

Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering, Switzerland

Three action-packed days of expert guided Alpine adventure with glacier skills training, via ferrata and an ascent of a beautiful 4,000m peak.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trekking Peak
Accommodation	Hotel, Mountain hut
Grade	Expedition Grade
Duration	5 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Activities on: 3 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Mr Kevin O'Neale
Land only	Joining in Geneva, Switzerland
Max altitude	4,017m/13,179ft, Weissmies, Day 4

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Managing Director: Steven Berry. Registered in England No. 2118433. VAT No. 496 6511 08

Departures

Group departures

2022 Dates:

Sat 11 Jun - Wed 15 Jun
Sat 27 Aug - Wed 31 Aug

2023 Dates:

Sat 10 Jun - Wed 14 Jun
Sat 26 Aug - Wed 30 Aug

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

Please note the mountain huts have dormitory style accommodation so single rooms are not available.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



Kevin O'Neale qualified as a British Mountain Guide in 1992. It is the highest internationally recognised qualification for instruction and guiding in rock and ice climbing, mountaineering and off-piste skiing and ski touring - the coveted IFMGA carnet. It is recognised throughout the mountain world as your guarantee of their professional training and competence in all aspects of mountaineering and client care. Kevin also possesses the Mountaineering Instructors Certificate - M.I.C - the highest UK qualification in Mountaineering. He has been an instructor and mountain guide in the UK since 1978, having worked in North Wales, the Lake District, the Swiss and French Alps, as well as the Highlands of Scotland, and the Indian and Nepal Himalaya since then. He has based himself in Saas Grund and the Swiss Alps from 1994 to the present.

Your trip highlights

- An alpine skills training day on a glacier to learn or refresh basic snow and ice skills
- A day of via ferrata on the Jegihorn with easy scrambling and spectacular wire bridge crossings
- A night in the Hohsaas mountain hut with its spectacular views of the giant Mischabel range, including the mighty Dom, the highest mountain wholly in Switzerland
- A magical alpine sunrise on an ascent of the classic 4,017m Weissmies
- Hire of crampons, ice axes, harnesses, via ferrata equipment and other technical kit is included
- The trip is led by Kevin O'Neale - a highly experienced IFMGA guide

At a glance itinerary

Day 1	Fly to Geneva. Minibus (one transfer timed to coincide with our flights) transfer to Saas Grund. Evening introductory meeting with the group and leader.
Day 2	Ecole du Glace skills training on the Trift Glacier. Overnight Saas Grund.
Day 3	Jegihorn Via Ferrata. Summit the Jegihorn (3,200m), and descend to Hohass hut
Day 4	A pre-dawn start to ascend the Weissmies (4,017m). Descend to Saas Grund.
Day 5	Minibus transfer to Geneva airport (one transfer timed to coincide with our group flight).

Trip summary

This Alpine adventure is perfect for those who want a short but action-packed mountaineering break in the beautiful Swiss Valais Alps, with a 4,000 metre peak as the ultimate objective.

Our minibus transfer takes you from Geneva to Saas Grund, a quiet village in Switzerland surrounded by spectacular 4,000m peaks. Here you will spend three nights in a small, friendly hotel with great views.

The first day is spent high on the Trift glacier learning or refreshing crampons and ice-axe skills, moving over glaciated terrain whilst roped up, and finishing with some exciting real crevasse rescue practise. This is followed by a via ferrata ascent of the Jegihorn. Via ferrata literally means 'iron way' in Italian and is an exposed mountain route which offers protection you can either hold or clip into. The Jegihorn Via Ferrata combines easy scrambling with wire ladders and spectacular wire bridge crossings. Finally, with mountaineering skills refreshed, you are ready to make a safe ascent of the Weissmies 4,017m (or the Allalinhorn 4,027m). You will spend one night in the impressive Hohsaas mountain hut before making this ascent, which is a great experience in itself. Setting off well before dawn, you cross a glacier and ascend steadily using all your new Alpine skills. On a clear day the views from the top of the Weissmies are breath-taking, and once you are back down in the valley bottom you can really celebrate your achievement - and plan your next Alpine adventure!

The trip is led by Kevin O'Neale, a fully qualified British mountain guide with decades of experience, with a client to guide ratio of 4:1. It is suitable for the mountaineering novice or those whose mountaineering skills are a little rusty. You will however need to be in good physical shape and have a head for heights. This 'Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering' provides suitable preparation for one of our more demanding trekking peaks such as Mont Blanc, Mera Peak or Island Peak as it covers the use of ice axe and crampons, roped glacier travel, and crevasse rescue.

It is possible to add a short extension to climb Monte Rosa. Please ask us for details.

Special notes

Land Only clients

For anyone booking their own flights on this trip, you should aim to arrive by or before noon on arrival day, and to have an afternoon flight (or noon at the earliest) on return, due to having to travel from/to Geneva airport to/from Saas Grund on these days.

