



# China

**Planning a trip to China? Then you should talk to us...** We offer independent expert advice and the ability to deliver top quality itineraries with the best tour operators that are exceptional value for money. Arranging your travel through The Specialist Travel Consultancy also reduces the time you have to spend researching and planning your trip and... our service is completely free!

Contact us to discuss your travel requirements on **0845 838 7667** or for more information on the service we offer please visit our website: [www.thestc.co.uk](http://www.thestc.co.uk)

## We arrange:

- School expeditions •
- Walking & trekking •
- Geography & history tours •
- Link school visits •
- Cultural tours •
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## Facts & Highlights

**Full Name:** The People's Republic of China

**Area:** 9,956,960 sq km (3.7m sq ml)

**Population:** 1.29 billion

**Capital:** Beijing

**People:** Han Chinese (92%) and 55 minority ethnic groups (8%).

**Language(s):** Mandarin (Putonghua) with many local dialects.

**Religion(s):** Officially atheistic, but there are five State-Registered Religions: Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholic and Protestant Christianity.

**Currency:** Yuan or Renminbi (RMB)

**Government:** Chinese Communist Party

**Electricity:** 220V, 50 Hz.

**Time:** GMT + 8 Hours (the entire country runs on Beijing time)



**The Forbidden City:** Visit the largest palace complex in the world, with its 800 buildings and over 8,000 rooms.

**The north side of Everest:** Venture off the beaten track to China's southern border to see the world's highest peak.

**Walk the Great Wall:** Walk a section of the Great Wall well away from the tourist hotspots.

**Terracotta Warriors:** Marvel at the detail and sheer numbers of the life size Terracotta Warriors at Xian.

**Yunnan's breath taking scenery:** Explore the bizarre limestone rock formations around Guilin.

**The Silk Road:** Barter for your wares in the historical market of the Silk Road town of Kashgar in China's far west.

To understand and appreciate China fully it would take a life time of travel and exploration, such is its diversity and size.

China's draw lies in its extraordinary combination of ancient and modern, as well as some truly awe inspiring landscapes and unique cultures. From the buzzing metropolis of Shanghai to the ancient traditions and cultures of its remote tribal minorities, it is a country of contrast that will constantly surprise.

Change is happening rapidly so now is a great time to visit. Despite its size, it is possible to see a wide variety of scenery and history in just a two week trip. Staying longer than two weeks will give opportunity for a more in-depth exploration of China's cultures and natural treasures.

China's capital, Beijing, is home to the Forbidden City with its intricately carved walkways and colourful ceilings. It is easy to spend a whole day at this UNESCO World Heritage Site appreciating the many dynasties that have trodden the corridors.

North of the city lies magnificent countryside bisected by the Great Wall. The sections nearest Beijing are hugely crowded, but venture a little further afield and parts of this extraordinary human achievement are virtually deserted. On a short cultural tour to China, just a day visit may be in order, however, there is also the opportunity to walk many of the more remote and spectacular sections of the wall on an extended trek, perhaps as part of a longer cultural tour or expedition.

Head south from Beijing and you arrive at Xian, home to the 6,000 lifesize Terracotta Warriors protecting the tomb of China's first Emperor, the great Qin Shihuang.

Further south still and China begins to take on a different flavour, with the impressive Yangtze Gorges (despite the recently built dam) and the areas around Guilin and Yangshuo renowned for its spectacular limestone outcrops.

The far south west is home to some of the

most spectacular scenery in China, including the famous "Tiger Leaping Gorge". The region shares its borders with Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar and the southern parts have much in common with these south east Asian countries both in terms of minority groups and its tropical climate. This whole south west region is full of "must-see" sights and excellent trekking. On an extended visit to China you should really include this area, if possible.

Further west Tibet, although part of China, is both geographically and culturally a world away, and worthy of a separate trip altogether. The mystery and magic of Tibet is matched only by its stunning scenery and friendly welcoming people. While change is happening quickly with the opening of the new rail link to Lhasa, Tibet retains its air of a forbidden land.

The regional capital Lhasa with its instantly recognisable Potala Palace is a classic travel destination. Similarly, the overland route from Lhasa to Kathmandu in Nepal takes you across the Tibetan plateau and through the greatest mountain range on earth and is one of the world's most spectacular journeys. Whilst the majority of groups travelling this route do so by jeep, it is also possible (for the fit and very determined) to travel by mountain bike. With full vehicle support it is an exceptional ride and a tough and challenging expedition. The route takes in some five 5,000m-plus passes and the descent from the Tibetan plateau through the Himalaya to Kathmandu encompasses the biggest downhill in the world – all 4,600m and 160km of it!



## Suggested Itineraries

There is no way we can do justice here to the travel possibilities that China offers. We can design a tailor-made tour from scratch or these examples can be amended as needed, taking in requirements for trekking, history, wildlife, project work and cultures as required. China is an excellent country to see by bicycle, so for an added dimension to a trip, see the country from two wheels.

