

Places you visit



Day 1: Beijing

Welcome to the grand imperial capital of Beijing, which occupies a vast sprawling area of several thousand square kms. Most of Europe's cities and towns have their compact 'quaint' old city centres and are relatively easy to explore on foot – Beijing is not like this. At 100 acres, Tiananmen Square alone is larger than the historic centres of many European cities.

Day 2: Beijing

Your visit this morning to Tiananmen Square takes you through the Forbidden City to see its pavilions, courtyards and gardens – all surrounded by almost 10-metre high walls and a huge moat. It was forbidden to all but royalty until the fall of the imperial dynasties in 1911. After lunch, tour the Summer Palace, a 700 acre complex containing elegant buildings and landscaped gardens. Originally built in 1750, it was largely destroyed by British troops in 1860. The Empress Dowager Cixi rebuilt it in 1888 and it became her favourite residence. Tonight's dinner features China's famous Peking Duck, followed by a performance of the world-renowned Peking Opera.

Day 3: Beijing

After breakfast, travel to the Badaling Hills to walk the fabled Great Wall of China. This is the highest point of the Guangou Gorge where the wall snakes and undulates along the breathtaking Juyongguan Pass. Lunch in a local restaurant then stroll through the Sacred Way, a tree-lined avenue with massive animal sculptures guarding the Ming Tombs. This evening enjoy a dinner of local specialities.

Day 4: Beijing & Xian

This morning take a rickshaw tour through the hutongs, narrow ancient city alleys integral to Beijing's older residential areas

(not available on Shanghai to Beijing itinerary). You'll also see the intricate detail of handmade silk carpets during your workshop tour, followed by lunch in a local restaurant. This afternoon fly to Xian, a city dating back to the Tang Dynasty. Dinner this evening features a performance of period costumes and Tang Dynasty song and dance.

Day 5: Xian & Chongqing

Explore one of China's greatest archaeological sights, the 2,000 year-old army of life-sized, individually moulded Terracotta Warriors who were buried with Emperor Qin Shi Huang. A superb view of the 6,000 strong army and their horses is provided from the specially constructed walkways. After lunch fly to Chongqing, China's largest inland city and gateway for your Yangtze River cruise. Board your ship then join fellow passengers for a Western dinner this evening.



Beijing, Great wall

Day 6: Fengdu

Fengdu dates back to the Han Dynasty. Take a tour of the Snow Jade Cave, an underground labyrinth of caverns featuring dramatic limestone formations. Evening cruising.

Day 7: Shibaozhai

After a morning scenic cruise along the Yangtze tour the 12-storey Shibaozhai Temple, an impressive example of Qing Dynasty architecture set on the banks of the river.

Day 8: Three Gorges & Lesser Three Gorges

Cruise through the spectacular limestone cliffs known as the Three Gorges. Qutang Gorge, the most dramatic has peaks rising over 122 metres. Board a smaller boat and navigate the remarkable canyons and sheer cliffs of the Lesser Three Gorges. Along the way, see many archaeological sites including the hanging coffins of the Ba people. Enjoy lunch at a scenic stop, return to your ship and cruise through Wu (Witches) Gorge and the famous mist-shrouded Twelve Peaks. This evening pass through the five-stage locks of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest dam – 186 metres high and 2 kms wide.

Day 9: Three Gorges Dam

First thing this morning, disembark for a tour of this amazing engineering project scheduled for completion in 2009. Return to the ship and cruise through Xiling Gorge, the longest of the Three Gorges.

Day 10: Jingzhou

After breakfast visit Jingzhou, a rural village where Viking River Cruises has built an elementary school. Here you will be warmly

greeted by the local children. Return to your ship for lunch and cruise through the night.

Day 11: Dongting Lake

After breakfast, cross Dongting Lake, China's second largest freshwater lake. Stop for a visit to the 66-foot high Yueyang Tower and its nearby pavilions, built during the Qing Dynasty. Cruise overnight.

Day 12: Wuhan

This morning you visit Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province. Tour the Hubei Provincial Museum filled with archaeological treasures, including a collection of intricate bronze bells. Most of the artefacts in the Museum come from a single tomb dating to 433 BC and not discovered until 1978.

Day 13: Jingdezhèn

After breakfast, embark on your full-day tour, including lunch in a local restaurant and a visit to the Ceramic History Museum. Jingdezhèn is an ancient town, which manufactures the country's much coveted porcelain. Learn how ceramics were produced in ancient times and why they were significant to China's many dynasties.

Day 14: Mt Jiu Hua

Today you'll marvel at the serenity of Mt Jiu Hua, one of only four sacred Buddhist mountains. Taoist monks built thatched temples here in the 3rd century, but with the rise of Buddhism, stone monasteries gradually replaced them. Today 70 temples and monasteries remain. After lunch, tour a sacred Buddhist temple before returning to your ship for dinner.

Day 15: Nanjing, Suzhou & Shanghai

After breakfast disembark and take a morning tour of China's ancient capital and its 34 metre ancient city wall. Enjoy a scenic motorcoach ride to Suzhou, often called the 'Venice of the East'. This is a city of sensuous silk, lush gardens and elegant canals. Tour a Silk Factory and visit Fishermen's Garden then lunch in a local restaurant, before continuing on by motorcoach to Shanghai.

Day 16: Shanghai

Your tour of Shanghai this morning reveals the fascinating history of China's largest city, situated at the mouth of the Yangtze River. You will see Old Shanghai and travel along the elegant riverfront promenade, the Bund. After lunch, visit the Shanghai Museum housing exhibits of ancient Chinese art, furniture and jade. Dine at a local restaurant and see a performance of Chinese acrobats.

Day 17: Shanghai

Your tour ends after breakfast.