

WILD FRONTIERS



Wild Walk in the Kashmiri Himalayas Kashmir - India

Kashmir - that centuries old holiday idyll - is back on the tourist map offering some of the most pristine and wonderful trekking anywhere on the subcontinent. Guides at Wild Frontiers have returned here for a number of years, walking the streets of Srinagar, searching out the best houseboats, and repeatedly coming to the conclusion that this region had been closed for too long. The four-day trek from Aru to Sonomus is a classic Himalayan trail, taking you through primal forests, past pristine lakes and over High Mountain passes. Then with three nights at the end to relax on Srinagar's famous lakes, this is a wonderful trip for anyone with a strong sense of adventure and love of the wild outdoors.

"We were thrilled by the scenery, challenged by the trekking, warmed by the people we met along the way. A trip I will never forget." *Ginny Fraser*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Delhi's historical sites
- Epic flight over the Himalayas to Srinagar
- Wonderful trek through the Kashmiri Mountains.
- Day trip up to Gulmarg
- The houseboats of Srinagar

Duration: 10 Days

Average group size: 5 - 12

Start: Fri 31 Aug 12

Finish: Sun 09 Sep 12



Why Wild Frontiers?

As a young, innovative company, Wild Frontiers is delighted to have been voted one of the 'Top 10 Tour Operators' by the readers of both Wanderlust and National Geographic Adventure. We are frequently asked what makes us different from other tour operators, and feel that the factors below answer this important question.

The Traveller's Ethos: WF is a company that has been set up by travellers for travellers, and our ethos is to help adventurous souls get to incredible and inaccessible places in safety and as much comfort as local conditions allow. We are firm believers that travelling is all about the experience and it's the details that make the trip - we specialise in drawing on our own extensive local knowledge and array of contacts to give our clients the very best experience possible.

Personal Service: Our London office is manned by experienced expedition leaders and every trip we run stems from their extensive knowledge - in short, we run the kind of trips that as passionate travellers, we like to do ourselves! When you ring our office, you can be guaranteed to chat to someone that knows the trips and the terrain, and is able to offer sound and practical advice.

Authentic Experiences: Our unique, original itineraries allow our clients to take journeys that venture beneath the surface of the region. Unlike the plethora of 'world specialists' out there who purport to know a hundred destinations, we concentrate on the locations we know and love. We don't run the same tour over and over, thus running the risk of creating a 'tourist circuit' and spoiling untouched regions. Instead, we rarely run any tour more than a couple of times a year and they are on routes we have discovered for ourselves, meaning we are able to give a truly authentic, off-the-beaten-track experience.

Be the First: Our style of travel is all about exploration, and nothing excites us more than opening up new routes to genuine travellers. We keep abreast of new destinations and are often the first to return to places that have vanished from the tourist map. We were the first back into Pakistan after 9/11, the first to return to Kashmir after a decade of tourist isolation, and the first to run a commercial travel trip to Afghanistan for almost 30 years. Since then we have helped bring Colombia, Yemen and Georgia back into the tourist fold, specialising in groundbreaking reconnaissance trips and imaginative expeditions.

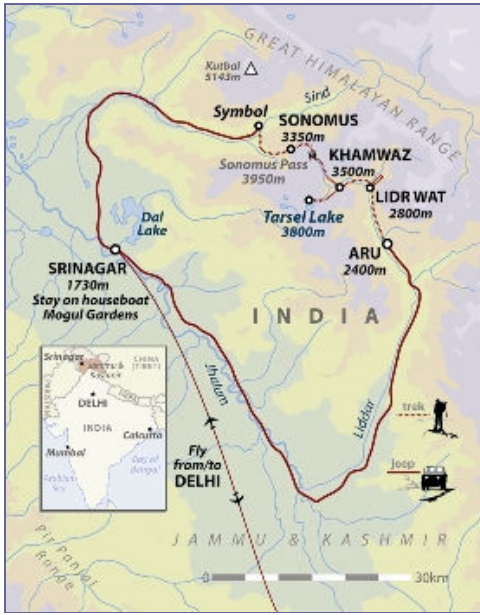
Small Group Size: We believe it is imperative to keep the group sizes small. Most trips are limited to a maximum of approximately 12 travellers, thus giving you more access to fragile cultures, better opportunities to interact with local people, and the knowledge you are making less of an impact while there.

