

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

WALKING ADVENTURES INTERNATIONAL

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT ON A WALKING ADVENTURE

Walking Adventures International provides travel programs that combine worldwide travel with recreational walking. We invite you to get off the bus, stretch the kinks out of your legs, and experience healthy travel itineraries that blend walking with historic, cultural, and scenic highlights. Our trips are fast-paced, overview programs designed to introduce you to as much of a region's significant highlights as we can manage without wearing you to a frazzle. Our travelers consistently tell us that we show them fascinating places they don't think "regular tourists" would ever see and that they see more than they would ever have imagined possible in the time we are "out on the trail." Though most active people find it easy and natural to enjoy our style of travel, it is vital that your expectations of the Adventure match our travel style and itineraries. Listed below are a series of commonly-asked questions along with our responses. Please feel free to contact us with any further questions.



Q: Who is Walking Adventures? Are you a travel agency?

A: Walking Adventures International is a small team of dedicated individuals in Vancouver, Washington that has been offering travel programs combining walking with traditional sightseeing since 1989. Our travel strategy is to identify what makes a destination unique and capture those special characteristics with a travel program of walks and sightseeing. We offer inclusive packages that provide all land arrangements including hotels, transportation by motorcoach, many meals, sightseeing excursions and, of course, walks.

Walking Adventures International is a tour operator, providing programs that we plan and book ourselves. We are not a travel agency which books airline tickets and sells a variety of travel services purchased from other organizations.

Q: Tell me more about your philosophy of travel.

A: "Close to the ground" is a term we use to capture our belief in connecting travelers with the destination we are exploring together. Though we sometimes stay in fairly nice hotels, we believe that the more we try to take a slice of America with us when we travel, and expect our destination to provide all the comforts and conveniences of home, the less we truly experience the history, culture, and scenery we are there to connect with. We believe that the blend of walking and conventional sightseeing is the ideal vehicle to accomplish this connection. Sightseeing exposes us to the monuments and attractions that over time have become linked with the identity of the destination. Walking takes us into out-of-the-way places that expose us to the true identity that most travelers never see. This is who we are and what we are aiming for with each Adventure.

"Safe but not scripted" is another catch phrase that captures who we are. In many ways, WAI is more like a travel club than a travel company. We have a relatively small base of travelers who return for travel on a regular basis. Each year we survey our

travelers to find out where they want to travel in the upcoming season. We therefore only offer a fraction of our Adventures in any given season and the schedule changes every year. Each travel program is a customized Adventure! Because we are not a tour mill, cranking out dozens of identical cookie-cutter tours like the larger tour operators, we sometimes experience a few more surprises than you'll find on a more sanitized and fully scripted cookie-cutter tour. We work hard to plan each program carefully, and because we are spread all over the planet, we rely on local travel partners to protect the standard of the arrangements made, but sometimes we end up experiencing some unplanned "adventures", and these often become part of what makes the Adventure memorable.

Q: What kind of guide service will be offered?

A: Your Adventure leader will not be a stranger from a foreign country who is not part of our WAI team and whom you will never see again on a subsequent WAI program. From the Adventure meeting point until the time we say "goodbye" at our departure airport, one of our own WAI Adventure leaders will be with the group and will be responsible for all group functions and logistics. To provide better insight into the city or area, we often use local "step-on guides." Furthermore, most of our international Adventures include a national guide who works in partnership with your WAI Adventure leader to provide smoother, high quality experiences. One of our staff members, however, will always be with the group. If you participate in multiple tours, you will likely develop an ongoing relationship with our small staff of friendly, caring tour leaders.

Q: What is the schedule for a typical day on an Adventure?

A: A typical daily schedule begins with breakfast at 7:00 or 7:30 am, and loading the coach at 8 or 8:30 am. When possible, the walk is scheduled for the first part of the day. Because lunch falls during the middle of the day – travel prime time – we

usually don't give it the quality time of a priority meal. The afternoon typically consists of a sightseeing activity or travel to our next destination. We aim to be checked into the destination hotel around 5 or 6 pm and keep most evenings free for dinner, socializing, and rest. Walks are not always scheduled for each day of the program. North American programs are skewed more towards walks and typically do offer a walk most days. International programs are skewed towards sightseeing and typically offer a walk on 2 out of 3 days.

Q: What is the volkswalking or volkssport your material refers to?

