



GENERAL INFORMATION

These notes should be read in conjunction with our booking conditions. Please read them – if you do not, we cannot be responsible for any misapprehensions about your trip.

Information contained in our literature may change between its publication and any booking. Please refer to the latest version of our Terms and Conditions online prior to booking.

ABOUT EXPERT AFRICA AND ITS BONDING

Expert Africa is the trading name of *Discovery Worldwide Ltd*, which is a fully bonded operator. We are also members of ABTA (Y1608) – the *Association of British Travel Agents*. We are licensed by the *Civil Aviation Authority* (ATOL 5206) for holidays including flights, and also via ABTA's own bonding scheme for holidays which don't include flights. Thus, the complete financial protection of your holiday is ensured. (See also www.expertafrika.com/our-guarantee)

The *Sunvil* family of companies has operated holidays since 1970. Our specialist programmes include Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Africa, Central and South America. We are proud to say that the majority of expansion has come about through repeat bookings and personal referrals.

Over the last decade *Sunvil* has usually been rated within the 'Top Ten' UK operators in the *Guardian/Observer* newspaper 'Best Travel Companies Readers' Survey' (the largest such survey in the UK) and the adventurous travellers of the UK's *Wanderlust Magazine* have twice voted *Expert Africa* as their favourite tour operator. We are the first operator to scoop top place in their survey twice, and the only operator ever to have scored a 100% satisfaction rating. In 2012 we won 'Best overall tour operator to sub-Saharan Africa' in the *British Travel Awards*, and were finalists in 2013. More recently, in 2017, we won the highly coveted *Times Travel* Editor's Award and won silver in the hotly contested AITO Tour Operator of the Year. We remain owner-managed and fiercely independent.

NON-STANDARD HOLIDAYS

All of our trips are flexible. Our team know Africa intimately. Therefore, we can often arrange trips which include places which are not shown in the brochure. Most of these are tailor-made, to suit the individual traveller. All are individually costed – so do feel free to call us to put a cost on your preferred trip, and give you further information.

TAILOR-MADE BOOKING PROCEDURE

We will take time with you to plan a trip that will suit you and at a price that you are happy with. When you wish to proceed with the booking, we then ask you for a completed booking form, with a deposit. This is normally held on file, whilst we complete the reservations. Because of the time and expense of communicating with Africa, we cannot make overseas arrangements without a signed booking form.

If anything on the planned itinerary is not available, then we will discuss the options with you. Normally, we can make an equally good plan. If you don't like what we suggest, then you can cancel without penalty. When all the reservations have been confirmed, your deposit is processed, and we will issue you with a confirmation invoice.

CHANGES AFTER BOOKING

We will usually confirm the price of your trip when you book. Once we have issued you with a confirmation invoice, we will absorb most price increases (but not airline charges or government action). If a hotel/lodge becomes unavailable after we have confirmed your itinerary, we will contact you immediately to make alternative arrangements. If we substitute this with a less expensive lodge, we will reimburse the difference. If this happens whilst you are abroad, then we will make every effort to facilitate the change for you.

If you want to change your itinerary whilst on holiday, contact us and we'll do our best to assist – and to minimise any costs that you incur. We can't be responsible for changes made without our help.

PAYMENT, TICKET DISPATCH AND LATE BOOKINGS

The balance of your account is due ten weeks before your departure. For late bookings we require the full amount to be paid immediately on confirmation.

Tickets, vouchers and a final information pack will be sent to the address on your invoice, about 8 weeks before you leave. If this address changes, please advise us immediately.

AMENDMENTS

After a booking has been confirmed, any changes that you request are generally very costly. You may be liable for an amendment charge and/or cancellation charges from the camps or lodges involved. For alterations within ten weeks of departure, *Expert Africa* has the right to treat this as a cancellation of the original holiday (attracting cancellation charges) and regard it as a new holiday booking. However, in practice, we will do all we can to help make arrangements that suit you, at the minimum possible cost.

CHILDREN AND INFANTS

We arrange many trips for families with children. Some lodges welcome families warmly; others will not accommodate children. Remember that children can be unpredictable, and this is dangerous in areas where there are animals. The risks in taking children abroad are entirely the responsibility of the adults accompanying them. *Expert Africa*, and the lodges, camps, and hotels concerned, can accept no responsibility for any accident which befalls a child, unless caused by their own negligence.

REQUESTS AND ACCOMMODATION

If you have any special requests or needs that are vital to the enjoyment of your trip, please let us know in writing on our booking form. If you have particularly detailed dietary or medical requests, please ask us for our additional form. We do not hold many room allocations at hotels or lodges; where you have requested rooms with particular views, etc, we will pass on the request. We will then try our best to ensure that you get the rooms that you have requested and the hotels and lodges will try hard to help. However, we cannot guarantee any request unless it is stated on your invoice using the word "guaranteed".

SAFETY AND THEFT

Theft is a problem in many countries all over the world. It is becoming more common in Africa. In some of the cities, mugging is also on the increase. It is your responsibility to take sensible precautions. Never leave anything in a car (especially not on the back seat) unless it is under constant supervision, as theft from cars is becoming much more common. Most travel insurance policies exclude claims for thefts of items from unattended vehicles, unless in a locked boot (valuables are almost never covered). Check your policy before you travel for precise exclusions; most stipulate exclusions and maximum limits on claims for stolen items.

If you wish to take valuables overseas, then it is often easier to get good cover for them under your house insurance than under any travel policy.

DRIVING IN AFRICA

Most areas where we operate self-drive holidays do not require any special 4WD vehicles, or off-road driving. Standards of sign-posting vary, and most roads will have animals crossing them and children playing on them. You must drive carefully and conscientiously to avoid an accident, especially on gravel roads. Speeding on gravel is very dangerous: never exceed 80kph. Similarly, driving at night is very dangerous; avoid it.

