



## Colombia

Colombian Wildlife Discovery

# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



**DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...**

## ITINERARY

## Colombian • Wildlife Discovery

**13 DAYS • 12 NIGHTS**

**Bogota – Manizales – Villamaria – Rio Blanco – Puerto Nariño –  
Mocagua – Paz de Ariporo – Cartagena**

Optional extensions available

This trip can be tailored to your interests and requirements.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit Rio Blanco Nature Reserve; one of the top 3 birding sites in the world
- Visit Fundacion Maikuchiga, where captured primates from the illegal animal trade are nurtured back to health
- Searching for Pink and Grey River Dolphins and 'Charapa' turtles at Lake Tarapoto
- Llanos Wildlife Safari + night-time safari

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Wildlife Tour
Tour Start	Bogota
Tour End	Bogota
Accommodation	Hotels & Lodges
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 10 Lunches & 11 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium

## COLOMBIAN WILDLIFE



'Colombian Wildlife Discovery' will allow you to experience the very best of Colombia's wildlife as well as much of its colourful culture. Take in Bogota's unique merge of cosmopolitan and rich history, birdwatch amongst the largest amount of bird species in the world, witness the rehabilitation of rescued primates from the illegal animal trade and spot the captivating Lake Tarapoto Pink and Grey River Dolphins. Furthermore, discover the nocturnal Llanos wildlife with both all-morning and night safaris.



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# COLOMBIA, *an overview*

Colombia is in the midst of a new era in its history. It has one of the top regional economies and is one of the most politically stable countries in Latin America. The significant improvement in the country's safety has also positioned Colombia as a **top travel destination** that people from all around the globe are eager to discover. Colombia boasts the stunning **Andes mountain region** and the legendary **Amazonian rainforest**; the country is the second most **bio-diverse** country in the world. Furthermore, booming cosmopolitan cities like Bogotá and Cartagena can impress anyone with their magnificent views, innovative architecture, rich culture, exceptional restaurants, and enthralling ambience. A much-loved destination for bird watchers, Colombia is **home to over 1,900 species of birds** (more than the amount of bird species found in North America and Europe combined). Additionally, **450 mammal species** live in Colombia with approximately 22% considered either endangered or critically endangered. Colombia has it all: city life, stunning coastlines, **diverse landscape and wildlife** as well as countless trekking opportunities.

## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

Pioneer Expeditions are one of the few specialists that really *do* off the beaten track and unique adventures. The team have a real passion for wildlife and adventure travel which we love to share with our clients. We delight in searching the world for new destinations, new experiences and creating the most incredible adventures.

We like to introduce our clients to unique, the different, and the incredible. Whether it is through wildlife tracking, sea kayaking, snorkelling, trekking, rafting, cycling or observing wildlife in its natural environment, we want to give you the real Pioneer experience.

From the moment you choose to travel with Pioneer Expeditions until you return back home, you are supported by our dedicated team. We listen to what you want and can create an itinerary around your specific needs, working with your budget and with a commitment to responsible travel.

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## DAY 1: Arrive into BOGOTA

Welcome to Bogota! Your host and a driver will be eagerly waiting to greet you at Bogota Airport. Your host is a local who will fully introduce you to the charmingly unique city Bogota, and will conveniently serve as your local guide, translator and concierge while in Bogota. Following your arrival, we will make our way to the Zipaquirá Salt Cathedral; an underground Roman Catholic Church uniquely hidden within the tunnels of a Zipaquirá salt mine. Following an optional lunch in Zipaquirá, our return to Bogota will be met with an afternoon visit to the dramatically domineering Cerro Monserrate, this mountain towers above Bogota and will offer us gorgeous panoramic views over the city. In the evening we will be heading out to La Macarena neighbourhood for our first dinner.

Overnight – Hotel Casa Deco



Overnight:  
Hotel



Meals:  
B



Distance:



Activity:  
Travel

## DAY 2: Enjoy a BOGOTA CITY TOUR before flying to MANIZALES



Today we will explore Bogota City, travelling through the winding streets of La Candelaria accompanied by a historian and living the stories behind the streets, plazas, cathedrals and street art pieces we will see along the way. Our guide will not only give us an insight into the country's history and architecture, but also into Colombia's political and economic revival. We will visit some of Bogota's most important museums such as Botero Museum and the Gold Museum.

Following the excursion, there will be an optional lunch. We will then be transferred to Bogotá airport to catch our flight to Manizales. From here, we will be transferred to the hotel and the afternoon will be at your leisure to do whatever you wish, relax, take in the scenery, or go

exploring. Later on, a briefing will be given to us by a local birding guide who will be accompanying us for the next day's birding activity - something you'll be looking forward to if you're a bird lover!

