

Welcome to **tucantravel's** Latin America & Antarctica

Our pre-departure information has been carefully compiled to help you prepare for your tour in the best possible way and to minimise any inconveniences you may experience on tour.

Experienced travellers may already be familiar with many of the topics covered in this booklet, yet proper preparation is what transforms a good time into a fantastic time!

In addition to familiarising yourself with this information, please read our brochure and website (www.tucantravel.com), and download your relevant tour dossier and country dossier(s). You should also read our booking conditions carefully; they can be found in the back of the brochure and on our website. We take great care to compile the latest information and update all of our documents regularly. However, it is important to realise that things can and do change at short notice (and if this happens we cannot be held responsible).

Your Tucan Travel tour will bring you into contact with cultures and experiences which may contrast dramatically with those at home. Being prepared will help you to adjust to this, but there will always be times when it is best to simply relax and go with the flow. Events will often move at their own pace and may occasionally be frustrating, but this is all part of your travel experience. The most important thing on your packing list should be a good sense of humour!

Important Note: If you are leaving home well in advance of the start date of your tour, please advise us or your travel consultant of a contact email or postal address in case of any last minute changes to your tour. As our dossiers are updated regularly we recommend you download the latest version just prior to the start of your tour. It is also a good idea to check the Latest News on our website www.tucantravel.com.

Contents

PART ONE - before you leave home	2
Payments	2
Documents (inc. passports, visas, insurance)	2
Health, fitness & safety	4
Money (inc. spending money & budgeting)	6
What to take (inc. luggage checklist)	9
PART TWO - arrival	11
Arriving at the airport, transfers, taxis, arrival at the hotel, pre-departure meeting, arrival & departure days, missing the tour departure, punctuality, city tours/orientation walks	
PART THREE - general information	13
Keeping in touch, contacts, the local people, Climate, environmentally friendly tips, shopping tips, questionnaires, Illegal drugs, flight reconfirmation, onward travel, suggested reading	
PART FOUR - travel styles	
Discovery Tours	16
Adventure Tours	17
Overland Expeditions	18
Budget Expeditions	23
Independent Travel	24
Expedition Cruises	26

PART ONE - before you leave home

PAYMENTS

Outstanding balance

Full payment must be received no later than 60 days prior to the start of your tour as failure to do this may result in loss of deposit and any other monies already paid. It is important that you inform us of the following at least 60 days prior to departure (or at the time of booking if within 60 days):

- Passport number, date of issue, date of expiry, nationality & place of issue,
- Your full name and date of birth
- Flight arrival details in your starting city (and your departure details if you have them).
- Any special requirements e.g. special dietary requirements or allergies.

Please let us know if you are travelling with another person on the tour but have made separate bookings so that we can make suitable rooming arrangements (where possible).

Local payment

Applies to Discovery Tours, Adventure Tours, and Overland Expeditions.

The cost of these Tucan Travel Discovery Tours, Adventure Tours and Overland Expeditions includes a compulsory local payment, which is in addition to the price you pay to your travel consultant. The local payment is payable to your tour leader in full at the pre-departure meeting on the first day of your tour. It must be paid in US dollars cash (Euros in Cuba). This is a fixed amount and makes up the complete price of your tour. The local payment is administered by our tour leaders and no refunds can be made for any unused services or if you decide to leave the tour early.

Why do we have a local payment?

The local payment forms a part of the total tour cost (for Discovery Tours, Adventure Tours and Overland Expeditions only) and ensures our tour leaders have a supply of money on tour, access to banking facilities can be limited or nonexistent, and at times the transferral of funds can be problematic. The local payment, in conjunction with the tour price you pay your travel consultant, is used to finance the tour expenses paid by your tour leader along the way.

Please note: This amount **MUST** be paid to your tour leader **BEFORE** departing the joining hotel. Please remember the local payment is a non-refundable amount and a component of the total tour cost.

Local fund

Applies to Budget Expeditions only.

The cost of Tucan Travel Budget Expeditions tours includes a compulsory local fund, which is in addition to the price you pay to your travel consultant (see our website for exact amount). The local fund is payable to your tour leader in full in US\$ dollars cash at the group meeting on the first day of your tour. The local fund covers many of the expenses that you will do as a group, leaving you free to choose your own individual options according to your personal taste and budget.

In general your local fund will cover:

- Meals while camping and some lunches on travel days on the expedition vehicle
- Campsite fees and cooking gas
- Hotels and hostels when staying in towns/cities (and possibly lodges if bad weather on camping days)
- National park entrance fees when visited in the expedition vehicle

We have tried to estimate these costs before the tour starts, but there may be times when prices increase and we are forced to ask you for an additional contribution to cover the extra costs (although this is not a common occurrence). Your tour leader will manage the local fund and keep individual accounts, so you have the option to keep your costs down (e.g. by using multiple share accommodation rather than twin share, wherever available). When you finish your tour, any cash left over from your local fund will be refunded to you.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Local payments are **NOT** the same as local funds. The local fund applies **ONLY** to tours in

the Budget Expeditions travel style. Local payments apply to ALL OTHER group tours. You will pay EITHER a Local payment OR a local fund depending on your travel style, NOT both.

DOCUMENTS

Tucan Travel can accept no responsibility for any client who is refused entry to a country because they lack the correct documentation.

Your passport

Your passport should be valid for at least six months after you have finished your tour. You should have at least one blank page for every country to be visited, as some visas and entry and exit stamps can take up a whole page.

Before starting your tour, it is very important to take 2 photocopies of the information pages of your passport (including visas for your tour) and your travel insurance policy. Keep one set with you (in a different place to the originals) and give the other set of copies to your tour leader at the start of your tour. On the reverse side of the passport copy, please write the contact name and address of your next of kin.

Your passport is your most valuable document. It should always be carried under your clothing in a small cotton pouch or money belt when travelling. NEVER store your passport in any part of your luggage. In cities, we suggest that you leave your passport in the hotel safe (unless you need it to change travellers cheques etc) and carry a photocopy of it as identification. Sometimes there is a small charge to use the hotel safe. Tucan Travel accepts no responsibility for money, passports or other valuables left in safe deposit boxes in our hotels or vehicles.

In some countries you will need to show your passport at police controls, when checking into hotels, buying airline tickets, changing money etc. If you lose your passport you must report it at once to your tour leader, the local police and the nearest embassy or consulate of your home country. Please remember that if your passport is lost, it can sometimes take up to a week to replace. You will also be responsible for any expenses incurred (e.g. extra accommodation and transportation) while replacing your passport and will not be entitled for a refund of any unused portion of your tour.

Travel documents and tour vouchers

Once you have booked your tour you will be issued with a confirmation invoice from Tucan Travel or your travel consultant. Please ensure that all of the services (including any extra accommodation or transfers) for which you have paid are shown and that all names have been spelt correctly. Our staff can only provide the services detailed on your travel documents.

Once you have paid in full you will be issued with vouchers for these services along with a joining map and joining letter. You should also receive a copy of your tour dossier and relevant country dossier(s) from your travel consultant. Alternatively these can be downloaded from our website at www.tucantravel.com. As our dossiers are updated regularly we recommend you check our website for the latest version just prior to the start of your tour. If you do not receive these documents, or cannot download them, please contact Tucan Travel or your travel consultant.

Visas

All countries have their own visa requirements, which may change at short notice. A guideline visa chart can be found on our website, but you must check with your local embassy or consulate for the very latest information for your nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have all necessary visas for your travels.

Try to obtain your visas before departing from your home country, as some countries can be awkward about issuing visas to those temporarily resident in other countries. Be very cautious about applying for visas by mail. Postal applications tend to be given the lowest priority and some consulates have a huge backlog of these applications. If you make an application by mail, we recommend that you send your passport and fee by registered mail. If there is no representation in your home country for a particular visa, then normally it is best to use a visa service (see below).

Please note: if you have dual nationality and travel on two passports it is NOT advisable to obtain visas in different passports. Although this may sometimes be cheaper, you may encounter problems at border crossings if your exit stamps from one country are not in the same passport as your visa for the next.

Make sure that the validity of each visa covers you for the dates that you will be visiting the country (see your tour Dossier for a day by day itinerary). 'Double' or 'multiple' entry visas are required for some of our tours if you are leaving and then re-entering the same country again. Apply for your visas in the same order as the countries are visited, so the visas do not expire beforehand! If you need a visa for the country in which the tour commences, you MUST obtain that visa BEFORE arrival.

Most visas are only valid for entry within 3 months of the date of issue. On some of our longer tours this may mean that the visa expires before you can enter the country. In these cases the only alternative is to obtain the relevant visas during your tour (this applies to long tours only). If it is necessary for you to obtain any visas en-route, please contact Tucan Travel or your travel consultant to check that it will be possible to do this and inform your tour leader at the start of the tour. You should be aware that while many consulates will issue visas in 24 hours, some applications can take several days. It is therefore important to allow sufficient time as consulates are normally closed on weekends and national holidays. Bring 2 passport photos (in case these are required), for each visa you still need plus photocopies of both your credit card (for proof of funds) and airline ticket. Visas are at your own expense and Tucan Travel cannot be held responsible for delay or refusal of a visa or entry into any country (although these are both very rare). If you do not have the appropriate visa Tucan Travel will not reimburse any expenses incurred in acquiring visas or any unused portion of the tour.

Some immigration departments and consulates require proof that you will be departing the country before they will issue a visa or permit entry into their country. Your tour voucher plus your return airline ticket is usually sufficient. They may also ask to see your travel itinerary, which you will find in your Tour Dossier.

Check your visa when it has been issued. It is your responsibility to ensure that your visas are correct. If you applied for a multi-entry visa check to make sure one has been issued. Possession of a visa does not necessarily guarantee your entry into a country. The final decision rests with the immigration official to whom you present your passport upon arrival.

Visa services

Many travellers find it beneficial to use a specialist visa service. These businesses obtain visas every day and build up good working relationships with the various embassies and consulates enabling them to obtain visas more quickly than individuals. If you need a visa for a country that is not represented in your home country or if the embassy is many hours away from your local town, a visa service can be invaluable. They charge for their services but you should weigh the costs up against the convenience and time it will save you. Please contact your travel consultant for details of a suitable visa service.

