

Premium China: Natural Wonders & Cultural Highlights



trip highlights

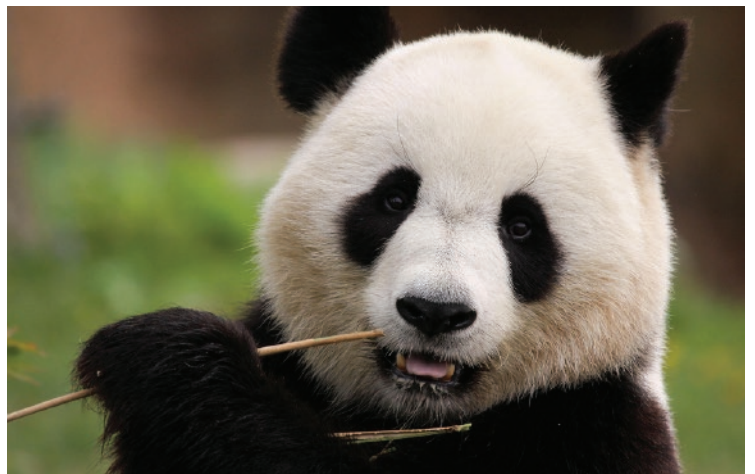
Walk a spectacular section of the Great Wall, staying just steps away from this incredible landmark

A behind-the-scenes visit to a panda sanctuary, observing daily feeding routines with the keepers and gaining rare insight into conservation efforts.

Discover everyday life through Chengdu's tea houses and Beijing's historic hutong neighbourhoods

Walk among the misty sandstone pillars of Zhangjiajie National park, the landscape that inspired the film Avatar

Travel in comfort, enjoy delicious meals, and stay in carefully selected premium hotels



Trip Duration	12 days	Trip Code: PPCH
Grade	Introductory to Moderate	
Activities	Adventure Touring, Day walks (2-5 hours)	
Summary	11 nights premium hotels	

welcome to World Expeditions

For over 50 years, we've been creating high-quality, expedition-style adventures for active travellers with a curious spirit. From our very first trek in the mountains of Nepal to pioneering remote routes across all seven continents, our journeys are built for those who want to truly explore – not just visit.

At the heart of what we do is a simple philosophy: take the paths less travelled.

This means travelling with care, supporting local communities, minimising our impact, and unlocking experiences that most travellers will never have.

If you're ready to go further and dig deeper, we invite you to join us on the Premium China: Natural Wonders & Cultural Highlights, a journey that captures the essence of a unique adventure.

why travel with World Expeditions?

This premium journey combines China's most iconic cultural landmarks with active exploration of some of its most spectacular natural landscapes. From walking a quieter section of the Great Wall and exploring the sandstone peaks of Zhangjiajie to discovering Xi'an's Terracotta Warriors, Chengdu's tea-house culture and a behind-the-scenes panda sanctuary visit, the itinerary is designed to go beyond conventional sightseeing. Carefully selected boutique hotels, first-class rail travel, an internal flight and experienced local guides add comfort and efficiency, while regular walks ensure you experience China at a more immersive pace.

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World Expeditions does not require single travellers to pay a surcharge for travelling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same gender and if we cannot match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. Please refer to our website for the additional cost.

the trip

From the imperial landmarks of Beijing to the dramatic sandstone peaks of Zhangjiajie, and on to the vibrant streets of Chengdu, this journey brings together some of China's most remarkable landscapes and cultural highlights, experienced in comfort. Much of our exploration is undertaken on foot, from sightseeing walks through Beijing, Xi'an and Chengdu to longer walks of between two and five hours on the Great Wall, amongst the landscapes of Zhangjiajie and through the forested mountains of Sichuan.

Beginning in Beijing, we explore iconic sites including the Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven, while staying in a traditional hutong neighbourhood. We then spend a night beside the Great Wall, exploring this extraordinary structure on foot and making dumplings with a local family.

In Xi'an, China's ancient past comes into focus with the Terracotta Warriors. We walk along the city's historic walls, explore the Muslim Quarter on foot, and a tai chi class gives us the opportunity to experience a practice that has been part of life in China for centuries.

