

Hong Kong to Hong Kong

16 days | Starts/Ends: Hong Kong



SEMI INDEPENDENT TOUR:

Discover China's ancient and reinvented culture. Marvel at the iconic cityscape in Hong Kong and karst landscape of Yangshuo, get up close to China's national icon in Chengdu's Panda Breeding and Research Centre, walk among the Terracotta Warrior army in Xi'an and through the ultra-modern capital Beijing.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Hong Kong – marvel at the Hong Kong skyline from Victoria Peak
- Chengdu – visit the famous Panda Conservation centre and get up and close with China's national symbol
- Shaolin – learn the art of Kung Fu from masters from Shaolin Temple (optional)
- Mandarin Challenge – enjoy free Mandarin lessons with your guides and use your new skills completing challenges around Beijing
- Great Wall of China – hike to unrestored sections of the wall, set up camp on a deserted section and watch the sunrise on one of the Wonders of the World

- Xi'an – walk among the famous UNESCO listed Terracotta warriors made to protect the emperor in the afterlife
- Yulong River – cruise along the karst landscape of Yulong River in Chinese style bamboo rafts
- Beijing – roam the streets of China's fascinating capital independently. Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Silk Alley markets, Jade Carving Factory, Hutong area of Beijing, Chinese Acrobatic Show
- Yangshuo – cycle through post-card worthy landscapes and past limestone peaks along the Li River

What's Included

- 11 nights hostel, 1-night camping, 3 overnight trains (6 berth hard sleeper cabins): Chengdu – Xi'an; Zhengzhou - Beijing; Beijing – Hong Kong
- Daytime trains: Hong Kong – Guilin; Guilin – Chengdu
- All relevant transfer and transportation within China using public transport
- Local guides for scheduled sightseeing in Yungshuo, Chengdu, Xi'an, Shaolin and Beijing. Unescorted travel between cities
- Free basic Mandarin lessons
- Local guide in Hong Kong for tour briefing
- Entrance to Terracotta Warriors museum
- Hiking along unrestored parts of The Great Wall of China

- Entrance to Giant Panda Research & Breeding Centre
- Cycle and cruise excursion down Yulong River

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
- Optional activities, these must be paid for locally
- Laundry, meals, drinks, items of a personal nature

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Hong Kong to Yangshuo



Hong Kong – Yangshuo. Meet our group at the hostel and travel together up Victoria Peak, where we'll be able to enjoy incredible

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views of the bustling metropolis below! After listening to a short welcome and safety briefing, travel down Victoria Peak back to the hostel. Later, we cross the border into Mainland China, going by bullet train and bus to Yangshuo.

Please note: The meeting time at the hostel is 7am

Journey time:

Shenzhen North - Guilin (approx 3 hours)

Guilin - Yangshuo (approx 2 hours)

Overnight - Yangshuo

Days 2-4 : Yangshuo

Wake up to the unbelievable karst scenery of Yangshuo. This landscape of rivers, rice paddies and limestone peaks is our playground for the next three days. On our first afternoon, participate in the first of many free and un-missable attractions: bamboo rafting down the Li River. Put your feet up and relax as we meander downstream. At night, kick back at Monkey Jane's Hostel where we can sit quietly atop the rooftop bar with a cool beer.

Those wanting to keep busy can try their hand at kayaking (150RMB), deep water soloing (rock climbing above a river with no ropes; 150RMB) and rock climbing (170RMB) or watch a Cormorant fishing demonstration (45RMB). Once the river has run its course, you can take mud-baths in underground caves (85RMB), attend a Chinese cooking lesson (120RMB), or try cupping (suction cups on the back that help circulation; 35RMB). There's also a chance to visit your adventure leader's home village (80RMB).

Overnight - Yangshuo

Day 5 : Yangshuo to Chengdu

Yangshuo – Chengdu. Spend our final morning in Yangshuo at leisure before boarding the bus to Guilin where we bid farewell to our leader and board the night train to Chengdu.

Journey time: Guilin - Chengdu (approx 7 hours) Overnight - Sleeper Train

Days 6-7 : Chengdu Pandas



After the long train journey we have some free time to relax and ease out the strains of your overnight journey with a massage from a blind physical therapist (40RMB). In the afternoon learn some useful Chinese phrases in a free Mandarin lesson! Then, check out an authentic Sichuan opera performance! (140 RMB).

