

# GENERAL INFORMATION



# WE ARE VERY PLEASED INDEED THAT YOU ARE JOINING ENCOUNTER

The working language of the project, as with the brochure, the project dossier and this pre-departure information is English. The purpose of this pre-departure information is to ensure that everyone has a similar and accurate perception of what to expect, what it takes from each one of us, and what has to be done to best ensure a happy, healthy trip free of unnecessary hassles. So please study this information carefully to clear up any doubts or queries that you may have.

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Once on the road everyone gets involved and contributes equally to the running of the project whether it be a daily chore or just simply helping the project leader.

Every day is different and it is difficult to give an impression of a typical day. On occasional days there is very little or no travelling at all, and other days we need to get the kilometres behind us. Only in very exceptional circumstances, strictly recorded and with prior justification will any project be continued into the night.

The journey will naturally follow the description of the brochure and Project Dossier, however the very nature of these journeys does require a certain amount of flexibility.

### HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Simple, proven standards of hygiene need to be introduced from the start of the journey. Burying rubbish and human waste, cleaning, disinfecting and proper washing are routines which must be established.

When sickness does arise it is usually as a result of an irresistible morsel from a market stall and/or from the hard travelling, climate and diet, and their combined temporary debilitating effect on the body's metabolism.

A sensible, well tried medical kit is carried on all projects. Over the years the medical kit has been tuned to the situations that have arisen and drugs, antibiotics etc are available should the need arise. We carry sterilised syringes but it is not possible to carry plasma as there are no refrigeration facilities on the vehicle. However it is not a travelling pharmacy and therefore bring along your own supplies of basic items such as band-aids, aspirins, insect repellent, lipsalve etc.

Established medical facilities en route obviously vary in standard. Assistance is occasionally sought and the care of the sick project member will always take priority. If you have any known allergies or any previous significant medical history you should advise us of this immediately (if you have not already done so on your booking form)

## MALARIA

Malaria is a problem which occurs in all three continents, therefore Anti-Malarial tablets must be taken. A course of tablets needs to be started one week before entering a malarial area and continued four to six weeks after finally leaving malarial areas, (which will often mean the period following your project).

IN AFRICA: Encounter will supply the malarial tablets for all projects in Africa, but it is the responsibility the individual to take the tablets. However, in cases where you are flying immediately into malarial areas then you will need to supply yourself with tablets for the week before. Also, if at the end of the project you are continuing to travel through malarial areas then you will need to carry adequate supplies for this time.

IN ASIA, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA: You will have to supply all your own malarial tablets before, during and after the project.

Mosquito nets: Individual nets are provided in malarial areas and their use in these areas is absolutely necessary - these need to be cared for throughout to protect you fully.

## AIDS/HEPATITIS B

Aids and Hepatitis B are prevalent all over the world and one of the easiest ways to catch either disease is through sexual intercourse. You are strongly advised to protect yourself against the possibility of this risk.

## ILLEGAL DRUGS

### ENCOUNTER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ILLEGAL DRUGS IS UNCOMPROMISING

In all countries en route possession of drugs is a criminal offence and in many it is diligently policed and carries serious penalties.

Encounter has never been involved in a drugs issue and for us to be so would be disastrous for the group and ruinous for Encounter. Therefore, you are urged to respect legislation concerning drugs and are advised that not to do so will mean your being required to leave the expedition without recourse to refund.

## SECURITY

Don't bring items of sentimental value that can not be replaced. Also, insure your personal belongings. There is an element of safety in numbers, but general awareness and avoiding putting temptation in the way should lessen the risk of theft.

## SOUVENIRS

There is usually plenty of space available for souvenirs - however, before you buy them do think about how you are going to get them home. Watch out - souvenir sellers are both persuasive and persistent; more often than not, little mementoes won't be regretted, but don't be rash with a major purchase.

Artefacts are not always well made, not always genuine and not always the bargain they may seem. You are strongly advised to make purchases only of articles for which you can pay in full at the time and that you can take away with you (not sent on later) - too much can go wrong and subsequent to this advice Encounter can not be expected to involve itself in situations where this advice has not been heeded.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Film is often expensive or unobtainable en route, so take all you will need from home. A cheap, pliable, lead lined x-ray proof bag is useful for keeping film cool and dry. There are practically no places en route where colour film can be periodically processed, but once used it should survive perfectly until developed on your return home. An ultra violet filter is a good, inexpensive way of protecting your lens from sand and dust.

