

Splendours of China 2020

13 Day Guided Tour – 4V

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

• Exclusive to Virgin Holidays guests • Shanghai, Beijing, Xi'an, Chengdu and Guilin • Great Wall of China • Terracotta Warriors • Panda Breeding Centre • Li River Cruise • Extend to Hong Kong

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Saturday

Welcome to Shanghai, upon arrival at Shanghai Pu Dong airport, you will be met by your tour guide and transferred by the exciting Maglev Train to **Shanghai Ocean Hotel** (standard room) for the next 2 nights. This afternoon is at leisure, you may wish to take a taxi and spend some time at Xintiandi, Shanghai's newest landmark (own arrangements).

Day 2 – Sunday

The day begins with a visit to the lovely Yu Gardens and the Old Town, followed by a stop at the Shanghai Museum to view 5,000 years of Chinese culture. This afternoon, take a walk through the charming back streets of Shanghai and visiting the charming Tianzifang Street which is awash with boutique crafts shops and tea houses. This evening, you will be taken to the world famous Shanghai Acrobatic Troupe show, a highlight of any visit to Shanghai. (B,L,D)

Day 3 – Monday

Take a short train journey to the beautiful canal town of Suzhou (approximately 30 minutes). During your visit, you will have the opportunity to retrace the 2,500 years of history that the city has enjoyed. Spend the next 2 nights at the **Scholar's Hotel** (Elegant room). This afternoon, visit the Garden of Humble Administration, the silk-spinning factory and Tiger Hill and lunch at a local restaurant. (B,L)

Day 4 – Tuesday

Morning visit to the nearby picturesque water town on Tong Li where we will visit the Garden of Retreat and Meditation before taking lunch at a local restaurant. Return to Suzhou in the early afternoon and take a rickshaw tour of the city, stopping at the bustling local market and Suzhou Park, followed by a short cruise on the Grand Canal. (B,L)

Day 5 – Wednesday

This morning take the high speed train from Suzhou to Beijing (approximately 5hrs 30minutes). Arrive Beijing at approximately 14:00pm and transfer to the **Sunworld Dynasty Hotel** (superior room) for the next 3 nights. In the afternoon enjoy a visit to the stunning Summer Palace, the seasonal retreat of the Qing Emperors. (B,D) **Please note:** sometimes it may be necessary to visit the Summer Palace prior to checking into the Sunworld Dynasty Hotel, your guide will inform you locally in what order this will happen.

Day 6 – Thursday

Today's sightseeing includes the Temple of Heaven with a Taichi lesson, China's largest sacrificial building symbolizing the relationship between heaven and earth and deftly illustrates the evolution of one of the Earth's greatest civilizations. Continue to Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the iconic Chinese imperial palace from the Ming and Qing era. (B,L)

Day 7 – Friday

There are few structures on earth that can evoke the same sense of wonder and awe than the imposing presence of the Great Wall of China. Begun over 2,000 years ago it stretches for some 5,000 kilometres, across a timeless landscape. Enjoy a tour to the 'Mu Tian Yu' section of the wall. It will take around 2 hours to reach The Great Wall where you can enjoy a memorable walk along a section of one of mankind's most incredible creations. Return to your hotel before heading out this evening for dinner, a Peking duck banquet. (B,L,D)

Day 8 – Saturday

This morning, transfer to the station for a high speed train journey to Xi'an, China's ancient capital, where you will transfer to the Xi'an **Titan Times Hotel** (standard room) for 2 nights. This evening, dine out at a local Dumpling Dinner & show. (B,D)

Day 9 – Sunday

Visit the world-famous Terracotta Warriors, one of the greatest archaeological excavations of our time. These artifacts are associated with the Qing dynasty (211-206 BC). Also visit the City Wall and Small Wild Goose Pagoda. (B,L)

Day 10 – Monday

Transfer to take a fast train to Chengdu via the Hanyang Tombs. Rest of the afternoon at leisure, transfer to the **Tibet Hotel** (deluxe room) for 2 nights. (B)

Day 11 – Tuesday

In the morning, visit the Panda Breeding Centre to watch these endangered creatures feeding and playing. Afterwards visit Jinli Old Street. Lunch will be held in a local restaurant and dinner will be at your own arrangements (B,L).

Day 12 – Wednesday

Morning transfer to take your flight to Guilin. Upon arrival you will transfer to Yangshou to enjoy a memorable cruise along the Li River which winds through magical 'willow pattern' scenery, ending back in Guilin. Check in to the **Guilin Bravo Hotel** (Grand Wing in a deluxe room) for your overnight night stay. Tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner with your tour group (B,L, D)

Day 13 – Thursday

Morning at leisure before a midday check out before heading to the train station for your journey to Hong Kong, to connect with your overnight Virgin Atlantic flight to London. Alternatively extend your stay with a few nights in Hong Kong. (B)

Meals: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

This is a set tour itinerary, if you have booked any pre/post or optional tour arrangements please refer to your separate vouchers and final documents.

