



TanSuo Cultural Travel

Explore Chinese Culture through the Ages



From Dynasties to the Digital Age: Experience China's Changing Culture on a Tour of its most Celebrated Landmarks

It is impossible to see all of the stunning attractions that China has to offer in one trip, but a well-designed tour will afford you the opportunity to discover many of its **most celebrated landmarks** and follow the **fascinating historical timeline** that has led to China as we know it today.

The culture of the Han ethnic majority originated from Central China and currently plays a dominate role in Chinese communities throughout the world. Yet it is towards the north that we will turn our attention, to the home of Beijing and Xi'an, which are considered the two most important capital cities in Chinese history. Some of the most successful dynasties made these cities their base, and they subsequently flourished as hubs of Chinese culture. Ancient history carries forward to the modern-day, as Beijing remains China's capital and centre of culture.

Similarly Nanjing was not only one of China's ancient capitals, but also served as the capital of the Republic of China, as evidenced by the Presidential Palace.

During this tour, we will

- Explore three ancient capitals in Chinese history and two historical old towns;
- Hike along a portion of the magnificent Great Wall and Challenge two of the tallest and most beautiful mountains in China: Mount Hua and Mount Huang;
- Marvel at the Forbidden City and the legendary Terracotta Army;
- Enjoy stunning views of the Loess Plateau and the mountainous landscape that surrounds Mount Huang;
- Learn about the history of China, particularly with reference to the histories of Jin and Hui merchants;
- Experience what it's like to live in traditional Chinese dwellings, such as Shanxi Courtyard Houses and Hui-style mansions;
- Sample traditional Beijing-style, Shaanxi-style, Anhui-style, and Jiangsu-style cuisine.

Capital cities aren't the only thing on the agenda, as we'll also visit two areas that were integral to the development and success of China's culture and economy; Shanxi and Huizhou. After all, you can't have a capital without capital! Bringing our tour right up to the modern day, we'll also be visiting Shanghai, a city in China synonymous with technology, fashion, and keeping ahead of the curve.

So join us on our tour, where we'll discover how Chinese culture adapted from imperial times right through to the modern day. And we'll tackle a couple of the country's most scenic mountains while we're at it!



Participants Max: 10

Duration: 15 days and 14 nights

Tours in 2021: 31st of Oct - 14th of Nov

Tours in 2022: 30th of Oct - 13th of Nov

Highlights - Historical Significance

Pingyao Old Town



With its old-fashioned black-tile roofs and simple flagstone streets, Pingyao may seem humble now, but it was once China's financial centre. The city was built over 2,700 years ago, although it didn't reach its prominence until it was expanded during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). By the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), it was home to over half of the financial institutions in the whole of China.

Residents in Pingyao were so wealthy that they were literally laughing all the way to the bank! Nowadays the city is a popular retreat for tourists and is home to over 300 historic sites, the most famous of which is arguably Rishengchang. This ancient building is thought to have been the first bank ever established in China and, in its heyday, it once controlled half of the silver trade in the country. Its establishment was integral to China's economic development, so it's definitely worth investing a little time in it during your visit. After all, it's sure to generate interest! Read more about [Pingyao Old Town](#).

The Mutianyu Portion of the Great Wall



This portion of the Great Wall was originally built during the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-557) but, since it protected one of the gates that gave access to Beijing, it was repaired extensively throughout the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and is now considered one of the most well-preserved parts of the Great Wall.

Its important defensive position meant it was once the site of numerous legendary battles. If only walls could talk, and then we could hear about them first-hand! Thanks to its tough exterior, which is predominantly made of granite, it is considered virtually indestructible and has survived in beautiful condition to this day. Read more about [the Great Wall](#).

Highlights - Historical Significance

The Terracotta Army

The legendary Terracotta Army has captivated audiences across the globe ever since they were discovered in 1974. In fact, when the British Museum held an exhibition of just a small selection of real figures from the excavation site, it resulted in the most successful year they had had since the King Tutankhamen exhibition in 1972. So if the opportunity to see just a few of these magnificent statues was enough to send the British public into a frenzy, imagine seeing over 6,000 of them arranged in their original military formation!

Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China and founder of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), began building his mausoleum in 246 BC at the tender age of just thirteen. Talk about starting them young! This colossal necropolis took 11 years and over 700,000 laborers to complete, and perhaps its most exceptional feature is the Terracotta Army. Boasting approximately 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses, and 150 cavalry horses, this army is impressive enough in of itself, but what makes it so fantastically unique is that every single soldier is different. From their height and hairstyle to their uniform and facial features, each figure is unlike the one before it. Read more about [*The Terracotta Army*](#).



Highlights - Ancient Capitals

Xi'an



Prior to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Xi'an was known as Chang'an, which means "Long-lasting Peace". This noble city was one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China and served as the country's capital for 13 feudal dynasties, so no wonder peace was their main concern!

Nowadays it's earned great fame as the starting point of the Silk Road and the site of the legendary Terracotta Army. Yet Xi'an has a few more surprises up its sleeve! Its Muslim Quarter is home to the Hui ethnic minority, whose unusual culture and delicious cuisine have delighted locals and visitors for years. From the Great Wild Goose Pagoda and the Da Ci'en Temple to the Bell Tower and the Great Mosque, Xi'an boasts so many wonderful attractions that a lifetime may not be enough to discover them all! Read more about [Xi'an](#).

Beijing



Beijing, the capital city, is the nation's political centre as well as the culture centre. The establishment of Beijing City can be traced back to the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770 BCE – 256 BCE), during which time it was named Ji City as the capital of Yan State. Some historical records show that the Jin City was built around 1045 BCE. It became a big city since the beginning of the 10th century, the Liao Dynasty (907-1125). From then on, it had been the capital of Jin (1115-1234), Yuan (1279-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, with different names. Of course it is the capital again of the new China now.

Because of its history, there are plenty of culture heritages. Most of the buildings and temples built in Ming Dynasty, which well present the traditional Han culture. It is a definitely international modern city, meanwhile you can find out real Chinese culture here, just like what you expect. Read more about [Beijing](#).

Highlights - Ancient Capitals

Nanjing

Having served as the capital for 7 separate kingdoms, one dynasty, and one revolutionary government, Nanjing is a city steeped in history and is now ranked as one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China. It was also the capital of the **Republic of China** from 1927 to 1949.

As a testament to its ancient roots, it is still surrounded by a 48-kilometre-long (30 mi) city wall, which was constructed during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Nowadays it serves as the provincial capital of Jiangsu province, but its long and illustrious history is flecked with success and tragedy.

Nanjing salted duck is one of the gastronomic specialties of the region and is renowned for its tender, juicy meat, while local night markets sell a variety of handmade items, such as the delicately woven *yunjin* or cloud silk brocades. The city's long history has come together to form a vibrant culture that lives and breathes within its walls, inviting visitors to come and enjoy a taste of Nanjing! Read more about [Nanjing](#).



Highlights - Folk Architecture

Shanxi Grand Compounds

Shanxi Grand Compounds were colossal mansions masterminded by wealthy merchants during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties. These bizarre castle-like structures were built according to the architectural style of northern China and feature many small courtyards that were in turn surrounded by high walls for defensive purposes.

The layout of each compound is symbolic and has a deeper meaning based on the wishes and desires of the family who built it. For example, the Wang Family Compound is made up of five main courtyards, which were designed to represent the five lucky animals in Chinese mythology: the dragon, the phoenix, the tortoise, the *qilin* (Chinese unicorn), and the tiger. It was believed that these animals would watch over the family, protect them from misfortune, and bring them good luck. Being the largest grand compound in the whole of Shanxi, you could almost say it's a real *beast* to get around!

Nowadays over 100 of the smaller courtyards and 1,000 rooms are open to the public, giving visitors an insight into the lavish lifestyle of the rich and famous in ancient China. Read more about [*Shanxi Grand Compounds*](#).



Traditional Hui Architecture

Traditional Hui Architecture

Like the merchants of Shanxi, traders from the ancient region of Huizhou began to thrive financially during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and swiftly found themselves with more money than you could shake an ink stick at! Unfortunately the size and majesty of residential buildings was largely dictated not by wealth but by social status and, since merchants were considered of a low social standing, they were not permitted to own the kind of grand dwellings that were afforded to government officials or aristocratic families.

Yet the wily Hui merchants weren't about to let this stop them, so they found a way to show off their immense wealth without breaking social etiquette. Instead of focusing on size, they turned their attention to decoration and adorned their mansions with the finest brick-sculptures, woodcuttings, and stone carvings money could buy. From the doors to the roofs, Hui mansions are a true work of art. Many of these ancient buildings date back to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties and are still in excellent condition, serving as proof that money doesn't just talk, it speaks beautifully! Read more about [Hui Architecture](#).



