

SOUTHWEST CHINA & TIBET

8 - 24 October 2027

Xi'an & Beijing Extension

23 - 29 October 2027

FROM
£8,480
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Nick Van Gruisen


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY

From southeast to southwest across this country's huge canvas, this captivating journey combines the historical legacy of China, with its extraordinary cultural and ethnic diversity, and the spectacular beauty of its landscape.

This remarkable journey starts in the vibrant city of Shanghai, where the Old Quarter and the grand 1920s and 30s architecture of the Bund sit alongside today's glass towers. We take a high-speed train to Hangzhou capital of China's Zhejiang province, renowned for its beautiful West Lake – with willow-lined causeways, arched bridges, and iconic pagodas – and its Longjing Tea.

From here we fly to Yunnan Province where we begin in Dali, situated between the majestic Cangshan Mountains and the shores of Lake Erhai, a city is famous for its rich Bai ethnic culture and a major stop on the ancient Tea Horse Road. We continue to the enchanting town of Lijiang with its spectacular alpine backdrop, inhabited primarily by the Naxi ethnic minority. From here we drive on via Tiger Leaping Gorge on the Yangtze – one of the deepest canyons in the world – through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery imaginable to Shangri-La, bordering Tibet, renowned for its vibrant Tibetan culture, ancient town and the impressive golden-roofed Songzanlin Monastery.

We then fly to Lhasa, the traditional capital and cultural heart of Tibet, situated in a high-altitude valley of the Himalayas. Known as the 'Place of the Gods', it is one of the world's most profoundly spiritual and visually stunning ancient cities. A highlight of the trip will be a visit to the Potala Palace, the iconic, towering winter residence of successive Dalai Lamas.

There is also an optional post-tour extension to Xi'an and Beijing. Xi'an marked the eastern end of the Silk Road and has an impressive Imperial legacy of monuments, archaeological sites and, most notably, the 2000-year-old Terracotta Army. This is followed by the capital, Beijing, with its equally remarkable Imperial landmarks such as the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, and of course the Great Wall.





Shanghai Bund Pudong skyline



The Three Pagodas of the Chongsheng Temple

17-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 8 OCTOBER 2027

8 October London / Shanghai

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) British Airways BA169 departing London Heathrow at 12.05 hrs.

9 October Shanghai

Arrive Shanghai at 07.77 hrs. Group transfer to the Yangtze Boutique Hotel, where two nights are spent. This historic hotel is centrally located in the bustling People's Square and has stunning Art Deco architecture and design features. Dine on authentic Cantonese cuisine in the Tang Restaurant or Mediterranean classics at CIAO and relax in the spa or state-of-the-art steam room.

Lunch under own arrangements. Ascend the Shanghai Tower for panoramic views before walking along the Bund, often called Shanghai's 'Wall Street' and the symbol of foreign trade with its assortment of 1920s and 30s grand architecture, and continuing to the famous Nanjing Road shopping district and People's Square. Dinner at a local restaurant.

10 October Shanghai

Morning tour of the French Concession, where former colonial homes have been transformed into restaurants, bars and boutiques. Visit Fuxing Park, where Chinese practice their daily morning exercise ritual, and Xintiandi, an entirely renovated area that is considered one of the liveliest parts of the city, and the narrow, animated alleyways of Tianzifang.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit

the Old Town with its few remaining lively 'lilongs' (traditional streets) and the Yu Gardens, which originally date from the 1550s and are laid out in traditional Ming style, before exploring local markets and bazaars. Dinner under own arrangements.

11 October Shanghai / Hangzhou

Check out and transfer to Shanghai railway station to take a high-speed train to Hangzhou.

