



*Tour:*

## DESERT DISCOVERIES

*Destination:*

Tucson, Arizona & the Sonoran Desert

*Specialization:*

Science, History & Culture

*Itinerary:*

7-days / 6-nights

## DESERT DISCOVERIES

### Tucson, Arizona and the Sonoran Desert

Day	Morning		Afternoon		Evening	
1	Travel to Tucson, Arizona; transfer to hotel and check-in				Welcome, Safety & Orientation	Dinner
2	El Presidio Museum	The Turquoise Trail Guided Tour	Salsa Making at the Carriage House	Colossal Cave Mountain Park + Guided Cave Tour + Horseback Trail Ride		Dinner
3	Mission San Xavier Del Bac	Arizona Sonora Desert Museum with Green STEM Lab		Old Tucson Studios		Dinner
4	Biosphere 2 - University of Arizona - Full-day Master Class Series			Dinner & free time		
5	Copper Queen Mine Tour in Bisbee	Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum	The O.K. Corral / Tombstone / Historama			Dinner
6	Free Time	Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum		Kitt Peak National Observatory & Night Sky Discovery Master Class; dinner included		
7	Depart Tucson for Home					



As with all sample itineraries, please be advised that this is an 'example' of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.



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# Desert Discoveries: Science, Culture, and Sky-High Adventures

Get ready for a week of discovery in the heart of the Sonoran Desert - where science meets storytelling and every cactus has a tale to tell. This isn't just a trip; it's a full-on immersion into the wild beauty, rich history, and cutting-edge science of southern Arizona. From cave tours and horseback rides to salsa-making and stargazing, you'll explore everything from ancient missions to futuristic biospheres. Whether you're walking the Turquoise Trail or digging into desert ecology, every day brings something new.

You'll dive into hands-on labs at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, explore the mysteries of Biosphere 2, and gaze into galaxies at Kitt Peak Observatory. Along the way, you'll meet local experts, visit Native cultural centers, and step into the legends of the Old West at Tombstone and the O.K. Corral. With 350 days of sunshine, Tucson is the perfect place to roam, reflect, and recharge. Pack your curiosity, your sunscreen, and your sense of adventure - this is the Southwest like you've never seen it.

## **Day 1**

*Dinner on arrival, dependent upon flight times*

Arrive in Tucson, Arizona and transfer to your hotel. Get settled, have a Welcome, Safety & Orientation Meeting, eat dinner and get ready for a fabulous week!

Sample CITY hotels – [Hampton Inn & Suites Tucson Mall](#), [Comfort Suites at Tucson Mall](#)

Sample DUDE RANCH – [The White Stallion Ranch](#) [VIDEO](#)



Let us know your hotel preference and we'll make sure you are set up for success. **If 7-days is a bit too long to be away, no problem. We will happily customize your experience to ensure you have the perfect tour just for your students.**

## **Day 2**

*Breakfast, salsa cooking class & dinner included*

Today is a day for sightseeing and learning about this impressive area nestled in the southwestern USA. We'll focus the day on history, science, arts and culture, having some fun along the way!



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**El Presidio Museum** - The Presidio San Agustín del Tucson Museum is a re-creation of the Tucson Presidio built in 1775 where students can travel back in time to learn about life as early Tucsonans would have lived it. Docent tours discuss life in the Santa Cruz Valley for early Native Americans, Presidio residents and Territorial Period settlers. See the archaeological remains of a pit house, walk along the original Presidio wall and experience a 150-year old classic Sonoran Row house.

Next, we'll meet our guide for a hike on the Turquoise Trail.

**Guided Tour of the Turquoise Trail** – The Turquoise Trail (formerly called the Presidio Trail) is a 2 ½ mile long loop trail through downtown Tucson that highlights structures and sites of historic interest and is marked by a turquoise stripe on the sidewalk. It begins at the site of the northeast corner of the reconstructed Presidio San Agustín del Tucson, founded in 1775. This presidio or fort was the first European structure in urban Tucson, constructed by the Spanish to mark the northern frontier of the Spanish empire in the Americas. The trail was created by the Tucson Presidio Trust for Historic Preservation.



