

CHINA – BEIJING TO HONG KONG

15-day / 14-nights GUIDED walking Beijing, the Great Wall, Xi'an, Huashan, Longji, Yangshou & Guilin



Departs: Saturday 4th – 18th May & Saturday 14th – 28th September 2019

Cost from: \$3850 per person, twin-share Single room supplement \$740

Includes: 14 nights in selected hotels or guesthouses; all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 15 including a Pekin Duck dinner; English speaking guide services, entrance fees; arrival transfer at set time in Beijing; local flights / trains, gondola rides & transport in China as shown.

Not included: Private transfers, visa fees, personal expenses or gratuities, drinks with meals (other than drinking water). Extra nights of accommodation can be arranged at extra cost.

Grading: Easy to moderate – over varied terrain with some steeper climbs. Options to take local transport or a gondola may be available at extra cost. The pace allows for rest stops and photo opportunities, the tour should present little difficulty for anyone who is a regular walker.

China was isolated from the rest of the world until incursions by Marco Polo and then the British (through Hong Kong opened a door into an ancient world of history and culture, cuisine and natural beauty that often defies description. This journey can be described as the 'best of China' for the cities visited and sightseeing included. But it is much more than that as we have used our years of experience to craft an itinerary that includes some of the most interesting walking that China can offer.

See the highlights of the modern capital, Beijing on foot and escape the city to two small traditional villages where we walk on unrestored sections of the Great Wall. Huashan, one of the Five Sacred Mountains of China offers excellent walking trails. Xi'an, capital before the Mongolian invasion, where we see the fabled Entombed Warrior but we also discover the Qian Ling burial tombs and the huge area of mounds, sculptures and processional routes from previous emperors here. Enjoy the walking in Longji with its hillsides of lush green rice terraces. See Guilin's amazing mountain views and Yangshou on the River Li, amongst the stark limestone peaks for some great walking and a peaceful look into rural China.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Day 1 Arrive Beijing (D)

Arrival and set time transfer to hotel accommodation for two nights. After a welcome dinner a two-hour guided walk of Beijing by night. Extra nights pre-tour in Beijing and private transfers can be arranged at extra cost.

Day 2 Beijing (BLD)

Walking distance @ 5km

Starting before breakfast we walk to see the city coming alive and at the Temple of Heaven join the locals in their morning exercises, Tai Chi or Chinese Kung Fu. We return to hotel for breakfast then take the subway to Tiananmen Square to see the Monument to the People's Heroes, Great Hall of the People and Mao Zedong's giant portrait painting and Memorial Hall. We visit the Forbidden City, climb the hill in Jingshan Park for the city views and, if time allows the National (Olympic) Stadium, the Bird's Nest designed with artist Ai Weiwei.

With a history dating back three millennia Beijing is a futuristic city with an intrinsic link to its ancient past. With a population of nearly 22 million, Beijing is a city with a myriad of narrow streets or hutongs and ancient temples amongst the ultra-modern and bustling business districts.

Having such an extensive history, Beijing has developed its own unique culture of arts, cuisine, and architecture which are best discovered by wandering through the streets and chatting with locals. Here we find the Forbidden City; a huge and impressive palace complex said to contain 1000 rooms. Created by the Ming and Qing dynasties over 500 years it is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and museum. Nearby we can see Tiananmen Square, the Chinese Parliament building and the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, the final resting place of the Chairman of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China from 1943

Day 3 Beijing/Gubeikou & Great Wall of China (BLD)

Walking @ 6km in 3 - 4 hours - elevation + 210m

We transfer to Gubeikou and hike the remote Wohushan section of Great Wall that was built in 556 AD the Qi period and extended in the Ming Dynasty. Some 13.6km long this largely unrestored section has many steep climbs and impressive stone watch towers with spectacular views. Due to its strategic location, many battles were fought here between China and the Mongol and Manchu invasions. The 'Twenty-four Eye' tower was built with 24 observation windows (uncommon in other sections), however, only the west and south walls remain today. The famous 'Sister Towers' here are two watchtowers standing close together as if they are hand in hand.