Travel insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all tours. You must be adequately insured for medical, hospital, baggage and personal expenses, any necessary extra travel (rejoining tour or repatriation) as well as curtailment and cancellation. Please note that insurance provided by standard credit cards does not provide adequate cover. However policies purchased through credit card companies or provided to gold or platinum card holders may be acceptable. You must satisfy yourself that your policy covers medical emergencies resulting from any and all of the activities that you propose to undertake during the course of the tour and you should request a full policy document from your insurer if one is not automatically provided.

We strongly recommend that all clients carry a copy of their full policy document with them at all times, together with any certificate showing the policy number and emergency contact details. Your tour leader will also ask for a photocopy of your insurance document, so please take this to the pre-departure meeting at the start of your tour. You will not be able to commence your tour unless you can provide proof of insurance to your tour leader.

HEALTH, FITNESS & SAFETY

A regular balanced diet will help build up your immunity before the start of your tour. A dental and medical check up before leaving home is a very good idea as the high altitudes of the Andes can be very trying on your body and can also aggravate dental problems. The following is a general summary only and it is essential that you consult your doctor/medical centre for professional advice as far in advance of your departure as possible. Depending on the countries you plan to visit you may need several vaccinations and/or malaria tablets and you should be aware that some inoculations require more than one visit and can take several weeks to administer. Always carry your International Certificate of Vaccination with your passport.

Malaria

Malaria is prevalent in some parts of Mexico, Central & South America. It is very rare in the Andes (or at any high altitude) but the risk is greater in rainforests or other areas at sea level. No malaria tablets guarantee complete protection and the most effective protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten. Mosquitos mostly bite at dusk and dawn so one of the best ways to minimise the chance of being bitten is to wear long trousers, long sleeves and socks at these times. You should also take a good insect repellent (with DEET) and apply liberally and regularly. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm>) states that in general, the more DEET a repellent contains, the longer it can protect against mosquito bites, however as DEET can irritate skin, there appears to be no added benefit of concentrations greater than 50%. Flying-insect spray or mosquito coils (containing a pyrethroid insecticide) can help clear rooms of mosquitoes and may be worth bringing if you are travelling to Central America or tropical South America.

Yellow fever

If travelling to Latin America it is recommended that you have a vaccination against Yellow Fever . This will provide protection for 10 years. You should obtain a signed and stamped International Certificate of Vaccination, which must be valid for the full duration of your tour. It is not common to be asked to show this certificate in South America (although possible on some border crossings e.g. Bolivia/Brazil), however customs and immigration in your home country may ask to see it on your return home. For example, this is normal procedure in Australia if you've been travelling in South America.

Diarrhoea

Traveller's diarrhoea is often caused by a change of climate, altitude, water, diet and simply too much too soon. You can reduce the likelihood of suffering diarrhoea if you treat food and drink with caution. Don't eat uncooked meats, fish or vegetables and always peel fruit. All uncooked products and dirty utensils can carry such diseases as cholera, hepatitis and typhoid. Do not share unwashed drinking or eating utensils with your fellow travellers or anyone else (in other words don't pass water bottles around to other group members) as disease and infections are easily transmitted from/to others.

Make sure you wash your hands frequently, especially after going to the bathroom and before eating or preparing any food. It is also a very good idea to carry a bottle of antiseptic hand cleansing gel at all times (particularly as many public bathrooms do not have hand-washing facilities). In most cases it is not advisable to drink tap water and you should be aware of ice in cold drinks. Inexpensive bottled drinking water is available everywhere and is a lot more convenient than trying to purify or filter tap water.

If you are unfortunate enough to suffer a bout of "Montezuma's Revenge" or the "Cuzco Cacas", you should be very careful not to become dehydrated. Drink plenty of bottled water, flat Coca Cola, Sprite or black tea and avoid heavy meals (dry crackers are usually better) until your stomach has settled. It is also a good idea to bring plenty of rehydration sachets with you which will help restore your salt and sugar levels. In general we don't recommend the use of anti-diarrhoea tablets, as they block you up but don't cure. However there will be times (for example a long travelling day) when tablets of this kind are helpful. Diarrhoea, which lasts longer than 48-72 hours or which shows signs of blood or mucus, or which is concurrent with other symptoms, such as headache or high temperature, should always be taken seriously. Your tour leader will be able to help you seek medical advice.

Dehydration

In deserts, the tropics and at high altitude, your body can lose a lot of liquid. Dehydration also occurs when you're suffering from a bout of diarrhoea. To avoid dehydration drink plenty of fluids at all times.

Altitude sickness

This is something that anyone can suffer at moderate to high altitude (generally anything over 3,000 metres – although lower altitude cities such as Mexico City (2,300m) can also be tough on your body). Altitude sickness is caused by the lack of oxygen which can be up to a third less than at sea level. The symptoms include severe headache, loose bowels, shortness of breath, insomnia, dizziness and maybe even nausea. To combat this, it is advisable to rest for a few hours, avoid alcohol, smoking and eating big meals. If you are arriving into a high altitude city, take things easy for the first 24 hours and drink plenty of water. Altitude sickness can also affect some people when they travel to higher altitudes by land, so it is important to take things easy whenever possible. Drugs are available to combat the effects of altitude sickness, which are very good, they can be purchased over the counter in most pharmacies in the Andes countries.

Sunstroke/heatstroke

It is VERY easy to underestimate the strength of the sun when you are busy sightseeing, especially at high altitude where the harmful rays can be up to three times the strength of that at sea level. When going out for the day always take a wide-brimmed hat, even if it is dull and cloudy when you set off. Use a sun cream or sun block with high UV factor and drink plenty of fluids.

Personal medical supplies

You should have your own medical kit for minor wounds and ailments (see page 10 for guidelines). In areas of limited or suspect medical facilities, some travellers like to take their own emergency medical kit containing syringes and other items, which can be used by local medical staff in case of accident or illness. Kits of this nature can normally be purchased at most travel medical centres and pharmacies. Please be aware that by law our staff are NOT allowed to administer first aid or drugs to travellers so be prepared with your own medical kit.

Existing medical conditions

We assume that you are in good health and have a sufficient level of fitness to complete your chosen itinerary. It is very important that any illness, disability or medical condition from which you suffer or are recovering from, has been brought to our attention at the time of booking and you may need to provide a medical certificate. Tucan Travel reserves the right to turn you away at any time without reimbursement if we find that you have concealed an existing medical condition which is affecting your ability to participate in the tour. We also reserve the right to turn you away if we consider you incapable of completing the tour. Your travel insurance company will also need to know any existing conditions to provide adequate cover.

If you are taking any medication, please make sure you bring an adequate supply as you may not be able to obtain suitable medication in the countries visited. You should also bring a letter from your doctor stating that you require a certain medication to avoid possible problems at borders. Please inform your tour leader at the start of the tour of any existing medical conditions, allergies and/or medication taken in case of emergencies.

Can you swim?

Some tours include optional activities on water and all of our local operators using boats/canoes etc are instructed by Tucan Travel to carry lifejackets on board. Unless advised otherwise, we assume that all participants can swim. If you are unable to swim we recommend that you make this known at the time of booking and also inform your tour leader. This will enable us to take additional precautions for your safety.

Prepare yourself

Our tours are designed for people who lead a reasonably active life and for those who are young at heart and mind. Many of our tours offer optional activities such as hiking, trekking, cycling, rafting, climbing etc. Although no previous experience is necessary we recommend that you do some preparation before your tour, as you will find all activities and the high altitudes more enjoyable if you have a good level of fitness.

Suitability of passengers

It is important to realise that none of our tours are of a 'luxury' standard and at times things can become a little arduous; be it bad roads, weather conditions, a lengthy border crossing, the high altitude of the Andes or the hot humid conditions of the jungle. Your tour leader will always be on hand to smooth out any problems however it should be remembered that he/she must look after the interests of the whole group (which is sometimes up to 34 people) and cannot be expected to devote all their time to the needs of one or two individuals.

Tours of this nature do not always run like clockwork and you should not expect streamlined travel arrangements associated with some other continents. You need to be patient, flexible and prepared to get involved and help your tour leader if necessary; don't forget that sense of humour!

Please note: If a passenger proves entirely unsuitable the tour leader has the right to insist that the person leaves the tour without reimbursement for any unused portions of the tour.

Security and safety

In general, travel to Latin America is surprisingly safe, group travel even more so. Security has very much improved over the years, but thieves are still about and you still need to use your common sense. Take at least the same precautions you would take if travelling around your own country.

- **DO NOT** bring along any jewellery or watches, as even fakes can catch the eye of a thief. Purchase a cheap plastic watch that you can afford to lose or is not worth stealing in the first place.
- **DO NOT** bring your camera equipment in a flashy camera bag; try to camouflage your equipment by using an ordinary daypack or shoulder bag.
- **DO NOT** worry yourself sick but at the same time be prudent and keep your valuables in a safe secure place whenever possible. All money and travel related documents should be kept in a secure place, NOT in your luggage. Concealing them under your clothing in a cotton pouch or money belt or pockets sewn inside loose clothing is recommended.
- **DO** keep alert at all times, look confident and assured that you know where you're going. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security if nothing happens.
- **DO** listen to your tour leader's advice at all times and heed any warnings given. Most of our hotels have safe deposit boxes in the rooms or a safe at reception, where you could deposit your valuables on arrival. If using the reception safe, put your valuables into a sealed envelope and sign across the seal to make sure it is not opened. You should always ask for a receipt. Tucan Travel cannot accept responsibility for any valuables left in safe deposits in hotels or in our vehicles.

MONEY

Local payment/Local fund

Your local payment must be paid in US dollars cash only (Euros in Cuba). Make sure all notes are the new style, and are not damaged, defaced, rubber stamped or written on, as these can be extremely difficult for your tour leader to exchange. Unfortunately we cannot accept travellers cheques or credit cards. We recommend you obtain the money before you arrive at your starting city, as US dollars (or Euros) are not available in some countries (see the relevant country dossier for more information). For the exact amount of your local payment, please refer to the tour page on our website. Please note that some US\$100 bills are not accepted in South America. The serial numbers of these bills are posted on our website.