Cost of Tours: We believe in an honest, upfront pricing system so you know exactly what the tour will cost before you book. We avoid local payments, 'optional extras' or forcing our clients to split every meal bill. Our tours are provided on a predominantly full board basis, with mineral water, government permits, entrance fees and transport all included.

Added Value: We aim to give our clients the very best (not the least expensive) experience through whatever facilities are available to us. We always try to provide accommodation that is interesting, characterful and convenient, and transport - another important part of any tour - that is as varied and comfortable as possible.

Our Clients: Your companions can make or break a trip, and it's lucky therefore that our clients are our greatest asset. Travelling to remote regions is not for everyone, and as such we tend to attract open-minded travellers looking for genuine experiences, and a desire to reach those hard to get to places.

Responsible Travel: Awarded 5 star status by AITO (Association of Independent Tour Operators), responsible tourism has always been an integral part of our company ethos and our adventures are designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. For further details please refer to the RT section on this dossier.



Day 1: Delhi: The tour starts at our joining hotel in the city centre. After meeting at about midday we will go out for lunch and then take a look around the new town, home of the British Raj, where we will take a stroll down the Rajpath to see Rashtrapati Bhavan, formerly the Viceroy's palace, before moving on to the Old Town. Once here we will take a wander from the Red Fort, down Chandi Chowk - the old town's main thoroughfare - through the narrow alleyways of Shahjehanabad to emerge at the beautiful Jama Masjid Mosque. Dinner in a Delhi restaurant.

Hotel (L, D)

Day 2: Delhi - Srinagar - Aru: Up early to take a very spectacular flight up to Srinagar. If you are lucky and find yourself in a window seat you will get a great view of the Himalayas. Arrive into Srinagar and transfer immediately to Aru, where the first night's camp will be located. We will have excellent facilities with mattresses, dining, shower and kitchen tent, as well as a separate loo. On arrival we will have drinks and dinner. *Camp, Altitude 2,400m (B, L, D)*

Day 3: Aru - Lidr Wat: After a relaxed breakfast we will trek for only four hours as we acclimatise ourselves to the mountains. It is a stunning walk that takes us through forests of cedar, spruce and pines to Lidr Wat where we will camp between two rivers. After lunch in camp

we can go for a further 2-hour walk up the Lidr Valley.

Camp, Altitude 2,800m (B, L, D)

Day 4: Lidr Wat - Beyond Tarsel Lake:

Today things get a little tougher as we walk for around 6 hours towards the stunning, 3,800m Tarsel Lake. We will leave the forested areas soon after breakfast and head out onto the open mountains, with peaks and valleys surrounding us. Setting off in good time, we should reach our camp at Khamwaz in time for lunch. Those who would like to walk some more can take the side trip up to the beautiful turquoise, glacial lake getting in to camp later in the afternoon for tea.

Camp, Altitude 3,500m (B, L, D)

Day 5: Beyond Tarsel Lake - Sonomus:

Today we will be arguably the most stunning day of the trek as we climb up to 3950m to cross the Sonomus Pass. After the pass we will have a picnic lunch in a spectacular spot before descending on towards the tree line. We should reach our final camp above a beautiful stream at Sonomus after about 6 hours. We'll have tea then some time to relax and enjoy this wonderful spot.

Camp, Altitude 3,350m (B, L, D)

Day 6: Sonomus - Srinagar:

After breakfast we will carry on down through the forests, as the Sind Valley opens out, the road-head at Symbol. On the way we will have a picnic lunch and hopefully cool off in a sparkling mountain stream before finishing the trek. Transfer to jeeps for a 2½-hour drive to Srinagar, which we should reach by late afternoon. Once here we will transfer to shikara water taxis to paddle round to our Palace Houseboat, situated on a quiet quarter of Dal Lake. Dinner will be on the houseboat.