Highlights - Folk Architecture

The Hutongs of Beijing

The beauty of Beijing's hutongs is indefinable and, rather fittingly, there is no exact definition for the word "hutong". The term is commonly used to refer to ancient streets and districts in Beijing that have remained largely unchanged. There is even an old Chinese saying in the city which states: "There are 360 hutongs that are named, but the hutongs without names are as plentiful as blackberries". This may be something of an exaggeration but, like blackberries, hutongs are one of the sweetest parts of Beijing! Many of them date back further than 800 years and act as a sort of time capsule, connecting this modern city with its ancient past.

Yet, unlike many of Beijing's illustrious historical sites, people still inhabit the hutongs and perpetuate a way of life that has long since been forgotten by the city's urbanites. Walking down one of these ancient passageways and feeling the well-worn flagstones beneath your feet, with the trees rustling above you and the muffled cries of vendors in the distance, you'll be thankful that this peaceful slice of history still exists. Read more about [*The Hutongs of Beijing*](#).



Highlights - Folk Architecture

The City God Temple District of Shanghai

The locals consider this temple so integral to the history of Shanghai that there is even an old saying which states, “Anyone who fails to see the City God Temple, fails to see Shanghai”. So, if you’re braving that long flight to China and stopping off in the city, you surely don’t want to be accused of missing out!

The temple is located in the ancient, walled part of the city and the name “City God Temple” is used to describe not only the temple complex, but also the surrounding commercial district. The term “City God” refers to specific immortals or deities who were believed to protect certain cities, and Shanghai happens to have three of them. Evidently it is true what they say; three really is the magic number! The temple was originally known as the Jinshan or “Golden Mountain” Temple but was converted into the City God Temple in 1403, during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It enjoyed a surge of popularity during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) and, eager to take advantage of this new business opportunity, hundreds of vendors set up shop in the surrounding streets, which swiftly became a busy marketplace. Many of these old stores have maintained their original characteristics and are over a hundred years old. After all, if your business strategy has worked for that long, why change it! Read more about Shanghai's *City God Temple District*.



Highlights - Amazing Nature

Mount Huang

In ancient times people believed that Huang Di (a King in Chinese legend) had come here to refine his Pills of Immortality. During the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), it was known as Mount Yi, but was renamed Mount Huang in 747 AD in honor of the Yellow Emperor. Evidently it wasn't enough to just make himself immortal, his name had to be immortalized too!

Although it is not classed as one of the Five Great Mountains of China, a famous Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) geographer named Xu Xiake once wrote: "It is not worth seeing other mountains if you have been to the Five Great Mountains; and it is not worth seeing the Five Great Mountains if you have been to Mount Huang".

We'll be visiting both Mount Huang and one of the Five Great Mountains on our trip, so feel free to put Xu Xiake's words to the test! Read more about [*Mount Huang*](#).



Highlights - Amazing Nature

Mount Hua

Listed as one of the Five Great Mountains of China, Mount Hua has a pretty big reputation to live up to. Standing at an altitude of just 2,100 metres (7,070 ft.), it is nowhere near as tall as several of the other mountains in the country. Yet it is its spiritual significance that has earned it such fame and, once you set foot on one of the many mountain paths, its mystical quality is palpable.

Taoists believe that the god of the underworld lives inside the mountain and historically it has been a site of pilgrimage for monks of various religions. From Immortal's Palm Peak, where the deity Juling reputedly descended from heaven and tore the mountains in half, to the Jade Spring Temple, where the Golden Fairy Princess supposedly lost her jade hair clasp, this mountain range practically exudes spirituality. Only the hardest of hermits, with the strongest wills and most spiritual of natures, were believed to be able to conquer the mountain, so don't be too disappointed if you end up having to use the cable car! Read more about [Mount Hua](#).

