EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

China Explorer (QCE 2014)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOUR DURATION **9** DAYS

Tour Style: Simply
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Simple
Tour Code: QCE

Tour Highlights - China Explorer

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

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	6 nights Simple Hotel 2 nights Basic Overnight Train
Included Meals:	0 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Beijing
End Point:	Tour ends: Shanghai
Transport:	Bus, Train
Countries:	China

China Explorer

Travelling by local transport and staying in simple hotels, we experience everyday life in modern China. We also discover imperial China's most famous cultural highlights including the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Great Wall at Mutianyu and the Terracotta Army in Xian. We finish the trip exploring the vibrant streets of Shanghai, China's most cosmopolitan city.

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.

Tour Comfort: Simple

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

Tour Style: Simply

Light on your pocket but not on adventure, these fun and flexible tours let you choose how much or little you spend on activities, sightseeing and food. Staying in simple accommodation, these tours are great value for money, using mainly public transport to get around; you are assured of a fun and authentic travel experience.

Tour Pace: Busy

Your tour 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

Arrive in Beijing and check-in to the hotel.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 Exploring Beijing

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

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 3 Walk the Great Wall before catching the overnight train to Xian

It's a busy day today as we drive out of the city to Mutianyu to visit the Great Wall. Its construction commenced in the 3rd century BC by Shi Huangdi, thousands of conscripted workers laboured on it and many lie buried in its brick and stone ramparts. Returning to Beijing we are scheduled to leave the city this evening on the sleeper train. The main railway station is a hive of activity.

Overnight: **Basic Overnight Train**

DAY 4 Arrive in Xian; free to explore the city

We arrive in Xian in time for breakfast. We make the short journey from the train station on foot. Our stay in Xian reveals the extraordinary continuity of Chinese civilisation. Xian (Changan) served 11 dynasties and was the very starting point of the Silk Road between Central Asia and Europe. Its ancient monuments include the Great Mosque, a wonderful 15th century working mosque within the old muslim Hui District. There is also the option to visit the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, a 7-storey high structure with a superb overview of the city.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 5 In Xian visit the Terracotta Army

Today we take the public bus and visit one of the highlights of any visit to China - the magnificent Terracotta Warriors and Horses who guard the Qin Shi Huangdi Tomb. There are literally thousands of lifesize warriors, dating from 200BC. This dramatic find of the 1970s is considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the century. We should have time to stop at the on-site factory to see how the warriors are made today. In the early evening we take the overnight sleeper train to Suzhou.

Overnight: **Basic Overnight Train**

DAY 6 Suzhou, the garden city

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

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 7 Fast train to Shanghai

We continue our exploration of the town. There is time to make an optional visit to the 'Lingering Garden' which features a man-made mountain and lake, garden courts and elegant buildings, a real contrast to the garden from yesterday. Early afternoon we catch the train to Shanghai. Shanghai is one of Asia’s most vibrant and dynamic cities. It began as a fishing village in the 11th century, but after the end of the first opium war and of the five newly opened treaty ports Shanghai soon became the most cosmopolitan city, with Asian, Russian, European and Jewish influences. Here were cabarets and ballrooms, fine shops and satirical newspapers, and with such style and influence Shanghai was dubbed the ‘Paris of the Orient’. Today its elegant past is still noticeable as you walk down ‘the Bund’.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 In Shanghai

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

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 9 Tour ends in Shanghai

Our tour ends this morning.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

During the tour we spend two nights on overnight sleeper trains. These are a great way of travelling between cities without losing precious time in the day for exploring with the added bonus that we will get to meet locals as we travel.

We use cabins with six bunk beds, three on either side. There are curtains at the end of the cabin for privacy. There is space in each cabin for bags, under the bottom bunk. We suggest a soft duffle style bag or a rucksack as they offer more flexibility than a suitcase.There are toilets in each train carriage, usually Asian style squat toilets although some trains do now have a western style toilet as well. We are likely to be sharing our cabins with non Explore travellers giving us plenty of time to learn about local life during the journey.

The majoritiy 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.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 0 breakfasts, 0 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

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

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 Forbidden City - £6
Hutong Tour £13
Temple of Heaven £3.50
Cable car at Mutianyu £6
Xian Shaanxi National Museum, entrance free of charge, City wall by bike £10, Cultural performance & dumpling banquet £30
Suzhou Administrators Garden £6, canal boat trip £8
Shanghai Acrobatic performance £28. Cruise on Huangpi River, £10 Museum £5

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. £15 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 Tour

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

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

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 joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

China: A visa is required by all nationalities. A single entry visa should be arranged in advance of travel, this can be obtained through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK; Visaswift, at http://www.visaswift.com/explore.aspx.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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 Tour

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

Clothing

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

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.

Luggage: On Tour

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

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

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and 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. 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 £: 10.00

Drink

China

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.50

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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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, elephant, 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.

Our commitment to the environment

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 and traditional, 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: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

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 http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

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.

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 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour 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: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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