Overnight – Hotel Termales El Ruiz



Overnight:  
Hotel



Meals:  
B, D



Distance:  
Short Flight  
Approx. 30min drive



Activity:  
City tour and travel

## DAY 3: BIRDING at LOS NEVADOS NATIONAL PARK and TERMALES EL RUIZ



Our third day, which will be dedicated to birding, will start with a morning activity. We will spend our morning searching for all of the high-Andean specialities and endemics that can be found at the hotel's feeders, along the old Manizales road on which the hotel is located on and at the entrance of Los Nevados National Park (the landscape of which is made up of three mountain ranges, dormant volcanoes and hot springs... not to mention the birds!). Here we will witness the unique birds of which include: Andean Condor, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan, Rufous-fronted Parakeet, Buffy Helmetcrest, Tawny Antpitta, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Black-thighed Puffleg, Rainbow-

bearded Helmetcrest, Crested Cotinga, Sapphire-winged Hummingbird, Shining Sunbeam, Buff-winged Starfontlet and various mountain tanagers. Breakfast will be provided either before leaving the hotel or during the trail, depending on your requirements.



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If you loved your morning of birding, after lunch, we will offer you an option to return to continue birding along the old Manizales – Los Nevados road and forests to see how many more species we can spot, we're sure you won't be disappointed! After dinner back at the hotel, the evening will be at your leisure in the hotel grounds, with full access to the hotel's natural hot springs which you'll have to try out!

Overnight – Hotel Termales El Ruiz



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 3-4hr drive**



Activity:  
**Bird watching**

#### DAY 4: Visit RIO BLANCO NATURE RESERVE for more birding

An early start to the day will involve us being transferred to the Rio Blanco Nature Reserve, located just above Manizales (1hr 30mins). It will definitely be worth the early start, believe us! This drive from the hotel will take us to one of the world's best birding sites – not only because of its size or wonderfully conserved Andean forests, 380 or so recorded species, but because for the past number of years, the reserve's keeper has been feeding and coaxing some of the world's most difficult bird genus to see – the Antpittas. These skulking birds that look like balls on two sticks are terrestrial forest birds, normally making good sightings a rarity. Thanks to the keeper's (Carlos Mario) work, however, it's possible



to experience almost daily sightings of these wonderful and charismatic birds that will silently hop out of the undergrowth as soon as they hear his voice. During this morning we'll be visiting the various Antpitta feeders and with a little patience we may be able to see the vulnerable and endemic Brown-banded Antpitta, Bi-coloured Antpitta, Slate-crowned Antpitta, the more common Chestnut-crowned Antpitta and less common Chestnut-naped Antpitta. In total there are 7 species of Antpitta found in the reserve, an astounding number and testament to what a special place this is.

After lunch at the reserve, where we'll be able to sight many hummers and flower piercers at the feeders, you can either have the choice to relax at the lodge and look for crab foxes as they appear out of the forest or go for a bit more birding. Walk along the reserve's roads looking for the large Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker and the pretty Cinnamon Flycatcher, sallying for insects above the road. Various species of the Tangara genus will be passing by in mixed flocks but special attention will be paid to the uncommon and local Red-Hooded Tanager, the lush Grass-green Tanager and emblematic Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher. We will also be on the lookout for the local and uncommon Scaly-naped Parrot and strikingly coloured Rusty-faced Parrot.

Following another successful action-packed birding day, we will be returning to the Hotel Termales El Ruiz for an afternoon and evening to be used at leisure, before dinner is provided for you at the hotel to re-fill your birding energy levels.

Overnight – Hotel Termales El Ruiz



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 25-30mins**



Activity:  
**Bird watching**



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## DAY 5: TRANSFER to PUERTO NARIÑO

Day 5 will start with you being transferred from the hotel to the airport in Manizales, where we will catch a transfer flight to Bogota for our connection flight to Leticia – a city located near the borders of Brazil and Peru, in southern Colombia, right next to the Amazon River! There will be the opportunity to have lunch at the airport in Bogota if you require it. After our flight, there will be a private boat transfer up the mighty Amazon itself, from Leticia airport to Puerto Nariño – a tiny village in the depths of the Amazon and an ideal peaceful nature retreat which was also Colombia's first sustainable tourism destination (2 hrs). Upon arrival, we check into our hotel.

Towards the evening/night-time, you will be able to participate on our thrilling jungle walk and become at one with nature to see what nocturnal animals we can find!