Personal spending money

For your personal spending money, you should bring US dollars (Euros in Cuba) cash or travellers cheques (no other currency is widely accepted). Travellers cheques are gradually being replaced by the convenience of credit and debit cards however if you prefer to use them, the most widely accepted brand is American Express except in Cuba (see Cuba country dossier). Travellers cheques are not accepted everywhere and cash is more convenient, but it is difficult to replace if lost or stolen.

Generally the most convenient way of carrying your spending money is by having at least 1 or 2 credit or debit cards. The majority of cards eg, Visa, Diners Club, MasterCard (not in Brazil), American Express and Maestro, Plus and

Cirrus for debit cards) are accepted in most large cities and tourist areas. Cash advances are usually no problem even though higher fees will apply and money is paid in local currency not US dollars. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are becoming more common and usually you can choose either Spanish or English on the screen. In some countries (e.g. Peru) you will have the choice to get cash out in local currency or US dollars. Remember, if the ATM doesn't work after the first two attempts, find another machine, as it may retain your card the third time. Always make sure no one else sees your PIN number when using ATMs. See the relevant country dossier(s) for more details on exchanging/carrying currency in each destination

Important note: While cards provide a very good overall way of carrying your spending money, DO NOT totally rely on them, as there will be times when a computer is down, the machine has run out of money or some other problem means cash is not available! It is therefore advisable to always have some cash on-hand for emergencies. We recommend you bring along a minimum of US\$200 cash (in addition to your local payment/fund) in small denominations (no \$100 notes) although the more you can bring the better.

Make sure all notes are the new style, and are not damaged, defaced, rubber stamped or written on, as many places will refuse them if they are not in perfect condition. It is a good idea to try to maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping (see below) or small purchases.

Working out your budget

It is impossible to say exactly what you will need during your tour but hopefully the following will help you work out your budget. Please refer to the brochure or your tour dossier for full details of what's included and excluded and the recommended daily allowance for spending money on your tour. The recommended spending money should cover meals, entrance fees, some souvenirs and drinks etc. For approximate prices of optional excursions, please see the optional excursions guide located on the tour page at www.tucantravel.com. For more details of approximate local costs and prices see the relevant country dossier(s). The amount you will actually spend obviously depends on personal taste and budget but we recommend that you bring along more than you think you will need to cover any emergencies or unexpected must-have souvenirs.

We try to tell travellers exactly what to expect, but in developing countries there are bound to be some surprises!

Flights

International flights are not included in the tour prices listed in our brochure and website. As travellers join our tours from all over the world this also allows you the flexibility to arrange suitable flights and the freedom to arrive early or depart later than the final day of your tour. Regional domestic flights as mentioned in the itinerary are included in the tour price. Please see the brochure or your tour dossier for more details. Please note that these flights generally cannot be changed to suit personal preferences and no refunds can be given for unused services.

Border & airport taxes

Border and airport taxes are not included in the tour prices listed in our brochure as these costs can fluctuate frequently. Many countries impose taxes on travellers arriving and departing. These are sometimes included in the price of your airline ticket but rarely within Latin America. If your tour involves entering or leaving countries by land, sea or air, border taxes will often apply so please allow for this (see your country dossier for actual costs).

Tipping

Tipping is a way of life in Latin America. Many workers in Latin American countries are very poorly paid and depend on tips for their main income. Whilst we fully understand that some nationalities are not accustomed to tipping, this is a normal part of Latin American culture. The local people work very hard to provide a good service and this is due in part to the tips they have received from foreigners in the past. However all tips are at your own discretion and you should not feel obliged or pressured to tip at any time – particularly if you feel that the level of service was not up to standard. The information given below is intended as a guide only.

As a general guideline a gratuity of 10% of the total bill for your waiter is recommended in restaurants. You should be aware that prices on the menu often exclude service charges but they are added to the bill (10%) and local taxes (anywhere between 2% and 20%). If it is included then you are not expected to pay an additional tip, although this is still appreciated. Some restaurants have a "cubiertos" (cover charge) which is normally added onto the food section of

the bill, not the total, so watch out for this when dividing the bill with other group members.

Gratuities are usually expected for local guides on both included and optional excursions. As a guideline, we recommend US\$3-5 per passenger for a half/full day excursion. Your tour leader will generally pass around an envelope for the local guide on included excursions. The tour leader will indicate on the envelope the amount of the tip usually given per person to the guide. This information is given as a guide as many clients are unsure how much to tip. Should you wish to give the local guide your tip personally and not with the group tip then please feel free to do so.

Inca Trail - the commonly accepted combined tip for guides, porters and cooks on the Inca Trail is US\$30 per trekker. This amount will be collected from each trekker by the tour leader and distributed amongst the Trail team usually at the last dinner in Winay Wayna.'

Tips are also appreciated by Tucan Travel tour leaders and drivers at the end of your tour. This, however, is only if you feel that their service was up to standard and is completely at your own discretion.

Optional excursions

Popular optional excursions are detailed in the brochure, in your tour dossier and in more detail in the relevant country dossier. Most listed optional excursions are of a more strenuous or specialised nature and are therefore not included in the tour price or the recommended spending money. All fees are approximate and may fluctuate due to local exchange rates or price changes. Sufficient time is allowed on all tours to do the optional excursions mentioned although in some places we offer a choice of excursions and there may not be time to participate in every one. If there are any particular excursions which you are interested in but which are not offered in our literature, please ask your tour leader for advice.

Airport transfers

Arrival/departure transfers are not included in the tour prices listed in our brochure however in some cities we offer you the option of booking a transfer from the airport to your joining hotel (please see our website for more details). This service is offered for your convenience and peace of mind but will cost you more than arranging it yourself.

For approximate prices of taxis from the airport to our hotels please see the relevant joining letter. By the end of your tour you should be familiar enough with the way things are done to arrange your own taxi to the airport. If you require assistance, your tour leader or hotel receptionist will be happy to help you. However if you would prefer a pre arranged departure transfer please book this with your travel consultant before departing your home country.

Pre and post tour accommodation

Pre and post tour accommodation can be booked in our hotels to give you the chance to explore more of your arrival/departure cities as time in these cities is limited on the tour. This is particularly important for passengers joining tours in high altitude cities (Quito & La Paz) so that you can rest and acclimatise before the tour begins.

Very little time is spent in the starting and finishing cities on the tour and it is therefore necessary to arrive early / depart late if you want to explore these cities.

Please see our brochure or check with your travel consultant for prices. Note: our prices will often be higher than the hotel rack rates due to administration fees and currency fluctuations however this service gives you the reassurance of having a guaranteed booking at an established hotel. We can only book accommodation that matches your tour style (i.e. if you are on a Discovery Tour, we will not book Overland Expedition or Adventure Tour hotels).

Meals are not included unless specified in the tour dossier. Most overnight excursions usually include basic meals and food is included when camping and for lunch on travelling days on Budget Expeditions, Overland Expeditions and Discovery Tours. For other meals your tour leader will advise you on the best places to go to suit your particular budget and taste and it is entirely up to you whether you choose to eat with the group.

Food in Latin America is generally excellent with many different local specialities and international cuisine to suit all budgets. The recommended spending money should cover most of your meals and drinks provided you do not eat

every meal at expensive restaurants or consume a lot of imported alcoholic drinks (see the relevant country dossier(s) for more details).

Entrance fees are included for excursions stated under the 'what's included' section of the tour dossier

All other entrance fees are at your own expense and are usually covered in the recommended spending money. If you have an International Student Card or are entitled to one, it will almost certainly be to your advantage to bring it along for possible discounts on sightseeing and entrance fees in some countries.

Local transport

You will have free time to explore independently, and this may involve the use of local transport. Obviously, if you use taxis in preference to buses or metro systems, it will work out more expensive but in most places, not as expensive as back home. Your tour leader will advise you on how to get around during your free time.

The Inca Trail

Regulations regarding the issue of Inca Trail permits are subject to change and it is important that you check our website regularly to make sure you have the most up to date information. For more information about the Inca Trail please see the Inca Trail Information Sheet.

Rio Carnival

Some tours and expeditions are in Rio for the spectacular carnival which occurs from Friday to Monday on the weekend before Shrove Tuesday/Ash Wednesday each year. Tours generally arrive the day before and or depart just afterwards. Please see the Rio Carnival page on our website for full details of accommodation packages and ticket prices.

Other Extras

You will also need to allow for drinks, laundry, stamps, internet fees etc.

Remember it's always better to bring along more money than you think you'll need in case of emergencies.

WHAT TO TAKE

Travel light! We suggest you take much less than your airline allowance (usually 20kg for economy class) to leave space for souvenirs you will almost certainly buy along the way.

Luggage

On all tours you will have to carry your own luggage (e.g. at some border crossings, into hotels and up to your room if hotels don't have lifts). It is up to you to remember to collect all of your bags when leaving a hotel or bus etc and you should not expect the tour leader or driver to carry your bags for you, he/she is not a porter. Don't pack more than you can comfortably carry – if you struggle to lift your bag once it is packed (and before you have bought any souvenirs), you have certainly packed too much!

On Adventure Tours (public transport) it is very important that you do not bring too much luggage as you will find it extremely difficult to get on/off buses and trains etc and there is a fair amount of walking to/from hotels. You are also likely to encounter many cobbled streets and dirt roads so luggage on wheels is totally unsuitable. You must be prepared to carry your own bags at all times and we therefore strongly urge you to limit your luggage to a maximum of 10-14kgs.

We recommend that you bring along a frameless backpack or a sports type shoulder bag as these are less bulky and easier to handle than rigid suitcases or framed backpacks. Suitcases are unsuitable for our tours and are NOT recommended.

Travel is rarely kind to luggage and you can expect your bags to suffer wear and tear during your tour. Tucan Travel takes no responsibility for any damage to your luggage while on our vehicles or public transport.

In addition to your main bag, you will need a small daypack for your everyday things (e.g. camera, water bottle, sun cream, hat, sweater etc) while travelling, sightseeing or on overnight excursions. Try to keep this bag as light as possible and make sure that all main sections of your bags can be padlocked. Do not leave ANYTHING of value in your main luggage – keep it on you or in a safe.

