

## **The Sudan**

**Trip notes: EAXT**

**Validity: 01/01/2011 to 31/12/2011**

### **Itinerary Disclaimer**

The information in this dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Babel Travel. The itinerary featured is correct at time of printing. It may differ slightly to the one that's featured in the brochure. Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements that stem from past travellers, comments and our own research. Sometimes it can be a small change like adding an extra meal in the itinerary. Sometimes the change may result in us altering the tour for the coming year. Ultimately, our goal is to provide you with the most rewarding experience.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Please ensure that you print a final copy of your dossier to review a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans. For the latest updated trip notes please visit our website: [www.babeltravel.com](http://www.babeltravel.com)

### **Cultural Engagement**

Robert Young Pelton and Babel Travel have teamed up to create the first organised entries into the World's Most Dangerous and forbidden places. Our Cultural Engagement trips have been created to challenge the intellectual, emotional, participatory and educational desires of a very select group of individuals. Our trips will maintain the highest level of personal and physical safety based on Robert Young Pelton's 30 years in conflict zones and Babel Travel's experience in the adventure travel business.

These trips are 'dangerous' because they are designed to make you think, our intention is not to scare you. Being inside a country is a completely different experience compared with watching it from the outside and it is bound to energise and engage you. You will be inspired to want to make a difference. Each group is screened, trained and tasked with creating an end product to share with the world. We do not intend to be passive observers. Stories, interviews, research, video and photographs will be combined to create a portal for the next group and the world. Communities in these regions don't have time to entertain outsiders. They are happy to engage, challenge and share with visitors but only if they take their message to the outside world.

Kevin Pollard, Founder and General Manager of Babel Travel, has long wanted to tap into Pelton's expertise and access ever since he read his best selling guide *The World's Most Dangerous Places* which was first published in 1993 and is now in its fifth edition. Participants in this program will update the sixth edition and carry on Pelton's two-decade legacy of safely penetrating and making sense of the world's least understood regions.

Cultural Engagement trips for 2011 will include 11-22 day itineraries to Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, North Korea and Colombia with other destinations coming soon. Each journey will cost in the neighbourhood of EUR 5 - 12,000 per person, excluding airfare. Robert Young Pelton will not lead the trips personally, but will choose both the trip leaders

(1 western and 1 local) and co-design each itinerary. Each western trip leader has a background in philanthropy, journalism, adventure travel and is considered an expert in the country they are leading trips to. There will be a second unadvertised list of trips for those return members who Pelton will accompany into selected locations.

Robert Young Pelton is the author of a number of books on survival and global conflict. He has journeyed through 36 conflicts and travelled to over 120 countries.  
[www.comebackalive.com](http://www.comebackalive.com)

## **Trip Structure**

The key elements of our Cultural Engagement trips (other than North Korea or other fixed agendas) are:

- 1) Meeting with VIPs and subject matter experts to welcome you to the country
- 2) Charitable social benefit hands on activity
- 3) Political discussions and interaction with at least two opposing entities
- 4) Exposure to authentic, non commercial and socially relevant environments
- 5) Interaction with locals, penetrating discussions and documentation of the countries situations
- 6) Formal interviews, information gathering, fact checking and publication of group's endeavours for public viewing and further discussion
- 7) Traditional interaction with social, political, NGO or other groups to understand how outsiders can engage, understand and better the situation
- 8) Cultural immersion into music, art, dancing, storytelling, history etc
- 9) Contemporary interpretation of culture, historical monuments, natural wonders, landscapes or events by experts
- 10) Trip members questions answered, flexibility in itinerary to take advantage of opportunities or invitations and constant support for unscripted discovery, interaction and follow on relationships

## **Formal Structure**

Each trip member will be sent a personal safety guide culled from Come Back Alive or Dangerous Places on survival in the specific area to which they are travelling. Members will be asked to pick 5 things that they hope to learn. There will be a formal videotape interview of your expectations or goals both at the start and after the trip. Your privacy is assured.

You will be asked to use a skill you have to contribute to a diary, wrap up, interview and query. Each person will be issued with a workbook with suggested questions, discussion points, and a do-it-yourself travel guide creation kit modelled on The World's Most Dangerous Places. The goal is to give structure to exploration and curiosity.

During the trip you will be brought into the narrative and will be filmed interacting, interviewing, photographing or helping. At the end of the trip the material will be assembled into a web based blog. Should you choose not to be photographed, you will not be included on the public site. Those who wish to have their trip kept private will be respected.

## **Itinerary**

### **Days 1-2 Khartoum**

Arrive and check into your hotel. Your tour leader will leave a notice in the hotel reception

with information for our all important welcome meeting, scheduled for 10am on day 1. You will need to bring with you your passport, all tour vouchers and a copy of your insurance policy to this meeting so that your tour leader can obtain important details that are essential to the running of the tour. This meeting will give you an overview of all the exciting things you will be seeing during your tour and includes a lot of practical information on how to get the most out of your time in Sudan.

Important Note: it is a condition of joining our tours that you are in possession of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. We highly recommend <https://www.ingletravel.com/en/travel/specialRisk.asp> for coverage in Sudan.

If you do not have a policy you will be required to purchase one from your tour leader in order to join the tour.

Khartoum is the capital of Sudan with a population of over 11 million people. It is located at the confluence of the White Nile flowing north from Lake Victoria, and the Blue Nile flowing west from Ethiopia. The location where the two Niles meet is known as "al-Mogran". The main Nile continues to flow north towards Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

The word 'Khartoum' is derived from Arabic Al-Jartūm meaning "end of an elephant's trunk", probably referring to the narrow strip of land extending between the Blue and White Niles.

Souq Arabi: If you want to see crowds and action, this is the place. The commercial heart of town, Souq Arabi (Arabian Market) can provide everything you need. We will also visit Souq Omdurman, said to be one of the largest markets in Africa and you can get handicrafts here. At 3pm we'll visit the Hamed al-Nil tomb for a night of Sufi dancing.

On Day 2 we'll leave very early for a full day visiting the pyramids of Meroe, Naqa, Nuri and Musawarat. We'll leave the hotel at 6am and return at 7pm. The highlight of the day is the visit to the Meroe Pyramids. Meroë was the southern capital of the Napata/Meroitic Kingdom, that spanned the period c. 800 BC - 350 AD. It was the base of a flourishing kingdom whose wealth was due to a strong iron industry, as well as an international trade involving India and China.

### **Days 3-4 Al Fashir**

An 2 hour flight takes us over the barren desert interior of central Sudan to Al Fashir.

A historical caravan post, Al-Fashir has a population 400,000 and is capital of the North Darfur region of Sudan. The town serves as an agricultural marketing point for the cereals and fruits grown in the surrounding region.