Lunch at a local restaurant before transferring to the Banyan Tree Hangzhou hotel where two nights are spent. The hotel is surrounded by lush greenery and quiet waters and the architecture of grey tiled roofs and ivory walls interspersed with arched bridges is inspired by southern water towns. Its restaurants serve a mixture of classic Hangzhou cuisine, Southeast Asian specialities and Western dishes. The famous Banyan Tree Spa provides relaxing body massage and treatments influenced by ancient Asian traditions. Afternoon visit to the West Lake renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty, surrounded by lush gardens, willow trees, and charming pagodas. Take a boat trip to explore the lake's picturesque islands and admire landmarks such as the Broken Bridge and the Su Causeway. Dinner at a local restaurant.

12 October Hangzhou

Visit a tea plantation where Hangzhou's Longjing tea (one of the most prized and expensive teas in the world) is grown and take part in a tea ceremony (Diancha).

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit Lingyin Temple, with its famous 20-metre-high Buddha statue, and the Buddhist sculptures in and around the nearby caves of Feilaifeng. Visit the bustling, ancient Hefang Street, full of traditional stores. Dinner under own arrangements.

13 October Hangzhou / Dali

Check out and transfer to Hangzhou airport for a domestic flight to Dali.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Linden Centre hotel where two nights are spent. This historic boutique hotel in Dali Old Town is housed in a beautifully restored 1947 Bai ethnic courtyard mansion. It offers a meditation/ yoga room, library, tea house and seasonal dining. Cooking demonstration before dinner at the hotel.

14 October Dali

Full day tour of Dali including the Old Town with its white walled houses, which are often decorated by paintings representing mountains, running water, birds and flowers and front porches distinguished by their beautifully carved arches. Visit the Three Pagodas of the Chongsheng temple which date from the Song Dynasty.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Relaxed afternoon walk around the beautiful Lake Erhai, set against the backdrop of the Conghshan Mountains, and see the traditional way of life of the local Bai people. Dinner under own arrangements.



Maitreya and Disciples Carving in Feilai Feng Caves



Songzanlin Monastery

15 October Dali / Lijiang

Check out and drive to Lijiang. Check in at the Banyan Tree Lijiang hotel where three nights are spent. Located close to Lijiang's Old town with views of Jade Dragon Mountain, the hotel's décor echoes traditional Chinese architecture and the local Naxi culture. Facilities include three restaurants, a traditional tea house, swimming pool and spa.

Lunch at the hotel. Tour of Lijiang's fascinating Old Town, Dayan, which has wonderful ancient, cobbled streets, meandering streams and breathtaking views. Visit the Mu Palace, a vivid example of Ming and Qing architecture and then head to the local market where the local Dongba people, still dressed in traditional clothing, sell teas, vegetables, fruits and even daily tools. Continue to Black Dragon Pool, where the snow-capped mountains seemingly shimmer as they are reflected in the waters of the lake. Dinner at a local restaurant in the Old Town.

16 October Lijiang

Visit Jade Dragon Mountain, standing majestically to the north of the city. Take a cable car up the mountain to the Spruce Flat, a high mountain meadow located on the eastern slope of the mountain, surrounded by pristine spruce forests.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Take a stroll through Blue Moon Valley, along the extremely blue river that meanders through the Jade Dragon

Mountain's emerald valley between Ganhaizi and Spruce Meadow. Dinner under own arrangements.

17 October Lijiang

Visit Baisha Ancient Town, one of the oldest towns in Lijiang City. It got its name, meaning 'white sand', from the natural white sand in the area. It was the cradle land of the Tusi Dynasty which evolved from the Mu Clan. It was also the earliest settlement of the Naxi people. In ancient times, Baisha was a center of silk embroidery in southwest China and an important place on the Ancient Tea and Horse Road.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon at leisure. Private group session with a local Shaman. Dinner under own arrangements.

18 October Lijiang / Shangri-La

Check out and drive north through stunning scenery to Shigu to see the Yangtze River in its infancy and where it changes course to flow through China. Visit the quirky Long March Museum.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Continue to Tiger Leaping Gorge, believed to be the deepest gorge in the world, where the Yangtze River, thunders through the gorge with cliffs of almost 4,000 metres on either side. Continue to Shangri-La and check in at the Hotel Indigo Diqing Moonlight City where two nights are spent. The Tibetan inspired hotel offers splendid views over the town and has two restaurants. Dinner at a local restaurant.

