast landscapes with professional photographer Robert Harvey. Organised to maximise photo opportunities, Robert will be on hand to assist in getting the best images possible of this fabulously photogenic destination. Walk among the red rock hoodoos of Bryce Canyon, capture the sunrise over the iconic formations in Arches National Park and discover the sweeping views across one of the world's greatest natural wonders - the Grand Canyon. Also organised within the trip are various opportunities for astrophotography, with a chance to capture the magical night sky over these remarkable national parks. We've planned this trip over the moon phases, so the low light in Bryce and Arches National Parks will give us the best possible chance of seeing the milky way stretching across the sky.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Grand Canyon** - Walk on the Kaibab Trail and photograph sunset over the Grand Canyon
- ★ **Monument Valley** - Survey the iconic and majestic vistas of Monument Valley and the surrounding Navajo Lands
- ★ **Astrophotography** - Photograph a sea of stars over the red rock formations of Bryce Canyon and Arches National Park
- ★ **Las Vegas** - Take in the madness of America's wild and extravagant playground
- ★ **Robert Harvey** - Capture stunning images with advice, assistance and support from an expert photographer

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:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

8 - 12

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 trip in Las Vegas

Join the tour in Las Vegas and check-in at the hotel. At the turn of the 1900's this glitzy city barely existed, but today it is home to over a million people and boasts 14 of the 15 largest hotels in the world. It is an enigmatic place, where replica Egyptian Pyramids and Arthurian Castles share the desert haze with Venice, Paris and the New York skyline.



Accommodation: Stratosphere Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Drive to Zion National Park; explore the Watchman's Trail

We head straight out of Vegas on our 3 hour drive to Zion National Park, the first natural gem on our trip where huge hanging gardens and meandering waterways have created an oasis in the desert. The position of the park, at the meeting of the Colorado Plateau, the Great Basin and the Mohave Desert means the region is rich in a vast diversity of flora and fauna that range from desert bush to Ponderosa Pine, cottonwood to red birch.

We'll spend the afternoon exploring Zion Canyon, amid red rock pinnacles and massive sandstone cliffs that dominate the skyline, taking in many of the classic viewpoints such as the Court of Patriarchs and the Temple of Sinawava. Photographic opportunities are plentiful, with a great contrast between the red of the rocks and the running rivers that we'll pass. It's important to remember that in November there may be snow on the ground throughout the majority of national parks on this trip, which will add something extra special to your photos.

Tonight, we will be staying in nearby Springdale.



Accommodation: La Quinta Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 3 - Sunrise in Zion; drive to Bryce Canyon; walk among the hoodoos

We'll take in the sunrise at the Towers of the Virgin this morning, capturing the reddish hues that appear over the rock formations as the sun comes up. Shortly afterwards we drive to Bryce Canyon, which will undoubtedly be one of the natural highlights of the journey. Named after a Mormon settler by the name of Ebenezer Bryce, who memorably declared it a 'helluva place to lose a cow', Bryce Canyon is a multihued amphitheatre of surreal sculpted rocks which resemble petrified animals or historic figures. Steeped in the history of the Paiute tribe, legend has it that these sandstone hoodoos of Bryce are in fact the petrified followers of the Coyote God, turned to stone as they stood listening to his angry tirade.

This afternoon we will explore something of the myriad colours and shapes of this fairytale realm, by undertaking some easy hikes in the area. Assisted by our photographer, Robert, we will be able to take some outstanding photographs of the pink, orange and red spires that are so iconic to the park.

Later tonight we'll come back into the park where we'll attempt some astrophotography. If the weather is right, the stars will look magical over the eerie hoodoos.



Accommodation: Ruby's Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 4 - Sunrise in Bryce Canyon; drive Scenic Byway 12 towards Capitol Reef National Park

This morning we see Bryce at its most radiant, in the golden hues of sunrise as we watch the dawn break across the landscape.

In the afternoon we drive across Scenic Byway 12, a 122 mile stretch of spectacular road that carves its way through the rugged and varied landscape linking Bryce Canyon to Capitol Reef National Park. There are plenty of photographic opportunities along this road, and we'll spend most of the day exploring the twisting canyons, forests and vast cliffs that line the route. We'll spend time this afternoon at Grand-Staircase Escalante Monument, a giant set of sedimentary rock plateaus that descend all the way to the Grand Canyon. This outstanding natural formation is millions of years old and its colourful layers are ripe for photographing. We will be at the enigmatic Escalante Devil's Garden at sunset.

We'll arrive into Capitol Reef in the evening.



