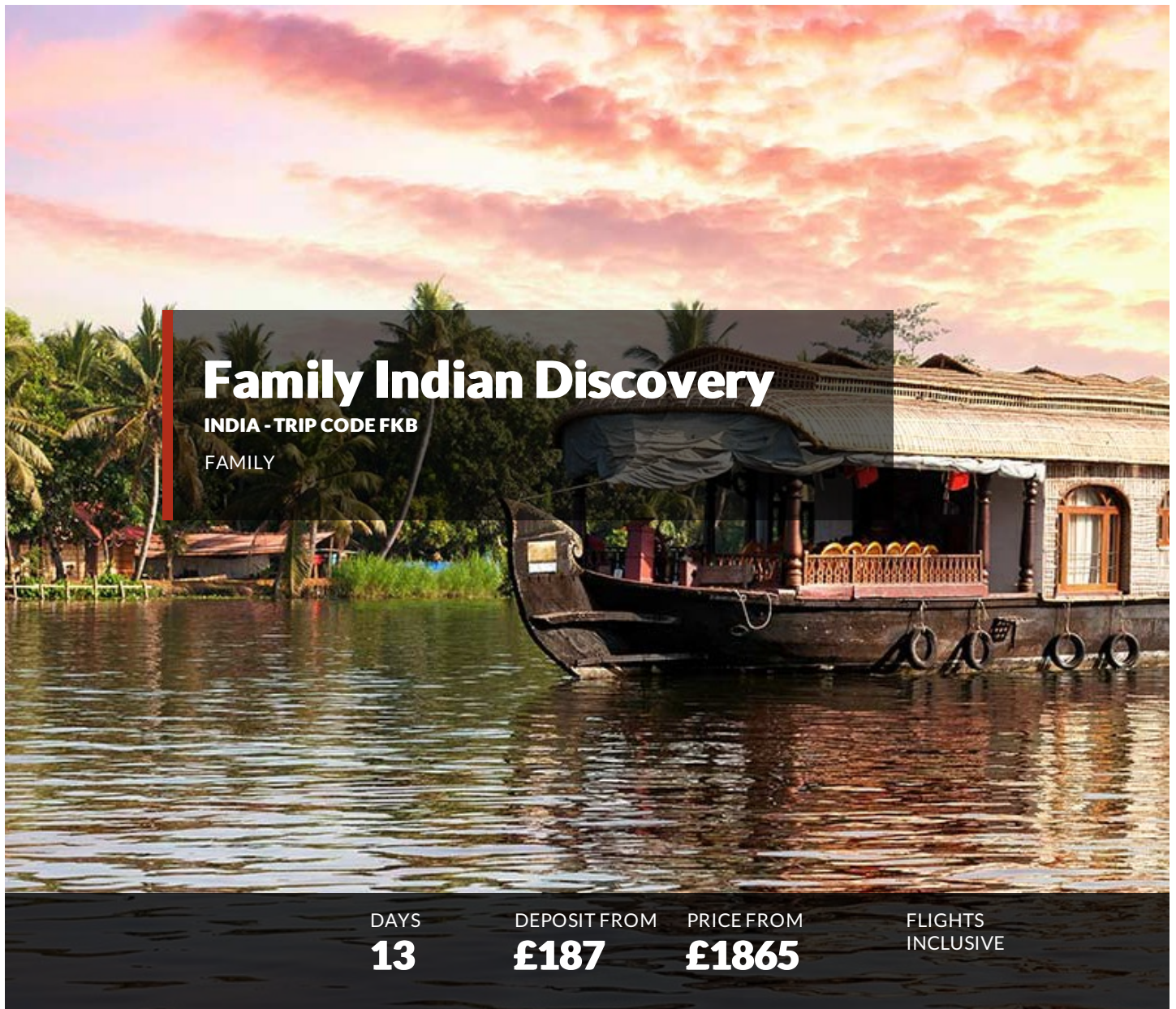


EXPLORE!



Family Indian Discovery

INDIA - TRIP CODE FKB

FAMILY

DAYS

13

DEPOSIT FROM

£187

PRICE FROM

£1865

FLIGHTS
INCLUSIVE

Why book this trip?

Combine north and south India in this two week fascinating introduction as we visit the magnificent Taj Mahal, explore a hilltop fortress and discover the grand monuments of Delhi in the north and cruising along the backwaters in tropical Kerala in the south. Spend a night at a homestay where we get to cook up a fragrant curry using local ingredients, hire bikes and explore ornate temples, kick back and relax on a houseboat, cruising the backwaters of Kerala and end the trip with two days relaxing on the stunning Indian Ocean.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 5
Dinner: 5

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

TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Flight
Rickshaw

ACCOMMODATION
1 nights simple boat
2 nights simple homestay
7 nights standard hotel
2 nights premium hotel

TRIP PACE:
Moderate

GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Arrive in Delhi with city tour of New Delhi

