encounter the
WILD

TRAVEL - CONSERVATION - COMMUNITY

2013/14 TOURS GUIDE
# 2013/14 Tours Guide

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Dear fellow traveller

A small company with big connections

Encounter the Wild represents a passion for wildlife and adventure. It has sprung from years of experience out in the wilderness areas of the world, seeking out wildlife in jungles, mountains, and seas. It is a collection of the best wildlife experiences on earth and a testament to the incredible wildlife and people that we had the privilege to meet along the way.

We see a tour with Encounter the Wild as the antidote to modern life. Be it the primal experience of being in a true wilderness, immersion in a culture different to our own, or the raw power of a wildlife encounter that hits you right between the eyes, these tours transport you to place beyond the ordinary. From Forest Elephants in the Congo to Narwals in the Arctic, every tour is special, crafted to showcase the best a country has to offer. The sights, sounds, and memories of each will stay with you forever.

As well as being a source of enjoyment and inspiration, we believe responsible wildlife tourism at its best can be a driver for change. It can provide a significant source of income and employment for a growing number of communities around the world, promote tolerance and understanding between people and cultures, raise awareness of pressing environmental issues, and fuel conservation efforts that seek to balance wildlife protection with community development.

Our response was to build a business model that supports the delicate balance between the need to protect species, habitats, and biodiversity, and the material needs of local communities.

Whether in the well-established destinations or in the more remote wildlife areas, each time we visit we contribute. This may be through supporting a new tour operator in a marginalised area of the world or financial donations to a variety of conservation initiatives. Our partner conservation projects place long-term community partnerships at the heart of what they do. Wildlife & human conflict mitigation, habitat restoration projects, schools, & wildlife corridor initiatives are just a few examples of where donations to them can make a real and lasting difference.

Our promise to you is to donate in your name and show you how & where your contribution is spent. This is our commitment to Travel, Conservation and Community.

Whether you want the classic safari adventure or rare and unusual species in pioneering destinations, we promise you superb guides, stunning wildlife, and a chance to make a difference.

I hope to see you out there.

Rob Montague,
Director and Founder
Tour departures - 2013/14

AFRICA

Namibia
Specialist Wildlife of Namibia
This 14 day tour takes you to remote areas in search of the more unusual wildlife encounters. We'll focus on specialist animals, including desert adapted mammals, reptiles and birds unique to this country, and a number of protected species.

Namibia
Namibia Explorer
This 10 day tour showcases the outstanding diversity of Namibia’s National Parks. By travelling over land, you experience this memorable country in a very personal and intimate way, with plenty of opportunities to explore and take in the sights of this beautiful country.

Namibia
Luxury Namibia Adventure
This 11 day tour showcases the stunning diversity of Namibia’s National Parks and offers you the chance to experience habitats and landscapes with all the benefits and comforts of luxury accommodation and transport.

For dates and prices for all our tours, please visit our website: www.encountertewild.co.uk or call our office on 020 8432 6484
Tour departures - 2013/14

AFRICA

Botswana
Botswana Predator Safari
This 7 day tour has been carefully designed to showcase Botswana's iconic predators in all their glory, with a strong focus on observing predatory behaviour and learning how these animals interact with the local landscape and environment.

Congo & the Central African Republic
Gorillas and Elephants of Congo & CAR
This adventurous tour brings you into the heart of the Congo's forest, with opportunities to track Western Lowland Gorillas in their natural habitat and Forest Elephants at the world famous Dzanga Bai (forest clearing) at the Dzanga Sangha Reserve.

Uganda
Uganda: Gorillas, Chimps, and Game
This 10 day tour showcases the remarkable diversity of Uganda's wildlife, including the chance to experience an encounter with one of the most impressive primates in Africa – the endangered Mountain Gorillas that live on the slopes of the Bwindi Forest. We offer 1 Gorilla permit and 2 Chimpanzee permits as part of the tour cost.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

AFRICA

Kenya
The Great Plain Migration
Combining open savannah in the shadows of Mount Kenya and the secluded areas of the vast Olare Motorogi Conservancy, our 7 day Wildebeest migration safari gives you unrivalled access to view the migration in all its glory. This tour promises exceptional game viewing in remote and secluded areas of the Masai Mara.