Hungry? Our next stop teaches us how to make incredible southwestern salsa!

**The Carriage House** – What's the southwest without the incredible flavors they share with our world! We'll stop at the Carriage House for a private salsa-making class.

Then this afternoon, we're off to Colossal Cave – complete with a caving expedition and a trail ride!

**Colossal Cave Mountain Park** – Hidden high in the southern Arizona Mountains with its endless Sonoran Desert vistas, rich history, and authentic Wild West vibe, Colossal Cave Mountain Park is a destination for the adventurous at heart. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this desert refuge has sheltered people for over a thousand years. It has been home, shrine, hideout, inspiring workplace, exciting playground, and tranquil retreat. On the National Historic Register, the 2,400-acre Park showcases crystal-filled Colossal Cave and historic La Posta Quemada Ranch. Included is a Guided Cave Tour, a Trail Ride and lunch!



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**Guided Cave Tour:** The tour route is a half mile long and takes about 45-50 minutes to complete. As your guide relates the Cave's geology, history, and legends, you walk down and back up about six and a half stories and see beautiful cave formations like stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone, boxwork, and helictites.

**Horseback Trail Ride:** Saddle up! Enjoy a leisurely guided trail ride through scenic La Posta Quemada Ranch. Starting from the site of the historic Mountain Springs Hotel and Stage Station, you'll leave behind the modern world as you lose yourself along the old National Mail Stagecoach Route. See spectacular and complex geological formations and a Hohokam bedrock mortar site as you ramble through an unspoiled Sonoran Desert.



After our very full day of exploration, in the evening we'll enjoy a local dinner and the night is then free for a quiz night, a dip in the pool or other activity.

### **Day 3**

*Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own*

After breakfast at our hotel, we're off to understand Wild West Mission life!

**Mission San Xavier del Bac** - Mission San Xavier del Bac is a historic Spanish Catholic mission located on the Tohono O'odham San Xavier Indian Reservation, fondly dubbed the "Sistine Chapel of North America." Recognized as a US National Landmark, San Xavier Mission was founded as a Catholic mission by Father Eusebio Kino in 1692. The oldest intact European structure in Arizona, the church's interior is filled with marvelous original statuary and mural paintings. It is a place where visitors can truly step back in time and enter an authentic 18th century space. A shrine church for many, it is still the parish church for the Native Americans of the area. Enjoy a 20-minute video about the church's history and then browse the museum and historical artifacts.



Next, it's time for science and nature. We're off to the amazing Arizona Sonora Desert Museum!

**Arizona Sonora Desert Museum** - The mission of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the Sonoran Desert. Focused on the preservation of the Sonoran Desert, students will experience a quintessential desert experience which includes an unforgettable fusion zoo, botanical garden, natural history museum, aquarium and art gallery with 21 acres and two miles of walking trails. Highlights include the hummingbird



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aviary, Warden Aquarium and Earth Sciences Center where guests descend into a replica limestone cave, plus live animal presentations that showcase a variety of desert animals.



While here, we'll participate in a 60-minute Green STEM Lab, plus have time to explore and check out the animal presentations.

Pick one of two educational programs for participation (subject to change and dependent upon dates):

**Design by Nature** - Biomimicry is an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature's time-tested patterns and strategies. Through experimentation with models, a live animal encounter, and exploration of how animal and plant adaptations have inspired human innovation, students will undertake a design challenge for the arid southwest.

**Exploring Adaptations** - Desert plants and animals display a fascinating variety of adaptations that help them thrive here. Examine desert plants' structures to reveal how they deal with the temperature extremes and aridity of this environment. Then, meet some live desert animals and identify their secrets to success as desert dwellers.

This afternoon, we're in for a bit of fun and theatre!

**Old Tucson Studios** – Old Tucson, where the spirit of the 'Old West' comes alive, is southern Arizona's premier venue for Western fun. Old Tucson features live action stunt shows, musicals and live entertainment, vintage rides, genuine southwest BBQ and special events throughout the season. Step back in time as you make your way through town, walking the same streets made famous by movie legends such as John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Elizabeth Taylor, Steve Martin, Sharon Stone and Martin Short. Immortalized in more than 400 films and commercial productions, Old Tucson remains the region's premiere film location.



