



Great cities of China.

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CHINA | 8DAYS / 7NIGHTS

Route: Round-trip from Beijing to Shanghai

Type of tour: Cultural

Departure days: Sunday

TOUR OVERVIEW

China's great world-renowned cities offer an intoxicating mix of old and new, with ancient pagodas standing in the shadow of skyscrapers and classical gardens hidden in the midst of bustling metropolises. This itinerary features authentic and culture-infused attractions combined with a healthy dose of history over eight unforgettable days exploring Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai, Xi'an. All three cities will welcome and encourage you to immerse yourself in their rich pasts and admire their modern wealth. Groups vary in size but are typically made up of about 6-10 travellers.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

DURATION: 8 days / 7 nights



Start & finish destination

1. Beijing 3. Shanghai

Destinations

2. Xi'an

Great Wall: Stroll along the restored Badaling section and see the undulating wall disappear into the horizon

Ming Tombs: Pass the Great Red Gate and walk the enchanting Sacred Way towards the mausoleum of the third Ming emperor

Forbidden City: Discover the majesty of the walled imperial precinct, which for centuries was closed off to mere mortals

Temple of Heaven: Behold the beauty of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests and other buildings in this Buddhist complex

Xi'an city walls: The 14km-long ramparts provide an unrivalled platform from which to observe this fascinating ancient city

Great Mosque of Xi'an: Hidden in a lane in the Muslim Quarter is this extremely rare piece of Islamic-Chinese architecture

Big Wild Goose Pagoda: This seven-storey tower in Xi'an has protected priceless Buddhist scriptures for centuries

Terracotta Army: Pay homage to the immortal clay warriors unearthed after 2,000 years guarding China's first emperor

The Bund: Shanghai's riverfront promenade is crammed with an eclectic range of buildings from the European colonial era

Yu Gardens: A peaceful retreat of landscaped gardens and classical halls in the heart of the bustling old city of Shanghai

French Concession: Explore the elegant boulevards and leafy residential streets of Shanghai's former French sector

DON'T MISS

Beijing: Amble along to the Pan Jia Yuan Market and find a wealth of Chinese antiques, books, statues and other curios

Xi'an: The night market near the Great Mosque is the place to go to for street food and just about anything else you fancy

Shanghai: Head to the avant-garde M50 arts district and immerse yourself in the city's burgeoning cultural scene

DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 | BEIJING

Meet your local guide in the lobby of the Beijing Tangram Hotel. This afternoon there is an **optional excursion to the Summer Palace and Kunming Lake** in the north-west of the city. This spellbinding complex was where China's emperors and their families would retreat from the heat and intrigues of the Forbidden City. Here they could relax in the lavish pavilions of **Longevity Hill**, meditate in the temples and stroll through the landscaped gardens around Kunming Lake. The vast and sumptuous Summer Palace provides a range of striking views, and boasts **beautifully decorated buildings and courtyards**, which are charged with history. Admire structures whose grandeur is matched only by their wonderfully evocative names such as the Temple of Buddhist Virtue, the Hall of Jade Ripples, the Cloud-Dispelling Hall and the Hall of Happiness and Longevity. Kunming Lake is a large manmade pond, expanded over centuries, which has three isles that are believed to represent the 'three fairy islands of the Eastern Sea'. Two can be reached by bridge, including Nanhu Island, which is linked to the shore by the sensational Seventeen-arch Bridge.

- **Overnight in Beijing hotel on a bed-and-breakfast basis.**

DAY 2 | BEIJING – BADALING GREAT WALL – BEIJING (160km – 8 hrs)

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before departing for a journey into China's past with visits to the Imperial Tombs of the Ming Dynasty and the Great Wall. The **Ming Tombs** are located some 45km north of Beijing in the valley below the Jundu Mountains. The location was specifically chosen because of its harmonious environment, and it was designed in an arc form to ward off evil spirits from the north. This monumental and serene complex is accessed through the imposing **Great Red Gate** and then reached via the 7km-long **Sacred Way**, which is lined with statues of guardians such as camels, elephants, lions, soldiers and imperial chamberlains. Explore the **Changling Tomb**, which is the final resting of the Yongle Emperor, who reigned in the early 15th century and is considered one of China's greatest rulers. Break for lunch at a local restaurant. Afterwards, take to the road for a brief drive to the **Badaling section of the Great Wall**. This stretch was built in 1505 in the strategically important Guan Valley in order to keep out the Mongol hordes from the north. Nowadays, tourists flock from all over the world and it is the most visited part of the Great Wall. Having been reconstructed to replicate its original appearance, this section gives a realistic vision of the Great Wall's immensity. Dinner in a local restaurant.

