

WILD FRONTIERS



Under a Pagan Moon Kalash Winter Festival Tour Pakistan

This is quite simply the one of the most amazing, original and wild trips we do. Run for the first time in 2006, our small group of intrepid travellers was the first to experience the Kalash winter solstice festival of Chamos and probably one of the first to see the rare snow leopard in the wild. This is the most important time of year for the Kalash, when life, the gods and ancestors are celebrated in a weeklong party and joining them for their celebrations is a privilege to which very few Westerners are invited. And having liaised with the BBC Planet Earth team as to the whereabouts of the exquisite snow leopard, it was only fitting that on the second day of the tour we watched her all afternoon as she roamed gracefully over the mountainside and as dusk fell, make her kill. And now with the new Lowari Tunnel making access to these hidden valleys all the more accessible we can now offer this trip without the hassles of the past. So if you are game enough to experience a true adventure you will witness events that will certainly stay with you forever. This is as close to real exploration as us mortals are ever likely to get.

“All the way we were treated as guests rather than tourists, a rare privilege in a foreign land.” *June McCausland*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spend five nights with the Kalash and enjoying their amazing Winter Festival
- Take a winter walk up to our own wild hideaway
- Watch a game of frontier polo in Chitral
- Visit Tushi and Chitral Gol National Park to search for snow leopards
- Watch the wild Markhor goats

Duration: 16 Days

Average group size: 5 - 12

Start: Fri 07 Dec 12

Finish: Sat 22 Dec 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: Islamabad: The tour starts in the morning at our joining hotel and for those who have just come from an international flight, there will be time to freshen up and have a rest. We will then head to Rawalpindi for lunch and take time to explore the bustling markets, before returning to our hotel to freshen up, and taking dinner in the Margalla Hills.
Hotel (L, D)

Day 2: Islamabad - Chitral: This morning we take an early flight* from the capital to arrive in the sleepy mountain town of Chitral. Here we will wander through the streets and markets of Chitral, absorbing the friendly local atmosphere, meeting the shopkeepers and sampling their wares. After lunch and a game of frontier polo - should there be one - and check into our hotel.
Hotel (B, L, D)

*Should the flight be cancelled due to bad weather we will drive this route stopping for lunch in Dir.

Days 3/4: In & around Chitral: A relaxing morning for more local sightseeing and after lunch we will drive out to Tushi, from where the famous Planet Earth footage was filmed, and set about trying to spot the elusive snow leopard. Dinner will be at our hotel. Whether we have flown or driven the next day will follow

the same pattern with a day trip to the snow leopards cave in Tushi.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Days 5/6: Chitral - Chitral Gol: Today the adventure will really begin as we move up to the old hunting lodge in Chitral Gol, the region's National Park. Staying in the wild will give us another great opportunity to spot the snow leopard, but that is not all. This is also the rutting season for the famous Markhor wild goat and we will see hundreds of them fighting and playing - indeed it is the young of the Markhor that interest the snow leopard.
Mountain Lodge (B,L,D)
(Lodge - rooms are limited so single supplement will not apply)

Day 7: Chitral Gol - Ayun: After another day of Snow Leopard watching, we move on to stay at the beautiful Ayun Fort, home to the Prince of Ayun. This is a gorgeous place, with fire places in each of the bedrooms. Dinner will be in the Prince's traditional dining room.
Guesthouse (B,L,D)

Day 8: Ayun - Balanguru: Today we drive to the Kalash Valley of Rumbor and the village of Balanguru where we stay with our friend Saifullah Jan, the chief spokesperson for the Kalash. The journey takes about an hour, though most people prefer to walk the last few miles through the gorgeous valley. Today, the women of the valley - including those travelling with us - must cleanse their souls by performing certain purification rituals, but don't worry, it is nothing too drastic, just a bucket wash followed by offering up some pure chapattis at the Temple of Jastak Khan. Women from here on will be expected to wear Kalash clothing. Afterwards we will go with our friends to visit their extended families in Grum or Kalashagrum. After dinner there will be spectacular night of dancing in the village.
Guesthouse (B,L,D)

