



Classic China with Giant Pandas and Yangtze Cruise

13 Night Private Tour

Experience a different side of China on an unforgettable journey from vibrant Shanghai to historic Beijing. Discover all the highlights of our Classic China tour, alongside two unique experiences.

Cruise along the mighty Yangtze River through the dramatic Three Gorges, taking in spectacular scenery along the way, before getting closer to China's iconic giant pandas at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding.

From the Terracotta Warriors of Xi'an to the Great Wall and Forbidden City in Beijing, this journey combines ancient history and culture with wildlife encounters, scenic cruising and high-speed rail travel.

Highlights:

- Explore Shanghai's historic Yu Yuan Gardens, Old Town and famous Bund
- Cruise along the mighty Yangtze River through the spectacular Three Gorges
- See giant pandas up close at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding
- Marvel at the life-sized Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an
- Discover the ancient city walls of Xi'an and historic landmarks of Beijing
- Walk along the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall of China

What's included:

- Getting there: Flight to Shanghai, return from Beijing
- Transport: Return private airport transfers, private ground transport and high-speed trains
- Accommodation: 13 nights total duration (including 1 night on outbound flight) – 12 nights accommodation: 2 nights Shanghai, 4 nights Yangtze Cruise, 1 night Chengdu, 2 nights Xi'an, 3 nights Beijing
- Meals included: 12 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners.

Not included:

- Any meals (other than the one mentioned in the itinerary), drinks, tips, expenses of personal nature.
- Early/late check-in/out service at hotels (surcharge if requested)
- Optional excursion/tours
- Travel insurance and visa
- Anything not mentioned in the "What's Included" column

Full Itinerary

Day 1: Overnight Flight

Board your overnight flight from the UK to Shanghai Airport.

Day 2: Welcome to Shanghai

On arrival in Shanghai, you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel.

Check in and settle into your surroundings before enjoying the rest of the day at leisure. Take some time to relax after your journey, unwind at the hotel or begin exploring Shanghai at your own pace.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Sunrise On The Bund Hotels & Resorts Shanghai or similar



Day 3: Yu Yuan Gardens, Old Town and The Bund

Today, begin your Shanghai sightseeing with a visit to the beautiful Yu Yuan Gardens, a masterpiece of traditional Chinese garden design dating back to the Ming Dynasty. Wander through tranquil courtyards, ornate pavilions, peaceful ponds and distinctive rockeries, discovering an oasis of calm in the heart of bustling Shanghai.

Continue into Shanghai's Old Town, where historic streets and traditional architecture offer a glimpse into the city's past. Wander through the atmospheric lanes, hidden courtyards and historic buildings as you discover this fascinating part of the city.

Later, stroll along the Bund, one of Shanghai's most famous landmarks. Admire the striking collection of historic European-style buildings along the waterfront, while across the Huangpu River, the futuristic skyline of Pudong creates a dramatic contrast between old and new Shanghai.



Optional Tour: Huxinting Tea House and French Concession (at an additional cost)

Take a break at Huxinting Tea House, one of Shanghai's most famous traditional tea houses. Located on a small island in the lake opposite Yu Yuan Gardens, this historic teahouse is a great place to experience a traditional Chinese tea ceremony while taking in the peaceful surroundings.

Explore Shanghai's historic French Concession, known for its tree-lined streets, historic villas and distinctive European-style architecture. Wander through the atmospheric neighbourhood, discovering independent cafés, boutiques and galleries while learning more about this fascinating part of the city's history.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Sunrise On The Bund Hotels & Resorts Shanghai or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

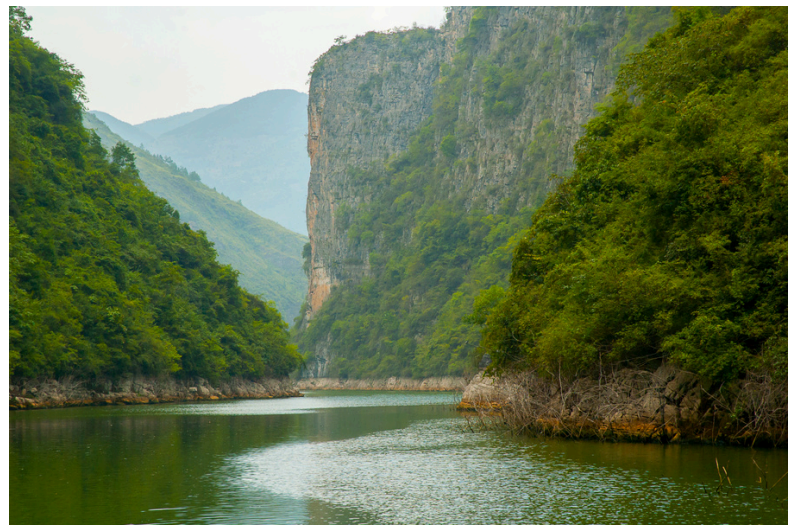
Day 4: High-Speed Train to Yichang and Yangtze River Cruise

Transfer to the rail station for your high-speed train to Yichang. On arrival, you'll be met and transferred to the pier for your Yangtze River cruise.