We stay overnight in the small village of Gubeikou in a typical inn of East River Village. Rooms are simple but clean with a private bathroom with sit-down toilet and hot shower. Run by local village family and with a traditional dinner menu, our stay here will give you an insight into the lives of local Chinese people.

Day 4 Gubeikou - Jinshanling (BLD)

Walking @ 12km in 6.5 - 7.5 hours - elevation: + 480m

We set off early today for a full day guided walk through cornfields and farmland for a taste of true rural China, before exploring this classic section of the wall, well off the beaten track, known locally as the '*dragon standing on the beautiful golden mountain*'. With broad sweeping views, it's easy to see the wall resembles a dragon's back weaving its way across the land. The views are stunning and you will have hundreds of great photographic opportunities. This evening we stay at another typical guesthouse in Jinshanling.



Day 5 Si Ma Tai – Beijing (BLD)

Walking @ 8km in 4 - 5 hours - elevation: + 280m

One of the best preserved sections of the Great Wall is at Jinshanling, still retaining many of its original features. Located in the mountainous regions, northeast of central Beijing, Jinshanling has 67 watchtowers distributed from 50m to 100m apart, making it one of the most densely fortified sections of the wall.

After breakfast we head off for an exhilarating half-day guided walk – steep in sections - below the summit of Mount Simatai, taking in two villages with stunning views of the hinterland. Again, unlike other sections of the wall, this area has seen little restoration and is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

After lunch we transfer back to Beijing and for dinner and overnight accommodation.

Day 6 Beijing – Huashan in Huayin County (BLD)

Breakfast and free morning in Beijing. After lunch we transfer to the railway station for the high speed train to Mount Huashan for two nights.

The small city of Huashan is roughly 120km east of Xi'an and is considered the gateway to one of China's most sacred Taoist mountains. Our hotel is located in the foothills near the base of Mount Huashan.

Day 7 Mount Huashan (BLD)

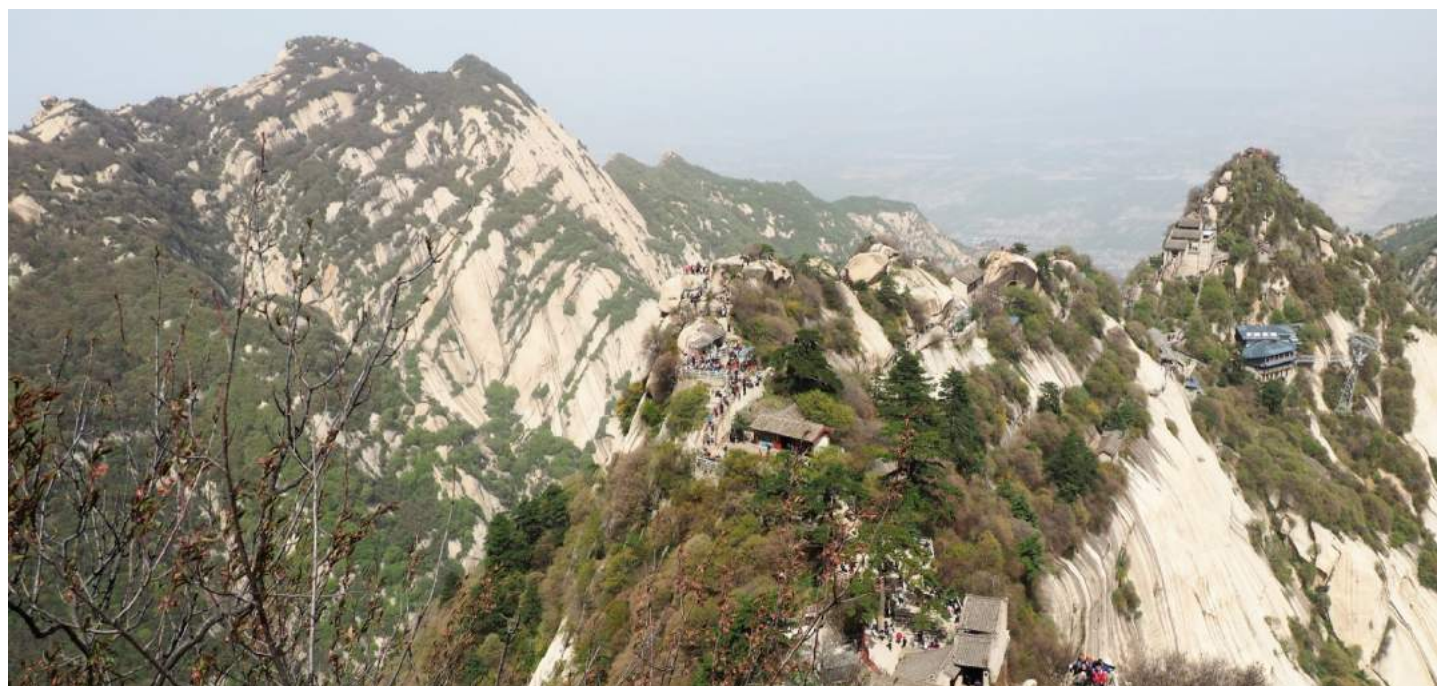
Walking @ 12km in 7 - 8 hours - elevation: + 2000m

