



China on a Shoestring

CHINA - TRIP CODE QCH

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Witness China's highlights as we travel across this vast country with locals on public transport. From ancient sites in Beijing and the Great Wall to the lively and modern streets of Shanghai, experiencing the 'real China' in between.

- **Xian & Chengdu** - Meet the famous Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huangdi and see pandas at the famous research centre
- **Yangtse River cruise** - Relax for 3 days whilst exploring the stunning river landscapes
- **Villages and Rice Terraces** - Take in rural China as we hike amongst the villages of the Dong, Yao and Zhuang people



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 11
Lunch: 6
Dinner: 6



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



TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Train



ACCOMMODATION
4 nights
comfortable boat
4 nights simple
guesthouse
5 nights
comfortable hotel
5 nights simple
hotel
2 nights simple
overnight train



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
8 - 14

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Beijing

Arrive 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 westernmost regions being some 5000kms away.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 7pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Beijing at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into either Beijing Capital International Airport (PEK) which is one hour to one hour and 30 minutes' from our hotel or Beijing Daxing International Airport (PKX) which is one hour and 15 minutes to one hour and 45 minutes' drive away. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up the next morning.



ACCOMMODATION:
King Parkview Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Discover the sights of Beijing including the Forbidden City

Today offers a chance to explore something of a city that has been at the centre of China, politically and culturally, since the days of Kublai Khan. You could pay a visit to the impressive expanse of Tiananmen Square, the vibrant heart of Beijing, covering some 40 hectares and enclosed on all sides by memorials to the past and present. You could also visit the magnificent Forbidden City, the one-time home of the Ming and the Manchu (Qing) emperors and a treasure trove of eastern wares. So named, because for 500 years it was off limits to all but a privileged few, the Forbidden City is the largest and best-preserved collection of ancient buildings in China, covering an area of some 720,000 square metres and containing an incredible array of some 800 buildings. We can make a visit to Jin Shan park situated to the north of the forbidden city. The hill here is said to have been built using the spoils excavated from the forbidden city over 600 Years ago. A climb to the top will reward you with panoramic views across Beijing and the 999 1/2 rooms of the forbidden city.



ACCOMMODATION:
King Parkview Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Discover the Temple of Heaven, free afternoon in Beijing

Today we continue to explore Beijing. There is the option to visit the temple of Heaven, often considered a must as it represents a high point of Ming architecture. You might also like to take a trip out to the Summer Palace, the old summer residence of the emperors, which contains an extensive garden complex full of impressive imperial buildings and a large boating lake that comes complete with a magnificent marble boat built by the Empress Dowager Cixi.



ACCOMMODATION:
King Parkview Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Walk the Great Wall; overnight train to Xian

This morning we drive 90 km north of the city, to a particularly well preserved section of the Great Wall at Mutianyu, where two kilometres of restored majesty gives us something of the idea of this immense structure in all its grandiose glory. Begun 2000 years ago, the Great Wall of China snakes from the east coast to the Gobi Desert, stretching for over 5,000 kilometres and crossing five provinces and two autonomous regions. Meandering across an undulating landscape of folded hills, the wall at Mutianyu was started by the Northern Dynasties during the 6th century, with much of the restoration that we can see today being completed during the reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Nearly 8 metres high and up to 5 metres thick, the wall provided a formidable barrier along the northern edge of the empire and its 22 watchtowers and enhanced defensive features indicate that this section was of particular importance. These magnificent parapets cross a quite incredible landscape of verdant hills, evoking a sense of wonder in anyone who sees it.

In the afternoon we transfer to the railway station this afternoon, to catch the overnight train on to Xian. We will be travelling in hard sleeper compartments for the duration of the journey, these are formed of three tier bunk beds, with 6 people sharing a cabin. Each cabin has a curtain separating it from the train corridor and there is space underneath the bottom bunks for luggage. Each train carriage has toilets at each end, usually one Western style and one Asian style. There are hot water machines on all trains to make up tea and noodles during the journey.

Overnight trains are an ideal way to meet the locals, experience something of the unique eccentricities of Chinese life and cover distance while you sleep.



