Dear Traveller,

First of all many thanks for booking your upcoming journey across with Oasis Overland, I hope you are looking forward to the adventure!  Back here at Oasis HQ we have been working hard putting as much advance preparation in place as possible.  We will be sending further documents like this in the coming weeks. This update covers the following:

* What to expect
* Itinerary
* Passports
* Visas
* Travel insurance

***Actions to take now:***

* Those travelling through China: **Email us a colour scan of your passport.**
* Everyone: **Check other countries on your trip to see if you require a visa**

But first…

**What to expect!**

We are delighted that this will be our first Trans Asia expedition to run since the pandemic prevented us from setting off in April 2020. We hope you are thrilled to be a group member on this momentous trip!

**Bishkek to the Chinese border (or back to Bishkek)**

This is the final section of the overland section of the trip which is run with one of our expedition trucks that will have started in Istanbul in April. So, if you are starting in Bishkek on 17th June, you will be joining other people who have been on the truck for some time already.

This is one of the biggest overland adventures that we run and it’s an expedition where you should expect the unexpected, with the itinerary and route having to adapt at times, even whilst en route. This could be due to the distances covered, border closures and visa changes to name a few!

This is about as far away from your average holiday as you can get, as at times we travel to places where roads are poor, the heat is extreme or the cold is bitter, and some people will be on the road for 3 months or more.

You will all get involved in the cooking and the cleaning, as well as setting up and taking down the tents. You need to bring your own sleeping bag and camping mat. You may bring your own tent as well if you wish – solo travellers often like to do this as it guarantees you have your own tent and don’t need to share. Please let us know if you will be bringing your own tent. There will also be some bush camping on this trip, which means no campsite facilities, but rather dig a hole and a ‘shower in a can’ moments will happen! Some of the time we will stay in hostels or basic hotels and a yurt camp and standards can vary considerably, depending on what is available to us. Upgrades to camping are available as we go along in some places we stay, but not everywhere – you need to be ready to do plenty of simple camping.

**China and beyond travellers (coming in from Kyrgyzstan or starting in China)**From China onwards the whole trip will be carried out using local transport (trains, sleeper trains, coaches etc., plus a couple of short flights) and staying budget hotels/hostels. So, there won’t be camping, but you should still expect some pretty simple and basic accommodation at times, especially in remote areas.

Together with these challenges you should also expect numerous amazing moments, meeting local people (some who see few tourists), exploring stunning scenery and seeing some of the world’s most iconic sites. All in all, we hope this is going to be a really special trip that you’ll remember forever.

**Itinerary**

As noted above, the nature of our trips means that all our itineraries are somewhat flexible. There will almost certainly be changes to the website itinerary at some point on the route for reasons that we cannot foresee yet.

However, there are also some potential changes that we do know about now and need to advise you about. These include:

* **China, Xi’an/Beijing**

This will be our first time running the trip’s route through China in exactly the way we are showing it now. Those entering China from Kyrgyzstan will leave the truck at the border and continue their trip with a tour leader using local transport and budget hotels/hostels. There may be some minor adjustments to the route based on the best current options for overnight train timings and journeys on our dates. The truck and driver will return to Bishkek with those finishing there.
We will also be adjusting the itinerary in China for those people going onward towards Singapore so that you head north by train from Xi’an and visit Beijing, before returning back south by train again to Chengdu and then on to Kunming.

* **Beijing end date**

On this year’s trip we now expect to be arriving into Beijing early in the morning of the 23rd July on the sleeper train from Xi’an. From there we will head straight out to visit the Great Wall and then return to Beijing to overnight. **For those people finishing in Beijing, please plan for the trip to end after breakfast in the morning of 24th July. That is one day later than our published dates.** Please take this into account when making any further travel plans and flight bookings.
There remains a chance that we may be able to get to Beijing a day earlier and finish on the 23rd, but this is dependent on what tickets we can get for the Lhasa-Chengdu train, and we won’t know that until a few weeks before, when the tickets are released and we can purchase them.

**Passports**

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months AFTER your trip finishes. This is a general requirement for all of the countries we travel to on our trips.

As a guideline, you will need at least 1 blank page per country in your passport after you have obtained the relevant visas before your trip commences.