Day 9: Balanguru: Today it will be the turn of the men to cleanse themselves, this time with goats' blood at the temple of Sagi Gor. More than 40 goats will be sacrificed as an offering to the gods, wine will be drunk and preparations for the dancing will start. From here on men

should wear the shalwar kameez. Once again in the evening we will join the Kalash as they dance in the village.
Guesthouse (B,L,D)

Days 10-12: Balanguru: For the next three days we will enjoy this extraordinary festival that precious few Westerners have ever seen. As well as dancing, singing and feasting we will also witness the head Shaman and religious priests (or Qazis, as they are known) summon up the spirits and ask for their blessing. On the night of the 17th - as the ancestral spirits enter the valley - all the Kalash of the Rumbur descend to a clearing in the trees, carrying with them flaming sticks of juniper, and dance around a giant fire.
Guesthouse (B,L,D)

Day 13: Balanguru - Chitral: Having watched the final dance of Chamos - when the men dress as women to enact a spectacle centred on adultery and infidelity - we leave the Kalash Valleys and return to Chitral and our hotel. After lunch we will once again head out to Tushi to see the Markhor and hopefully spot the snow leopard.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 14: Chitral - Islamabad Transfer to the airport for our flight to Islamabad, where we will check into our hotel. After some last minute shopping and sightseeing we will have dinner at a local restaurant.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 15: Islamabad: Contingency day in case, due to bad weather, we have to drive using the Lowari Tunnel. If we have flown we will do some local sightseeing such as taking trips to Rawalpindi and Taxila.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 16 Islamabad: Tour finishes after breakfast with transfers to the international airport.
(B)

Transfers will be available for those booked on WF suggested flight.

Warning!

The British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) 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 see the Insurance section below or contact us.

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?

The most obvious extension is to visit Lahore, to see this famous old Moghul city and the 'Closing of the Gate' ceremony. And then to cut across the border into India to visit the dazzling Golden Temple at Amritsar

And the Alternative Christmas in Rajasthan itinerary which joins perfectly with this tour!

- Other extensions in Pakistan could be made to Murray, Mohanjadaro or Multan (security issues permitting).

Contact the office for extension specifics.

TOUR DETAILS

Tour Code: UPM/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: Due to the nature of tourism in Pakistan, it can be difficult to guarantee single rooms in some locations. Single rooms should be available for all nights of the tour but if for any reason this is not the case, we will reimburse you for any nights when you are required to share.

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 (if necessary)
- Local airport taxes
- Tips
- Beverages & any costs of a personal nature.
- International Flights
- Airport transfers - if not on WF recommended flight

GETTING THERE

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

06DEC EK002 LHR-DXB 13:35/00:25+1
07DEC EK612 DXB-ISB 03:30/07:30
22DEC EK615 ISB-DXB 03:40/05:50
22DEC EK001 DXB-LHR 07:45/12:15

Key

LHR - London Heathrow

DXB - Dubai

ISB - Islamabad

EK - Emirates 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 varies hugely from nice 2/3* small hotels, local guesthouses and the forest lodge. Again it is important to stress that in certain places such as the Kalash Valley accommodation is basic, and although most will get en-suite facilities, there are no showers and running hot water...that is bought in bowls by the family.

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

Transport on tour will be in the wonderful Willis jeeps, minibus coasters and domestic flights.

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 walking should enjoy this tour but it should be made clear that adventure travel in this part of the world is not for the faint-hearted and fastidious, particularly at winter!

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.

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 currently require a visa for Pakistan.

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

NB, it should also be noted that anyone with a passport showing evidence of having visited Israel (including having entered or left Jordan/Egypt from posts which are known to border Israel) are likely to be denied a visa for Pakistan.