Itinerary

This itinerary is a sample itinerary - the feasibility of alpine mountaineering is completely dependent on the prevailing weather conditions. The guide(s) will suggest alternatives if weather conditions dictate that any of the planned activities are not feasible. The decision about each day's activity rests with the guide. However, please rest assured they will do all they can to ensure you have a varied and rewarding trip.

Client/guide ratio: 4:1

Technical gear:

- Mountaineering boots (plastics are not necessary) - phone Niki in the office for advice.
- Mountaineering boots can be hired (for around £35) from an outdoor shop in Saas Grund.
- Gaiters.
- Climbing Harness (can be provided without cost).
- Ice axe (can be provided without cost).
- Crampons (can be provided without cost).
- Helmet (can be provided without cost).
- Prussic loops, lanyards and karabiners will be provided, without cost, by our agent.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly London to Geneva

On arrival at Geneva airport you will be met and taken by minibus to Saas Grund. There is a single group transfer provided which is timed to coincide with the bulk of the flight arrivals.

At around 7.30pm in the evening there will be an introductory meeting and kit check, at which you will be issued with any technical gear you need - crampons, ice-axe, helmet or harness. Your guide will make sure that your Alpine Mountaineering Insurance is in order and discuss the itinerary for the next few days in the light of the most recent weather forecast.

Overnight: Schönblick Hotel, Saas Grund (Meals: D)

Day 2: 'Ecole du Glace' skills training on the Trift Glacier.

At approximately 9.30am you will be met by the guides and after a final check of gear make your way to the main Saas Grund lift station at 1,550 metres, for the lift up to Hohsaas at 3,130 m/10,264ft where you gear up for the Trift glacier and a session of what the French call 'Ecole de Glace' - learning or refreshing skills in the use of crampons & ice-axe, movement on snow & ice whilst roped, assessing for crevasse areas & coping with crossing crevasse zones, some simple crevasse rescue. You finish with a spot of real crevasse rescue practice - all on a second back-up safety rope but involving taking it in turns being lowered into a crevasse (cameras on a leash advised!) then being hoisted out again. Or you can try climbing out using two ice-axes - not compulsory though! All the while you are gaining acclimatisation at over 3,000 metres in a stunning Alpine setting.

After this first day on a glacier you descend back to the hotel in the valley to rehydrate on the sun terrace and enjoy a good night's sleep at a lower altitude.

Overnight: Schönblick Hotel, Saas Grund (Meals: B D)

Day 3: Jegihorn Via Ferrata

This morning you take the long lift from the village up to Hohsaas 3,200m. After leaving kit you do not need at the Hohsaas hut, just 100m across from the lift, you set off for the Jegihorn Via Ferrata nearby. All the kit needed for the via ferrata is provided, for a thrilling day with great views all around. The route follows a safety wire for about 600m of easy scrambling, including a spectacular wire bridge crossing a deep gap, all the while safeguarded by two lanyards attached to the safety wire. Full instruction will be given in the use of the lanyards. After topping out on the Jegihorn 3,200m, you walk down on the walkers' track around the back of the peak then take the lift back up to the Hohsaas hut and spend the night there, enjoying one of their famous three course meals with a view.



Overnight: Hohsaas Hut (Meals: B D)

Day 4: Ascent of Weissmies, 4,017m/13,179ft.

The final day sees the biggest effort - that of getting up at 4am! Then after a good breakfast you head outside in the dark, and with headtorches on, set off for the ascent of the Weissmies, a classic 4,000 metre alpine snow peak involving crossing a glacier and weaving your way through some spectacular serac and glacier scenery. All the skills you have learnt on the first day now come into play. You put on crampons, and with an ice-axe in hand and roped together, you take your time as the hut and starting point is so close to the mountain.

Experiencing an Alpine sunrise is something that will long be remembered, especially on this day as the sun comes over the Mischabel range across the valley, including the mighty Dom, the highest mountain wholly in Switzerland, and a view to fire the ambition of any budding Alpine mountaineer.

You get to the summit of the Weissmies by mid morning after an unrushed ascent with plenty of time to take photographs, time to drink to keep hydrated and eat to keep energy levels topped up. From the top of the Weissmies, weather permitting, you see glorious views of the Pennine Alps, from the Bernese Oberland in the far north, to the Bernina in the east, and to the west two of the alpine giants, Monte Rosa and the Dom. After a team photograph you descend the same way, getting back to the Hohsaas hut for lunch on the terrace. You then descend back to the valley on the long lift returning back to the hotel for a celebratory beer after an action packed three days.



Today's ascent from the Hohsaas hut to the Weissmies summit will be 887m/2,910 ft.

Overnight: Schönblick Hotel, Saas Grund (Meals: B D)

Day 5: Group transfer to airport. Fly to London.

After breakfast, a minibus transfer will be arranged to take you from Saas Grund back to the airport in Geneva for your flight home. This will be a single transfer timed to coincide with the main group's departure.
(Meals: B)

Our grading system

Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering is graded as an Expedition Grade trekking peak holiday, as described below.

Expedition Grade

These trips all involve long, hard days - ice axe, crampons and safety ropes may be used. These high altitude trips provide a considerable physical challenge and some technical experience may also be required.