Kenya
Kenya: A Classic Safari Adventure
From open plains in the shadows of Mount Kenya to the Acacia valleys of the Olare Orok stream, our classic safari adventure offers you the chance to experience two very diverse eco-systems and the very best of Kenya’s wildlife habitat.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

ASIA

India
Classic Tiger Safari
Focusing on the central state of Madhya Pradesh, our Classic Tiger Safari takes you to the best National Parks of central India to watch and photograph tigers in the wild. Combining Tadoba and Pench National Parks, we have developed an extended 11 day itinerary to maximise your time in Tiger habitat, with 2 guided drives per day accompanied by experienced tiger guides and trackers.

Our 100% record for Tiger sightings on this tour speaks for itself, with 9 sighting on our first tour in 2013 and clear sightings of Jungle Cat and Leopard at Pench.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

SOUTH AMERICA

Chile
Pumas of Patagonia
Our 6 day expedition has been specifically designed to see Pumas in the Torres Del Paine National Park, one of the wildest and most remote parts of the Puma's range through the Americas.

This small group tour (maximum of 4 guests to increase our chances) includes day and spotlight night tours of the park by foot and by private vehicle, the use of excellent accommodation conveniently located close to the prime Puma areas, and the expertise of an experienced naturalist guide and Puma tracker. You can also expect to see a variety of other fascinating birds and mammals unique to Patagonia.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

CENTRAL AMERICA

Panama
Panama: Ultimate Wildlife Adventure
Our 10 day tour has been expertly tailored to showcase a region of Panama world famous for its bio-diversity, with a focus on the unusual creatures that inhabit the lush and pristine forests.

From the diminutive Geoffroy's Tamarin to the boisterous Mantled Howler, the incredible Three-toed Sloths to tongue-sucking Orange Nectar bats, our tour will give you a unique perspective on Panama’s incredible wildlife.

We will strive to find diurnal mammals such as Monkeys, Agoutis, Coatis and Tamanduas during the day and at night we will venture out with our spotlights to search for nocturnal mammals, such as Kinkajous, Opossums and Bats. The forests are also full of other fascinating creatures, unlike anything else you might find: brightly coloured poison dart frogs, vibrant coloured snakes, and weird and wonderful insects.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

NORTH AMERICA

Baja, California and the Sea of Cortez
Wildlife & Whales in the Baja Peninsula
The tranquil waters of the Baja Peninsula and Sea of Cortez are considered to be some of the most bio-diverse marine habitats on the planet. Our specialist whale and wildlife tour showcases this incredible marine landscape.

Our journey through this pristine environment includes a wildlife experience like no other; the chance to come close to the magnificent Grey whales and their calves of the San Ignacio Lagoon. This is one of the most intimate and personal wildlife encounters you can have.

Canadian Arctic
Narwhal and Polar Bear Expedition
Our Arctic expedition offers a rare opportunity to see the abundant wildlife that congregates where the frozen sea meets the open ocean. Along this icy edge there is a fascinating marine eco-system where wildlife gathers and thrives during the spring months.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

POLYNESIA

For those who experience it, snorkelling next to a Humpback Whale is a life changing experience – nothing prepares you for the site of an ocean giant beneath you.

Tonga
Swim with the Whales
This tour combines the comfort of staying at a beach resort with 7 planned days on the water to look for and hopefully swim with the Humpback whales.

Tonga
Swim and Sail with the Whales
This tour offers you the chance to live on board a luxury sailing 43ft catamaran. With 7 days on the water, our catamaran places you in the Whale nursery itself and affords easy access to the whale watching areas.

Tonga
Photo Special: Swim with the Whales
Our photographic tour is perfect for those guests who want the very best shots of the humpbacks under or above the water.

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Tour departures - 2013/14

ANTARCTICA

Antarctica

Ultimate Antarctica: Peninsula, Falklands, & South Georgia
A land of extremes, nowhere else captures the imagination like Antarctica. Steeped in the historic voyages of Shackleton and Amundsen, the 'white continent' continues to attract explorers with the promise of adventure.

The 5.4 million square miles of land and ice, vast tabular bergs, powerful glaciers, and glittering ice are the backdrop to a wildlife extravaganza. The wildlife, still unafraid of humans, never fails to inspire and our 19 day voyage has been designed to showcase this wildlife in all its glory.

