



Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1

Destination: Shanghai arrival

Welcome to China. Shanghai will be your first sight of China and you're in for a treat! Shanghai manages to blend innovative 21st-century architecture with old-world style. This is one of China's most impressive financial centers. It is a vibrant city with ancient temples next to modern skyscrapers and great cuisine.

We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6 PM after you've had time to rest and unwind to plan the rest of the day. Please plan for your flight to have arrived sufficiently prior to 6 PM to give you time to clear customs, travel to the hotel and unwind before the 6 PM meeting.

Today the adventure begins with a typical Chinese meal followed by your first exploration of the city.

Day 2

Destination: Shanghai- Xitang

Breakfast included.

Travel back in time with a walking tour of the Old Shanghai of the 1920s. The Bund, the wide avenue facing the Huangpu River, is lined with a stunning collection of Art Deco buildings that were once a part of the most important financial center in China.

Meander the narrow winding lanes or "hutongs" of Old Shanghai, where you can get a real glimpse into the locals' going about their daily lives. Explore the European-influenced French Concession neighborhood with its Tudor mansions on the tree-lined avenues of Luwan's Huaihai Road.

In the afternoon, leave Shanghai and take a two-hour journey to Xitang, a nearby water town, once a center of 19th-century trade. Water towns are China's version of Venice. The ancient towns are built on rivers where much of life takes place.

Water towns are spectacular in the daytime, but it is in the evenings that they become magical. This is when you can wander next to the river and dine by the lantern-lit canals. Your local guide will recommend the best places to try the regional cuisine.

Day 3

Destination: Xitang- Overnight train

Breakfast included

In the morning, explore the streets of Xitang. Cross the classic curved bridges typical of Chinese architecture. Wander the maze of cobblestone streets, sip tea by a canal or learn about local history at one of the many museums. Xitang is the stuff of fairy tales and the perfect location for amazing photo opportunities.

Return to Shanghai and board an overnight sleeper train bound for Xi'an. You will encounter a more rustic side of China on this 15-hour journey. Train travel is the main form of transport for local people.

Make sure to stock up on snacks at the train station. The local people make noodle soup on the train, bring their own food or purchase from vendors. Do as the locals do. This is a fun opportunity for a unique and authentic China cultural experience.

Optional Activities

- Xitang - Gondola ride - CNY120, about US \$16.50 at today's exchange rate. (CNY is the symbol for Chinese currency, known as the yuan or RMB)

Special Information

Train compartments are clean with padded berths (6 to a compartment). Travelers will be grouped together whenever possible, but this will depend on group size and ticket availability. Sheets, pillows and a blanket are provided. Safe, hot water is always available.

Basic bathroom facilities with toilets and washbasins are situated at the end of each carriage.

Day 4

Destination: Xi'an

Arrive in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi Province, former imperial center of China and the largest city in northwest China with a population of 12.5 million. The city was once the start of the ancient Silk Road and is as exotic as that sounds. As if that's not sufficiently enticing, Xi'an is also home to the legendary Terracotta Warriors.

Today we'll take a short walk to get acquainted with this city of historical centers, temples, night markets and much more.

The city also has a large section called the Muslim Quarter. Here you'll see quaint shops, lively markets, groups of bearded men in skull caps and flowing white robes sipping tea in cafes and the Great Mosque, one of the most important in China. Delightful aromas waft from the many small restaurants serving everything from savory Muslim fare to amazing Chinese dumplings.

The streets of the Muslim Quarter are narrow, winding and dotted with temples. You'll feel like you've gone back in time to explore an ancient city.

The great wall surrounding Xi'an is one of the most complete and intact in China and runs over 13 kilometers around the city. You may want to rent a bike and ride on the wall to get a comprehensive view of the city.

Xi'an also has one of the best night markets making it a great place to sample the local food like hand-pulled noodles, lamb broth with flat bread, and meat skewers.