- **Overnight in Beijing hotel on a bed-and-breakfast basis.**



DAY 3 | BEIJING – XI'AN (1,100km, 12-14 hrs by train)

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a full day visiting four of Beijing's most famous landmarks. First up is the enormous **Tiananmen Square**, one of the world's largest urban plazas, which is the location of the Chinese parliament, Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, the National Museum of China, the Zhengyangmen Gate Tower and the Tiananmen Gate ('Gate of Heavenly Peace') which gives access to the **Imperial City**, within which is the Forbidden City, hidden from the prying eyes of commoners by 10-metre-high walls. Head inside and as you stroll along the stretch leading from the Tiananmen Gate to the Meridian Gate, which leads to the **Forbidden City** proper, the sense of anticipation gives way to awe as you take in the sheer majesty of this incomparable treasure – one that for centuries no commoner or foreigner could enter and live to tell the tale. Construction began under the **Yongle Emperor** in the early 15th century and it was meticulously designed to be in harmony with philosophical, religious and hierarchical principles. Thus all roof tiles were yellow, which was the emperor's colour and could not be used by commoners, while no other building in Beijing could be taller than the Forbidden City. Among the city's attractions visited are the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Central Harmony, the Hall of Preserving Harmony and the Palace of Heavenly Purity as well as the Hall of Union and Palace of Earthly Tranquillity. Explore this beguiling UNESCO World Heritage Site and marvel at the magnificent temples, halls, pavilions, palaces and courtyards. Enjoy a local lunch after the visit. Adjacent to Forbidden City is **Jingshan Park**, which is sprawled over the manmade 45-metre-high hill of the same name. It is the highest point in Beijing and was built as a private garden for emperors and their families. Like all imperial projects, feng shui was to the fore in the planning process, and **there are five peaks on the hill, each crowned by a pavilion**. The views over the Forbidden City and the rest of the capital are

breathtaking. The last visit of your stay in Beijing is to the **Temple of Heaven**, which is located 3km south of Tiananmen Square. This Buddhist complex dates from the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of the three main structures, the most impressive is surely the 32-metre-high **Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests**, which is the oldest building in the temple. After the tour, transfer to the train station for the overnight train to Xi'an.

- **Overnight in soft sleeper carriage.**

DAY 4 | XI'AN

Arrive at Xi'an railway station and transfer to your accommodation for the next two nights, the four-star Le Garden Hotel, which is located just a block away from the southeast corner of the old city. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before venturing out to walk along the top of the **14km-long city walls**, which have protected the city for more than six centuries. From here, you have an unrivalled vantage point 12 metres above the old city and the modern metropolis beyond. Breach the walls and head to the historic **Muslim Quarter** to visit the famous **Great Mosque**. The current version dates from 1392 and the design is that of a typical Buddhist temple of the era with five successive courtyards, each with a gateway, pavilion or screen, eventually leading to the prayer hall. Lunch is at a local restaurant. The afternoon's activity is an excursion to the **Big Wild Goose Pagoda**, which has stood here since the **Tang Dynasty** in seventh century. It has been expanded and renovated many times but its main purpose of housing Buddhist scriptures brought back from India by the travelling monk, Xuanzang, has remained the same.

- **Overnight in Xi'an hotel on a bed-and-breakfast basis.**

DAY 5 | XI'AN

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a trip to the countryside outside of Xi'an to visit a priceless treasure that was unknown to humanity until some farmers stumbled upon it four decades ago. What they encountered has since become a global phenomenon, with parts of the so-called **Terracotta Army** being exhibited all over the world. There are thousands of armed warriors, each one different, lined up in rows according to military rank as well as hundreds of horses and chariots. The figures were made by an army of artisans and were buried with **Qin Shi Huang**, the first emperor of China, who died in 210 BC. To see them all before your very eyes is a truly unforgettable experience. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll return to Xi'an. In the afternoon, visit the **Shaanxi History Museum** (closed on Mondays) which has a collection of more than 370,000 objects from prehistory all the way to the late Qing Dynasty, a timespan of one million years. The **Shang Dynasty bronzes** are exquisite while the gold and silver exhibits from **Han and Tang dynasties** are as dazzling today as they were when they were first crafted. Qin Dynasty terracottas also feature prominently.