The following list is a guideline of things that you should consider bringing along on your tour;

Essential for all tours

- Tour vouchers, tour dossier, country dossier(s), joining letter with hotel details & joining city map (if not already supplied can be downloaded from our website—except vouchers)
- Pre & post tour accommodation vouchers and transfer vouchers (if applicable)
- Passport (with 2 photocopies - one kept separately & the other to give to the tour leader with your next of kin details)
- Cash/travellers cheques/credit & debit cards (with photocopies kept separately)
- Travel insurance certificate (with a photocopy to be given to your tour leader)
- Spare passport photos (you may need these for obtaining visas)
- International airline ticket(s) (with a photocopy kept separately)
- International Vaccination Certificate (Yellow Fever)
- International student card (may get you discounts into some sites)
- Your travel consultant's phone number and email address (it is very important to have this as it is much easier to confirm/change flights etc via your agent)
- Cotton money belt and/or pouch to store your valuables under your clothing

Suggested equipment (some useful, some necessary - use your discretion)

- Sunglasses
- Small calculator (to help with currency conversions)
- Lockable pouch for your money and valuables to use in safety deposit boxes
- Plastic bags (very useful for wrapping camera equipment, soap, shampoo bottles, wet clothing etc)
- Inflatable pillow
- Small collapsible umbrella (also good for sun protection)
- Pegless washing line & travel laundry detergent (bio-degradable preferably)
- Universal washbasin plug
- Swiss army type penknife (don't pack in handluggage when travelling on aircraft)
- Torch / flashlight
- Travel alarm clock
- Travel plug adaptor (most countries either have 2 pin flat as in USA or 2 pin round)
- Small medical kit (can be purchased at most medical centres & chemists) with diarrhoea remedy, rehydration salts, antiseptic cream, sterile dressings, plasters, bandages, pain-killers, safety pins etc.
- Small sewing kit
- Lip balm, sun block with high UV factor (this can be expensive to buy locally)
- Insect repellent (DEET 35% min) and bite cream
- Tampons and condoms
- Toilet paper (best to carry a roll with you at all times) and/or tissues (purchase locally)
- Antibacterial hand cleansing gel (the type you can use without water)
- Moistened face tissues (e.g. Wet Ones)
- Ear plugs (for snoring room-mates, traffic, roosters, church bells, fire-works etc!)
- Travel sickness tablets (these are usually easy to buy over the counter locally)
- Cheap plastic wristwatch
- Spare pair of spectacles or contact lenses and solution (a lens prescription is also advisable in case of loss or breakage)
- Camera / video camera with plenty of film or digital camera with spare memory cards
- Spare rechargeable batteries for camera, Discman, etc. iPod
- Writing materials, address book and diary
- Pocket size Spanish & Portuguese (if going to Brazil) phrasebook
- Travel games, cards & couple of paperbacks (they can be swapped with other travellers when finished)
- As gifts for local children - pens (with advertising on them), coloured pencils, small notepads. To discourage a

begging mentality we recommend that you try to give these gifts at schools or childcare centres rather than on the street.

Note: much of the above can be bought on arrival however local products may be substandard or expensive. Don't forget to re-pack all articles that are in breakable containers into plastic containers. If arriving into a high altitude city some things (such as deodorant) may expand/explode – be careful when opening and don't be shocked if lids fly across the room!

Sleeping bags

Sleeping bags and sleeping mats are essential on all Overland Expeditions and Budget Expeditions. We recommend a four season bag with side zip which can be opened out in warmer weather. If you do not have a four season sleeping bag, you can purchase extra blankets locally (and cheaply). If you are only doing an 'Amazonia' Overland Expedition you do not need a thick sleeping bag as the climate will be warmer. In terms of sleeping mats, thermarest self inflating mattresses are comfortable and provide protection against the cold ground, while foam roll mats are compact, inexpensive and have similar features. Avoid air mattresses as these can be bulky and puncture easily. You may also want to bring a sleeping sheet as this keeps your sleeping bag clean plus can be used on its own in hot weather. A good warm sleeping bag is necessary on ALL tours which include the Inca Trail or Lares treks in Peru. Adequate ones can be hired locally but we take no responsibility for the standard and we therefore recommend that if possible you bring your own. Thick blankets are supplied when on Amantani Island (Lake Titicaca) but they have a tendency to be dusty, so you may wish to bring a sleeping bag or sheet (they cannot be hired there). Sleeping bags are not required on any tours in Central America.

Clothing & footwear

All clothes should be lightweight, durable and easily washable. Please do not bring any military or camouflaged style clothing as it can be dangerous to wear and occasionally illegal. Everybody ALWAYS packs too much, so rather than bringing lots of chunky sweaters, wear clothing in layers when in the colder regions. Nights can be cold at higher altitude so it is a good idea to bring at least one pair of warm trousers or jeans plus several thinner sweaters / fleeces which you can layer (note: it is very easy to buy extra sweaters / jumpers locally). Check the climate and altitude at www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your tour. We do not feel that it is necessary to include a full packing list as you will know what you need depending on the duration of your tour.

However we do recommend that you bring the following:

- A lightweight water/windproof jacket with hood
- Easy to pack wide-brimmed hat or cap
- Sarong - can be useful as a beach towel, bag, hat, shawl and a wrap around
- Towel - you will need a towel for most overnight excursions, while camping and on all Overland Expeditions. Many people are usually happy to use a sarong on the beach so please check your tour dossier to see if a towel is necessary.
- On winter tours it's a good idea to take along a space blanket (foil type blanket)
- Swimwear
- Sandals or thongs / jandals / flip flops

It is also ESSENTIAL that you have good, comfortable shoes that are suitable for walking and trekking. These don't need to be expensive boots, but they should have good ankle support and grip, be worn in and ideally waterproof.

If you are trekking the Inca Trail please see the Inca Trail Information Sheet for notes on packing and load limits.

If you find that you have forgotten something, especially clothing, don't worry as it is normally cheap and easy to purchase locally. Clothes in extra large sizes, however, might be more difficult to find in some regions.

"When you are packed and all ready to depart on your holiday, you should discard half your luggage and take twice as much money".

Laundry

There are usually laundromats or laundry services in or near most of our hotels. Hotel services can be pretty costly however your tour leader will be able to recommend cheaper options. Try not to bring any clothes with you that are

valuable or sentimental in case of loss/damage. If you wash clothes yourself take care not to be too obvious where you hang them as most hotels do not like guests washing and drying their clothes in the hotel rooms.

Photographic equipment

Make sure that you bring enough film / video tapes / memory cards along. You can buy film / memory cards locally but it can be expensive and you cannot always rely on the quality. As a guideline, most people use approximately one to two rolls of 36 per week however for sites like Machu Picchu, Iguazu Falls and Chichen Itzá you are likely to take a whole roll in one day! Fast film (200-400 ASA) may be useful at times, especially in dark areas like the jungle. If you have a video recorder which uses PAL, then you must bring lots of spare tapes, as they are almost impossible to find in Latin America. Batteries can be charged in the hotels but it's a good idea to bring spare batteries to cover you for at least a full day's filming. In some countries you will be able to download digital photos to CD to free up space on your memory cards.

A WORD OF WARNING

Do not take shots of military and police buildings or at borders. Some locals particularly dislike having their photos taken, especially some indigenous people in Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador and sometimes Peru. Others will normally consent for a small fee and a smile though and this is by far the best way to get good close-up shots. We recommend that you try not to give children money for photos. Ask permission from their parents if they are around or give a small gift such as fruit or a bread roll (not sweets). If in doubt, ask by pointing at your camera and then at the subject – this goes for all situations.

Electricity supply

The power supply in Latin America differs not only from country to country but sometimes from region to region within a country. If bringing electrical equipment, make sure that it can be switched over from 110 volts to 220 volts and vice versa. If your equipment is 220 volts it will work on a 110 volt system (albeit slower), but if you use 110 volt equipment in a 220 volt system, it will blow the equipment! If you plan to use electrical equipment make sure you bring a plug adaptor.

PART TWO – arrival

Arriving at the airport

When you arrive in your starting city the immigration officials may ask to see your onward flight ticket, so you should have your Tucan Travel tour voucher and international flight ticket to hand. Before you exit customs, look for a money exchange "Casa de Cambio" or an ATM within the airport complex. Change enough to get you to the hotel plus allow for some spending money for the next couple of days. Exchange rates at most airports are generally just as good as in the city centre, and much more convenient. **Please Note:** not all airport banks accept travellers cheques – always check with someone who works there before lining up.

Transfers

If you have booked an airport/hotel transfer with us, please look out for someone with a sign which has your name, Tucan Travel, or both after exiting the customs hall. If you do not see our representative immediately, do not worry; he/she is probably attending to some other clients. He/she will usually wait until they have gathered together all passengers arriving on the same flight (or at the same time), and then escort you all to the car or transfer bus.

Taxis

If you don't have a transfer arranged, you can take a taxi from outside the airport terminal or, if there is one, we recommend that you use the pre-pay taxi desk (please see your joining letter for detailed instructions). These taxi reservation agencies charge a set fee to take you to your hotel and you pay the money to the agency NOT to the taxi driver. If the airport does not have this facility, you will need to agree a fare with your taxi driver. The vast majority of taxi drivers don't speak English so you should show them the address of the hotel and use your phrasebook help you agree a price (as many taxis do not have meters). It is best to get them to write down the price (be clear on whether they are talking about the local currency, US dollars or Euros!). If they have a meter but do not switch it on, ask "taxi-metro por favor". Be aware that there are some unscrupulous taxi drivers who see newly arrived travellers as ripe targets. If you are told that your hotel is closed down, full or no good and that they know of another hotel they can

take you to instead pay no attention and just insist on being taken to the hotel that is listed as your tour meeting point. In the interest of comfort and safety it is always best to sit in the rear of a taxi and lock the back doors. The driver will not consider this rude. If the driver insists that you should sit in the front, we recommend that you find another taxi.

Your tour leader or Tucan Travel's local guide (whichever is applicable, see your tour dossier for details) will leave a notice up at reception with details of the pre-departure meeting and/or let you know how to contact them. There will also be other information posted up for you to read so it is important that you look out for these notices.

Arrival at the hotel

If you are arriving on day 1 of the tour or you have reserved pre-tour accommodation, a room will be awaiting your arrival. At the hotel reception just say that you are with Tucan Travel or "Grupo Tucan Travel" (if the receptionist doesn't speak English) and show your Tucan Travel voucher. Your tour leader or Tucan Travel's local Guide (whichever is applicable, see your tour dossier for details) will leave a notice up at reception with details of the pre-departure meeting and/or let you know how to contact them. There will also be other information posted up for you to read so it is important that you look out for these notices.