From Xi'an we continue on to Furong Ancient Town, dating back two thousand years and built around a cascading waterfall, where we take in the traditional Tujia architecture and atmospheric night scenes. In nearby Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, we walk amongst the 3000 towering quartz-sandstone pillars and misty forests that famously inspired the scenery of the film Avatar.

The journey concludes in Chengdu, where we are introduced to Sichuan culture through its parks, tea houses and renowned cuisine, alongside a visit to a panda sanctuary set within the region's forested mountain landscapes.

at a glance

DAY 1	JOIN BEIJING
DAY 2	BEIJING: IMPERIAL HIGHLIGHTS
DAY 3	WALK THE GREAT WALL
DAY 4	TO XI'AN, VIA BEIJING
DAY 5	XI'AN AND THE TERRACOTTA WARRIORS
DAY 6	TO FURONG ANCIENT TOWN
DAY 7	TO ZHANGJIAJIE NATIONAL FOREST PARK
DAY 8	TIANZI MOUNTAIN AND YUANJIAJIE, THE INSPIRATION FOR THE FILM AVATAR
DAY 9	ON TO CHENGDU
DAY 10	CHENGDU PANDA SANCTUARY AND PLATEAU HIKE
DAY 11	CHENGDU: MUSEUMS, PARKS AND LANEWAY WALKS
DAY 12	TOUR CONCLUDES CHENGDU

what's included

- English speaking local guide
- 11 nights accommodation on a twin share basis, mostly 4 & 5 star boutique style hotels
- 11 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 9 dinners
- Airport transfers on days 1 and 12
- Private air conditioned bus transport
- First class train journey: Beijing to Xi'an and Zhangjiajie to Chengdu
- Internal flight Xi'an to Zhangjiajie (economy class)
- Dumpling cooking class
- Behind the scenes visit at a panda sanctuary
- Entrance fees: Sanxingdui Museum Chengdu, Terracotta Warriors and Furong Ancient Town
- National Park fees & gondola/cable cars for Zhangjiajie National Park and Tianzi Mountain Nature Reserve

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trip dates

2027 10 Apr - 21 Apr
10 Oct - 23 Oct

fast facts

Countries Visited:

China

Visas:

Yes*

Vaccinations:

Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Singles:

A single supplement is available for this trip*

Leader:

Expert local leader

Advice for people with limited mobility

This trip is not suitable for people with limited mobility.

thoughtful travel

Our World Expeditions adventures are grounded in a deep commitment to regenerative travel, going beyond minimising harm to actively restoring and enriching the places we visit. We partner closely with local communities, ensuring that our trips support cultural preservation, fair livelihoods, and community-led initiatives. Each expedition is designed to protect and regenerate natural ecosystems through low-impact practices, climate action, and education that fosters respect for biodiversity. We prioritise meaningful connections between travellers and place, encouraging a sense of stewardship that lasts well beyond the journey. By embedding sustainability into every layer of our operations, we aim not only to explore the world responsibly but also to leave it healthier, more resilient, and more vibrant for future generations.

what's not included

- Flights to Beijing, from Chengdu
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Visa
- Single supplement - when booked in your own room
- Meals and drinks not listed
- Tips
- Any items not listed as included

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Join Beijing

Welcome to China. On arrival in Beijing, you are met and transferred to your hotel, where we will spend the next two nights.

China's capital for over 800 years, Beijing is a city where imperial history and modern life exist side by side. Grand ceremonial avenues, ancient temples and traditional hutong neighbourhoods sit alongside contemporary architecture and vibrant street life. Our boutique hotel is tucked within one of Beijing's traditional hutong neighbourhoods of narrow lanes and courtyard houses. There is time to settle in before gathering this evening for a welcome dinner.

