

Journey Idea to China

Classic China with Tibet
15 Days



Prepared for
Steppes Travel Clients

QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly London Heathrow/Beijing (overnight)
Day 2	Arrive Beijing
Day 3	Beijing
Day 4	Beijing
Day 5	Train or Fly Beijing/Xian
Day 6	Arrive Xian
Day 7	Xian
Day 8	Fly Xian/Lhasa
Day 9	Lhasa
Day 10	Lhasa
Day 11	Lhasa
Day 12	Fly Lhasa/Shanghai
Day 13	Shanghai
Day 14	Train Shanghai/Suzhou/Shanghai
Day 15	Fly Shanghai/London Heathrow

DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1

London / Beijing

This afternoon depart London Heathrow on the direct flight to Beijing, flying overnight.

Day 2

Beijing

Following your arrival in Beijing you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Day 3

Beijing

After breakfast your sightseeing programme will begin. This morning you will visit the Forbidden City (Palace Museum) built between 1406 and 1420. This served as the residence of the 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Before entering the Forbidden city complex you will visit Tiananmen Square, the scene of many political rallies and the place where Mao's Mausoleum is located.



After lunch you will see the Summer Palace located on the outskirts of Beijing. The site consists of a park and several inter-connected lakes with willows and hump back bridges so often seen in Chinese paintings. It was for a long time an imperial garden but was expanded by the Empress Dowager Cixi who used money earmarked for a new navy for the building project. Of particular interest is a unique marble boat that sits immobile at the edge of the lake.

Option - Evening Peking Opera. (*Breakfast*).

Day 4

Beijing

This morning you will be met by your guide and taken outside the city for a full day excursion to visit the Great Wall at Mutianyu, a chance to see some of rural China at close hand, and the Ming Tombs.



The Ming Tombs are located in a valley and number 13 in all. The valley is approached by the Imperial Way that is lined by larger than life stone figures, (animals, soldiers and mythical figures).



Only one tomb, Ding Ling, has been excavated and now lies empty but you will visit Changling which houses the impressive treasures from Ding Ling. You will return to Beijing in the late afternoon. (*Breakfast*).

Day 5



Beijing OR Beijing / Xian

The morning is at leisure.

In the afternoon you will be collected from the hotel and taken to see the Temple of Heaven, recognised by its circular blue glazed tiled roof.

This is where the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties offered sacrifices to heaven and prayed for good harvests. It is set in an expansive park.

This evening you will be taken to the railway station for the overnight train to Xian OR overnight in Beijing. (Breakfast).

Day 6



Beijing or Beijing / Xian

This morning the train arrives in Xian. You will be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the morning is at leisure OR you will be taken to Beijing airport for the flight to Xian. On arrival you will be met and taken to your hotel.

This afternoon travel outside the city to see some of China's, and the world's, most important sights. Qin Shihuang was the first emperor of the Chinese people. A mound of earth protects his tomb and it is believed to be studded with precious stones. When Qin Shihuang died, so the story goes, he wanted to be buried along with his entire army and entourage of servants who were of course still alive. He was persuaded instead to create life-like clay figures of them all, the famed Terracotta Warriors, and today they stand with their horses guarding his tomb as they have done for 2000 years.

On return to the city visit the Wild Goose Pagoda, which was built in AD648 by the third emperor of the Tang dynasty, Gao Zong, in memory of his deceased mother. (Breakfast).

Day 7



Xian

After breakfast continue your visits. See the Great Mosque, one of China's largest and built in the Chinese style. Although founded in 742 the present layout dates from the 14th century and is made up of four courtyards, which contain stone steles, many trees and ornate arches. The backstreets leading the Mosque have been home to the city's Hui community for centuries - typically distinguished by their practice of the Islamic religion, they form one of the 56 minority groups found within China. You will have the opportunity to walk in the area.

The Shaanxi Provincial Museum will give you an insight into the region and the many complex factors that have formed the city's history.

The afternoon is at leisure. (Breakfast).

Day 8

Xian / Lhasa

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for the flight to Lhasa. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure to allow you to rest and acclimatise. (*Breakfast*).

Day 9



Lhasa

The morning is at leisure.

In the afternoon begin your sightseeing programme. You have the opportunity to view both daily life, with a visit to the Moslem market, and buildings of immense religious importance. In the heart of Old Lhasa is Barkhor Street, which encircles the Jokhang. The area has a sacred pilgrim path and a lively marketplace that attracts a cross-section of society from all over Tibet. The Jokhang is the spiritual centre of Tibet and the oldest parts date back to the 7th century. It was one of two temples that were built to house two Buddhas bought back from Nepal and China by the wives of King Songtsen Gampo. In the outer courtyard and the porch of the temple pilgrims can often be seen in full-length prostrations towards the holy sanctum. (*Breakfast*).

Day 10



Lhasa

Spend a full day in Lhasa. The highlight of the day will arguably be the Potala Palace, an architectural wonder and a spectacular edifice whose gold roofs soar high above the town and rise more than 300 metres above the valley floor. The present building was mainly constructed during the fifth Dalai Lama's reign between 1645 and 1693. With over 1000 rooms, it contained the living quarters of the Dalai Lamas and their magnificent golden tombs. Hundreds of decorated chapels and shrines, halls and corridors contain thousands of gilded statues.



Within the city is Norbulingka, the Summer Palace. Norbulingka means Jewel Park and the first Dalai Lama built a summer palace here in 1755. Each successive ruler added their own. The present Dalai Lama built one in 1950 shortly before he left Tibet.