Arrive in Delhi and check in to our hotel. New Delhi was the creation of the British Raj of the 1930's and our afternoon tour includes; Qutab Minar, the tallest stone tower in India and Humayun's Tomb, the first example of an architectural design of the Mughal Dynasty. We also drive past the imposing India Gate (War Memorial Arch), the Parliament buildings and the Rashtrapati Bhawan (the President's residence). India's capital is a bustling metropolis which successfully combines the ancient with the modern. Amidst the tall and modern skyscrapers, there are still the remnants of a bygone time with numerous monuments and temples.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel The Hans (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Travel to Agra and visit its Fort plus sunset at the Taj Mahal

We drive to the Mughal city of Agra (around 4 hour's drive) known to the world as the city of the 'Taj Mahal'. Agra is still associated with the Mughals, who besides being the countries rulers were also great builders. Agra Fort, which is the seat and the stronghold of the Mughal Empire, is a vivid reminder of the opulence and makes Agra one of the most remarkable cities in India.

Late this afternoon we proceed with a sunset visit of the world-renowned Taj Mahal - The legendary Taj Mahal is celebrated for its architectural magnificence and aesthetic beauty. Emperor Shah Jahan built this exquisite white marble mausoleum for his favourite queen, Mumtaz Mahal, commissioned in 1631, it took 20,000 artisans 22 years to complete. Watching the sun set over this great monument is a wonderful way of watching the fading light illuminating the contours of this 'dream in marble'. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the Taj Mahal has always evoked varying emotions from wonder to poetic verse and over the centuries has become a symbol of love and flawless beauty.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Amar (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Keoladeo Ghana National Park and onto Jaipur

This morning we drive to the Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Bharatpur. The National Park was originally called Ghana which means dense forest and is now named after the Keoladeo Shiva temple in the centre of the park. Initially a Maharaja's hunting estate built in 1956, it is now a bird sanctuary to some 375 species of birds including egrets, darters, cormorants, herons and painted storks with their colourful beaks and plumage. We are taken on a bird-watching tour by cycle rickshaw and hope to see some of these magnificent animals. Our journey continues on to Jaipur, the vibrant capital of Rajasthan which is renowned for its forts and palaces that have encapsulated an image of the 'Pink City' due to its pink-coloured buildings. An ideal base for touring the royal state, the city has the distinction of being the third jewel of India's 'Golden Triangle'. Its main claim to fame is that it is India's first 'planned' city built by the famous 18th century astronomer King Sawai Jai Singh II.



ACCOMMODATION:
Mandawa Haveli (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 4 - Amber Palace and Fortress

We travel to the ancient capital of Amer to see the fabulous Amber Fort situated on a ridge just outside Jaipur city. The fort is surrounded by fortified battlements with ruins that are spread over the surrounding Aravalli hills. Our visit incorporates the chambers and hallways of the palace, famous for its design and decoration as well as Ganesh Pol, an imposing gateway painted with images of the elephant-headed god, Ganesh. We also stop at the Hawa Mahal (Palace of Winds) - a five-storied wonder with a spectacular pyramidal facade with overhanging windows with latticed screens, domes and spires.

In the afternoon, we visit the City Palace Museum which has a superb collection of Rajasthani costumes, armoury including swords with chiselled handles, an art gallery with an excellent collection of miniature paintings and rare astronomical works. We also see the awe-inspiring Jantar Mantar Observatory, a stone astrological and astronomical observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh in the 18th century.



ACCOMMODATION:
Mandawa Haveli (or similar)

Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 5 - Morning at leisure with flight to Kochi

The morning is free for leisure activities before catching an afternoon flight to Kochi via Mumbai, the commercial capital of Kerala and the most cosmopolitan of the state's cities. Cochin or Kochi has long been praised as the 'Queen of the Arabian Sea'. Strategically located on the east-west sea route, Kochi is Kerala's major port and boasts one of the finest natural harbours in the world.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Bright Heritage (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Drive to Fort Kochi, visit the Mattancherry Palace and watch the famous Kathakali Dancers

We take an auto-rickshaw (3-wheeler automated 'scooter') to Fort Kochi. Fort Kochi is the oldest European settlement in India (built in 1500), and has a mixture of English, Dutch and Portuguese influence. There is time to wander and take in some of the sites including the Chinese fishing nets or wander around the fish market as well as visit the Jewish quarter. Our next stop is Mattancherry Palace, built by the Portuguese in the 16th century and is popularly known as the Dutch Palace. The Palace features Kerala murals, depicting Hindu temple art, portraits and exhibits of the Rajas of Kochi. A blend of colonial and Kerala architecture, it was a gift to the local ruler by the Portuguese in exchange for trading rights. The palace was later renovated by the Dutch and so gained the other name.