Houseboat (B, L, D)

Day 7: Srinagar: Sitting at the heart of the Vale of Kashmir lies Srinagar, famed for centuries for its clean, clear air, its idyllic setting and of course its lakes. Framed by high-forested hills that rise up in the distance to the snow-capped Himalayas it is simply one of the most picturesque places you're ever likely to visit. To drift across Dal Lake on the elegant shikaras is relaxation at its most exotic and peaceful, which you might

need after the rigours of your trek. Staying in one of the most beautiful houseboats, where things have changed little since the Brits first built them back in the 19th century, today we will simply chill-out.

Houseboat (B, L, D)

Day 8: Srinagar: Of course, staying for nearly 3 whole days there is plenty to do besides relaxing in the gorgeous summer sunshine. Today we will visit the beautiful Moghul Gardens, created by the Emperor Akbar, and the old city with its narrow streets and ancient mosques. No doubt many of you will want to do some shopping; though in truth that doesn't require much effort as on the lakes the hawkers - of flowers, jewellery, pashminas etc - come to you. For the really energetic there's always a round of golf to consider on one of India's best courses. There is also the option of taking a day trip out to the old British retreat of Gulmarg if the group wishes. Each day we will eat on the houseboat, sampling the delicious cuisine.

Houseboat (B, L, D)

Day 9: Srinagar - Delhi: The morning is free and after an early lunch we will fly to Delhi and check into our hotel. A couple of hours free for a last look around before heading on down to have dinner at a restaurant in Delhi.

Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 10: Delhi: The tour finishes with breakfast this morning at the hotel.

(B)

Warning!

The British Foreign & Commonwealth Office sometimes advises against certain parts of this itinerary. Before choosing to join this trip you should first read the relevant sections of their website (www.fco.gov.uk). If travelling from the UK you will also need insurance that is not FCO sensitive. For more information, please contact Wild Frontiers Adventure Travel Limited.

Wild Extensions:

Arrive early to adjust to a new time zone or just to get a feel for the country before your tour starts. Explore the country after your tour on a bespoke Wild Extension or just allow a few days to

relax afterwards. Maybe choose all of the above and get cheaper flights mid-week?

- A) Taj Extension. Not yet seen the marble wonder of the world that is the Taj Mahal? Take an extra couple of days after the tour to visit this amazing site coupled with the deserted dry fort that is Fatehpur Sikri.
- B) Kashmir Extension. Although on the lake for 3 nights already, many people then are in the dilemma of wanting to stay longer. Organise it before you leave so you know you have that relaxing time afterwards... be the envy of those that have to leave.
- C) Seen something else in India you want to explore...

...then please just contact the office, where we can tailor your extension to suit your needs.

TOUR DETAILS

Tour Code: WWK/A

Tour price: All our tours are priced on a LAND ONLY basis, giving you maximum flexibility when deciding how to get to and from your tour.

Single Supplements: These are NOT compulsory for any Wild Frontiers tour. Where single supplements are available please note that a single room cannot always be guaranteed for every night of the tour as depending on the destination, rooms may be limited. On this tour we are happy to offer an optional single supplement that will cover you for all nights of the tour.

NB: for those nights when we are camping you will get a single tent.

Flights: If you would like us to send you a quote for the suggested tour flight (see GETTING THERE) or on any alternative flight that may suit you better, please let us know.

In all cases, for the latest prices, please refer to our website or contact the office.

Please remember that all Wild Frontiers tour prices mean NO hidden extras, NO local payments or kitty and NO compulsory single supplements.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Full services of a Wild Frontiers Tour Leader with local guides and drivers.
- Meal plan as detailed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner) with mineral water as required.
- All transport as outlined in the itinerary.
- All accommodation
- All entrance fees, as per itinerary.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- Visas
- Local airport taxes
- Tips
- Beverages & any costs of a personal nature.
- International Flights
- Airport transfers (unless booking suggested flights through WF office)

GETTING THERE

For this trip our suggested flights (subject to change) are:

30AUG 9W121 LHR-DEL 20:45/10:00+1
09SEP 9W122 DEL-LHR 13:50/18:30

Key:

LHR - London Heathrow

DEL - Delhi

9W - Jet Airways

NB If you wish to arrange your own flights you are completely free to do so and in this case we can arrange any transfers or supplementary accommodation that you may require.

Please note that if you are making your own flight arrangements, we recommend that you only purchase flights that are totally flexible and refundable as due to the nature of adventure travel, itineraries can change at any time. For more information, please refer to our booking conditions.