Overnight - Hotel Lomas del Paiyu



Overnight:  
Hotel



Meals:  
B, D



Distance:  
Two short flights  
Boat transfer



Activity:  
Travel

## DAY 6: Visit FUNDACION MAIKUCHIGA and learn how the centre helps to nurtured primates back to health

An early morning walk (40 mins) will take us to Fundacion Maikuchiga ran by Dr. Sara Bennett and the local community of Mocagua. Fundacion Maikuchiga works with captured primates from the illegal animal trade and those who have also been brought up in captivity. At the centre, primates are lovingly nurtured back to health for their eventual return to their native habitat. After a brief introduction to the programme, we will walk through secondary forest looking for: the common Squirrel Monkey, tiny Pygmy Marmoset, beautiful Yellow-handed Titi, Black-mantled Tamarin and Spix's Night Monkey. After this location, we will take a trip up the River Matamata which borders the national park of Amacayacu to look for a trail to go into some more primary vegetation where we'll be on the look out for the enigmatic Monk Saki monkey. Howler sightings are also possible.



A packed lunch will be provided for you and after lunch we will take part in an afternoon birding and wildlife watching session during our return from the Fundacion. We will then return to Puerto Nariño and observe the legendary Amazonian sunset over the great river, which will be magnificent! In addition, making this trip even more cultural, we will meet with a local Tikuna indigneous group (Cocama and Yagua dialects) and get to know the community. Furthermore, we will make a visit to Natutama NGO which works with environmental education and conservation programmes, before a well deserved dinner in Puerto Nariño.

Overnight - Hotel Lomas del Paiyu



Overnight:  
Hotel



Meals:  
B, L, D



Distance:  
N/A



Activity:  
Wildlife

## DAY 7: Enjoy a day of WILDLIFE SPOTTING on LAKE TARAPOTO

This morning we take a boat ride to Lake Tarapoto and spend the morning exploring the flooded Varzea forest of Lake Tarapoto, looking for various primates, birds and other forms of wildlife. There is even the possibility of catching a boat ride up the Amacayacu River to observe wildlife and/or visit the community of San Martin.

A packed lunch will be provided for you at Lake Tarapoto. The afternoon at Tarapoto oxbow lake will consist of searching for Pink and Grey River Dolphins, freshwater 'Charapa' turtles, various species of primate and other mammals along with hundreds of species of bird. Furthermore, walking a trail to the lake's local community looking for the



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legendary Ceiba tree (rubber tree) and local medicinal plants will also be in the afternoon's agenda. We will return to Puerto Nariño before nightfall and enjoy an evening activity by the local community. Our day will again conclude with dinner in Puerto Nariño.

*Overnight - Hotel Lomas del Paiyu*



*Overnight:*  
**Hotel**



*Meals:*  
**B, L, D**



*Distance:*  
**N/A**



*Activity:*  
**Flora and Fauna**

## DAY 8: Explore PUERTO NARIÑO

Today will give us the opportunity to explore more of the town of Puerto Nariño, with the morning spent looking around the town and taking in their ecological living style, along with an early lunch. This will provide you with the perfect opportunity to buy local handicrafts before heading back to Leticia by private boat.

In the afternoon, we will arrive in Leticia to be transferred to the airport; here we will catch a transfer flight back to Bogota. From the airport in Bogota, we will transfer you to the airport hotel where you will be able to spend the evening at leisure with dinner provided at the hotel.

*Overnight – Habitel Hotel*



*Overnight:*  
**Hotel**



*Meals:*  
**B, L, D**



*Distance:*  
**Boat transfer  
Short Flight**



*Activity:*  
**Exploring and travel**

## DAY 9 : Discover the beautiful HATO LA AURORA, LLANOS

We will be leaving our hotel at around 4:30am, for a short 15min transfer to Bogota to catch the flight to Yopal. Even with the early start to the day, breakfast will be provided as well as a lunch, to take with us before leaving the hotel. We will then be transferred to the 16,000-hectare reserve and cattle ranch of Hato La Aurora in the Llanos of Casanare department. This Hato is a fully working cattle ranch with a focus on conservation. Today, a traditional 'a la Llanera' lunch will be served at the Hato residency of Juan Solito.



Following on from lunch, we will then be given the opportunity to embark on a short boat trip or 4x4 Safari in the reserve whilst keeping an eye out for Capybara, Jabiru Stork, White-tailed deer, Cayman and Red-howler Monkeys, amongst many other typical Llanos species. In the evening we will view a spectacular sunset over Llanos as well as receiving a short introductory talk about the Hato and dinner.

