Background

Founded in 1970, Smithsonian Journeys, the Smithsonian Institution’s worldwide travel program, is an enduring leader in cultural and enrichment, expert-led travel, offering land and cruise journeys on all seven continents. Smithsonian Journeys is a vital part of the Institution’s educational outreach activities, supporting the important mission of the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.” Smithsonian Journeys tours are designed to provide travelers with a deeper understanding of the people, history, and cultures they will experience and meet on their tour. This is accomplished through careful itinerary planning and fine educational leadership. With more than 350 departures annually, Smithsonian Journeys is the nation’s largest museum-based travel program. The program is managed by a core programming and marketing staff located at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and operated in cooperation with travel partners nationwide.

Who Travels on Smithsonian Journeys Tours?
Smithsonian Journeys travelers are curious, thoughtful people with a keen intellectual interest and concern for the people and cultures they encounter on tour. The average age for international travelers is 55+ but the age range can be wide, with multigenerational family tours often attracting three generations of travelers. Guests choose to travel with Smithsonian Journeys because of our reputation for offering well-managed, quality tours with a strong emphasis on learning and enrichment, high caliber Smithsonian Journeys Experts, and competent, friendly staff. Smithsonian Journeys travelers also list compatibility with fellow travelers as an important factor in choosing Smithsonian Journeys.

What Kinds of Travel Programs Are Available Through Smithsonian Journeys?

- Small-Group Classic Land Journeys
- Small-Ship Cruises – Ocean and River
- Cultural Stay Programs - unpack once!
- In-depth Immersion Programs
- Train Travel
- Special Interest Tours
- Walking and Natural Park Tours
- Multigenerational Family Journeys
- Around the World by Private Jet
- Tailor-Made Journeys
What Distinguishes Smithsonian Journeys Tours?

- **Smithsonian Journeys Experts:** Among the experts who accompany a journey are Smithsonian scientists who are scholars in biology, ecology, geology, and other disciplines, and curators who study and interpret culture, art, and history. Travelers will also find experts – scholars, scientists, diplomats, authors, journalists, theater experts, and naturalists – who have been selected by Smithsonian Journeys for their special knowledge and charisma. In addition to presenting a series of planned discussions, Smithsonian Journeys Experts offer ongoing commentary and camaraderie to provide travelers with the breadth, details, and insights necessary to more fully understand and appreciate their destination. Travelers often find that the quality of their expert is the difference between an outstanding travel experience and a mass-market alternative.

- **Tour Managers/Directors:** All tours are accompanied by a knowledgeable and experienced Tour Manager/Director who handles all of the tour logistics so travelers can take advantage of the many opportunities to learn. These attentive and caring people rank among some of the best in the business and their love of travel is equaled only by their passion to share their enthusiasm and knowledge with others.

- **Local Guides and Comprehensive Sightseeing:** We always choose the most sophisticated local guides whose English is excellent and who understand the intellectual needs of our travelers. Smithsonian Journeys tours and cruises will not only visit the traditional routes but will also explore places where travelers don’t have the access or opportunity to visit – behind the scenes and off the beaten path.

- **Accommodations:** Travelers stay in distinctive properties that reflect the character and ambiance of the local culture and that meet our high standards. Accommodations are selected for their quality, location, ambiance, cuisine, service, and amenities, and can be in a historic area or in the idyllic countryside. Plus, the ambiance might be “out-of-this-world” luxury, seriously historic (but also upscale), family-run charm (in the true meaning of the word), or something truly unique.

- **Small Ships:** Smithsonian Journeys cruises feature smaller, more intimate ships that are able to cruise distinctive waterways where large, mass-market cruises cannot go. These vessels allow travelers to see the life of a country up close and allow them to disembark frequently to explore ashore. Ships vary from comfortable to truly deluxe, and generally
feature a casual on-board ambiance, “single-seating” dining, and amenities such as lounges, fitness facilities, and plenty of open deck space.

- **Camaraderie:** Travelers choose Smithsonian Journeys tours in order to experience an exhilarating and authentic adventure with like-minded lifelong learners who share their special interests. These shared interests provide a social and intellectual starting point for enjoying their journey together. On many trips, travelers forge new and lasting friendships. Programs are ideal for solo travelers, couples, family, and friends.

- **Pre-Tour Preparation:** Travelers are well prepared for their journeys with detailed pre-tour mailings, including a comprehensive, customized reading list and pre-tour bulletins containing vital information on the destination and tour logistics.

- **Flexibility:** People who have always traveled independently and then choose to travel with Smithsonian Journeys on a group tour are always enthusiastic with the service, independence, and value of a Smithsonian Journeys program. Travelers can get the best of both worlds: the ease and comprehensive itinerary of a group tour, and the flexibility of independent travel. For example, guests can choose to skip an included excursion in favor of independent time. Plus, there are generally a number of meals that are left unplanned so that travelers can enjoy the freedom and flexibility to explore on their own or with newfound friends. (Also, on the occasion where travelers may want a more bespoke travel experience, Smithsonian Tailor-Made Journeys is available to provide the service and quality to suit their needs.)