- **Overnight in Xi'an hotel on a bed-and-breakfast basis.**

DAY 6 | XI'AN – SHANGHAI (2.5 hrs flight time)

Transfer to Xi'an Xianyang International Airport after breakfast for your flight to Shanghai. Head for a guided walking tour of **Nanjing Road**, Shanghai's pedestrianised commercial hub, where the thousands of shoppers are dwarfed by the neon signs and the skyscrapers of modern Shanghai. The immense energy, colour and spectacle of the boulevard is a microcosm of Shanghai all condensed into one place. Perpendicular to Nanjing Road is **The Bund**, the riverside quay crammed with historic bank buildings from the decades when foreign powers controlled large swaths of Shanghai as 'concessions'. There are **52 landmark buildings** along this 1.5km promenade, ranging in style from neo-classical to art deco. Among the more eye-catching structures are the eight-storey Customs House and the China Bank of Communications Building. Continue to the four-star New Century Puxi Hotel for check-in.

- **Overnight in Shanghai hotel on a bed-and-breakfast basis.**



DAY 7 | SHANGHAI

Have breakfast at the hotel before enjoying a guided morning stroll through Shanghai's old city, which has somehow survived China's impressive modernisation push of the past two decades. Almost huddled beneath the modern high-rises, the two and three-storey narrow streets of the earthy **old city** offer an astonishing contrast to the glistening new Shanghai. Mingle with pedestrians and cyclists as they weave about, heading to and fro in this **warren of family-run**

shops and diners, before returning to your accommodation. In the heart of the old city is the **Yu Garden**, a classical Chinese garden, which is crammed with richly decorated pavilions, halls, towers, rockeries and ponds, some dating from as far back as the **Ming Dynasty** four centuries ago. Here you will find a tranquil spot for respite from the modern pace of life in this at times hectic city of more than 24 million souls. Have lunch at a local restaurant and then head to the **Jade Buddha Temple**, where you can admire jade, marble and gold Buddha statues. Its central location makes this one of the livelier temples in Shanghai. After this spiritual sojourn, continue to what was for almost a century known as the **French Concession**, which was a sector of the city controlled by French colonial authorities until 1941. To this day, the area retains the charm of a French or Quebecois provincial city, with elegant boulevards and leafy residential *rues* as well as grandiose mansions with chateau-style roofs and turrets. Café terraces, boulangeries and bistros add to the unmistakably Gallic ambience, which is virtually like having a foreign country in the middle of Shanghai. All attributes, which have no doubt contributed to making the area one of Shanghai's most exclusive.

- **Overnight in Shanghai hotel on a bed-and-breakfast basis.**

DAY 8 | SHANGHAI

Savour a final breakfast at the hotel before checking out and continuing your journey, whether it's to your home or somewhere else in our beautiful country.

- **Breakfast included.**

END OF SERVICES

INCLUDED

TOUR GUIDE:

- Operated with local English/ French/ German-speaking guide

ACCOMMODATION:

- Six nights as indicated on a bed-and-breakfast basis plus one overnight train journey in a four-bed cabin in a soft sleeper class carriage

MEALS:

- Six lunches

TRANSPORT:

- Air-conditioned transportation, transfers by train and aeroplane as stated in the programme

ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES:

- All admission fees as indicated: Ming Tombs, Badaling Great Wall, Forbidden City, Jingshan Park, Temple of Heaven, Great Mosque of Xi'an, Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Terracotta Warrior Museum, Shaanxi History Museum, Yu Garden in Shanghai, Jade Buddha Temple and French Concession tour

NOT INCLUDED

- Expenditures of a personal nature, drinks and meals if not stated explicitly in the programme
- Gratuities for driver and guide
- Optional tours (Summer Palace: USD 35.00)
- International or domestic flight tickets and airport taxes or Chinese visa fees

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comfortable and light clothing is the most suitable for travelling in China. Visitors should not wear sleeveless shirts, shorts, short skirts or skimpy clothing when visiting temples, religious or official buildings. Shoes should be removed before entering a temple or private house. Sun protection, sun glasses, a hat and mosquito repellent can be very useful during your stay.