

EXPLORE!

Treasures of China

15 days

China - Trip code YR



Treasures of China

On this fast paced trip we explore China's main highlights. From the Great Wall and sprawling Forbidden City in Beijing and Xian's Terracotta Army to the loveable giant pandas in Chengdu. We cruise on the infamous Yangtse River through the Three Gorges and relax in quiet Yangshuo before heading to the neon lights of Shanghai.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Beijing** - Walk through Tiananmen Square to the Forbidden City. Walk on the Great Wall at Mutianyu
- ★ **Xian** - Meet the Terracotta Warriors and explore the Muslim Quarter
- ★ **Yangtse Cruise** - Float along the Yangtse River on a 5 star cruise ship
- ★ **Yangshuo** - Cruise on the Li River and see classic Chinese limestone scenery
- ★ **Shanghai** - Take in China's most cosmopolitan city

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Beijing

Our tour begins today in Beijing. After a briefing with the Tour Leader the rest of the day is left free to relax after the flight.



Accommodation: Xiao Xiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Take a walk on the Great Wall

Today we drive out to a renovated part of the Great Wall at Mutianyu, situated 90km north of the city. Began in the 3rd century BC by Shi Huangdi, thousands of conscripted workers laboured on it and many lie buried in its brick and stone ramparts. It is incredible to think that this wall spans the entire country! Here there is a 2km section to walk along with watchtowers and views of the surrounding countryside. En route we may also get to visit a cloisonné workshop where you can see examples of this ancient metal-working technique.



Accommodation: Xiao Xiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Discover the Forbidden City; sleeper train to Xian

Beijing is China's capital and its political and cultural centre. The city has been the capital for most of the period since Kublai Khan made it the capital of his mighty Asian Empire in the late 1200s. All clocks in this vast country are set by Beijing time despite the westernmost regions being some 5000kms away. After walking through the infamous Tiananmen Square we shall visit the Forbidden City, the one-time home of the Ming and the Manchu (Qing) emperors and a treasure trove of eastern wares. In the late afternoon we transfer to the train station where we board our sleeper train for Xian.



Accommodation: Overnight Train: Beijing/Xian



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Explore the Muslim Quarter of Xian

We arrive in Xian this morning and after taking breakfast at the hotel we begin to explore. Xian (Changan) served 11 dynasties and was the very starting point of the Silk Road between Central Asia and Europe. Its ancient monuments include the Big Wild Goose Pagoda (64m, a 7-storey high structure with a superb overview of the city) and the Great Mosque, a wonderful 15th century working mosque within the old Muslim Hui District, which we include in our sightseeing tour. The afternoon is free but highly recommended is an optional visit to the Shaanxi National Museum which takes us through a million years of Chinese history.



Accommodation: City Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Meet the famous Terracotta Warriors. Fly to Chengdu

Today we visit one of the highlights of any visit to China - the magnificent Terracotta Warriors and Horses who guard the Qin Shi Huangdi Tomb. There are literally thousands of lifesize warriors, dating from 200BC. This dramatic find of the 1970s is considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the century. We should have time to stop at the on-site factory to see how the warriors are made today. In the late afternoon we transfer to the airport for the short flight to Chengdu.



Accommodation: Chengdu Furong Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Visit the Panda Research Centre. Bullet train to Chongqing

This morning we drive to the Panda Research Centre to see the animal synonymous with China. Operational since 1990, the centre

covers an area of some 92 acres and is home to a many Giant Pandas, who roam in their large leafy enclosures. The ultimate aim of the centre is to reintroduce Giant Pandas back into the wild, in such numbers as to ensure their survival, and the centre's nursery has enjoyed a success rate with new-born pandas over the past few years that has been quite extraordinary. After our visit we will return to the city and transfer to the local railway station for the bullet train to Chongqing.



Accommodation: Hoi Tak Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Board a cruise boat on the Yangtse River

This morning we visit the cliff sculptures at Baoding Shan (Precious Summit Hill). It is fascinating to wander beside the many brightly painted images carved into the rock face, amongst the most impressive of which is an enormous reclining Buddha, 31m long and 5m high! We then return to Chongqing for dinner before boarding our riverboat for a two and a half day cruise along the Yangtse River. The longest river in China, the Yangtse runs through nine provinces forming a delta in the south which has attracted a very high population density to the region. In addition, the river flows through important industrial centres which form the economic heart of China. We travel on board a five star cruise boat fully equipped with two berth air-conditioned cabins. Our boat carries approximately 150 passengers with your fellow travellers likely to come from a variety of different countries.