Overnight: Blossom House, Beijing (or similar)

meals: D

DAY 2 Beijing: Imperial highlights

Today brings together some of Beijing's most significant imperial landmarks. At Tiananmen Square, one of the largest public squares in the world, the scale of modern China is immediately apparent, setting the scene for a visit to the Forbidden City beyond. For over 500 years, the Forbidden City served as the political and ceremonial centre of imperial China, home to emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties. We continue to the Temple of Heaven, a masterpiece of Ming dynasty architecture set within expansive parkland. Once used by emperors to perform sacred rituals for good harvests, the site reflects the deep connection between heaven, earth and imperial authority in traditional Chinese belief. The remainder of the afternoon is free to explore the nearby Houhai district with its lakeside walks and cafés. Those wishing to stretch their legs can wander the narrow lanes surrounding our hotel, discovering hidden courtyards, small shops and all the character of one of the city's oldest neighbourhoods.

meals: B,L

DAY 3 Walk the Great Wall

Leaving Beijing behind, we travel north towards the Great Wall, where the landscape shifts from city to open countryside and rugged hills. Stretching for thousands of kilometres across northern China, this vast defensive network was built, rebuilt and extended over centuries, forming one of the most extraordinary engineering achievements in the world. Today, we walk the Jinshanling section, along its ancient stone ramparts, with watchtowers rising at intervals along the route. Tonight's hotel is set just moments from The Wall, offering a peaceful base and sense of the scale and presence of this remarkable landmark. In the evening, we visit a nearby family-

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adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise.

important note

The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

run guesthouse for a hands-on introduction to one of northern China's most loved dishes. Here, we learn the art of making dumplings, before enjoying them together for dinner.

Walk 4 - 5 hours

Overnight: Jinshanling Great Wall Hotel (or similar)

meals: B,L,D

DAY 4 To Xi'an, via Beijing

This morning we return to Beijing and board the high-speed train to Xi'an, a journey linking two of China's great historic capitals. Travelling in first-class comfort through the changing landscapes as we make our way west. On arrival in Xi'an, we transfer to our hotel. Once the eastern terminus of the Silk Road and capital to multiple imperial dynasties, Xi'an offers a deep connection to China's ancient past. The remainder of the evening is free to settle in and relax before tomorrow's exploration of one of China's most significant archaeological sites.

Overnight: Lan Feng Hotel, Xi'an (or similar)

meals: B,D

DAY 5 Xi'an and the Terracotta Warriors

The day begins with a one-hour tai chi class, a practice that has been part of life in China for centuries. With its slow, flowing movements, controlled breathing and emphasis on balance and focus, tai chi is valued as a way to support physical wellbeing and mental calm, and remains a familiar sight in parks and public spaces across China. Refreshed and centred, we then visit the Terracotta Warriors, one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th century. Created over 2,000 years ago to guard the tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, the vast army of life-sized figures reflects an extraordinary level of craftsmanship and ambition, with each warrior uniquely detailed. Late afternoon we walk along part of Xi'an's ancient city wall. Extending for 14 kilometres, it is one of the best-preserved city walls in China. We continue on to Xi'an's Muslim Quarter, where narrow streets are lined with food stalls, small eateries and market vendors. We have dinner here, discovering flavours that may be quite different from the Chinese food we know, with the city's Muslim culinary traditions bringing influences from both China and Central Asia.

meals: B,L,D

DAY 6 To Furong Ancient Town

This morning we fly to Zhangjiajie. On arrival, we drive 1.5 hours through the lush landscapes of Hunan Province to Furong Ancient Town. Set dramatically on a cliff above a cascading waterfall, this two thousand-year-old settlement is one of the most striking in the region. Closely associated with the Tujia ethnic minority, the town retains a strong sense of its heritage, with traditional diaojiaolou houses - timber structures raised on stilts - clinging to the cliffside. At the heart of the town, the Furong Waterfall cascades directly through the centre, while Wuli Street, a winding stone lane, threads through the old town, lined with traditional shops and wooden houses. As evening falls, the waterfall is illuminated, creating one of the most atmospheric night scenes in the region.

Overnight: Annai Xizhou Ji Hotel (or similar)

meals: B,D

DAY 7 To Zhangjiajie National Forest Park

We take a two hour drive to Zhangjiajie, entering China's first national forest park, part of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest

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Area. The wider landscape is famous for more than 3,000 quartz-sandstone pillars and peaks, some rising hundreds of metres from the valleys below. We begin with a cable car ride to Yellow Stone Village for a panoramic view over the sculpted peaks and forested valleys below. After lunch, we enjoy a gentle walk along Golden Whip Stream (7km), a peaceful and shaded trail set within a narrow canyon at the base of the immense stone pillars. Our accommodation for the next two nights is set in a quiet, forested valley on the edge of the national park. The retreat is designed to blend with its natural surroundings, with warm timber interiors and views out across the surrounding greenery.