Arrival and departure days

Day 1 of all our tours is simply a joining day so that you know the latest you can arrive for your tour and the tour actually departs the joining city on day 2. Therefore we recommend that you arrive a day or two earlier to take full advantage of all the interesting sights in and around your joining city. The last day of your tour is the official departure day and is free for you to pack or sightsee before you depart. All tours are scheduled to arrive at your final destination the afternoon / evening before your departure day so you will need to stay on a day or two after the tour if you want to explore the finishing city properly. Although rare, delays can occur and we therefore advise you not to arrange your onward travel too close to the end of the tour. You can, of course, arrive on day 1 and depart on the last tour day, but we take no responsibility for any missed flights etc. if the group arrives late into the departure city at the end of the tour. If you would like to book additional nights before or after your tour in the hotels we use, please refer to the contact details on your joining letter to make your reservation directly or contact Tucan Travel so we can make the reservation for you.

Missing the tour departure.

If you miss the start of your tour, please ask at the reception of the hotel for a message from your tour leader which will give you instructions on how to catch up with the group. Any associated costs will be at your own expense (although, depending on the reason, you may be able to claim these from your travel insurance so ensure you keep all receipts).

If you know in advance that you are unlikely to arrive on time, please contact Tucan Travel immediately so we can inform the tour leader. Tucan Travel cannot be held responsible should your airline/boat/coach be delayed and we are unable to refund any unused portion of your tour.

Pre-departure meeting

Your tour leader or local guide will normally hold a meeting in the afternoon/early evening of day 1 of your tour. Detailed information will be on the hotel notice board. At this meeting your tour leader will need to collect the local payment, check your passport, travel insurance and travel voucher. Remember you **MUST** supply a photocopy of your travel insurance and the details pages of your passport. You will also be able to ask questions and meet your fellow passengers.

Your tour leader will give you all the very latest information about your tour and advise of any known itinerary changes due to local conditions, such as festivals, local holidays, political unrest, weather and road conditions. Please be aware that some unavoidable changes may occur during the tour. Please note: Tucan Travel reserve the right to surcharge for transportation costs which are not specified in the brochure but are necessary due to political, immigration or other problems which are out of our control.

Time keeping

Punctuality is very important and throughout the tour the tour leader will give you the time to meet in reception or at the Tucan Travel vehicle (if applicable). All bags must be in the lobby or by the vehicle at the specified time, so please don't be late as it is very annoying for the rest of the group and our crew and may result in missed buses/trains etc. Tour leaders will often post notes at reception with meeting times etc so remember to always look out for these.

City tours/orientation walks

In most cities your tour leader will take you for orientation walks (time allowing) to familiarise you with the area surrounding the hotel. These walking tours are intended to point out practical facilities like restaurants, banks, internet cafes, post offices etc as well as giving you some local historical information on important sites and attractions. The orientation walks are quite brief, usually around 30 – 60 minutes, and should not be confused with the full city tours that are available through local guides and on our optional excursions guides.

PART THREE – general information

Keeping in touch

Email is without doubt, the best way of keeping in contact with friends and family. Our tour leaders will point out internet cafes in all major cities and towns. If you intend to take your mobile phone you should find out in advance from your network provider if your phone is set up for international roaming and if there is coverage in your destination – do not expect it just to work! In some Latin American countries (as in the USA) you will need a tri-band or quad-band handset to make and receive calls and text messages while others work on the iDEN system. Whichever handset you have there is no guarantee that it will work everywhere. We do not give out details of hotels before the start of your tour (except for the joining hotel) as these may be subject to change and it is simply not possible to inform all passengers of any last minute changes. In addition, most hotel receptions have non-English speaking staff and it is unlikely that the person answering the phone would be able to locate you. If someone needs to contact you during the tour, the best method is for them to contact your travel consultant, who can then pass on a message to Tucan Travel.

The local people

The local people are generally very friendly and hospitable. It certainly helps if you can try and learn a few phrases of Spanish and/or Portuguese (for Brazil), as most locals do not speak English. Latin America is called the “land of mañana” (tomorrow) because everything takes time, so try to be patient as losing your temper when things go wrong won't help! As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your travels.

We recommend that you purchase a phrasebook to help you order food / ask for the toilet etc. A phrasebook helps you get by on a practical level and speaking a little of the local language will greatly enhance your experience.

Climate

South America experiences a wide variety of climatic conditions from below freezing up to, and sometimes above, 40°C. You might experience heavy downpours of rain, hot sunshine, high humidity and even snow. In Mexico, Cuba and Central America the climatic changes are not so evident and it is usually hot and dry or hot and wet, depending on the season but sometimes during the rainy or hurricane season, it can get much cooler.

The Andes Mountains can be very cold with night temperatures often falling below zero, while on the coast it is usually warm during the day but can become cool at night. In the Amazon, Mexico, Cuba and Central America it can be very hot and often with high humidity but in the mountainous areas of Guatemala and Mexico, it can be cooler at night. Even during the high season (summer) Patagonia can still be cold and will almost certainly be windy. You should also expect some rain and should pack plenty of clothes for cooler, wet weather. The temperature chart on our website will give you a general idea of what to expect.

Questionnaires

At the end of your tour your tour leader will ask you to complete a questionnaire. To ensure confidentiality, please ask your tour leader for an envelope or post your form directly to our London Office: Tucan Travel, 316 Uxbridge Road, London, W3 9QP. We ask you to please take this questionnaire seriously and answer every question in as much detail as possible (although please do consider if your comments concern areas which are out of our control) as this is an opportunity for Tucan Travel to keep our tours to the standard that you, future passengers and we demand. If for any reason, you do not want to complete the questionnaire, we would ask you to please fill in your name and sign it as all tour leaders are required to return a questionnaire for every client.

Environmentally-friendly travellers tips

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the countries you visit is positive rather than negative.

- **Don't prejudge:** Things overseas will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- **Communicate:** Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- **Conserve energy:** Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging: Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- **Don't litter:** No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to make it even worse than it already is.
- **Choose environmentally friendly products:** By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help keep the rivers and seas (and therefore the water supply) free from pollution.
- **Don't attempt to bring back rare materials, plants or animals:** Don't buy animal skins or coral; they look much better where they belong – on the animal or in the sea. Be careful not to damage wild plants or disturb wildlife.
- **Respect local customs and traditions:** As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- **Carbon offset your Tucan Travel tour and flights:** Check out our website for details about how you can go about this www.tucantravel.com.
- **Gifts:** Please don't offer gifts to children as it encourages begging and promotes a culture of dependency. If possible, contribute money or supplies to a local school or community organisation – talk to your tour leader about the options available.
- **Dispose of toilet paper properly:** Many countries lack modern plumbing systems so you will almost always find a rubbish bin situated by the toilet – please deposit all used paper into it rather than the toilet bowl! When going to the toilet 'in the wild' please burn or bury all toilet paper.

Shopping tips

Shopping can be great fun. In many countries prices are not fixed so you need to barter to establish what you pay. The correct price for the item is the price you agree to pay. Remember haggling is not a fight to the death; the object is to arrive at a mutually acceptable price for both parties.

Here are a few basic tips that will help you on your quest for a bargain:

- **Make sure you do barter:** Bargaining is expected if buying something at a market or in the streets. Don't feel guilty if you get the article very cheaply, the locals will never sell their wares for less than they know it is worth. It's rare to be able to bargain in shops, they normally have set prices but it never hurts to give it a go (ask for a 'descuento' – discount).
- **Have an idea of the price:** It's a good idea to get an approximate price of the article that you wish to purchase beforehand. Shop articles are normally more expensive so get an idea of the 'top' price before you head to the

market.

- **Don't appear too keen:** Remember that local vendors are expert hagglers as their livelihood depends on it.
- **Be firm but always polite:** Never offer a price that you are not willing to pay – even as a joke. Don't arrive at a price and then try reducing it, this is just not the way it's done. First, ask the price, then at least halve it and start from there. You can always find out how seriously the vendor wants the sale, by walking off when you get to a price that you want to pay. If he/she doesn't call you back, there is a good chance that you won't get it for that price anywhere else either.

Demonstrations: On some tours, you will be invited to witness a demonstration of some local skill or handicraft eg; ceramics in Nazca or a Panama hat factory in Ecuador. Almost inevitably, after the demonstration you will be offered the opportunity to buy. This is not the purpose of our visit; instead it is our intention that after watching a demonstration with some of the best examples of local craft you will have a benchmark for your own visits to other shops. The general rule is, if you like something at the time, buy it, as there is a good chance that you won't find an exact replica elsewhere. Remember that most souvenirs in markets and elsewhere are handmade and no two are the same!

Illegal drugs

The possession or use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated on or anywhere near our tours. When overseas you are subject to local laws and the penalties for breaking these laws are long, harsh sentences in tough, unsanitary prisons. It is not only the possessor of the drug who will be arrested but all those who are with that person, so it could affect the whole group. In order to safeguard the interests of the group as a whole, our tour leaders have been instructed to insist that any person found to be in possession of illegal drugs leave the tour immediately – without refund. The tour leader's decision on this matter is final. If you need to carry certain drugs with you for purposes of medication, please inform your tour leader and ensure that you carry a copy of your prescription or letter from your doctor.

Flight reconfirmation

Reconfirmation of your onward International flight ticket is your responsibility. Many airlines no longer require reconfirmation however you should double check with your booking agent to see what applies to you. If you do need to reconfirm this should be done 2-3 days prior to your departure. Occasionally, even if your flight has been reconfirmed, some airlines may deny this, so always try to get a confirmation code number as verification. Get to the airport with plenty of time to spare as occasionally in this region flights can depart early! We will assist you with your flight reconfirmation if necessary but take NO responsibility for this and accept no liability in the case of schedule changes, cancellations or anything else to do with your international travel plans.

Onward travel

Most of our travellers book a tour in conjunction with connecting flights and it is advisable to have all of your onward travel arranged before you set off, especially if your travelling time is limited. Please also bear in mind that flight tickets bought locally in Latin America are often more expensive due to high local taxes.