ACCOMMODATION:
Overnight Train from Beijing to Xian

Grade: Simple Overnight Train



DAY 5 - Free time to explore Xian's Muslim Quarter

Arriving in Xian this morning we walk to our hotel, a short 10 minute journey, after which the rest of the day is free to make the most of China's old imperial capital. The capital of China's Shaanxi province, Xian (Chang'an) served as the imperial capital for 11 dynasties and was the starting point of the Silk Road between Central Asia and Europe. This was the beginning of a journey that spanned an incredible diversity of cultures and landscapes, as goods from China made their way across mountains and deserts, into the exotic kingdoms of Asia and the Indian subcontinent and then into the unknown lands of the west. You might like to pay a visit to the city's Tang Dynasty Big Wild Goose Pagoda, a 64 metre high structure that supplies some quite superb views out across the city. Alternatively, the intimate network of alleys and streets that make up the city's engaging Muslim Quarter are home to Xian's Hui minority people, descendants of 8th century Arab soldiers, and its rambling quarters provide an excellent destination for a day of exploring.



ACCOMMODATION:
Jie Fang Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 6 - Discover the Terracotta Army; optional Tea Ceremony

Today we visit one of the highlights of not only Xian, but of China itself - the magnificent Terracotta Warriors and Horses who guard the Qin Shi Huangdi Tomb. Considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the last century, there are literally thousands of lifesize warriors guarding the tomb of the first emperor of a unified China. Each figure measures approximately 1.8 metres in height they were believed to be individually crafted to represent actual members of the Imperial Guard. Over 200 Years ago the warriors were armed with actual bows, crossbows, swords and spears, when they were discovered in 1974 the few that still remained were as sharp as they had been when they were buried. We'll travel to the site by public bus and on arrival visit the three excavated pits that hold this incredible army, viewing an astonishing array of bowmen, charioteers and the incredible sight of a thousand soldiers lined up in battle formation before the tomb of the emperor. After our visit we will return to Xian by public bus for a final evening in the city. Here there will be an option to witness a traditional tea ceremony, where we will learn how tea is served in China and get the opportunity to taste a few different brews. Tea originated in China and the first records indicate that it was first used in the year 200 BC, used for medicinal purposes.



ACCOMMODATION:
Jie Fang Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 7 - Morning train to Yichang; board the Yangtse riverboat

Walking back to the train station today, we catch the morning train to Yichang, on the banks of the mighty Yangtse. We arrive in the city late this evening and transfer directly to our riverboat by private bus. We will spend the next four nights living on the boat, floating down the incredible Yangtse River. Our accommodation is in twin share cabins each with an en-suite bathroom. The boat has a restaurant and bar to relax in during the evenings and plenty of space to relax and enjoy the scenery during the journey.



ACCOMMODATION:
Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Boat



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 8 - Cruise down the Yangtse River

Surrounded by hazy mountain peaks, this mystical section of the Yangtse is steeped in legend and has long been an inspiration for traditional Chinese painters. Departing Yichang this morning we pass through Xiling Gorge, which is comprised of several smaller gorges that run along a 78 km stretch of the river. There will be the option to visit the remarkable and controversial Three Gorges Dam Project, the largest hydroelectric dam on the planet.



ACCOMMODATION:
Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Boat



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Continue down the Yangtse River; passing through the fabulous Three Gorges

Our second full day on the boat sees us journeying along the 193 km route that takes us through the fabulous Three Gorges, each one as spectacular as the last. We'll pass from Wu Gorge and into the Qutang Gorge, following the river's course through a landscape hemmed in by towering cliffs that rise up to 900 metres above the relatively calm stretch of water below. There will also be the possibility to watch a film on the Three Gorges and enjoy some fascinating cultural programmes whilst on board. Today there is also the chance to stop and explore Baidicheng, an ancient hilltop temple complex known as the White Emperor Walled City, or explore the Lesser Three Gorges by boat.



