

EXPLORE!

China Highlights
10 days

China, Hong Kong - Trip code HC

China Highlights

Enjoy an action-packed introduction to China as we travel from the skyscrapers of Hong Kong to the imperial palaces of Beijing. We take a cruise along the Li River to Yangshuo, passing vast paddy fields and beautiful limestone scenery. We also visit the incredible Army of Terracotta Warriors in Xian and walk along the Great Wall in Mutianyu.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Hong Kong** - Orientation tour plus plenty of time to explore this bustling metropolis
- ★ **Yangshuo** - Float through dramatic karst scenery on the Li River
- ★ **Xian** - Visit the incredible Terracotta Army of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi plus Big Wild Goose Pagoda
- ★ **Beijing** - Explore the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and Forbidden 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 Hong Kong

Arrive Hong Kong and check into hotel.



Accommodation: Panda Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Discover the sights of Hong Kong; optional ride on the Victoria Peak Tram

Situated in a dramatic setting, Hong Kong is a lively, sophisticated city and the world's third largest financial centre. We start with an orientation walk and leave

the afternoon free for optional excursions. Public transport is efficient and easy to use. You can take a funicular railway to Victoria Peak or a launch out to a floating restaurant in Aberdeen Harbour. Alternatively explore the jade market or admire the latest sartorial and electronic fashions.



Accommodation: Panda Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Continue exploring Hong Kong; overnight train to Guilin

This morning will be left free to explore Hong Kong further. In the late afternoon we transfer by coach to the Sheng Shui train station close to the Chinese border. From Sheng Shui we then take a train to reach the pedestrian only border at Lu Wu. As we cross on foot and porters are not available please make sure you can comfortably carry your own luggage. After clearing immigration and customs we walk the short distance to nearby Shenzhen station from where we take an overnight train to Guilin.



Accommodation: Overnight Train from Shenzhen to Guilin



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Boat trip on the Li River to Yangshuo

On arrival in Guilin we will make a quick stop at a local hotel for breakfast before we head to the MoPanShan 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 - a contrast to the bustle of Hong Kong. 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 5 - Free time in Yangshuo; catch flight to Xian

Yangshuo has a lot to offer so most of 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 - here art students from Guilin sell their batiks, silk paintings, Tai Chi, cooking, calligraphy, mahjong, or you may be tempted to buy a 'Little Red Book'. Later on today we fly to Xian.



Accommodation: Union Alliance Atravis Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - In Xian; visit the Big Wild Goose Pagoda

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. 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: Union Alliance Atravis Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Explore the Terracotta Army; overnight train to Beijing

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. Later this afternoon we take an overnight train to Beijing.



Accommodation: Overnight Train from Xian to Beijing



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Discover the sights of Beijing; including the Forbidden City

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. 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. There is the option to visit the Summer Palace an old and very extensive imperial garden complex with a large boating lake and impressive palace buildings. There is also 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

DAY 9 - Walk on the incredible 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

DAY 10 - Tour ends in Beijing

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.



Extend your trip

Why not extend your holiday with some time walking the fabulous Great Wall of China?

Why book this trip

With a fast pace and busy days this tour is the ideal introduction to China. Combining modern cities, important sites and the natural beauty of the Li River it offers something for everyone.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 9
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
Boat
Train



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

7 nights standard 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

Hong Kong

Climate

Hong Kong enjoys more of a sub-tropical climate and the winter months tend to produce temperatures in the high teens, with January being more susceptible to cloud cover, with occasional rain and cold fronts.

Time difference to GMT

+8

Plugs

3 Pin Flat

Religion

3 main religions - Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism

Language

Chinese, English

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.

Hong Kong - Victoria Peak tram, £2

Yangshou - 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.

Xian - Shaanxi National Museum, free entry. City wall by bike - £10.

Beijing - Summer Palace, £5 (plus £12 for private transfer); Opera, £15

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 with good grip for the Great Wall and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of lockable baggage and a shoulder bag. Remember, you are expected to carry your own baggage - so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

A small torch.

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

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 £25 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

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.

Hong Kong

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

£7.5

Dinner price

£14

Beer price

£2.4

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Hong Kong Dollar.

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

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Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, 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 Beijing, Xian and Hong Kong 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 rooms 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.

Our hotels in Beijing and Xian enjoy relatively central locations in these large cities, within walking distance of the Temple of Heaven and the Muslim Quarter respectively.

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.

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.

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.

Hong Kong

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.