Suitable for those with strenuous trekking experience in high mountain environments.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ Qualified IFMGA mountain guide
- ✓ Guide ratio of up to 4:1
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK (flight inclusive option).
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Hotel accommodation in Saas Grund at Schönblick on a half board basis
- ✓ Accommodation in Hohsaas Hut on Day 3 with breakfast and evening meals included
- ✓ Hire of equipment (climbing harness, crampons, helmet, prussic loops and karabiners)
- ✓ Lift passes in the Saas Grund Valley
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our Flight Inclusive option)
- ✓ The option of joining one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds.

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- × Lunches
- × Travel insurance
- × Mountaineering boots - these can be hired locally for approximately £35

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



Schönblick Hotel, Saas Grund

This friendly run hotel is very welcoming and has good views of the surrounding mountains. It is comfortable, relaxed and has a distinct 'family run' feel. Many of the rooms have balconies which are great for relaxing, sunning yourself and especially, drying out any kit.



Hohaas Mountain Hut

Situated at 3,200m the Hohaas hut is a combination of traditional dormitory accommodation and a modern restaurant serving signature cheeses dishes and excellent local wines. The sun terrace gives great views of the Monte Rosa range and other 4,000m high peaks.

Meal arrangements

Breakfast and dinner included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 5. Lunches at own expense.

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

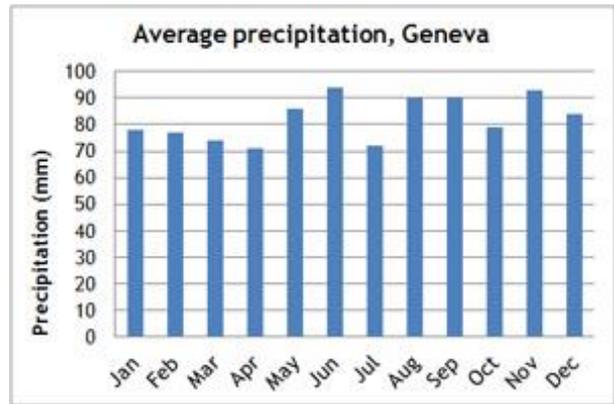
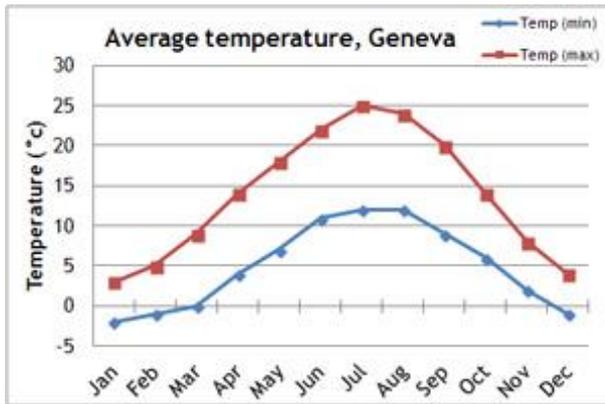
Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.



There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra hotel nights at the start or end of your trip, arrange an extension to climb Monte Rosa or enjoy some other exciting activities. In fact, whatever's available we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements.

We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- We have carefully designed this varied, alpine adventure to pack in a full day of skills training on the glacier, an exciting via ferrata traverse and an ascent of a 4,000m peak - all in five days London-London.
- Our itinerary provides excellent value for money and includes group airport transfers between Geneva and Saas Grund.
- Your guide, Kevin O'Neale, is a highly experienced IFMGA guide - a Brit, who has based himself in Saas Grund in the summer since 1994 so has extensive knowledge of the area.
- Hire of crampons, ice axes, harnesses and other technical kit is free of charge, and given to you in Saas Grund so it doesn't add to your flight weight limit.
- We include an alpine skills day including use of ice axe and crampons, roped glacier travel, and crevasse rescue.
- You will be based in Saas Grund where the acclimatisation peaks are stunning, with excellent views of the Mont Blanc range. Saas Grund is quieter than Chamonix so the huts and acclimatisation peaks will be less crowded.
- All lifts are included.
- We impose a maximum group size of 12 and a ratio of 4 clients to 1 guide.
- We routinely research and make a reconnaissance of our new trips ourselves. If you have any questions about this trip, please contact Niki Morgan who will be happy to answer any queries.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We use British Airways for our flight inclusive bookings but, if you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say



I had a great experience with Kevin and always felt safe and well looked after. I met lots of like minded travellers and had an exciting trip.
- Mr L, West Yorkshire

Had 5 days private guiding learning Alpine mountaineering skills as first trip to the Alps. Great location. Hotel very friendly and accommodating, with good food. Guides extremely knowledgeable and helpful. Gained enough confidence and knowledge to plan our own trips in the future.
- Ian, Surrey



This alpine mountaineering adventure is a great experience for those looking to learn, or refresh, their skills/experience with crampons and ice axes. It's an amazing action-packed short trip, packing in an exciting via ferrata and a climb of a stunning 4,000m peak.
- Niki Morgan, Operations Manager

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

