



Classic China

10 Night Private Tour

Discover the diverse highlights of China on this fascinating journey through Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai.

Step into the country's rich imperial past as you explore the Temple of Heaven and magnificent Forbidden City, before experiencing the spectacular Great Wall of China. In Xi'an, encounter one of China's most remarkable archaeological discoveries at the Terracotta Warriors, then continue to vibrant Shanghai, where historic neighbourhoods and traditional gardens sit alongside a striking modern skyline.

From ancient landmarks and charming waterways to bustling streets and fascinating cultural traditions, this itinerary offers a wonderful introduction to the history, culture and contrasts of China.

Highlights:

- Visit the Temple of Heaven in Beijing.
- Explore the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall of China.
- Discover the magnificent Forbidden City.
- Marvel at the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an.
- Enjoy panoramic views from Shanghai Tower.
- Explore the historic Bund and Nanjing Road.
- Discover the charming Zhujiajiao water town and Yu Yuan Gardens.

What's included:

- Getting there: Flight to Beijing, return from Shanghai.
- Transport: Return private airport transfers, private ground transport, high-speed train and internal flight.
- Accommodation: 10 nights total duration (including 1 night on outbound flight) – 9 nights in hotels: 3 nights Beijing, 2 nights Xi'an, 4 nights Shanghai.
- Meals included: 9 breakfasts

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 Beijing Airport.

Day 2: Welcome to Beijing

On arrival in Beijing, you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Settle in and enjoy some free time to relax after your journey.

Optional Tour: Peking Duck Dinner (at an additional cost)

Enjoy an evening of traditional Peking Duck at Huajiaiyuan, a chance to sample one of Beijing's most famous dishes in a relaxed setting.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Tongpai Hotel or similar.



Day 3: Temple of Heaven

Start the day with a visit to the Temple of Heaven. Before entering the temple, take some time to explore the surrounding grounds, where you may see locals enjoying their morning routines. From Tai Chi, Kung Fu and sabre practice to meditation, tango and gymnastics, exercise is an important part of daily life in China.

You may also have the chance to see people practising water calligraphy, using giant brushes dipped in water to create beautiful characters on the park's flagstones before they quickly disappear.

Continue to the Temple of Heaven itself, an impressive site known for its simplicity and symbolism. Blending elements of Buddhism and Taoism, the temple was once used by Chinese emperors to communicate with the heavens.

Optional Tour: Beijing Sidecar Tour (at an additional cost)

See Beijing from a different perspective on a vintage motorbike sidecar tour (one guest per sidecar). Accompanied by an experienced local driver, travel through the city's historic hutongs and old streets, taking in a mix of traditional neighbourhoods, local life and modern Beijing.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Tongpai Hotel or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 4: Mutianyu and the Great Wall of China

Today, visit one of China's most iconic landmarks, the Great Wall. Although it isn't visible from space as the popular myth suggests, its scale and history are no less impressive.

While the Wall's origins date back around 2,000 years to the Qin Dynasty, much of the surviving structure was built and renovated during the Ming Dynasty. Stretching for thousands of kilometres and dotted with ancient watchtowers, it remains one of the world's most remarkable sights.

Begin with an early morning visit to the Mutianyu section of the Wall, when the cooler conditions and softer light make it an ideal time for photographs.

Enjoy convenient round-trip cable car access to the top of the Wall, allowing you to take in the spectacular surroundings 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* Tongpai Hotel or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 5: The Forbidden City and High-Speed Train to Xi'an

Experience the majesty of The Forbidden City, a UNESCO World Heritage site that has stood as the Imperial heart of China since its completion in 1420. With its legendary 9,999 rooms and vibrant restoration for the 2008 Olympics, this architectural masterpiece offers a glimpse into the grandeur of the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

After exploring the Forbidden City, travel by high-speed train to Xi'an.

On arrival, your guide will meet you and provide a warm welcome before transferring you to your hotel.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* Grand Mercure Xi'an on Renmin Square or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 6: Terracotta Warriors and Xi'an City Wall

No classic China itinerary would be complete without a visit to the famous Terracotta Warriors. Discovered by local farmers in 1974, this remarkable archaeological find consists of thousands of life-sized soldiers, archers and cavalry figures created to protect Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi in the afterlife.

Explore the three main pits, beginning with Pits 2 and 3 before continuing to Pit 1, the largest and most impressive of the three, where around 2,000 warriors are on display.

Later, discover more of Xi'an from the impressive city walls, built during the Ming Dynasty, with time to explore the ancient ramparts.