Your school will also have the opportunity to learn about and participate in:

- ⊕ **Life of a Miner: A look at Arizona mining and minerals** - Experience a day in the life of a miner in the 1880's, including a look at clothing, nourishment, tools and much more. Students will explore gems and minerals and can enhance their experience by panning for gold.
- ⊕ **Mountain Men: Fur Trapping in the 1800's** - Experience the rugged and challenging life of a fur trapper in the 1800's. Students will examine a sampling of tools, clothing and food.



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- ⊕ **Adobe Brick Making** - Get up to your elbows in history with this program on the building techniques used by the Tohono O'odham. Mold your own bricks using mud and straw (subject to weather conditions).
- ⊕ **A Visit to the General Store** - The storekeeper will introduce your students to this uniquely American institution, which gave flavor and personality to the Old West. Your students will learn about its multifaceted role in the community and how the general store contributed to the area's settlement. This program is an engaging way to learn about worldwide trade, household economics, pricing systems, profit margins and customer service – 19th century style.
- ⊕ **The Chuckwagon** - In this Western adventure, the young'uns will learn about the history of the chuckwagon, including the kinds of equipment and food needed for cattle drives lasting almost six months.
- ⊕ **Behind the Scenes: Sound, Lights and Special Effects** - Find out what it's like behind a real working movie set. Students will talk to a trained technician who will describe the various tasks that make Old Tucson shows so amazing. Students will learn about how stunts are performed, how movie angles affect the stunts, sounds that are used, and explosive effects that create dramatic scenes.

In the evening, we'll get to relax after a super busy day! We'll have dinner either in the hotel or a local restaurant.

## Day 4

*Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own*

Today is going to be amazing. After breakfast we're off to spend the day with the University of Arizona.

**The Biosphere 2** – Featuring cutting-edge science shaping the future of our planet, the Biosphere 2 is included in the "50 Must-See Wonders of the World." The iconic design of Biosphere 2 offers tremendous opportunities for research in earth and ecological sciences and its striking 3-acre physical structure is paired with a unique approach that is intimately linked with cutting-edge research activities. Students visiting Biosphere 2 can see science in action, interact with university research, and have hands-on experiences with earth-systems science.



Groups will spend an entire day in programming, choosing between one of the following 2 programs (based on availability):

### Wilderness & Marine Science Exploration

- Physical Science
- Obtaining, Evaluating & Communicating
- Stability & Change; Scale, Proportion & Quantity

This program features hands-on interaction with marine specimens, as well as data collection and analysis in the Biosphere 2 "Wilderness" Biomes. Students will rotate through stations using Biosphere 2 Marine Science Lab



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and Field equipment. Schools will typically have a behind-the-scenes interpretive tour and work through all three field/lab stations. Groups may be split into smaller groupings based on numbers.

## Sustaining Our Biosphere – Issues & Solutions for Planet Earth

- Human Impact – Physical Science
- Using Math & Computational thinking
- Stability & Change; Scale, Proportion & Quantity

This program familiarizes students with some of the issues and concerns facing current and future generations on Biosphere 1 (our Earth) and empowers them to be part of the solutions. Students will rotate through hands-on mini projects in small groups and go behind-the-scenes on an interpretive tour of Biosphere 2 facility. Focus is on Eco House (Rainwater Harvesting) & Environmentally Controlled Agriculture (ECA; Aquaponics, Hydroponics).

After our full day at the Biosphere, we'll have dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.

### **Day 5**

*Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own*

Today we'll see two more fabulous sites in the Arizona desert. We'll start our morning in Bisbee focusing on the copper mining of the past and follow up with our afternoon in Tombstone discovering the O.K. Corral!