The next morning, we will visit the Panda Breeding and Research Centre, arriving just in time to watch these national treasures dig into breakfast (bamboo shoots, of course). In the afternoon we've got some free time to visit the world's largest stone Buddha (it's 70m tall!) in Leshan (transportation + 90RMB entrance fee) or walk through Chengdu's Tibetan quarter with its Tibetan shops and cafes (yak dumplings anyone?).

In the evening try a traditional Sichuan Hotpot - a meal where you cook meats and veggies by dipping them into a boiling pot of spicy broth (around 80 RMB).

Overnight - Chengdu

Day 8 : Chengdu to Xi'an

Chengdu – Xi'an. This morning is our last in Chengdu. Visit Wenshu Monastery, Sichuan Province Museum and a traditional Chinese teahouse then board the night train to our next destination: Xi'an

Journey time: Chengdu - Xi'an (approx 16 hours) Overnight - Sleeper Train

Days 9-10 : Xi'an & Terracotta Warriors



Arrive into Xi'an this morning and explore Xi'an's fascinating Muslim Quarter, where we'll see unique Chinese mosques and sample the delights of the Hui Muslim street food carts - the lamb skewers are a must! Afterwards we've got the opportunity to visit the Silk Road market nearby. In the evening, we'll have the chance to volunteer at the Star Sun Home.

Next morning, we visit the jewel in Xi'an's crown: the Terracotta Warriors, a full-sized stone army designed to protect Emperor Qin in the afterlife. Late. This afternoon, join the group for an optional bike tour around the ancient city walls of the former dynastic capital (100RMB). A great way to get your bearings. Then it's time for a change of gear with a Chinese-style night of fun, which needless to say involves drinking and/or singing your heart out.

Overnight - Xi'an

Day 11 : Xi'an to Shaolin

Xi'an – Shaolin. This morning, we board a minivan to Deng-Feng, the closest village to the Shaolin Temple. After our arrival, we'll have the chance to put our strength and flexibility to the test in a Kung Fu lesson and then watch a show at a local children's home run by the Shaolin temple (150RMB - all proceeds go directly to the home). In the evening our second mandarin lesson starts - good luck/Yiqie shunli!

Journey time: Xi'an - Shaolin (approx 7 hours) Overnight - Dengfeng

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Day 12 : Shaolin to Beijing



Shaolin – Beijing. We have an early start to visit the flagship of Kung Fu - the Shaolin Temple (120RMB)! In the beautiful temple courtyards, we'll see masterful displays and physically impossible feats from these Kung Fu masters. Afterwards hike together to Dharma Cave, a spiritual spot for Buddhist pilgrims where we'll be rewarded with beautiful views of both the shrines and the surrounding landscapes. In the evening we travel to Zhengzhou to board your night train to Beijing.

Journey time: Shaolin - Beijing (approx 10 hours) Overnight - Sleeper Train

Day 13 : The Great Wall

After a morning spent relaxing in the hostel in Beijing and our third Mandarin lesson, it's off to do the Mandarin Challenge! We will need your freshly learned Mandarin to complete challenges all around Beijing's ancient streets and alleyways. In the afternoon we head off to The Great Wall of China, stopping in a local farming village for lunch (not included). We go to a deserted section of the Wall, where we will have the place to ourselves! Hike along this wonder of the world as the sun sets, before pitching up our tents for a night camping.

Please note: Due to cold weather bookings made before the end of April and after the end of September will be staying in a guesthouse near the Wall but will return to the Wall to watch the sun rise. Overnight - Camping on Great Wall

Day 14 : Morning at The Great Wall



Wake up the next morning for what will be one of the most memorable sunrises of our lives. Return to Beijing where we can visit the Olympic Bird's Nest Stadium or enjoy the incredible Beijing Acrobatics Show (140RMB). For dinner we've got the opportunity to taste one of Beijing's signature dishes: famous Peking Roast Duck (around 70RMB). **Overnight - Beijing**

Day 15 : Beijing to Hong Kong



Our final day in Beijing is spent at leisure seeing the Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City (60RMB), the Temple of Heaven (40RMB) and a night market where we can try snake, scorpion and a host of other "mouth-watering delicacies". In the evening return to Hong Kong by overnight train.

Journey time: Beijing - Hong Kong (approx 22 hours) Overnight - Sleeper Train

Day 16 : Hong Kong

We arrive into Shenzhen in the evening of day 16 where our guide meets us to assist with border crossing into Hong Kong where our tour ends. Transfers to the airport or additional nights accommodation in Hong Kong can be arranged on request for an additional fee.