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* Grand Mercure Xi'an on Renmin Square or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 7: Flight to Shanghai

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Shanghai. On arrival, transfer to your hotel and enjoy some free time to settle in and explore at your own pace.

Optional Tour: Vintage Jeep Tour in Shanghai (at an additional cost)

Explore Shanghai in vintage style on a two-hour Jeep tour. Take in some of the city's highlights, travelling from the historic Old French concession to the famous Bund while enjoying a different perspective of this vibrant city.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* SSW Boutique Hotel Shanghai Bund or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 8: Shanghai Tower, The Bund and Nanjing Road

Head to Lujiazui, Shanghai's modern financial district and home to some of the city's most recognisable skyscrapers, including the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Jin Mao Tower and Shanghai Tower.

Take the super high-speed elevator to the 118th-floor observation terrace of Shanghai Tower, where you can enjoy panoramic views across the city.

Continue to the Bund, a famous waterfront promenade lined with some of Shanghai's most historic buildings. From here, make your way along Nanjing Road, one of the city's busiest and most colourful shopping streets, before finishing at People's Square.

Optional Tour: Morning Private Vintage Bike and Brunch Tour (at an additional cost)

Start the morning with a private vintage bike and brunch tour, combining local flavours with a relaxed introduction to Shanghai's neighbourhoods. Sample a selection of traditional breakfast dishes, including soya milk, deep-fried dough sticks, glutinous rice cakes and sesame balls, before exploring the city by vintage bicycle.

Along the way, discover the city's traditional crafts, including needlepoint, paper cutting, lacquer, jade cutting and lantern making, as well as the distinctive shikumen architecture found throughout Shanghai. Further food stops include freshly made xiaolongbao, Jiangnan-style Suzhou noodles and a selection of Chinese desserts, such as ginger milk, double-layer steamed milk and mango sago pomelo.

8:45am–1:00pm. Minimum 2 guests. Easy difficulty level; children must be at least 1.4m tall to participate.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* SSW Boutique Hotel Shanghai Bund or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 9: Zhujiajiao Water Town

Escape the bustle of Shanghai with a visit to Zhujiajiao, a charming historic water town offering a glimpse into the traditional Jiangnan way of life.

Visit Fangsheng Bridge, the town's largest five-arch stone bridge, dating back to the Ming Dynasty. Wander along the bluestone-paved North Street, browsing local shops and handicraft stalls as you explore.

Continue through the old alleys, passing traditional waterside residences and historic river docks, with canals and waterways forming an atmospheric backdrop throughout the town.

Optional Tour: Zhujiajiao Boat Ride (at an additional cost)

Take to the water aboard a traditional hand-rowed wooden boat and enjoy a different perspective of Zhujiajiao. Glide along the canals, passing waterside residences and beneath the historic Fangsheng Bridge.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* SSAW Boutique Hotel Shanghai Bund or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 10: French Concession, Xintiandi, Tianzifang and Yu Yuan Gardens

Explore Shanghai's former French Concession, an area that reflects the city's fascinating international history. Visit Fuxing Park, where you may see locals taking part in their daily morning exercise routines.

Continue through the surrounding streets, admiring the area's distinctive colonial homes, many of which have since been transformed into restaurants, bars and boutiques.

Next, head to Xintiandi, a beautifully renovated neighbourhood and one of the liveliest parts of the city, before continuing to Tianzifang. Wander through its maze of atmospheric alleyways, filled with restaurants, boutiques and small art galleries.

Continue to Shanghai's Old Town, where a few of the city's traditional lilongs remain. Visit the famous Yu Yuan Gardens, a superb example of traditional Chinese garden landscaping, before exploring the nearby bazaar, where you can browse for souvenirs and experience the lively atmosphere.

Alternatively, take some time to relax at the historic Huxinting Tea House, located in the centre of the lake opposite Yu Yuan Gardens and one of the city's most famous tea houses.

Optional Tour: Traditional Chinese Massage (at an additional cost)

Relax with a traditional Chinese massage, also known as acupressure. The treatment focuses on pressure points around the body, offering a chance to unwind after a day of exploring Shanghai.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* SSW Boutique Hotel Shanghai Bund or similar.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.



Day 11: 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?

China can be visited year-round, although spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) are generally popular times to visit Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai, when temperatures are typically more comfortable for sightseeing.

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.

INTERNAL FLIGHTS

The checked luggage allowance for the internal flights is 20kg. Final flight times will be confirmed at the point travel documents are issued.

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.