Mount Huashan is the most westerly mountain of the Five Great Mountains of China and has a long history of religious pilgrimage. There are several Taoist temples where past emperors made sacrifices to the god of the mountain. There are five peaks to the mountain, each famous for varying reasons, but all now home to tea houses and shrines.

An ancient Chinese legend tells that there is only one true path up the mountain – a 12km trek scaling 1800m that took 3000 years to build. However, there are also two cable cars that will take you to the summits of the North and West peaks.

The North Peak or Cloud Terrace Peak has precipitous cliffs on all sides, often making it look like a flat plateau sitting amongst the clouds. It is the lowest of the five peaks, at 1614m. On the peak is Yiyun Pavilion which is a great vantage point for taking in the East Peak, South Peak, West Peak and Black Dragon Ridge. There are many attractions on North Peak, such as; Zhenwu Temple dedicated to the 'God of the North', Jiaogong Stone Chamber, Changchun Stone Chamber, Jade Maiden Window, and more.

Today we plan a full day of hiking on Mount Huashan. The walking routes are steep and physically demanding and our guide will make the final route selection based on the capacity and interests of the group, weather conditions and foot traffic on particular routes. We plan to walk up and to use the gondola down, hiking the many trails on the peak before returning to the hotel for dinner.



Day 8 Huashan - Xi'an (BLD)

Walking @ 5km

After breakfast we travel by bus (two-hours) to the site of the famous Entombed (Terracotta) Warriors.

The 2000-year-old Terracotta Warriors, crafted from clay to protect China's first emperor in the afterlife. Built between 246 - 206BC and rediscovered by farmers in 1974, the Terracotta army is one of the most significant archaeological finds in Chinese history. There are estimated to be over 7000 life-sized soldiers, each with unique facial features and uniforms. Assembled in formation with horses and chariots, positioned in army ranking, the mausoleum housing the warriors offers a fascinating look into ancient Chinese customs.

Often called the birthplace of Chinese civilisation, at the eastern end of the fabled Silk Road, Xi'an was originally named Chang'an, meaning 'the eternal city'. From here the First Emperor of Qin united the warring factions throughout China and through many name changes, the city became home to 13 Imperial dynasties.

We continue into the city of Xi'an and our central accommodation for two nights. In the afternoon there is a guided walk through the Muslim quarter visiting the Great Mosque, the Bell and Drum Towers and street food markets.

