

# Silk Steps

EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE



## China

*The ancient Chinese believed that their 'Middle Kingdom' was the centre of the world. China is so vast it seems that the world rests within its borders, from the high frozen peaks of the Himalayas to the steamy jungles of the southwest and the remote spectacular deserts of the West.*



### WEATHER

Spread over such a vast area the country has a great range of climates, but the following can be used as a guide.

In Beijing, from December to March the average temperature is minus 2°C and further north it is much colder. In July and August the temperature can reach 38°C and this is the time when most of the rain falls. The best time to visit the North is in the spring and autumn, when the temperature is comfortable with clear skies and little rainfall.

The Yangtze river area (mid China) experiences high humidity throughout the year, however the best time to visit is in the Spring and Autumn when there are cool nights and daytime temperatures of around 24°C.

The South of China experiences subtropical weather with a hot and humid period from April to September with periods of heavy rain. The spring can be wet and cloudy and the winter can sometimes be surprisingly chilly but often has clear sunny days. Autumn offers the best weather with dry sunny days and temperatures around 24°C.

### WHEN IN CHINA WHY NOT....?

**Trek the Great Wall of China - the parts rarely seen by visitors.** Be an adventurer and avoid the over-visited sections of Badaling and Mutianyu and discover the Wild Wall. Put on those walking boots and spend a few days walking along sections of the Great Wall that haven't been lavishly reconstructed - Huanghuachang, Huangyaguang, Simatai and Jinshanling. The experience and views are unforgettable.

**Visit Xiahe, one of the largest Buddhist centres in China.** Gansu Province, in remote north west China, is home to Xiahe, the site of the Labrang Monastery. This significant Tibetan Monastery belongs to the Yellow Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism and is a site of pilgrimage for many Tibetans. The monastery holds many Buddhist treasures including hundreds of statues of Buddha, many made from precious metals and adorned in gems.

**Trek the Tiger Leaping Gorge in Yunnan.** The roaring waters of the mighty Yangtze River tumble through the narrow chasm at the bottom of the Tiger Leaping Gorge, one of the deepest in the world, in Yunnan Province. Trek along the path, which stretches the length of the gorge, and you are bound to come across the resident Naxi people going about their business.

**Enjoy a gastronomic tour of China.** Love your Saturday night Chinese takeaway? Why not indulge yourself and spend time trying the real thing. Tackle a Beijing Duck in the capital city, sample the freshest seafood at Qingdao on the Shandong Peninsula, experience some interesting Cantonese delicacies in Guangzhou, make your eyes water in Sichuan with the spicy food and bravely savour the chefs' love affair with chillis in Hunan province.

**Train with Shao Lin Monks at a Shao Lin Martial Arts School.** Do you ever find yourself imitating the moves seen in the dramatic Chinese martial arts films. Now you can learn how it is done from the masters themselves - the protection monks at the Shao Lin Martial Arts School in northern China. Move over Jackie Chan!



# Suggested Itineraries

Nights stay at:
1
2 Beijing
3
4 Train journey
5 Xian
6
7 Chong Qing
8 Yangtze Cruise
9
10 Shanghai
11

## THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

The vastness of China means that the possibilities for visitors are endless, so we have put together an itinerary for first-time visitors which takes in some of the major sights.

In Beijing you will have time to visit the fabulous 15<sup>th</sup> century Forbidden City, once closed to ordinary Chinese citizens, the largest square in the world, Tian'anmen Square, the magnificent Great Wall and the tranquil imperial gardens and lake of the Summer Palace. Experience the excellent overnight train service to Xian where you will visit some of the finest museums in China including the incredible spectacle of the Terracotta Army, protecting the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang.

