

EXPLORE!

Kunming to Hong Kong and the Buffalo God Festival
17 days

China, Hong Kong - Trip code KHK



Kunming to Hong Kong and the Buffalo God Festival

Journey across southern China from Kunming to Hong Kong and explore ethnic minority villages, vast 1000 year old rice terraces, and modern cities where ancient China still has more than just a foothold. Experience the Buffalo God Festival, in the company of the Miao tribal people, and explore stone forests, high waterfalls, small villages and a relaxing cruise along the Li River past beautiful and unusual landscape.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Buffalo God Festival** - Join the Miao people for singing, dancing and feasting as they celebrate their enduring relationship with the Buffalo
- ★ **Shillin** - Wander through the strange 'Stone Forest' of Shillin
- ★ **Zhenyuan** - Explore this old Miao village and take a walk on a section of the Great Wall that overlooks the area
- ★ **Jiabang rice terraces** - Discover the picturesque and ancient rice terraces dotted with hamlets and farmers' houses
- ★ **Huangguoshu Falls** - Walk behind the 'water curtain' of one of Asia's largest waterfalls
- ★ **Hong Kong** - Experience this busy and exciting metropolis

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:

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 trip in Kunming

Our journey begins today in Kunming. After checking in to our hotel time is left free to relax after the flight.



Accommodation: Green Lake View Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Share lunch with monks at the Bamboo Temple, see the 'Stone Forest' and drive to Qujing

After breakfast we take a stroll through Green Lake Park. The park is in the centre of the city and is formed around four small lakes, linked by traditional Chinese bridges. Each morning locals make their way here for their daily Tai Chi session and we'll stop to watch, perhaps joining in if we feel like it! Leaving the park and the city behind, we drive a short distance to the Qiongzhu Temple, also called the Bamboo Temple. It is known for its 500 unique life size sculptures of Buddhist arhats, people that have advanced along the path of enlightenment but not yet reached nirvana. We will share a vegetarian lunch with some of the monks and take the chance to learn a little of their simple way of life.

In the afternoon we drive to the 'Stone Forest' at Shilin. Here the spectacular karst rock formations have formed a forest-like structure over a vast area, creating an atmospheric and surreal environment threaded with streams and greenery. We spend a couple of hours weaving our way through the forest on foot before driving to Qujing for our overnight stop.



Accommodation: Yindu International Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Visit Huangguoshu Falls and drive to Anshun

Today we will visit the spectacular Huangguoshu, or Yellow Fruit Tree, waterfalls. The largest in China, the drop measures an impressive 84 metres, with a width of over 80 metres. A climb up a series of steep, water soaked steps leads to a suspension bridge that crosses into a verdant, forested landscape, where, depending on conditions, there is usually an opportunity to walk behind the falls and enter the 100 metre long 'Water Curtain Cave' that lies behind it. Later we drive to the nearby small city of Anshun.



Accommodation: Puhua Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Explore Yunfeng Tunbao villages, the Jiaxiu Tower and the Flower market of Guiyang

600 years ago, Han Chinese soldiers settled down near Anshun after returning from war. They created a small collection of villages with houses and streets made of local stone. Some of the villages are still inhabited today, with the people living very traditional lives and considering themselves a specific ethnic group. They maintain some of the old customs from Ming Dynasty times including the languages and costumes. We explore a couple of the villages and walk up to a panoramic vantage point at the Yunjiu Temple, reached by 600 stone steps. This offers wonderful views of the area, the villages, and the dramatic karst stone landscape.

Leaving the villages behind, we head to the large and bustling city of Guiyang. An exciting city, the old and new China coexist here in an exhilarating mix of modern skyscrapers and old temples. Walking for a while along the Nanming River, through public parks and squares, we reach the Jiaxiu Tower which is the centre piece of the Fuyu Bridge. Also called the First Scholar's Tower, it was originally built in 1598 to encourage intellectuals to study hard for the honour of gaining official rank in the Ming Dynasty court; it is a great example of the architecture of the time. Later we'll visit the city's bustling flower and bird market where we can wander around and see the eclectic mix of wares for sale.