Accommodation: Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Standard Boat



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Sail down the Yangtse and optional visit to the Ghost City of Fengdu

Today is spent relaxing on board as the scenery of the Yangtse drifts by. During the journey the boat will stop and visit Shibaozhai, the Precious Stone Fortress, a dramatic 9 storey temple set at the top of a 200m tall cliff. If there are sufficient passengers wishing to take part, the boat will make a stop at the Fengdu 'ghost town' and you'll be able to alight and explore this large complex of shrines, temples and monasteries dedicated to the afterlife.



Accommodation: Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Standard Boat



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 9 - Cruise through Qutang, Wu and Xiling Gorges

Our journey will take us 193km through the 'Three Gorges', each one spectacular in its own way. The first is Qutang Gorge which is only 8 km long. This was always considered a treacherous but necessary part of the river as it was the only way to reach Sichuan province from the eastern lowlands, which are surrounded by impassable mountains. Whilst travelling through the gorge there is the option to visit Baidicheng, an ancient hilltop temple complex also known as the White Emperor Walled City. After passing through Qutang Gorge, we enter Wu Gorge and take a side trip up Shennv stream to admire some of the smaller gorges feeding in to the Yangtse. Wu Gorge is 40km long and it follows a relatively calm stretch of river. Surrounded by hazy mountain peaks, this mystical section of the Yangtse is steeped in legend. Continuing downstream we pass through the third and final gorge, Xiling

Gorge, once renowned for its fast flowing rapids but now tamed by the Three Gorges Dam further downstream. Later this evening, after dinner, we finally reach the dam itself and make the descent down the impressive series of locks.



Accommodation: Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Standard Boat



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 10 - Disembark and take a train to Guilin

This morning we'll visit and take a tour of the dam and learn about this amazing project, one of the great engineering wonders of the world. We then disembark and take a short transfer to Yichang East train station we take a bullet train to Wuhan before changing to a standard train for the remainder of the journey to Guilin. We arrive in the early evening and check in to our hotel.



Accommodation: Dan Gui Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Sail down the Li River to Yangshuo

After breakfast we head to the Bamboo Reed Dock where we board our boat on the Li River and cruise to Yangshuo. Lunch is taken aboard the boat during the journey as we pass along the most scenic stretch of the river. We will pass paddy fields, villages and stunning limestone scenery en route. An afternoon arrival in Yangshuo offers the opportunity to explore this laid back town. During this free time you may wish to take one of the optional bike rides or walks in the surrounding villages. Alternatively you could head to one of the many limestone pinnacles around the town, the best known being the Moon Hill.



Accommodation: New Li Jiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 12 - A free day to explore the relaxed town of Yangshuo

Yangshuo has a lot to offer so the day is left free for you to explore at your own pace. You can walk into the surrounding karst summits or hire a bike and cycle through country back lanes. Alternatively, you can soak up the atmosphere of this beautiful riverside town. You may want to practice your bartering skills in the local market - selling batiks and silk paintings, or you may be tempted to buy a 'Little Red Book'. This evening you may choose to go to an amazing sound and light show (optional).



Accommodation: New Li Jiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Fly to the cosmopolitan city of Shanghai

Departing Yangshuo we drive to Guilin where we board a flight to Shanghai. Shanghai is one of Asia's most vibrant and dynamic cities. It began as a fishing village in the 11th century, but after the end of the first opium war and of the five newly opened treaty ports Shanghai soon became the most cosmopolitan city, with Asian, Russian, European and Jewish influences. Here were cabarets and ballrooms, fine shops and satirical newspapers, and with such style and influence Shanghai was dubbed the 'Paris of the Orient'. Today its elegant past is still noticeable as you walk down 'the Bund'. This wide avenue is a good place to start to get to know the city.



Accommodation: Holiday Inn Express Zhabei Shanghai (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Visit Shanghai's Jade Buddha Temple and walk the Bund

Today we make a city sightseeing tour to visit the famous Jade Buddha temple with its white jade statues, continuing on to the 16th Century Yu Yuan Gardens. We also visit the museum which houses some very good examples of Ming pottery. In the evening you may wish to see the city's world famous troupe of acrobats (optional).



Accommodation: Holiday Inn Express Zhabei Shanghai (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Tour ends in Shanghai

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 14
Lunch: 3
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus
Boat
Flight
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)



Accommodation

3 nights standard boat
10 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple overnight train

Trip information

Country information

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Climate

China has primarily a temperate climate, with a wide spectrum of extremes due to its huge area. Summer months are hot and rainy though in the south the climate is tropical and we can experience rain at any time of the year, often falling in sharp tropical rain-storms which are heavy but short lived. Winter is colder and drier, temperatures in Beijing can be as low as -12c.