With extended time set aside on the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and on the Antarctic Peninsula itself, your journey will take you through a spectrum of landscapes and habitats.

This journey is unlike anything else. We encourage you to embrace the unexpected and set off on a voyage of discovery.

For dates and prices for all our tours, please visit our website: www.encounterthewild.co.uk or call our office on 020 8432 6484
New Tour departures - 2014/15

We're close to adding some incredible tours for 2014 and 2015. Keep your eye on the website for news and updates and remember that we offer great discounts on new tour departures. This is just a small selection of what's to come.

Finland
Wolf and Bears
A rare chance to observe and photograph Finland's "Big 4" in the eastern reaches of the country. Good sighting of Wolves and Bears can be expected, with chances of also seeing Wolf and Lynx.

Estonia
Wild Estonia
Estonian forests are renowned for their healthy populations of mammals with around 700-800 Lynx, over 150 Wolves, 500-600 Brown Bears and almost 20,000 Beavers.

During our 8-day tour we will search for mammals, including Raccoon Dog, European Beaver, Wild Boar, Elk, Roe Deer, Flying Squirrel and Brown Bears and also seek out the more elusive residents such as Wolf and Lynx.

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Papua New Guinea
Wild Papua New Guinea
The Encounter the Wild team enjoyed a fantastic wildlife tour of Papua New Guinea and are delighted to now offer this tour to our clients. From the incredible Birds of Paradise to the curious Tree Kangaroos, this island is a paradise for wildlife lovers.

Sri Lanka
Sri Lanka’s Blue Whales, Leopards, and Rare Mammals
We are really excited about this tour. This is the ultimate island safari and the best place in the world to see Blue Whales.

Our 9 day tour also includes excellent opportunities to see Leopards in Yala National Park, Sloth Bears, Asian Elephants, Sperm Whales, and up to 450 species of bird.

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Gabon
Magical Gabon
The Encounter the Wild team were lucky enough to experience the wildlife wonders of Gabon in 2011 (See Rob on the adjacent page setting off to look for Elephants!). We have been working with our supplier to develop an exclusive itinerary that showcases this incredible country.

From Mandrills in the Forests to Hippos in the surf at Loango National Park, this is a spectacular wildlife destination.

North America
Wolves of Yellowstone
In 2012 we were extremely lucky to spot and photograph Grey Wolves in Yellowstone. Our new 6 day tour takes you deep into the park during the winter months with days spent on the snowy hillsides and valleys searching for the legendary Wolf packs. With a 100% success rate to date, this should prove to be a very popular tour.

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FAQs

We want to provide you with all the essential information you need to plan and prepare for your tour. If a particular question is not answered below, please call our office and speak to one of our tour specialists on +44 (0) 20 8432 6484.

Why book with Encounter the Wild?

We aim to set ourselves apart by offering pioneering wildlife tours at competitive prices. Our small group of friendly and experienced staff ensure that every detail is taken care of, from your initial enquiry to your arrival back home.

We’re a small company with big connections. By booking with us you get: the benefit of our unrivalled travel experience and the local knowledge and support from our exceptional tour guides around the world.

How do I make a booking?

By booking with us, clients benefit from dealing with someone directly who has personally experienced the tour and has an excellent knowledge of the destination and the wildlife. We therefore start all bookings over the phone or by email to be sure that you can ask plenty of questions and be satisfied that the tour is right for you before securing your place. Making a booking is fast and simple. Simply select your tour and then contact us at the office to start the booking process.

What happens when I have completed my booking?

Once we have received your completed booking form and deposit, we will send you confirmation of your trip, a bound copy of the Tour Brochure, and a payment receipt. Your Tour Brochure gives you all the information you need on booking flights, packing for your tour, and what to expect from the date of arrival until your journey home.

Why do you only have small groups?

Wildlife viewing is often at its best when the group is small. This allows us to be more responsive to wildlife encounters, offer more space and freedom for guests to take photographs, and generally allows for a more personal experience. We do offer larger group tours, but this tends to be more on request or when travelling to the polar regions.

Why are there minimum group sizes?

All of the itineraries included on our website require a minimum number of participants before the tour can operate. This is usually a minimum group size of 4 people. In the very unlikely event that we do not reach this minimum number, we will review the situation and discuss your options with you.