ACCOMMODATION:
Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Boat



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - A chance to visit the Jade Emperor's Shrine and take part in the Captain's farwell dinner

For our final day on the boat there is the optional morning visit to the shrine of the Jade Emperor, the supreme god in ancient Chinese mythology. In the afternoon there is also an optional visit to the Wuling Rift Valley with spectacular green scenery all around. In the evening you are invited join the captain for a

farewell dinner and party (optional).



ACCOMMODATION:
Yangtse River Boat (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Boat



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 11 - Disembark riverboat; bullet train to Chengdu

Disembarking the boat in Chongqing this morning, we transfer by private bus to the station to board the afternoon train to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province. Our bullet train should get us in sometime in the middle of this afternoon and, after checking in to our hotel, the rest of the day is free to enjoy as you wish. With a history that stretches back nearly 2500 years, Chengdu marked the spot where the southern Silk Road began and can boast a rich pedigree that includes a reputation as home of some of China's most famous poets the most important being De Fu. It is also considered by many Chinese to be the home of tea drinking culture. It is also a place famed for its cuisine, so be sure to make the most of an opportunity to try some of Sichuan's renowned fare.



ACCOMMODATION:
Chengdu Kuanjing Ruiji Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Visit the Panda Research Centre and take the bullet train to Sanjiang before driving to Ma An Zhai Village

This morning we visit the Panda Research Centre, to see for ourselves an animal that has become so synonymous with China itself. 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 Sanjiang. Arriving early evening, we then take a drive to Ma An Zhai, a Dong minority village that lies amidst the forested hills along the Hunan-Guizhou-Guangxi borders. The Dong are just one of over 55 non-Han groups that occupy these fertile landscapes and can trace their ancestry back to the 3rd century BC. We will be staying in a local village guesthouse.



ACCOMMODATION:

Longfeng Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 13 - Drive to Ma An Zhai Village. Evening with local family

This morning we will take a walk down to the village's Wind and Rain Bridge. The Dong are renowned for their architecture, particularly their covered bridges and multi-storey drum towers and this afternoon affords an opportunity to view this beautiful minority style bridge, along with some lovely riverside views. From here we take a stroll through the village, stopping to enjoy a performance of some traditional Dong Singing and dancing. After lunch we will walk through some of the villages and visit some of the families as we make our way back to the guesthouse. This evening we will enjoy some local home-cooked cuisine with our hospitable hosts.



ACCOMMODATION:

Longfeng Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 14 - Meet Yao families in Longji and Dazhai Village

After breakfast this morning we'll depart the village and drive on to Longji, where we change to a small local bus for the short drive to the base of the mountains. From here we walk up to the village of Dazhai, our final destination for today. The walk will take around 1/2 an hour and on arrival in the village, the rest of the day will be free to relax and enjoy the spectacular setting. The village is made of some 60 Yao families, who live here amongst a network of stunning rice terraces. Amazing feats of agricultural engineering, the terraces are known locally as the 'Dragon's backbone' and this afternoon affords us some unique opportunities to spend time walking across the terraces, enjoying the extraordinary views over this spectacular landscape. The area is home to both the Zhuang and Yao minorities and we may be lucky enough to come across colourfully dressed women working in the fields during our afternoon's wanderings. Your main luggage will be stored in Dazhai town and you will need a small overnight bag for the next two nights.



ACCOMMODATION:

Dazhai Xin Tian Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 15 - Hike from Dazhai to Pingan, passing incredible views

An early morning hike up to the top of the mountain (about an hour's climb) provides a chance to enjoy the sunrise over the rice terraces, before we return to the village in time for breakfast. Following our meal, we then bid farewell to Dazhai and trek on to the village of Pingan, which is located on the central ridge of the 'Dragon's backbone'. The 5-6 hour hike presents us with some truly stunning views along the way. The last of our village locations belongs to the Zhuang, the largest of China's minority groups, numbering some 18 million in total. Mostly spread throughout the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region they can trace their ancestry back to the Tai, who migrated south from central China some 5000 years ago. With beliefs deep rooted in the power of nature, the Zhuang have long followed a tradition of worshipping the earth, sun and water and many of their festivals reflect this reverence for the natural and spiritual worlds. Skilled in weaving and embroidery the Zhuang have a reputation for producing quite exquisite designs of cotton woven brocades, which has won them worldwide recognition for the quality of their produce. On arrival there should be time to walk around the village and soak up the unique ambience of its rural setting before we settle down for dinner.