### 10 Day Highlights Tour

**DAY 1** Fly London/Hong Kong.

**2** Arrive Hong Kong, walking tour.

**3** Morning in Hong Kong; afternoon fly to Guilin.

**4** Morning cruise on Li River to Yangshuo; afternoon free in Yangshuo.

**5** In Yangshuo; option of walks and bike rides, fly Xian.

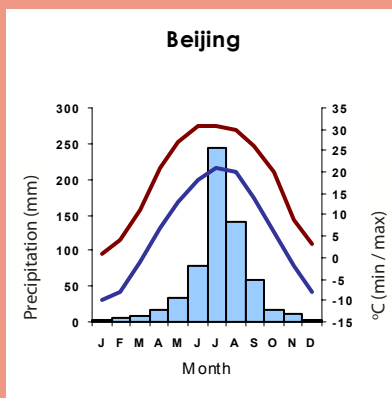
**6** In Xian; half day city tour including Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Bell and Drum Towers

## Geography & Climate

China is huge and geographically incredibly diverse. It is the third largest country in the world and twice the size of western Europe. Its physical geography ranges from extensive alluvial plains, deserts and grasslands to semi-tropical forests, high plateaus and the mighty Himalaya. The Yangtze River, at 6,400 km, is the world's third longest.

The south western provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan are considered amongst the most beautiful and ethnically diverse. They offer a quieter and more traditional view of China, away from the frenetic pace of Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong.

Spring and autumn are generally considered the best time to visit, but as with any country the size of China, there are exceptions to the rule. The Tibetan plateau can only feasibly be visited between June and October for instance. If possible, the times to avoid are when the Chinese themselves are on holiday (early May and early October) as they travel in vast numbers throughout the country, accommodation becomes scarce and queuing to see the sites is common place.



and Old Muslim Quarter.

**7** Visit Terracotta Warriors; sleeper train Beijing.

**8/9** In Beijing; visit Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall.

**10** Fly London.

3 weeks

**Day 1/2** Depart UK, arrive Beijing.

**3** Full day at remote section of Great Wall.

**4** Beijing city tour, overnight train to Xian.

**5** Arrive Xian, afternoon sightseeing.

**6** Visit Terracotta Warriors.

**7** Free morning, pm train to Chengdu.

**8** Arrive Chengdu afternoon sightseeing.

**9** Visit Panda conservancy.

**10** To Chongqing, Three Gorges.

**11/12** Three Gorges cruise.

**13** Conclude Three Gorges in Yichang, fly to Shanghai.

**14** In Shanghai.

**15** In Shanghai, overnight train to Huangshan.

**16** Arrive Huangshan.

**17** Full day hike.

**18** Fly Huangshan to Guilin and transfer to Yangshuo.

**19** In Yangshuo.

**20** In Yangshuo.

**21** Return to Guilin, Depart for UK.

**22** Arrive UK.

## National Holidays

Due to the Chinese Calendar being different to the western Gregorian calendar, the dates of their national holidays and festivals vary from year to year (in our calendar at least). Therefore it is difficult to give exact dates.

## Festivals

**The Torch Festival of the Yi Minority in Liangshan;** July 23-28; Place: Sichuan Province; Activities: Bullfighting, horse races, singing contests, wrestling, torch parade and bonfires.

**Horse Race Festival in Qiangtang, Tibet;** The last 10-day period of August; Place: Nagqu Prefecture in Tibet; Activities: Horse races, archery and horsemanship.

**The Water-Sprinkling Festival of the Dai in Yunnan;** April 13-15; Place: Jinghong City, Yunnan Province. Activities: Dragon boat races, fireworks, drum-treading dance by elephants, peacock dance and water sprinkling (symbolizes auspiciousness).

**Guilin Scenery Festival;** Oct 31- Nov 8; Place: Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region; Activities: Lantern

festival on the Lijiang River combining sound, light, color and movement.

## Price Guide

With so many options, prices vary enormously depending on the length and style of trip required, as well as the group size. A simple ten-day cultural tour of the east of the country is likely to be in the region of £1,500 per person. Extended expeditions, perhaps including Tibet, trekking or specialist facilities, might feasibly cost £3,200 or more person. Contact us for more details.

## Regulations & Red Tape

A full passport, valid for 6 months after your return date, is required for travel to China. British passport holders require a visa, obtainable in the UK before departure. Visas currently cost £30 and are valid for three months from date of issue.

## Useful Addresses

**Embassy of the People's Republic of China**

49-51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL  
Tel: 0207 299 8426.

Web: [www.chinese-embassy.org.uk](http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk)  
Hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1230 and 1330-1700.

**Consular and visa section:**

31 Portland Place, London W1B 1QD, UK  
Tel: 0207 631 1430 (hours: 1400-1600 only)  
Hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1200

**China National Tourist Office**

71 Warwick Road, London SW5 9HB  
Tel: 0207 373 0888

Web: [www.cnta.gov.cn](http://www.cnta.gov.cn)

## More Information

To discuss the travel possibilities that China offers in greater detail and get free, independent advice on suitable tour operators, please contact:

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