Due to the nearby Abu Shouk and Al Salam refugee camps with the influx of humanitarian aid from the United Nations as a result of the Darfur crisis, the city has experienced a significant economic and population boom.

Rents and retail sales increased, including the selling of bottled water and the opening of a pizza parlor to cater to the demand from western aid workers. The number of gas stations has tripled in three years as a result of the increase in the amount of automobiles in the city. Employment opportunities also increased as the United Nations offered jobs to citizens.

### **Days 5-6 Nyala**

A long and bumpy 7 hour, 200km journey takes us to Nyala.

In the local Daju language, Nyala is known as "the place of chatting or a theatre" and is the capital of South Darfur state in the western part of the Sudan. Nyala is located at elevation of 673 m and has a population of 800,000. Local industries produce textiles, as well as processed food, gum Arabic and leather goods. Nyala has terminus ends for both road and railway, and also has a domestic airport.

During the ongoing Darfur conflict, thousands of internally displaced persons have gathered near the city in the hopes of protection. The refugee camp in the southern portion of Nyala is Kalma.

The Amel Center is run by Mossaad Mohamed Ali Mossaad and former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Amel Center is a treatment and rehabilitation center for internally displaced persons in Nyala. The center has earned Mossaad and Annan the Olof Palme Prize.

### **Day 7 Muglad**

After breakfast we board a helicopter and fly over the desert landscape to reach the oil producing area of the Muglad Basin. Normally, it's a 12 hour, 460kms journey from Nyala to Muglad.

The Muglad Basin is a large rift basin and is situated within southern Sudan and covers an area of approximately 120,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It contains a number of hydrocarbon accumulations of various sizes, the largest of which are the Heglig and Unity oil fields. During the 1960s and 1970s, Chevron made the first oil discoveries in the Basin near the towns of Bentiu, Malakal, and Muglad. Taken together, the Muglad and Melut rift basins account for the majority of Sudan's known oil reserves.

The oil fields of the Muglad Basin are connected to Port Sudan on the Red Sea by the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline which begins at the Unity oil field. Oil extracted in Muglad is known as "Nile Blend" crude. It is refined at Khartoum for export and domestic consumption. Further oil exploration in the Muglad Basin commenced in February 2008.

### **Days 8-9 Nuba Mountains**

We continue on in our helicopter flying over the Heglig/Mindig & Bamboo oil fields to the Nuba Mountains. Normally, it's a 13 hour, 500kms 4WD journey from Nyala to Muglad.

The Nuba Mountains is an area located in South Kordofan region of Sudan. The mountains cover an area roughly 65 kms wide by 140 kms long, and are between 450 and 910 metres higher in elevation than the surrounding plain. It's an arid area, but lush and green compared with most nearby areas. There are almost no roads in the Nuba Mountains; most villages there are only accessible by ancient paths that aren't navigable by motor vehicles.

The area is home to the Dilling tribe, an ethnic Sudanese group and one of the Nuba peoples. Their language is of the Nubian branch of the Nilo-Saharan family. Our 2 nights here are spent in the home of a local tribal chief. Accommodation is in a 2 person tent in the grounds of his house.

The region is currently under the control of the central government and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement does not have the option for Nuba Mountains to join Southern Sudan.

## **Days 10-11 Abyei**

After a 430kms, 12 hour journey via dirt roads we reach Abyei.

Abyei is a county and former district of South Kurdufan, Sudan, that is considered an historical bridge between northern and Southern Sudan. Abyei is home to both the Dinka ethnic group, seen as supporters of the south, and the nomadic Arabic-speaking Misseriya people, seen as northerners. The people of Abyei are due to vote in January 2011 on whether the region should belong to north or south Sudan.

Abyei is situated within the Muglad Basin. A period of significant investment in Sudan's oil industry occurred in the 1990s and Abyei became a target for this investment. By 2003 Abyei contributed more than one quarter of Sudan's total crude oil output. Production volumes have since declined and reports suggest that Abyei's reserves are nearing depletion. An important oil pipeline, the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline, travels through the Abyei area from the Heglig and Unity oil fields to Port Sudan on the Red Sea via Khartoum. The pipeline is vital to Sudan's oil exports which have boomed since the pipeline commenced operation in 1999.

The World Food Programme has a base in Abyei.

## **Day 12 Akun/Marial Bai**

Today we travel via the mountain village of Akun and reach Marial Bai (200kms – 7 hours).

First stop is the Kunyuk School for Girls is based in the small village of Akun. This new campus is home to 8 fully furnished classrooms, offices, dining facilities and latrines. A group of UN teachers focus on recruiting, training and developing competent teachers to prepare Sudan's next generation of women leaders.

Moving on we travel to Marial Bai, the real-life hometown of one of 'The Lost Boys', Valentino Achak Deng. Deng was the protagonist of the Dave Eggers book, 'What is the What'. Devastated during Sudan's second civil war, Marial Bai now benefits from the efforts of the Valentino Achak Deng Foundation, which has constructed a new Marial Bai Secondary School.

Tonight we stay on the grounds of the school.

## **Day 13 Wau**

Today we travel from Marial Bai to Wau (170kms – 5 hours).

Just north of Wau, especially in the areas of Gogrial, Ajiep and Panacier was hit hard during the famines of 1998.

Wau is a city in southern Sudan on the western bank of the Jur River, and is the capital of the West Bahr al Ghazal state, it is the third largest city in Southern Sudan, with a population of 350,000. Located in mid western part of the region, the city is the capital of the state and is home to the prestigious Bahr Elghazal University.

Initially established as a zariba (fortified base) by slave-traders in the 19th century, it became an administrative center during the time of Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule in

Sudan. Wau is a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically mixed town. Its residents include peoples of Fertit, Dinka, Luo and Arab origin.

Late in the afternoon we'll visit a project managed by Save the Children UK with UNICEF's support. This project provides classes to more than 50 children who have missed years of primary schooling. There is also a youth club where street children and others have access to counsellors, recreational and life skills activities.

### **Day 14 Rumbek**

After a 260kms, 5-8 hour 4WD journey we reach Rumbek.

Rumbek is the capital of the state of Lakes (also known as Buhayrat) in southern Sudan. Following the peace agreement ending the Second Sudanese Civil War, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement chose it as the interim administrative center of the semi-autonomous southern regions. Juba has since become the permanent capital. Rumbek sustained significant damage during the conflict and the region was one of the worst hit areas during the famines of 1988 and 1998.

