



China: Present, Past and Future

Country: China

Duration: 10 days / 8 nights

Route:	Round-trip from Beijing to Shanghai
Type of tour:	Cultural
Departure days:	See inside for details
Validity:	From Nov 15, 2020 – Oct 24, 2021

TOUR OVERVIEW

China's first emperor was of such influence that his death and journey to the next world were marked with the construction of a standing army of clay soldiers. Since being discovered under a farmer's field the archaeological dig has since been transformed into one of the most important attractions in the Asian continent, perhaps even the world.

Just as Xi'an was once home to the first emperor of China, so then became the time for what we know today as Beijing to take the helm of the nation. If Xi'an and Beijing are China's past and present, then what of its future? In terms of an international outlook and cosmopolitan feel, it's hard to argue with the position of Shanghai as China's most forward looking urban expanse; and such a status is hard to challenge when faced with the bright lights and international mix of peoples that make this port city one of the world's most populous, dynamic and hip.

Experience the past, present and future of the Chinese nation as you travel overland by high speed train from the busy capital to the home of China's first emperor and onto the future of China's increasingly progressive outlook under the bright lights of the Shanghai skyline.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



Great Wall: Great Wall: Stroll along the restored Badaling section and see the undulating wall disappear into the horizon

Ming Tombs: Pass the Great Red Gate and walk the enchanting Sacred Way towards the mausoleum of the third Ming emperor

Forbidden City: Discover the majesty of the walled imperial precinct, which for centuries was closed off to mere mortals

Temple of Heaven: Behold the beauty of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests and other buildings in this Buddhist complex

Xi'an city walls: The 14km-long ramparts provide an unrivalled platform from which to observe this fascinating ancient city

Great Mosque of Xi'an: Hidden in a lane in the Muslim Quarter is this extremely rare piece of Islamic-Chinese architecture

Big Wild Goose Pagoda: This seven-storey tower in Xi'an has protected priceless Buddhist scriptures for centuries

Terracotta Army: Pay homage to the immortal clay warriors unearthed after 2,000 years guarding China's first emperor

The Bund: Shanghai's riverfront promenade is crammed with an eclectic range of buildings from the European colonial era

Yu Gardens: A peaceful retreat of landscaped gardens and classical halls in the heart of the bustling old city of Shanghai

French Concession: Explore the elegant boulevards and leafy residential streets of Shanghai's former French sector



Start & finish destination

1. Beijing
3. Shanghai



Destinations

2. Xi'an

DON'T MISS!

Beijing: Hip Gulou district is dotted with small independent bars and music friendly venues and is popular with trendsetters

Xi'an: After the Terracotta Warriors the most important sight in Xi'an is surely the restored tomb of revered emperor Jingdi

Shanghai: Head west from The Bund along Nanjing Road and follow the bright lights of Shanghai's premier shopping street

DAY BY DAY

D1-2 BEIJING

Meet your local guide in the lobby of the Beijing Dong Fang Hotel. On the afternoon there is an **optional excursion to the Summer Palace and Kunming Lake** in the north-west of the city. This spellbinding complex was where China's emperors and their families would retreat from the heat and intrigues of the Forbidden City. Here they could relax in the lavish pavilions of **Longevity Hill**, meditate in the temples and stroll through the landscaped gardens around Kunming Lake. The vast and sumptuous Summer Palace provides a range of striking views, and boasts **beautifully decorated buildings and courtyards**, which are charged with history. Admire structures whose grandeur is matched only by their wonderfully evocative names such as the Temple of Buddhist Virtue, the Hall of Jade Ripples, the Cloud-Dispelling Hall and the Hall of Happiness and Longevity. Kunming Lake is a large manmade pond, expanded over centuries, which has three isles that are believed to represent the 'three fairy islands of the Eastern Sea'. Two can be reached by bridge, including Nanhui Island, which is linked to the shore by the sensational Seventeen-arch Bridge. **Overnight in 3* Dong Fang Hotel or similar on B&B basis**

D3 BEIJING (B, L)