WILD ENVIRONMENTS

In taking a trip to Africa, you acknowledge that it involves risk. Many of our trips spend time in wild, uncontrolled environments. Wild animals present threats, things may drop from trees and even plants can sometimes pose risks to your safety and your health. All of these risks are your responsibility. We will do what's reasonable to inform you of the main risks and we'll often have you guided by expert local guides. You can minimise the risks by following the advice of your hosts and guides. In unfenced camps, always request a guide to escort you when walking around. Do not touch any plants, animals or insects, however harmless they seem; any could be hazardous.

Many safari lodges will require you to sign a record of safety briefings that you have been given; some will also include a personal indemnity. Often this is done on arrival. We ask you to listen carefully and take heed of such briefings; if you cannot accept local rules made for your safety, then do not book a trip with us to Africa. That said, the contract for your holiday is between you and *Expert Africa*, so nothing that you sign can absolve any lodge from its responsibilities.

LOCAL REPRESENTATION

This is a specialist tailor-made programme designed for more independent and experienced travellers. We do not have agents or representatives everywhere. We do, however, have close contacts in every country which we deal with, and in some countries we have a local agent.

ADDRESSING PROBLEMS

If you encounter an issue that affects your trip and you want to resolve it, then firstly speak to the manager of your lodge/camp/hotel. State clearly what is wrong and what you would like. S/he will then usually try very hard to solve the problem.

If this doesn't resolve the problem, then ask the manager to contact our team directly and **immediately**. Alternatively, call us yourself – using the emergency contact numbers provided within your travel documentation. We will reimburse you for the call.

Don't wait to do this; if you only voice problems to us on your return, we are powerless to help. In a medical emergency, or any situation which is likely to result in a personal insurance claim, you should also alert your insurers.

GROUP TRAVEL

We are experienced in making travel arrangements for groups, and welcome genuine enquiries.

PASSPORTS, VISAS AND HEALTH

All passports, visas, health certificates, inoculations, prophylactics and international driving permits, etc. are the responsibility of the traveller. Passports should be valid for 6 months after you return. At the time of writing, holders of British/American passports need visas for the countries included in our programme, except South Africa, Botswana and Namibia (many of these are available on arrival). If you do not have a British or American passport, you must tell us when you book.

SAFETY STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Safety standards and regulations overseas are often different to what you're used to. The monitoring, enforcement and compliance with these local regulations is a matter for the authorities in that country. Similarly, liability requirements vary from country to country, as does the responsibility placed on an organisation by local law. Therefore take all precautions to protect yourself and your party whilst in Africa. In particular, you should familiarise yourself with fire escape routes, and the safety guidance for any wild areas that you visit. We recommend that you review the advice given by your foreign office or state department on any country that you are visiting, both just before you book and just before you travel, i.e. www.fco.gov.uk.

A FEW FACTS OF LIFE

We work very hard to ensure that our website, and the printed information that we send to our travellers, all keep up to date with the latest developments and changes. However, with well over ten thousand pages on our website, and a continent where things can change by the hour, we accept that not everything will be bang up to date.

Even so, we strongly recommend that before you book you read the information about your trip which we send to you, as well as the information on our website about your destination, including the latest travellers' reviews of places where you plan to stay. If you're unsure of anything, speak to us. Members of the *Expert Africa* team have extensive knowledge of all of the countries in our programme.

Please bear in mind that it is impossible to qualify every statement in our literature and on our website. Arrangements in Africa are seldom 'set in stone'. If you visit, you must accept that things in Africa don't always work the way they would in your home country. If you want a totally predictable trip, do not go to Africa. The finer details of your itinerary will always depend on local circumstances, and you sometimes have to adapt your plans.

People in Africa have very different ways of life than we have in the UK, Europe and America. Their cultures demand your respect. We are sure that you will have a superb trip. But, if you do experience niggles, try to be patient and understanding. Gracefully accept that you cannot expect things in Africa to be the same as they are at home.

QUALITY CHARTER

AITO is the Association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Our member companies, usually owner- managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating.

Exclusive Membership

AITO sets criteria regarding ownership, finance and quality which must be satisfied before new companies are admitted to membership. All members are required to adhere to a Code of Business Practice which encourages high operational standards and conduct.

Financial Security

AITO members are required to protect money paid by customers to the member for any holiday sold under the AITO logo and to comply with UK Government Regulations in this respect. Members submit details of their bonding and guarantee arrangements to the Association on a regular basis.

Accurate Brochures and Websites

All members do their utmost to ensure that all their brochures and other publications, print or electronic, clearly and accurately describe the holidays and services offered.

Professional Service and Continual Improvements

All members are committed to high standards of service and believe in regular and thorough training of employees. Members continually seek to review and improve their holidays. They listen to their customers and always welcome suggestions for improving standards.

Monitoring Standards

AITO endeavours to monitor quality standards regularly. All customers should receive a post-holiday questionnaire, the results of which are scrutinised by the Association.

Responsible Tourism

All members acknowledge the importance of AITO's Responsible Tourism guidelines, which recognise the social, economic and environmental responsibilities of tour operating. Those demonstrating their achievements beyond the pure acceptance of this principle are recognised by the award of 2 or 5 star status.

Customer Relations

All members endeavour to deal swiftly and fairly with any issues their customers may raise. In the unlikely event that a dispute between an AITO member and a customer cannot be settled amicably, AITO's low-cost Independent Dispute Settlement Service may be called upon by either side to bring the matter to a speedy and acceptable conclusion.

Expert Africa is a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators. To contact the Association visit www.aito.com or call 020 8744 9280.