Suggested reading

We recommend that you try to read as much as you can about the region in which you are going to travel before joining your tour. Your tour leader will supply you with a great deal of useful information during the tour but reading ahead will make you more independent and help you to understand the cultures of the countries you are visiting.

We strongly recommend that you purchase a Latin American phrasebook to help you order food/ask for the toilet etc as most locals speak very little English. A phrasebook helps you get by on a practical level and speaking a little of the local language will greatly enhance your experience. 'TravelTalk Spanish Latin America' (which comes with a cassette and Lonely Planet phrasebook) is recommended. Many guidebooks cover individual countries throughout Latin America but we suggest (if travelling to more than one country) that you purchase the main guide which covers the whole region e.g. Footprint South American Handbook, rather than two or three individual handbooks - remember you have to carry them around! The regional versions generally include masses of information and are quite adequate.

We recommend the following books:

- **South America Yesterday** - John Rothchild
- **Conquest of the Incas** - J. Hemming
- **The Conquistadors** - Hammond Innes
- **100 Years of solitude** - Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- **Lost City of the Incas** - Hiram Bingham
- **The Ra Tour** - Thor Heyerdahl
- **Mystery of the desert** - Maria Reiche
- **Chariots of the Gods** - Erik von Daniken
- **Exploration in pre-Inca** - Peru Simone & Roger Waisbard
- **Andean Republics** - William Johnson
- **Old Patagonian Express** - Paul Theroux
- **The Motorcycle Diaries** - Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (various versions)
- **The Maya World Rough Guides**

www.questia.com is a good online library resource

PART FOUR - travel styles

Discovery Tours travel style

Suitability of passengers

We ask that you approach the tour with a spirit of adventure and an open mind and be tolerant with your fellow travellers and locals alike. Most clients on Discovery Tours tend to be between 18 and 55 years of age although older clients are welcome provided they can harmonise with the recommended age group, recommended max 70. (Over 60's may be required to obtain a medical certificate stating they are fit and in good health for this type of tour).

Although Discovery Tours are of an adventurous nature discomfort is kept to a minimum as we use our own specially designed vehicles or, on occasions, leased coaches.

Fellow travellers & group size

Your fellow travellers will come from all walks of life and from all corners of the globe. Some will be couples, but many will be singles travelling on their own, so either way it is guaranteed that you'll meet a number of likeminded people.

On average there are between 15 and 20 people on our Discovery Tours, although on the busier departure dates there will be up to 34 passengers. In Cuzco, Peru and on some included excursions this number may be larger. Our expedition vehicles are designed to comfortably suit these maximum numbers with plenty of leg room and storage space. Many Tucan Travel tours form part of a modular system, therefore group numbers may fluctuate at times. This is a great opportunity to meet an even more diverse range of people.

Crew

On all Discovery Tours we have two crew members; a tour leader and driver who are both responsible for the safe and enjoyable running of the tour. Your tour leader is responsible for organising the day-to-day aspects of running the tour and will be doing a lot of behind the scenes work to ensure everything runs smoothly. They will advise you on the best places to eat and drink, will arrange local optional excursions, attempt to solve any problems that might crop up and give you commentary about the local environment, culture, geography and history. The tour leader will take into account the group's wishes as a whole but there will be times when safety and security may dictate that an unpopular decision be made and your patience and understanding will be appreciated. Your qualified driver will be fully accustomed to the local terrain and will drive with everyone's safety in mind. He/she will be a fully experienced mechanic and will keep the vehicle in good running order to avoid major mishaps.

Hotels

In keeping with the Latin American experience, we stay in small hotels, hostals* and guest houses situated close to the main sights and town centres. They are chosen for their local ambience rather than star rating and we look for attributes like character, location, atmosphere, cleanliness and security. Standards may vary due to local conditions but

our preference is mid-range comfortable rooms with en suite facilities. All accommodation is on a share basis; normally twins or triples and occasionally multiple share (there are no single supplements so solo travellers will be roomed with other group members of the same sex). Please remember we are travelling through developing countries and some hotels may have erratic services like lack of hot water, air-con or central heating, the staff don't always speak English and sometimes our reservations are "lost"! In general facilities are good but please be prepared for the occasional mishap – it's all part of the Latin American experience. (*In Latin America, hotels with less than 25 rooms are generally called "hostals". This should not be confused with cheaper, dormitory style hostels.)

Transport

To ensure you get the best from your tour, we will choose the most suitable vehicle depending on the region we are travelling through. This may be either a modern coach, one of our more robust Mercedes' Benz trucks or a combination of both vehicles. Some privately hired vehicles may also be used in the Cuzco region. On all Tucan Travel vehicles you will find superior comfort, from our carpeted interiors with curtained and tinted windows, modern reclining coach seats, overhead storage shelves, writing tables, a well hidden safe, a small library (which you can use and add to!) and a stereo for the group's use. Most vehicles also have two refrigerators for cold drinks and food. There will also be plenty of storage space for your luggage and souvenirs as well as kitchen equipment, tables and camp stools carried for picnic lunches. Tucked away will be specialised equipment for the maintenance and upkeep of the vehicle. On rare occasions it may be necessary to utilise a privately hired vehicle for the duration of the tour. Although modern and comfortable, these vehicles may not include all the facilities and equipment listed above.

Toilet stops

Our vehicles do not have toilets on board for hygiene and logistical reasons. We stop when necessary to suit the group so please be considerate to your fellow passengers by making use of these toilet stops, as long journeys will certainly become a lot longer if we have to stop every half hour or so! You will also find that on some occasions our crew will not stop at service stations or other amenities on the route but will pull up alongside the road so you can 'go behind a bush'. The main reason for this is that often the facilities of public bathrooms leave a lot to be desired and the great outdoors is usually far better. Our crew always try and stop in isolated areas with as much privacy as is possible and will tell you how to practice environmentally sound 'bush toileting'.

Food

Picnic lunches are included on days travelling between hotels and on most included overnight excursions. Staple food supplies are stored on the vehicle and fresh ingredients (including fruit, salads, cheeses and cold meats) are purchased locally. The buffet style lunches are prepared by group members under the guidance of the tour leader. Vegetarians or those with special dietary needs can also be catered for – please advise your booking agent and inform your tour leader at the start of the tour. Drinks are not included but there are many opportunities to purchase water/soft drinks etc along the way. No other meals are included giving you the flexibility to choose when, where and with whom to eat. Our tour leaders have a wealth of knowledge regarding local restaurants and can advise you of the best places to try the varied local cuisine.

NOTE: Tucan Travel reserve the right to surcharge for transportation & hotel costs not specified in the brochure but which become necessary due to political, immigration or other problems out of Tucan Travel's control.

Adventure Tours travel style

Suitability of passengers

We ask that you approach the tour with a spirit of adventure and an open mind and be tolerant with your fellow travellers and locals alike. Most clients on Adventure Tours tend to be between 18 and 60 years of age although older clients are welcome provided they can harmonise with the recommended age group, recommended max 65. (Over 60's may be required to obtain a medical certificate stating they are fit and in good health for this type of tour). As there are many walks between bus/train terminals and hotels, travellers should be fit and able to carry their own luggage over various terrains. Adventure Tours are a hands-on experience with plenty of opportunity to interact with the local people.

Fellow travellers & group size

Your fellow travellers will come from all walks of life and from all corners of the globe. Some will be couples, but many will be singles travelling on their own, so either way it is guaranteed that you'll meet a number of like-minded people. On average there are between 7 and 12 people on our Adventure Tours, but the maximum is 18. On some included excursions these numbers may occasionally be larger. Many Tucan Travel tours form part of a modular system; therefore group numbers may fluctuate at times. This is a great opportunity to meet an even more diverse range of people!

Luggage

On Adventure Tours it is very important that you do not bring too much luggage as you will find it extremely difficult to get on/off buses and trains etc and there is a fair amount of walking to/from hotels. You are also likely to encounter many cobbled streets and dirt roads so luggage on wheels is totally unsuitable. You must be prepared to carry your own bags at all times and we therefore strongly urge you to limit your luggage to a maximum of 10-14kgs.

Tour leader

Our tour leaders are carefully selected to ensure that you are in the very best hands. They are knowledgeable about the countries we visit and the ways of the local people. Your tour leader is responsible for organising the day-to-day aspects of running the tour and will be doing a lot of behind the scenes work to ensure everything runs smoothly. They will advise you on the best places to eat and drink, will organise your transport, arrange local optional excursions and attempt to solve any problems that might crop up.

Hotels

In keeping with the Latin American experience, we stay in small hotels, hostals* and guest houses situated close to the main sights and town centres. They are chosen for their local ambience rather than star rating and we look for attributes like character, location, atmosphere, cleanliness and security. Standards may vary due to local conditions but our preference is mid-range comfortable rooms with en suite facilities. All accommodation is on a share basis - normally twins or triples and occasionally multiple share (there are no single supplements so solo travellers will be roomed with other group members of the same sex). Please remember we are travelling through developing countries and some hotels may have erratic services like lack of hot water, air-con or central heating, the staff don't always speak English and sometimes our reservations are "lost"! In general facilities are good but please be prepared for the occasional mishap - it's all part of the Latin American experience.

*In Latin America, hotels with less than 25 rooms are generally called "hostals". This should not be confused with cheaper, dormitory style hostels.

Transport

On Adventure Tours we use a great variety of local transport depending on the region. This can be a lot of fun and is a truly cultural experience as you travel with the locals. We may use buses, trains, aircraft, ferries, colectivos, pick up, private shuttles trucks, boats, dugout canoes, and taxis. Most bus transport is very comfortable, often with reclining seats.

However travelling conditions in some countries can be cramped and seating is not always guaranteed, especially in Central America. This may mean having to stand for some time in cramped conditions or share a seat with 5 others! This is all part of the experience of travelling with the locals.

Food

On Adventure Tours most meals are not included which gives you the flexibility to choose when and where you eat. Our tour leaders have a wealth of knowledge regarding local restaurants and can advise you of the best places to try the delicious and varied local cuisine. Meals are included in remote areas such as the Amazon Jungle excursion and on the Inca Trail or Lares treks.

NOTE: Tucan Travel reserves the right to surcharge for transportation costs & hotel costs not specified in the brochure but which become necessary due to political, immigration or other problems out of Tucan Travel's control.