**Copper Queen Mine Tour** - BISBEE - a name to stir the interest of mining men everywhere - has been one of the greatest copper camps the world has ever known. In almost 100 years of continuous production before the Bisbee mines closed in 1975, the local mines produced metals valued at \$6.1 billion (at 1975 price) one of the largest production valuations of all the mining districts in the world incorporating copper, gold, silver, lead and zinc. Taking the Queen Mine Tour is to step back through the pages of history. A melting pot of immigrant miners from the mining districts of Europe labored beneath the Mule Mountains to feed the insatiable demand for copper and electricity.



Outfitted in hard hat, miner's headlamp and a yellow slicker, groups ride into the Queen Mine Tour, heading underground and back in time. Tour guides, retired Phelps Dodge employees, lead the group 1,500 feet into the mine and recount mining days, techniques, dangers and drama. Adding a personal touch, the miner-turned-tour guides help students experience what it was like to work underground.

After exploring the mine, we'll check-out the historical museum to see the artifacts and learn more about fascinating science life.



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**Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum** – Once known as "The Queen of the Copper Camps", Bisbee nestles among the Mule Mountains of southeast Arizona, world renowned for its diverse minerals and wealth of copper. Although its mines closed in the 1970s, the town's legacy has been preserved not only in its architectural and mining landscape, but in a museum that was once the corporate headquarters of the Copper Queen Consolidated Mining Company. The Museum is the first rural affiliate of the **Smithsonian Institution** nationwide, forming a partnership between the nation's largest museum and one of its smallest.

In the afternoon, we're off on a brilliant escape to the world-famous O.K. Corral!

**The O.K. Corral** - Groups will spend the afternoon visiting the "living museum" of Old West history and site of notorious '1881 Gunfight at the O.K. Corral'. See Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday in daily reenactments, stand where the legendary Gunfight began, visit Doc Holliday's room, the stables, the blacksmith, the boarding house and the bunkhouse along with the museum. Also, visit The Tombstone Epitaph newspaper museum to read the paper's original reports of the Gunfight and learn how newspapers were printed in the 1880s.



"Tombstone's Historama" provides visitors with an authoritative account of Tombstone's history from Geronimo's Apaches to modern times. This "must see" orientation includes the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, the great fires, the flooding of Tombstone's mines, and more. Viewers discover how Tombstone got its name and why Wyatt Earp left Tombstone wanted for murder. Actor Vincent Price narrates this 25-minute multimedia presentation involving video, historic photos, and computer controlled animated figures moving on a revolving stage. The Historama is included with admission to the O.K. Corral.

Tonight, we'll have dinner at a local restaurant.

## Day 6

*Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own*

Another incredible day awaits you! After breakfast we'll have an opportunity to take some free time and kick back. Maybe some shopping or just some sleep! In the early afternoon, we'll travel about 1.5-hours to a Native American Reservation to learn about their people, their nation and their pride.

**Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum** - The Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum is located in Topawa, Arizona, between Sells and the US-Mexico Border, 86-miles southwest of Tucson. The 38,000 SF facility stands on 30-acres in pristine desert land and serves its visitors and community with diverse cultural programming and exhibitions. The Center is working to instill pride by creating a permanent tribal institution to protect and preserve O'odham "jewe c himdag". Working with elders, the Cultural Center & Museum promotes understanding and respect of O'odham "himdag" through educational programs and public outreach.



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The Tohono O'odham Nation is a federally-recognized tribe that includes approximately 28,000 members occupying tribal lands in Southwestern Arizona. The Nation is the second largest reservation in Arizona in both population and geographical size, with a land base of 2.8-million acres and 4,460 square miles, approximately the size of the State of Connecticut, and at an elevation of 2,674 feet.

After learning about Native American culture, we're off to discover astronomy!

**The Kitt Peak National Observatory** - The world's largest collection of optical telescopes is located high above the Sonoran Desert. Kitt Peak, on the Tohono O'odham Reservation, is home to 24 optical and two radio telescopes representing dozens of astronomical research institutions. The National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO), funded by the National Science Foundation, oversees site operations on Kitt Peak. Explore the visitor center exhibits and gift shop to learn about astronomy, take a tour and discover how astronomers use telescopes to unlock the mysteries of the Universe, visit the National Solar Observatory exhibit gallery and watch scientists operate the world's largest solar telescope.



