

CLASSIC CHINA**with Yangtze River Cruise****12 days**

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Day 1 Arrival in Shanghai

Welcome to China!

Shanghai, among the two or three largest cities in the world, is China's most populous as well as its most "urban" city. Despite the profound changes in social and economic structure brought on since 1949, Shanghai retains the look and feel of a great Western metropolis, with a population that seems quite at home amidst the press of crowds and the throbbing energy and diversity of city life. In many ways, Shanghai's ambiance is more like that of New York or Rome than that of Beijing or Guangzhou.

The easiest and quickest way into central Shanghai is aboard the world's fastest train, which, at 430 km / hour, whisks you to the city centre in just 8 minutes. Those passengers who have booked flights with Adventures Abroad will be met at the airport and accompanied onto the train by a local transfer agent. From the train a private vehicle will take you the remainder of the way to the hotel.

Overnight in Shanghai.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Shanghai: City Touring

Our first stop is at the Shanghai World Financial Center, an astonishingly high building reaching 492-metres. We will go by elevator to the 94th floor observatory deck for fantastic views over the city below. It is located in the Pudong district of Shanghai, an area that swiftly sprung up in the huge economic growth enjoyed in the new millennium.

Afterwards we will continue by bus to the famed Bund where we will enjoy a stroll along the Huangpu River, soaking in the atmosphere of one of the most recognizable architectural symbols of Shanghai. The word 'bund' derives from an Anglo-Indian word for an embankment along a muddy waterfront, and that is what it was in the beginning when the first British company opened an office there in 1846. It became the epitome of elegance during Shanghai's history as a city of trade.

Time permitting, this afternoon we take a leisurely stroll in the beautiful Yu Garden, established in 1559 and considered one of the most lavish and finest Chinese gardens in the region. At nearby Yuyuan Market, we discover a bustling bazaar selling traditional Chinese arts and crafts, as well as a mish-mash of items including chopsticks, Chinese medicine, walking sticks, fans, silk umbrellas, bamboo and rattan furniture, goldfish, pottery, plus much more. Food is also a great temptation in Yuyuan Market with local delicacies such as xiao long bao, pigeon egg dumplings, and spicy cold noodles from the street stalls or numerous restaurants.

This evening you may consider attending an optional acrobatic show (your Tour Leader will assist).

PLEASE NOTE: The start time of today's program will depend on the arrival time of your Tour Leader, who is coming from Guilin with travellers booked on a longer tour option (code CN4).

Overnight in Shanghai.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Shanghai - Zhujiajiao - Shanghai

Early this morning we embark by bus on a half-day trip to Zhujiajiao, a charming canal-based town dating back to the time of the Yuan Dynasty. The old town is very compact and we will have a leisurely visit that features such sights as the Qing Dynasty Post Office, the Kezhi Gardens and the Fangsheng Bridge, built in 1571 and featuring a five arches. Here is where we will board small covered boats for an exploration of the town by canals.

After taking the opportunity for some lunch and free time we will proceed back to Shanghai to continue our sightseeing.

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Our first stop will be at the fascinating Shanghai Museum located at People's Park. The museum is an ultra-modern repository for 5,000 years of history and tradition; its striking design by Xing Tonghe invokes the shape of a bronze ding tripod. The museum's bronze, ceramic, painting and calligraphy collections are among the finest in the world, and the range of its collections displayed in 14 state-of-the-art galleries is unparalleled.

This evening we will enjoy an early dinner in the French Concession. The tree-lined avenues and their many Tudor mansions in the area still retain an air of "the Paris of the East."

After our dinner we will make our way to board our evening cruise of the Huangpu River. This river cruise features the incredible sights of the Pudong area at night, buildings brightly lit in a variety of ever-changing colours. On the opposite bank lies the charming subtly lit Bund. The cruise lasts nearly an hour. Afterwards we will return to our hotel.

Overnight in Shanghai.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Shanghai - Chongqing - Yangtze Cruise

Today we fly to Chongqing, the main starting point for downstream cruises along the Yangtze River gorges, a stunning riverine passage. The famous gorges of the Yangtze lie in a 189 km (118 mile) stretch between Chongqing and Yichang, with towering mountains that drop almost perpendicularly into the river as if hewn by an axe. The spectacular grandeur of these walls and the turgid river that roars through them have long been the subject of China's romantic poets and painters.

Yangtze cruise ships are generally about 300 ft long with an average capacity of about 150 passengers. A typical boat will have 4 decks and various amenities such as ballroom, beauty salon, business center, shopping boutique, game room, reading room, satellite phone/TV, restaurants and coffee shop. Cabins are outward-facing with lower twin berths, picture windows, ample closet space, en suite bath and toilet, and air-conditioning.

This itinerary reflects what typically happens on a downstream cruise. There may be some variation in content and order depending on weather, water level, and other logistical considerations. You will be updated with the finalized itinerary upon boarding.

Time permitting, we may be able to conduct some sightseeing in Chongqing, particularly the Huguang Guild Hall, a community centre for immigrants from Hu (Hubei and Hunan) and Guang (Guangdong and Guangxi) Provinces several hundred years ago. Now a museum, it has been elaborately restored and features fine wood and ceramic work.

Before boarding our cruise we will enjoy a traditional "hotpot" dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight Yangtze River Cruise.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Yangtze Cruise

Today we have an excursion to the town of Fengdu, said to be the abode of devils and ghosts. The origin of the town's extraordinary reputation can be traced back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) when two officials, Yin and Wang, became Taoist recluses here and eventually immortals. Later in Tang Dynasty their names when combined mean "King of the Under World".

