

EXPLORE worldwide

N.B. Dossier amended Sept '00

For operational reasons: the itinerary and duration of the CK & CKY tours have been amended slightly since the 2001 brochure went to print. However, dates and days of operation shown in the back of the brochure are correct.

China

Central Kingdoms

Issued Sept 2000. Valid from 01 Jan 2001 to 31 Dec 2001

CONNECTING TRAVEL FROM LONDON

19 days/18 nights Tour including Connecting Group Flights London-Beijing & Shanghai-London

Depart Sunday from London Heathrow airport for overnight flight to join tour in Beijing the following day (Monday day 1 of Land Only itinerary). Transfer to hotel.

Return Thursday from Shanghai (day 18 of Land Only itinerary) and arrive London Heathrow the same day.

33 days/32 nights Central Kingdoms & Along the Yangtse River Tour including Connecting Group Flights London-Beijing-London Ref. CKY

Return Thursday from Beijing (day 32 of Land Only) and arrive London Heathrow the same day.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

18 days/17 nights Land Only Beijing to Shanghai

Join Beijing on Monday (day 1)
End Shanghai on Thursday (day 18)

32 days/31 nights Central Kingdoms & Along the Yangtse River Land Only Ref. CKY

Join Beijing on Monday (day 1)
End Beijing Thursday (day 32)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Beijing. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights on this trip we particularly mention:

- * **BEIJING** The Great Wall, Forbidden City and Summer Palace
- * **XIAN** Terracotta Army
- * **QUFU** Confucius' birth place. Visit holy temple
- * **MOUNT TAI SHAN** China's holy mountain
- * **NANJING** Yangtse bridge, Sun Yat Sen's mausoleum, Qixia Temple and Purple Mountain
- * **WUXI** Travel by boat on Grand Canal
- * **SUZHOU** Beautiful classical gardens
- * **SHANGHAI** Visit Yu Yuan gardens and Jade Buddha temple

This fascinating journey captures the very essence of ancient and modern China as we explore charming cities with an historic past, and travel through mountains where life has changed little over the centuries. Starting in Beijing the modern capital, a veritable pastiche of Old and New we travel to two of China's most sacred sites where we aim to see some of the fascinating places that have shaped and moulded several thousand years of civilisation. In Suzhou we find gardens of peace and harmony whereas Nanjing was home to revolutionary ideas.

We climb holy Tai Shan, and learn of Confucian wisdom in Qufu. Finally we reach Shanghai, the cosmopolitan seaport at the mouth of the Yangtse river.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Note: While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route as printed, a degree of flexibility is built into the route. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and opening times of museums may change without notice.

Day 1. Monday. Join tour Beijing

Arrive Beijing and check-in at hotel. In the afternoon we'll visit Tiantan Park, set in 267 hectares (108 acres) but more famous for being the grounds of China's largest temple and altar complex, the Temple of Heaven built in 1420. **3 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Days 2 & 3. In Beijing. Visit Great Wall

Two full days are planned for our stay in the Chinese capital, the political and cultural centre of the country. Beijing has mostly been the capital since the days of Kublai Khan, and is a more dominant factor in people's lives today than ever before. All clocks in this vast country are set by Beijing time. During our visit we shall see the Forbidden City, the one-time home of the Ming and the Manchu (Qing) emperors, a treasure trove of eastern wares, and the Summer Palace, an old imperial garden. On one of our days, we shall also drive out to the Great Wall, about two hours from the city centre. Begun in the 3rd century BC by Shi Huangdi, thousands of conscripted workers laboured on it and many lie buried in its brick and stone ramparts. There is also some time for some independent sightseeing, the great attraction being the Old City with its narrow lanes, and small craft and antique shops.

Day 4. Fly to Xian

We depart early in the morning and fly to Xian. Our stay in Xian reveals the extraordinary continuity of Chinese civilisation. Xian (Changan) served 11 dynasties and was the very starting point of the Silk Road between Central Asia and Europe. Its ancient monuments include, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda (64m, a 7-storey high structure with a superb overview of the city) and the Great Mosque, a wonderful 15th century working mosque within the old muslim Hui District which we include in our sightseeing tour. We'll also visit the Shaanxi National Museum which takes us through a million years of Chinese history. **2 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 5. In Xian

Today we visit one of the highlights of China - the magnificent Terracotta Warriors and Horses who guard the Qin Shi Huangdi Tomb. There are literally thousands of lifesize warriors, dating from 200BC. This dramatic find of the 1970s is considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the century. On the way back from the Terracotta Warriors we'll stop at the Hualing hot springs and the Ban Po museum.

