



china

With over 5,000 years of history and a landmass roughly the size of Europe, nothing can quite compare with China's extraordinary cultural and natural heritage and, with the country developing rapidly and an improving infrastructure, there has never been a better time to visit this remarkable land.

Visitors to this immense country will be drawn by the ancient mystique of the Silk Road, by the imperial splendour of Beijing and the Great Wall, and by the watercolours of Guilin whose dramatic landscapes have been the inspiration for generations of China's poets and painters. Equally mesmerising are Suzhou's ornate gardens, the world-famous Terracotta Army at Xi'an, and the cosmopolitan kaleidoscope that is Shanghai.

Those who wish to delve deeper into China's unique cultural heritage will be drawn to the Naxi capital of Lijiang with its centuries old maze of cobbled streets, to the elegant Qing architecture of Pingyao, and to the fabulous Buddhist cave art in the remote northern deserts of Dunhuang.

China's natural heritage is no less compelling and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the southern province of Yunnan. Shielded behind the mountains of Sichuan and dissected by the mighty Yangtse and Mekong rivers, Yunnan is an enchanting land of snowbound peaks, alpine lakes and tropical jungles, home to some thirty different ethnic peoples. To the north, Dechen Prefecture, or 'Shangri La' as it is better known, is a remote and stunningly beautiful region on the border with Tibet where you can trek through lichen clad forests or ride across high plateaux in the shadow of the Himalayas.

TRAVEL GUIDE

VISA REQUIREMENTS

UK Passport holders currently require a visa for China and Mongolia. Non British Passport holders should check requirements.

HEALTH ADVICE

No vaccinations are currently required, but the following are recommended: Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Polio and Tetanus.

FLYING TIME

Beijing 9hrs 55mins
Hong Kong 11hrs 35mins

LOCAL TIME

China GMT + 8hrs
Mongolia GMT + 8hrs
Hong Kong GMT + 8hrs



WHEN TO VISIT

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
China			✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	

✓✓ indicates the optimum time to visit

Ultimate China

Across the Empire from Beijing to Guilin

From north to south across the country's huge canvas, this captivating journey offers a comprehensive introduction to China's extraordinary cultural and natural heritage.

The journey begins in the capital, Beijing, with a few days to explore such landmarks as the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven and Summer Palace, and enjoy a day's hike along a wilder section of the Great Wall. Following an overnight stop at the ancient walled city of Pingyao, you move on to Xi'an and the wondrous spectacle of the Terracotta Army, before flying south-west to the burgeoning city of Shanghai, where the Old Quarter and the grand 1920s and 30s architecture of the Bund sit alongside today's glass towers. Finally you return inland for a well-earned rest amidst the stunning natural beauty of Guilin and Yangshou, where this wonderful journey ends.

Sample itinerary:

Day 1: Depart London. **2/4:** Arrive Beijing. City sightseeing of Beijing & excursion to Great Wall. Overnights The Peninsula. **5:** Overnight train to Pingyao. **6:** Arrive Pingyao. City sightseeing. Overnight Tianyuankui Courtyard Hotel. **7/8:** Fly to Xian. City sightseeing. Overnight Sofitel Remin Square. **9/10:** Fly to Shanghai. City sightseeing. Overnight The Peninsula. **11:** Fly to Guilin. Overnight Guilin Sheraton Hotel. **12/13:** Drive to Yangshou. Li River cruise. Overnights Paradise Hotel. **14/15:** Fly to London via Hong Kong.

Dates: To suit individual requirements.

Price: From £3,795 per person (based on 2 people travelling).



A China Odyssey

Highlights of the 'Divine Land'

This absorbing journey combines the fascinating historical legacy of China's imperial past, the pandas of Chengdu, the natural beauty and ethnical diversity of Yunnan Province in the south, and the burgeoning city of Shanghai.