Accommodation: Guiyang Karst Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive to Zhenyuan, take a boat trip on the Wuyang River and walk on an old part of the Great Wall

An ancient town of the Miao people, Zhenyuan is a pretty mixture of caves, palaces, pavilions, temples and rivers, set in a marvellous natural landscape. We'll take to the Wuyang river for a gentle cruise of around an hour and a half, passing scenery of impressive karst mountains with deep river gorges and lush green forests. We then explore the town by foot and climb around 800 steps to a vantage point for beautiful views of the whole area, walking for a time on an old part of the Great Wall.



Accommodation: Fucheng Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Join the Miao at Fei Yun Dong Taoist temple for the Buffalo God Festival

The Miao people are farmers and have relied on the buffalo for thousands of years to help them work the fields. Once a year they celebrate the animal and the help it gives them by preparing special dishes of rice and porridge for the buffalo to eat. Over time this has developed in to a festival that takes place at the 15th century Fei Yun Dong Taoist temple, around an hour and a half drive from Zhenyuan. We'll be able to enjoy the special 'buffalo porridge' with the locals, who will be dressed in their best traditional costumes, and we will hear folk songs, accompanied Lusheng music (a traditional Chinese instrument made from bamboo) and dancing. Other activities include displays of horse riding skills and trying to climb to the top of a ladder made out of the blades of knives.

We'll spend the whole day at the festival before returning to Zhenyuan for the night.



Accommodation: Fucheng Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available




Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 7 - Walk along the Wuyang River, drive to Leishan and visit nearby villages on the way

A stroll along the banks of the Wuyang River this morning will bring us to the local market and the courtyards, narrow streets, ancient houses and temples of the old town. We'll spend a couple of hours exploring and learning about the 2000 year old history of Zhenyuan before leaving for Leishan. On the way we stop at Shuidain and Peika villages to gain an insight in to the rural communities of the area. In Peika we'll meet Mr Mo, a famous local lusheng maker whose skills have been passed down through his family for generations, and we'll learn how he makes the instruments using traditional methods.



Accommodation: Leishan Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Visit Nande Village and enjoy lunch in a farmhouse


A short drive from Leishan, Nande is a charming Miao village with large wooden houses clinging to the hillside, and old cobbled stone streets. Many of the inhabitants still wear traditional dress. We take a walk through the village and stop to enjoy some Lusheng dances before enjoying lunch of meat, eggs, vegetables and homemade rice wine in a local farmhouse.

In the afternoon we'll drive to Rongjiang, a journey of around four hours. On the way we stop at Datang, a Miao village famous for the traditional dress of its inhabitants. The women wear very colourful costumes with silver jewellery and elaborate headwear. Their skirts are much shorter than those of other Miao tribe, a tradition stretching back some 600 years and that may have begun as an act of defiance.



Accommodation: Dongxiangmi Grand Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive to Jiabang Rice Terraces via Chejiang Dong village


Just outside Rongjiang, Chejiang Dong village is famous for the massive Banyan trees that line the banks of the river, and its Drum Tower. Highly impressive pagoda-like structures, the Dong drum towers are intricately carved and designed to represent the four seasons and 12 months of the year. Originally used to call the villagers to a gathering to hear the punishment that the council of elders would dispense to wrong-doers, they now serve as social centres for the old men of the village who meet to play cards, drink tea, smoke and chat. The village also contains a Sama Temple, dedicated to the Dong's former heroine who died during a fight with another tribe, and who is now commemorated during new year celebrations.

Leaving the village we drive through the mountains for around four hours to the Jiabang rice terraces. Along the way we will meet the Zhuang people at Yinping Village. Known as 'people of the soil' for their agricultural knowhow, the Zhuang worship nature, believing that everything has its own spirit. They also revere their ancestors, whose names are written on strips of red paper on altars in their houses.



Accommodation: Tianzhiyuan Hotel (or similar)

 Simple Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Explore the spectacular Jiabang terraces and Miao villages

The Jiabang terraces are rumoured to be over a thousand years old and sprawl across the hillsides of lush green valleys which are dotted with Miao houses and small hamlets. A walk through the terraces will enable us to see how they are farmed by hand and with oxen, still using old methods that have been passed down from generation to generation over hundreds of years. In the afternoon we visit a Miao village on the hillside, a chance to learn how the people of the region live and make their living from the terraces.