*Overnight – Juan Solito Lodge*



*Overnight:*  
**Lodge**



*Meals:*  
**B, L, D**



*Distance:*  
**Short flight  
Short car transfer**



*Activity:*  
**Wildlife**



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## DAY 10: Enjoy a LLANOS WILDLIFE SAFARIS



After breakfast, we will get to experience an all-morning, all-Colombian safari to witness the Llanos wildlife which includes the notorious Anaconda and enigmatic Giant Anteater. You'll find it of interest that The Hato was recently named as having the highest concentration of Jaguars on the continent and Panthera Colombia (NGO) are using the Hato as one of their main investigation centres. Continuing on with the safari, we will be searching for the typical bird species of the Llanos including the 2 regional endemics. We will provide you with the option to either safari by 4x4 or safari by horse depending on your preference, both

options will provide you with an amazing experience! In addition, the various elements of Llanos ranch life will be explained to us during our journey around the Hato.

We will be treated to a typical lunch at the Juan Solito residence and the afternoon will involve relaxing before experiencing a night-time safari. This second safari of the day will be conducted in order for us to see the animals that only come out after the sun goes down, such as the large felines that inhabit the Hato (but make sure you take a torch!). After dinner and before retreating to bed for the night, the day will conclude with folklore, songs, musical instruments and stories - a brilliant and highly cultural way to end our Colombian Safari day!



*Overnight – Juan Solito Lodge*



*Overnight:  
Lodge*



*Meals:  
B, L, D*



*Distance:  
Varies*



*Activity:  
Wildlife*

## DAY 11: BIRDING and transfer to CARTAGENA

Day 11 will begin with birding around the various trails that encircle the house and that lie next to the Ariporo River. We will also get the opportunity to visit La Aurora's original farmhouse and walk across the Llanos in search of Llanos specialities! Lunch will be provided at the Juan Solito residence. Alternatively, if you feel like catching your own lunch, at one of the sites by the river there will be some great fishing opportunities!

We will then take a flight to Cartagena and be met to transfer to the hotel, followed by dinner in Cartagena.

*Overnight – Casa Canabal Hotel*



*Overnight:  
Hotel*



*Meals:  
B, L, D*



*Distance:  
Short flight  
Approx. 1hr of driving*



*Activity:  
Birding, culture and  
fishing*

## DAY 12: City tour of CARTAGENA

In the morning, we will be invited on a tour of the beautiful city of Cartagena. Our tour will include visiting the cultural and historical locations of which include: Barrio Manga, Bocagrande, Popa Monastery, Saint Philip Castle, Museum of the Spanish Inquisition, the Vaults and various battalions.

After the tour we will return to our hotel and be taken to enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. The afternoon and evening will be entirely at your leisure in Cartagena; when there will be an optional trip to Café del Mar to watch our final Colombian sunset and enjoy a few drinks, which we can ensure will be beautiful and idyllic. A farewell dinner will be put on



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in the evening. If on a group expedition, this will allow you to share your experiences and treasured moments of the trip; a delightful way to say your goodbyes to Colombia as well as all the great friends you've made over the last 2 weeks!

Overnight – Casa Canabal Hotel



Overnight:  
Hotel



Meals:  
B, L, D



Distance:  
N/A



Activity:  
Culture and heritage

## DAY 13: Time to say GOODBYE to COLOMBIA

Our final day on this Colombian Wildlife Discovery, you will have the morning at your leisure or to transfer to Cartagena airport for your flight back home via Bogota to your final destination.



Overnight:  
N/A



Meals:  
B



Distance:  
30min airport transfer



Activity:  
Travel

## ACCOMMODATION, at a glance

Accommodation subject to availability

### Hotel Casa Deco

Bogota

<https://www.hotelcasadeco.com/en-gb>



### Hotel Termales Del Ruiz

Caldas

<http://hoteltermasdelruiz.com/>



### Hotel Lomas del Paiyu

Puerto Nariño



Photos from Tripadvisor



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### Habitel Hotel

Bogota

<https://en.hotelhabitel.com/>



### Juan Solito Lodge

Casanare

<https://www.juansolito.com/>



### Casa Canabal Hotel

Cartagena

<https://www.casacanabalhotel.com/>



Photos from TripAdvisor

## WHEN TO GO

- Due to Colombia being on the equator, temperatures are fairly stable at 24°C throughout the year, getting cooler if you move higher inland.
- Colombia wet seasons vary depending on where you are in the country. In the North, there are 2 rainy seasons, between April and June, and between September and November. However in the South the rain is more constant but the showers never last that long.
- As for when to avoid the tourists! The busy tourism season tend to be between December to February and Easter Week (the week before Easter weekend).