Overland Expeditions travel style

Suitability of passengers

We ask that you approach the tour with a spirit of adventure and an open mind and be tolerant with your fellow travellers and locals alike. You should be young at heart and prepared to get totally involved and help your tour leader if required. Most clients on Overland Expeditions tend to be between 18 and 45 years of age although clients up to a maximum age of 55 are welcome provided they can harmonise with the recommended age group. Overland Expeditions maximise participation camping so it is important that passengers are energetic and love spending plenty of time in the great outdoors – even in the rain!

Fellow travellers & group size

Your fellow travellers will come from all walks of life and from all corners of the globe. Some will be couples, but many will be singles travelling on their own, so either way it is guaranteed that you'll meet a number of likeminded people. On average there are between 15 and 24 people on our Overland Expeditions, but the maximum is 34 passengers. Our expedition vehicles are designed to comfortably suit these maximum numbers with plenty of leg room and storage space. Many Tucan Travel tours form part of a modular system, therefore group numbers may fluctuate at times. This is a great opportunity to meet an even more diverse range of people!

Crew

On all Overland Expeditions we have two crew members; a tour leader and driver who are both responsible for the safe and enjoyable running of the tour. Your tour leader is responsible for organising the day-to-day aspects of running the tour and will be doing a lot of behind the scenes work to ensure everything runs smoothly. They will advise you on the best places to eat and drink, will arrange local optional excursions, attempt to solve any problems that might crop up and give you commentary about the local environment, culture, geography and history. The tour leader will take into account the group's wishes as a whole but there will be times when safety and security may dictate that an unpopular decision be made and your patience and understanding will be appreciated. Your driver will be fully accustomed to the local terrain and will drive with everyone's safety in mind. He/she will be a fully experienced mechanic and will keep the vehicle in good running order to avoid major mishaps.

Camping & hotels

Overland Expeditions combine camping and hotel accommodation and our expedition vehicles have all the equipment required for a trip of this kind. The campsites used vary from established sites with all facilities necessary to occasional free-camping in the wild where we are totally self sufficient. Large two person tents are used, and those who come alone will be teamed up with another group member of the same gender. The approximate percentage of nights spent camping on each expedition is given in the Facts box found in the brochure and on your tour dossier.

You will be allotted a tent and your tour leader will give you guidelines on how to erect it. This will be your tent for the duration of the expedition and it is important you take good care of it. At each site your tour leader will make suggestions for the best place to pitch your tent e.g. away from areas that may be prone to flooding in heavy rain and away from the kitchen/cooking area, as some people like to sit and chat after the evening meal which may keep you awake. However it is not a good idea to pitch your tent too far from the other group members for security reasons. Please pay attention to all advice given by the crew at each campsite.

Our crew will always be around to assist you and answer any questions. The first rule of camping is to take care of the equipment and make sure that you don't lose or leave anything behind (so always check the area before departure). If you must pack away your tent when it is wet, please re-erect and dry it out at the very first opportunity to stop it from becoming smelly, mouldy or rotten! For quality reasons our tents are usually imported from Europe however this can make them hard to replace when travelling. While much time is spent camping on these expeditions, it is impractical to camp in many major cities and areas where there are adverse climatic conditions. On these occasions we stay in small hotels and guest houses situated close to the main sights and town centres. They are chosen for their local ambience rather than star rating and we look for attributes like character, location, atmosphere, cleanliness and security.

All accommodation is on a share basis; normally twins or triples and occasionally multiple share (there are no single supplements so solo travellers will be roomed with other group members of the same sex). Rooms will mostly be en

suite however on some occasions facilities may be shared. At other times you may be sleeping in cabins, in local people's homes or even in hammocks.

Please remember we are travelling through developing countries and some hotels may have erratic services like lack of hot water, aircon or no central heating, the staff don't always speak English and sometimes our reservations are "lost"! In general facilities are good but please be prepared for the occasional mishap – it's all part of the Latin American experience.

Duties

All Overland Expeditions are participation tours where each group member will have some duties at various times throughout the tour. These duties vary from shopping and cooking to washing up of cooking equipment (everyone washes their own plates and utensils and is expected to put away their own dining stool), cleaning the inside of the vehicle and vehicle packing. The tour leader will organise small groups (normally 3-4 people) to do these duties on a roster basis however the actual tour group size will determine how many days you will have for each duty and how much time off in between. Our crew are usually very much involved in many of the duties and invariably take over on some occasions if the group is sightseeing or involved in other activities. However, it is compulsory that every group member is involved and takes his/her turn on the roster.

Food

All meals are included while camping (healthy breakfast, buffet type lunch with fresh bread, salad, cold meats, cheeses etc and a one or two course dinner) and lunches are only included on travelling days in the truck. Staple food supplies are stored on the vehicle and fresh ingredients (including fruit, salads, cheeses and cold meats) are purchased locally. Vegetarians or those with special dietary needs can also be catered for – please inform your tour leader at the start of the tour. Drinks are not included but there are many opportunities to purchase water/soft drinks etc along the way. At other times meals are the responsibility of each passenger giving you the flexibility to choose when, where and with whom to eat. Our tour leaders have a wealth of knowledge regarding local restaurants and can advise you of the best places to try the varied local cuisine.

The expedition vehicle

The majority of time on Overland Expeditions is spent travelling on our custom-built expedition vehicles. This is normally one of our robust Mercedes Benz trucks or very occasionally one of our specialised coaches. These vehicles are custom built to European standards and are perfect for open road cruising as well as climbing the high Andes. Although robust and versatile they are also designed to give you the maximum comfort. On board you'll find carpeted interiors, reclining coach seats with plenty of leg-room, tables for playing games or writing up your diary, large tinted windows for maximum visibility, large overhead racks, two cool boxes/refrigerators and a stereo (so bring along your favourite music!). All vehicles have PA systems so the tour leader can provide information as you travel and there is through access to the driver's compartment. The vehicles have large storage compartments, water supplies, spare parts, extra large fuel tanks so we can cover many kilometres between service stations and all equipment necessary for the preparation of meals including tables and camp-stools. Please note there may be instances on some tours where it is necessary to utilise the services of locally hired vehicles for the occasional journey or excursion.

Toilet stops

Our vehicles do not have toilets on board for hygiene and logistical reasons. We stop when necessary to suit the group so please be considerate to your fellow passengers by making use of these toilet stops, as long journeys will certainly become a lot longer if we have to stop every half hour or so! You will also find that generally our crew will not stop at service stations or other amenities on the route but will pull up alongside the road so you can 'go behind a bush'. The main reason for this is that often the facilities of public bathrooms leave a lot to be desired and the great outdoors is usually far better. Our crew always try and stop in isolated areas with as much privacy as is possible and tell you about environmentally sound 'bush toilet' practices.

NOTE: Tucan Travel reserve the right to surcharge for transportation & hotel costs not specified in the brochure but which become necessary due to political, immigration or other problems out of TucanTravel's control.

Budget Expeditions travel style

Suitability of passengers

We ask that you approach the tour with a spirit of adventure and an open mind and be tolerant with your fellow travellers and locals alike. Instead of including all of your options and excursions in the tour price, we give you the freedom to decide what you would like to do while you're on tour, so you choose how to spend your money along the way. Most clients on Budget Expeditions tend to be between 18 and 35 years of age who want to travel in the company of other young, fun and like-minded people. Our tours aim to unite other adventure-seekers from all over the world who have similar interests and passions. You can rest assured that on a Budget Expeditions tour you'll be with an awesome bunch of people who are all the same age, on the same wave length and are geared up for the experience of a lifetime.

Fellow travellers & group size

Your fellow travellers will come from all walks of life and from all corners of the globe. Some will be couples, but many will be singles travelling on their own, so either way it is guaranteed that you'll meet a number of like-minded people and even maybe form some lifelong friendships. On average there will be between 20 to 35 people on your tour. On more popular sections or times of the year the group size may be greater – up to a maximum of 34 people. Due to the modular system of our trips some passengers may join or leave the tour in selected cities. This style of travel is very popular with our travellers, as it enables you to meet even more new friends. Modular tours are also great for those of you who have a restricted amount of time or for those who may have previously travelled to some destinations but not others in our itineraries.

Crew

Fun, knowledgeable, approachable and organised are the best ways to describe our crew. On many of our trips we have two crew members; a tour leader and tour driver who combined are responsible for the safe and enjoyable running of the expedition. We take great care in choosing our crew and like our passengers they come from all around the world. They all have a passion for travelling, people and sharing their knowledge with you and of course the outdoor lifestyle. Each has to pass an intensive training programme to make sure they are qualified to lead our trips and meet our high standards.

Your tour leader will provide information on the places visited; arrange all campsite accommodation and establish duty rosters; organise optional excursions and group meals out and run the local fund and tour accounts. Your tour driver will maintain and service the vehicle, maintain all camping equipment and keep the vehicle clean and tidy. Overall as a team their goal is to ensure they offer you a service that exceeds your expectations while striking a balance between representing the company in a professional manner and being your mate. They are available to assist you 24/7 on your tour in order to make sure you get the best out of your experience.

Duties

All of our trips are hands-on and every group member is expected to participate and get involved, especially whilst camping. Duties vary from helping to cook with food preparation, washing up (everyone washes their own plates & utensils and is expected to put away their own dining stool), cleaning the inside of the vehicle and helping the boot packers with the packing of luggage, cooking & camping equipment on travel days. The tour leader will organise small groups to do these duties on a roster basis, normally of 3 to 4 people. Often it takes a bit of team work to get everybody ready to go on time.

When meals are included, they generally consist of breakfast (toast or cereal), buffet type picnic or packed lunch (so you can continue sightseeing) and a 1 or 2 course dinner. Fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy products and staple foods are purchased en route by the cook. Vegetarians or vegans or those with special dietary needs can also be catered for, so please inform your tour leader at the start of the trip. When meals are not included you will find there are many quality restaurants to choose from, allowing you to taste and experience authentic local cuisine which is cheap and delicious. Tour leaders often have a good knowledge regarding local restaurants and can advise you of the best places to try the varied local cuisine.