19 October Shangri-La

Visit the Tibetan Buddhist Monastery of Sangzanlin with its the glittering golden roofs and admire the countless prayer flags waving in the wind. Visit Napa Lake surrounded by mountains and meadows where horses and yaks graze.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit Dukezong Ancient Town (also known as 'Moonlight City'), one of the best-preserved and largest clusters of Tibetan residences in China, with a history of over 1,300 years. The ancient town is built into the mountain slopes and was once a significant hub on the Tea Horse Road. Dinner under own arrangements.

20 October Shangri-La / Lhasa

Check out and transfer to Shangri-La airport for a domestic flight to Lhasa.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Songtsam Linka Retreat hotel where three nights are spent. The hotel is built on a hillside with spectacular views of the nearby Potala Palace, traditional Tibetan architectural details and rooms elegantly decorated with wooden floors, Tibetan carpets, and handcrafted copperware. Its restaurant serves traditional Lhasa fusion dishes made with produce from the surrounding area. Remainder of the afternoon at leisure. Dinner at a local restaurant.



Potala Palace

21 October Lhasa

Visit Potala Palace, the one-time residence of the Dalai Lama, a true architectural masterpiece, magisterially overlooking the whole city of Lhasa from its 130m vantage point. The Palace is comprised of two main buildings: the Red Palace, the religious centre housing relics belonging to previous Dalai Lamas, and the White Palace, housing the private apartments of the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas. Explore the labyrinth of staircases, apartments, ceremonial rooms, and chapels.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit Jokhang Temple which dates from the 8th century, with Nepalese and Indian influences, and is famous for being the most venerated religious site in Tibet, attracting a daily crowd of pilgrims some of whom prostrate themselves in front of the temple doors. Dinner under own arrangements.

22 October Lhasa

Visit Drepung Monastery, one of the largest Tibetan monasteries, which lies at the foot of the Gambo Utse Mountain. From a distance, the monastery resembles a heap of rice, and the name means 'collecting rice'.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit Sera Monastery still inhabited by 600 monks of the Yellow Hat sect who devote every afternoon to their famous religious debates (true examples of verbal sparring). The young monks inject their speeches with theatrical gesturing while the elders watch and judge their ability to climb the hierarchy. Dinner under own arrangements.

23 October Lhasa / Shanghai

Check out and transfer to Lhasa airport for a domestic flight to Shanghai.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Westin Xi'an hotel where two nights are spent. Located in the heart of the city opposite the Wild Goose Pagoda, the hotel has Tang Dynasty design features, three restaurants offering International, Chinese and Japanese cuisine, a swimming pool and a spa.

24 October Shanghai / London

Check out and group transfer to Shanghai airport. Suggested flights (not included) British Airways BA168 departing at 10.40 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 18.45 hrs.



MAIN TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£8,480
Single Supplement	£1,960

Upgrade to Potala Palace View Suite at the Songtsam Linka Retreat Lhasa
£125

Upgrade to Potala Palace View Deluxe Suite at the Songtsam Linka Retreat Lhasa
£230

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

PRICE INCLUDES

- High speed train Shanghai / Hangzhou
- Economy class flights Hangzhou / Dali, Shangri-La / Lhasa and Lhasa / Shanghai
- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 11 lunches; 7 dinners
- Group arrival and departure transfers and transportation as per the itinerary
- All entrance fees, visits and excursions
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals; portage
- Gratuities to driver/s; gratuities to guide/s
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- The services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Meals 'under own arrangements'
- Visa
- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 22/07/26