Time difference to GMT

+8

Plugs

3 Pin Flat

Religion

Mainly Buddhist

Language

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Beijing - Summer Palace, £4 (entrance only); Opera, £15. Acrobat show, £24. Hutong tour inc lunch, £16. Xian - Shaanxi National Museum, free entry (closed on Mondays). City wall by bike - £10. Tang Dynasty Show and dumpling banquet £30 Yangshuo - Sound and Light show £21.00 (£26 for VIP seat); bicycle hire £5.00; painting lesson £5.00; calligraphy lesson £8.00; cooking class £15.00. Yangtse River Cruise - All optional excursions during the cruise require a minimum number of participants so we cannot guarantee that they will be available on every journey. Fengdu Ghost City - River cruise stop off £30pp Baidicheng ancient temples - £30 pp

Clothing

Light rainwear is advisable at all times.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes or trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece and a daypack. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - so don't overload yourself. Whilst walking on the Great Wall your main luggage will be left on the vehicle or in the hotel. You should carry a daypack containing water, sunscreen and a hat at the very least. It is essential that your baggage is lockable to comply with local aviation regulations. Please be aware, before boarding a flight in China that the Chinese authorities will only allow bottles onto aircraft if they have been checked in as main luggage. Any bottles in the hand luggage may be confiscated.

Equipment

Bring a sunhat, insect repellent, torch and water bottle. You may find rehydration salts useful.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approximately £35 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

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Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£5

Dinner price

£6.00 - 10.00

Beer price

£2

Water price

£1.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Renminbi/Yuan

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Either EUR, USD or GBP.

Where To Exchange

In all towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. When changing money ask for a receipt so you can change Yuan back into your own currency when leaving China.

ATM Availability

All major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Most major restaurants and stores.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques can be changed in Hong Kong and at the Bank of China in all major cities but only during bank opening hours. Please note this is very time consuming and is not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

As tourism developed relatively recently in China, accommodation is usually modern, spacious and comfortable, albeit rather generic. Most hotels are large and purpose built and though rarely characterful, you can generally rely on good facilities. In major cities the hotels that we use are of international style generally with business facilities, restaurants and bars and all mod cons, though few have pools. In other cities and large towns the standard is similar although on a lesser scale. In small towns or villages where tourism is less prevalent, the hotels we use are smaller and facilities are more limited, though we generally stay in the best place in town. Rooms will still be en suite but can be basic. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be somewhat erratic and although the welcome is warm, service levels may be less efficient than you might expect. Please be aware that the beds in China are often quite firm and may take a few nights for you to get used to. Aboard the overnight sleeper train, berths are usually in 1st class 'soft sleeper' lockable compartments for 4 which have 2 sets of bunks with clean bedding provided. WC and washbasins are provided for shared use at the end of each carriage. Hot meals and snacks are usually sold to your berth on overnight journeys. In times of large demand we may have to travel in 2nd class 'hard sleeper' which consists of sectioned off compartments for 6, leading off an open plan carriage. The majority of hotels in China offer check in from 12noon. On days where we will arrive on a sleeper train the Tour Leader will try and arrange an early check in for the group, however this may not be possible.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

China: A visa is required by all nationalities. A single entry visa should be arranged in advance of travel. In order to apply for your Chinese visa you will need to submit supporting documents from our local supplier confirming your itinerary and travel arrangements, which we will obtain on your behalf. So that we can provide this for you, and to ensure all local arrangements are in place, we require a copy of your passport no later than 8 weeks before you are due to start your trip. Once we have your passport copy we shall process and pass on the documents you require 6-8 weeks before your trip, please be mindful of this when applying for your visa. If you require the supporting documents earlier than this, please contact Explore so we can arrange this. **PLEASE BE AWARE:** Passengers wishing to extend their stay in China should note that current visa regulations only allow foreigners to stay in the country for up to 30 days. Please consider this when making your travel arrangements. Passengers with flights that transit via Beijing or Shanghai airports (Beijing Capital International airport, Shanghai Pudong International airport and Hongqiao International airport) should take note of the following: Citizens of certain countries holding a valid passport, a visa for their final destination and a transit flight ticket with a confirmed departure seat and date leaving within 72 hours to a third country (region), may be exempt from a transit visa, provided that their stay within the Beijing or Shanghai administrative regions does not exceed 72 hours. On arrival at Beijing or Shanghai Airports please head for immigration and look for a desk marked Transit Visa Exemption. Please have all your necessary travel documentation on you such as your onward tickets, passport etc. as you will need to show this to the immigration officer. Please ensure you state to the immigration officer that you want to transit without visa. This is especially important if you do not want your Chinese visa to be invalidated. You will then be given a stamp called a transit pass (Hexagon Shape) rather than the normal regular immigration stamp (Oval Shaped). Please refer to your local Chinese Consulate for a list of countries that are eligible for the 72 hour transit visa exemption within Beijing and Shanghai airports. Nationalities that are not eligible for exemption may need to obtain a double entry visa and should seek further advice from their local Chinese Consulate. Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of return to your home country. All visa information is subject to change regularly, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you are visiting.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange

appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

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Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.
