

Journey Idea to China

Classic China with Yangtse River 14 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 Beijing/Xian (overnight) Or Fly Beijing/Xian
Day 6	Arrive Xian Or Xian
Day 7	Xian
Day 8	Fly Xian/Chongqing. Ship to Yichang on Yangtse River
Day 9	Yangtse River
Day 10	Yangtse River
Day 11	Arrive in Yichang. Fly Yichang/Shanghai
Day 12	Shanghai
Day 13	Shanghai, excursion to Suzhou
Day 14	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 interconnected 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 worlds, 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 / Chongqing (Yangtse River)

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for the flight to Chongqing.

En route to the airport, visit the Han Jing tombs & museum. Discovered in the early 1990's by road workers this tomb has



only recently been opened and is still under excavation. The terracotta figurines uncovered here are much less imposing (but no less grand) than those of the Army of Terracotta Warriors. The museum houses most of the artifacts excavated from the tomb which include examples of male & female warriors, eunuchs, dancers and various farm animals.

A short drive from the museum you will have the chance to visit the Underground Museum, which is the 1st of its kind and was opened in April 2006. Here you have the chance to walk around the actual burial chambers (which are glassed in to protect the relics) and observe the excavations of the Miniature Warriors taking place.

On arrival in Chongqing, you will be met and taken to the ship that will take you for your journey along the Yangtse River to Yichang. The ship arrives later tonight.

We use Victoria Cruises and the Deluxe Yangzi Explorer ship.

Chongqing is located in the south-eastern part of the Sichuan Basin and the meeting point of the Jialing and Yangtse Rivers. It served as the capital of China during the Japanese occupation during the Second World War. (Breakfast).

Day 9

Yangtse River



Deluxe cabin on Yangzi Explorer ship

The following cruise programme is used by Victoria Cruises. A similar programme is also followed by the Yangzi Explorer.

Today you will visit one of three possible sites, Fengdu or Shibaozhai or Wanzhou.

Wanxian (Wanzhou), is a small mountainous city known as the 'Gateway to the Eastern Sichuan Province'. It is an old river city which once rivalled Chongqing in importance. The Wanxian tangerines and oranges are renowned throughout China and it has some of the finest silk spinning weaving factories in the region.



You may also visit Shibaozhai. A huge rectangular rock stands by the riverside backed by sheer cliffs. Perched on top is a temple, a 12 story wooden pagoda built against the side perpendicularly next to the rock wall. It is over 400 years and no nails were used in its construction. Appropriately it has been named the "Pearl of the Yangtse".



Fengdu is located on the northern bank of the Yangtze, 176 km downstream from Chongqing. Known as the "Ghost City, Fengdu is a very popular shore excursion site for tourists on the Yangtze River.

Fengdu received its reputation as the "Ghost City" in the Eastern Han Dynasty. Two officials from the imperial court--Wang Fang Ping and Ying Chang Sheng were bored with political life in the court and came to Mt. Minshan outside Fengdu city to practice Taoist teachings. Both of them later became immortals by carrying out self-cultivation. When combined together, their surnames Yin and Wang sound very much like "King of Hell" in Chinese. Hence the people began to call Fengdu the "Ghost City".

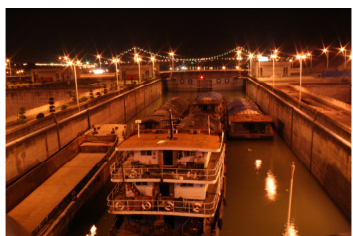
To Chinese people, the social structure is hell is exactly like that in the real world. In hell, a spirit goes through the whole bureaucracy to be finally judged. Those pure of spirit will be rewarded and those sinful of spirit will be subjected to severe punishments. Different punishment would be given to different kinds of sins. The temples built on Mt. Minshan display punishing instruments and wild demon images, which vividly depict the Chinese people's imagination of Hell. Landmarks on the hill bear horrible names-Ghost Torturing Pass, Tower of Last Glance to Home, No Way Out Bridge, and River of Blood. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 10

Yangtse River



You will sail through two of the Three Gorges (Wu and Qutang) today. The Wu Gorge is six times longer than the Qutang Gorge and is known for the twelve peaks that line its banks and for the Kong Ming tablet, a large slab of rock at the base of the 'Peak of the Immortals'. Ming was the prime minister of the state of Shu during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280 AD).