Finally, visit the 1000 Buddha Wall. This small area of religious importance is hidden away from all who do not know of its existence. The wall itself is covered in Buddhist paintings, pilgrims spin prayer wheels and chant at its base and a short distance away stone masons chip away at slates creating mani stones. Tibetan Buddhists believe that saying the mantra (prayer), Om Mani Padme Hum, out loud or silently to oneself, invokes the powerful benevolent attention and blessings of Chenrezig, the embodiment of compassion. Viewing the written form of the mantra is said to have the same effect. (*Breakfast*).

Day 11

Lhasa

The morning is at leisure.

In the afternoon travel outside the city to one of the periphery monasteries. Sera, meaning "Merciful Hail" lies on the northern edge of Lhasa. Its name denotes the rivalry with the "Rice Heap" (Drepung) since hail destroys rice. Founded in



1419 by Tsongkhapa's eighth disciple it became famous for its tantric teachings. The warrior monks of Sera, the dob-dobs, were admired as athletes but feared. One interesting spectacle to observe at the monastery is the afternoon debating where monks challenge their elders in debate by shouting, stamping their feet and slapping their hands together. *(Breakfast)*.

Day 12

Lhasa / Shanghai

The morning is at leisure before you are transferred to the airport for flight to Shanghai. On arrival you will be met and taken to your hotel. *(Breakfast)*.

Day 13

Shanghai

Mid-morning begin a full day sightseeing programme seeing the sites of this metropolitan city. Shanghai was a city divided up by foreign powers and a centre of eastern trade. It is fascinating to see how the architecture varies between each section of the city. Much has changed in 150 years.



In the Old Quarter you will see the Yu Garden originally built in the Song dynasty. This is a classic Chinese enclosed garden complete with halls, bonsai and rocks. On leaving the temple you enter a square containing a large pond, which has across it a diagonal walkway leading to the Huxingtng Teahouse.



Also visit the Shanghai Museum, which is one of the finest in the country and respected by many. It is well presented and its displays diverse. Halls dedicated to jade, money, calligraphy, pottery and porcelain and bronze reflect China's long impressive history.

Arguably one of the highlights of a visit to Shanghai is seeing the Jade Buddha Temple. The temple is always busy with pilgrims and there are many resident monks. In one hall there are three gold Buddha's and in others life-size deities line the walls. The major feature is the Jade Buddha brought from Burma by a monk in 1882. It is a white two-metre high statue inlaid with jewels and said to weigh one thousand kilogrammes.



In Shanghai, most people immediately think of the Bund, an area along the waterfront famed for its glitzy hotels, banks and trading houses of the 18th and 19th century. Today, the buildings still stand but the 'glamour' has gone. A walk along the river front will allow closer inspection.



Option - Enjoy an evening performance of the world famous Shanghai Acrobats. *(Breakfast)*.

Day 14



Shanghai / Suzhou / Shanghai

Today you will be taken to the railway station where you will depart by train for a full day excursion to Suzhou.

Suzhou is one of the many water towns that surround Shanghai. It is criss-crossed by small canals that separate away from the Grand Canal. The Grand Canal was built in sections and the earliest ditches were dug 2400 years ago. Today, life on the canal goes on as it has done for generations. All manner of goods are transported by boat and life on the river is a truly remarkable experience.

The town is famous for its silk and gardens and visits will be made to two of the most interesting gardens, the Humble Administrators Garden and the Garden of the Master of the Nets.

Also see the Silk Embroidery Institute. If you are interested in purchasing silk then Suzhou is the place to do it. Some pieces take up to two years to complete and can have several artists working on them at the same time. If time allows you can visit a silk factory to see firsthand the process of making silk.

Finally, visit Pan Gate accessed via the single span Women bridge, the only original gate remaining in the city. This helped to control water traffic and collect taxes from boats passing along the waterways.

You will return to Shanghai in the late afternoon by train and taken back to your hotel. (*Breakfast*).

Day 15

Shanghai / London

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for the direct flight to London Heathrow, arriving in London later the same day. (*Breakfast*).

TRIP PRICE

4* hotels - Price from £2,740.00 per person + flight taxes

5* hotels - Price from £3,375.00 per person + flight taxes

A supplement will apply to the above prices if you decide to travel by air between Beijing and Xian.

The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, written confirmation and Steppes Travels terms and conditions.

The price includes - Return flights from London in Economy Class, accommodation in twin/double room, private transfers & transportation (air-conditioned car, internal flights in Economy Class, 1st Class train seats), private sightseeing programme with English speaking guide and entrance fees to tourist sites, meals as indicated.

The price excludes - Visas, travel insurance, meals unless indicated, early check in or late check out at hotels, camera/video fees at museum/sites, items of a personal nature, gratuities.

Please note that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the country and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities this fascinating country has to offer. We have a separate list of escorted tours and specialise in tailoring individual itineraries to your particular interests and requirements. This journey idea serves more as a general guide on what there is to see and do, as well as a guide on price.

Altitude: During the course of this trip you will be travelling at altitudes of between 3,500 and 5,000 metres. Your personal health is our primary concern and if you have or had heart or respiratory problems we would ask that you get medical clearance from your doctor. The fittest and healthiest of people may still encounter problems associated with altitude and problems and age is not usually a factor.

Certain precautions can be taken to alleviate altitude sickness. We recommend that you do not drink alcohol for one or two days prior to arrival in Tibet and for one or two days after your arrival. Some doctors recommend diuretic tablets and drinking lots of water especially just after arrival. Most people usually feel nauseous and tired for a day or two and suffer from headaches but this should pass. Plenty of rest is a good idea.

Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise.

Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

Please contact Steppes Travel on 01285 880 980 or visit our website www.steppestravel.co.uk for further information.

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