Continued overleaf.
FAQs

Continued from previous page.

Having a minimum and maximum small group size allows us to be cost-effective and ensure that your tour experience is personal and intimate. Small group number allow us to get closer to the wildlife and improve our chances of wildlife sightings.

You must check with us that your chosen tour has reached the minimum passenger numbers required and is **guaranteed to run** before paying for your air tickets, transport connections, visas or any other item or service related to your tour.

**When should I book my flight?**

We will contact you 12 weeks before your departure date to review the number of people booked on your tour and discuss your options regarding flight arrangements.

You must have confirmation that your chosen tour has reached the minimum passenger numbers required and is **guaranteed to run** before paying for your air tickets, transport connections, visas or any other item or service related to your tour.

**Do I have to be a wildlife expert?**

Not at all! Our guides are the experts and you do not need to have any previous experience of wildlife watching or photography. Many of our guests are new to this type of holiday and have no prior knowledge of the wildlife they will see. That's often what makes the tour such a memorable experience. All you need is a spirit of adventure.

**Do you sell flights?**

All our tours are 'land only' as we do not sell international flights. However, we do want to make arranging flights as simple and cost-effective as possible and can advise you on flight arrangements and how to get the best prices. We work with a number of ATOL licensed air travel agents who we can put you in contact with. All internal flights are included as part of the tour price and are booked via our local representatives and suppliers.

**What about ATOL and ABTA?**

An ATOL licence is required when selling flight inclusive holidays. We do not sell flights and therefore do not require an ATOL licence. ABTA stands for the Association of British Travel Agents and is an umbrella organisation representing Travel Agents in the UK. Encounter the Wild is not a travel agency.
FAQs

Can I get a tour testimonial or recommendation?
Yes, many of our clients share testimonials on our website and are happy to offer personal recommendations to new clients. Please contact us if you would like to know more.

How do you offer financial protection?
We provide 100% financial protection on every booking. The UK Package Travel Regulations 1992 require us to provide security for the monies that you pay us for a tour and for your repatriation in the unlikely event of our insolvency. Encounter the Wild comply with the regulations by offering financial failure insurance on every booking made with us. This protects you and your money. Please read our Booking Terms & Conditions for full details and download a copy of our Insurance Policy.

Do you offer tailor-made/bespoke itineraries and are your tour dates flexible?
Yes. We can arrange bespoke tours all around the world and at various time of year. If you have a specific wildlife tour in mind, would like to experience a different destination, or simply travel on different dates than those advertised on our site, just let us know and we will be happy to help.

Do you arrange tours for families?
We offer several tours that are suitable for families. These tours can be tailored to include learning about nature and time for the family to relax. For example, our new rare mammals tour in South Africa is perfect for families – an exciting camping adventure in a malaria free zone and plenty of Meerkats! Due to the adventurous nature of our tours, we do sometimes operate a minimum age policy.

Can I travel as a single traveller?
Many of our guests travel as a single traveller and our friendly tour groups are a great place to meet likeminded travellers with a passion for adventure and the outdoors. Should you wish to make a booking on a shared basis, we will make every effort to pair you another same sex guest. Alternatively you may wish to have your own room and in this instance a single supplement will apply.

Who travels with you?
Our tours are suitable for everyone. From professional photographers to first time travellers, our guests come from a variety of backgrounds and age groups. Typically our guests are aged between 25 and 70.
FAQs

Do you share facilities with other tour groups?

Depending on the destination, we sometimes share transport and accommodation with other likeminded travellers outside your tour group. However, our tours have been designed and priced to be exclusive wherever possible and include excursions and activities that take you away from the crowds. Local laws and travel restrictions sometimes limit what we can do in this respect.

Will I see the wildlife I want to see?

The ultimate question! Our tours often focus on rare and specialist wildlife and seeing some species can never be guaranteed. Seeing the rare animals in their natural environment requires skill, patience, and sometimes a degree of luck.

However, we will take you to the best places to see rare wildlife, at the optimum time of year, and use the best local guides to maximise your chances. We can never guarantee sightings or photography opportunities, but promise to work tirelessly on your behalf to locate what you want to see. All of our tours include a wide variety of animal and bird species and our guests are rarely disappointed with the encounters they experience.

How much time will I spend watching wildlife?