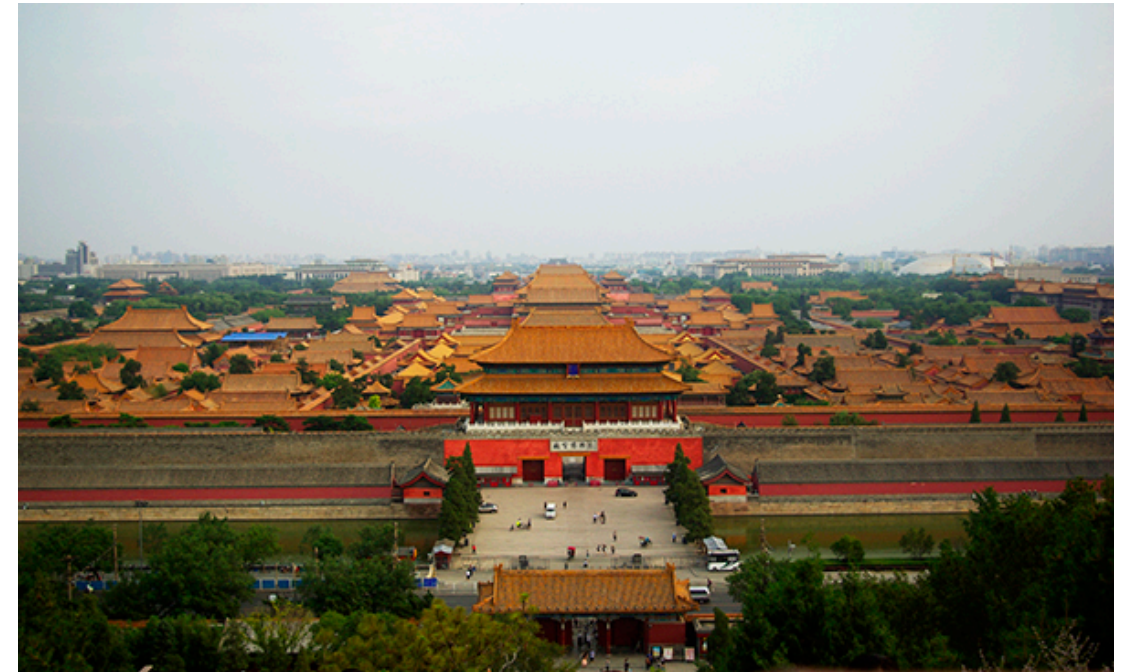


Highlights - Palatial Structures

The Forbidden City

Construction of this colossal palace began during the early 15th century and was masterminded by the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It took over 100,000 artisans and one million laborers 14 years to complete and was home to 24 successive emperors over a period of 491 years. This means that, for every year it took to build, it got over 35 years of use. Talk about getting your money's worth! Since each emperor believed himself to be the son of heaven, the palace was built to imitate the legendary Purple Palace of the Jade Emperor (the King of Heaven). This is why it's occasionally referred to as the Purple Forbidden City and why it originally had 9,999.5 rooms, as the Purple Palace supposedly had 10,000 rooms and it was considered improper for the Emperor to try and outdo his father!

Nowadays the palace's smooth red walls, yellow glazed-tiles roofs, and intricate decoration have become a symbol of Beijing and one of the most recognizable relics of imperial China. Read more about [*The Forbidden City*](#).



Highlights - Palatial Structures

The Presidential Palace

The Presidential Palace is one of the more unusual tourist attractions in Nanjing, as its history spans both imperial and modern China. This has resulted in a hectic mixture of traditional dynastic and contemporary architectural styles, with a post-colonial flair added in for good measure!

The palace was originally established during the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and was used primarily by royal princes. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), it became the Office for the Viceroy of Liangjiang, a government official charged with the administration of modern-day Jiangsu, Anhui, and Jiangxi provinces. Most people are lucky enough to upgrade from a cubicle to their own office, let alone an entire palace! Yet its period of greatest fame came after the collapse of imperial rule in 1912, when Sun Yat-sen^[1] decided to keep offices there. From 1927 onwards, it was the main headquarters of the Chinese Nationalist Party until their leader, Chiang Kai-shek, fled to Taiwan in 1949.

Nowadays it is known as the China Modern History Museum and serves as one of the last remnants of the Republic of China, being one of the only places where the Flag of the Republic of China can be legally displayed. Read more about *the Presidential Palace*.

[1] Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925): A Chinese revolutionary who played an instrumental role in overthrowing the Qing Dynasty, abolishing imperial rule and founding the Republic of China. He became the first president of China in 1912.