Day 6. Train to Luoyang

This morning we board the train for a beautiful journey to Luoyang. The city is known as the Eastern Imperial City as, like Xian, it served as the capital for several dynasties. **2 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 7. In Luoyang

We start with some sightseeing in Luoyang before taking an excursion to see one of the most spectacular cultural and historic sites in the region - the Buddhist Longmen Caves. Over 1300 grottoes and 100,000 statues created between the C5th and C7th stretch along both sides of the River Yi. They are a unique document of Buddhist creative art.

Dossier Ref. CK & CKY

We shall also visit possibly the oldest monastery in China, the White Horse Temple, founded in AD68 and named after a legend.

Day 8. Drive to Kaifeng via Song Tombs

We break our journey to Kaifeng with a visit to Shaolin (Kung Fu) Monastery and then drive onto the Song Tombs and Buddhist caves. Kaifeng flourished under the Song dynasty between 960-1279 AD and was capital for a further seven dynasties until 1644. Located on the Yangtse floodplain the city has experienced severe inundations. During one incident before 1887 a flood caused hundreds of thousands of local people to lose their lives. Today there is still plenty to see within the Qu Ming Dynasty walls which have maintained the ancient Chinese town atmosphere. **Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 9. In Kaifeng; overnight train to Tai An

The impressive Iron Pagoda stands 50m high in the north-west of the town, built of rusty coloured brick which gives it its name as, from a distance, it looks like it is made of cast iron. Among other Buddhist monuments we can visit is the Xiangguo monastery which was, for many centuries, the centre of Buddhism in China. This evening we board the overnight train to Tai An. **Overnight train with breakfast.**

Day 10. Arrive Tai An. Bus and walk to Tai Shan

Arriving in Tai An this morning, a short drive brings us to the Daimiao Temple at the foot of holy Mount Tai Shan. From here we drive half way up the mountain and then walk to the top. There are three paths to the summit; the central path is steep but passes several pavilions, temples and many inscribed stones which provide a veritable outdoor museum. Mount Tai Shan is the most venerated of China's five sacred mountains and as the most easterly, it was believed that the sun began its daily westward journey from its peak. Throughout the ages, many Chinese pilgrims including famous poets, writers and painters, have climbed the paths to enjoy the views out over the land below. If you prefer you can continue to the top by cable car (optional). We overnight at a small hotel on the summit. **Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 11. At Tai Shan. Descend mountain and drive to Qufu.

We get up early and hope to watch the beautiful sunrise over the mountains. We explore the summit at leisure and soak up the magnificent views before descending and driving to Qufu - a magnificent centre of pilgrimage. Confucius (Kong Fu Zi.) was born and died here (550-479 BC). Although the first temple constructed dates from the year after his death, his teachings were only formalised by his followers. He taught and practiced selflessness and work for the common good, and died in poverty. Confucian wisdom is based on respect and obedience, son to father, commander to ruler, in a defined hierarchical order. Through successive dynasties the temple has been remodelled and today it covers 20 hectares. The main buildings date from the Ming Dynasty, (16th century) and compete with the Forbidden Palace in grandeur and size. **Overnight hotel with breakfast. H+.**

Day 12. In Qufu, overnight train to Nanjing

Time is spent in Qufu this morning. We explore white marble terraces and spacious courtyards with Bixi - statues of dragon offspring, renowned for their strength, bearing the weight of tablets inscribed with fine calligraphy. Late this evening we take the overnight train to Nanjing, the ancient capital on the banks of the mighty Yangtse river. **Sleeper train, with breakfast.**