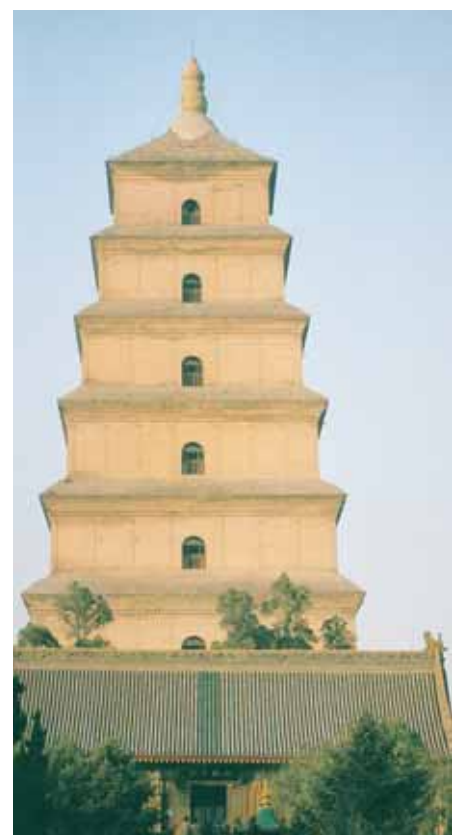
From here you continue to the riverine city of Chong Qing, where you board the Yangtze ship to cruise down one of the longest rivers in the world. The cruise and shore excursions will give you an insight into the heartland of China, passing small towns and villages scrambling up the banks of the river. Sail through the spectacular Three Gorges and marvel at the enormity of the dam.

The last stop on the tour is Shanghai, once linked with colonial decadence and revolutionary fervour and now the economic powerhouse of new China. The dramatic skyline and energy of the city is breathtaking but old China can still be found in the exquisite gardens, bazaar and the grand old colonial buildings on the Bund.

### Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

**FROM £1,145**



Nights stay at:
1
2 Beijing
3
4 Kunming
5 Dali
6
7
8 Lijiang
9
10
11 Zhongdian
12
13 Kunming

## KINGDOM BEYOND THE CLOUDS

Here you are taken on a journey in south west China, home to minority hill tribes who have successfully kept their traditional dress and customs alive.

Start the journey in dynamic Beijing where you can see the glittering Forbidden City, the remarkable Great Wall and the tranquil gardens and lake of the imperial Summer Palace before flying to Kunming, the 'city of eternal spring'.

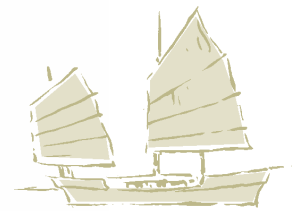
You will have time to see the charming collection of wooden buildings, which are tightly squeezed together along small alleys, before continuing to Dali, located on the edge of Erhai Lake with a stunning backdrop of mountains. Dali is home to the minority Bao people and retains much of its old cobbled streets and traditional architecture.

The next stop is enchanting Lijiang, a World Heritage Site and home to the Naxi minority, with its maze-like streets and narrow wooden buildings. Continue by road to the mighty Tiger Leaping Gorge before reaching Zhongdian, high in the mountains. With a predominantly Tibetan population, Zhongdian is an ideal base for exploring the surrounding remote villages and hamlets close to the Tibetan border. Take a domestic flight back to Kunming.

### Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

**FROM £1,470**



Nights stay at:	
1	Beijing
2	
3	Xian
4	
5	Lanzhou
6	Xiahe
7	Train journey
8	Dunhuang
9	
10	Urumqi
11	Kashi
12	

## THE SILK ROAD

Venture along the Chinese section of one of the Silk Routes, stopping at desert towns that were once prosperous cities living on the wealth of passing trade caravans.

Start the journey in dynamic Beijing where you will have time to visit the spectacular Forbidden City at the heart of the city and the magnificent Great Wall. Travel to Xian with its walled city and the incredible Terracotta Warriors guarding the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Fly to Lanzhou, once an important meeting point on the Silk Road, where you will marvel at the monumental sculptures of the Binglingsi grottoes carved into the cliffs. The journey continues to remote Xiahe, totally surrounded by soaring mountains, where you will visit the Labrang Tibetan Monastery.