Day 9 Xi'an (BLD)

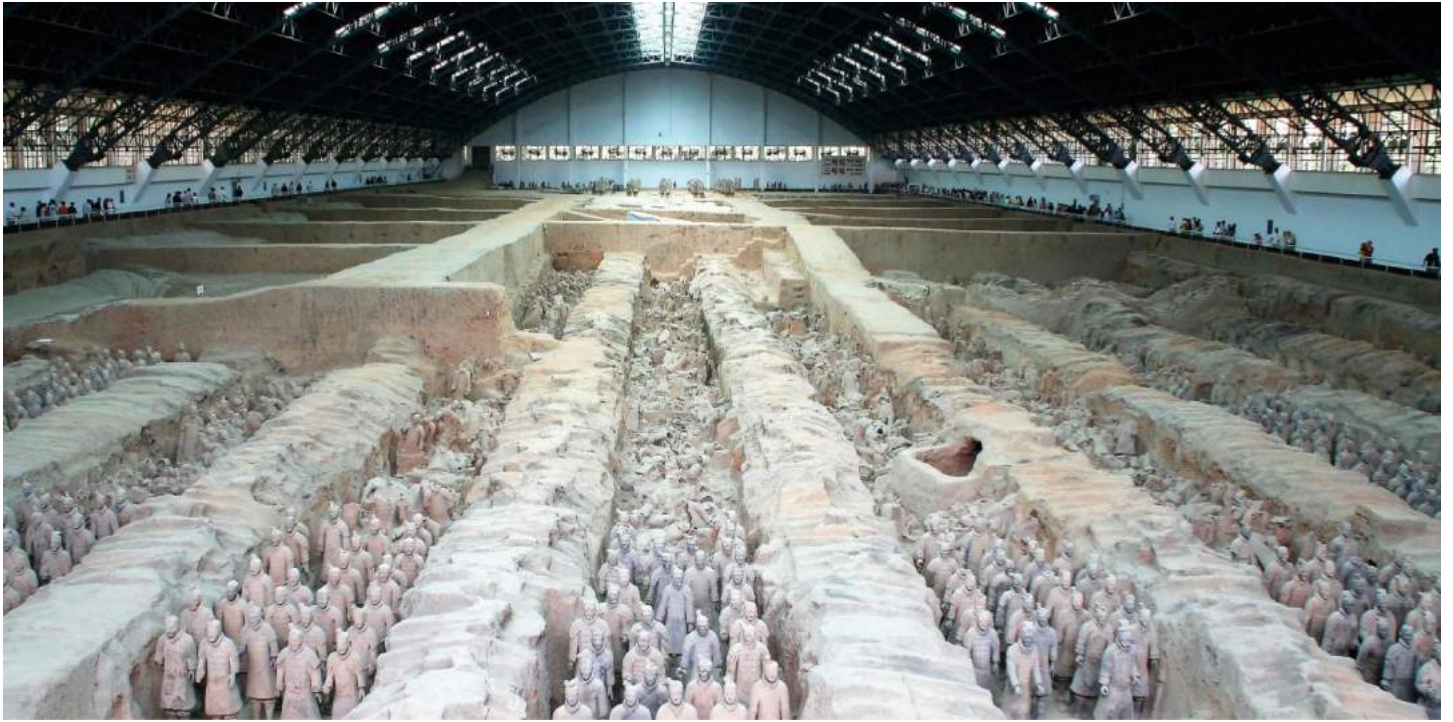
Walking @ 5km

Most visitors to Xi'an stay briefly with a focus on the Entombed Warriors but there is much more to the history of China at the Qian Ling Tombs. We plan a day visiting the tomb sites far from the usual crowds.

Located in the Guanzhong plain, China's 'Valley of the Kings', is the burial grounds for 18 of the 20 Emperors of the Tang dynasty and is the final resting place of China's only Empress. Known for her beauty, intelligence and cruelty, Empress Wu ruled for 16 years, once she usurped power after her husband Emperor Gaozong died.