Walk 3 hours

Overnight: Evergreen Forest Retreat, Zhangjiajie (or similar)

meals: B,L,D

DAY 8 Tianzi Mountain and Yuanjiajie, the inspiration for the film Avatar

Rising above the surrounding valleys, Tianzi Mountain offers some of the most expansive views within Zhangjiajie National Forest Park. Standing at 1,250 metres, Tianzi's main peak is surrounded by a remarkable forest of sandstone pinnacles, with mist and cloud often drifting between the peaks and continually changing the view. From here, we continue to Yuanjiajie, and enjoy lunch overlooking the dramatic scenery before setting out on foot. This area is known for inspiring the landscapes seen in the film Avatar. Our afternoon walk, follows well-formed paths along the escarpment with views across the immense sandstone formations and forested valleys below. We finally descend via the Bailong Elevator, a remarkable glass lift constructed against the side of the cliffs. Rising more than 300 metres, it makes the journey from the mountaintop to the valley floor in under two minutes, with dramatic views through the glass as we descend.

Walk 1 hour

meals: B,L,D

DAY 9 On to Chengdu

A relaxing morning to enjoy the surrounds at our retreat before an afternoon train to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province. Our boutique hotel, located beside historic Wenshu Monastery, provides a peaceful base for the next three nights. Often referred to as the gateway to western China, Chengdu has been an important centre for trade and agriculture for over 2,000 years. Today, it is equally famous for its tea houses, vibrant food scene and as the home of the giant panda. We take an orientation walk of the city, before dinner at a local restaurant and our first taste of Sichuan cuisine.

Overnight: Buddha Zen Hotel, Chengdu (or similar)

meals: B,D

DAY 10 Chengdu Panda sanctuary and plateau hike

Today we travel into the mountains of Sichuan to visit a panda sanctuary, set within a protected landscape of forested valleys and rolling hills. Located in one of the natural habitats of the giant panda, the reserve plays a key role in conservation and research, working to protect and restore wild panda populations. Giant pandas are native to China and remain one of the world's most recognisable and endangered species, with the majority of the wild population found in the mountainous regions of Sichuan. Their specialised diet of bamboo and solitary nature make conservation efforts both complex and essential. During our visit, we have special access inside the enclosure to observe the pandas feeding and learn more about the sanctuary's conservation work from the keepers. There is time to ask questions about the

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challenges of protecting these remarkable animals. Visitors are not permitted to touch or feed the pandas, and photography is not permitted from inside the enclosure. After lunch, we take an easy circular hike across the Panda Plateau, following trails of open hills and forest. We return to Chengdu in the late afternoon.

Walk 3 - 4 hours

meals: B,L,D

DAY 11 Chengdu: museums, parks and laneway walks

Today we visit the Sanxingdui Museum, home to one of the most important archaeological discoveries in modern China. Unearthed in the 20th century, the Sanxingdui site revealed the remains of a previously unknown Bronze Age civilisation dating back more than 3,000 years, transforming our understanding of early Chinese history. After lunch, we spend time in Chengdu People's Park, established over a century ago. More than a green space, this is a place where locals gather to socialise, play games or practise music. In the late afternoon, we explore the Kuanzhai Alleys, a network of restored historic lanes dating back to the Qing dynasty. Lined with traditional courtyard houses, boutique shops and small eateries where we'll sample some of Chengdu's renowned local specialties for dinner.

meals: B,L

DAY 12 Tour concludes Chengdu

As your journey comes to an end, depart Chengdu with a deeper appreciation of China's landscapes and culture.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

country information

China is a destination that captures the imagination with its vast landscapes, enduring traditions and deep historical legacy. Stretching across nearly four million square miles (over 9.5 million square kilometres) and home to more than 1.3 billion people, it is a land of extraordinary contrasts – from alpine plateaus to subtropical forests, bustling megacities to quiet rural villages.