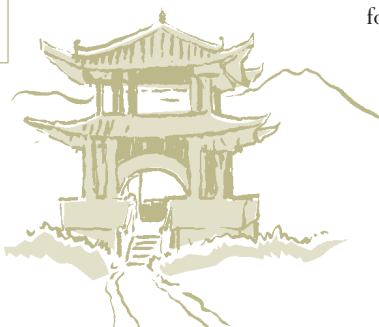
Continue by overnight train to the oasis town of Dunhuang, surrounded by rolling sand dunes and justly famous for its treasury of Buddhist cave art at Magao, beautifully preserved by the dry desert climate. The journey continues through the Gobi Desert to Urumqi, visiting the Heavenly Mountains, a stunning area that is home to nomadic Kazakh herders. From here fly to Kashi,

formerly known as Kashgar, once a remote desert oasis, now bustling with nomads, exotic bazaars and the Sunday market where hundreds of donkey carts and locals congregate and the bargaining is fierce.

### Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

**FROM £2,147**



# Suggested Itineraries



Nights stay at:
1
2 Beijing
3
4 Pingyao
5 Train journey
6
7 Xian
8 Guilin
9
10 Yangshuo
11
12 Shanghai
13
14 Nanjing
15 Suzhou
16 Shanghai

## ANCIENT SPIRITS OF CHINA

Start your journey in Beijing, the exciting cultural capital of the Middle Kingdom, taking in such sights as the magnificent Great Wall, the ornate pavilions of the Forbidden City and the serene gardens of the Summer Palace. Step back in time when you head for ancient Pingyao in Shaanxi Province, a World Heritage Site, whose massive city walls are perfectly preserved. Inside are hundreds of traditional buildings dating from the Ming and Qing dynasties, many with delightful courtyards.

Next take in one place that is the 'must see' for most visitors - Xian. Here you will discover the fortified city walls and the Wild Goose Pagoda before continuing to the awesome Terracotta Warriors, the vast army created to protect the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang. From here travel to traditional China and the haunting landscape of Guilin with its intriguingly shaped limestone mountains, which have so captivated China's painters and poets. Then on to sleepy Yangshuo, where you can spend time watching the famous cormorant fishermen and explore the surrounding countryside on bicycle. Leave peaceful Yangshuo and head towards frenetic Shanghai, China's economic powerhouse, with its futuristic skyline hiding such gems as the grand old colonial Bund and the Yu Yuan Garden from which the design for the 'willow pattern' pottery. Continue by train to Nanjing, a major city during the Ming Dynasty, whose people suffered so greatly during the Japanese occupation from 1937-1938. Visit the Massacre Memorial and the mausoleum of Sun Yat Sen. Then on to Suzhou by train a pure retreat and you will have time to enjoy its delightful gardens and serene canals before returning to Shanghai, where your tour ends.

### Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

**FROM £1,752**

Nights stay at:
1
2 Beijing
3
4 Train journey
5
6
7 Lhasa
8
9 Gyantse
10 Shigatse
11 Zhangmu
12 Kathmandu
13

## TRAIN TO TIBET

Beijing is the starting point for one of the most exciting new developments within China - the completion of the Qinghai to Tibet section of railway climbing from 2829m above sea level at Golmud to 3641m at Lhasa. Begin the journey of discovery in Beijing, the dynamic capital city, where you will see the ancient sights of the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the Summer Palace which contrast with this fast-emerging modern city. Spend 2 days crossing the vastness of China by train via Xian, Lanzhou and Golmud to reach your final destination, Tibet, 'the Roof of the World'.

Although there has been a lot of development in Tibet's capital Lhasa, the modern architecture cannot hide the sheer beauty of the city's most famous building, the Potala Palace. Dominating the town, the magnificent building, once the home of the Dalai Lama, is a permanent reminder of Tibet's long history. Pilgrims still make their way to the Jokhang Temple and novice monks still spend their days debating at the Sera Monastery.

Once away from Lhasa life has changed little for the people of Tibet. Most still live in isolated communities in traditional houses adorned by prayer flags, which can also be seen fluttering at the top of high passes. The journey across the Tibetan Plateau to the small towns of Gyantse and Shigatse passes many destroyed monasteries, but the Tashilunpo monastery escaped virtually unscathed and is still at the heart of Shigatse and the beautiful Dzong monastery dominates the skyline above Gyantse.