Rumbek has a population of 250,000 and is the 4th biggest city in Southern Sudan. The city is the home of three tribes of Dinka: Aliab, Chic and Agar. Non-Dinka peoples, such as Atout and Jurbel, also live in Rumbek. The World Food Programme has a base in Rumbek.

En route to Rumbek we'll stop at the towns of Tonj and Thiet - both severely affected by the 1998 famine. One of the main World Vision feeding centers was set up in Thiet to combat the 1998 famine that killed over 250,000 people.

### **Day 15 Mundri**

After a 250kms, 7-8 hour journey via a mountainous dirt road we reach Mundri.

Mundri is a typical Dinka village with a population of 30,000 people.

The Swedish SCA group, through its brands Libresse, Edet and Tork, is sponsoring a project by Oxfam Novib and Mundri Relief and Development Association (MRDA) to improve school sanitation in South Sudan. Together with MRDA, Libresse is providing scholarships to girls and comfort kits, hygiene bags that include sanitary napkins, soap, underwear and washing powder. Edet is financing the construction of school toilets in the Mundri region of South Sudan. Tork is providing rainwater harvesting systems, soap and handwashing facilities.

An historic stronghold of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Mundri saw intense fighting during the latter years of the war, which lasted from 1983 to 2005. In addition to pitched ground battles, the town endured frequent bombings by the northern Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). Although the bombings tapered off in 2003, their tangible and potentially lethal remains lie scattered in fields along the river.

The SAF used a lot of cluster bombs in this area and many of the cluster sub-munitions failed to explode and are buried under the surface. While in the town we'll speak with a member of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team about the clearance operations that are taking place in Mundri.

Tonight we are the guests of a local tribal chief in his family house. Accommodation is in a 2 person tent in the grounds of his house.

## **Days 16-17 Juba**

We continue our journey via many colorful villages and reach Juba (180kms, 4 hours)

Juba is the regional capital of Southern Sudan and the capital of the Sudanese state of Central Equatoria. In 2010 Juba's official population was 700,000 but some estimates put the population at 1.2 million due to the influx of refugees flooding into the city. Juba is one of the fastest growing cities in the world and is developing very rapidly due to oil money and UN workers and especially Chinese nationals flocking here for development work. The largest development is 'Liberty City' 10kms west of Juba. When complete, Liberty City will cover 3,000 hectares and be a fully functioning town of over 120,000 residents.

With the advent of peace in Southern Sudan, the UN increased its presence in Juba, whereas many Southern Sudan operations had until that time been managed from Kenya. Under the leadership of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN established a camp known as "OCHA Camp", which served as a base for many UN agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The UN and Southern Sudanese government are repairing the roads, but full repair is expected to take many years. The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) started in 2003 to clear the roads leading from Juba to Uganda and Kenya, it is expected that these roads will be completely demined and rebuilt by 2012. The rebuilding of the roads, most un-paved, takes a tremendous amount of effort and time because of the limited work season due to the rainy season, which lasts from March until October.

There are just over 60km of tarred roads in the entire south (640,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and the roads turn into quagmires when it rains. There are 4 roads in Juba that are paved.

UNICEF, UNMIS and various NGOs have aid centres based in Juba.

## **Day 18 Bor**

After a 220kms, 5 hour journey we reach Bor.

Bor is the capital of Jonglei State. It is located off the east Bank of the River Nile and has a population of around 500,000 making it the 2nd largest city in Southern Sudan. Bor started as an administrative post along the Nile River centuries ago. The word bor is a derivative of the word abor and loosely translates as the land that floods as in Piny ë bor. The whole South Eastern Dinka is known as Dinka Bor.

In Bor we'll visit a charity that provides former child soldiers with medical check-ups, food, clothes, shelter and vital counselling. In addition the charity runs a family-tracing and re-unification service set up to help re-unite child soldiers with their long lost families.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has promised to demobilise all its child soldiers by the end of 2010. According to the UN children's agency, there were more than 200,000 children in the SPLA ranks, but these numbers have reduced to around 900 today.

Various NGOs have aid centres based in Bor and Panyagor camp. 20kms North East of Bor is where the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has their base.

## **Days 19-20 Akobo**

After boarding a helicopter we cross The Sudd flood plain, home of the biggest animal migration in the world to Akobo. Normally, it's a 12 hour, 410kms journey from Bor to Akobo.

The Sudd flood plain is home to the the Boma National Park. This park was established in 1986 and is one of the more impressive national parks in Sudan. The park is an important refuge for the African buffalo, African elephant, leopard, giraffe, plains zebra, oryx, hartebeest and cheetah.

Akobo's population is around 130,000 and is located 10kms west of the Sudanese/Ethiopian border.

The U.N. mission in Sudan is calling this dusty town of straw huts the "hungriest place on earth," and scenes of skeletal children and elderly people who are too weak to even walk tell of impending tragedy. Two years of failed rains and tribal clashes in the outlying regions have laid the foundation for Africa's newest humanitarian crisis. The World Food Program quadrupled its assistance levels and is now feeding 100,000 people in the area. The isolated region suffers from tribal warfare that has displaced almost 400,000 people. Southern Sudan lies in a drought-prone belt of Africa but the situation there has been exacerbated by rising intertribal violence that has claimed more than 2,000 lives in 2009.

The UN World Food Programme, Save The Children and Medair have their bases in Akobo.

## **Days 21-22 Khartoum**

Leaving early we return via helicopter to Juba before boarding a plane back to Khartoum. We aim to return to Khartoum by 6pm on Day 21. Early on Day 22 we explore some more of Khartoum. We have day rooms until 6pm.

The trip finishes at 6pm on Day 22. You are free to depart anytime during the evening of Day 22.

## **Arrival Complications**

Arrival transfers are included for all clients arriving in Khartoum. If you have booked your flights separately from your tour please ensure that you inform your tour booking agent of your flight details at least one month before departure to avoid payment of an administration fee. If you have not made contact with our representative (please look for the Babel Travel Logo and your name) within 30 minutes of clearing customs and immigration, as can occasionally occur as many flights tend to arrive at once, please contact our Sudanese representative. Give this person your exact location in the airport (find a landmark) and you will be attended to promptly.

In the very unlikely event that this process fails, you can find taxis at the front of the airport and it will cost approximately 40 SDG – New Sudanese Pound (18 USD) to take you to your hotel.

Please inform your group leader at the initial group meeting if this occurs for a refund. No refund is available on missed transfers, or portions of your trip owing to a different flight arrival or delayed flight arrival. Any additional cost incurred in order to meet up with your group is at your own expense.