Arriving in the late afternoon, your group will participate in the **Night Sky Discovery Program** at the Kitt Peak National Observatory. It is an evening/night program that introduces the groups to astronomy by various types of observing, naked-eye, binocular, and telescopic. You will experience stargazing like few places on Earth can offer and become acquainted with the night sky, star charts, binoculars, and of course, the telescope. You will enjoy amazing views of deep-sky wonders! The program begins around sunset and lasts for approximately 3-hours. **Important note** - this program takes place in a telescope dome and classroom that is not accessible to wheelchairs.

**The Night Sky Discovery Program** - After check-in, an orientation and dinner (boxed sandwich meal), the first viewing experience is watching the sunset from a west-facing cliff on the mountaintop. Afterward, as night arrives, we introduce you to the beauty of the night sky. A binocular tour of the sky, instruction on how to use special night sky maps called planispheres, and extended viewing through a telescope will introduce you to some of the wonders of the universe. The staff will run the telescope for your group as long as they can stay awake. When your energy is exhausted, your group retires to their coach and heads back to the hotel.



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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Although the Visitor Center is open to all, the US Government requires passports for visitors from other countries when driving through the Border Control check point on Arizona State Route 86. If traveling internationally, please be sure you bring your passport with you for today's activities. If traveling domestically, please ensure you bring proper photo identification.

## Day 7

Breakfast included (dependent upon departure time)

Good morning Tucson! After breakfast, it's off to the airport or coach-ride home. We're hoping that you are inspired and taking home wonderful memories that will last a lifetime! If you would like to add in any last-minute stops, simply enquire with your Ambassador who will make sure you are set up for success.

## Farewell Tucson!



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## Other Options to Explore

[\*\*Amerind Museum\*\*](#) - A museum, art gallery, and research center dedicated to archaeology, Native cultures, and Western art.

[\*\*Arizona Historical Society's Arizona History Museum\*\*](#) - The Arizona History Museum's focus is southern Arizona history from Spanish colonial through territorial eras. Exhibit topics include mining and transportation. The Arizona's Treasures exhibit features Geronimo's rifle and 18th-century Spanish silver artifacts.

[\*\*Old Town Artisans\*\*](#) - Old Town Artisans is located on the site of El Presidio San Augustin del Tucson, the fort built by the Spanish in 1775 to stake claim to the northern frontier of New Spain. Old Town Artisans sits in what was once the stables area, and the north wall is the location from which Apache attacks were repelled. Construction of the adobe buildings began in the 1850's. Stroll through the shops and you will see original ceilings made of saguaro cactus ribs, packing crates, and whiskey barrel staves with remnants of imported wallpaper and gold-leaf moldings. The 150-year-old adobe building has six distinctive shops and galleries featuring fine art, imports and crafts from hundreds of local and regional artists from the Americas and the world. The Spanish-style courtyard offers a relaxing place to enjoy lunch or beverages amidst regional plants and trees.

[\*\*Pinnacle Peak Dinner\*\*](#) - Known for "the best steaks in Tucson", get a taste of the Old West at Tucson's original steakhouse established in 1962. Enjoy world-famous mesquite-grilled cowboy steak, ribs, chicken, and fish in a relaxed atmosphere!

[\*\*Trail Dust Town\*\*](#) - This collection of shops and eateries is a little slice of the 19th-century West, with boardwalks, an old-fashioned town square lit by the glow of authentic gas streetlamps, shaded park benches, and a gazebo in the middle of it all. Also, enjoy the Dragoon Street Wild, Wild West Stunt Shows, the Haunted House, a spin on the vintage Carousel and more. You'll be able to ride the Trail Dust Town Railroad (a replica of the 1863 C. P. Huntington narrow-gauge train), visit the Museum of the Horse Soldier, pan for gold at Gabby's Gulch, and grab a cowboy dinner at Pinnacle Peak Steakhouse.