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before departing for a brief drive to the **Badaling section of the Great Wall**. This stretch was built in 1505 in the strategically important Guan Valley in order to keep out the Mongol hordes from the north. Nowadays, tourists flock from all over the world and it is the most visited part of the Great Wall. Having been reconstructed to replicate its original appearance, this

section gives a realistic vision of the Great Wall's sheer immensity. For a journey further into China's past, next is a visit to the Imperial Tombs of the Ming Dynasty and the Great Wall. The **Ming Tombs** are located some 45km north of Beijing in the valley below the Jundu Mountains. The location was specifically chosen because of its harmonious environment, and it was designed in an arc form to ward off evil spirits from the north. This monumental and serene complex is accessed through the imposing Great Red Gate and then reached via the 7km-long Sacred Way, which is lined with statues of guardians such as camels, elephants, lions, soldiers and imperial chamberlains. Explore the Changling Tomb, which is the final resting of the Yongle Emperor, who reigned in the early 15th century and is considered one of China's greatest rulers. On return to the city there is the chance to take a picture stop at Olympic park, built during the 2008 games and considered to be the lungs of the city. **Overnight in 3* Dong Fang Hotel or similar on B&B basis**



D4 BEIJING (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a full day visiting four of Beijing's most famous landmarks. First up is the enormous **Tiananmen Square**, one of the world's largest urban plazas, which is the location of the Chinese parliament, Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, the National Museum of China, the Zhengyangmen Gate Tower and the Tiananmen Gate ('Gate of Heavenly Peace') which gives access to the **Imperial City**, within which is the Forbidden City, hidden from the prying eyes of commoners by 10-metre-high walls. Head inside and as you stroll along the stretch leading from the Tiananmen Gate to the Meridian Gate, which leads to the **Forbidden City** proper, the sense of anticipation gives way to awe as you take in the sheer majesty of this incomparable treasure – one that for centuries no commoner or foreigner could enter and live to tell the tale. Construction began under the **Yongle Emperor** in the early 15th century and it was meticulously designed to be in harmony with philosophical, religious and hierarchical principles. Thus all roof tiles were yellow, which was the emperor's colour and could not be used by commoners, while no other building in Beijing could be taller than the Forbidden City. Among the city's attractions visited are: the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Central Harmony, the Hall of Preserving Harmony and the Palace of Heavenly Purity as well as the Hall of Union and Palace of Earthly Tranquillity. Explore this beguiling UNESCO World Heritage Site and marvel at the magnificent temples, halls, pavilions, palaces and courtyards. Enjoy a local lunch after the visit. Adjacent to Forbidden City is **Jingshan Park**, which stretches out over the manmade 45-metre-high hill of the same name. It is the highest point in Beijing and was built as a private garden for emperors and their families. Like all imperial projects, Feng Shui was at the fore of the planning process, and there are five peaks on the hill, each crowned by a pavilion. The views over the Forbidden City and the rest of the capital are breath-taking. To end your day in Beijing we journey on to the **Temple of Heaven**, which is located 3km south of Tiananmen Square. This Buddhist complex dates from the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of the three main structures, the most impressive is surely the 32-metre-high **Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests**, which is the oldest building in the temple. Towards north end of the Temple of Heaven, you will visit the **pearl market**. **Overnight in 3* Dong Fang Hotel or similar on B&B basis**

D5 BEIJING – XI'AN (B, L)

Begin the day with a tour of Beijing's intricate alleyway 'Hutongs' in style, aboard a nifty pedal-powered Rickshaw. Stop off to visit a local family and dine in authentic Beijing fashion (think an array of dishes and an emphasis on congeniality) before taking a leisurely stroll around popular Houhai Lake. **Bid farewell to Beijing and transfer to the train station for a high speed train to Xi'an**. Arrive at Xi'an railway station and transfer to your accommodation **for the next two nights. Overnight in 3* Le Garden Hotel or similar stay on B&B basis**