Also today you will transfer to smaller launches for the trip up the Daning River (or Shennong Stream). As on other tributaries of the region, spectacular gorges have been created and the tour reveals great rustic beauty. Dragon-Gate Gorge (Longmen) is the shortest of the three (3km) and is aptly named for the precipitous cliffs that form a natural entrance to the gorge. In this area are the remains of an ancient plank road and the famous silver rapids. The Misty Gorge (Bawu) is so called for the perpetual misty cloud cover that surrounds its sheer cliffs all year. This gorge is well known for its beautiful formations such as Horse Returning Mountain, Goddess of Mercy seated on Lotus Platform and the suspended coffin to name but a few. The jewel of the Lesser Three Gorges is the enchanting Emerald Gorge (Dizui). Mandarin Ducks swim in the Emerald water, as monkeys leap from branch to branch on the many trees that adorn the banks of this verdant, waterfall dotted paradise. This trip may be substituted by a trip up the Shennong Stream depending on water levels.

There is also an optional excursion to White Emperor City (river conditions permitting).

White Emperor City overlooks the western end of Qutang Gorge. It has long been a refuge for would-be kings and poets, who have travelled here to be inspired by the majestic views of Qutang Gorge. Remains of the city wall can be seen on the hill behind Baidi Mountain, and a temple built to commemorate Gong's reign dates back over 1,950 years.

The great poet Du Fu is believed to have written numerous poems at the Western Pavilion on the mountain slope overlooking the Yangtse. Legend has it that in 25AD, white vapour in the shape of a dragon rose from a well here, and Gong Sunshu, a soldier who had his headquarters here declared himself the White Emperor.

Today you also pass through the 3 Gorges ship locks. You will sail through the first of the large Three Gorges, the Xiling Gorge

and the Three Gorges ship lock. The Xiling Gorge is the longest of the three at 66 KM and is known for many scenic spots including the Ox's Liver and Horse's Lung Gorge and Military Manual and Precious Sword Gorge. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 11



Yichang / Shanghai

This morning a visit will be made to the site of the Three Gorges Dam project. Located 27 miles upstream from Yichang city proper the new Yangtse River dam will be by far the largest hydroelectric project in the world. A briefing on the project will be given to enlighten you further. A dam along the Yangtse was originally proposed by Dr Sun Yatsen in 1919 to control flooding and aid the modernisation of China. The feasibility of such a dam project has been studied and debated for decades. The current site was selected by American engineers in the 1930's.

The dam submerged 13 cities, 140 towns, 1352 villages, 657 factories and 30,000 hectares of cultivated land. New towns were being built above the old river towns and over 1.5 million people were relocated. The promised benefits of the dam will be flood control, hydroelectric generation of 15% of the national demand and navigation improvement for shipping. An aqueduct will channel water to northern China to relieve persistent drought and guarantee agricultural production for millions of Chinese.

The cruise ends later this morning and you will disembark at Yichang. You will be met on arrival and transferred to the airport for your flight to Shanghai. On arrival in Shanghai you will be met and transferred to your hotel. (Breakfast).

Day 12



Shanghai

The full day will be spent 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 Huxingting 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 kilograms.

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 13



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 as the quality at the official outlets is almost guaranteed. 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 first hand 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 and taken back to your hotel. (Breakfast).

Day 14

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

3* hotels - Price from £2,350.00 per person + flight taxes (with Victoria Cruises)

4* hotels - Price from £2,655.00 per person + flight taxes (with Victoria Cruises)

5* hotels - Price from £3,540.00 per person + flight taxes (with Yangzi Explorer)

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, trains, Yangtse ship), private sightseeing programme (part of a group on the Yangtse ship) 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.

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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