All of our tours have been designed to maximise your time looking for and observing wildlife. This often means considerable time spent in wilderness areas and day and night excursions with your guide. Guests have complete freedom to opt out of wildlife activities at any time during the tour should they wish to have more time to relax.

Will I always have a tour guide with me?

Most of our tours include a local expert who acts as your guide for the duration of tour. Our guides are bilingual, experienced naturalists and know the countries & regions intimately. On some tours you simply don’t need a tour guide with you all day every day and in these instances the staff and guides at the lodges or camps we use operate as your guide or driver. If the tour requires a guide to be with you at all times, we ensure that this is the case.

How fit do I need to be?

This very much depends on the nature of the tour and we are happy to provide you with all the advice and information you need by phone or by email. Your Tour Brochure (available on request or sent to you once a booking is made) details the fitness requirements.
FAQs

Continued from previous page

Several tours include trekking for long distances and at high altitudes, travelling by boat, canoe and on foot through wilderness areas, and excursions in extreme weather conditions. We recommend that you speak to one of our expert staff to discuss the fitness requirements of the tour and any concerns you may have. It may also be appropriate to undertake some pre-tour training to enhance your fitness, although we will always advise you if this is the case.

What accommodation do you use?

We select our accommodation on the basis of location (i.e. proximity to wildlife habitats), their environmental policy, service, and of course comfort. This means that we use a wide variety of accommodation from tented camps on the frozen sea ice to luxury lodges deep in the Masai Mara.

What is the food like on tour?

One of the great things about being on tour is the chance to experience different cuisines. Whether it’s dinner around a campfire or at a luxury safari lodge. Meals often combine local dishes with western and European style cuisine. Regardless of your destination, we aim to provide filling, nutritious, and tasty meals that will sustain you during your and be enjoyable.

We can always cater for vegetarians and people with allergies and ask that you advise us of any special requirements when completing your booking form.

Do I need a visa?

Many of our tours require a visa to be arranged prior to travel. We do not process visas, but can recommend an efficient visa service and assist you with completing the applications. It is your responsibility to ensure that all visas are in place prior to travel.

Do I need a passport?

Yes, you need a passport for all of our tours. Please ensure that you have a passport valid for at least 6 months from your date of travel and adequate space for visas and Immigration stamps.

Do I need insurance?

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have comprehensive travel insurance for your tour. Some of our more adventurous destinations require a higher level of insurance cover than most standard policies provide. We ask that you contact us and discuss new and existing policies. We also require confirmation of your insurance details before your tour commences.
FAQs

What about health and safety on tour?

The Tour Brochure we send you on confirmation of a booking offers general recommendations on health and staying fit during the tour. However, it is vitally important that you seek expert advice and discuss your specific requirements with a medical practitioner prior to travel. The Travellers health line at MASTA in the UK is a premium health advice service on 0906 8224 100.

All of our suppliers are contractually obliged to conform to appropriate standards for vehicle maintenance, fire safety, hygiene, and security.

Are the countries safe?

We only operate our tours in regions where we are sure that the political and social environment is safe. We constantly monitor the travel advice from consulates, embassies, the media, and our network of suppliers to keep abreast of any important political changes that affect our destinations.

Should our destinations be deemed unsafe, we will either remove the tour from our portfolio or cancel any existing tours to that destination. In the unlikely event that this occurs during your tour, we may have to make changes to the itinerary to safeguard your welfare. We recommend that all our guests refer to the Foreign Office’s website for specific advice on countries and regions: www.fco.gov.uk.

Do I need specialist equipment and clothing?

We always provide a very detailed packing list for our tours. This list has been designed from our personal experience and includes plenty of handy tips and advice on clothing and equipment.

Most of the tours do not require anything specialist apart from good walking boots, a waterproof jacket, and a good quality rucksack/day bag. For some specialist tours to regions with extreme climates (polar regions, mountain areas, etc.), we often offer specialist clothing via our local supplier or through a recommended hire service in the UK. This is a simple and cost effective way of obtaining high quality jackets, sleeping bags, boots, etc. for your tour.

Apart from clothing, we can provide all the advice you need on camera equipment, binoculars, snorkeling and diving equipment, etc. Simply ask us and we’ll ensure you have everything you need to get the most out of your tour and stay safe & comfortable.