PRACTICALITIES

Accommodation will involve excellent hotel/guesthouse accommodation in Delhi, houseboats in Srinagar and tents on trek.

Any accommodation mentioned in the itinerary is subject to availability and if not available substitutes will be of a similar quality.

Transport will be by planes and jeeps and local transport in Delhi.

Trip Grading:

Adventure Rating ❖❖❖❖❖

Comfort Grade ❖❖❖❖❖

Fitness Level ❖❖❖❖❖

Cultural Interest ❖❖❖❖❖

Please note that this grading is an indication only and should you have any concerns please contact the office.

Fitness...

Anyone in a reasonable state of health who enjoys mountain walking should be perfectly able to cope with this trip. The trek takes you from around 2,400m to a high point of 3,950m but the ascent is relatively gradual. That said a decent state of fitness is required for this trip.

It may sound obvious but...

Wild Frontiers tours are not always for everyone and it is important to us that the tour you choose is the most suitable. Please therefore take time to read the dossier carefully. All our tours are graded to give an overall picture of the trip but these are only guidelines and you should check the daily itinerary. Should you have any concerns about your ability to partake in any aspect of the tour then please contact the office.

Insurance: Insurance that provides cover for emergency repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all tours. You should be aware that many standard insurance policies may not cover you adequately for all aspects of a Wild Frontiers trip and so we strongly recommend that you purchase a suitably designed insurance policy. One such policy is the "Wild Frontiers" policy underwritten by Travel & General Insurance Company plc, which is available

to UK and Republic of Ireland residents through our website or via the insurance company direct on 0845 408 0583. Under this policy there are two different levels of cover available and for this trip the minimum requirement would be the Elite Policy.

Cover explained:

Standard policy: a comprehensive travel insurance policy that provides cover for all Wild Frontiers activities, including trekking up to 6,000m. This policy does not provide cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel.

Elite policy: provides the same comprehensive level of cover as the standard policy. In addition the Elite policy also provides cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel. The policy will not provide cover for any claims arising from or relating to the reasons why the FCO is advising against travel.

If purchasing the Elite policy you also have the option to **extend the cover** provided by the policy to include cover for claims arising from a terrorist act in an area where the FCO is advising against travel. You can add this cover to your policy when purchasing online or over the telephone.

These policies are only available to those travelling on a Wild Frontiers holiday.

For more information and to purchase your policy online please visit the Insurance section of our website.

The cover is underwritten by the International Insurance Company of Hannover Limited (IICH), who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Wild Frontiers Limited is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Travel & General Insurance Company plc, details of which can be found at the FSA's website www.fsa.gov.uk.

If you do decide to purchase alternative insurance, then you must ensure that it covers you for every aspect of this trip. Please pay particular attention to ensuring that you are covered for travel

to areas advised against by the FCO, and for trekking up to 4000m.

Visas: Visas are necessary for many of the destinations we travel to and while we aim to provide you with the most up-to-date information, requirements frequently change and as such we advise that you check with the relevant embassies or contact our recommended visa agency, Travcour (020 7223 5295) www.travcour.com for the latest advice.

For this tour, UK passport holders require a visa for India.

Non-UK passport holders should contact the relevant embassies for individual requirements.

Further details will be sent out to you on booking, however ensuring that correct and valid visas are obtained remains the sole responsibility of the client.

Responsible Travel: Responsible travel and sustainable tourism are fundamental ideas that Wild Frontiers has been committed to since our birth. It is our strong belief that these words should not be simply 'tagged on' to dossiers and websites but should be at the very core of each trip, and our adventures are therefore designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. We believe that a successful trip not only delivers a unique and unsurpassable journey for our clients, but that it also benefits the peoples whose lands we are privileged to visit.

The Wild Frontiers Foundation: In order to facilitate an enduring support structure for the communities we visit, and to show a commitment to these values, Wild Frontiers has set up a charitable foundation through which we can channel funds to both existing NGOs and our own development projects. In addition to organising ethically sensitive tours, having our own charitable foundation allows us to raise money - through the cost of our tours, charity trips and fund raising events - which can then be used to fund various projects in education, sanitation, reforestations and a number of other important issues facing developing communities. Wherever possible we are happy for our clients to visit these projects to see for themselves

where and how this money is being spent. For a full list of partner NGOs please visit our website. Should you wish to donate to the foundation please contact the office for details.