Board the Victoria cruise at the Yichang Three Gorges Center Cruise Terminal and settle into your cabin. Enjoy the facilities on board and take in the changing scenery as you begin your journey along the Yangtze River.

ACCOMMODATION: Victoria Cruise Line

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 5: Three Gorges Dam and Scenic Cruising

Start the morning with early bird coffee and tea before breakfast on board.

Spend the day cruising through the spectacular Three Gorges region, enjoying the dramatic mountain scenery from the comfort of the ship.

Visit the Three Gorges Dam, which spans the Yangtze River at Sandouping in Xiling Gorge. It is the world's largest power station. Later today, sail through Xiling Gorge, the longest (41 miles) and deepest of the Three Gorges.

Back on board, enjoy some time to relax and take part in the ship's activities. In the evening, attend the Captain's Welcome Reception before dinner, followed by a colourful show featuring traditional minority and dynasty costumes.

ACCOMMODATION: Victoria Cruise Line

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 6: Shennong Stream and the Three Gorges

Enjoy breakfast on board before continuing your journey through the spectacular scenery of the Three Gorges.

Take an included shore excursion along the Shennong Stream, one of the most scenic waterways in the Three Gorges region, surrounded by dramatic mountains and lush landscapes.

Back on board, continue cruising through the Wu Gorge and Qutang Gorge. These dramatic landscapes are characterised by steep mountains, winding waterways and towering cliffs, offering some of the most memorable scenery along the Yangtze River.

Optional Tour: White Emperor City (at an additional cost)

Visit historic White Emperor City, perched above the Qutang Gorge, and discover its connection to the history and legends of the Three Gorges.

Enjoy dinner and an evening cabaret show as the cruise continues downstream.

ACCOMMODATION: Victoria Cruise Line

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 7: Fengdu and Scenic Yangtze Cruise

Continue your journey downstream through the scenic Yangtze River landscape, enjoying breakfast and lunch on board.

Visit Snow Jade Cave, a spectacular natural cave known for its impressive limestone formations, before continuing to Xiao Guan Shan Folk Culture Park to discover more about traditional life and culture along the Yangtze.

There will also be time to relax on board and enjoy the ship's facilities and activities.

In the evening, enjoy the Captain's Farewell Dinner before settling your onboard account ahead of tomorrow's disembarkation.

ACCOMMODATION: Victoria Cruise Line

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 8: Chongqing and High-Speed Train to Chengdu

After breakfast, check out and disembark the cruise in Chongqing.

Transfer to the rail station for your high-speed train to Chengdu. On arrival, you'll be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel.

Settle in and enjoy some free time to relax or explore Chengdu at your own pace.

Optional Tour: Ciqikou (at an additional cost)

Travel to Ciqikou, a historic town in Chongqing known for its traditional architecture and lively atmosphere. Wander through the narrow stone streets, browse local shops and sample traditional snacks as you discover this fascinating area and its connection to Chongqing's past.

Optional Tour: Sichuan Opera – Face Changing Show (at an additional cost)

Experience the spectacular art of Sichuan Opera, famous for its mesmerising 'Face Changing' performance. Watch as performers change colourful masks in the blink of an eye, accompanied by traditional music, dramatic movements and theatrical performances.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Dorsett Grand Chengdu or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 9: Chengdu Panda Base and High-Speed Train to Xi'an

Visit the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, one of the best places to see China's much-loved giant pandas. Wander through the peaceful surroundings and watch these fascinating animals as they eat, play and explore their enclosures, while learning more about ongoing conservation and breeding programmes.

Later, transfer to the rail station for your high-speed train to Xi'an.

On arrival, you'll be met and transferred to your hotel.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Eastern House Xi'an or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 10: Terracotta Warriors and Xi'an City Wall

No visit to Xi'an would be complete without seeing the world-famous Terracotta Warriors. Discovered by local farmers in 1974, this extraordinary archaeological site contains thousands of life-sized soldiers, horses and chariots created to protect China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, in the afterlife.