TOUR NOTES

Pre/Post Tour information

The first day of the tour is at leisure to allow you enough time to arrive and relax. If you wish to arrive earlier extra nights can be added to your tour in Shanghai. We do recommend extending your tour with a few nights exploring Hong Kong.

Time difference

GMT +7 hours (summer) +8 hours (winter)

Tour inclusions

- Domestic flights (internal flight baggage allowance is 20kgs)
- Private air conditioned transport throughout. Train journeys are on non-exclusive air-conditioned express trains in 2nd class
- Sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees
- Services of an experienced local guide in each destination
- Road taxes, parking fees and fuel surcharges.

Tour exclusions

- International flight with Virgin Atlantic in economy class, including all UK and overseas airport taxes and applicable fuel surcharges
- Flight upgrades and airport transfers in the UK
- Insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, tips & gratuities, video camera fees at monuments
- The required Chinese visa – details will be provided at time of booking
- Anything not detailed on the itinerary
- Seat upgrades on the train journeys (available at a supplement)

Dining inclusions

12 breakfasts, 8 lunches and 5 dinners

The majority of meals are likely to be Chinese rather than international. Vegetarians can be catered for but the food is quite different from which you are likely to be used to. Larger city hotels provide international cuisine as well as Chinese, but presentation and taste may vary from western standards.

Included activities

- Tours listed in the itinerary.

Optional activities (not included and booked locally)

- Beijing Night Tour or Rickshaw Hutong tour
- Xi'an by night
- Shanghai by Night.

Accommodation

Occasionally we may need to substitute one or more of the hotels with that of a similar standard.

Journey times

China is a vast country and journey times between destinations can sometimes be long. Journey times are listed in the itinerary and are approximate.

Group size

There is a maximum of 25 people per group.

Electricity

The electricity supply in China is 220 volts, most hotels have a two pin round sockets so we recommend a travel adaptor set.

Language

Mandarin Chinese is the official language and it may help to learn a couple of phrases before you travel. There is a keen interest in English so you may find people keen to practice with you but it is more widely spoken in the cities.

Visa requirements

A Chinese Visa is required for all British passport holders and most other nationalities and **MUST** be obtained before your arrival in China. A full 10 year passport is required and must be valid for 6 months beyond your departure date from China, with at least two blank pages. We recommend processing your visa directly with 'CIBT' who will obtain all visas in person, and return your passport to you (with visa) by registered post. Contact them on www.cibtvisas.co.uk/virginholidays or 0207 963 3873.

Currency

In China the basic unit of currency is the Yuan. There is no limit to the amount of foreign currency you can bring into China although it must be declared at point of entry. Traveller's cheques may be difficult to change. There are plenty of banks and ATMs, but you see less once you head out of the cities, so make sure you have enough to cover your drinks and ad-hoc item bills. You may want to carry small amounts of local currency for tips and to buy souvenirs from vendors too! Please note: Not all smaller hotels and shops can accept credit cards.

Tipping

It is customary to tip in China. 10% is usual in hotel restaurants and a guide for drivers would be \$3USD and tour guides \$5USD each per guest per day.

What to pack

- Lightweight, cotton clothes. Smart casual is acceptable in hotels
 - A light sweater or fleece for early mornings and evenings and air-conditioning can be cool in restaurants
 - Comfortable, sturdy footwear
 - Casual clothing and sandals for dinner and relaxing at your hotel
 - Sun cream, sunglasses and hat
 - Camera and/or video camera with spare batteries and memory cards
 - Swimming attire for an occasional swim
 - Binoculars
 - Mosquito repellent and spray
 - Handy wipes, antiseptic hand gel and bottled water where possible
 - Low denominations of local currency – handy for ad-hoc tipping!
- The train companies have implemented a policy which does not allow passengers to carry inflammable liquids including aerosols, styling gel, compressed air or insecticides; any explosives, magnetised material, knives, scissors or sharp items (medicine is fine). Bag checks are conducted randomly and any of these items may be confiscated before boarding the train (in hand luggage or main luggage).

What to expect

A tour in China is an adventure where anything can happen. We recommend you are of a reasonable fitness level as touring often involves long walks and uneven surfaces, this tour may not be suitable for those who require special assistance. Our tours provide the opportunity to see some of the local crafts and industries of China that reflect Chinese culture. These visits form part of the tour and but you should not feel obliged to purchase anything unless you want to. In each city there will be no more than 1 shopping stop arranged.

Recommended vaccinations

We advise you to discuss your individual requirements for China with your GP at least 6-8 weeks prior to travel.