

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



China on a Shoestring (QCH 2017)



TRIP DURATION
21
DAYS



Tour Style: Simply
Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation Grade: Simple

Trip Code: QCH

Trip Highlights - China on a Shoestring

- ✓ Beijing - Walk along the Great Wall at Mutianyu. Explore Tiananmen Square and the sprawling Forbidden City
- ✓ Xian - Meet the famous Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huangdi
- ✓ Yangtse River cruise - Relax for 3 days whilst exploring the stunning Yangtse River landscapes
- ✓ Villages and Rice Terraces - Take in rural China as we hike amongst the villages of the Dong, Yao and Zhuan people
- ✓ Yangshuo - Enjoy beautiful karst landscapes as we drift down the Li River
- ✓ Shanghai - Explore one of Asia's most vibrant and dynamic cities

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 8 nights Simple Hotel
3 nights Simple Overnight Train
4 nights Standard Boat
3 nights Simple Guesthouse
2 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 6 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Beijing
End Point: Trip ends: Shanghai
Transport: Bus, Train, Boat
Countries: China

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China On A Shoestring

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

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.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Simple

No-frills accommodation which includes berths on sleeper trains, rooms in village houses, boat cabins, campsites, huts and simple family-run lodges, guesthouses and hotels. Sleeping arrangements are simple and amenities are adequate, sometimes with en suite facilities and occasionally communal.

Tour Style: Simply

If your idea of adventure travel is to experience everyday local life in a country then try one of our Simply Explore tours. These grassroots adventures are flexible, affordable and fun

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Beijing

Our tour begins today in Beijing.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available



 **Included Meals:** 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. A stop at the Temple of Heaven is also considered a must as it is considered to be a high point of Ming architecture. You might 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.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 3 Walk the Great Wall; afternoon free in Beijing

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. Returning to Beijing later this afternoon, the rest of the day is free to enjoy a little more of the Chinese capital at your leisure.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 4 Overnight train to Xian

After a leisurely morning 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, an ideal way to meet the locals and experience something of the unique eccentricities of Chinese life.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** None

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.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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 2000 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.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Standard Boat**

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Standard Boat**

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Standard Boat**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10 A chance to visit Fengdu, the Yangtse famous ghost town

For our final day on the boat there is the option to visit the famous ghost town at Fengdu. The city is said to symbolise hell in Chinese mythology. As part of the dam project the city has become partially submerged, with only the 'door to hell' accessible. In the evening you are invited to join the captain for a farewell dinner and party (optional).

Overnight: **Standard Boat**

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Visit the Panda Research Centre; overnight train to Guiyang

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 overnight train on to Guiyang. We will be travelling in hard sleeper compartments.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** None

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

Arriving in Guiyang early this morning we cross the city to take the bullet train to Sanjiang. We will then take a private mini vans and transfer on 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 and once we have checked in 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 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.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Dinner

DAY 14 Meet Yao families in Longji and Dazhai Village

After breakfast this morning we'll take a walk into the centre of the village to visit the Drum Tower Square, where we will get a chance to enjoy a performance of some traditional Dong singing and dancing. Following lunch 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.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** 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.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** 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).

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

Our tours ends in Shanghai this morning.



Included Meals: None

Accommodation and Meals

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.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 6 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

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.

China

Lunch £: 5.00

Dinner £: 6.00 - 10.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

China

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.50

Other Sightseeing & 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.

Optional Excursions

Beijing

Cable car to the Great Wall - 80 Yuan one way, 100 Yuan return

Summer Palace - 40 Yuan entrance fee plus 120 Yuan to arrange a private bus if required).

Birds Nest Stadium - 50 Yuan to visit the outside of the stadium and for photo opportunities.

Temple of Heaven - 35 Yuan.

Forbidden City - 60 Yuan.

Opera- 150 Yuan.

Acrobats- 240 Yuan.



Kung Fu performance - 240 Yuan.

Xian

Wild Goose Pagoda - 50 Yuan.

Cultural Performance and Dumpling Banquet - 300 Yuan.

City wall by bike - 100 Yuan.

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 - 260 Yuan

Lesser Three Gorges - 260 Yuan

Dam Tour - 300 Yuan

Yangshou

bike hire - 10 Yuan.

raft from Hongqi to Shengdi - 250 Yuan.

Li river boat- 200 Yuan

Tai Chi- 80 Yuan

Cookery lesson- 150 Yuan.

Calligraphy- 80 Yuan.

Sound and light show- 260 Yuan.

Shanghai

Acrobatic performance - 280 Yuan.

Yu Yuan gardens - 40 Yuan.

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Tipping - 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.

Foreign Exchange

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.

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.

Joining your Trip

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 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 on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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Travel Aware

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 follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

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.

Visa Information

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

In order to apply for your Chinese visa you will need to submit supporting documents from our local supplier confirming your itinerary and travel arrangements, which we will obtain on your behalf. So that we can provide this for you, and to ensure all local arrangements are in place, we require a copy of your passport no later than 8 weeks before you are due to start your trip. Once we have your passport copy we shall process and pass on the documents you require 6-8 weeks before your trip, please be mindful of this when applying for your visa. If you require the supporting documents earlier than this, please contact Explore so we can arrange this.

Passengers wishing to extend their stay in China should be aware that current visa regulations only allow foreigners to stay in the country for up to 30 days. Please consider this when planning your trip.

You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with

details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

China

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

China

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 rainstorms which are heavy but short lived. Winter is colder and drier, temperatures in Beijing can be as low as -12c.

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.

Equipment

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

Footwear

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

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.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

Transport

Whilst travelling on overnight trains we will share 'hard sleeper' compartments. 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. 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. We may be sharing compartments with non-Explore customers or either sex however we will endeavour to keep the group together where possible.

General Information

Country details

China

Population: 1,339,724,852

Size of Country: 9,640,821 sq km

Major Language: Mandarin

Religion: Mainly Buddhist

Time Difference to GMT: +8

Electric Supply & Plugs

China

3 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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