

discovering st helena

PRIVATE GUIDED JOURNEYS



DISCOVERING ST HELENA



THE FORGOTTEN ISLAND

St Helena Island is a tropical island of volcanic origin in the South Atlantic located 2,485 miles East of Rio De Janeiro, 703 miles to the South East of Ascension Island, 1200 miles from the West African coast and 4,901 miles from the UK making it one of the most remote islands in the world. In 1815 the British Government selected St Helena as the place of detention of Napoleon Bonaparte. He lived on the island until his death in 1821. His body remained on the island for another 20 years before being moved to Paris. The island is only 47 square miles however boasts 400 endemic bird and plant species. Above all the island is very safe and you are assured of a warm welcome by the islanders.

Previously the island has only been accessible by taking a five day voyage on the RMS St Helena from Cape Town. This is all about to change with the opening of the brand new airport in May of this year. We are thrilled to be offering this journey to the island before the inevitable change takes place. One can expect unspoiled landscapes and untouched nature. Beneath the shadow of a soaring, ruined cathedral of volcanic rock is a rugged paradise, one of sand dunes and lush green hills and a coastline where dolphins and whales are often spotted.

St. Helena draws nature lovers and avid birders alike. Diana's Peak National Park, home to 60 known native species of plants - 45 of which exist nowhere else in the world - is utterly pristine. In addition, the island's mountains and subtropical climates make for exceptional coffee-growing conditions, and although farms are not abundant, it produces some of the best (and most expensive) coffee in the world.



THE ITINERARY

Friday 18 November 2016 (D)

Welcome to Johannesburg!

You will be met at the door of your aircraft and assisted through immigration, baggage collection and customs. You will then be shown to your awaiting transfer vehicle and transferred to the Peech Hotel, your hotel for the evening.

This evening we meet for dinner and an informal introductory talk to the island by Lindsay Grattan Cooper. Lindsay lived on the island for ten years and has written a wonderful book *Remote* which forms part of your pre departure information. Lindsay is looking forward to sharing her experiences on this unique island with you.

Saturday 19 November 2016 (BLD)

This morning after breakfast you will be transferred back to the airport to board your British Airways flight to Saint Helena. On arrival you will be met by your local guide, Aaron Legg, and assisted onto your vehicle for the transfer to the Consulate Hotel for check in. After a light lunch, head off with Aaron to visit High Knoll Fort. The present fort dates from 1874 and is on the site of the original citadel which was built in 1798. It was built as a redoubt which is a fort or fort system usually consisting of an enclosed defensive emplacement outside a larger fort, usually relying on earthworks, although some are constructed of stone or brick. It was built for the island's population in the event of an invasion. High Knoll Fort commands superb views across much of the

island and therefore makes it the perfect place to visit as an introduction to the island.

Dinner and overnight at the Consulate Hotel

Sunday 20 November 2016 (BLD)

After breakfast you may wish to attend a church service at St James Church (5 minute walk) which starts at 09.30. On your return head off again with Aaron at 11.00 for a sight-seeing tour taking in Deadwood Plain which was the camp site of Boer prisoners of war (POW) during the Anglo Boer War of 1900-1902. Optional short walk to Flagg Staff which gives you wonderful panoramic views across the island. Visit Fishers Valley where Napoleon was able to ride his horse unescorted during his exile on the island. Visit Levelwood and the bell stone – a rock which when struck rings like a bell. Legend says that the ringer is granted a wish. Enjoy a picnic lunch at one of the scenic spots. Visit Green and Blue Hill in the remote South West of the island. Visit St Paul's Cathedral built in 1850/51 and becoming a Cathedral in 1859, making the Diocese of St Helena the fourth oldest diocese in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa. Return to Jamestown and the Consulate Hotel for dinner and overnight.

Monday 21 November 2016 (BLD)

This morning after breakfast Aaron will take you on a Wire Bird Tour. The wire bird (*Charadrius Sanctaehelena*) is a type of plover which lives in burrows and is the national bird of Saint Helena. It is called the wire bird because of its thin legs that look like wire. It was first recorded in 1638 however interestingly not observed by Charles Darwin during his

visit in July 1836. It is featured on St. Helena's coat of arms and is held in great affection by island residents. The wire bird is officially classed as critically endangered with only 322 individuals reported in the most recent survey. Later continue onto the Millennium Forest which is a historic reforestation project launched in 2000 with plenty of energy from the island community, where virtually every islander planted a tree. In the first phase about 3,000 trees were planted and by 2012, 35 hectares has been planted with 10,000 trees. The total land designated for reforestation has been extended in the course of the last 15 years and is now 250 Hectares. You are encouraged to plant a tree during your visit to the project.