Continue westwards and fly to Kathmandu with its eclectic mix of the maze-like streets of the old city and the upmarket Durbar Marg. Kathmandu is a city of wild contrasts where modernity meets tradition with chic shops, ancient temples and the attractions of Thamel which draw backpackers from all over the world.



**Cost per person** (based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

**FROM £1,477**

# Hotel Selection

The choice of hotels in China is endless and those detailed below are recommendations only. We can book most hotels throughout China, so please contact us if you would like alternative hotels.

## BEIJING

The **Red Capital Club** is something completely different: not only is it tiny, a mere five rooms, and rather romantically well-hidden, tucked away in an unassuming residential neighborhood, but it's something of a revolutionary fantasy, a kitsch tribute to the iconography of Maoist China. Little Red Books are everywhere, and the hotel's collection of propaganda posters and Red Guard figurines is not to be trifled with.

As a superior hotel, the **Jianguo Garden Hotel** finds its place along the bustling Chang'an Street of Central Beijing, near the well-known shopping street of Wangfujing and just a few minutes drive to historical attractions such as Tian'anmen Square and the Forbidden City.

## XIAN

The **Hyatt Regency** is ideally located within the ancient city walls of historic Xian and has gained the reputation as one of Xian's favourite hotels. All the rooms have recently been renovated to offer Hyatt's highest level of comfort and design.

The **Garden Hotel** is an oasis of space and calm that offers a spectacular view of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. It recaptures the spirit of the Tang Dynasty and brings you closer to the heart of ancient China. The hotel is designed in a garden style setting with a beautiful pavilion and a peaceful pond.

## SHANGHAI

The **Peace Hotel** is truly a fusion of ancient and modern, Eastern and Western. The hotel is built in a Gothic style and opened as the Cathay Hotel in 1929. After recent renovation all the rooms and restaurants are furnished with first-class facilities to provide you with the best comfort and convenience.

The **Rui Jin Guesthouse**, also known as the Rui Jin Hotel, is a large property with significant historical significance and is located about ½ mile from the major shopping area in the French Concession district.



## GUILIN

The deluxe 5-star **Lijiang Waterfall Hotel** offers luxury accommodation surrounded by a wealth of natural beauty. With the glittering Shanhu Lake in front of the hotel, the flowing Lijiang River to the east, the impressive Elephant Trunk Hill to the south, and the majestic Diecai Hill to north, photo opportunities abound from any angle. The unique manmade waterfall that rushes down from the top of the hotel completes this picturesque setting. Conveniently located in the downtown area of Guilin City, only a short ride from the train station and airport.

The **Fubo Hotel** is located on the banks of the Li River adjacent to the Fubo Park and only a 10-minute walk to the downtown area. The hotel has been built in a classic Chinese style and is a comfortable hotel with good amenities.

## YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE

Along the shores of China's Yangtze River, the ancient and the modern collide. And on a journey with **Victoria Cruises**, you will experience the thrilling ebb and flow of Chinese life in the 21st Century. For over a decade, Victoria has been the leader in Yangtze cruising, because of the quality of their fleet, outstanding service and innovative itineraries.

The Victoria Cruises are now featuring their premier ships, a series of larger contemporary vessels; these include new or newly rebuilt ships with enhanced facilities. All cabins on the premier ships have private balconies for viewing the spectacular Three Gorges scenery. They also feature their classic ships, first class vessels which entered service in the 1990', and feature Victoria's same outstanding service.

### A Silk Steps inclusive holiday price includes:

- Private return transfers between airports and hotels (unless otherwise specified)
- The services of English speaking guides and representatives at each stage of the tour. Between most places you will travel unescorted
- Accommodation in a standard room (shared twin) with private facilities (unless otherwise specified) with breakfast
- Government taxes and compulsory service charges
- All tours and sightseeing as specified, inclusive of entrance fees
- Economy class air travel within all countries on the scheduled services of the national or domestic carrier as specified in each tour
- The services of our local representative

### Extras:

- International flights - please contact us for up-to-date prices
- Travel insurance
- Meals - unless otherwise stated
- Optional sightseeing other than specified
- International airport departure tax payable overseas
- Visa fees
- Single supplement (on request)