

EXPLORE!

Walk the Great Wall + Xian Extension
12 days

China - Trip code WGT



Walk the Great Wall + Xian Extension

Stretching from the Yellow Sea to the edge of the Gobi Desert - some 4,300 kilometres - the magnificent ramparts and watch towers of the Great Wall were built to protect China's northern frontier from raiding Mongol horsemen. Our walk concentrates on some of the most interesting and spectacular sections including the Old Dragon's Head and Jinshanling. This trip gets off the beaten track and explores rural China.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Beijing** - Visit Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City
- ★ **Old Dragons Head** - Visit the point where the Great Wall meets the sea
- ★ **Jiaoshan** - Walk on spectacular sections of the wall near its eastern end
- ★ **Panjiakou** - Take a boat trip where the Wall crosses the water
- ★ **Eastern Qing Tombs** - Visit the stunning Imperial Tomb Complex of the Qing Dynasty near Zunhua
- ★ **Jinshanling** - Beautiful section with numerous beacon towers

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.

WALKING GRADE:

Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

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 Beijing

Arrive Beijing and check-in at hotel.



Accommodation: Xiao Xiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Beijing city tour including the Forbidden City

A full day in Beijing, 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 western- most regions being some 5000kms away. During our stay 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. The afternoon is free for you to explore this fascinating city and you may choose to go on a tour of the hutongs (old residential districts of the city - optional). There is the possibility of seeing a Beijing opera in the evening, or perhaps an acrobatic performance (optional). The opera in Beijing is considered to be the best in China.



Accommodation: Xiao Xiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Drive to Shanhaiguan where Great Wall reaches the sea

Leaving Beijing we drive to Shanhaiguan. It is here that the Great Wall reaches the Bohai Sea at a point called Laolongtou or the 'Old Dragon's Head' - named after the legendary carved dragon's head that once faced the ocean. The city was a garrison town with a large square fort (which still exists) with huge gateways facing the four compass points. The east gate is an impressive structure known as 'First pass under Heaven'. It has these words inscribed at the top signifying the ancient Chinese perceived division of the world into 'civilised China' and the 'barbarians'. After visiting Old Dragon's Head we then drive to the First Pass where we have our first opportunity to walk on the Wall and visit the Great Wall Museum.



Accommodation: Bo Yi Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Trek on Great Wall to Jiaoshan Pass; drive to Panjiakou

Today we walk out of town along an old section of the wall to the impressive Jiaoshan Pass where it heads into the mountains for the first time. The fitter amongst the group may wish to continue up to a high point for spectacular views (weather permitting). This afternoon we take the scenic drive to Panjiakou where the wall crosses water.



Accommodation: Sahe Jinyu Gangwan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Boat trip by the Wall, walk at Luowenyou

This morning we take a boat excursion on the reservoir at Panjiakou. The surrounding scenery is stunning - the Wall following undulating ridges across the rugged hills before plummeting into the water at two points, Panjiakou and Xifengkou. Joining our vehicle again we head for Luowenyou where we are able to walk for approximately 10kms on a rugged and quite steep section of the wall with glorious views across the surrounding area. From Luowenyou we continue to our hotel in the grounds of the Eastern Qing Tombs near Zunhua.



Accommodation: Qing Feng Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Visit Eastern Qing Tombs; trek on Wall to Huangyaguan

Making a reasonably early start this morning, we hope to have this lovely site to ourselves. The Eastern Qing Tombs are the largest and most complete of the Imperial Tombs in China with 5 emperors, 15 empresses and 136 concubines all buried here. In addition the surrounding mountains contain the tombs of hundreds of lesser nobles such as princes and dukes. We are able to enter a few of the beautifully carved tombs which mostly date back to the 17th and 18th Centuries. That of Emperor Qianlong covers almost half a square kilometre. Leaving the tombs we drive to a point on the Great Wall where there is access, and walk for 2-3 hours into Huangyaguan. This section of the wall is very quiet and offers some great views - the first part of the walk is an ascent up to a prominent tower before descending down to another tower near the river. From here we cross the river and walk into the town and our hotel for the night.