## **Starting Point Hotel**

TBA  
Khartoum  
Sudan

## **Starting Point Instructions**

If for some reason you did not make contact with our transfer officer please get a local taxi from the airport to the start point hotel. The Khartoum International airport is situated about 20 minutes away from our hotel. Taxi's are convenient and inexpensive 40 SDG – New Sudanese Pound (18 USD) and can easily be arranged at the airport to our starting point hotel. If arranging the taxi yourself we recommend you negotiate the fare before getting in the taxi.

## **Finishing Point Hotel**

TBA  
Khartoum  
Sudan

## **Trip Style: Cultural Engagement**

This is the only way professionals, intellectuals, and modern day explorers can visit the world's most inaccessible places with comfort, security and insight. Robert Young Pelton and Babel Travel have designed experiences that are both life changing and inspiring. Those who want more from their travels will understand that whilst these trips are intense, they are also engaging and rewarding by opening a window into the rapidly changing world. Accordingly these trips are never the same, never dull and will encourage further exploration. Comfort, safety and value are the cornerstones of planning and the ability to engage and interact with our hosts is critical. This is a trip for those who "do" not watch.

## **Exploratory Adventures**

Our exploratory trips are often our most exciting and memorable Babel Travel adventures. We may have designed a new itinerary or created a first-time adventure to a new land but rest assured; we've been planning this over a long period of time. Our local operators have been operating trips for a number of years in The Sudan and we have had a team of on-the-ground staff and researchers (local and western) working hard to put this trip together. Our exploratory trip will be accompanied by a senior member of our Babel Travel team along with one of our on-the-ground managers. These trips are popular with experienced adventurers who thrive on the sense of discovery and serendipity that occur on first time forays into new places. You are part of the exploration, helping make decisions as we go, and sharing insights with guides and local people about your experience.

## **Travel warning**

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs currently advises against travel to most of the countries we've chosen for our Cultural Engagement trips. Before choosing to join this trip you should first read the relevant sections of their website ([www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)). In similar website is in English; <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/index.html>. Because of this we will ask that all those travelling to take out our special Ingle Insurance which, in itself, will cover you

against all issues other than terrorism, and can be upgraded prior to departure to cover all eventualities.

### **A Word About Safety and Security**

By choosing to travel with Babel Travel you can be sure that your personal safety and well-being is our prime concern.

Although the countries we have chosen for our Cultural Engagement trips are generally considered to be mostly safe, it should be known that foreign traveller safety can be associated with some risk. Local and foreign rebel groups, clan and militia rivalries and marauding pirates all add to these risks. Babel Travel will do its best to mitigate these risks by performing due diligence, daily information gathering and security reviews in what we may consider to be "dangerous or higher risk areas" before travelling there. Babel Travel works closely with local government security forces and monitors these situations to make security determinations on a daily basis. In some extreme cases it may be necessary for our local trip operators to postpone, delay or even cancel the trip in the rare event that safe passage is not possible at that given time.

Our local trip operators and their security force personnel have the ultimate decision in these cases and their decisions are non-negotiable and final. In the event a of a trip being delayed or an area bypassed because of security risks, Babel Travel will make every effort to keep the trip on schedule by either increasing time at one destination, eliminating or skipping an area or staying at another destination point. Your safety is our number one concern, and these adjustments may be necessary to achieve those goals.

We travel in Jeeps and Land Cruisers (and in some cases helicopters and light aircraft) as local transport can be unreliable and in parts of the country, dangerous. All of our drivers/guides are in daily contact with local security briefing services through their satellite phones to check routes for increased security risks. In addition to this, we travel with up to five armed security guards at all times.

### **Group Size**

Maximum of 12 travellers per group.

### **Accommodation**

Guesthouses/hotels/military style tents (21 nights)

Outside of larger towns and cities hotels don't normally go above very basic. That means bed-frames with either simply a string mesh or with thin mattresses. Bathroom facilities are quite poor. Due to this, we've chosen to stay in 2 man military style canvas tents. These tents have an spacious interior with the floor space measures 60 X 80 inches. It sleeps two adults very comfortably, with plenty of head room for sitting up.

Tables and chairs will be provided for when we take our breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

Toilets; For your convenience at the completion of the days driving we will assemble a western style toilet and tent close to our sleeping tents. Any assistance from the group building the toilet tent is always much appreciated.

Showers will be (private) bucket showers, with water provided by the local village (paid for by Babel Travel).

Our main criteria for choosing hotels is cleanliness. On our 'Cultural Engagment' tours, most of the hotels are 3 to 4 stars, comfortable and sometimes luxurious! Bathroom facilities may sometimes be shared and rooms may sometimes be multi share rather than twin. Please bear in mind that hotels can sometimes suffer from minor problems and technical difficulties. At each hotel your Tour Leader will try to organize the rooming arrangements to suit everyone's requirements.

If you have purchased pre or post trip accommodation (only when available), you may be required to change rooms from your trip accommodation for these extra nights.

## **Meals**

While travelling with Babel Travel you will experience the wide choices of excellent local food available in the Sudan. For us, we aim to provide you with the flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat, and as a result not every meal is included in the trip price. Great, when you're on a budget! Usually, the large majority of our groups eat together, enjoying the wide array dishes, relaxing and enjoying each other's company - and all those wonderful travel stories! Of course, you are under no obligation to join every dinner. Your group leader will recommend excellent restaurants and eateries throughout the trip for those of you that wish to go it alone. Please check the 'included meals' section of the trip dossier for details of which meals are included.

It is not recommended that you drink the local tap water in Sudan. However, bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available throughout the country. Allow USD 100 for snacks. All meals are included in the price of the trip.

## **Included Meals**

21 Breakfasts, 21 lunches, 21 dinners

There are some simple breakfasts included on this trip which comprises simply of bread, cucumber, tomatoes, olives, butter, jam, coffee/tea and juice. This is typical of breakfasts in hotels in Sudan. Local breakfasts are available for the more adventurous at nearby markets.

## **Solo Travellers**

If you are travelling alone you will be allocated a room with another group member of the same sex. If you are travelling as a couple please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds. Some of our itineraries have accommodation booked on a mixed gender share basis - where applicable this will be specified in our Trip Notes.

## **Getting around**

Private vehicle (4WD), local bus, taxi, plane, helicopter, walking.

## **Arrival and Departure Transfers**

Please note that arrival and departures transfers are included in the price of this trip. This is regardless of when you arrive in or depart from Sudan.

## **Included Activities**

This is a list of included activities on this trip. All other activities are optional and at your own expense. For a list of optional activities and sightseeing available on this trip, see the optional activities section below. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not be refunded.