You begin in the capital, Beijing, with the Forbidden City and other distinguished imperial monuments, and a walk on the celebrated Great Wall, before flying south Xi'an, the ancient political and cultural centre where the imperial legacy is no less impressive in its many monuments and archaeological sites, most notably the magnificent Terracotta Army. The second week of your journey is spent in the south starting with the pretty town of Chengdu, close to the fascinating Panda Breeding Research Base. From here you fly to Yunnan Province where highlights include the enchanting town of Lijiang, whose cobbled streets, arched bridges and canals date back to the Ming Dynasty, before ending your journey in the vibrant city of Shanghai.

Sample itinerary:

Day 1: Depart London. **2/4:** Arrive Beijing. City & Great Wall sightseeing. Overnights Raffles Beijing Hotel. **5/6:** Fly to Xi'an. City & Terracotta Warriors sightseeing. Overnights Sofitel Hotel. **7:** Fly to Chengdu. Overnight Shangri La Hotel. **8/11:** Visit to Giant Panda Breeding Institute. Fly to Lijiang. City sightseeing and excursions to Dayan, Yu Hu Village, Yongfeng Monastery & Wenhai Lake. Overnights Banyan Tree Lijiang. **12/14:** Fly to Shanghai. City & Suzhou sightseeing. Overnights The Peninsula. **15:** Fly to London.

Dates: To suit individual requirements.

Price: From £4,545 per person (based on 2 people travelling).

The Silk Road

In the footsteps of the merchant caravans

This adventurous tour follows the fabled Silk Road, exploring the desolate landscapes, lost cities, ancient trading outposts and vibrant markets that have captured the imagination for centuries.

Your journey begins in the beautiful desert town of Dunhuang, with visits to the Western Thousand Buddha Caves and Mogao Grottos. From here, drive to Jiayuguan, starting point for the Silk Road odyssey and from where you can visit the very western end of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall at Jiayuguan Pass. Continue by overnight train to Turpan at the second lowest point on earth, before driving to Urumqi with its vibrant and colourful local markets. You then fly to Kashgar an oasis outpost rich in Central Asian culture, and the westernmost city in China. It is here your journey ends with the opportunity to visit the fabulous Kashgar Sunday Market. **NB: In order to include a visit to the Kashgar Sunday Market, it is necessary to depart London on a Sunday.**

Sample itinerary:

Day 1: Depart London. **2:** Arrive Beijing. Overnights Park Plaza Beijing. **3/4:** Fly to Dunhuang. City & Taklimakan Desert sightseeing. Overnights Silk Road Hotel. **5:** Drive to Jiayuguan. Overnight Garden Hotel. **6:** Excursion to Ming Dynasty Great Wall. Overnight train to Turpan. **7:** Arrive Turpan. City sightseeing. Overnight Turpan Oasis Hotel. **8/9:** Drive to Urumqi via Tuyog. City & markets sightseeing. Overnights Hoi Tak Hotel. **10/11:** Fly to Kashgar. City sightseeing & Kashgar Sunday Market. **12:** Fly to Beijing. Overnight Park Plaza Beijing. **13:** Fly to London.

Dates: To suit individual requirements.

Price: From £3,375 per person (based on 2 people travelling).



China – Ancient and Modern

From Hong Kong to the Tibetan Plateau

This captivating journey from the cosmopolitan city of Hong Kong to the enchanting outposts of the Tibetan Plateau in Yunnan, illustrates perfectly the contrasts between the China of old and today's dynamic country.

From Hong Kong you fly to Yunnan, a land of snowbound peaks, verdant terraced fields and rugged frontier lands, populated by some thirty different ethnic peoples and seemingly frozen in time. In the charming town of Lijiang, whose cobbled streets, arched bridges and canals date back to the Ming Dynasty, you explore traditional villages, thriving markets, fine monasteries and majestic scenery. Continue north, via the spectacular Tiger Leaping Gorge on the Yangtze River, to Zhongdian, which is surrounded by snow-capped mountains and is renowned for its traditional Tibetan culture and hospitality. The tour ends back in Hong Kong with the opportunity to explore this vibrant bastion of commerce and symbol of modern China.