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, reforestation 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 comprehensive list of all 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 - particularly here in Pakistan. 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.

Cultural Sensitivity:

It may sound obvious but Pakistan is an Islamic country, in places very traditional and conservative, and its ways should be respected, especially since Sept 11th. Both men and women should dress modestly in loose-fitting cotton shirts and slacks or long skirts. A thin cotton veil for women, sometimes advisable - like in the

old town of Peshawar - can be bought cheaply once there.

Chamos Customs

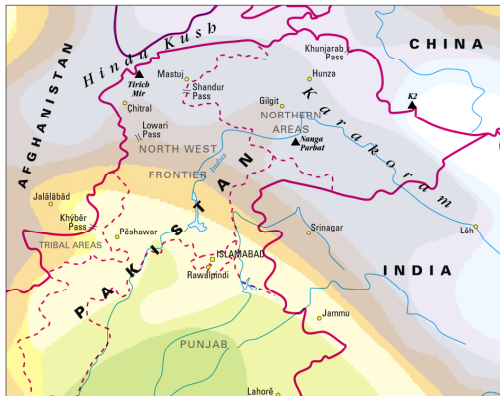
- Both men and women will be expected to wear local garb - though warm clothes can be placed over or under these garments.
- Both men and women will have to go through the purification ceremonies - which for the men means having freshly sacrificed goats' blood thrown across their face. For women it means a bath and a visit to the family temple for the making of pure chapattis...burning juniper will then be circled over your head.
- Because women are considered unclean when having their period, you must not menstruate from the 15th Dec until we leave the valley on the 18th - otherwise you will have to spend your holiday in the menstruation house!
- No honey, onions or cow's dairy products are allowed in the valley - they carry the evil jinns.
- No sexual activity can take place in the valley until the last day.

Please also note this itinerary is exclusive to Wild Frontiers and only possible because of our unique relationship with the Kalash. Prior to the running of this trip in 2006 we convened a meeting of village elders to discuss our participation in the festival and received their blessing. It is important that we observe the special rules that apply to us as honorary Kalash and must abide by them.

Climate: Cold, Cold Cold! Well at least it will be while we are in the Kalash Valleys. Though it was apparently something of a rarity, for the whole of our stay in 2006 there was snow on the ground with a daily temperature rarely climbing into double figures. That said, with the days bright and sunny, if active, it got quite warm. In Chitral standing around watching the snow leopard and Markhor was cold as we were usually in a gorge where the sun didn't reach. In Peshawar and Islamabad at this time of year it is generally much more temperate with a daytime average temperature of 18°C.

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.

PAKISTAN - THE FACTS



Chitral: Lying in a fertile valley beneath the mighty Tirich Mir - at 7,700m the highest mountain in the Hindu Kush - Chitral Town is a cosy place, inhabited by warm and welcoming people. A lively bazaar, many of the stalls and restaurants run by Afghan refugees, leads through its centre to the small airstrip at one end and the polo field at the other. The old mud fort, scene of the famous British siege, still rests on the banks of the Chitral River next to the imposing Shahi Mosque. From here the hot springs of Garam Chashma, the Kalash Valleys, Mastuj and the Shandor Pass are all accessible. Being cut off from the rest of the country by high mountains, Chitral has developed its own particular feel and charm.



The Kalash: Obscured by time, the roots of the Kalash are steeped in myth and

legend. Descended, they maintain, from the armies of Alexander the Great, at one time their ancestors ruled all the way from the Panjshir Valley, north of Kabul, to Swat and Chitral in a land known as Kafiristan - literally, Land of the Unbelievers - and it was here that Rudyard Kipling set his famous short story, *The Man Who Would Be King*. But when Afghanistan's eastern border was finally agreed upon in 1893 - cutting right through Kafiristan - the ruthless Amir of Kabul seized the opportunity to invade the land on his side of the border, convert the infidels and change its name to Nuristan - Land of Light. In what was probably the last forced mass conversion in history, Kafiristan was reduced to the lands of the Kalash.