Walking tours of Khartoum, Al Fashir, Nyala, Wau, Rumbek, Juba, Bor, village visits in the Nuba Mountains, day trip to the Meroe pyramids, visits to the Muglad, Heglig and Bamboo oil fields, various dinners with local families and visits to 12 different charities/NGOs.

## **Optional Excursions**

All of our itineraries include some free time, the amount of which usually depends on the style of tour you are travelling on. Although we do not arrange any specific optional excursions in Sudan, there is plenty of free time for you to undertake activities not covered specifically in the itinerary. You should allow approx. USD \$30-40 per week for extra activities.

If you are happy with the services provided by your local guides and drivers a tip - though not compulsory - is appropriate. While it may not be customary to you, it is of great significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels, inspires excellent service, and is an entrenched feature of the tourism industry across many Babel Travel destinations. Please consider this when budgeting for your extra expenses on this trip.

## **Insurance**

Our tour prices do not include insurance. However, it is a condition of joining our tours that travellers are fully insured for any medical expenses they might incur while travelling. At the start of your tour the Tour Leader will ask to see your insurance documents and will note down the policy number and emergency contact number.

We recommend a comprehensive travel insurance policy that covers repatriation and evacuation in case of a medical emergency, kidnapping, serious injury or worse, cancellation and curtailment as well as covering baggage and valuables. You may also need specific cover for expensive camera equipment.

Many credit card companies offer complementary travel insurance. However the majority of such policies offer virtually no cover and cannot be accepted as adequate travel insurance. If you are planning on using credit card insurance you must bring along proof that the policy covers medical emergencies. Failure to be able to provide such proof to the Tour Leader will result in you being compelled to purchase a new approved policy before you can join the tour. If your travel insurance was not purchased from Babel Travel or our agents, you will be required to sign a waiver absolving the company and its agents should your policy not be adequate.

Any clients unable to provide proof of adequate travel insurance cover will be required to purchase a policy or will not be allowed to join the tour.

Most insurers require a local police report to support claims for loss of or damage to personal property. Our office can only issue a letter verifying that personal items have been lost or damaged on tour of 50 USD in value and the tour leader was informed of the loss or damage at the time that it occurred. We recommend Ingle Insurance for this particular trip;

<https://www.ingletravel.com/en/travel/specialRisk.asp>

Please also make sure you have access to an additional USD500, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (eg. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

## **Your Safety**

By choosing to travel with Babel Travel you can be sure that your safety and well-being is our prime concern. Over the years we have built up a network of local offices, and a team of Destination Managers, local and non-local staff enables us to maintain constant contact with events on the ground in each of our destinations, and to ensure that every aspect of your tour runs as smoothly as possible.

**Armed conflict;** Sudan is recovering from a 40-year civil war between the Arab-dominated central government and non-Muslim separatist groups from the South. Although a truce has been signed by both groups, the situation can still be unpredictable and can make traveling in the south a bit dangerous. The situation however is improving all the time and visitors are starting to make their way to places like Juba, Wau and Bor in Southern Sudan.

The well-publicised conflict in Darfur is still taking place, making traveling to some parts of the vast Darfur region inadvisable. The cities of Al-Fashir and Nyala are safe to visit.

**Personal safety;** There is almost no likelihood of being physically attacked (i.e., mugged) for your possessions, but keep an eye on your things in public places, e.g., street cafes. Sometimes thieves operate in pairs: one distracts you while the other makes off with your stuff. Nothing too much to worry about if you're sensible.

**Women travellers;** Travel for solo women is relatively safe (in areas unaffected by civil war), if you dress and act appropriately for an Islamic country. You will raise a few eyebrows but will generally be treated with great respect. In general, it is best for women to travel in groups, and even better, with men. In this case, the men should walk together ahead of the women, i.e., the women a pace or two behind the men.

**Police and army;** You will see armed policemen and military personnel everywhere but you will not have any problems with them unless you have infringed some rule, e.g., taking photographs or filming in prohibited areas. Sudanese police/army are not known to target travellers for bribes. So, if you are pulled over for whatever reason, be sure to pay them.

**Taking pictures;** Sudan has very strict rules about taking pictures. First and foremost, you need a permit to take pictures which will tell you where you can and cannot take pictures. Photographing or filming military personnel or installations is a quick way to get into trouble. People have been arrested for taking pictures at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles in Khartoum.

## **Visas**

It is your responsibility to arrange visas before you travel. Your travel agent can assist. Below are the visa requirements at the time of printing.

**Sudan:** All travellers require a visa to enter Sudan. It is advisable to obtain a Sudanese visa in your home country before departing.

You'll need a letter of introduction from your employer/sponsor stating the purpose and duration of your trip. Babel Travel will provide this letter of introduction once your trip deposit has been made.

The visa process for Babel Travellers takes around 2-3 weeks and visa's are available to be collected at the Khartoum airport.

If the visa application form requires a contact address in the destination, please give either your meeting point hotel or the address of our local contact. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of the correct visas for your holiday and onward travel. Babel Travel cannot accept responsibility for anyone who is refused entry to a country because they lack the correct documentation.

A visa will be flatly refused if your passport contains evidence of travel to Israel. Note: this is not confined to just an Israeli stamp in your passport. You will be refused a Sudanese visa if there is an Egyptian entry or exit stamp from the Egyptian/Israeli border (at Taba or Rafah) or a Jordanian entry or exit stamp from the Jordanian/Israeli border (at Wadi Araba near Aqaba, Sheikh Hussein bridge or King Hussein bridge otherwise known as the Allenby bridge) is in your passport. Even without actually having an Israeli stamp in your passport, these exit or entry stamps prove that you have visited Israel and entry into Sudan will be disallowed.

From Egypt - if you are abroad, however, Cairo is one of the easiest places to get one (usually a couple of hours after application), although for a lot of nationalities it costs US\$100 (not payable in Egyptian pounds). You will almost definitely need a letter of invitation/introduction from your embassy, and the time this takes varies from embassy to embassy, e.g. the Canadian Embassy takes 24 hours, the British 15 minutes. The British Embassy charges 315 Egyptian pounds (just under £30) for theirs and is situated only 200m from the Sudanese one.

Hours-long waits for customs clearance are not unheard of, and landing in Khartoum can be tricky. Entering or exiting by land usually goes smoothly.

Please be aware that visas are your responsibility. Visa requirements vary, from what country you are from and where you are travelling to, or where you have come from. We update our visa information regularly, but please understand that rules and conditions can sometimes change. It is essential, that you as a traveller check any possible changes before starting your trip.