Sample itinerary:

Day 1: Depart London. **2:** Arrive Hong Kong. Overnight Intercontinental Hotel. **3/6:** Fly to Lijiang via Kunming. City sightseeing and excursions to Dayan, Yu Hu Village, Yongfeng Monastery & Wenhai Lake. Overnights Banyan Tree, Lijiang. **7/9:** Drive via Tiger Leaping Gorge to Zhongdian. Excursions to Songzanlin Monastery & Shudu Lake. Overnights Banyan Tree, Ringha. **10/11:** Fly to Hong Kong via Kunming. Independent sightseeing. Overnights Intercontinental Hotel. **12:** Fly to London.

Dates: To suit individual requirements.

Price: From £3,295 per person in January and February, and £3,695 per person during rest of the year (based on 2 people travelling).

banyan tree hotels

The renowned Banyan Tree hotel group has recently opened two new properties in Yunnan - Lijiang, in the 'Venice of the Orient' as this historic town is known, and Ringha, a stunning retreat high in the mountains. Both are ideally situated for exploring this fascinating and undiscovered region of China.



Banyan Tree Lijiang

Situated close to Lijiang's Old Town, with panoramic views of the sacred Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, the Banyan Tree Lijiang has brought a new standard of accommodation to the region. The resort offers guests a luxurious retreat ideally situated to explore the city and countryside.

The 55 villas, of varying sizes, are beautifully appointed with indigenous handicrafts, each with a private garden and some a private pool. Good amenities include a Chinese banquet-style restaurant, a traditional tea house, an outdoor swimming pool, tennis court and a Banyan Tree Spa.



Banyan Tree Ringha

Nestled in a remote Tibetan valley in western Yunnan, the Banyan Tree Ringha lies in a magnificent setting. Decorated in a style reflecting the local Tibetan culture, the hotel provides an extremely comfortable base from which to explore the wonderful sights of this fascinating region.

Housed in painstakingly rebuilt traditional farmhouses, the 20 lodges are beautifully furnished in ethnic style and feature cosy fireplaces and wooden balconies with valley or river views. Facilities include two warm and inviting restaurants, a tea house and an excellent Banyan Tree Spa.

china options

The itineraries featured in this section of the brochure cover many of China's principal attractions, but in a country of such diversity and scale it would be impossible to include them all. Here are a few more ideas that you might wish to consider...

Guizhou Trek

Guizhou remains one of China's best-kept secrets, a remote and isolated backwater in the south-west of the country, with stunning mountain landscapes and colourful ethnic diversity. A leisurely 6-day trek through the heart of Guizhou, with nights en-route spent at local village houses, gives a rare insight into the region's culture and traditions.

Yangtze River Cruise

Victoria Cruises run a variety of regular 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8-night cruises on the Yangtze between Shanghai, Yichang and Chongqing. The Yangtze Explorer operates a smaller luxury 3 or 4-night cruise between Yichang and Chongqing. Both vessels include visits to the spectacular dam and the dramatic gorges on this legendary river.

Mongolia

Nestled between China and Russia, Mongolia is an ideal extension to a tour of China, being less than two hours flying from Beijing. It is also a country with much to offer, with its unique 'tribal' culture and majestic scenery. From the vibrant capital, Ulan Batur, to the stunning landscape of the countryside and its many national parks, Mongolia is definitely worth of consideration.

Lhasa and The Tibetan Plateau

The overland journey from Kathmandu to the 'forbidden city' of Lhasa, through the Himalaya and across the vast expanse of the Tibetan Plateau, is as challenging as it is dramatic. However the rewards are great, from the astonishing mountain scenery of the plateau to the charm of Lhasa and its exquisite Potala Palace.



japan

Japan is an archipelago of over 4,000 islands, most of which are mountainous and many volcanic, a prime example being the often snow capped Mount Fuji.

The largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku. These islands offer an astonishing array of choice to the visitor, from the glittering lights of Tokyo and the ancient temples of Kyoto, to the Kaga Onsen hot springs and the spectacular mountain landscapes.