Optional Activities

- Xi'an - Small Wild Goose Pagoda - CNY50
- Xi'an - Great Mosque - CNY25
- Xi'an - Bell & Drum Towers - CNY50
- Xi'an - Cycling on City Wall - CNY99
- Xi'an - Big Wild Goose Pagoda - CNY80

Day 5

Destination: Xi'an

You'll remember this day for a long time to come. Today you'll journey outside of Xi'an (approximately 2 hours) and visit one of the most spectacular man-made wonders of the world – the Terracotta Warriors. Discovered after being buried for 2000 years, these clay statues depicting soldiers, horses and chariots were commissioned by the emperor Qin Shi Huangdi as part of his mausoleum after he ascended to the throne in 264 BC.

The most amazing part of this is that each of the over 1000 warriors have a different costume, height and facial expression. The statues are lined up in military formation in an area the size of several football fields. As large as this area is, it is believed that only about 10% of the archeological site has been excavated.

Afterwards you'll enjoy lunch with a local family nearby and continue exploring this culturally rich city.

Lunch included

Day 6**Destination: Xi'an- Beijing**

Today is a big travel day so grab some snacks for the journey. Transfer to the railway station then board the high-speed train to Beijing (approx. six hours). These highspeed trains are an experience in themselves and very different from the overnight sleeper trains. They are among the most modern and fastest in the world traveling over 220 miles per hour. This will probably be the fastest you've ever traveled on land.

Watch the landscape change from farmland and villages to industrialized cities and urban sprawl. On arrival in Beijing, you'll be transported via private car to the countryside, where you'll spend the night in a family-run guesthouse. This evening the people who run the guest house will teach you how to make dumplings for dinner.

Special Information

Please note that the guesthouse for this night is relatively rustic compared to the hotels on this trip, though all rooms have private facilities and WIFI is available. Despite the rustic facilities of

the guesthouse, you'll enjoy the warm hospitality of our hosts here and definitely feel like you're having an authentic cultural experience.

Dinner included.

Day 7

Destination: Great Wall – just outside Beijing

Breakfast included

This morning you'll visit a section of the Great Wall and tick this box on your must-do bucket list. The photo ops here are amazing and the visit will stay with you forever.

The Great Wall stretches 6000 kilometers west from Beijing. It was originally constructed to protect Chinese empires from invaders from the north. Although that strategy was utterly useless, it's still an amazing achievement and visiting the Great Wall is a once in a lifetime experience.

The part of the Wall you will visit is not as crowded as others. When you stroll along the top, which snakes through the hills almost endlessly into the distance, you may feel like you have it all to yourself.

After your visit to the Great Wall you'll journey back to Beijing (approx. 3 hours) – your last stop on your China Cultural Tour.

Special Information

There are many steps and slopes on the Wall, so you'll need to concentrate hard to keep your footing. You'll need walking shoes with good support and grip for this activity

Day 8

Destination: Beijing

Breakfast included.

Beijing, the capital of the most populous country on earth, is a frenetic city with areas reflecting the ancient culture. There are plenty of places that will give you a great insight into the nation's fascinating past as well as China's contemporary culture.

Make your way to the center of the city. Tiananmen Square – supposedly the largest downtown square in the world – is the symbolic center of Chinese power. Framed by the Gate of Heavenly Peace, Mao's Mausoleum and the Great Hall of the People, it's a place of pilgrimage for the Chinese tourists who consider it to be the heart of their nation.

From this imposing square you'll enter the enormous Forbidden City built more than 500 years ago and off limits to commoners for almost all that time. Despite the transformation of the city around it, the Forbidden City looks much like it did when it was built centuries ago. Explore the halls and courtyards and you'll appreciate the might and grandeur of the Imperial Chinese court during the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the afternoon, enjoy some free time to explore on your own. Maybe check out the Temple of Heaven before getting together with your fellow travelers for a farewell dinner. There's no better way to celebrate the end of your journey than with a meal of Peking duck and other Beijing specialties.

Optional Activities

- Beijing - Temple of Heaven - CNY40

Day 9

Destination: Beijing departure

There are no activities planned for the final day and you can depart the accommodation for your return trip home at any time after check-out.