D6 XI'AN (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a trip to the countryside on the outskirts of Xi'an to visit a priceless treasure that was unknown to humanity until some farmers stumbled upon it four decades ago. What they encountered has since become a global phenomenon, with parts of the so-called **Terracotta Army** being exhibited all over the world. There are thousands of armed warriors, each one different, lined up in rows according to military rank as well as hundreds of horses and chariots. The figures were made by an army of artisans and were buried with Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, who died in 210 BC. To see them all before your very eyes is a truly unforgettable experience. The afternoon's activity is an excursion to the **Big Wild Goose Pagoda**, which has stood here since the Tang Dynasty in seventh century. It has been expanded and renovated many times but its main purpose of housing Buddhist scriptures brought back from India by the travelling monk, Xuanzang, has remained the same. Then you will be stopping at a Jade factory on the way back. **Overnight in 3* Le Garden Hotel or similar stay on B&B basis**

D7 XI'AN – SHANGHAI (B, L)

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before venturing out to walk along the top of the 14km-long city walls, which have protected the city for more than six centuries. From here, you have an unrivalled vantage point 12 metres above the old city and the modern metropolis beyond. Breach the walls and head to the historic Muslim Quarter to visit the famous **Great Mosque**. The current version dates from

1392 and the design is that of a typical Buddhist temple of the era with five successive courtyards, each with a gateway, pavilion or screen, eventually leading to the prayer hall. **In the afternoon transfer to Xi'an train station for your overnight train to Shanghai.**



D8 SHANGHAI (B, L)

Have breakfast at the hotel before enjoying a guided morning stroll through Shanghai's old town, which has somehow survived China's impressive modernisation push of the past two decades. Almost huddled beneath the modern high-rises, the two and three-storey narrow streets of the earthy old city offer an astonishing contrast to the glistening new Shanghai. Mingle with pedestrians and cyclists as they weave about, heading to and fro in this warren of family-run shops and diners, before returning to your accommodation. In the heart of the old city is the **Yu Garden**, a classical Chinese garden, which is crammed with richly decorated pavilions, halls, towers, rockeries and ponds, some dating from as far back as the Ming Dynasty four centuries ago. Here you will find a tranquil spot for respite from the modern pace of life in this at times hectic city of more than 24 million souls. Have lunch at a local restaurant and then head to the **Jade Buddha Temple**, where you can admire jade, marble and gold Buddha statues. Its central location makes this one of the livelier temples in Shanghai. Next onto **The Bund**, the riverside quay crammed with historic bank buildings from the decades when foreign powers controlled large swaths of Shanghai as 'concessions'. There are 52 landmark buildings along this 1.5km promenade, ranging in style from neo-classical to art deco. Among the more eye-catching structures are the eight-storey Customs House and the China Bank of Communications Building. Head for a guided walking tour of **Nanjing Road**, Shanghai's pedestrianised commercial hub, where the thousands of shoppers are dwarfed by the neon signs and the skyscrapers of modern Shanghai. The immense energy, colour and spectacle of the boulevard is a microcosm of Shanghai all condensed into one place. **Overnight in Holiday Inn Express Zhabei or similar on B&B basis**

D9 SHANGHAI (B, L)

Zhujiacao, is a water town that could be considered the Venice of China and after all of those bright lights and high rise buildings what better escape than a place where the daily commute involves the gentle punt of a boatman and buildings sit just a couple of storeys above the waterline. Enjoy a half day amongst the bohemian cafes and main streets that share space with stone alleyways in this increasingly popular township. Upon your return to Shanghai continue on to what was for almost a century known as the **French Concession**, which was a sector of the city controlled by French colonial authorities until 1941. To this day, the area retains the charm of a French or Quebecois provincial city, with elegant boulevards and leafy residential *rues* as well as grandiose mansions with chateau-style roofs and turrets. Café terraces, boulangeries and bistros add to the unmistakably Gallic ambience, which is virtually like having a foreign country in the middle of Shanghai. All attributes, which have no doubt contributed to making the area one of Shanghai's most exclusive. On the way you will also visit a silk factory. **Overnight in Holiday Inn Express Zhabei or similar on B&B basis**

D10 SHANGHAI (B)

Savour a final breakfast at the hotel before checking out and continuing on your journey, whether it's to catch a return flight or onto another location in China or further afield. **Breakfast included.**

(B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner)