## 2. PROJECTS IN ENCOUNTER'S EXPEDITION VEHICLES

### **FOOD AND WATER**

In so far as supplies allow we carry a useful cross-section of non-perishable foods. These are used only when there is no local alternative. Markets en route are often vibrant and colourful and brimming with produce and you will have good fun bargaining for your provisions. At certain times of the year and in some areas, food is in short supply and it is then we will fall back on our truck stores. Your Project Leader will give advice as to what is needed for the days as well as that evenings dinner. In the truck's larder there are to hand, jams, soups, cereals etc and tinned and dehydrated provisions in reserve for those times when fresh food is not available locally. We have great success in producing interesting meals as well as a nutritional balance and although these are not gourmet tours, the expeditions eat well. The Project Leader will make sure that proper cleaning of vegetables and sterilising of all water on the truck happens to reduce the risk of sickness. In Asia, South & Central America it is not necessary for us to carry a large quantity of stores, as there is usually an abundance of fresh local produce available. In Africa we often cook on open fires, where wood is readily available. Otherwise gas is used when it can be obtained. One's liquid intake increases in tropical conditions - water, some flavoured drinks, tea and coffee are plentiful on the vehicle. Bottled drinks are available in the larger towns. Beer and local spirits are available in most countries and expeditions often organise a bar system for those interested in contributing to a sundowner to settle the dust of the day. There is a full supply of pots and pans on the vehicle together with cutlery, plates bowls, kitchen, utensils etc.

### **CAMPING**

By evening we have found a campsite and everyone swings into action, putting up tents, camp-beds, setting the camp-fires, preparing dinner and settling down for an enjoyable evening. The equipment is of a high standard and care for its maintenance is in everyone's interest. Therefore, all equipment needs to be packed away sensibly to avoid undue loss or damage.

### **SECURITY**

No doubt in your considerations you have evaluated the pros and cons of our soft top vehicles and the pros and cons of camping. Theft can be from one's person or bag when in a large town or from a campsite, more likely during the evening than in the night. Therefore at certain points you may have to take it in turns on security duty, whether just the truck or sometimes the whole camp. In choosing a camp location this will be carefully considered but personal effects should not be left in unoccupied tents.

### **TAPES**

Many of the Project Leaders install their own cassette tape recorders and speakers in the vehicle so you may like to bring along some of your favourite tapes.

## 3. PROJECTS USING ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT

Even though you will not be using one of Encounter's expedition vehicles it does not mean you do not have to participate with the every day running of the expedition, whether it be white water rafting, trekking or using local transport. Please read the following carefully.

### ACCOMMODATION

The choice of accommodation on projects not utilising our trucks, will vary greatly. We may be staying in a simple beach hut, sleeping in a hammock or maybe a hotel with quite reasonable facilities. In more remote areas we will merely secure the most practical facilities available, a guesthouse, a dormitory or even a village hut - none of which will claim any star rating!!!!

### WHITE WATER RAFTING PROJECTS

Whether you are doing a one day or a ten day project all the equipment necessary to run the expedition will be provided locally. You will have to bring along your own clothes, cameras etc. (please read the pre-departure information for a detailed clothing list.) While on the river you are expected to put up your own tents, help prepare meals with the raft guides on the river banks and of course paddle!!

### LOCAL TRANSPORT PROJECTS

You will be staying in basic travellers hotels, teahouses and guesthouses. A majority of meals will be in local restaurants, cafes or small market stalls. (Please read the project dossier and pre-departure information as to which meals are included in the trip cost.) While on the project whether you are travelling by jeep, train, bus or long boat you may have to help with every unforeseen circumstance ie getting the jeep to the other side of a landslide. Therefore you must be prepared for delays or minor hiccups for instance the train not turning up on time - its all part of the adventure.

### TREKKING PROJECTS

#### The Trans Borneo Crossing and Daring the Darien

You will be expected to carry everything on the trek including the food, cooking equipment and bedding etc which will be divided between each of you evenly. As food will be hard to come by in the jungle we will have to carry sufficient supplies of dehydrated foods. There will be no porters or cooks therefore these two particular projects rely on everyone helping with every aspect.

#### All Himalayan Projects

On all trekking projects in Nepal, Encounter provide porters to carry your belongings. That doesn't mean to say you take everything plus the kitchen sink! You will have to carry your own water bottle, camera, etc during the day. The sherpa's will pitch your tents and cook for you as well but all help is gratefully accepted. Please read the pre-departure information for a detailed clothing list, but the most important thing is to take good warm clothing for the evenings and good WORN IN walking boots. On other projects where there is a days trek or a couple of days trekking, your project leader will organise all the equipment that needs to be taken and the local staff carry it. You will not have to provide any specialised equipment - should you require individual porters to carry your own gear, then these can be organised through the Project Leader at a nominal cost. Examples of this could be the Mount Roraima trek in Venezuela or say the Tiger Leaping Gorge in Yunnan Province, China.

# HAVE A FANTASTIC TRIP

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Every effort is made to keep this information up to date and free from error. However, things will change - sometimes quite without warning. If you do not understand anything or are uncertain in which order to go about things ie; visas, vaccinations etc do not hesitate to contact Encounter or your agent who will be pleased to help.