Highlights - Religious Art

Shuanglin Temple

Shuanglin Temple has been nicknamed “The Museum of Coloured Sculptures” and, when you set foot inside and marvel at the collection of over 2,000 painted statues that decorate its halls, you’ll soon see why!

Currently, due to lack of historical documents, researchers do not know exactly when the temple was built, but a stone tablet stating it was rebuilt in 571 AD during the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577) and two huge locust trees that were planted during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) attest to its ancient origins. Although it is estimated that the temple is about 1,400 years old, it underwent large scale restoration throughout the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties and so its appearance reflects those architectural styles. After all, when you’re over 1,000 years old, you need a little extra help to keep looking good! Its name literally means “two woods” and makes reference to one of Buddha’s teachings, which states that “nirvana is between two trees”. Buddha may not have specified which two trees they were, but Shuanglin Temple’s peaceful atmosphere is sure to make you feel more enlightened. Read more about [the Shuanglin Temple](#).



Highlights

The Bund of Shanghai

The Bund has become something of an emblem for the city of Shanghai and is widely considered to be its most well-known tourist attraction. The term “bund” derives from the Persian word “band”, which means embankment or levee, and is a testament to the city’s cosmopolitan nature. As a harbor city, Shanghai has seen more foreign merchants, visitors, and residents over the years than some Chinese cities will see in their lifetime. The numerous banks, trading houses, hotels, and consulates that line the Bund were built in the colonial architectural style and make for a stark contrast compared to the more traditional Chinese buildings found in cities like Beijing.

The Bund itself centres on a section of Zhongshan Road, which rests on the western bank of the Huangpu River and directly faces the towering forest of skyscrapers in the Pudong District. This futuristic scenery is a far-cry from the delicate eaves of the Forbidden City or the ancient majesty of the Terracotta Army, yet it has still managed to enchant visitors for decades. With its rippling waters, international vibe, and fascinating blend of architectural styles, it serves as the perfect symbol for modern China. Read more about the *Bund of Shanghai*.



Itinerary

Day 1 Meet in Beijing

Meeting point: Beijing International Airport or you can come to the hotel directly by yourself.

We will arrange one airport pick-up in the afternoon and another airport pick-up in the evening, depending on the flight times of all of the participants.

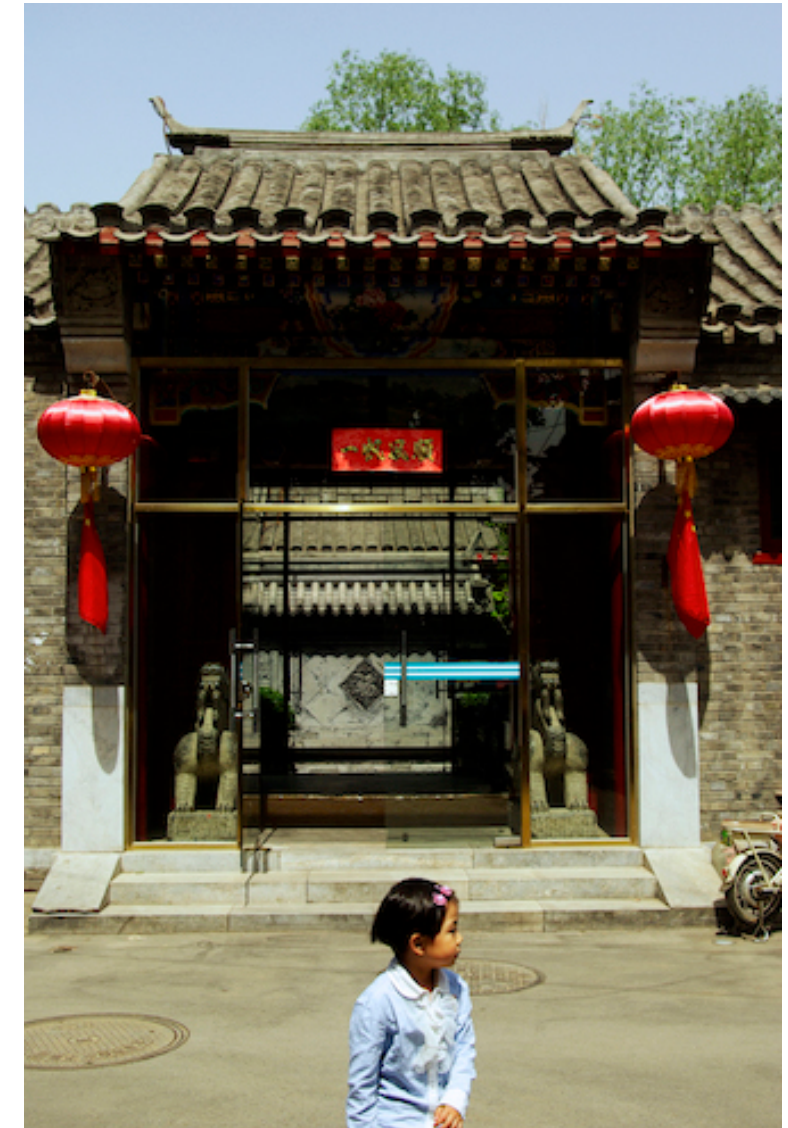
Please Note:

A late pick up (after 21:00) service is also available, but there will be a fee depending on the time.

If you decide to take the train from another city in China to Beijing, please let us know in advance and we can meet you either at the hotel or the railway station. If you need any help making travel arrangements, please don't hesitate to ask us. The pick-up service fee will depend on the railway station and the arrival time.

Dinner: Not included. Since some participants may arrive late or may not have an appetite after the long flight, we've left this evening's dinner arrangements up to you. Our guide, however, will be on hand to recommend restaurants and help you translate if necessary.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Beijing city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 2 Delve into the History of Beijing

On this day, we'll catch our first glimpse of the city's ancient history. In the morning, we will go to the “heart” of Beijing, **Tiananmen Square**, and then we will start our tour of **the Forbidden City**, which will take approximately 4 hours.

Then we will scale the highest hill in **Jingshan Park** so that we can enjoy **a panoramic view of the Forbidden City and Beijing itself**. Jingshan Park was originally served as a private imperial garden attached to the palace complex. The park is also the ideal place to relax and soak in the atmosphere of Beijing, as many local people gather here to chat, dance, sing opera, play traditional instruments, and practice Tai Chi.

We will enjoy the rest of the day in **the heart of Old Beijing**, the Hutong district, where we can admire the old dwellings and imagine what life was like in ancient China.

What's Included: Entrance ticket to the Forbidden City and the Jing Hill.

Dinner: We will enjoy a welcome dinner together made up of dishes from traditional Beijing-style cuisine

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Beijing city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 3 Hike the Mutianyu Portion of the Great Wall

The entire day will be spent hiking the Mutianyu Section of the Great Wall.

We will be taken to Mutianyu directly by coach. It is time to see whether you are up to the challenge! Are you strong enough to finish climbing this entire portion of the Great Wall? If you fancy a more leisurely ascent, you can always buy a ticket for the cable car. After all, you are on holiday!

There is also the option to [toboggan down](#) this section of the Great Wall, which is a lot of fun. If you would like to do this but would prefer to hike to the wall itself, please let us know in advance, as you will need to buy the tickets for the toboggan at the main gate before we start our hike.

We will spend about 4 to 5 hours hiking this section of the wall. Then we will take the coach back Beijing.

What's Included: Entrance ticket to the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall

Dinner: Not included. Throughout the tour, we will recommend several signature dishes and notable local restaurants, but you are free to choose where you would like to eat.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Beijing city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 4 Welcome to Pingyao Old Town

Today let's try the most popular icon of advanced technology in modern China, the high speed train! It will take us about 4 hours to travel from Beijing to the ancient town of Pingyao. After settling down in the hotel, we will still have a couple of hours to visit some interesting places in the old town.

There are more than 20 attractions in the huge and sprawling complex that is Pingyao Old Town. We will start with the most important ones, the old "banks".

We will go to visit **Rishengchang**, the oldest bank in China. Established in 1823, Rishengchang controlled nearly half of the silver circulating in the country during its heyday. It may have traded in silver, but it was worth its weight in gold! These banks had the Chinese name *piaohao* (票号).

We will also pay a visit to the "security company" that worked with *piaohao* to transport the gold, silver and money.

The economic prosperity of Shanxi province peaked during Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. That's the reason why "the first bank" in China was located in Pingyao. If you are interested in the story of the Jin Merchants, who were largely responsible for the rising wealth of Shanxi province, you can find more information in our article on [*Jin Merchants*](#).