The Qian Ling mausoleum comprises a complex of underground chambers, many headless statues, gardens, and imperial quarters where the souls of the past monarchs are said to live. What is unusual about this mausoleum is the 'Tablet without Characters'. Emperors were known for erecting steles or stone tablets detailing their achievements; Empress Wu's tablet mysteriously has no such engravings.

Qian Ling is the only mausoleum of the Tang dynasty believed to have not been plundered, suggesting that there could still be even greater archaeological finds than the Terracotta army.



Day 10 Xi'an – Guilin - Longji & Ping'an (BLD)

Walking @ 3 - 5km

Morning free and optional walking tour of the ancient and well-preserved city walls of Xi'an.

Afternoon transfer to the airport for the flight to Guilin and transfer by bus to Longji and the village of Ping'an where we stay for two nights. This is an ethnic minority Zhuang village in the mountains, a region renowned for spectacular views and terraced rice fields.

Possibly the most incredible rice fields in the world, Longji, or Dragon's Back was first created in the Yuan Dynasty (1271 - 1368) and was completed in the early Qing dynasty (1644-1911) spanning over 650 years. The rice terraces are built into the hillside and wind around the slopes like ribbons with the field colours and water reflections changing with the seasons. The village of Ping'an is over 300 years old and its inhabitants continue to wear traditional dress and follow their simple living customs.



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Day 11 Longji (BLD)

Walking @ 9km in 6 - 7 hours - elevation: + 250m

Full day of walking in the mountains from Ping An to Da Zhai village.

The small village of Da Zhai is home to the ethnic minority of Yao people. The Yao women are famous for their long hair and colourful clothing. The layout of the Da Zhai village mimics the rice terraces; the traditional cabins look as though they are stacked on top of one another, alluding to the idea that they are integral part of the landscape.

We take the cable car from the valley of Da Zhai to the 'Golden Buddha Peak' viewpoint, where we can walk with our guide to two viewpoints.

Day 12 Longji -Yangshuo (BLD)

Today after breakfast we transfer to Yangshuo on the River Li, not far from Guilin. This small town now attracts domestic and international tourists alike who come to see the dramatic forest encrusted karst stone peaks – often depicted in traditional Chinese paintings – an array of temples, cave and rock formations and the meandering River Li. We stay here for two nights to explore the mountains and river.

Day 13 Yangshuo (BLD)

Walking @ 5km in 4 hours - elevation: + 170m

Morning free to discover Yangshuo with optional bike hire. In the afternoon we take a guided walk to explore the karst rock formations including Moon Hill.

Chinese artists have been painting the dramatic landscape for centuries. Written 1200 years ago, Han Yu described the landscape as: "The river winds like a green silk ribbon, while the hills are like jade hairpins", an apt description for this region. Moon Peak is a 250m hill with an almost perfect circular hole in the middle with many different hiking routes to reach the peak for panoramic views.

Day 14 Yangshuo - Guilin (BLD)

Walking @ 3 - 5km

Transfer after breakfast to Guilin and check-in to a central hotel for 1 night. In the afternoon join the guide for a city walk. There is also free time to take a walk around the shopping areas and markets or along the River Li to watch the sunset before our farewell dinner.

Located in the autonomous region of Guangxi Zhuang, Guilin offers stunning landscapes and natural wonders it's said in an old Chinese saying that "Guilin's hills and water are best under heaven". Guilin has an extensive political history; due to its rich resources and strategic geographical position.



Day 15 Guilin – Shenzhen – Hong Kong (B)

This morning after breakfast we travel by train to Shenzhen and cross the border to Hong Kong. The tour ends on arrival at the central station.

For those who prefer we can arrange central accommodation in Hong Kong at extra cost – ask for details.

Hong Kong is not just skyscrapers and shopping centres, it is mostly mountains, country parks and nature reserves. Discover the golden pagoda in the Buddhist gardens, eat dim sum or dine out at some of the cheapest Michelin star restaurants in the world, take Star Ferry to see Victoria Harbour or hike to Lion Rock.



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