There's so much to see and do in Beijing. You may want to consider staying an extra day or two. Perhaps take a trip to the 798 Art District, a large, renovated factory town now dedicated exclusively to art galleries, restaurants and artist workshops. You could visit a Tibetan temple, explore Beijing's parks, or take a rickshaw through ancient alleyways. The options are endless.

If you want to extend your stay or arrive a day earlier to adjust your time clock, just let us know.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. A Single Supplement to have your own room is available on this trip, excluding the overnight train. If traveling alone and looking for a roommate, every effort will be made to pair single same-gender travelers with a roommate. If no roommate can be located or you prefer a single room supplement, the cost is \$220.
2. Securing train tickets in China is very different from Western countries. A scanned copy of the personal details page of your passport needs to be received no later than 60 days before departure for your train tickets to be secured.
3. Overnight train accommodation is in 6-berth sleeper class. Bedding is provided and wash basins and toilets- both squat and western are available in each carriage, but there are no shower facilities.
5. Please note while traveling through mainland China you will not be able to access some popular internet websites.

Passport and visas

Visas are the responsibility of the individual traveler. Visa requirements can change at any time, so it's important that you check for the latest information with the relevant consular website for detailed and up-to-date visa information specific to your nationality. Visas can take several weeks to process, so familiarize yourself with any requirements as soon as you have booked your trip to allow for processing time.

Most nationalities require a visa for mainland China. You must obtain your Chinese visa in advance. It is not possible to get a visa on arrival and Chinese visas can be difficult to obtain outside your country of residence. You will need a Single-Entry Tourist for this trip valid for 30 days.

China requires that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity remaining. Please ensure the name on your passport matches the name on your booking and airline tickets. Your passport details are required to complete your booking. Take a copy of the main passport pages and other important documents with you and leave another copy at home with family or friends.

INFORMATION & DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR CHINESE VISA APPLICATION:

* **Hotel List** - this will be sent to you after you book your trip.

* **Official invitation from licensed Chinese tourism company** - this will be provided along with the Hotel List to all travelers regardless of whether it is required by the consulate or not and will assist with your application.

* **Itinerary** – print off a copy of the itinerary and include it with your application.

* **Photocopy of your passport.**

* **Passport size photos** (up to 4 may be required)

* **Check with the consulate** for any other specific requirements.

China visas can be obtained from the local Chinese consulate or through a visa service. I use [iVisa](#) but there are many services available. When using a visa service, they will charge a service fee.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR CHINESE TRAIN TICKET BOOKINGS:

You will need to send the following at the time of booking or at least 60 days prior to travel:
Clear, color scanned copy of the personal details page of your passport. Please make sure that this copy is for the passport that you will be travelling on. If you must renew your passport after booking, please let me know as soon as you have a new passport number and bring your old passport with you on your trip in case it is also requested.

Meals in China

Meals in China, as in other locations, can be as inexpensive or costly as one wants. A hearty, delicious meal ranges from a couple of US dollars to much more and is up to the individual's discretion. In keeping with the authentic theme of the trip, meals will be at locations where locals eat. These places tend to be lower priced. It is highly recommended that you become comfortable with chopsticks.

What is not included in this trip.

- International flights
- Any visas required
- Services not mentioned in the itinerary
- Early check-in nor late check out at hotels, unless specified
- Meals and drinks not mentioned in the itinerary
- Drinks with included lunches and dinners
- Tips for local guides and driver (A few dollars is sufficient)
- Expenditures of personal nature

- Personal Insurance
- Optional activities

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is mandatory as required by the local China logistics provider. Your travel insurance must provide coverage against personal accident, death, medical expenses and emergency repatriation with a recommended minimum coverage of US\$50,000. We also strongly recommend it covers trip cancellation, curtailment, personal liability and loss of luggage and personal effects.

You must provide your travel insurance policy number and the insurance company's 24-hour emergency contact number on the first day of your trip; you will not be able to join the trip without these details. **If you have travel insurance connected to your credit card or bank account please ensure you have details of the participating insurer**, the insurance policy number and emergency contact number with you rather than the bank's name and credit card details.

If insurance is not provided by your credit card, I recommend, [World Nomads](#). For a good travel insurance comparison site, try [Squaremouth.com](#).