Hopefully we will have time in the afternoon to visit another old *piaohao*. If we do not have enough time, however, don't worry! We'll have plenty of time to visit plenty of attractions the next day



What's Included: Entrance ticket to Pingyao Old Town (including the attractions in the town).

Dinner: We will enjoy dinner together made up of dishes from traditional Shanxi-style cuisine.

Accommodation: Traditional Chinese style boutique hotel

Please Note: Depending on which boutique hotel we stay it, you may end up sleeping on a traditional Chinese style of brick bed known as a *kang*. Prepare to experience an authentic Chinese night's sleep!

Itinerary

Day 5 Pingyao Old Town

We've dedicated the whole day to exploring this old town. Let's start with the biggest attractions. **The County Government Office** and **the Temple of the City God** were not built in centrally and can thus be located on either side of the town. The County Government Office was designed to rule the “yang” of the human world, while the Temple of the City God held sway over the “yin” of the spiritual world.

We will also visit **the Confucian Temple** and other attractions. Perhaps the greatest highlight of the day, however, will be our visit to **the City Walls**. From the top, we'll be able **to enjoy a panoramic view of both the ancient town and the alien landscape of the Loess Plateau**. If you like, you can rent a bicycle to ride around the wall or hire a pedicab to take you on a tour of the wall.

Once we have finished our tour for the day, you are free to explore at your leisure and discover what life is truly like in this ancient town. The town itself is gigantic, so you can easily wander for hours without getting bored!

What's Included: Entrance ticket to Pingyao Old Town (including the attractions in the town).

Dinner: Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

Accommodation: Traditional Chinese style boutique hotel



Itinerary

Day 6 The Wang Family Compound, Shuanglin Temple

We will be driven by private mini coach to visit these two amazing attractions.

The Wang Family Compound is a colossal mansion made up of over 100 courtyards and more than 1,000 rooms, so we will probably spend at least 4 hours there. The Shuanglin Temple is not particularly large, but **the artwork within the temple is unparalleled in its beauty and deserves to be admired.**

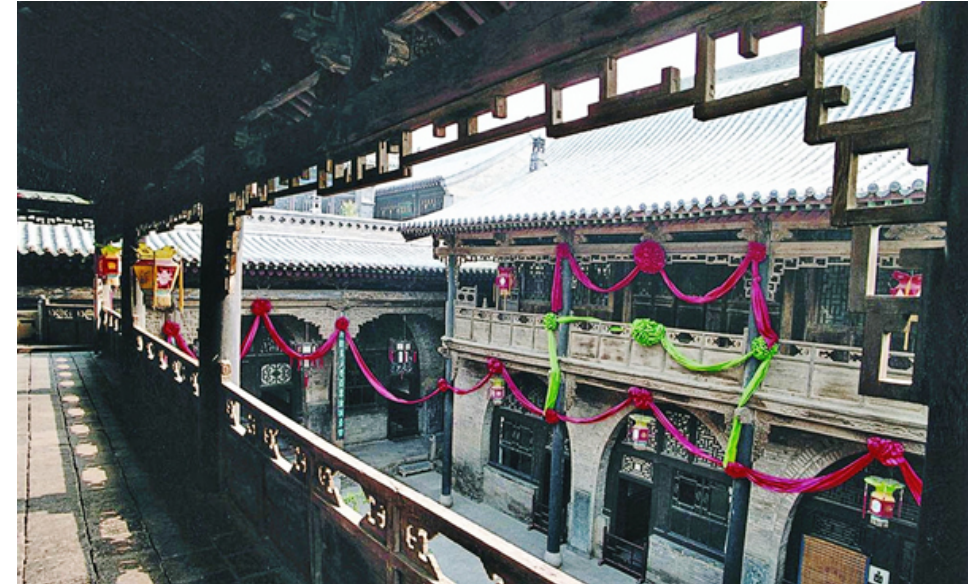
Once we have returned to Pingyao, you can either join us and continue our exploration of the town, or you can choose to spend the afternoon in a local tearoom and soak in the traditional atmosphere.

The most famous specialty of Pingyao is its breathtakingly intricate lacquerware. If you want to purchase some of this special lacquerware, don't hesitate to ask your guide for help with translation while you shop!

What's Included: Entrance ticket to the Wang Family Compound and Shuanglin Temple.