A: Great question! Volkssport is a German name for an international network of walking clubs that started in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland in the 1960's. These clubs organize noncompetitive walks along pre-marked routes (usually 10 kilometers – 6.2 miles) through a scenic and/or historic area. The idea is to get people of all ages outdoors to exercise in events where everyone is declared the winner. Though a growing number of our international trips include walks that we plan ourselves, our travel strategy also combines many club-sponsored walks with sightseeing activities. Travelers often list these times of walking and camaraderie with local walkers as a highlight. In countries where volkssport clubs have not been established, WAI staff conduct on-site planning trips or work with local walking guides to set up routes that showcase the history, culture, and scenery of the local areas.

Q: How difficult are the walks?

A: We use a difficulty rating system ranging from 1 to 5. A walk rated 1 is flat and level throughout. A walk rated 5 is a very difficult hike with steep grades over challenging terrain (Please contact us for more information about the rating system.). Though the clubs sometimes pre-select the route, we usually have options and normally opt for walks rated 3 or lower. Most physically fit people have no difficulty with this type of steady 2 to 3 hour walk. It is true, however, that your enjoyment of the Adventure will generally correspond with how well you prepare yourself physically.

Q: How do you handle the land travel? Do you use a motorcoach?

A: Yes, a motorcoach has proven to be the most efficient and effective way to achieve both mobility and comfort. For most programs this is the transportation mode of choice. We attempt to find top-quality coaches, and in most cases, use well-designed European buses with oversized windows, air conditioning, and toilet facilities (for emergencies only). In some countries in Asia and Central and South America, expectations of coach quality must be lowered.

Q: Will information be provided that is more detailed than the Adventure brochure?

A: Yes, a fact sheet specific to each tour will be available. About three weeks before departure, a hotel listing, a detailed daily schedule, and a list of fellow travelers will be mailed to each participant.

Q: What's included in the price?

A: International programs include all land and sea transportation (bus and ferry), hotel accommodations, all breakfasts and most dinners (since decoding foreign menus might be a bit dangerous for some of us), tips for drivers and guides, and all excursions and walk fees unless specifically described in the itinerary as optional. Generally, once you set aside money for the program price and airfare, you just need to allow extra money to pay for lunches and a few dinners,

and fund your shopping habit (remember – you buy it, you carry it). North American programs do not include most dinners, allowing travelers to choose both their menu and how much money and time they wish to allocate towards dinner. Otherwise, things are pretty much like the international trips – count on getting yourself to the starting point and paying for lunch, dinner, and any shopping.

Q: What is your approach to airfare?

A: For international Adventures, we monitor group air travel possibilities on a tour-by-tour basis and make them available as optional add-ons when research indicates we can offer a “good deal.” Usually, however, travelers are better served to book their air with a travel agent, on-line, or directly with the airlines. Doing so usually provides better fares and more direct routing than a flight plan that requires meeting for the group flight at an east coast or west coast departure airport.

Q: What type of hotels will we be in?

A: We use 3-star and 4-star hotels in most destinations, sometimes referred to as superior tourist-class accommodations. In North America, we patronize chains like Best Western, Country Inn & Suites, Drury Inns, and La Quinta. We're always on the lookout for hotels with a bit of local flavor that reflect the unique cultural character of the areas through which we are traveling. In Europe, our hotels vary substantially in style and atmosphere. We look for a blend of modern hotels in good locations and charming inns that retain an Old-world feel. All rooms have their own bathroom facilities (Though we make no guarantees that you'll be able to figure out how to operate them!). In Europe, double rooms often have two twin beds placed side by side.

Q: How many people do you accept on an Adventure?

A: We generally average 20 to 25 travelers on each tour, and our maximum tour size is 30. Our motorcoaches generally carry 46 to 50 people, so we like to keep a good percentage of the seats empty.

Q: In what age range do your travelers tend to fall?

A: Most of our travelers are between 50 and 70 years of age. However, we usually have travelers that fall outside that range, from the 20's up into the 80's (The record, so far, is 91!). Walkers are characteristically great traveling companions – positive, cheerful, and appreciative of the opportunity to see the world. WARNING: Don't let the average age fool you. These are not geriatric tours! Our coach drivers are always amazed at how fast a WAI group clears out of the bus, especially at an ice cream stop!

Q: What if I don't have a roommate?

A: It's always best to register for a trip with your own roommate, but we do offer to help match travelers up with others needing roommates. We provide contact information for potential roommates and encourage travelers to contact each other (We do not provide snore-test kits!) and make their own decisions. Many of our single travelers have found that this is a great way to meet new friends.

**Further Questions?
Call us at 1-800.779.0353**

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