The tour vehicles

We are proud to boast the best overland vehicles of any overlanding company in Latin America. We use modern powerful Mercedes Benz expedition vehicles with custom built bodies. Big engines mean that they can travel comfortably at cruising speeds, even in the high Andes, often cutting hours off the daily travelling times of the vehicles of other companies. Our vehicles have modern reclining coach seats, writing tables, tinted sliding windows with curtains, library, ample storage space, stereo & PA system, through access to the driver cabinet.

We have long range fuel tanks for extended travel, large capacity water tanks for when camping in remote regions. Our camping and cooking equipment includes waterproof 2 person tents with mosquito netting, camping stools, extensive cooking equipment, large walk in kitchen tent with lighting.

Our expedition vehicles are all non smoking and do not have toilets on board for hygiene and logistical reasons. We stop approximately every 2 hours so please be considerate to your fellow passengers by making use of these toilet stops, as long journeys will certainly be a lot longer if we have to stop every half hour or so!

Toilet stops

Our vehicles do not have toilets on board. This is for hygiene and logistical reasons. We stop when necessary to suit the group so please be considerate to your fellow passengers by making use of these toilet stops, as long journeys will certainly become a lot longer if we have to stop every half hour or so! In some developing countries you will find that generally our crew will not stop at service stations or other amenities on the route but will pull up alongside the road so you can 'go behind a bush'. The main reason for this is that often the facilities of public bathrooms leave a lot to be desired and the great outdoors is usually far better. Our crew always try and stop in isolated areas with as much privacy as is possible.

NOTE: Tucan Travel reserves the right to surcharge for transportation costs not specified in the brochure but which become necessary due to political, immigration or other problems out of our control.

Independent Travel

Introduction and suitability

Independent Travel is for travellers who want the flexibility and freedom to design their own individual itinerary. There are no upper or lower age restrictions (although the recommended max is 70) so if you have children Independent Travel is ideal. This style of travel gives you flexibility to explore various destinations around the world at a pace that suits you with the added benefit of having pre-booked arrangements. Our Independent Travel mini-tours are a great idea if you have spare time with your international flight arrangements and wish to have a stopover for a few days prior to or on completion of one of our organised tours. Most mini-tours depart daily and to create your own tailor-made holiday simply join any of the modules together. Your travel consultant can assist you in booking international and domestic flights.

Options available include single, twin or triple occupancy hotel accommodation, airport transfers, city tours and local excursions. All excursions mentioned in the itinerary are included in the price unless otherwise indicated. We can offer excellent value and high quality packages in destinations worldwide. Please use our advanced search to learn about the full range of options available.

Group size

The group size varies according to how many people you are travelling with, although some excursions are pooled.

Local guides and local reps

In each city Tucan Travel uses English-speaking local guides and local reps who will assist you during your stay with things like sightseeing and restaurant recommendations etc. It must be remembered that our local representatives are not personal tour leaders and usually visit the hotel receptions in the mornings and evenings. On included excursions you will receive detailed commentaries from our English speaking local guides. They are dedicated professionals who have extensive local knowledge that will allow you to learn and understand more about the fascinating regions visited. Tucan Travel has offices in London, Peru, Sydney and Thailand - emergency contact details can be found in your tour dossier and in the contact us page on our website if you have any serious problems.

Accommodation

This travel style gives you the option to choose from a wide range of hotels offering various standards of comfort. To assist you with your hotel selection, and to enable you to judge the various accommodations by western criteria, we have classed our hotels as Pleasant, Comfort and Superior.

- **Pleasant Hotels** are generally the equivalent of a 2 star hotel. They are clean and comfortable with ensuite facilities, usually provide hot water, and they are chosen for their security, friendly staff and character. They are usually centrally located close to local attractions, restaurants and bars. A Pleasant Hotel may also take the form of a mountain hut, rustic cabin, lodge, chalet or tented accommodation which offers the same amenities you would expect from this standard of hotel.
- **Pleasant Plus Hotels** offer a slightly higher level of comfort.
- **Comfort Hotels** are generally the equivalent of a 3 star hotel. They offer all the attributes of our Pleasant hotels with an added level of comfort. These hotels may include amenities such as cable television, swimming pools, restaurants, elevators, internet access, room service, hair dryers and English-speaking reception staff. A Comfort Hotel may also take the form of a lodge, chalet or tented accommodation, which will be at the same standard as hotels.
- **Comfort Plus Hotels** offer a slightly higher level of comfort.
- **Superior Hotels** are generally the equivalent of a 4 star hotel. They offer amenities such as cable television, swimming pools, restaurants, elevators, internet access, room service, hair dryers and English-speaking reception staff. Additionally, hotel rooms and facilities will have a more luxurious ambience and modern feel. A Superior Hotel may also take the form of a lodge, chalet or tented accommodation, which offers the same amenities you would expect from this standard of hotel. The prices shown on each Independent Travel tour page are per person and include local taxes and breakfast. Hotel check-in time is generally 14:00 with check-out at 10:00.

When booking please advise what type of room you require. Two single beds are classed as a twin or one double bed is sometimes known as a matrimonial room. At peak season or during local festivals many hotels increase their prices. Tucan Travel will endeavour to keep prices as advertised, however, if these prices change we will inform you when you request the service. Should our advertised hotels not be available, an alternative hotel of the same star rating and similar price will be used and you will be notified of any changes.

Transport

Our aim is to offer you safe, comfortable and reliable transport. We use a variety of transport including minivans, taxis, coach, economy class flights and trains. Some of the transport used will be a private service however on some excursions a pooled service is used. If you have prepaid for an arrival transfer, or if an arrival transfer is included in your tour, please look for your name to be displayed on a welcome board held by our local driver once you are past customs at the airport.

Excursions

Excursions are generally guaranteed with departures based on a minimum of one person booking (this varies, please check individual package for details). To offer more competitive prices many excursions operate on a pooled service. This means clients are collected from several hotels around the city and travel as one group for the duration of the excursion. These groups will vary in size and can sometimes have mixed nationalities so it may be possible that your guide will commentate in more than one language - however these group excursions are an ideal opportunity for individual travellers to meet new friends.

Expedition Cruises

Introduction and suitability

Expedition Cruises are perfect for adventure travellers who are looking for a way to experience remote areas of the world in comfort and style. Forget about casinos, cabaret shows and 'floating hotels', Expedition Cruises offer you the chance to delve deep into rainforests, extreme polar environments and enjoy close encounters with unique wildlife in marine reserves and volcanic islands. If you're interested in walking across diverse and fascinating landscapes, snorkelling and swimming activities, lectures by knowledgeable naturalist guides and meeting local people, Expedition Cruises are for you.

Expedition Cruises suit people aged between 11 and 65 (recommended max 70) who are relatively fit and healthy, comfortable negotiating rocky or slippery terrain and enjoy getting close to nature. Itineraries can vary according to local conditions so we recommend that you take a flexible approach to maximise your enjoyment of Expedition Cruises.

Group size

The group size varies according to the destination and capacity of the vessel, and is indicated on the particular ship page and on the tour dossier. The maximum capacity of the largest vessel that we represent in this travel style is 136, however most ships are significantly smaller.

Local guides and local reps

Local representatives will assist you with accommodation, flights and transfers (if included). During your cruise you will be looked after by expedition leaders such as naturalist guides who will share their extensive knowledge of local flora and fauna, geology and history, and maritime safety with you during on-board lectures and/or onshore excursion. Emergency contact details can be found in your joining letter and in the contact us page of our website.

Accommodation onboard

Cabin styles vary according to the vessel. Generally the cabins feature air conditioning, port holes or windows, twin or double beds, ample room for storage and private bathroom facilities. Detailed information about cabin facilities can be found on individual ship pages and picture galleries on our website.

Pre and post cruise accommodation & transfers

We have packaged some cruises with pre and post cruise accommodation where necessary to coincide with early ship or flight departures. These packages include a high standard of accommodation. All hotels are centrally located in the joining/departing city and are Superior Hotel standard, generally the equivalent of a 4 star hotel. They offer amenities such as cable television, swimming pools, restaurants, elevators, internet access, room service, hair dryers and English-speaking reception staff. Additionally, hotel rooms and facilities will have a luxurious ambience and modern feel. A Superior Hotel may also take the form of a lodge or chalet which offers the same amenities you would expect from this standard of hotel. If your Expedition Cruise does not include pre and post cruise accommodation and/or you would like to spend more time in your arrival or departure port, our reservations team can make a booking for you.

Transport

All the vessels that we represent in the Expedition Cruises travel style have been selected on the basis that they all provide a high level of service, excellent facilities, a responsible approach to the environment and a strong emphasis on value for money. Boat types and sizes vary according to the destination – specifications are available on individual ship pages on our website. Landings will be made by smaller vessels such as zodiac style boats or dingys. Some itineraries also require short flights. Transfers may be made in private cars, minivans or coaches. If you have prepaid for an airport arrival transfer, or if an arrival transfer is included in your Expedition Cruise, please look for your name on a welcome board held by the local representative in the arrivals hall at the airport.

Food

Most meals are included during cruise days. The cuisine provided during your Expedition Cruise will be delicious, nutritious and prepared by professional chefs to high standards. The food will vary according to your destination but international styles will generally be available. Meals will generally be held at set times. Vegetarians and those with special dietary requirements can be catered for if advised at the time of booking.

Excursions

Although an itinerary outline is given, Expedition Cruises are anything but exact and days can change depending on local circumstances such as weather conditions, national park policies and regulations, opportunities to see wildlife, seasonal changes or safety matters. Excursions may include walks across diverse landscapes, snorkelling and swimming activities, lectures by knowledgeable naturalist guides, visits to particular places of interest and meeting local people.

Landings are not set in stone and the frequency, location and duration will vary depending on the situation on shore at the time. Your expedition leader will aim to land where the best weather conditions, the most abundant wildlife and the most stunning scenery can be found. Landing times will also be determined by your expedition leader. Landings are made by smaller vessels such as zodiac style boats or dingys. A dry landing allows passengers to step from the dinghy onto the rocks or a dock. Wet landings are as the boat edges onto a sandy beach; passengers step into knee deep water and wade ashore. The group will be accompanied by an expedition leader.

NOTE: Tucan Travel reserve the right to surcharge for transportation costs not specified in the brochure but which become necessary due to political, immigration or other problems out of our control.