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# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## INCLUDED

- Including internal flight
- Bilingual Birding Guide (for Llanos and Central Andes legs of tour)
- Local guides at every destination
- All transfers and road transport
- All accommodation
- All entrance fees to all museums, parks and reserves
- Tours as included in this itinerary
- Meals as included in this itinerary

## NOT INCLUDED

- Any internal flights (aside from Expeditions Tour Leader – see 'Inclusions')
- Any international flights
- Laundry
- Personal expenses
- Tips
- Visa
- Items of a personal nature
- Drinks or beverages
- Meals not specified in the meal plan, as detailed in the itinerary.

## OPTIONAL EXTENSION

### Day 14: Eastern Andes Birding Tour

There is great birding available in and around Bogota (maximum 1hr 30mins by car to the farthest locations) that will rack up all of the Eastern Andes endemics and rarities which are isolated to this range, such as the elusive Bogota Rail, rare and local Green-bearded Helmetcrest, stunning but difficult to spot Brown-breasted Parakeet amongst many, many others. Ventures to the western slope that leads down the Middle Magdalena River Valley will also pick up a number of Magdalena Medio specialities and endemics such as Indigo-capped and Ruby-topaz Hummingbird.

### Day 15: The Lost City Trek

Trek to one of the world's great archaeological sites that literally emerges from the jungle after a strenuous 2-day hike through the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta foothills – recently declared as the most irreplaceable natural reserve on Earth. Pioneer Expeditions has adapted this excellent trek to allow for more comfort and an optional private beach hotel stay to relax tired muscles. Treks can be done in either 4 or 5 days.

### Day 16: El Dorado Birding & Northern Colombia Birding Trail

Birding at El Dorado lodge, located high up in the San Lorenzo ridge in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is a dream come true for avid birders. In a 2 to 3-day stay it is not uncommon to rack up over 20 endemic species of the 24 that inhabits this isolated range. With one of the world's highest concentrations of endemic biodiversity, these mountains and the reserve lodge - with the new addition of the stunning Kogihabs - has taken this already excellent accommodation to another level. For those wanting to stay a little longer, the recently launched Northern Colombia Birding Trail – an initiative funded and led by the USAID and National Audubon Society in partnership with Colombia's Calidris NGO, has led to the formalisation of one of Colombia's best birding trails, where we get to visit dry forest, mangroves, desert scrub, humid tropical forest and two isolated ranges and a number of national parks and flora and fauna sanctuaries full of recently described endemics, some of which are new to science.



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## Day 17: San Jose del Guaviare

Not yet found on the international tourism map, Pioneer expeditions is very proud to be pushing what will become one of Colombia's most fascinating destinations. Surrounded by Amazonian forest on the divide between Colombia's 'Eastern Plains' or tropical savannah ecosystem and Amazon basin, San Jose del Guaviare has it all. Amazing diversity of flora and fauna, typical of both of these immense bio-regions; indigenous reserves that have so much to offer where the visitor can interact and learn about their ways of life; ancient rock formations that are part of the Guyana Shield and that leave visitors wondering about their creation and maybe most remarkable of all – ancient rock art that dates back to over 20,000 years ago that emerges from the jungle. The discoveries here are just beginning.

## Day 18: PNN Los Nevados trek

Here we can disappear into the high-Andes on a full-service mountain trek or expedition, depending on your ability level. PNN Los Nevados is one of Colombia's most famous and most beautiful national parks, home to 8 volcanic structures. We will climb through pristine Andean cloud forest through various ecosystems as the oxygen slowly dissipates leaving the paramo, an ecosystem so unique it is only found in 4 countries on Earth, of which Colombia is home to over 50% of. Glacier-capped volcanoes and plateau lakes await in a landscape that has to be seen to be believed.

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITY DURATION	3 – 7 hours per day
SEASON	This trip is best experienced from November to March, but can run (with minor amendments) throughout the year
BEST TIME TO GO	November – January
GROUP SIZE	2-8pax and Tailor-made
RESPONSIBILITY	As part of our commitment to responsible travel, we propose activities that are respectful of the environment and communities working at the same time exclusively with local partners.
DIFFICULTY LEVEL	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'Medium' level (3-7 hours of activities per day). This means that you will need an average level of fitness.



# THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

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Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at [info@pioneerexpeditions.com](mailto:info@pioneerexpeditions.com) if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website [www.pioneerexpeditions.com](http://www.pioneerexpeditions.com) to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

**1. Contact us -**

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

**2. Leave everything to us -**

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

**3. Wait for your adventure to begin -**

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

