

China

THE SEAT OF THE ANCIENT EMPERORS - A SHOW PIECE OF THE MODERN WORLD

SAMPLE ITINERARY :: AUTHENTIC ASIA



Today's China is a country of contrasts, extremes, and juxtapositions. One minute you will find yourself dining in a five star restaurant looking towards the blinking sky line of Shanghai's magnificent Pudong area or shopping in an avant-garde gallery, while the next day you may stroll through a hidden alley in an ancient Muslim quarter where little has changed since the days of the great empire. You can explore the Forbidden City, walk on the Great Wall, and see the famous Terracotta Warriors; or you may choose to escape the crowds and float down a quiet river on a bamboo raft, enjoying a breathtaking backdrop of magnificent limestone peaks. This scene has been depicted in Chinese landscape scroll paintings since imperial times. The beauty of it all is that there will always be another surprise just around the corner!

Day 1 | Beijing

Once the seat of the Emperors, the showpiece of a revolution, and now—reinvented once again—Beijing is a happening 21st-century capital. Although many of the bicycles have been replaced by cars and the wave of modern architecture is astounding, the city still retains a stately, larger-than-life demeanor as a result of presiding over the Middle Kingdom for centuries.

Upon arrival in Beijing you will be met by your guide and driver and transferred to your hotel.

Accommodations: Peninsula Hotel

“We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us.”

- Anonymous

Day 2 | Beijing

Start the day at Tiantan Park where locals gather every morning. The park surrounds the Temple of Heaven, and the scene is most colorful in the mornings (especially on Sundays). The temple itself is a paragon of Ming Dynasty design. Its intricate wooden pagodas were built with no nails—just bracketing and joints (like most Chinese antique furniture). Before leaving the park via the east gate, stop by the Teahouse, where you can sit down to a flavorful lesson in Chinese tea ceremonies. It is touristy, but also interesting and fun enough to be worth the stop.

Next visit Panjiayuan Market, Beijing's largest outdoor antiques and flea market. It's an engaging scene even if you're not a shopper. If you are, buyer beware: most of the "antiques" are phony, and you must bargain hard for whatever souvenirs catch your eye.

The crowds at the Forbidden City will most likely have thinned some in the afternoon. Visit Tiananmen Square first, where the afternoon sun lights the imposing Stalin era–style buildings that surround the largest public square in the world: the Great Hall of the People, the National Museum of China, the Forbidden City (now called the Palace Museum), and the Mao Zedong Mausoleum. The Forbidden City, the largest and best preserved cluster of ancient buildings in China was once home to the Ming and Qing dynasties. The basic layout for the cities was established between 1406 and 1420 by Emperor Yongle, commanding battalions of up to a million laborers. The buildings now seen are mostly post 18th century, as is the case with a lot of restored or re-built structures around Beijing.

Conclude the day with a drive by the famous Olympic Bird’s Nest and the Water Tube building (no entrance to the buildings- just a photo stop from the outside).

Accommodations: Peninsula Hotel



Day 3 | Beijing

Much of what you've seen so far in Beijing has been historic, so now is the time to get a feel for the country's modern side. Factory 798 is a cluster of converted industrial buildings that is the center of Beijing's burgeoning arts scene. You will find galleries, cafés, and boutiques selling artist-designed items. The complex is enormous and labyrinthine. Two of the more well-regarded galleries are the Long March Project- a good not-for-profit organization that nurtures

new artistic talent, and the Commune Gallery founded by curator and critic Leng Lin and dedicated to top Chinese contemporary artists.

Next, drive to Caochangdi Village, a village and community in the Chaoyang District of Beijing. Caochangdi, which translates as “grasslands” is home to migrant workers, farmers, and students but is also home to Beijing’s burgeoning art scene with internationally recognized artists.