The Environment: Trying to do our bit for the environment, in 2005 we were among the first UK-based travel companies to automatically offset every client's international flight (if booked with us) with a payment to Carbon Clear to help promote sustainable energy.

Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO): The FCO Travel advice highlights potential hazards people might experience when travelling abroad. Given the nature of destinations offered by Wild Frontiers it is inevitable that from time to time some itineraries contravene this advice. Whilst WF takes the safety and security of its clients extremely seriously, we will not necessarily cancel a trip because of the FCO advice. It is recommended therefore that clients check this advice before booking and contact us if they have any queries or concerns. Please see our website for further information.

Climate: The main thing to bear in mind when visiting Kashmir, especially if travelling up from the Indian plains, is that weather-wise, anything can happen. There is the potential for rain showers and chilly conditions on the high mountain passes. Therefore, as with so many of Wild Frontiers' mountain trips, you need to come prepared for any eventuality.

Further information:
When you make a confirmed booking with Wild Frontiers we will send you our confirmation pack with complete pre-departure information giving you details on visas, health and vaccinations, packing lists, suggested reading on the region, insurance, photography and other useful tips to make your trip more enjoyable.

KASHMIR - THE FACTS



Delhi: Capital of modern India, of the British Raj and the Moghul Empire, Delhi - the City of Djinns - is a fascinating place to explore. It is bursting with centuries of colourful history, old imperial splendour and modern manic mayhem. From the chaotic, narrow alleyways of the old town to the relative tranquillity of the new, at almost every corner there is something - a fort, a mosque, an imperial palace - to excite and amaze the visitor. To wander unhindered down Rajpath - the Kingsway - from India Gate to Rashtrapati Bhavan, stopping for a while in the shade of the sheltering neem trees to feast your eyes on Lutyens' extraordinary work of architecture will have even the most seasoned traveller gasping in awe. Just as impressive, and arguably a lot more fun, is to take a walk through the old town, down the bustling Chandi Chowk and off into the narrow, sunless alleyways that make up Shajehanabad. Here, among the jewellery, fabric and wedding bazaars you will find a world barely changed from that of Moghul times. With plenty more sight-seeing trips available to the Qutab Minar, Lodhi Gardens, the Lotus Temple or the awesome Humayun's Tomb (inspiration for the Taj Mahal), you can also go on shopping expeditions on Janpath, Santoshti or to the Khan Markets, or just sip a quiet cup of tea at the Imperial. Whichever you choose, Delhi can have you busy for days.

Kashmir: Famed for centuries for its infinite natural beauty - its spectacular mountains, fertile valleys and tranquil lakes - Kashmir has long been regarded as a paradise on earth. It was to Srinagar that the Moghuls and British rulers

travelled to escape the summer heat; in the sixties it was the turn of the hippies, and in the seventies and eighties so followed tourists and travellers for just the same reason. Shangri La... until at the end of 1989 when the region exploded in a violent struggle for independence that has continued with various levels of hostility for the past 15 years, claiming 60,000 lives. With Pakistan encouraging the militants on the one hand, and India suppressing, imprisoning and torturing the local population on the other, the situation has run and run, appearing like it has no end.



Then in early 2004, after regional elections the governments of India and Pakistan began to ease the tension with a series of talks that are continuing to this day. As nominal, yet crucial, changes began to take place - from international cricket matches to the opening of 'friendship' bus routes across the line of control - so the peace process gathered momentum. Finding themselves isolated, with dwindling support in the Vale and diminishing assistance from Islamabad, the militants agreed to a ceasefire and though this has been breached on occasions, the general mood has swung towards peace. The last time a tourist was attacked was over a decade ago. In fact, realising the importance of the tourist dollar to the region, Hebz-i-Mujahadeen, who represents the main militant groups in the Vale, even came out with a statement announcing that under no circumstances were tourists to be harmed.