Day 13. In Nanjing

We arrive early this morning and spend the rest of the day sightseeing in Nanjing. We see China's largest bridge which spans the river. Completed in 1968 the bridge provided rail access from Beijing to the major southern cities. First settled by primitive matriarchal tribes 6,000 years ago, Nanjing became the nation's capital in 220 AD, a position it held for most of the ensuing 1,200 years. When the capital was moved to Beijing in the 15th century Nanjing continued to prosper and became an important centre for astronomy and other sciences. The signing of the Nanjing Treaty in 1842 ended the first Opium War and consequently five ports, including Nanjing, were opened to foreign trade. The inequitable treaty led to many revolts by the impoverished peasants, and the successful Taiping Rebellion established Nanjing as the capital of the 'Kingdom of Heavenly Peace'. The loyalist Qing forces violently crushed the kingdom 11 years later. Nanjing played a key role in overthrowing the Qing dynasty in the 1911 revolution, as Dr Sun Yat Sen founded the provincial Government here. We'll visit his mausoleum constructed at the foot of Purple Mountain on his death in 1925. The city is rich in culture and also in natural beauty – the Purple Mountain and the winding Yangtse river are often described as a crouching tiger and a coiling dragon. We make an excursion to Qixia Temple (an ancient monastery 1,500 years old) in the mountains east of Nanjing to see the grotto of Buddhist sculptures known as the 1,000 Buddha cliff. The afternoon is free for you to explore at leisure. **Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 14. Train to Wuxi

A short train ride brings us to Wuxi. Once a sleepy trading port on the canal, Wuxi today is a wealthy industrial centre on the shores of Lake Tai, China's fifth largest fresh water lake. The locally mined tin, after which Wuxi is named, ran out in the 2nd century BC but instead Wuxi produces enamel ware and glass, and constructs canal boats for use on the region's waterways. A sight seeing tour of the town will be made in the afternoon.

Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.

Day 15. Boat along Grand Canal to Suzhou

Linking the Yellow River with the Yangtse, and Beijing with Hangzhou, the 1,800 km Grand Canal was a magnificent engineering feat completed in 610 AD. Over the centuries it has transported food north from the fertile lands in the south. Our leisurely journey along the busy waterway allows us to observe the way of life beside the banks. We arrive at Suzhou, 2,500 years old, sitting astride the Grand Canal and sometimes known as the "Venice of the Orient". Apart from the bridges, canals and ancient buildings, part of Suzhou's special magic lies in its famous gardens, perhaps the most beautiful in all China. The small 'Garden of Harmony' features pools of coloured pebbles, bright flower beds and white pine trees, whereas the large 'Humble Administrator's Garden' has streams, ponds and beautifully decorated pavilions scattered throughout. Here water reflects land and provides a fresh tableau at every turn. We shall discover these tranquil places this afternoon.

Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.

Day 16. In Suzhou, drive to Shanghai

A morning at leisure to explore more of this ancient city. For a thousand years Suzhou has been famed for the finest silks in China and its production remained the mainstay of the city's economy until only 40 years ago. There are historical references from the 15th century onwards to silk workers' strikes, however the people of Suzhou are regarded as gentle and graceful, not only because of the mellifluous tone of the local 'Wu' dialect

but because of the beauty of their city, interlaced with a network of canals. Discover the old quarter or the lively bazaar with its street vendors and silk merchants. In the afternoon we take a scenic bus journey through several small villages and arrive in the energetic port of Shanghai, one of Asia's most vibrant and dynamic cities. 1842 marked the end of the first opium war and of the five newly opened treaty ports Shanghai soon became the most cosmopolitan, with Asian, Russian, European and Jewish influences. Here were cabarets and ballrooms, fine shops and satirical newspapers, and with such style and influence Shanghai was dubbed the 'Paris of the Orient'. Today its elegant past is still noticeable as you walk down 'the Bund'. This wide avenue is a good place to start to get to know the city: people practice Tai Chi early in the morning, black-market sellers sell a wealth of goods, there are street performers and by night couples stroll along soaking up the atmosphere. **2 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 17. In Shanghai

First we visit the famous Jade Buddha temple with its white jade statues and continue on to the 16th century Yu Gardens. We also visit the museum which houses good examples of Ming pottery. The afternoon is left free for personal exploration or last minute shopping. You may wish to take a sightseeing cruise on the Huangpu River.

Day 18. Thursday. Tour ends Shanghai

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You will need some spending money for such things as souvenirs, drinks, other sightseeing, airport taxes and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Optional Excursions

The following excursions are usually available and may be paid for through the tour leader during your trip. Estimated costs are provided:

BEIJING Opera £4

BEIJING Acrobatic performance £12

BEIJING Boating at Summer Palace £2.00

TAI SHAN Cable car to top (return) £8.00

TAI SHAN Half day visit to commune village with meals £6.00

SUZHOU Bike Hire £1.00

SHANGHAI Sightseeing cruise £15

Tipping: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £20 for tipping. Your tour leader will account to you for any organised tipping.

Meal Plan

We do not include lunch and dinner in China, allowing more flexibility and choice and the possibility to eat out in some of the excellent local restaurants. However, should you wish to eat at your hotel, or require advice as to where to eat, your Tour leader will be happy to assist you. Meals other than those included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveller. You should calculate for buying 18 evening meals and 18 lunches. Examples of comparative costs are given below.

	UK	China
Coffee/Tea	£0.70	£0.50
Soft drink	0.80	0.60
Bottle of water	0.70	0.30
Beer	1.00	0.80
2 Course Meal*	7.50	3.00
3 Course Meal**	15.00	5.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

China has primarily a temperate climate, with a wide spectrum of extremes due to its huge area. Summer months are hot and rainy though in the south the climate is tropical and we can experience rain at any time of the year, often falling in sharp tropical rain-storms which are heavy but short lived. Winter is colder and drier.

Visa Requirements

Entry visas are required by all visitors and can be obtained through the EXPLORE Visa Service in UK, or for overseas clients by their EXPLORE agent.

Please note that clients taking tour ref CKY need to apply for a special 60 day visa, as their stay in China will exceed 30 days which is the duration of a standard tourist visa

Note: Any passport which has an endorsement or visa for Tibet will have difficulty obtaining a Chinese visa.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Malaria, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid, Tetanus and Polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis.

Special Note: Visa and Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's 'General Information Booklet', available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of lockable baggage and a shoulder bag. Total allowance: **44lbs/20kgs**. Remember, you are expected to carry your own baggage – so don't overload yourself. **It is essential that your baggage is lockable; the train authorities insist on this. Luggage sometimes travels separately from the group.**

Clothing: Pack as for 'All Tours' and "Hot Conditions". Lightweight raingear year round.

Footwear: Comfortable shoes or trainers and sandals.

32 days Central Kingdoms & Along the Yangtse River Ref. CKY.

Travellers extending their tour from Shanghai back to Beijing should read the individual 'Along the Yangtse River' Dossier Ref. YR for a full description and details of included meals and accommodation.

Day 1. Monday. Join tour Beijing. **Days 2 & 3.** In Beijing. **4.** To Xian. **5.** In Xian. **6.** Train to Luoyang **7.** In Luoyang. **8.** To Kaifeng. **9.** In Kaifeng, overnight train to Tai An. **10.** Arrive Tai An, bus/walk to Tai Shan. **11.** Descend Tai Shan. Bus to Qufu. **12.** In Qufu. Train to Nanjing. **13.** In Nanjing. **14.** To Wuxi. **15.** To Suzhou. **16.** To Shanghai. **17 & 18.** In Shanghai. **19.** To Hangzhou. **20.** In Hangzhou. **21.** To Qiandao Lake. **22.** Boat to Shendu, bus to Mt Huangshan (foot). **23.** Up Mt Huangshan (summit) **24.** Down Mt Huangshan. Drive Tunxi **25.** In Tunxi, fly Wuhan. **26.** To Yichang. **27.** Board riverboat. **28.** On riverboat. **29.** Arrive Chongqing, drive Dazu. **30.** In Dazu. Drive to Chengdu. **31.** Fly to Beijing. **Day 32. Tour ends Beijing**

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

H+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

H : Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

Local Style Accommodation

L+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, may be some 3-4 bedded. Normally shared facilities.

L : Could be twin bedded but more usually multiple share or dorm style sleeping arrangements. Normally shared facilities.

Camping – under canvas or bivouac

C+ : Designated campsite, usually with fixed WC/shower. Possibly with fixed pre-erected tents.

C : Natural/Rough/Wild/Bush Camp. Limited or no facilities. Temporary WC. Usually need to pitch own tents.