**Visas**

***Actions to take now:***

* Those travelling through China: **Email us a scan of your passport.**
* Everyone: **Check other countries on your trip to see if you require a visa**

**Kyrgyzstan**

Most nationalities are visa free but check your nationality here: <https://www.evisa.e-gov.kg/get_information.php?lng=en>

**Kazakhstan**

Most nationalities are visa free for a stay of up to 30 days but you can check your nationality here: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/article/details/6764?lang=en>

**China**

Our local operator will provide a Letter of Invitation and Travel Plan to support your application and we will forward these when we receive them in March, along with information to help you complete the application form.

**If you haven’t already, please send us a colour scanned copy of your passport by the end of February. This is required by our China operator in order to produce the above documents.**

Most nationalities will need to apply online and then in person (in order have finger prints and a photo taken) through their nearest Chinese Visa Application Service Centre.

Some Centres advise that for your nationality you should not apply for your visa earlier than 3 months before your date of entry to China which means the earliest date is 2nd April 2024.
This may not apply to all nationalities. For example, we have been advised by the UK Centre that you can now apply any time from now as they issue a 2 year visa whereas Canberra and Paris have advised that you must apply within 3 months because the visa they issue is only valid for entry for 3 months. You should contact the Centre you intend to apply at to check this directly with them.

If you are advised that you must apply within 3 months but you wish to try applying earlier, we can provide a letter explaining our itinerary and timings. As we don’t have previous experience of this, we can’t guarantee it will work and you may still be issued with a visa valid for entry for 3 months.

As previously mentioned, it is recommended to apply for your China visa in your home country as most people need to go in person to a visa centre or embassy to provide finger prints.

Additionally, if you apply somewhere where you are not resident, it’s not always possible to know in advance how long your visa will be valid for, as their rules regarding this frequently change. Some Embassies or Service Centres may not issue visas to non-residents.

If you will not be able to apply in your home country, we suggest you investigate which Embassy or Consulate you will be able to apply at and what their requirements are.

The London Centre offers the following visa processing services:

* Regular – 4 working days to process your application (from when you submit it in person at the Centre). Costs £66 in addition to the visa fee.
* Express – 3 working days. Costs £93 in addition to the visa fee.
* Postal – 2 weeks. Costs £90 in addition to the visa fee.

**Tibet**

Following the recommendation of our Chinese partners, we will be applying for our Tibet entry permits AFTER we have already obtained our China visas. We have done this in this order before too. So, do not be alarmed when you receive your Travel Plan from us and it does not show Tibet on the route.

When you have received your China visa, please email us a colour scanned copy. We will forward this to our China operator who need this to apply for the Tibet permits.

**Countries after China (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore)**

For the majority of nationalities (including UK, USA, Canada, Europeans, Australia, New Zealand) most countries will be visa free or require an e-visa obtainable online.

So, no action is required at this stage beyond double checking if your nationality requires you to obtain a visa in advance.

*Please note: Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is correct and up-to-date and is given in good faith, but we cannot be held responsible when visa regulations change and information supplied becomes out of date. We recommend you check the requirements for each country with the relevant embassy in your home country.*

**Covid-19 vaccination**

While we do not make being vaccinated against Covid-19 compulsory on our trips, we strongly recommend it. Being fully vaccinated (including any available boosters) will both protect your health, the health of other travellers and crew (through reduced risk of transmission), save the additional time and cost required to obtain any possible pre-entry PCR tests and avoid potential disruption to the itinerary. If countries en-route start asking for negative PCR tests before entry for unvaccinated travellers then obtaining these will be at your cost should you need them. If some countries will not admit unvaccinated travellers at all, then any travellers in the group affected would need to overfly that country at their own cost. If you are not vaccinated against Covid-19 you do still have time to arrange this before the trip starts. You should also bring some copies of your proof of vaccination with you.

**Travel Insurance**

The British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) as well as governments of other countries aim to provide advice and security information for their citizens.  This advice can affect many travel insurance policies that travellers purchase prior to travel. This means that at times if the FCDO is advising against “all or non essential travel” to a particular country, most travel insurance companies will not cover the policy holder for travel through that country or a specific area of a country highlighted by the FCDO. The advice for the different countries and areas through which we operate trips is forever changing and we are constantly reviewing information as it comes to hand.  At the moment we do not expect to be travelling through any areas against FCDO advice.

Each individual traveller needs to check that their own personal travel insurance (if you have already purchased travel insurance), is valid for travel through each and every country on the expedition.

We will update you in our upcoming emails closer to departure if there are any areas that the FCDO have travel advisories in place on our intended route.

If you are not intending on travelling with us on this trip after all, please do let us know as soon as possible so that we can make your space available to someone else.

We hope that all this information proves helpful.

Best wishes, The Oasis Overland team