

PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

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FIND YOUR WANDERLUST IN AFRICA

The essence of travel is wanderlust – a word normally associated with up and coming backpacking meccas. According to Acacia Adventure Holidays, India and Thailand have had their time in the spotlight and now Africa is heading up the list of locations: 30% of their travellers going solo after finishing their itineraries. But why combine an organised trip with backpacking in Africa?

Kate Plummer, Sales & Marketing Co-ordinator at Acacia Adventure Holidays, comments: “We give people the opportunity to see a destination with the experts, all our tour leaders have extensive experience and most are born in Africa. Tour leaders will also have plenty of common sense tips to impart to adventurers thinking of going it alone – personal, first hand and up to the minute information which social networking sites might not be able to provide. In some countries, for example Ethiopia, ‘going solo’ might take some ingenuity, in that sense we can provide some useful ‘info- structure’ on the less-well established backpacker havens, and as our tours are off the beaten track, invaluable information on handling yourself in unfamiliar situations.”

Phil Murray, Director of gapadvice.org, agrees: “ For adventurers looking to hook up with likeminded people taking an organised tour is ideal as you’ll get to know the people you’re travelling with pretty well, while for those going on their virgin solo trip without parents it’s peace of mind for mum and dad. Even older career gappers who might be coming out of their comfort zone, on their premier voyage into the unknown, will benefit from travelling with the experts first.”

Aside from Africa’s wanderlust pedigree as a backpacking destination, adventurers will also profit from the continent’s budget haven status. In 2008, inter-railing round Europe could come at a cost, the value of the Euro rising sharply against the pound, (up 20% on 2007) Africa however, will compare much more favourably. In addition, Acacia’s transparent local payment system means that left over cash is redistributed to the group at the end of all their overland trips – an enticing thought for those looking to head off on a solo jaunt.

The 17-day Ethiopia Explorer is a compact adventure in the cradle of civilization, with the first nine days spent chartering its 5,000- year history and the ancient imperial cities of the North. From the former palace of Haile Selassie, the last member of the Solomonic Dynasty, which ruled Ethiopia for almost 3,000 years, through to Axum believed to hold the Ark of the Covenant, it is a journey of discovery. Lake Tana and Gondar, the first capital city of the Ethiopian Empire, also hold historical riches while Lalibela’s isolation makes the rock-hewn churches even more awe inspiring – its treasures guarded by countless generations of priests. Bringing travellers closer to the heart of Ethiopia, the latter half of the trip covers the fascinating tribes of the South including the Hamar, a group which practices cattle leaping, an initiation ceremony for manhood; and the Dorze renowned for their cotton ‘youaving.’ The well- rounded itinerary also includes plentiful game viewing in the Mago, Simien, Abijatta and Shalla National Parks. (£1995pp + local payment from £363pp) departures on request.

Overlanding with Acacia Adventure Holidays is the perfect pre- backpacker option, as it allows travellers to mingle with 24 likeminded people, many of whom might want to share some of the solo route. In addition, with tours ranging from six to 58-days Acacia Adventure Holidays can provide either bite size or more in-depth views of several countries in one tour. Kate Plummer, continues: “Our longer tours might be preferable for first time backpackers as they will cover a lot more ground, not just in terms of countries and locations, but also experiences. Experience and common sense being key to staying safe in unfamiliar territory.”

The 6-day African Insight incorporates Big Five viewing in the Kruger and an optional night drive in a neighbouring private park. The overland itinerary also covers Botswana’s Chobe National Park, with a game-viewing cruise on the Chobe River and a host of heady adrenaline rushes in Livingstone, including a white water rafting excursion on the Zambezi’s grade five rapids (optional). (£275pp + local payment from £89pp, year round departures)

Traversing seven countries, the 43-day Kenya to Cape Town overland trip is culture, adventure and wildlife rolled into one. The Masai Mara, Serengeti, Olduvai Gorge and Ngorongoro Crater are major wildlife highlights, while cultural excursions with the Masai tribe and the Bushmen offer a personal insight into real life in Africa.

Regular doses of adrenaline in Livingstone and Swakopmund contrast with the more laid back Zanzibar and Lake Malawi; travellers being able to kick back and contemplate their new found adventures on the continent's tropical sands. Other activities include, elephant viewing in the Chobe National Park, wilderness camping in the Okavango Delta and wildlife viewing in the Etosha National Park – renowned for its plentiful wildlife due its flat plains and numerous watering holes. Adventurers can also climb the sand dunes in the Namib Naukluft National Park, the world's oldest desert, and marvel at the sight of the Fish River Canyon, before concluding the tour in the Townships of Cape Town. (£1,225pp + local payment from £474pp, year round departures).

The above prices include all tour highlights as listed in the brochure, transport, road tolls and taxes, camping and cooking equipment, most meals and services of tour leader and driver. Excludes return international flight, visas, departure taxes, transfers, flexible local payment excursions. Please note: the above local payments are FROM prices and should appear separate to the actual tour cost as they have been converted from \$USD to £GBP for media. Telephone Acacia Adventure Holidays on 020 7706 4700, email info@acacia-africa.com or visit www.acacia-africa.com. ATOL No.6499 and ABTA No.W4093 PROTECTED. All prices are subject to availability.

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For further information please contact Siobhan at tion London on 020 8180 1614 or email siobhan@tionlondon.co.uk.

Notes to Editors': gapadvice.org provides independent advice on gap years, for people of all ages. Whether you are young, looking for a career break or in retirement, it is an unbiased source for all gap year information, research and advice. The BBC recommends gapadvice.org: 'an extremely useful and reliable resource'. www.gapadvice.org tel: +44(0) 1494 673448, email: info@gapadvice.org