### **Permits and other legal requirements**

Registration is obligatory within 3 days of arrival. It costs 120 SDG and if in Khartoum it could take you a full day. Alternately our start point hotel in Khartoum will complete the registration on your behalf for free. Do not be tempted to skip registration, as it is very likely to cause problems when you leave the country - you might not be allowed to board your flight! Departing from the Khartoum airport, at passport control counter after you've paid your departure tax, and checked in with the airline you will be turned back. There is a VISA office in the same room who will require payment and a passport picture. With the proper amount of money in Sudanese Pounds, and a passport this took approximately 30 minutes.

Visitors are technically required to obtain a permit for photography of any kind. Apply at the

government office near the British Council. Passport-sized photos are needed and the permit makes a nice souvenir. The permit will stipulate where you can or cannot take photos.

## **Money**

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

In January 2007, the government introduced a new currency - the Sudanese pound (SDG - the 'G' actually stands for Guinea) - which replaced the Sudanese dinar (dinar, SDD). The new pound is worth 100 dinars (basically, lob two zeros off the dinar amount and you get the pound equivalent). The new pound will be divided into 100 piastres (coins), though not immediately.

Unfortunately, things are not so simple when it comes to price quoting. Instead of new pounds (which are hardly used for quoting) and dinars (more commonly used, especially when quoting in English), most people still talk in terms of the old pound, although there are no more old pound notes in circulation. One dinar is worth 10 old pounds. Hence, when a person asks for 10,000 pounds, they actually want 1,000 dinars from you. And just to add to the confusion further, people usually do away with the thousands when quoting in pounds. So, your taxi driver may ask you for 10 pounds, which actually means 10,000 old pounds, which is equivalent to 1,000 dinars, which, by the end of this year, should be referred to once again as just 10 pounds! To clear any confusion, you could try saying "new pound" or jeneh al-jedid.

Easy summary: 1 new pound = 100 dinars = 1000 old pounds (long out of use).

Also easy (December 2010): 1 US dollar = 2.3 new pounds (most banks/changers/hotels etc. exchange at exactly this rate).

Bring only foreign CASH into Sudan, preferably US Dollars (often accepted in hotels), British Pounds and to a lesser extent Euros are also fairly easy to exchange at banks in big cities. Travellers cheques, credit cards and foreign bank automatic teller machine cards are NOT accepted in Sudan, partly because of the US embargo.

There are many banks in Khartoum and throughout Sudan but not all of them have foreign exchange facilities. There are several money changers in Khartoum, especially in Afra Mall. There are also several Western Union agents in Khartoum which will do payouts for money transferred from overseas. Although the currency is not fully convertible, the Central Bank sets the exchange rate in line with market forces, hence there isn't really a parallel black market in forex.

**Credit cards;** Because of the US embargo, no credit cards can be used in Sudan. The only exception is Diners Club which is accepted by the Khartoum Hilton. All transactions have to be in cash making it unsafe as you will be carrying large sums of money with you. Carrying out on-line transactions while you are in Sudan can cause problems, as some merchants (especially American ones) will pick up your Sudanese IP address, and refuse to do business with you. If you attempt to use an American Express card for any on-line transaction while in Sudan, you are likely to have the card summarily cancelled.

**Please note;** you cannot change Sudanese currency into hard currency outside of Sudan. Upon arrival at the Khartoum airport there are a few places where you can change money

(at a poor rate) and we recommend you change some money at the airport before departing. Remember if you run out of money while in Sudan it can be difficult, expensive and time consuming to find banks that can transfer money over to you. Before leaving for Sudan, calculate how much money you'll think you'll need in either USD, British Pounds or EUROS and take that, and a bit extra with you.

Babel Travel recommends you take at least \$1000 USD with you for your 22 day trip in Sudan. This will cover all optional activities, snacks, special clothing requirements, some souvenirs and other items.

Remember that all meals are included in the price of the trip; 21 Breakfasts, 21 lunches, 21 dinners. This ranges from a gourmet dinner in Khartoum, a simple lunch at a roadside eatery or a meal with a local family. The large majority of meals will be traditional Sudanese fare with between 2 and 10 meal choices in each location.

Please remember that all Babel Travel tour prices mean no hidden extras, no local payments or kitty and no compulsory single supplements.

For money safety we recommend that you carry your cash and credit cards in a secure money belt or pouch concealed under your clothing.

### **Spending Money**

Each and every traveller differs when it comes to how much money they spend on their holiday. Some may spend more on shopping, souvenirs or food and drink. Please keep in mind your spending habits when deciding upon how much money you should set aside as spending money. Each trip has specific extra costs that pertain to that particular trip. Please read the trip dossier for more information.

Any tip that you wish to give your group leader, local guides or drivers in recognition of service is always appreciated.

### **International flights**

International flights are not included in the price of the trip. Babel Travel can assist with finding you the right flight. The tour price quoted is land only.

### **Getting in/getting away**

Khartoum Airport is served by various European, Middle Eastern and African airlines. Among the cities with direct air links with Khartoum are Abu Dhabi (Etihad, Sudan Airways), Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Airlines), Amman (Royal Jordanian, Sudan Airways), Amsterdam (KLM Royal Dutch Airlines), Bahrain (Gulf Air), Cairo (Egypt Air, Sudan Airways, Ethiopian Airlines), Damascus (Syrian Airlines, Sudan Airways), Doha (Qatar Airways), Dubai (Emirates, Sudan Airways), Frankfurt (Lufthansa), Istanbul (Turkish Airlines), London (British Airways, British Midlands, Sudan Airways) and Nairobi (Kenya Airways, Sudan Airways) and Sharjah (Air Arabia).

Please contact Babel Travel for more information on your flights to/from Sudan.

### **Travelling in Sudan**

Sudan is a land that is without a doubt very different to your own. From the craziness of packed market places, the searing heat, huge crowds, pollution and poverty - this will probably lead to a dose of culture shock. This should be viewed as a wonderful and exciting challenge, rather than a deterrent. From our time in Sudan, we have grown fond of this incredibly diverse and varied land. As a developing country, Sudan has very different philosophies on an all manners of things. From men staring at you in the streets, semi clean squat toilets or the 'when it happens, it happens' attitude things don't really get much more different than this. Patience, understanding and a sense of humour will see through and you'll no doubt grow this love this amazing place.

## **Transport**

We travel in Jeeps or Land Cruisers (and sometimes helicopters and aircrafts) as local transport can be unreliable and in parts of the country, dangerous. All our drivers/guides are in daily contact with local NGOs through their satellite phones to check routes and all the latest security issues. In addition to this we travel with at least 2 armed security guards. Paved roads are the exception, not the rule, and even those roads can be in poor repair. Once outside the major cities expect dirt roads (which turns to mud during the raining season).