TRAVEL GUIDE

VISA REQUIREMENTS

UK Passport holders currently do not require a visa for Japan. Non British Passport holders should check requirements.

HEALTH ADVICE

No vaccinations are currently required for Japan, but the following are recommended: Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Polio and Tetanus. Hepatitis B is also recommended if you are travelling to rural areas of the country.

FLYING TIME

Tokyo 11hrs 30mins
Osaka 12hrs 10mins

LOCAL TIME

Japan GMT + 9hrs



WHEN TO VISIT

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Japan		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	

✓✓ indicates the optimum time to visit



Ultimate Japan

Land of the Rising Sun

This fascinating journey is the perfect introduction to Japan, encompassing the major centres of Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima and all the tradition and culture of this unique unconventional and exotic destination.

You begin in the capital, Tokyo, a fascinating blend of ancient traditions, Edo temples, 21st century modernism, glittering lights and consumerism. To the south-west lies Hakone, renowned for its beautiful setting, its hot springs and wonderful views of snow-capped Mt. Fuji. You continue by 164mph Bullet train to Kyoto, the former Imperial capital and, defining traditional Japan, a city of shrines, temples, exquisite and intricate gardens, and narrow lanes where geisha still wander to and from delicate teahouses that line the streets. The journey ends with a train journey, to Hiroshima, site of the first atomic bomb attack in history, where a vibrant and attractive city has risen from the ashes, and the National Peace Memorial is a moving reminder of the past.

Sample itinerary:

Day 1: Depart London. **2/4:** Arrive Tokyo. Optional Tokyo, Hakone & Nikko sightseeing. Overnights The Peninsula. **5:** Transfer to Hakone. Tour to Mt. Fuki. Overnight Hakone Ginyu. **6/8:** Train to Kyoto. Optional Kyoto & Nara sightseeing. Overnights Hotel Okura. **9/10:** Train to Hiroshima. Optional Hiroshima & Miyajima Island sightseeing. Overnights Hiroshima Granvia Hotel. **11:** Train to Osaka. Overnight Hotel Granvia. **12/13:** Fly to London.

Dates: To suit individual requirements.

Price: From £2,495 per person (based on 2 people travelling).



Japan Explorer

A taste of the highlands

An enchanting journey through Japan, combining the major centres of Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima with the stunning mountain landscapes and the well preserved highland cities of Kanazawa and Takayama.

The journey starts in the vibrant city of Tokyo with the option to visit the hot springs at Hakone or the Toshogu, Japan's most lavishly decorated shrine complex. Travel west by train through the majestic central mountain range to Takayama, with its beautifully preserved old town featuring many Edo period buildings. Continue to Kanazawa on the Sea of Japan. Surrounded by spectacular alpine peaks and the Hakusan and Noto Peninsula National Parks, the city has well preserved traditional architectural and historic districts. After a stay in the ancient city of Kyoto with its exquisite temples and gardens, this tour ends in Hiroshima, a vibrant and attractive city risen from the ashes of war, with the option to visit the island of Miyajima with its Shinto shrine and giant 'floating' torii gate.

Sample itinerary:

Day 1: Depart London. **2/4:** Arrive Tokyo. Optional Tokyo, Hakone and Nikko sightseeing. Overnights The Peninsula. **5/6:** Train to Takayama. Overnights Hotel Associa Takayama. **7:** Train to Kanazawa. Overnight Hotel Nikko Kanazawa. **8/10:** Train to Kyoto. Optional tour to Nara. Overnights Hotel Okura. **11/12:** Train to Hiroshima. Optional tour to Miyajima. Overnights Hiroshima Granvia Hotel. **13:** Train to Osaka. Overnight Hotel Granvia. **14/15:** Fly to London.

(In addition to the hotels shown, we also recommend the wonderful *ryokans* (traditional Japanese inns) throughout Japan. Please advise us should you wish to try one.)

Dates: To suit individual requirements.

Price: From £2,430 per person (based on two people travelling).