

EXPLORE!



China Explorer
9 days
China - Trip code QCE

China Explorer

Experience the 'real China' as we travel across the country with locals on public transport. Discover China's greatest sights including the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and the Terracotta Warriors. Staying in traditional village houses, we explore rice terraces, uncover dramatic limestone landscapes and visit welcoming tribal families. We also cruise down the Yangtse River and visit endangered Giant Pandas.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Beijing** - Walk along the incredible Great Wall at Mutianyu. Free time to explore the Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven
- ★ **Xian** - Visit the thousands of warrior statues which make up the Terracotta Army
- ★ **Suzhou** - Relax on the traditional walled city of Suzhou, famous for immaculate sculptured gardens
- ★ **Shanghai** - Explore the modern heart of China

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes 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:

8 - 14

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 in Beijing and check-in to the hotel.



Accommodation: Far East Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

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

Beijing is the political and cultural centre of this vast country. Today you will have free time where you can chose to do a number of things. You may wish to wander across Tienanmen Square into the iconic Forbidden City, the one-time home of the Ming and the Manchu (Qing) emperors and the largest and best preserved collection of ancient buildings in the whole of China. Alternatively you could visit the Temple of Heaven or just walk through the Houtongs in the area.



Accommodation: Far East Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 3 - Walk the Great Wall before catching a sleeper train to Xian

It's a busy day today as we drive out of the city to Mutianyu to visit the Great Wall. Its construction commenced 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. Returning to Beijing we are scheduled to leave the city this evening on the sleeper train. The main railway station is a hive of activity.



Accommodation: Overnight Train from Beijing to Xian



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: None

DAY 4 - In Xian; Visit the Old Ming Dynasty City Wall

We arrive in Xian in time for breakfast. We make the short journey from the train station on foot. 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 Great Mosque, a wonderful 15th century working mosque within the old muslim Hui District. There is also the option to visit the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, a 7-storey high structure with a superb overview of the city.



Accommodation: Jie Fang Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 5 - Explore the Terracotta Army; overnight train to Suzhou

Today we take the public bus and 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 early evening we take the overnight sleeper train to Suzhou.



Accommodation: Overnight Train: Xian/Suzhou



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: None

DAY 6 - Optional boat ride along Suzhou's canal's

Suzhou sits astride the Grand Canal which was completed in 610AD and linking the Yellow River with the Yangtse, and Beijing with Hangzhou, the 1,800 km Grand Canal was a magnificent engineering feat. Over the centuries it has transported food north from the fertile lands in the south. Over 2,500 years old, Suzhou is sometimes called the 'Venice of the Orient' with a series of bridges, canals and ancient buildings. But a little of Suzhou's special magic lies in its famous gardens, perhaps the most beautiful in all China. This afternoon we have time to explore this lovely old town with the option to take boat ride on the pretty canals or visit to the large 'Humble Administrator's Garden' which has streams, ponds and beautifully decorated pavilions scattered throughout. Here water reflects land and provides a fresh tableau at every turn.



Accommodation: Gu Su Hotel Suzhou (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 7 - Enjoy the beautiful garden in Suzhou; bullet train to Shanghai

We continue our exploration of the town. There is time to make an optional visit to the 'Lingering Garden' which features a man-made mountain and lake, garden courts and elegant buildings, a real contrast to the garden from yesterday. Early afternoon we catch the train 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'.



Accommodation: Shanghai Yu Hang Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 8 - Optional visit to the Oriental Pearl TV and Radio Tower

Time in Shanghai is left free for your own exploration. You may wish to visit the 16th century Yu Yuan Gardens or stroll along the Bund.



Accommodation: Shanghai Yu Hang Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available

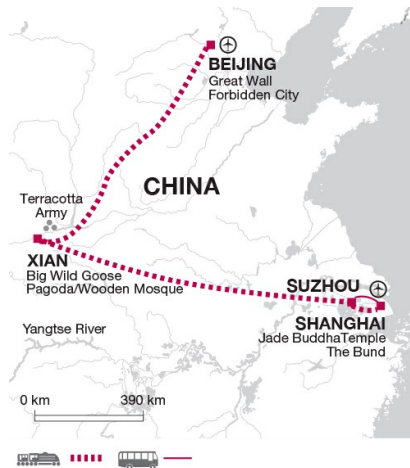


Meals Provided: None

DAY 9 - Tour ends in Shanghai

Our tour ends this morning.

Meals Provided: None



Why book this trip

This short tour is a great insight into China and explores the main highlights. It is ideal for travellers who are interested in culture as well as experiencing the busy cities including Beijing and Shanghai. You have the chance to stay on two overnight trains and really experience the China lifestyle.

What's included?



Transport

Bus
Train



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

6 nights simple hotel
2 nights simple overnight train

Trip information

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

+8

Plugs

3 Pin Flat

Religion

Mainly Buddhist

Language

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 Forbidden City - £6 entrance fee

Hutong Tour £16

Temple of Heaven £3.50

Cable car at Mutianyu £10

Xian Shaanxi National Museum, entrance free of charge, City wall by bike £10, Cultural performance & dumpling banquet £30

Suzhou Administrators Garden £9, canal boat trip £10-£12

Shanghai Acrobatic performance £28. Cruise on Huangpi River, £10 Museum £5

Clothing

Lightweight raingear is required all year round. For winter departures warm sweaters, gloves, scarf, hat, warm coat, thermal underwear will be required.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Please note that luggage space on the sleeper trains is limited. Bags are stored either under the bottom bunk or in an overhead section at the end of each berth. Soft bags are more suitable for train travel in China. You will need to carry your own luggage at train stations so please bear this in mind when packing.

Equipment

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

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 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.

Country Information

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

£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, 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.

During the tour we spend two 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

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.

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 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.

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 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, 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.

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.