## **Local Dress**

As a general guideline, clothing should be lightweight, loose fitting, hard-wearing and easily washed. In Sudan hot summer months, cotton clothing is much more comfortable than man-made materials like nylon. You should bear in mind that Sudan has very conservative attitudes towards dress, particularly in remote areas. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women. It is advisable to keep legs, shoulders and upper arms covered, and we recommend that you bring appropriate clothing for this purpose. Western women are highly encouraged to wear a head scarf (especially outside Khartoum). Men should wear long pants at all times.

## **Talk**

The official languages in Sudan are Arabic and English, according to the 2005 constitution. English is not widely spoken except by officials and hospitality workers. The most used languages are. Arabic is spoken in the north, east, west and middle regions, along with the tribal languages (especially Nubian and Ta Bedawie). Tribal languages in all Sudan with some educated people speaking English. The lingua franca in Southern Sudan is a variant of Arabic called Juba Arabic.

## **Religion**

An estimated 70% of the population adheres to Islam, while the remainder of the population follows either animist and indigenous beliefs (25%) or Christianity (5%). Islam predominates in the north, while traditional indigenous beliefs (animism) and Christianity are prevalent in the south. Almost all Muslims are Sunni, although there are significant distinctions between followers of different Sunni traditions.

## **People**

Sudan people include the following groups: Indigenous tribes 51%, Arab 40% and Beja 6%.

## **Food**

Sudan is not renowned for its culinary prowess. Fool, made from fava beans, is a common dish, eaten from a communal bowl sopped up with unleavened bread. Fresh fruit and vegetables are thankfully very common. Lamb is the main meat.

## **Drink**

Islam is in charge here, so the only thing that's frequently drunk in Sudan is tea; usually sweet and black. Hibiscus tea called Karkadeyh (red) is a delicious alternative. Alcohol is officially forbidden in Sudan, and attempting to import it will bring strict penalties. The consumption of beer and spirits in the south is usually tolerated.

## **Extreme temperatures in Sudan**

There are regional variations but generally it goes like this: Sudan rainy seasons is between late March and early November in the south and between July and August in Khartoum. From May to September temperatures are unbearable, reaching 40-50°C (especially in Khartoum).

November to March is the best time to visit the north, central and southern Sudan. Northern temperatures are the hottest from April to August. Haboob dust storms blow occasionally from July to August and November to January.

## **Ramadan**

Ramadan (Arabic: رمضان) is a Muslim religious observance that takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; the month in which the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims do not eat or drink anything from true dawn until sunset. Fasting is meant to teach the person patience, sacrifice and humility. Ramadan is a time to fast for the sake of God, and to offer more prayer than usual. During Ramadan, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds.

This period is actually a wonderful time to travel to Muslim countries (we encourage you to travel then) as it gives you an opportunity to view first hand, the sacrifices people make for the sake of God. Sitting with a group of locals when they break their fast, can be one of the more rewarding aspects of your adventure. Approximate dates in 2011 are 1 August – August 29 2011.

## **Your health**

All travellers joining our tours are assumed to be in good health and to have a sufficient level of fitness to complete their chosen itinerary. If you have an existing medical condition or disability you must make this known at the time of booking. If accepted on the tour, you must also make your condition known to the Tour Leader.

When selecting your trip please carefully read the Babel Travel brochure and itinerary and assess your ability to cope with our style of travel. Please contact us at [info.en@babeltravel.com](mailto:info.en@babeltravel.com) should you require any clarification on what is involved on your itinerary. For travellers over 70 years a completed Babel Medical certificate is required.

Babel Travel reserves the right to turn away, without recompense, any person who is found, at any time during their trip, to have concealed an existing medical condition. We also reserve the right to turn away any person who we consider incapable of completing the trip. If you are taking any form of medication, please make sure that you bring with you an adequate supply to last the duration of your holiday and inform your Tour Leader at the start of the tour. You might not be able to obtain suitable medication in the countries you are visiting

Although, there are no particular health requirements for this trip, it is important for you to get an update from your family doctor or health clinic on what vaccinations may be required. It is your responsibility to bring a small supply of items such as insect repellent, aspirin or plasters for small cuts and abrasions. Some travellers like to bring along their own emergency medical kit which may be used by local medical staff in the case of accidents or illness. Your group leader is fully trained in basic first aid and will carry, at all times a very well stocked First Aid Kit which can be used in emergencies.

### **Health in Sudan**

Sudan has its fair share of health issues, and it would be wise to consult a travel doctor ahead of your trip about vaccinations and health risks. Respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis and food-related illness are common, and malaria is a risk in many parts of the country. Sudan is a very dusty country and you should be prepared to be covered in it and breathing it for most of your stay, even in the major cities.

Flies are notoriously heinous here, likely due to poor sanitation. Food should be approached with a discerning eye, hygiene standards can often be lacking. Hot, freshly cooked food is generally safer. Bottled water is also advised, unless you have your own purification system.

Bring any prescription medicine you may need from your home country, don't count on being able to find it locally. You may also consider carrying pain relievers and anti-diarrheals, as they'll be hard to find outside of major cities. As in most parts of Africa, squat toilets are the norm, and toilet paper optional and often scarce. Western-style toilets are seen occasionally in newer buildings and some private homes.

### **Drinking water**

Please DO NOT drink tap water, even in hotels or restaurants as it usually contains high levels of minerals than the water you are used to drinking in your own country. It is fine for a local to drink water from a tap as their bodies are conditioned to it, but for everyone else we highly recommend you drink bottled water at all times. Bottled water is found everywhere and is quite cheap. Upset stomachs generally occur quite quickly if you drink local water, and although it is not really serious - it can hamper your overall enjoyment of a country. Also, please aim to brush your teeth by using bottled water.

### **Asthma**

For some travelers desert sands can bring on bouts of asthma. If you suffer from asthma even occasionally, we recommend you bring your medication as it cannot be administered by your Tour Leader and may not be readily available while you are travelling.

### **Are you ready for this adventure?**

On most of our itineraries there are long travel days and some rough travelling in areas

away from main tourist routes. Mountain passes, bumpy and windy roads can sometimes make for some real challenging travel experiences. If you have experienced motion sickness in the past, we highly recommend you consider medication to help ease the discomfort. On some occasions, we depart very early in the morning to make sure we get the most of our time in the next destination. It should be made clear that adventure travel in this part of the world is not for the faint-hearted. Roads are often in a bad state of repair and journeys can therefore be very tiring.

## **Communication**

### **Email**

Internet cafes can now be found in most large towns and cities. The cost for an hour is approx USD 2. Outside of Khartoum the internet is very slow and it often crashes. Don't expect to be able to check the internet more than a handful of times while on the trip.