Explore the archaeological pits and marvel at the remarkable craftsmanship of the individual figures, each with distinctive features and expressions.

Later, visit the Xi'an Ming City Wall, one of the largest and best-preserved ancient city walls in China. Dating from the Ming Dynasty, the impressive ramparts provide a fascinating insight into Xi'an's history while offering views across both the historic and modern parts of the city.

Optional Tour: Xian - Bike Rental on the City Wall (at an additional cost)

Take to two wheels for a unique way to explore Xi'an's ancient city wall. Cycle along the well-preserved stone ramparts, passing historic watchtowers while enjoying views across both the old and modern parts of the city.

Optional Tour: Xi'an - Evening Foodie Tour in Xian - Shared tour (at an additional cost)

Discover the flavours of Xi'an on an evening food tour. Travel around the city by tuk-tuk, stopping to sample some of the local specialities before finishing with a visit to a local brewery near your accommodation.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Eastern House Xi'an or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 11: High-Speed Train to Beijing

Transfer to the rail station for your high-speed train to Beijing.

On arrival, you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. Settle in and enjoy some free time to relax or begin exploring the Chinese capital at your own pace.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 12: Mutianyu Great Wall

Today, visit the magnificent Mutianyu section of the Great Wall of China.

Enjoy a walk along the ancient stone paths as the Wall winds its way through the surrounding mountains. Take in the spectacular scenery and explore the historic watchtowers along the route, learning more about the Wall's important role in China's history.

Round-trip cable car access makes it easy to reach the Wall and enjoy the panoramic views across the surrounding countryside before returning to the valley.

Optional Tour: Summer Palace (at an additional cost)

Visit the beautiful Summer Palace, once a simple imperial garden before being transformed into an important royal retreat during the 18th century. Explore its tranquil gardens, traditional temples and pavilions, set alongside the scenic lake.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 13: Temple of Heaven and Forbidden City

Begin the day with a visit to the Temple of Heaven, one of Beijing's most important historic landmarks. This impressive complex was once used by China's emperors for ceremonies and prayers for good harvests, reflecting the ancient belief in the connection between heaven and earth.

Explore the traditional architecture and peaceful surrounding gardens before continuing to the Forbidden City.

Discover the former imperial palace, which served as the home of Chinese emperors throughout the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Wander through its grand courtyards, impressive halls and ornate buildings while learning more about the lives of the emperors and the history of imperial China.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing or similar

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 14: Return to the UK

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home to the UK.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

FAQs

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO TRAVEL?

Spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) offer some of the most comfortable conditions for exploring China, with milder temperatures across Shanghai, Chengdu, Xi'an and Beijing. These seasons are also ideal for enjoying the Yangtze River cruise. Summer can be hot and humid, while winter brings cooler temperatures and possible mist along the river.

WHO IS THIS TOUR SUITABLE FOR?

This tour is accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and normal mobility. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.

VISAS AND VACCINATIONS

For departures from 2027 onwards, UK passport holders should currently expect to require a visa to enter mainland China for this tour. China's current visa-free arrangement for eligible UK passport holders is only confirmed until 31 December 2026. Visa requirements and entry regulations can change, so we recommend checking the FCDO website for the correct requirements.

There are no mandatory vaccinations required to enter China. However, we recommend consulting your GP or a travel health clinic before you travel to ensure your routine vaccinations are up to date and to receive any personalised health advice.

TIPPING GUIDANCE

While tipping isn't mandatory, it's a thoughtful way to show appreciation, especially considering the modest wages many workers receive. A small gesture can go a long way, so setting aside a little extra for porters, guides, and drivers is always appreciated. Leaving some spare change at restaurants is also a kind way to recognise good service.

WHAT CURRENCY IS USED IN CHINA?

The official currency in China is the Renminbi (RMB), with the basic unit being the yuan (CNY). Cards are accepted at many hotels, restaurants and larger establishments, although we recommend carrying some local currency for smaller purchases and places where card payments may not be available.

TRAIN TRAVEL

High-speed trains have designated luggage areas at the ends of the carriages, as well as overhead racks for smaller bags. Luggage space is not individually reserved, so it can be limited on busy services. Train staff can usually assist if you need help storing your luggage.

Your local guide will accompany you to the railway station and assist with your departure, but you will travel independently between cities. On arrival, your guide in the next destination will be waiting at the station with a welcome sign.