Accommodation: The Noor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 5 - Head to Arches National Park; view sunset at Balanced Rock

Capitol Reef National Park encompasses a landscape of coloured sandstone cliffs, canyons, petroglyphs and spires, and we'll walk among these formations in the morning before driving the approximately 2 hour journey to Moab, the largest town in south-eastern Utah and the gateway to Arches National Park.

With over 1600 rock formations, Arches National Park is home to the world's largest concentration of natural sandstone arches, all sculpted over the years by wind, sun, frost and rain which create a strange rockscape in the desert. In the afternoon they take on a fiery glow in the low light, and we will explore the Devil's Garden area with a walk to Landscape Arch. We'll watch the sunset over the aptly-named Balanced Rock, capturing the glow of the land as the sun goes down.



Accommodation: Moab Rustic Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 6 - See sunrise over Mesa Arch; astrophotography in Arches National Park

We'll have a very early start this morning to drive (only 30 minutes) to the neighbouring Canyonlands National Park for sunrise. Canyonlands is home to the famous Mesa Arch, and sunrise is pretty amazing here, as the arch frames the backdrop of sandstone formations being lit up by the sun's warming rays.

We'll have the afternoon free to relax in Moab before going back into Arches National Park in the late afternoon. Probably one of the most photographed arches in the American southwest, Delicate Arch, with its backdrop of the snow-capped peaks of La Sal,

provides the perfect setting for our late afternoon hike. It is a relatively strenuous uphill climb of about 1 hour, but the payoff is worth it - Delicate Arch has become Utah's symbol, and seems to defy gravity as the large precariously-balanced boulders hover near the edge of a cliff. We are going to stay out in the park after sunset and try our hand at capturing the stars over the photogenic arches. We've planned the trip around the moon phases, so a waning moon in Arches should give us a good chance of seeing the Milky Way.



Accommodation: Moab Rustic Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 7 - Visit Monument Valley with a Navajo guide; desert photography

After watching the sun come up over Turret Arch this morning, we will then drive to the biggest indigenous reservation in the country, the Navajo Reservation, which was founded in 1888 to provide a protected region for the Navajo people.

Monument Valley lies within this vast area and has featured as a backdrop to many Westerns and other Hollywood productions, including Forrest Gump, Thelma and Louise and Wild Wild West. This is the classic wild west landscape. However, familiarity does not prepare you for this amazing spectacle. Pinnacles and towers rocket skywards from the desert floor and the warm embrace of sunset colours alters the landscape's appearance daily.

We'll take a guided jeep tour of the valley with a Navajo guide, affording a closer exploration of this compelling place and certainly many opportunities to take some great shots.



Accommodation: Kayenta Monument Valley Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 8 - Drive to Page; visit the famous Antelope Canyon

This morning we drive to Page, where we'll spend time in Antelope Canyon, a beautiful, peach-gold coloured, sandstone slot canyon formed by the force of flash floods coming from the plains above. Being inside the canyon is totally surreal, with the light hitting the walls at angles and disorienting its visitors.

The rest of the afternoon is free to relax. Our hotel is approximately a 30 minute walk from a viewpoint over the Glen Canyon Dam, which is worth a visit if time permits, for views of the enormous dam presiding over Lake Powell.



Accommodation: Quality Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 9 - Capture Horseshoe Bend at sunrise; boat trip on Lake Powell to Rainbow Bridge

One of the most iconic locations in the Page area is Horseshoe Bend, and we'll be taking in the sunrise over the eponymous river bend this morning before heading back to the main town.

The rest of the day is spent exploring Lake Powell, which boasts a shoreline length of an incredible 1950 miles - longer than the western coast of the United States. The lake is the second largest man-made lake in the USA and is one of the most scenic lakes in the world. It is also one of the most surreal landscapes imaginable, with more than 96 major canyons, tranquil blue waters and red sandstone buttes lining its edges. We'll take a boat trip on the lake to the Rainbow Bridge National Monument, an enormous sandstone arch that is widely considered the world's largest natural bridge.



Accommodation: Quality Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 10 - Drive to the Grand Canyon; explore the canyon on the South Kaibab Trail

Leaving Lake Powell behind, we drive towards the southern rim of the Grand Canyon. Once described by Theodore Roosevelt as 'the one great sight every American should see', the canyon extends some 277 miles from east to west, from the western edge of the Navajo Reservation, to the Nevada border. Reaching a depth of 1600m the canyon's floor is littered with some of the oldest rocks on the planet and as we take in the views, we gaze out across a land that has taken over 2 billion years to create.