### **Phone**

The Sudan phone system is adequate, although international calls can be expensive. A 3 minute call (to Europe) will cost approx. USD 6 from a hotel and approx. USD 4 from a telephone centre. Prepaid mobile phone packages are easily available in Sudan. The two telecommunications companies in Sudan are ZAIN and MTN.

### **Post**

The postal service is relatively good and stamps are available everywhere. An overseas stamp for postcards will cost approx. USD 2. Posting of parcels can be time-consuming however, and contents of parcels normally have to pass customs inspection before they are sealed for posting.

## **Your fellow Babel Travellers**

On group trips you will be exposed to all the wonderful things that comes with experiencing a destination with like-minded people. Your fellow Babel Travellers will most likely come from all walks of life, and from different countries. We ask you to patience will all travellers for the sake of group dynamics. We want every one of you to have the best travel experience of your life. Being punctual helps the group. If you are asked to be in a place at a particular time, please ensure that you do so. Being late may mean you'll miss that special cultural performance, spend less time with a local family - or in some cases completely miss a local bus or a train journey! The best groups are the ones that work together as a happy Babel Travel team!

## **Tour Leader**

Your Babel Travel tour leader (whether it be a local or a westerner) is there to ensure that all aspects of the trip run smoothly. He/she will share their local knowledge, advise on how to fill your free time and co-ordinate the day to day running of the tour, although occasionally he/she may need your understanding if things do not go according to plan. If you have any problems on the tour, please let your Tour Leader know so that steps can be taken to put it right. Tour Leaders are supported by our regionally based office staff and, in most cases, a locally based manager.

In Sudan we also use the services of specialist guides at sights of particular historical

interest, and specialised mountain guides for any trekking/ hiking activities in mountain regions. At Babel Travel we aim to support local guides who have specialised knowledge of the regions we visit - and who better to hear it from than the locals themselves? If you were interested in delving deeper into the local culture then your leader can recommend a local guide service in most of the main destinations of your trip.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects.

In Sudan we have built strong links with local communities, aid agencies, charities, women's and children's groups, hospitals - all of which directly rely on the assistance of donations and products purchased by our travellers and other visitors. We offer Babel travellers an opportunity to interact with locals at these organisations.

### **Drugs and the law**

The possession or use of any illegal drugs is strictly prohibited in all the countries we visit. When overseas you are subject to local laws and the penalties for breaking the law are severe. In order to safeguard the interests of the group as a whole, our Tour Leaders are instructed to insist that any person found to be in possession of drugs leave the group immediately. The Tour Leader's decision on this matter is final. If you need to carry certain drugs with you for purposes of medication, please ensure that you also carry a copy of your prescription.

Babel's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our Tour Leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

### **Laundry**

Some of our hotels offer a laundry service however this can be expensive. Self-service laundries are scarce in this region. We recommend you bring bio-degradable laundry soap and hand wash while travelling on your trip. Ask your leader who can point out the best places to do your laundry on the trip. They are usually at any 2 night stop to allow enough time for drying.

### **What to Take**

What you luggage you need to bring will vary according to the trip style you have chosen, the countries you are visiting and when you are travelling. As a guideline, you should pack as lightly as possible (under 10kgs is a great idea!) On the vast majority of our trips you are expected to carry your own luggage over short to medium distances (no longer than 20 minutes)

Due to this nature of our trips, suitcases and wheelie bags are not recommended for Babel Travellers! Most group members carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags with wheels are acceptable (if it has carry straps) but you will need to carry these bags up and down stairs,

over bumpy roads etc. You will also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day/overnight trips or walking tours.

It is very important that your bags can be locked, as on public trains and buses it may be necessary to store your luggage separately (and unattended) from the group. The smaller your bag is the better for you and other passengers on local transport, for when it comes to traveling on local buses and trains it's usually only the smaller bags that will fit into the storage areas. If your bag does not fit in these areas then often the only place to put it is on your seat or on your lap.

## **Checklist**

The following is a guide to what you should bring along on your holiday and is not meant to be a complete and absolute list. You are welcome to bring less, or more than what is mentioned below.

Travel documents: (your passport, visa, updated travel insurance, flights tickets, travel voucher)

Health requirements and any necessary medication

Money: cash/credit cards, money bag or pouch

First Aid Kit

Alarm clock and torch (flashlight)

Lightweight travel towel

Ear plugs can be very useful

A scarf or face mask for dust and sand

Phrase book

Sunscreen (with high sun protection factor and lip balm)

Sunglasses

A hat

Antibacterial hand gel (wet wipes etc)

Tampons are extremely difficult to find in Sudan

Day pack to carry your personal needs during the day

A lock for your backpacks - small and large

Conservative attire (you can purchase headscarves in Khartoum)

Comfortable shoes with good grip and ankle support

Warm clothes

Please check recent temperatures before your trip departs.

Babel Travel leaders collect clothing for poorer village communities. If you have room in your luggage, warm children's clothes and shoes are particularly appreciated.

## **Your Belongings**

Although it can be traumatic and distressing to lose personal belongings, remember that almost everything can be replaced. Your valuables are your responsibility so look after them. Keep items like cash, traveller's cheques, tickets and passports on your person in a hidden money belt or stored in the hotel safe. Leave all non-essential jewellery and other expensive items at home.

Once on the road you will find that most of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. Your group leader will be with you on all included activities, however you will have some free time to pursue your own activities and

interests, chill out or explore in your own time. Please be aware that the optional activities you undertake are not part of your Babel Travel itinerary, and Babel Travel makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. We simply recommend them and not endorse them. Saying that, we will warn you if we feel that an activity is dangerous or an operator isn't reputable.

Pick pockets and personal safety: Please be aware that while travelling there is the risk of pick-pocketing, particularly in the more tourist orientated cities. We recommend that you exercise caution when walking alone at night and encourage you to walk together and only on main, well lit roads. Be particularly careful on public transport. Precautions such as carrying your day pack on your chest, not placing your bag over the back of your chair and wearing a money belt will reduce any chance that your valuables should being stolen.

### **Participation form**

All group members on a Babel Travel trip are required to sign a participation form on day 1 of the trip. This will take place during the all important welcome meeting. Please be aware that signing this form is an essential part of travelling with Babel Travel and is a requirement of all travelers.

### **Feedback**

This trip is unusual in that we will be putting together a mini documentary and website to show the world what is going on inside Sudan. You are explorers and your input along with the interviews, documentation and notes is important to show our hosts and new friends how they can better understand or get involved. In addition this trip is the first of its kind and we encourage you to provide suggestions, improvements and enhancements.

**Thank you and we look forward to welcoming you.**