Imperial Summer Palace

OPTIONAL XI'AN & BEIJING EXTENSION

23 October Lhasa / Xi'an

Check out and transfer to Lhasa airport for a domestic flight to Xi'an.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Westin Xi'an hotel where two nights are spent. Located in the heart of the city opposite the Wild Goose Pagoda, the hotel has Tang Dynasty design features, three restaurants offering International, Chinese and Japanese cuisine, a swimming pool and a spa. Afternoon visit to the Old City of Xi'an including the old City Wall built during the Ming Dynasty. Visit the Muslim Quarter of narrow lanes lined with mud-brick houses and the mid-18th century Chinese-style Great Mosque surrounded by gardens. Evening gastronomy tour, exploring hidden corners of the Muslim Quarter by tuk tuk while sampling local dishes and a pint of craft beer.

24 October Xi'an

Full day visit to the famous 2,000-year-old Terracotta Warriors, stumbled upon by a farmer in 1974 – three underground vaults containing thousands of life-size terracotta soldiers and their horses in battle formation. Also visit the small museum which houses two splendid bronze chariots found in 1980.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Dinner under own arrangements.

25 October Xi'an / Beijing

Check out and transfer to Xi'an railway station for a high-speed train to Beijing.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the PuXuan Hotel and Spa where three nights are spent. The luxury boutique hotel, located near the Forbidden City, has modern art architecture, a serene luxury spa, and high-end dining. Afternoon visit to the Imperial Summer Palace, former country residence of the Chinese Emperors, with its halls, towers, pavilions, bridges and fine landscaped gardens around Kunming Lake. Peking Duck Dinner at a local restaurant.

26 October Beijing

Morning visit to the magnificent Temple of Heaven, where the emperors once came to pray for good harvests and today where the locals come to do their morning exercises such as Tai Chi and Ballroom Dancing. Tai Chi Class inside the temple.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Drive past the vast Tiananmen Square, which is home to China's Parliament – The Great Hall of the People. Walk through the Gate of Heavenly Peace to visit to the Forbidden City, former home of China's Imperial Dynasties and the best-preserved collection of ancient buildings in China with its pavilions, courtyards, gates, treasure halls and gardens. Ascend the artificial coal hill just behind the Forbidden City for a spectacular view of the entire site and layout of the whole of Beijing. Dinner under own arrangements.

27 October Beijing

Drive out of Beijing to visit to the Great Wall of China at Jinshanling, a more remote section of the Wall which is much less visited. Built in stages between the 5th century BC and the 16th century AD, the wall is 3,333 miles long and is one of the world's few landmarks visible from space.

Banquet lunch on the wall. Return to Beijing and dinner under own arrangements.

28 October Beijing / Shanghai

Check out and transfer to Beijing railway station for a high-speed train to Shanghai.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Yangtze Boutique hotel where a further night is spent. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at a local restaurant.

29 October Shanghai / London

Check out and group transfer to Shanghai airport. Suggested flights (not included) British Airways BA168 departing at 10.40 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 18.45 hrs.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION PRICE

Extension Price	£3,280*
Single Supplement	£765

**dependent on the size of the group*

PRICE INCLUDES

- Economy class flight Lhasa / Xi'an
- High speed train Xi'an / Beijing and Beijing / Shanghai
- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 2 lunches; 3 dinners
- All entrance fees, visits, excursions and transportation as per the itinerary
- Local English-speaking guide/s

PRICE EXCLUDES

- Travel insurance
- Meals 'under own arrangements'
- Visa
- The services of your tour leader
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals; portage
- Gratuities to driver/s and guides
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 22/07/26)



Terracotta Warriors



YOUR TOUR LEADER

Nick Van Gruisen

Raised in Northumberland, in the 1970s Nick spent five years as a professional guide in Botswana and southern Africa. He then joined the Tiger Mountain group, pioneering cultural, trekking and wildlife holidays throughout the Indian subcontinent. He founded Worldwide Journeys and Expeditions in 1991, from which The Ultimate Travel Company emerged in 1998.

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