Long shrouded in mystery for Western travellers, China began opening its doors to tourism in the late 1970s. Since then, dozens of previously restricted regions have become accessible, and many ancient sites have been sensitively restored. Today, visitors can explore a remarkable breadth of cultural and natural wonders – including ancient temples, imperial palaces, sections of the Great Wall, and sacred mountains such as Huangshan and Emei.

China is home to 56 officially recognised ethnic groups, each with distinct customs, dress, languages and traditions. This cultural richness is visible in everything from local festivals and tea ceremonies to regional cuisines and architectural styles. While Mandarin is the national language, dialects and minority languages are widely spoken across different provinces.

Modern infrastructure including high-speed rail, well-connected airports and an expanding domestic tourism network makes travelling within China increasingly smooth. Yet much of the country still retains its traditional rhythm, especially in smaller towns and remote landscapes where daily life continues as it has for generations.

This striking blend of old and new, along with the hospitality of its people, makes China a truly rewarding destination for those seeking insight, challenge and cultural depth.

climate

Beijing and Hebei provinces experience distinct seasons, with comfortable conditions during both our April and October departures.

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April brings mild spring weather, with daytime temperatures generally ranging from 15 - 22C (59 - 72F). Gardens and parks begin to bloom, making it one of the most pleasant times to visit. Evenings can still be cool, and there is a chance of occasional showers.

October is one of the best times to travel in northern China, with generally mild, dry days and daytime temperatures of around 15 - 22C (59 - 72F). Evenings are cooler, particularly later in the month, and an occasional cold front from Siberia can briefly bring overnight temperatures close to or below freezing, although daytime conditions usually remain pleasant.

Weather in China can be variable at any time of year, so you should pack clothing that can be layered, along with a waterproof jacket with a hood for all departures.

dietary requirements

We are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Travellers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

accommodation on the trip



A carefully selected range of boutique and historic hotels, each chosen for their location and character. We have detailed our intended accommodations however these are subject to change, in which case a hotel of equal standard will be provided.

visas

Australian, New Zealand, Canada and the UK passport holders can travel to China for tourism without a visa if their stay is 30 days or less. This visa-free policy is effective to 31 December 2026. If you are staying over 30 days you will need to apply for a visa before your trip.

If you require a visa, it is advisable to apply for your visa approximately 6 weeks before your intended entry into China, but not earlier than three months prior. Applying too early may result in your visa expiring before your arrival. Passport holders from Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States, please visit: <https://consular.mfa.gov.cn/VISA/> to be directed to your dedicated city and countries website for instructions.

If you have any doubt about your eligibility, verify the conditions for visa free entry with your nearest Chinese Embassy.

Depending on your passport and location, different requirements apply and they change at short notice. Please refer to websites above for the latest information.

All other nationalities should check with your nearest embassy or consulate.

You must complete an electronic Digital Arrival Card (CDAC) prior to arrival to China. This free, mandatory, and 100% digital process is done via the National Immigration Administration (NIA) website, generating a QR code for immigration inspection. <https://s.nia.gov.cn/ArrivalCardFillingPC/entry-registation-home>

Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit. Visa costs and requirements do change regularly so we suggest you check

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with your travel agent or World Expeditions reservations consultant. It is your responsibility to obtain all necessary visas.

webinars & events

Catch a Webinar – Live or On Demand - to learn more about a particular trip. Make sure the trip you choose is right for you. Watch them live, so you can ask our presenters a question, or catch the recording later at your leisure and watch it On Demand. Visit our website or keep an eye on our newsletter for upcoming presentations.

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trip availability

We operate small group adventures, which means availability is always worth checking early. Check trip availability online or call our team who might be able to dig a little deeper for you to find what you want, when you want.

Many adventures require services that, if not available at the time you book (like an internal flight or permit) could mean the trip is unavailable. So, book early to avoid missing out on your dream adventure.

how to book

Check trip availability and book your tour online, or call or visit one of our offices. To book a trip, you will need to complete a Booking Form (online or request a PDF) and pay a non-refundable deposit. Please note that when booking our tours to not confirm any additional arrangements until all services related to your tour are confirmed by your dedicated Reservations Consultant.