After a pack lunch return to Jamestown for a town walk with Basil George a descendant of one of the Boer prisoners of war who decided to remain on the island after the declaration of peace. Basil is a hugely experienced guide who will keep you entertained with his vast knowledge of the background to many historical events that have taken place on this amazing island. Visit the Castle, St James Church, the famous Jacob's ladder, the Court House and Castle Gardens. Return to Jamestown for dinner and overnight at the Consulate Hotel.

Tuesday 22 November 2016 (BLD)

After breakfast at nine o'clock you will be met and transferred to your island boat tour. Cruise around the island and watch the pan-tropical spotted and bottle nose dolphins playing in their natural environment. The tour gives you a scenic view of St Helena's coastline and allows you to view a few of the old fortifications

and outposts that still stand. Visit and have a picnic lunch on Egg Island to view the various sea birds which nest there, as well as other smaller off-shore islands. Return to the Consulate hotel for an afternoon at leisure before dinner and overnight.

Wednesday 23 November 2016 (BLD)

This morning at nine o'clock you will be picked up from the hotel and visit the Napoleonic sites. Briars Pavilion was Napoleon's first residence before he moved to Longwood House where he died. Longwood House is one of the best Napoleonic museums in the world, with original furniture and over 900 artefacts.

Have your picnic lunch on Longwood Green and after lunch take a fifteen minute stroll to see Napoleon's tomb before returning to Jamestown for dinner and overnight at the Consulate Hotel.

Thursday 24 November 2016 (BLD)

This morning at nine set off for Diana's Peak, the island's only National Park. Experience the micro and macro life in a cloud forest, from the many endemic plants and invertebrate species, to the breath-taking views of the island. It is a four hour tour to the high central ridge.

The aim of the tour is to introduce you to some of the endemic plants and animals found on the island and highlight some of the issues facing these highly endangered species. You will be driven to Cabbage Tree Road to start your walk up the path to the highest point on the island, Diana's peak at 823 m. Walkers need to have a reasonable level of fitness as there is an ascent of 175m. Have your picnic

lunch on the peaks. In the afternoon visit Farm Lodge for tea built in approximately 1670 as an East India Company planters house, Farm lodge is set in its own grounds of 10 acres with lawns and lush tropical gardens, affording peace and tranquillity. Later return to the Consulate Hotel for dinner and overnight.

Friday 25 November 2016 (BLD)

This morning after breakfast you will be met for your Sandy Bay and Beach tour. Sandy Bay is a valley in the South of the island, leading South East from the height of the Diana's peak range to the sea. Much of the island coffee is grown here and we will see Solomon's coffee plantation. Geological features in Sandy Bay include the rock promontory Lot and along the coast Lot's wife and the Asses Ears. It would also be possible to visit SHAPE - St Helena's Active Participation in Enterprise. SHAPE opened in late 2008, this centre is the headquarters of a new initiative which employs people with disabilities to produce local, quality crafts. All money made from sales is put back into the enterprise, thus making it self-sustaining.

Buffet lunch at St Helena's distillery followed by a tour. Discover the delights and see how Tungi spirit, white Lion rum, midnight mist coffee liqueur and the island's own ermuda juniper flavoured gin are made. Later return to the Consulate Hotel for dinner and overnight.

Saturday 26 November 2016 (B)

After breakfast you will have time for a last look around Jamestown before your transfer back to the airport and your flight back to Johannesburg.





SPECIALIST GUIDE AARON LEGG

Aaron was born, brought up and educated at Prince Andrew School on the island of St Helena in the community of Sandy Bay. Sandy Bay is one of the most beautiful parts of the island and during his childhood this was the setting for many adventures. This would involve climbing trees or racing over the Barron hills and fortifications of Sandy Beach and the future nearby tourist attractions of Lots, Lots wife and Ponds. He recognised a market for quality guiding on the island and Aaron's Adventure Tours was born. He provides off road and walking tours allowing visitors to experience some of the sights and views, which

are inaccessible when exploring St Helena independently.

Aaron has gained a vast knowledge of the island's history, flora, fauna and its terrain and has actively participated within the islands Tourist Board and Farmers Association. Aaron's Adventure Tours was the winner of the Tourism Business of the Year award for 2011-12.

Aaron regards himself as a true St Helenian and respects the surroundings which he calls his home, with him you will see the raw beauty that his tiny island home has to offer.