Please note: This tour arrives into Hong Kong at approximately 9pm

Our partners

This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers who booked through different operators, not solely On The Go.

The sightseeing group may vary in size from 2 – 22 persons.

Joining Arrangements

Please note arrival transfers are not included and you will need to make your own way to the hostel on day 1 to meet your tour guide & group.

Meeting Point: Yesinn @YMT

Yesinn @YMT

2/F, 1B Wing Sing Ln, Yau Ma Tei

Hong Kong

Tel: (+852) 3703 7333

Meeting Time: 7am

Emergency contact: +86 (0)216150 3200 or (+86) 158 0074 0761

It is very important that you're not late. We will not be spending the night at the meeting hostel, and this is solely a meeting point. After meeting the group and your guide, you then make your way to the train station to catch a bullet train to Guilin North.

Accommodation

The accommodation on this tour is hostel dorm room accommodation. All rooms are clean, air-conditioned (or have fans) and offer internet and washing machines as well as bar and lounging facilities onsite. This accommodation is generally suited for travellers on a budget and looking to meet new people. There is an option to upgrade to private rooms for an additional fee.

All accommodation is included from the arrival day until check out time on the final day of the tour however there is an option to extend your stay and book additional post night accommodation.

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Camping at the Great Wall

If we arrive by night-train in Beijing we'll first head to the hostel in Beijing where we got time to fresh up, explore the hostel-area and do some shopping for our trip to the wall. We will store our big luggage in Beijing and only take a small bag for camping with us to the wall.

What to bring:

- Snacks for on the wall. We will have late lunch at the farm house close to the wall, but there is no dinner or breakfast at the wall. Also no snacks are sold at the farm house.

Drinks for on the wall (beers & water can be bought at the farm house next to the wall as well)

- Warm clothes (as it can be cold at night. The trip leader will inform them about the weather forecast though. Usually in summer it's not cold)
- Raincoat (depending on weather forecast)
- Mosquito spray, sunscreen
- Toilet roll
- Hand Sanitiser

Sleeping bags, isolation mattresses (very thin) & tents are provided.

Please note: We consider this a wild camping style trip where there are no toilet facilities or ablutions. Guests can use a secluded section of the wall, which will be cleaned by a local company when we leave. Please bring hand sanitiser and toilet roll with you.

From the farm house it's a 5-minute bus ride + 45 minute hike uphill to the camp site. To hike up we need to carry our small bags + camping equipment with us. Usually there's plenty of time so if we need more time to hike up it's not a problem.

We will only camp between 1st of May & 30th of September. Before or after these dates it will be too cold at the wall. During camping season, we will cancel camping when: the temperatures are too low at night, big rain and/or thunderstorms are predicted. Usually we inform pax 2 days in advance about the latest forecasts and make the final decision on "camping day" before 10 AM.

If we don't camp, we will stay at another part of the wall at a hostel. There is a local restaurant close to the hostel which serves dinner. The hostel also has a bar, karaoke room so we don't need to bring snacks with us. However, no breakfast is included at the hotel and snacks will need to be purchased in Beijing.

Local guides

This is a semi-independent tour and you will travel from place to place unaccompanied on public transport and meet the local guide at each new destination that will conduct your sightseeing arrangements in this location.

Time keeping

Punctuality is very important throughout the tour and you will usually be given a time to meet your tour leader and the rest of the group in reception. In the event that you miss the meeting time you will have to make your own way to where the group are, this will be at your own expense.

Delays can occur on the trips, although they are rare we recommend you do not book onward travel too close to the end of the tour to allow time for delays. We take no responsibility for any missed flights or additional expenses if the group arrives late to the departure city.

Food & Drink

Food in China is very cheap. We advise you to budget 80 RMB per day for food in great local restaurants your Adventure Leader will take you to which we know are safe and tasty. If you want to eat cheaper than this, you can by eating more simple dishes like fried rice/noodles which come in at less than 10 RMB per meal.

As an example of prices of everyday items:

- Small bottle water- 2 RMB
- Basic Chinese meal- 35 RMB
- Drink in a night club- 70 RMB
- Beer in a restaurant/hostel 10-20 RMB
- Coke- 6 RMB

- Taxi- 10 minutes- 20 RMB (taxi prices vary depending on the city, but are very cheap compared to Europe/North America)

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 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

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bought in country or shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

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 (HK SAR) 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 major 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! 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

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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!

Porterage

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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

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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

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