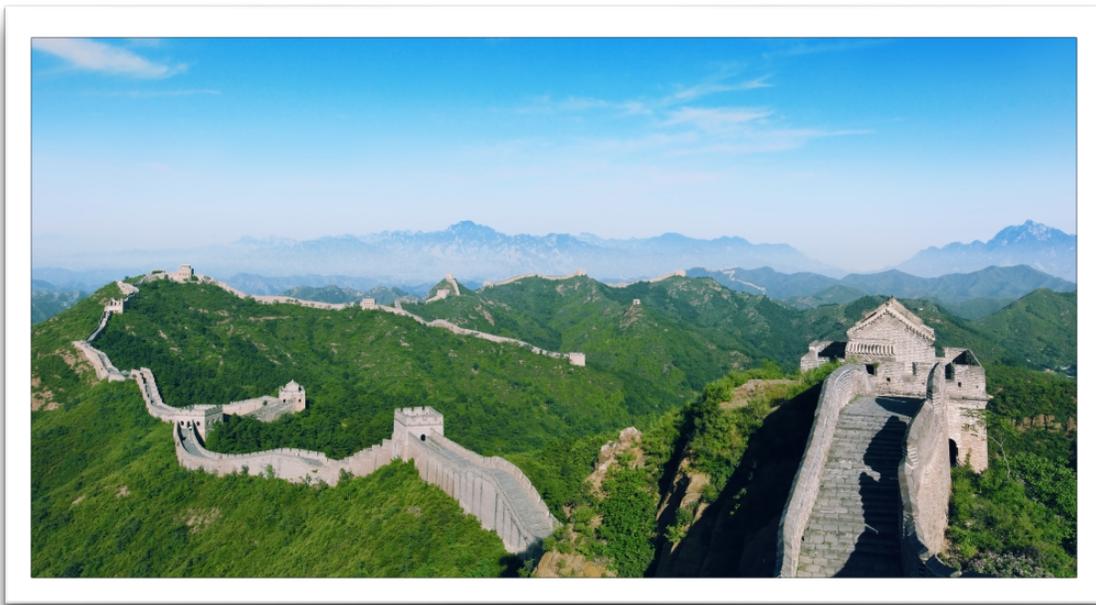
In the afternoon return back to “Old Beijing” for a tour of the Hutong area where one can envision how locals have lived for centuries in Beijing's traditional residential alleyways known as hutongs.

Accommodations: Peninsula Hotel

Day 4 | Beijing

Begin the day early! The earlier you get to the Great Wall, the world’s longest, built 2,200 years ago to protect China from invading armies, the better! We suggest leaving your hotel around 7 a.m. in order to avoid the tourist crowds as much as possible.

China’s strung out fortress of defense, the Great Wall, stretches from the North Korean border along roaring rivers, over high mountain passes and past Beijing until it finally disappears in the infinite sands of the northwest desert.



Your destination, the Great Wall area of Mutiyanyu, is less frequented by tourists than others. Located approximately 90 km northeast of the city, this section of the wall boasts 26 impressive watchtowers which can be reached by cable car.

Return to the city in the late afternoon.

Accommodations: Peninsula Hotel

Day 5 | Shanghai

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Shanghai.

Shanghai is the largest city in China with a population of over 20 million people. With its blinking sky-scrapers, thriving art scene, world class restaurants, and high end shops, it is one of the most vibrant cities in the world and, while retaining some of the atmosphere of the 1920s Paris of the East, it is now remolding itself in its own brash, glitzy, and self-confident image. The best view of Shanghai's Pudong area can be seen from the Bund, the famous waterfront.

This afternoon take a stroll along the waterfront and through the French Concession. While many of Shanghai's old lane houses are being bulldozed to make way for high rises, this district is filled with wide lanes and Western style mansions and gardens. This area is also home to the Jing Jiang Hotel, the art deco style complex where Richard Nixon and Zhou Enlai signed the Shanghai Communique in 1972, the treaty which led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Accommodations: Indigo Hotel

Day 6 | Shanghai

“One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.”

A day of sightseeing includes a visit to the Shanghai Museum which is least crowded when it opens at 9 a.m. It is arguably China's single best museum,

- Henry Miller

thanks to the scope and quality of its ancient art—bronzes, ceramics, paintings, furniture, calligraphy, jade, coins—and the technology it uses to display them so beautifully. Don't skip the intricate ethnic-minority costumes—China has more than 50 ethnic minorities, and the exhibit highlights just how distinctive they are—or the fabulous gift shop. You should allow for at least two hours to see the museum properly.

Next head to the Yu Yuan Garden, a traditional Chinese garden compound dating from 1559 that covers five acres and includes pools, pavilions, rockeries, and a zigzag bridge. It is located in the heart of Shanghai's Old City and just a few blocks from the Bund. The Yu Yuan Garden was built during the Ming Dynasty and also features a wonderful tea house that serves a delicious Shanghainese specialty lunch.

After lunch enjoy a stroll down Nanjing Road, Shanghai's biggest shopping street and some free time.

Accommodations: Indigo Hotel



Day 7 | Shanghai

Depart this morning on a short 35 minute train to Suzhou.