**Museum of the Horse Soldier** – Located in Trail Dust Town, Museum of the Horse Soldier is one of a few museums dedicated to preserving the history of the U.S. Military's mounted services. Visitors to The Museum can explore the history of U.S. horse soldiers and their roles in times of peace and conflict during the 18th – 21st centuries. The Museum of the Horse Soldier offers a unique opportunity to discover and explore military history through informative and engaging exhibits, featuring many rare and one-of-a-kind artifacts. The Museum's evolving exhibits and quality interpretations make each visit a new experience.

**Haunted House** – The Ravenhearse Family Classic Haunt gives those that dare a guided tour through a haunted parlor. Tours range from spooky to terrifying and are given Wednesday through Sunday from 5pm to 10pm.

**Gold Panning** - Gabby's Gulch is the only place in Trail Dust Town to find your fortune. Try your luck panning for gold Thursday through Sunday, from 4:30pm to 9pm.

[\*\*Tucson Desert Art Museum\*\*](#) - The Tucson Desert Art Museum celebrates the history of the Desert Southwest, featuring pre-1940s Navajo and Hopi weavings, historical artifacts, and southwestern paintings from both classic and contemporary masters. Nowhere else will the visitor find such an eclectic array of Desert Southwest art and artifacts.



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**[Tucson Museum of Art and Historic Block](#)** - Blending the traditional with the inventive, the museum presents original and traveling exhibitions with a focus on Art of the American West, Latin American Art, and Modern and Contemporary Art. The historic block features five distinctive properties that provide visitors with a unique look into Tucson's past.

**[Tombstone Monument Ranch](#)** - Tombstone's only dude ranch lies 3-miles from the center of town. Modeled on an old west town, individually decorated guest rooms line the street. Wake up in The Marshall's Office, The Blacksmith's, The Stagecoach, or even The Jail. Burst through the swing doors into the Trappmann Saloon and slide your drink along the bar while listening to live music or playing a friendly game of cards. The ranch boasts spectacular scenery and fascinating scenery and the best way to experience both is in the saddle.



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**Minimum Booking Numbers:** 20 students

## **What's Included:**

- ✓ Roundtrip flights or motorcoach transport
- ✓ 6-nights' accommodation; hotel dependent upon available options
- ✓ Airport transfers & group transportation
- ✓ Meals in destination – Breakfasts & dinners daily starting with dinner
- ✓ on arrival and ending with breakfast on departure
- ✓ El Presidio Museum
- ✓ Guided Tour of the Turquoise Trail
- ✓ Salsa Making Workshop
- ✓ Colossal Cave – Guided Cave Tour
- ✓ Colossal Cave – Horseback Trail Ride
- ✓ Mission San Xavier Del bac
- ✓ Arizona Sonora Desert Museum + Green STEM Master Class
- ✓ Old Tucson Studios Excursion
- ✓ Biosphere 2 full-day Science Master Class series
- ✓ Copper Queen Mine Tour in Bisbee
- ✓ Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum
- ✓ The O.K. Corral & Tombstone Excursion
- ✓ Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center & Museum
- ✓ The Kitt Peak National Observatory + The Night Sky Discovery Class
- ✓ Personal Tour Director
- ✓ 24-hour emergency cover

## **What's Not Included:**

- ⊗ Fully comprehensive insurance (**mandatory**; suggested provider link available for Travel Insured)
- ⊗ Baggage costs, pay directly to airline if required
- ⊗ Baggage handling - everyone should be able to pull / load their own bag
- ⊗ Transfers to/from home airport
- ⊗ Lunches, snacks or beverages other than at designated mealtimes
- ⊗ Meal selections other than ones provided for the entire group (we are generally able to cater for allergy conditions, vegetarians, halal and in some cases vegan)
- ⊗ Cost of personal passports, visas or visa waiver fees
- ⊗ Cost of inoculations or medication required for travel
- ⊗ Sightseeing / Entertainment / Transport not shown in Itinerary
- ⊗ Hotel incidental deposits & bills – mini-bar, movies, etc.
- ⊗ Gratuities – drivers, hotel services, local guides, tour director
- ⊗ Credit card fees if individuals wish to pay via credit card instead of ACH
- ⊗ Additional taxes, fuel surcharges or fees levied by governments / suppliers

As always, our staff are always available to you to answer any questions you may have regarding programming.  
If we may serve you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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