ACCOMMODATION:
Ping An Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 16 - Transfer from Pingan to Yangshuo

After a morning spent walking along the rice terraces we then drive to Yangshou, a small market town nestling besides the banks of the Li River. Set beneath a backdrop of towering karst mountains, amongst some of the most scenic landscapes that China can offer, the town provides an ideal spot to relax and break our journey. The sparkling green plain is laced with lakes and rivers, in the midst of which looms a bizarre array of dome-like pinnacles and towers, with such names as Expectant Husband, Mitten Mountain and Mighty Lion Riding a Carp. These stretch into the distant horizon as far as the eye can see, separated from each other by winding ravines and penetrated by subterranean caves - a scene of great romantic beauty.



ACCOMMODATION:
New Li Jiang Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 17 - Free day in Yangshuo; optional bike hire and cooking classes

Today has been left free for you to explore at your own pace, the spectacular karst scenery being easily

accessible from Yangshou. You can walk into the surrounding karst summits or hire a bike and cycle through country back lanes. It is definitely worthwhile to get off the beaten track and cycle through the rural area around the karst scenery to the small market town of Fuli. If you are lucky you can watch the locals filling the Fuli ferry with their local produce to sale. Stopping to visit the rural villages on the way down, you may like to continue on a circuitous route back to Yangshou, passing through the myriad of small hamlets that dot the landscape, perhaps even taking a raft trip from Hongqi to Shengdi, before finally returning to the hotel. Alternatively, you can just relax and soak up the atmosphere of this beautiful riverside town, or try your bartering skills in the local market, a bustling collection of colourful chaos that sells everything from batiks and silk paintings to copies of Mao's Little Red Book.



ACCOMMODATION:
New Li Jiang Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 18 - Transfer to Guilin; overnight train to Shanghai

Today we take a private bus to Guilin, a journey of around one and a half hours, we then board a train on to Shanghai, an overnight journey that gets us into the eastern coastal city tomorrow afternoon. We will again be travelling in hard sleeper compartments.



ACCOMMODATION:
Overnight Train from Guilin to Shanghai



Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 19 - Free day in Shanghai; stroll along the Shanghai Bund

Arriving in Shanghai at the city's South Station this afternoon, we then travel by underground train to the main station, from where we walk the short distance to our hotel. Shanghai began life as a fishing village

in the 11th century, but by the end of the first opium war it had become one of the five newly opened treaty ports, a factor that saw it grow into one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the region. Here was a city filled with cabarets and ballrooms, fine shops and satirical newspapers, steeped in the cultural influences and traditions of Asians and Jews, Russians and Europeans. Little wonder then that it was dubbed at the time, the Paris of the Orient.



ACCOMMODATION:
Shanghai Yu Hang Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 20 - Optional visit to the Pearl TV and Radio Tower

Today is free to enjoy Shanghai at your own pace, perhaps taking the time to wander along its famous waterfront and take in the elegant reminders of the city's graceful past amongst the historic buildings of The Bund. Another option is to pay a visit to the Yu Yuan Gardens, rightly considered one of Shanghai's most famous sights. Founded during the 16th century by the Pan family, they survived the destruction of the Opium Wars and the occupying French, to stand today as a magnificent example of Ming design. If time allows you might even like to take a sightseeing cruise on the Huangpu River, the ideal way to gain an altogether different perspective of Shanghai's impressive cityscape. This evening there may be an opportunity to see the city's world famous troupe of acrobats (optional).



ACCOMMODATION:
Shanghai Yu Hang Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 21 - Trip ends in Shanghai

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Shanghai.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Shanghai at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport (SHA), which is 45 minutes from our hotel, or Shanghai Pudong Airport (PVG) which is one hour and 15 minutes' away.