Accommodation: Huangyaguan Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Drive to Gubeikou; beacon tower walk to Jinshanling

Today we drive from Huangyaguan to Gubeikou. On arrival we walk through the small village of local farm houses, a great opportunity to see life in rural China up close. From here we will walk up on to the wall along a mountain path. This section of the wall takes us past 16 beacon towers and we get to see a part of the wall in the distance that is restricted and not usually seen. We leave the wall at Jinshanling and head to the hotel. Total walking about 6hrs.



Accommodation: Watertown Guesthouse (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trek on Great Wall towards Simatai; return to Jinshanling

Today we aim to walk on one of the most stunning sections of the Wall between Jinshanling and Simatai - both locations where the wall has been refurbished. The walk between these two places is on partially ruined sections, with some quite steep ascents and many steps to be climbed. In 2010 Simatai was closed to the public, so we'll walk as far as we're allowed towards Simatai before returning to Jinshanling for a second night. We pass 18 watch-towers on this walk - these provide the only shade along the route and give us an excuse to pause and admire the breath-taking views. (approx 4-5 hours walking).



Accommodation: Watertown Guesthouse (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Return to Beijing; overnight train to Xian

Today we return to Beijing. We should arrive back into the city by early afternoon with late afternoon free for further personal exploration. You may wish to take an excursion to the Summer Palace or the Temple of Heaven in Tiantan Park (both optional). We take an overnight train from Beijing to Xian.



Accommodation: Overnight Train: Beijing/Xian



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Sightseeing in the walled city of Xian

Our stay in Xian reveals the extraordinary continuity of Chinese civilisation. 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.



Accommodation: City Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Visit the impressive Terracotta Warriors

Today we visit one of the highlights of any trip 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. Late afternoon is free in Xian with the option to visit the extensive and impressive National (Shaanxi) Museum.



Accommodation: City Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Tour ends in Xian

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.

Walking and Trekking information

Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

We trek on 6 days with walks ranging from 2.5 to 6 hours. Much of the route involves negotiating the steep stone stairways along the wall. We have graded this trek as moderate although there are a few sections that are a little more strenuous.

Trek terrain

Some sections of the wall are broken and a little overgrown and certain stretches of the Wall have some very steep sections involving climbing on high steps - because of this the tour is not recommended for vertigo sufferers. It is possible to travel in the support vehicle if you do not wish to partake in any particular walk.



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 11



Transport

Bus
Boat



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

9 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple hotel
1 nights simple overnight train

Trip information

Country information

China Holidays & Tours

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

Mandarin

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Beijing - Opera £15.00; Acrobatic performance £24.00; Summer Palace £5.00 (plus £12 private transfer); Temple of Heaven £3.50. Hutong Tour £16.00; Kung Fu show £24.00 Birds Nest tour £10.00. Please note that it may not be possible to do all of the optionals.

Clothing

Lightweight raingear year round and some warmer clothes in April and October.

Footwear

Light walking boots are recommended for the walk, comfortable shoes or trainers and sandals for other sightseeing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac for personal items. Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage, so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

A Mandarin phrase book may be helpful. You may wish to bring a trekking pole with a rubber tip and a torch. You may also find rehydration salts useful in the summer months.

Tipping

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 approx £20 for tips. 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

China Holidays & Tours

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

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.

Our trek along the Great Wall is in a remote area off the beaten tourist track. Our accommodation is in local hotels and guesthouses. Rooms are twin-bedded and en-suite but plumbing and electricity supplies can be somewhat erratic. Although the welcome is warm, service levels may be less efficient than you may be used to. Our choice in these areas is limited and we do use the best available hotels. Any shortcomings are more than made up for by the experience of small town China and enjoying some spectacular locations close to the Great Wall. On day six you stay in a simple hotel. The rooms are basic with en-suite facilities and air conditioning. There is a lovely courtyard with view of the Wall - where you can relax at the end of the day. The overnight train is basic but bedding (duvet and pillow) is provided. There are four people to a cabin - two bunk beds. There is space underneath the beds and also overhead where you are able to store your luggage. At both ends of the train carriages there are long-drop style toilets and also western style toilets. There is normally a small snack service in the morning where you can buy tea/coffee and cake but we recommend you take your own snacks and drinks.

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 travelling. 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. Passengers wishing to extend their stay in China should be aware that current visa regulations only allow foreigners to stay in the country for up to 30 days. Please consider this when planning your trip. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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.