Dating back some 2,500 years, Suzhou is one of the oldest towns in the Yangzi Basin. With the completion of a Grand Canal during the Sui Dynasty, Suzhou found itself strategically located on a major trading route, and the city's fortune and size grew rapidly. Suzhou flourished as a center of shipping and grain storage, bustling with merchants and artisans. By the 12th century the town had attained its present dimensions. By the 14th century Suzhou had established

itself as China's leading silk producer. Aristocrats, pleasure seekers, famous scholars, actors and painters were attracted to the city, constructing villas and garden retreats for themselves.

Upon arrival in the city, visit the Master of Nets Garden, often considered the most exquisite small garden in Suzhou. Enjoy a tour of the local museum, designed by I.M. Pei, the only world renowned Chinese architect and one of the most important architectural artists of the 20th century. The museum was completed in the fall of 2006 and has the character of the Suzhou style gardens, yet also blends the simple geometric form of modern art.

You might also want to visit the Silk Factory. Although it is very touristy and, of course they hope that you will buy something, it does show the evolution of the silk industry and the production of silk starting with the silk worm to the finished product. For that reason it is worth stopping by.

Conclude your visit to Suzhou with a private boat ride through the old canals before returning by train to Shanghai.

Accommodations: Indigo Hotel

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”

- St. Augustine

Day 8 | Xian

Enjoy a free morning until your transfer to the airport for a mid-day flight to Xian. Upon arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

The legendary city of Xian, once the terminus of the famous Silk Road and a place where emperors reigned and merchants, monks, and warriors lived side by side still retains a few of its historical sites, providing a link into the past and the glorious days of the ancient empire.

With a little imagination, one can still hear sounds and footsteps of the traders from foreign lands, mingling in the crowded and narrow lanes of the Muslim quarter.

Remainder of the day at leisure.

Accommodations: Sofitel Hotel



Day 9 | Xian

Begin the day with a visit to the site of the famous Terracotta Warriors. The warriors and horses are considered to be one of the most important archaeological excavations of the 20th century. The origin of the site dates back to 246 B.C when the first Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang ascended the throne at the age of 13. At the time he took over the throne, he began the work on his mausoleum. In 1974 a group of peasants uncovered some pottery while digging for a well nearby the royal tomb. Archaeologist from all over the world began excavating the site which today is one of China's main attractions.

In the afternoon spend time exploring the Old City starting with a stroll through the Muslim Quarter that has been home to China's Hui minority for centuries. Here the men wear the traditional white skullcaps and the women cover their hair with colorful headscarves.

Visit the Great Mosque, one of China's largest, displaying a beautiful mix of Chinese and Islamic architecture. Elegant calligraphy has been used to decorate the entryways, the central minaret is disguised as a pagoda and the gardens are dotted in typical Chinese style with rocks and enhanced with elaborate archways.

Stop at the Bell and Drum Tower before reaching Xian's most famous landmark, the Big Goose Pagoda dating back to 652 when it was built to house the Buddhist scriptures brought to China by a monk named Xuan Zang. He spent most of his life translating the texts, some of which are still in use today. Time permitting make your way to the Shaanxi History Museum, well worth a visit as it is considered one of China's best.

Accommodations: Sofitel Hotel



Day 10 | Lijiang

A morning flight takes you to Kunming connecting to Lijiang. Upon arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

Lijiang is home to the country's ethnic minority groups living in Yunnan province. There are 26 of China's 56 different ethnic minority groups living in this province. These represent a remarkable contrast in languages, traditions, and artistic expression and include Mon-Khmer, Tibetan-Burman, Sin-Vietnamese, Tibetan, and even Australasian groups. This sweeping tapestry aptly reflects the province's geographic situation – deep in the southwest corner of China, at the crossroads of Tibet, India, and Southeast Asia. Add to this diversity an astonishing geographic make-up – high mountains, deep valleys, broad plateaus, tropical rainforest, alpine meadows, and towering pine forest. It is truly world within a province.

Accommodations: [Zen Garden Hotel](#)

Day 11 | Lijiang

Spend the morning walking through the Old Town of Lijiang (walking only – no cars allowed), which covers approximately four square kilometers. The town was originally established in the late 13th century during the period of the Mongol invasions. Then the Naxi minority people abandoned their original capital at Baisha village and moved into the area of the Old Town. Through time, the town grew and prospered and the Naxi clans living with the town began to

have greater interaction with the Han and Tibetans who also settled in the area. The Old Town has prospered under the 1999 ordinance that gave it the status of a UNESCO World Heritage site. The ordinance strongly prohibits any modern development and all repairs and construction must be in the style of the original buildings.

