26 Mar 25

Dear Traveller

Not long now until your Africa adventure begins!

This update includes information on

* Joining in Cape Town, your local payment and flying to Cape Town on a one way ticket
* Documentation
* Spending money
* Accommodation upgrades
* Taking time out from the trip
* Dietary requirements
* Passenger liability insurance and travel insurance with regard to government advice
* Keeping in touch and some tips from previous travellers.

Your crew, Paul and Liz are looking forward to meeting you in Cape Town. Liz has run several trips in West Africa over the years, as well as through Central Asia and beyond. Paul is a skilled mechanic and driver and has driven this route before the pandemic as well as many other overland trips throughout Africa, South America and Central Asia. Both are very experienced overlanders and make a fantastic team!

**STARTING IN CAPE TOWN**

The start date of your trip is dependent on the group who have been travelling through West Africa en route to Cape Town, arriving on time. Liz, Paul and the group are now in Namibia and running to schedule so currently you are all set to meet up and start on time on 14th April.

If you haven’t already, please email us your flight arrival and pre-trip accommodation details so we know who is arriving when.

**Trip Joining Point:**

Ashanti Backpackers Hostel - Cape Town

Address: 11 Hof Street, Gardens, Cape Town, 7441

Telephone: +27 (21) 423 8721

<https://ashanti.co.za/accommodation/backpackers-gardens/>

Email: info@ashanti.co.za

**Day 1 and the Pre-departure meeting**

As previously advised, we are adjusting the start of the trip slightly so that the night of Day 1 (14th April) will now be spent in Cape Town, and we will depart for Hermanus in the morning of the 15th. Your pre-departure meeting with the crew and the rest of the group will take place at **6pm in the evening of Day 1 of the trip, the 14th**, and not the night before on 13th.
You can check into Ashanti Lodge Backpackers Gardens at any time after 2-3pm on the 14th April.

**Local Payment**

As a reminder, please see your Local Payment amount listed below. Please note: CASH ONLY is accepted and needs to be in $US Dollars. Please make sure that all your notes are in good condition. Old, torn or marked notes are often refused by the banks and therefore we are unable to accept them either. Please make sure that $US Dollars are dated 2013 or later and do not have a serial number starting with CB. Please also bring larger denomination notes where possible.

Many of our travellers order currency online and pick it up at an airport foreign exchange desk just before flying out. This means you don’t have to carry a lot of cash with you for long, and you will get a much better rate by ordering the cash in advance rather than just buying it at the airport. Travelex have exchange shops in most airports, but do check your particular airport and terminal for the best option there (and make sure you know if you need to go to their land-side or air-side shop).

* **Cape Town to Cairo**

Local Payment = $3000

* **Cape Town to Nairobi**

Local Payment = $1950

**One-way flight letter**

Sometimes immigration officers or airline check in staff may question why you only have a one-way ticket. We have therefore prepared a template letter which you can amend and print out to explain your onward travels with us.

**Luggage reminder**

Please remember that 80 litre (100ltr max) backpacks and holdalls are the best form of carrying your luggage which will be stored in the truck’s luggage locker, along with a small day pack (40ltr max). Backpacks and holdalls that have a rigid frame as well as suitcases are impractical on the truck and should not be brought. If you bring excess luggage above the recommended amount then you will need to post it home from Cape Town.

**DOCUMENTATION**
You will need to bring a lot of paperwork with you to help with border crossings and visa applications. This includes multiple passport copies, yellow fever certificates, passport photos etc. Please see our separate document for a full list.

**SPENDING MONEY**

You will find a currency guide that may be useful to you in a separate document. This is a guideline as to what currencies are best to change in each of the countries you travel to, based on the previous year’s expedition.  Also see below for some tips from our previous travellers.

**CAMPING, ACCOMMODATION and UPGRADES**

As you will have seen on our website, you will be camping during your trip, mainly in designated campsites as well as some wild camping. There may be the occasional night in a hostel or basic hotel which could be dorm accommodation. We always aim for same sex dorms but sometimes this is not possible and you will be sleeping in a mixed dorm.

When we are camping, often the campsite we are staying at will also have an accommodation block, chalets, safari tents or other types of rooms available for people to stay in. When we arrive at these, you are welcome to upgrade your camping to stay somewhere and enjoy a bit more comfort. The tour leader will credit the cost of your camping towards your room booking IF the property allows them to do this. This is normally, but not always possible and you may need to pay the full cost of your new arrangements.

The same applies to hostel stays, if you want to switch from a dorm room to a private room. Again you can do this, but the tour leader will only be able to credit you with the cost of your original accommodation if the property allows it.

If you choose to stay somewhere else entirely, away from the rest of the group, then you will need to cover the full cost of this yourself.

If you want to arrange accommodation upgrades ahead of arriving somewhere, you are welcome to do this. Your tour leader will be able to tell you where we plan to stay (though bear in mind that often bookings are only made during the trip, so they won't have all details right from the start). But it is the traveller's responsibility for making the new booking - your tour leader will not have time to manage multiple different room requests for different stays during the trip.

While we are camping, you will be assigned a tent partner (same sex) to share with. If you want to have a tent to yourself, you are welcome to bring your own, but please advise us in advance.

**TAKING TIME OUT FROM THE TRIP**

Quite often on our much longer trips, people will take a few days away from the truck and group to do their own thing. This is perfectly fine and we will accommodate this as best we can. We will ask you to sign a simple bit of paperwork saying you are leaving the trip voluntarily, with a proposed place and date of return. You can stay in touch with the crew while you are away and liaise with them and with our head office about when you will re-join.

However, please bear in mind that we need to leave promptly on days we depart a location and if you are not there when we are scheduled to leave, you may be left behind and would need to cover any costs for re-joining yourself.

Also, our overland schedules are flexible, and we will not always be able to give exact dates for you to meet up again. You must be prepared to be flexible with this, and to cover all your costs for accommodation and transport yourself while you are away from the group. The crew need to put the arrangements of the group on the truck first and won't be able to re-arrange the trip schedule to accommodate your plans.  You will also not be due any refund of either the main trip price or the local payment if you spend time away from the truck and group.

**DIETARY REQUIREMENTS** (eg.Vegetarians / Vegans / Coeliacs / Gluten & Lactose intolerance etc.)

We will do our best to help facilitate dietary requirements or intolerances whenever possible, but also within reason. Everybody takes turns in cooking for the group as part of a small cook-group and while it is perfectly possible and normal to cook for both vegetarian and meat eaters, catering for more than that split is difficult. In general, in the past we have found that vegans have really struggled with the available food options at times.

If there is anything in particular you require in your diet or because of an allergy or intolerance, or would miss from home, it would be best to bring these with you, as these cannot be purchased with normal Local Payment funds due to the high cost of these specialised and often imported foods. This includes things like gluten free pastas. Additionally, you can stock up with items like this when we get to big towns or cities.

Because we will be cooking communally in a shared outdoor kitchen, it is hard, if not impossible, to prevent against some cross contamination. So, if you have severe allergies to certain food products you must tell us as soon as possible so that we can consider the implications and advise you further.

It must be remembered that the variety of dishes available to vegetarians may not be the same as available to meat eaters. When eating out in local restaurants and hotels, bear in mind that vegetarianism or food allergies / intolerances, are still not widely known about or understood by many local people. Eg. vegetarians will often be offered or served fish or chicken in error. Most large towns and cities, or areas used to tourists, will often have more choice but please be aware that it will probably not be as varied as you are used to when eating out at home.

**PASSENGER LIABILITY INSURANCE**

As a company we do our best to have the best possible level of insurance in place to protect our travellers and our operations. That includes a comprehensive tour operators liability insurance policy which protects all of our trips. We also try to obtain passenger liability insurance to cover our liability for your time on the vehicle itself, including any accidents. However, as we make clear in our booking conditions, this type of insurance is not always available or adequate in some countries.

We have done extensive research over the last couple of years through insurance companies and brokers both here in the UK and in several different African countries, and unfortunately the situation is that there simply is not any passenger liability insurance cover available at all now to purchase in advance for most of North and West Africa. We should have coverage for South and East Africa in place. The main policy that used to provide cover for overland companies like us before Covid is simply not available anymore. We will attempt to purchase insurance at each border we cross, and sometimes this is possible (albeit with a very low level of cover), but this will not be available everywhere. As a responsible operator we wanted to bring this to your attention before the trip starts. Be assured though that our main liability policy is in place for you.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE AND GOVERNMENT TRAVEL ADVICE**

As previously mentioned in our first email, the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) as well as governments of other countries aim to provide advice and security information for their citizens and this advice could affect your travel insurance policy. For example, if the FCDO is advising against ‘all or non essential travel’ to a particular country or specific area of it, most travel insurance companies will not cover the policy holder for travel through that area.