Accommodation: Tianzhiyuan Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Experience the unique culture of the Basha Miao. Drive to Zhaoxing Dong village

A three hour drive this morning will bring us to the village of Basha. The Miao people of Basha are unique and follow ancient traditions, possibly dating as far back as the Qing Dynasty some 2,200 years ago. They worship trees, especially maples, as gods, and the bun hairstyles they wear represent the leaves, while their purple clothes represent the bark. A tree is planted when a baby is born in the village and is often cut down to make a coffin when the person eventually dies. Their culture reveres the warrior and the hunter and they are the only people in China who are legally allowed to own guns, which they make themselves. We'll wander around the village to learn about the Basha Miao and there will be a chance to attend a traditional dance performed by the villagers.

Leaving Basha village we head to the Dong village of Zhaoxing, around an hour away.



Accommodation: Vip Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Walk through Zhaoxing village and drive to Guilin

Zhaoxing village is one of the largest Dong settlements in China and consists of wonderfully preserved two and three story wooden houses. Pretty bridges cross the rivers and streams that dissect the village, and there are several drum towers and temples. The surrounding countryside of rice terraces and fields provides a lovely backdrop and hints at the way the Dong make their living. After a morning walk through the village we depart for Guilin, a drive of around three hours.



Accommodation: Flower Boutique Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Sail down the Li River to Yangshuo, walk in the limestone mountain scenery to Moon Hill

After breakfast we head to the Bamboo Reed Dock where we board our boat on the Li River and cruise to Yangshuo. Lunch is taken on board as we sail along the most scenic stretch of the river. We'll pass paddy fields, villages and stunning limestone scenery. In the afternoon we drive to nearby Moon Hill, where we will take a walk for around an hour and a half through the limestone mountain scenery. Those that wish to ascend around 800 steps to the natural archway will be rewarded with splendid views of the area.



Accommodation: Yangshuo Guifu Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Drive to Baisha and explore the scenery of the Yulong River

This morning we take a 40 minute drive to Baisha village where we'll begin a leisurely 12 km walk through rustic countryside and small hamlets, and along the Yulong river. The walk will take around four hours and finishes at Gongnong Bridge. Those that don't want to cover the distance on foot can continue by bus to the end point and take gentle strolls along the river nearby. After the walk, another short drive will take us to Langzi, a 350 year old stone village which was reputedly founded by the peasant rebel warrior Qing Zhengyao. While fighting under the rebel leader Li Zicheng, Qing's army was defeated and he fled. Coming across the fertile land and clear waters of the area he decided to stay, and his settlement eventually became the village. Most of the buildings are around 200 years old and from Han Dynasty times.



Accommodation: Yangshuo Guifu Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Travel by bullet train and ferry to Hong Kong

We return to Guilin to board the bullet train to Shenzhen, a journey of three hours on the super modern and efficient high speed rail service. On leaving the train our drive to the port is around an hour and a half, where we take a short ferry ride to Hong Kong. Situated in a dramatic setting, this exciting island city is a lively, sophisticated hub with an energetic and fast paced atmosphere.



Accommodation: Panda Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 16 - Discover the sights of Hong Kong; optional ride on the Victoria Peak Tram

We start with an orientation tour of Hong Kong, including Kowloon's bustling waterfront, a ride on the famous Star Ferry and some of the city's more memorable buildings. We will also take in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and Des Voeux Road, wander through the shops and stalls of Li Yuen Street markets, visit the Man Mo Temple, one of the oldest in Hong Kong and finish up in Hong Kong Park.

The afternoon is left free and 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 17 - Trip ends in Hong Kong

Our trip ends this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

Southern China is home to dramatic and unusual landscapes, old wooden hamlets, energetic cities, and ethnic minority people who maintain centuries old traditions. A journey across the region is varied and full of contrasts. We'll meet people of the Dong, Zhuang and Miao tribes, joining the latter for the Buffalo God festival at a small Taoist temple. We'll cruise along the Li River, past stunning limestone scenery, and explore ancient rice terraces.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 16



Transport

Bus
Boat
On Foot



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

14 nights standard hotel
2 nights simple hotel

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.

Basha Miao village - Traditional show £12

Yangshuo - Light show on the river £32

Yangshuo - Cooking lesson £30

Yangshuo - Tai chi £30

Clothing

It is best to pack lots of layers for this tour, as although day time can be warm, temperatures can fall to below zero at night. It can also be wet at this time of year so a light waterproof is useful.

Footwear

Comfortable footwear that is good for walking is recommended.

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.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

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

Country Information

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

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, On Foot

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.

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.

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.