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

Trip information

Climate and country information

China

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	Plugs	Religion	Language
+8	3 Pin Flat	Mainly Buddhist	Mandarin

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Beijing

Cable car to the Great Wall - 120 CNY return

Summer Palace - 40 CNY entrance fee plus 200 CNY to arrange a private bus if required

Birds Nest Stadium - 50 CNY to visit the outside of the stadium and for photo opportunities
Temple of Heaven - 35 CNY
Forbidden City - 60 CNY
Opera- 150 CNY
Acrobats- 260 CNY
Kung Fu performance - 260 CNY

Xian

Wild Goose Pagoda - 50 CNY
Cultural Performance and Dumpling Banquet - 300 CNY
City wall by bike - 100 CNY
Tea Ceremony - 50 CNY

Yangtze Cruise Boat. All optional excursions during the cruise require a minimum number of participants so we cannot guarantee that they will be available on every journey.

Ghost Town visit - 290 CNY
Lesser Three Gorges - 290 CNY
Dam Tour - 300 CNY

Yangshou

bike hire - 50 CNY
Raft from Hongqi to Shengdi - 300CNY
Li river boat- 240 CNY
Tai Chi - 80 CNY
Cookery lesson - 250 CNY
Calligraphy - 100 CNY
Sound and light show- 260 CNY

Shanghai

Acrobatic performance - 280 CNY
Yu Yuan gardens - 40 CNY
Tea Ceremony - 50 CNY

Clothing

In the hotter months you will need to pack accordingly with light weight shirts and tops. In the earlier parts of the year it can get very cold so jumpers and fleeces are recommended.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals. If participating in rafting or visiting the jungle, old trainers (as they get wet) are useful.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Please note that there is a weight restriction of 7kg for hand luggage/daypack for international and internal flights.

As we will be using a lot of public transport it is important that you can easily carry your own bags. Soft shell bags/backpacks are easier to manage than hard cases. It is recommended to take a padlock for flights in and around China.

On Day 14 your main luggage will be left in Dazhai town and you will need to use your small daypack as an overnight bag. This is to avoid having to trek with large bags. You will be reunited with your main luggage on Day 16 before driving to Yangshou.

Equipment

You will need a good insect repellent, suncream, sunglasses, sun hat a small torch and a personal water bottle.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx. £25 for gratuities for local staff.

China

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£5	£6.00 - 10.00	£2	£1.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Renminbi/Yuan	Either EUR, USD or GBP.

Where To Exchange

We'd strongly recommend changing enough money for the duration of your trip at the airport on your arrival. When changing money ask for a receipt so you can change Yuan back into your own currency when leaving China.

ATM Availability	Credit Card Acceptance
All major towns.	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, Train

Accommodation notes

During the tour we spend three nights on overnight sleeper trains. These are a great way of travelling between cities without losing precious time in the day for exploring with the added bonus that we will get to meet locals as we travel. We use cabins with six bunk beds, three on either side. There are curtains at the end of the cabin for privacy. There is space in each cabin for bags, under the bottom bunk. We suggest a soft duffle style bag or a rucksack as they offer more flexibility than a suitcase. There are toilets in each train carriage, usually Asian style squat toilets although some trains do now have a western style toilet as well. We are likely to be sharing our cabins with non Explore travellers giving us plenty of time to learn about local life during the journey.

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.

Please be aware that the beds in China are often quite firm and may take a few nights for you to get used to.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport Information

China: A visa is required by all nationalities. A single entry visa should be arranged in advance of travelling.

From 1st November 2018, British Passport Holders will be required to present themselves in person at the Chinese Visa Processing Centre in London, Manchester, Edinburgh or Belfast on the day of application, to provide biometric information (fingerprints). Appointments can be booked and forms completed via www.visaforchina.org

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 be able to apply 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

Ability to swim

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

China

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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

This trip provides the perfect budget opportunity to see a great deal of a fascinating country including the must-see sites of Beijing, the Terracotta Warriors, the Great Wall and the Chengdu Panda Research Centre. More off-the-beaten-path places are also included and there is an option of free time at many places, allowing for a more independent approach to your exploration.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



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