Today tourists come to visit temples and shrines dedicated to the gods of the underworld. Landmarks here bear horrific names: Last-Glance-at-Home Tower, Nothing-to-be-done Bridge and Ghost Torturing Pass.

Later we continue the cruise through the Qutang and Wu gorges. Our river guide will talk about the historic sites, including Ancient Plank Road, Bellows Gorge, Chalk Wall, and the 12 lofty and misty peaks and precipices in the Wu Gorge.

Overnight Yangtze River Cruise.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Yangtze Cruise

Today we make an excursion along the Shennong Stream, comprised of Parrot Gorge and Dragon Boot Gorge, both with breathtaking scenery (may be substituted with Shennu Stream). Moving through the treacherous gorges with lush pine and translucent water, visitors can see spectacular sights like ancient suspension coffins and aquatic caves.

Later today (or tomorrow morning) we have an excursion to the Three Gorges Dam, taking a bus across the Three Gorges Bridge which leads toward the top of the hill for a bird's-eye view of the construction from the observation deck. Visitors will observe the five-step ship lock, the diversion canal, and the power station. Our guide will provide detailed information on the history of the dam and facts on its construction. In addition, an exhibition room displays a model of the dam and surrounding buildings.

Overnight Yangtze River Cruise.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Yangtze Cruise - Yichang - Xi'an

This morning we arrive in Yichang and our Yangtze River cruise ends; we connect with our flight to Xi'an and transfer to our hotel.

Overnight Xi'an.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8 Xi'an: Terracotta Warriors

Today we view the Terracotta Warriors, an impressive legion of thousands of life-size terra cotta warriors that has been guarding the emperor's burial site for over 2,000 years. In 1974, a group of peasants digging a well in Lintong County, about 30 km east of Xi'an, accidentally made one of the century's greatest archeological discoveries. What they stumbled upon were thousands of life-size terracotta warriors; an estimated 8,000 figures have thus far been identified.

We also visit the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, a Buddhist temple complex on the way back to Xi'an from the Terracotta Warrior Museum. Afterwards we continue to the Great Mosque, a five minute walk from the Drum Tower in the center of Xi'an. Inscriptions from the stone tablets indicate that the Great Mosque, located at Huajue Lane, was established in AD 742 during the Tang Dynasty. After restorations in the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the present complex proudly ranks among the largest mosques in China. Unlike Arabic mosques which have splendid domes, minarets reaching into the clouds, and colourful engraved sketches with dazzling patterns, the mosque is built in a Chinese traditional style with the grounds taken up by platforms, pavilions and halls.

Time-permitting, we will also drive to the City Walls of Xi'an where we can climb up to get more views of this remarkable city.

Overnight in Xi'an.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Xi'an - Beijing

This morning, we visit the museum dedicated to the tomb known as Han Yangling. Built in 2005 and regarded as one of the best of its kind in the world, the museum showcases not only the resting place of the occupant, Jing Di, but also how he and others lived during his time, the second century BC. The displays are exquisitely and sensitively done; the piles of hundreds of artifacts, in situ, are like a modern work of

"found" art.

From here we transfer to the nearby airport to fly to Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China. While many of its elements are common to other Chinese cities, the sum of this city -- its scope and presence in history -- has no equivalent in China or anywhere else in the world.

Beijing is not only the political and administrative center of the People's Republic of China, it is also China's single greatest repository of monuments and treasures from the imperial era. It is also the second-largest and fastest growing municipality in today's China, the home and workplace of 25 million people.

Overnight in Beijing.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Beijing: Forbidden City & Hutong Tour

We begin today with a visit to Tian'anmen Square, the place where one million students rallied for democracy in 1989. This is the largest public square in the world. Originally built in 1651, the square was quadrupled in size in 1958 to its present 40.5 hectares (100 acres) during a massive city-wide reconstruction program. Each flagstone is numbered so that parade units can line up in their assigned places.

From here we walk to the Forbidden City, a huge complex of palaces, pavilions, courtyards and gardens, which was off-limits to commoners for 500 years. This is where the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties carried out their administration and lived, now open as a Palace Museum.

Later we have a historical tour of Beijing's narrow streets, known as hutongs, on a traditional rickshaw (a type of tricycle designed to carry passengers in addition to the driver). We then visit a local home to learn about Chinese life from a family.

Today we include lunch and free up your evening for optional activities, such as a Kung-fu show. Your Tour Leader can assist with these arrangements.

Overnight in Beijing.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 11 Beijing: Great Wall & Summer Palace

This morning we travel north of Beijing to the Great Wall of China. A walk along the enormous undulating towered and turreted wall is spectacular. Rising and falling in concert with the ridges of the northern hills and undulating far off into the distance, the Great Wall consistently exceeds visitors' expectations and remains one of humankind's most remarkable accomplishments.

The wall's construction began during the Warring States Period (403-221 BC), when separate sections were built in scattered strategic areas. Following China's unification under the first Qin Emperor, 300,000 men -- many of them political prisoners whose bodies are buried in the wall -- were put to work connecting the segments into one huge rampart of stone and earth.

We will have plenty of free time to explore the wall before returning to Beijing early this afternoon.

After lunch we will have a tour of the Summer Palace, located in the northwest area of the city. During the late Qing Dynasty this was the summer retreat from Beijing's heat for the imperial family and court. In 1888 the notorious Empress Cixi used the money intended for the Chinese Navy to build this opulent summer retreat for herself. A marvel of design, the palace -- with its huge lake and hilltop views -- offers a pastoral escape into the landscapes of traditional Chinese painting.

Overnight in Beijing.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Departure

Departure from Beijing.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast