Discover China this Christmas to see the Great Wall, Beijing’s Forbidden City and the Terracotta Warriors of Xi’an. Flying to Harbin, New Year’s is a 5 star event as we discover the extraordinary, inspiring, enchanting and often incredibly beautiful ice installations of the 35th Harbin International Ice & Snow Festival.

What’s Included
- 10 breakfasts, 2 lunches and 4 dinners including a traditional Peking Duck dinner
- 2 nights 5 star hotel in Harbin, 7 nights 3-4 star hotels and 1 overnight train Harbin - Beijing (soft sleeper cabin)
- Flight from Xi’an – Harbin
- High speed train journeys between Beijing and Luoyang and Luoyang and Xi’an
- Touring of Beijing, Great Wall area, Luoyang, Xi’an and Harbin Ice Festival
- Chinese acrobatic performance in Beijing
- Rickshaw ride through Beijing’s Hutongs
- Xi’an - bike ride on medieval City Wall
- Escorted by an experienced English speaking Chinese Tour guide
- English speaking specialist guides at some sites
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private heated vehicles
- Airport arrival and departure transfer on day 1 and day 11
- Tipping Kitty: USD$75-85pp, paid in local currency
- Entrance Fees: USD$200-220pp, paid in local currency

What’s Not Included
- International flights and visa
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow USD$3 - 5 per day, per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

Day 1 : Beijing
Monday 23 December 2019. Welcome to China and the start of your holiday! Arrive Beijing Airport and included transfer to our hotel. The remainder of the day offers free time. Overnight - Beijing

Day 2 : The Forbidden City
This morning we gather for a short Welcome Meeting. Your entrance fees and tip kitty will be collected at this time. Then, it’s time to set off and see some of Beijing. A patriotic vision of grandeur, Tiananmen Square is a square for the public and also home of the mausoleum of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and the striking Monument to the People’s
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Heroes. In the square Mao’s gargantuan mausoleum in granite where since his death in 1976, he has lain in state in his crystal coffin. We’ll have a stroll on the square, which attracts many tourists wishing to take photos, all under the watchful eye of the dutiful guards.

Perhaps one of Beijing’s most famous sights is the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Above the gate and looking out across to all his people, is a famous colour portrait of Chairman Mao Tse-tung. Today, he is looking at a different Beijing, one that is quickly entering the 21st century. The Gate of Heavenly Peace is the main entry point into the Forbidden City. A vision in grandeur with its imperial yellow roofs and vermilion walls, the Forbidden City, once forbidden to all those except on imperial business until 1911, when the last emperor, Puyi, was overthrown. Built between 1406 and 1420, it served as the imperial palace for the Ming and Qing dynasties. We enjoy a guided walk through the city’s many temples, grand halls and courtyards.

This afternoon we take rickshaws to explore the Hutongs of Beijing. As our trusty rickshaw driver peddles us through the network of alleys, old back lanes, traditional courtyards and compact houses we gain a fascinating snapshot of the city’s traditional way of life. There is time to meet a local family and take a peek inside their home, before returning to our hotel. It’s Christmas Eve and to get you in the festive mood we’ll enjoy a tasty Christmas banquet tonight. **Overnight - Beijing (B, D)**

Day 3: Xmas at the Great Wall

Merry Christmas! Today we drive beyond Beijing to Badaling, where we can walk a section of the famous Great Wall. An enduring symbol of Chinese civilisation and genius, the UNESCO protected Great Wall of China was built as a defensive structure. The immense construction took place over a period of 2,000 years and followed different routes and building extensions as required. Snaking some 6700 kms across barren hills, deserts, mountains and plateaux, the now partially ruinous Great Wall stretches east to west in northern China. At one time perhaps nearly 9700 kms long, the wall was garrisoned by 1 million soldiers and featured over 1,000 fortified passes and 10,000 beacon towers. Climbing the Great Wall on Christmas day, now that’s something special. The wall is a little steep in sections, but the photo opportunities are worth a million dollars. Afterwards, we visit a Jade Carving Centre to learn about its importance in Chinese culture.

We celebrate our Christmas in China with a traditional Peking Duck dinner this evening, followed by an astounding acrobatic show. Doing the ‘splits’ is an elementary skill, when compared to what these showstoppers will pull out on the night. Bicycles and rings of fire are common props in a show that will leave you wanting to see more. **Overnight - Beijing (B, L, D)**

Day 4: Summer Palace & Silk Alley

Beijing - Luoyang. Opt for and early morning walk through the local, market before we set off to see the Summer Palace, set on Kunming Lake. The buildings date back only to the turn of the 20th century, though the site goes back to the 12th century. It is said that the Dowager Empress Cixi liked to travel with a retinue of at least 1,000. Her arrival at the rebuilt Summer Palace in 1905 was met by 458 eunuchs, and her two main meals consisted of some 100 dishes. Nice!

Perhaps most famous of all the structures at the Summer Palace is the wonderful Long Corridor, a covered walkway 730m long, and extraordinarily hand-painted with scenes from Chinese history, legend and literature. Look out for the solid marble boat on Kunming Lake. The lake may even be frozen solid. Afterwards we head back into the city and get a chance to cross a few palms with silver at Silk Alley markets. Silk Alley and similar shoppers markets across the city are retail havens for bargain knock-off ski jackets, big brand handbags, jewellery, accessories and souvenirs. Some bling jewellery for the lady and perhaps a genuine copy Rolex Sub-Mariner watch and matching Mont Blanc fountain pen and rollerball set for the gent?

Later we drive past the Beijing 2008 Olympic Stadium en route to the train station where we take the late afternoon bullet train to Luoyang. Reaching speeds of up to 305km per hour the journey is an experience in itself! Check in to hotel in Luoyang, late evening. **Overnight - Luoyang (B)**

Day 5: Longman Grottoes

Today we head off in search the UNESCO world heritage listed 6th Century Longman Caves. Carved into the cliffs along the Yi River, the 1300 caves (grottoes) were hollowed out by humans to create temples inside the mountain. Adorned with more than 100,000 statues and images of Buddha and his disciples carved during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Experts consider them an artistic triumph of Buddhist stone carving. Later this afternoon we tour stunning White Horse Temple, the first Buddhist temple in
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China before having a delicious local dinner. **Overnight - Luoyang (B, D)**

**Day 6 : Luoyang - Xi'an**

Early this morning there is the option to walk to Xiyuan Park and witness or maybe even partake in a little local exercise. Hundreds of local people enjoy their daily exercise by practising ballroom dancing, performing tai chi, sword fighting and play sports like badminton and hacky sack in the early hours of the morning. It’s a marvel to watch!

Afterwards we board a high speed train to Xi'an (journey time approximately 3 hours), evening at leisure. **Overnight - Xi'an (B)**

**Day 7 : Terracotta Warriors**

Most famous for the Terracotta Warriors, perhaps the find of the 20th century and only just usurped by the discovery of King Tut’s gold-laden tomb in Egypt, Emperor Qin’s Terracotta Warriors comprise more than 7,000 life-sized soldiers which stand in military formation in excavated pits under the cover of a modern protective hanger. Made of local clay, no two faces are alike, each is said to be an individual portrait.

Emperor Qin’s army of 2,200 year old terracotta warriors were discovered in 1974 by local farmers who happened to be digging a well. Previous emperors used to be buried with their slaves but slavery had been abolished. So, to make up for this, Qin had the warriors made to be buried near him to protect him in the afterlife. Delicate excavation continues on site, where hundreds of warriors remain smashed like eggs, not due to the passage of time but rather a peasant revolt after the emperor’s death. We visit a workshop where you’ll see modern-day crafts people producing terracotta warrior figurines.

This evening, On Broadway - Chinese style we can attend a Tang Dynasty dinner and performance with Chang’ an music and dance originally performed for the illustrious Tang emperors. Check out our Tang Dynasty add-on for more details and book with your travel consultant to secure your place. **Overnight - Xi’an (B, L)**

**Day 8 : Xi'an**

Xi’an – Harbin. This morning we bike ride (solo or tandem) atop the amazing old City Wall with no vehicular traffic to mow us over. An awesome sight, the City Wall and moat is over 15km in perimeter offers unique views of the city and residence beneath, going about their daily lives. Visits to the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, the Muslim Quarter and Great Mosque with time to explore. Afternoon/evening flight to Beijing and onward flight to Harbin. **Overnight - Harbin (B)**

**Day 9 : Snow Sculpture Festival & Ice World**

Today, we hit Sun Island Park for the Harbin International Snow Sculpture Art Expo. The festival is open to visitors from 20 Dec, (though the official festival opening occurs on 05 Jan). This is a wonderful time to visit as sculptors will still be adding final touches to their somewhat massive icy masterpieces.

Later we visit Harbin Snow and Ice World an otherworldly theme park where the incredibly large displays change from year to year. what will be on offer this year is anyone’s guess. Imagine sliding down a 100m ice luge resembling the Great Wall of China. You can pick up some serious speed if wearing a slick winter coat. Climbing to the top of a replica of the Emperor’s Summer Palace in Beijing, complete with towers, guard house, moat and seven arched bridge or sail away on Empress Dowager Cixi’s ice marble boat. Living up to its name the ‘Ice World’ is totally beyond imagination, unusual, enchanting, inspiring and a little peculiar.

This evening we include dinner at hotpot restaurant before returning to our hotel to take a position our hotel bar to ring in the coming year. **Overnight - Harbin (B, D)**

**Day 10 : Happy New Year!**

Harbin - Beijing. Happy New Year! This morning offers free time before an afternoon visit to Zhaolin Park to see the Ice Lantern Show, also known as the Ice Lantern Art Fair. In previous years we’ve seen ice blocks standing some 8 metres tall, resembling giant ice lollies. Ice is sculpted into the most unusual designs - from roosters to dragon boats and a pair of cupids fluttering in the heavens, or a cavalry about to do battle. Each is lit up with hundreds of traditional Chinese
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lanterns and a multitude of neon creating the most spectacular photo opportunities. Later this evening we bid farewell to Harbin, boarding our overnight sleeper train to Beijing. **Overnight - Soft Sleeper Train to Beijing (B)**

Day 11 : Beijing departure

Thursday 02 January 2020. Arriving into Beijing, hotel breakfast and onward departure transfer to the airport. Tackling Terracotta Warriors, seeing some amazing ice sculptures that will all be gone before the spring and climbing the Great wall on Xmas day, we hope you have had a wonderful Christmas and New Year’s tour in China! Note: Onward flights should be booked for departure after 2pm.(B)

Peony Plaza

The Peony Plaza Hotel is ideally located in Luoyang city centre, making it easily accessible from all parts of the city. The hotel benefits from a stylish, contemporary design and the guest rooms are tastefully furnished. All rooms feature minibars, free WiFi and LCD TVs with cable channels. The hotel also boasts a sauna and massage centre as well as a rotating restaurant for excellent views of the city.

Wan Nian Grand Hotel

The Wan Nian Grand is a comfortable, friendly hotel with light and spacious guest rooms. Elegantly decorated, the rooms also boast modern amenities and the hotel has a wealth of facilities including an indoor pool and sauna house, a cafe and bar, and well-equipped business centre. The hotel is located 4 kilometres from the railway station and 30 kilometres from the airport.

Songbei Shangri-la Hotel

Ideally situated on the banks of the Songhua River, is the Songbei Shangri-la Hotel. The five-star property offers ample fine dining options as well as gourmet pub cuisine. Each guest room is fully equipped with LED TV, WiFi, mini bar, iron and ironing board and much more. Guests can enjoy a relaxing massage or dip in the indoor pool before sipping on a cocktail in the onsite bar.

Weather in Harbin

Weather in Harbin at the time of the festival is understandably very very cold! Temperatures are commonly around the -25c mark! So be sure to bring with you adequate clothing including thermals, warm gloves, hats, scarves, balaclavas and sensible walking attire. A thick winter coat that is waterproof is also essential. Please also be mindful of what the weather can do to electronic equipment. It has been known for camera batteries etc to not work in such low temperatures so make sure you are prepared for any eventuality! Bring a padded bag and spare batteries just in case.

Entrance fees - collected in Yuan

Entry fees to most sites are not included, although reasonably priced. In China, we collect entrance fees on Day 2 of the tour (the amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document). A comprehensive breakdown of the entrance fee total is provided upon arrival. All funds collected in China for entrance fees and optional excursions, that you may wish to undertake are payable in local currency - Chinese Yuan (CNY).

Tipping Kitty

At the start of your group tour, we take a small tipping kitty (the amount is noted under exclusions) from all tour participants to cover tips throughout your holiday. This saves you the hassle of knowing when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage luggers, bus drivers, train conductors and other support staff throughout the tour. This amount does not include a tip for your tour guide. For a job well done, we would...
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suggest USD$3 - 5 per person per day. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

If travelling on a short stay, private tour or a group tour with less than 6 participants we do not collect a tipping kitty and recommend the following amount to cover tips paid directly by you to bellhops, luggage handlers, your driver and local guide: CN¥50/USD$8 - per person per day of your tour.

Arrival Transfers

For tours starting in Beijing When arriving into Beijing International Airport and attending to immigration and customs formalities, please proceed to the arrival hall. If arriving to Beijing into Terminal 2, when exiting immigration to the arrivals hall, please turn right where our representative will be waiting.

If arriving into Terminal 3 you will be met just outside the restricted area.

Please have your tour voucher handy and make it available to our representative who will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall, holding a prominent On The Go Tours logo signboard, ready to escort you to our awaiting transportation and onward to your tour start hotel.

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (remember Beijing is a busy International Airport) after waiting 30 minutes in the arrival hall or your flight to China is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher. Please do not leave the airport and travel to the hotel yourself. Please call the contact number as stated on your tour voucher.

China Country Guide

Visas

China Visa

Visas are required by all visitors to China. It is essential that a tourist visa is procured prior to travel. We will provide you with an invoice/itinerary indicating that you are travelling to China on a pre-arranged holiday. The visa is valid for entry within 3 months, so you cannot apply any earlier. Please ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of return from China.

If you're a resident of the UK and would like someone to handle your visa application for you then we recommend CIBTvisas. Please visit http://www.cibtvisas.co.uk/onthego for more information.

Visa for Hong Kong

Most Western visitors to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People’s Republic of China do not require a tourist visa issued in advance of travel. Currently, UK nationals can stay up to 180 days. Nationals of Australia, Canada, Eire, most other EU countries, New Zealand and the US do not require a visa for a stay not exceeding 90 days, while holders of RSA passports can remain for up to 30 days. If entering Hong Kong from mainland China and returning to mainland China a multiple Chinese entry visa is required.

Visa for Tibet

Tibet - if travelling to Tibet, a Tibet Travel Permit is required. The permit will be arranged by our office in China. Please contact On The Go Tours prior to departure for the most up to date Tibetan entry information.

The information above is not applicable for the Beijing and Shanghai Visa Free Tours

NOTE: Visa requirements are subject to change, please check with your embassy before booking this trip.

Climate

In all, China has a great diversity of climates. To sum it up – China experiences hot summers in most parts of the country, very cold winters in the north and comfortable winters in the south! Sep-Oct is warm to hot and dry across the country. Nov-Mar is winter with very cool temps in the north, whilst mild in the south. If combining the north and south, you’ll experience 2 distinct weather patterns. Apr-May - perfect in the north, if a little humid and rainy in the south. Jun-Aug can bring a few showers.

Health & Water

You should seek medical advice before travelling to China from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide it is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven’t had a booster in the last ten years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so we recommend vaccinations for Typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). There is a malarial risk in remote southern areas of China, so do check the current situation before travelling.

As tap water is not safe to drink in China, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available from hotels, shops and restaurants. Make sure bottled water is sealed.

Currency

The currency of China is the Chinese Yuan. Pound Sterling, US Dollars, Euro and other main currencies can be exchanged in China. Exchange facilities are available at various bureau de changes and banks in major towns have ATMs or it is possible to get some before you leave home. It’s advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller’s Cheques are not recommended as they’re often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Time & Voltage

China is 8 hours ahead of GMT. The country operates on one time zone, so clocks are set according to Beijing time, meaning, given the size of the country, sunrise and sunset can occur at peculiar times! Voltage is 220v, 50Hz AC. Chinese plugs come in many designs: 3-pronged angle pins as used in Australia; 3-pronged round pins as used in Hong Kong; 2-pronged flat pins as used in the USA; or 2 round narrow pins as used in Europe. To cover all bases, pack a travel adaptor.

Essential Packing

As light as possible! In China, most often portage is not available at railway stations and you will be required to carry your own luggage. Bags with wheels can be a hindrance when climbing several flights of stairs, though are a blessing when walking lengthy distances to reach our awaiting transportation. If travelling in early spring we recommend you pack warm clothes, layering works best this time of year.

• Food in China is very different and arguably better than your local takeaway!
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If you prefer western snack food, consider bringing a supply

- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume, basic torch/flash light & umbrella for sun or rain
- Comfortable closed in walking shoes for climbing the Great Wall
- DEET based mosquito repellent & antihistamine cream
- Chinese plugs come in many designs: 3 prong angle pins similar, though smaller than those used in Australia; 2 prong flat pins (type A) or 2 round pins, European style (type C). To cover all bases, pack a travel adaptor!
- Two spare passport photos & a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Plastic poncho to go over your jacket. Whilst site-seeing, you can be in the rain for an extended period and even a rain jacket can get soaked. You can purchase a cheap one locally, but we suggest taking one from home of a better quality that doesn’t rip easily

PLEASE NOTE: If your tour includes an internal flight, that most airlines have a 20kg baggage limit.

Toilets/Washrooms

Public toilets, when found, are usually ‘squats’ - holes in the ground with footrests at either side and often don’t possess a door! The custom is to wash with water from a jug or little pipe attached to the toilet using your left hand. Doesn’t appeal? Here are some hints!

- Time yourself with the accommodations you are staying at
- If you are out and about, find the nearest hotel, restaurant, fast food outlet, or toilets at tourist attractions, which all tend to have Western style facilities
- Ask your tour guide to make a stop
- Pack a roll of toilet paper and anti-bacterial wipes for your own comfort

Media Restrictions

There are restrictions on all media, including social media and free press throughout China. Whilst on holiday, you will have limited or no access to social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus - so no Google Maps and no Play Store. To bypass the firewall, you could download a VPN. It is much easier to do this before you go to China.

WeChat: If travelling on one of our budget tours, communication between the group and Adventure Leader is via the app: WeChat. Please install this App and open an account before your trip as it is harder to do so in mainland China.

There is also limited international calling options, so please check with your local provider before leaving home, to source the best roaming or online options to keep in regular contact with family and friends during your travels.

Travelling By Train

Fast and efficient, China’s first rail lines were laid in the 19th century, and today, the government continues to invest heavily in this crucial mode of transport which connects many parts of the country. When travelling during the day, ‘soft’ seats, that is to say ‘upholstered’ seats are provided. For overnight travel, clients are accommodated in ‘soft class’ sleeper cabins. Aboard each wagon are 9 compartments that comprise 4 bunks per compartment. Four people of mixed sex share one compartment. On occasion, dependent upon group size, you may be sharing with local people on the overnight journey, though sometimes dependent upon how the Chinese Railways Booking Office configure the bookings, the cabin may be filled with four of our passengers. A dining wagon serves reasonably priced Chinese food of the noodles and rice variety, along with snacks and drinks. A very simple menu is published in English. On the Beijing - Xi’an service, there is also a small bar serving drinks including alcohol. Each wagon offers a WC and hand basin facility. At one end, is a Chinese squat-style WC, whilst at the other end is a modern Western-style WC. Cabins are lockable from the inside and luggage is stowed in overhead compartments and under the bottom bunk. Bed linen and slippers are supplied, and often there is a TV mounted on the wall at the end of each bed that may even work. Most channels are broadcast in Mandarin, excluding one English Channel, which has little of interest on it!

Portage

In China most often portage is not available at railway stations and you will be required to carry your own luggage. We recommend you pack as light as possible as there can be several flights of stairs and a lengthy walk to our awaiting transportation.

Shopping

China is a virtual Aladdin’s Cave. Government-run Friendship Stores in almost all cities stock a range of fixed-price souvenirs and handicrafts and can offer a reasonable idea of what is acceptable in terms of quality and price. After a visit to the Friendship Store, visit private stores, craft shops and local department stores. However, the best shopping is often at public markets. If you see something you want, buy it when you see it - prices don't vary greatly, but selection can vary from location to location.

Top buys include silk products, embroidery, Chinese calligraphy and paintings, ceramics, jade and stone carvings, lacquer ware, Chinese tea, Cloisonne, Mao reproduction propaganda souvenirs such as the famous ‘Red Book’, caps and buttons, personalised ink seals and clothing of every kind. Markets in Beijing and Shanghai commonly sell top quality ski jackets and leisure attire by big name brands. Additionally, copied goods such as handbags, watches and shoes are available in plentiful supply in these markets. Ethnic crafts are a speciality in some regions including Xi’an and Kunming. If wishing to buy antiques, proceed with caution. It’s highly likely that the antique will be a skilful reproduction. However, if it is the real deal, you’ll need paperwork the Chinese Administrative Department of Cultural Relics which must then accompany the article being exported.

IMPORTANT: Set your budget and don’t be swayed, remember the caveat – ‘Let the buyer beware’. Any purchases made whilst on holiday with us, irrespective of whether the store is recommended by us or other, are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with the product you are purchasing and the delivery
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arrangements (we would recommend you take away with you any purchases rather than rely on shipping services). On The Go cannot be held responsible or accountable for items bought in country or shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution.

It's not like home!

Travel to far-flung corners of the earth involves lifestyles and conditions that are sometimes very different from what you are used to back home. You must come prepared to cope with unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned. With the greatest respect and in the interest of your ultimate enjoyment you must understand this. Things can and do change in foreign countries.

• Be prepared as locals smoke everywhere in China
• The Chinese don’t have an awareness of personal space, be ready to have people standing very close to you, nudge you or even walk into you, they are not being rude, it’s just a very different culture
• Many tourists report scams in Shanghai, so be friendly but careful. Never ever follow a stranger anywhere
• Spitting and snorting is common in China as they see the use of tissues as unhygienic.
• Some locals won’t queue and will often walk straight to the front of a line with no awareness or care of what they have done wrong
• Always take some antiseptic hand gel or antibacterial hand wipes with you and BYO toilet paper as its rare in public toilets. Squat toilets are very common, they can be a novelty and are easy to use
• Chinese people are delighted if you make any attempt to speak Mandarin, even if it’s only a couple of words