In the afternoon, head to the Jade Dragon Mountain, located 15 kilometers north of the county seat of Lijiang. It has 13 peaks, stretching 35 kilometers from north to south. Shanzidou, the main peak reaches a height of 5,596 meters above sea level. Jade Dragon is considered a holy mountain by the Naxi people. From here continue on to the small Baisha village. Before Kublai Khan made it part of its Yuan empire (1271-1368), Baisha was the capital of the Naxi Kingdom. Visiting Baisha is like stepping back in time.

The Naxi people are descendants of the ethnic Tibetan Qiang tribe and lived until recently in matrilineal families. In this matriarchal society, the “friend system” allowed a couple to live in separate residencies with their respective families. The man would be allowed to come and spend the night at the woman’s home but would then return to live and work at his mother’s house. Children born to the couple belonged to the woman and were raised by the woman but it was the man’s responsibility to support them for as long as the relationship lasted.

Accommodations: [Zen Garden Hotel](#).

Day 12 | Zhongdian

The day is highlighted with a trip to the spectacular Tiger Leaping Gorge. After making its first turn at Shigu, the mighty Yangtze River surges between the Haba Mountains and the Yulong through one of the deepest gorges in the world. The entire gorge measures 16 kilometers and it is a mind boggling 3,900 meters from the waters to the snow capped mountain tops.

After visiting the gorge, continue on a drive to Zhongdian and check-in at the Songstamten Hotel.

Accommodations: [Songsamten Hotel](#)

Day 13 | Zhongdian

Zhongdian is home to the Khampa Tibetans. It is also known as Gyalthag (the local Tibetan name) and Shangri-La. A few years ago, Zhongdian became the “official location” of the fictional Shangri-La in James Hilton's novel Lost Horizon—a place that Hilton described as having "snow mountains, grassland, Tibetan people, red soil plateau, three rivers flowing along, colorless snow-tea, and a lamasery.”



Spend the day visiting the Lamasera, one of Yunnan's most rewarding monasteries, Bita and Shudu Lake and enjoy time with some of the local nomadic families.

Accommodations: Songsamten Hotel

Day 14 | Longshen

Today is a traveling day! First take a flight to Kunming, connecting to Guilin where you will be met by your local guide and driver and will be transferred to the Li An Lodge located amidst the Longshen Rice Terraces.

This area of China is made up of sloping verdant hills sculptured with rice terraces and studded with Yao and Zhuang minority villages. Please keep in mind that many of the villages can only be reached by foot and that access to the rice terraces is often only by foot! Local sightseeing will involve a fair amount of walking as you travel through the small villages and to some of the country's most impressive rice terraces.

Accommodations: Li An Lodge

Day 15 | Longshen

Spend most of the day exploring this stunning area where a mesmerizing pattern of undulating fields has been cut into the surrounding hills. These terraces, known as the "Dragon's Backbone," are amazing in both their scale and their beauty. They are worked, and have been for generations, by rice farmers from the local Yao, Dong, Zhuang, and Miao communities, who build their houses in villages on the terraced hills. You will have a chance to visit these villages and walk through the rice terraces learning more about this ancient way of life that still exists to this day.

Accommodations: Li An Lodge

“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it or we find it not.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Day 16 | Yangshuo

During your final days in China, head to Yangshuo, the once legendary backpacker hang-out just 70 kilometers south of Guilin. Guilin gets all the press but Yangshuo, a great laid back base from which to visit other small villages in the nearby countryside arguably surpasses it visually.

Its spectacular karst landscape is at times otherworldly and the towering leaf limestone peaks are reminiscent of the magnificent scenes depicted on many Chinese scroll paintings.

Spend a leisurely after in the neighboring Xingping area where the mountain scenery is breathtaking and dotted with many caves. Xingping is well known all throughout China as it is shown on the back of the Y20 banknote. Its history dates back more than 1000 years. It represents quintessential rural China with scenes of wallowing water buffaloes and farmers tending to their crop in front of the prominent limestone peaks.

Accommodations: Yangshuo Mountain Resort

Day 17 | Yangshuo

Conclude your journey through China embarking on a private bamboo raft for a trip down the Yulong River. It is a small, quiet river but the scenery is nothing but amazing. You will have a chance to stop along the way and visit some of the villages strewn along the river or you may



even want to take a rented bicycle with you for a leisurely ride through the countryside. Time permitting, aim for the Dragon Bridge, a 600-year-old stone arched construction which is among the largest in the area. If you feel adventurous enough, you might even want to go for a dip in the cool waters!

Accommodations: Yangshuo Mountain Resort

Day 18 | Departure

Transfer to Guilin airport for your departure flight.

End of Services.

The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.

Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.

Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to China please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at info@authenticasia.net or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.