We'll be walking along the South Kaibab Trail this afternoon, a hike that gives us some of the most secluded and spectacular viewpoints of the Grand Canyon, rather than remaining at the overlooks which can get a little crowded. The trail's total length is 24km but we'll just do a short section of it to give us plenty of photo time.



Accommodation: Red Feather Lodge (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 11 - Free day at the Grand Canyon; optional helicopter flight

Today we have a full free day at the Grand Canyon to enjoy and take your time getting to know this dramatic landmark. Robert is on hand to head back into the canyon with your camera equipment if you'd like to continue snapping photos. Alternatively, take on one of the canyon's many hiking trails, or opt to go all out and experience the full majesty from the canyon with a helicopter flight.



Accommodation: Red Feather Lodge (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 12 - Drive along Route 66 to Las Vegas

This morning we leave the Grand Canyon behind and head back to the bright lights of Vegas. We travel along the historic Route 66, a road that during its lifetime has been called the 'Main Street of America' and the 'Mother Road'. Over 200,000 people travelled this route during the 1930s to escape the Dust Bowl of the Depression years and hopefully find a new life in California. A shadow of its former self, the road nonetheless is rich in Americana and its architecture still affords us a rare insight into a time long past.

If travel is to experience, then Las Vegas will not fail to impress or amaze. From the bizarre to the tacky, there is always something to grab your attention. In front of the Mirage hotel you can witness a live volcano eruption; see dancing fountains and a magical water light show in front of the Bellagio, walk around a recreation of Venice at the Venetian or climb to the top of the half-size recreation of Gustave's Eiffel Tower.

There may be the opportunity this evening to get some night shots of this most excessive of cities, as we enjoy our last evening in the USA.



Accommodation: Stratosphere Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 13 - End trip in Las Vegas

The trip ends in Las Vegas this morning. It's a great place to stay another night or two if you'd like to visit some of the casinos or see a show before departing.

 Meals Provided: None

Why book this trip

Organised to maximise photo opportunities, Robert will be on hand to pass on tips and advice on how to take great pictures. The trip is aimed at the keen amateur photographer who wishes to spend more time at a location than on normal trips. However, if you'd like to explore more you will also be accompanied by an experienced local Tour Leader who will help you get the most out of your trip.

What's included?



Transport

Boat
Maxiwagon



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver



Accommodation

2 nights premium hotel
10 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

USA

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

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Grand Canyon - Helicopter overflight approximately US\$ 254-284
Las Vegas - Limousine ride US\$ 40 per person

Clothing

The national parks in November will be cold, particularly before or after sunrise/sunset where temperatures will be in the minus numbers. Make sure you bring some warm layers including a fleece, thick jacket, woolly hat and gloves. During the day, layers are essential as temperatures can vary between around 0-15 degrees celsius. We recommend long sleeve shirts and trousers and sunglasses for both snow and sun. A waterproof jacket and swimwear are also useful.

Footwear

Lightweight walking/hiking boots with good ankle support, trainers and/or sandals for travelling (ones that can get wet).

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Bring only the bare essentials - one main bag plus a small daysack for walking, plus a camera bag if necessary. Main luggage cannot be accessed during the day. Soft luggage is more practical as it is stored in the trailer during travel. Bring plastic bags to keep things dry.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle (1-2 litre capacity), high factor sunblock, plastic bags/dry bags to keep things dry and a (head) torch and a towel. You may find a walking pole useful. A thermos flask would be a good addition, in order to take hot drinks out with you on your night photography trips.

In terms of camera equipment, we recommend the following to make the most of the photographic opportunities on this tour:

Camera - A DSLR or mirrorless camera is recommended. Alternatively any camera that allows you some manual control (aperture priority, shutter priority etc) would be suitable for this trip.

Lenses - If you own a number of lenses, a selection ranging from wide angle to short telephoto would be recommended. A fast lens for astrophotography would also be useful.

Tripod - A lightweight travel tripod is recommended particularly for shooting in low light

Remote cable release (if you own one. The timer on your camera can also fulfil this function)

Manual for your camera

Neutral density and polarising filters (optional)

Spare memory cards

Chargerpare battery

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

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.

Country Information

USA

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

Boat, Maxiwagon

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport Information

When travelling to the USA, you will need the following:

ESTA - Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia and passport holders from several EU countries can apply for an ESTA here - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> - you must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information. If you have visited Libya, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen since March 2011, or dual national of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA. In this case you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US embassy or consulate.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. This will be provided in your final documentation, which you will receive 3-4 weeks before departure. Explore's USA contact information will be listed as the first nights' hotel in the US. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information.

ETA - only if transiting via Canada

Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia and passport holders from several EU countries can apply for an ETA here - <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> - other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

USA

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