Please remember to check that your personal travel insurance is valid for travel through each and every country on the expedition.   Please also check the **cover will continue after you have been through any countries that currently have travel restrictions in place.**  We have been informed that some travel insurance companies will void a policy if you go against any of the British FCDO advice.

**Travel insurance that includes cover for areas the FCDO advises against travel to**

If you already have travel insurance and it doesn’t cover areas with travel advisories in place, [SafetyWing’s Nomad Insurance](https://safetywing.com/nomad-insurance?selectedPlan=NOMAD_INSURANCE_ESSENTIAL) can offer a policy for your time in each of them. As these areas can change at short notice, you can take out this cover during the trip, as and when needed. If you haven’t yet purchased a travel insurance policy for your trip, or wish to cancel and change your existing policy, you can also get cover through Safety Wing Insurance for the whole trip. Please see our previous update for further details about cover and exclusions.

As always, and whichever insurance policy you take out, please read the policy carefully – it’s always a long read with a lot of small print but it’s important and your responsibility to know what you are covered for and that it will be adequate for the trip you are undertaking.

**More on Government Travel Advice**

It’s important to remember that the advice for the different countries and areas in which we operate trips is forever changing and we are constantly reviewing information as it comes to hand.  Oasis Overland have been travelling through these areas for approximately 20 years and have gained a lot of experience and local knowledge. We have local contacts in many areas and others who travel these routes (which may be companies and/or individuals) readily share information.

First and foremost, the safety of our clients and crew is paramount and we take it very seriously. Our local contacts on the ground can inform us should an area become unsafe to travel through, often more quickly than the FCDO. One of the advantages of travelling overland in our own expedition vehicle and being flexible is that we can change our itinerary on the rare occasions this is needed. When this is not possible, then the group need to fly over at their own expense. This is rare but as previously advised, it has happened for Sudan over the past two years and so we plan to fly from Addis Ababa to Cairo (at your own cost) and travel Egypt with public transport and local hotels.

Current areas on our route with advisories in place are listed below. Your crew will advise you of these before arrive and ask you to sign some paperwork just to confirm that you have been given information about the advice:

[**Ethiopia**](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ethiopia)

The FCDO is advising against all but essential travel to an area between Bishoftu and Metehara which we drive through for approximately 3 hours along a 140km stretch of road on our way out of Addis Ababa towards Harar and also on our return to Addis from Semera. If you wish to fly over this section, you can fly from Addis to Dire Dawa or Djibouti and from Semera to Addis.

[**Somaliland**](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/somalia)

The FCDO advises against all but essential travel to the area of Somaliland we travel through. This has been in place for some time now and we travelled through last year with no issues. If you wish to fly over this section you can do so from Addis Ababa to Djibouti.

We will continue to monitor the situation in each country as we get closer and your crew will provide an update on our route and the current advice closer to the time.

**KEEPING IN TOUCH**

It is possible to buy local Sim cards for your mobile phone very cheaply. Please make sure that your phone is unlocked. Sim cards work on a top up basis and top up cards are readily available. Please be aware that Micro sims are difficult to obtain outside of big cities with posh phone shops and you’ll be even more unlikely to find a Nano sim. But regular sims are available pretty much everywhere!  If your phone is compatible, you can also buy eSims in advance. This is a good option now, though they may not work in every country. WiFi is available in some of the properties and areas that we visit – but the efficiency or speed in connection is never a guarantee! Prices can range considerably, from free WiFi to up to £4 pounds per hour.

Please prepare your family for the fact that you may have significant stretches of time where you will not be in contact – generally this means you are having fun!

**SOME TIPS FROM PREVIOUS TRAVELLERS**

* It was suggested that you budget for visas separately and keep visa money in a separate envelope to the rest of your cash.
* Many travellers said they underestimated their spending money (with drinks being a bigger expense than anticipated). In addition to our suggested spending money, some travellers recommend allowing up to £500-£1000 more, depending on the length of your trip.
* Some of our travellers have used a free standing mosquito net and found these to be effective and allowed them to sleep under the stars.   There are several nets available but the free standing ones can be put up anywhere and you do not need to rely on needing hooks or a tree to hang it off. Here is their personal favourite. They recommend shopping around as prices vary: [**http://www.sansbug.com/**](http://www.sansbug.com/)

You do not need to bring a net if you do not wish to as our tents have in-built mosquito netting.

* Previous travellers have said that they underestimated how cold it could get. During this trip you will encounter extremes in weather. A few of our previous expeditions have encountered frost in Lesotho, rainy seasons in East Africa and extreme heat in the desert.  The general advice here is to pack for all weathers!