Worshipping a plethora of ancestral gods, the Kalash hold colourful religious festivals of music and dance, drink wine, sacrifice animals and - though these practices have largely been forgotten - are still known to place effigies over the graves of their dead and judge a man by the size of the parties he gives. Though the men now wear the standard Pakistani *shalwar kameez*, the women still dress in traditional garb; voluminous black dresses held tight round the waist with wide red belts, flamboyant head-dresses made of wool, decorated with cowry shells, old buttons, beads and bells and, perhaps most striking of all, around their necks great strands of coloured beads. Practising the ancient agricultural system of *transhumance*, the Kalash divide the summer months between herding their goats in the high pastures and tending their crops of wheat and maize in the valleys. Apricots, mulberries and walnuts are collected and dried for winter while the grapes are made into wine.



During the seventies, when local Muslims forced a number of conversions upon the

Kalash, their numbers shank to just two thousand. However, with protection from the government, a decrease in voluntary conversion and a great reduction in the child mortality rate, the last two decades have seen their numbers double.



The Festival of Chamos: The festival of Chamos is celebrated when the month called 'Chamos Mastruk' starts, and coincides with the pagan winter solstice. Chamos is also called 'hona chamos yat' which means, the great memorial Chamos festival. This festival is celebrated after the Kalash finish all their fieldwork and have all their supplies stored. Like many pagan festivals, Chamos is held for a number of important reasons: to celebrate the end of the year and to clean the land of evil spirits for the year to come; to celebrate the return to the valleys of the ancestral gods; to give presents to each other and to simply have a party to brighten the long winter days... to tell the truth the similarities to Christmas - itself originally a pagan festival - are remarkable. During this time all the Kalash - and us, their guests - have to go through purification ceremonies, to dance around the fire and visit the various temples. It is a time when the Kalash all come together - both physically and mentally - to reassert their faith and values and remember what it is to be Kalash. It is one of the most colourful, fun and inclusive festivals you are ever likely to witness.



Snow Leopards: *(The above picture taken by group leader Jonny Bealby during the last running of this trip in 2006)* The snow leopard has long, thick smoky grey fur with dark rosettes and spots, and a very long thick tail. Weighing up to 75 kg (165 lb), it has large, well-cushioned paws, a strong chest, and short forelimbs that enable it to scale outcroppings high on the cliffs. Further adaptations for high-altitude life include long hair with dense, woolly underfur and an enlarged nasal cavity. It has been reported to leap as far as 15m (about 50'). Throughout its range, the snow leopard is mostly associated with steep, dry, rocky terrain with shrub or grassland vegetation. It is generally found at elevations between 3000 - 4500m (9800 - 14,800'). It is an opportunistic predator. Its most common prey includes wild sheep and goats - particularly the Markhor - but it also eats marmots, pikas, hares and game birds (chukor partridge and snowcocks), as well as domestic sheep, goats and even dogs. The snow leopard can be crepuscular or nocturnal, apparently depending on the degree of persecution by humans... we have seen her happily frolicking around at two in the afternoon. It is an excellent rock climber and prefers travelling along linear features such as major ridgelines, gullies, and the base or crest of broken cliffs. A female snow leopard usually has 2 - 3 cubs. They eat their first solid food when they are about 2 months old, and a month later begin to follow their mother when she goes hunting. They hunt with her at least through their first winter. Adult snow leopards are generally solitary, and males and females apparently have overlapping ranges. An average density of about 1 snow leopard per 100 sq km over large tracts of habitat appears to be typical. By 1970 the snow leopard had already become rare due to hunting for fur and as a trophy, persecution as a livestock predator, and loss of prey. Currently, it has a fragmented distribution, consisting of a mix of long narrow mountain systems and islands of mountain habitat scattered throughout a vast region surrounding the Central Asian deserts and plateaus.

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.