This evening see the famous Kathakali dancers. With its origins coming from the traditional temple rituals and an art form known as Koodiyattam, the performers use face makeup which can take up to three hours to paint on and makes this dance so unique within the country. Their features are heavily emphasised with their facial expressions and coordinated eye movements being important within the dance - during our visit, we can see the process of applying the make-up.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Bright Heritage (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Drive to Thekkady, free afternoon

This morning we drive to Thekkady via the meandering roads through the high ranges and past rubber and tea plantations. We should arrive early afternoon; the rest of the day is free.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Grand Thekkady (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Nature trek in Periyar National Park, visit a Tea factory and drive to Chennmkary Village

After breakfast, we drive to Thekkady which is the closest settlement to the Periyar National Park. A stunning setting on the shores of Lake Periyar, it is home to a myriad of wildlife such as elephant, wild pigs, monkey and the flying squirrel. The park also boasts some 260 species of birds including darters, ospreys and kingfishers. We take a guided nature walk in the hope of spotting some of these wild creatures although sightings cannot be guaranteed. The park itself is made up of a variety of habitats including open grasslands and semi-evergreen forests with an abundant number of ferns, orchids and air-plants all making up a beautiful ecosystem with the trail often passing through evergreen forests interspersed with marshy grasslands. We then drive to Chennmkary Village via a visit to a tea factory at Vandeperiyar. The site houses photographs and machines depicting the flourishing tea industry that the region is famous for with an explanation of each stage of the tea making process. When we reach Chennmkary we meet our hosts for the next two days and explore the village.

We will also walk among the seemingly numerous fruit and medicinal plants that surround the village, as well as strolling through banana and coconut plantations. There is also the option to travel by canoe and visit the famous temples of Karumadikuttan, dedicated to Lord Shiva. Accommodation at Chennmkary is spread over several village houses that is simply styled with traditional Kerala furniture. Due to space constraints, families may need to share a room together. The houses are close together, approx. 5-10 minutes walk between them and all have bedding and towels provided. The locals will cook the meals for the group and we all dine together giving the opportunity to understand how they live. The villagers grow their own rice, vegetables, coconuts and spices which are all used in the meals.



ACCOMMODATION:

Gaaby World Homestay (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Free-time to explore Mancombo Village

Today is left free to explore the area with the opportunity to take a stroll through the serene Kerala hamlets and experience the tropical forests filled with the fragrance of medicinal flowers. To cover more expanses you can sail through the interior villages and backwaters in a non-mechanized open canoe to get a chance of experiencing traditional Kerala hamlets.



ACCOMMODATION:

Gaaby World Homestay (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - Drive to Alleppey and board a houseboat to the Kerala Backwaters

This morning we drive to the lively backwater centre of Alleppey where we board our houseboats and begin our relaxing cruise into the network of the Kerala backwaters. Converted from old rice-barges, with walls and roofs of coir, these simple vessels have a number of en-suite rooms and an area to relax and watch riverside life as we go by. On the more open canals, you can see boats with large sails - the bow often carved in the shape of a dragon. These vessels are a lifeline for the villages with a number acting as taxis, mail delivery carriages and goods transport. You may see great pyramids of coconuts or even the odd buffalo being carried along in this time honoured fashion. We plan to stop off at several points of interest en-route including the Chambakulam Saint Foreine Church and Chambakulam Chundan - the famous snake boats. Traditional Kerala cuisine is served on board.



ACCOMMODATION:
Houseboat (or similar)



Grade: Simple Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 11 - Drive to the beach resort of Mararikulam

Disembarking the houseboat, we drive the short journey to the resort in Mararikulam with the rest of the day free to enjoy the relaxing atmosphere and beach activities. Mararikulam is a typical fishing village which is located on the southwest coast of Central Kerala and offers an unblemished and pristine shoreline, swaying coconut palms, thatched huts and a view point to watch the striking sunsets.



ACCOMMODATION:
Abad Turtle Beach Resort (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Day at the resort of Mararikulam

Free day at resort.



ACCOMMODATION:
Abad Turtle Beach Resort (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Tour ends Mararikulam

Our tours ends this morning after breakfast.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

India

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

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.

Kochi - Harbour Cruise £18.00 per boat (for one hour).

Kanyakumari - (tip of India) £8.00.

Clothing

Bear in mind that the area is tropical with high humidity. Lightweights are needed all year round with some warmer clothes (i.e. fleece and long trousers) for the cooler winter evenings (November to March) in Vanilla County. Bring a swimming costume for the beaches. Please note that for visits to temples and city sightseeing, tight fitting sleeveless t-shirts, brief or tight shorts and miniskirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention.

Footwear

Walking shoes or trainers and sandals.

Luggage

15Kg

Luggage: On tour

Please bring one main piece of baggage and a daysac. Remember - hotel porters are not always available, so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Binoculars, torch, insect repellent and water bottle.

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

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized 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. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders 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 £35 per person.

International Departure Taxes

Airport departure tax: as from 01 March 2011, a new departure tax will be applicable for all flights departing from Trivandrum International Airport. A tax of INR575 will now need to be paid at the airport before you join your onward flight.

India

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6	£8	£1.4	£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Indian Rupee Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been brought 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, Boat, Flight, Rickshaw

Accommodation notes

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

Family swimming

The hotels in Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Kochion and Mararikulam have swimming pools

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

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 £30 + 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.

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.

Ability to swim

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

India

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. 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.

Family Information

This trip allows the option for triple rooms to be included within the booking on a selected number of night stops within the holiday. If you would like this option, a discount may be applicable on the cost of the trip - please ask our Sales team for further information.



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**