As such, both domestic and international tourism has started to return. In 2004, 25,000 foreign travellers made their way to Kashmir, a number that almost doubled in 2005 and continues to rise. There are still a huge number of Indian soldiers in Kashmir but on the whole their presence does not cast an oppressive

'occupation' vibe: the number of sandbagged machine gun posts has been reduced considerably as has the amount of police check points. On the lakes you would know nothing of the troubles and even in the countryside it has little effect. With the situation between Islamabad and New Delhi continuing to improve, the latter has even agreed to start reducing the numbers of troops in the region.



Ask a Kashmiri and most will tell you that while they are not entirely content with domination from Delhi, they are under no illusions about the chances of independence and after a decade and half of unrest, they now want things to go back to normal so they can get on with their lives and start doing what they enjoy doing best... making money from tourists!

Having spent time checking things out, we at Wild Frontiers Adventure Travel believe that travellers face no greater risk here than they do in a number of other places where tourism is encouraged, and we are confident therefore that the time has come to return to Kashmir. We have visited Kashmir successfully each year since 2006.



A Brief History: Moghul emperor Babur longed for the clear streams and cool mountains of the Hindu Kush, plus, it should be added, the famously beautiful dancing girls. However it was his son, Emperor Akbar, who was first to conquer the state in 1588, and his son, Jahangir that planted the china trees and pleasure gardens that can still be enjoyed today. The lands were then inherited by the Sikhs; lost to the British as part of the reparations for the first Sikh War, who duly handed them over to their Rajput ally, Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu. Hence a Hindu became ruler of a majority Muslim state.

At independence, Gulab's great-grandson, Hari Singh, failed to decide which of the two newly created countries he wished to join, and Pakistan, seeing it as a rightful part of their new Muslim state, invaded. Eighteen months of fighting left the state split by a UN monitored ceasefire line, which remains the *de facto* border between the two countries.

In 1988 local elections in the Indian administered region, which it was hoped would give greater autonomy to the local population, were rigged by Delhi. Protests were suppressed and in January, after the killing of a number of demonstrators on a bridge in Srinagar, the full-scale insurrection began.

After two unsatisfactory elections in the '90s, 2002 saw something approaching a fair ballot and so the drive towards peace began. Even now there is a very long way to go, and the ultimate prize of peace might still prove elusive, but at the moment there is undeniably a mood of optimism in the Vale, a realisation that war can't go on forever. One generation has already been lost and that is enough.



Srinagar: Old Srinagar puts one in mind of London before the fire. Founded in the sixth century by Raja Pravarasen and

beautifully located around a number of lakes, Srinagar, 'the beautiful city', is divided in two by the river Jhelum that is crossed by a number of bridges. The old town is a wonderful maze of narrow streets and alleyways, is home to a number of famous mosques, temples and tombs - including Jesus' if you believe the legend - and though the true beauty of Kashmir has probably never been reflected in its capital city, it still makes for an interesting place to wander.



Houseboats: Like the Moghuls before them, the British loved Kashmir; the officers for the hunting and the walking and because it was seen as an ideal place for their young wives to give birth, well away from the dizzy heat of the Indian plains. However, as the British never ruled Kashmir they were not allowed to buy land and build houses (though somehow they managed in Gulmarg). As a result, they took advantage of the abundant timber and the gorgeous and tranquil lakes to build lavish houseboats instead. Today these houseboats are one of the main draws to Kashmir as many are still in a splendid condition and represent a very comfortable and characterful place to stay. Usually situated on one floor, with rosewood panelled walls and ceilings, a living room, dining room and forward balcony, they provide a wonderful glimpse into the past.



How to book:

In order to confirm your booking we need to have a completed signed booking form for each client together with a £400 deposit per person. You can either return your booking form to us by post or by booking online at

www.wildfrontiers.co.uk

You can contact the office by email to info@wildfrontiers.co.uk or we are very happy to take your call on **020 7736 3968**.

Wild Frontiers is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator and our ATOL number is 5975. You can book your holiday with Wild Frontiers in complete confidence that all monies you pay to us for your tour are fully protected.

We are also bonded with the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). AITO members comply with the highest standards of consumer protection. Every AITO holiday is backed not only by AITO's Quality Charter but also by full financial protection.

We do recommend that you take out adequate travel insurance at the time of booking in the event that you are no longer able to travel as all deposits are non-refundable - full booking conditions can be found on the booking form and online at our website.