Dinner: Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

Accommodation: Traditional Chinese style boutique hotel



Itinerary

Day 7 The Ancient Capital of Xi'an

We will take the high-speed train to Xi'an, which will only take two and a half hours! You may think this is a long time, but even just 50 years ago people on the Loess Plateau could not dream of traveling between the provinces of Shanxi and Shaanxi so quickly.

After we've settled and checked in to our hotel, we will visit [the Da Ci'en Temple](#) and [the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda](#).

The Da Ci'en Temple was originally built in 598AD. During the Tang Dynasty, sometime around 648AD, the crown prince Li Zhi spearheaded the renovation of the temple in honour of his mother, the Empress Wende, who had tragically suffered an early death. Li Zhi wanted to pay tribute to his mother's kindness and so named the temple "Da Ci'en", which means "kindness and grace" in Chinese. The famous Buddhist monk Xuanzhang, **who is famous for his fabled pilgrimage to India to gather Buddhist scriptures**, was abbot of this temple and masterminded the construction of the Great Wild Goose Pagoda there. More information about the [*Da Ci'en Temple*](#) and the [*Great Wild Goose Pagoda*](#).

What's Included: Entrance ticket to the Da Ci'en Temple and the Great Wild Goose Pagoda.

Dinner: We will enjoy dinner together made up of signature dishes from traditional Shaanxi-style cuisine.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Xi'an city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 8 The Terracotta Army

In the morning, we will take a bus to visit this world-renowned attraction and we will spend most of the day there, leaving only in the late afternoon.

The complex itself includes three pits where the warriors are located, one museum, and [Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum](#), which is a bit further away and will require us to take a shuttle bus.

Once we've returned to Xi'an, we will go to one of the most intriguing places in the city - the Muslim Quarter, which is also the centre of the old town.

On our way to [the Muslim Quarter](#), we will see the beautiful [Bell Tower](#) and [Drum Tower](#). They are widely considered to be the most iconic landmarks in Xi'an.

The Muslim street is famous for the cuisine of the Hui ethnic minority. If you want to learn more about this style of cuisine before trying it, you can read our in-depth guides here: [Shaanxi Local Snacks](#) and [Shaanxi Cuisine](#).

There is a "hidden treasure" in the Muslim Quarter known as the [Gao Family Mansion](#). It is not only a traditional Chinese mansion, but is also the ideal place to enjoy a performance of the [local Qiang Opera](#) and a traditional [Shadow Puppet Show](#). This is an optional choice. The joint ticket with entrance and both shows included is approximately £9. If you want to learn more about the Gao Family Mansion, you can read our article here: [The Gao Family Mansion](#).



What's Included: Entrance ticket to the Terracotta Army.

Dinner: Not included. We recommend you try one of the many small restaurants along Muslim Street, where you can sample the cuisine of the Hui ethnic minority. Please feel free to ask us for any help.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Xi'an city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)

Itinerary

Day 9 Scale the heights of Mount Hua

In the morning, we will travel to Mount Hua via high speed train. We will try to explore the entirety of the mountain range, but don't be discouraged if we can't make it. After all, it is one of the largest mountain ranges in China and some of the hiking paths that lead to the peaks are quite difficult. Alternatively you can choose to ride the cable car, which cuts out some of the fun of climbing but will save you a lot of time and energy.

We will take the main route in order to pass all of the attractions. We will hike up to North Peak, then across to East Peak and South Peak. We will finish our hike at West Peak, where we will take the cable car down. If we don't have enough time, we may miss out one or two of the peaks.

Please Note: If you want to take a cable car to the top, please tell us in advance, because this cable car leaves from a different entrance gate from the one we will use.

What's Included: Entrance ticket to the Mount Hua, one way cable car down Mount Hua, and one way shuttle bus.

Dinner: Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Xi'an city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 10 Discover the History of Huizhou

We'll take the high-speed train from Xi'an to Huangshan. It is a long journey and we will arrive in the late afternoon. Then we will head to **Tunxi Old Town**, where we will enjoy our traditional boutique hotel. Tunxi Old Town boasts a multitude of ancient buildings that follow the Hui-style of architecture. If you want to learn more about the local culture, you can read our article here: [*Culture of Huizhou*](#).

Dinner: We will enjoy dinner together made up of signature dishes from Anhui-style cuisine.

Accommodation: Traditional Chinese style boutique hotel

Day 11 The Bagua Village of Chengkan

We will spend the whole day learning about traditional Huizhou culture and enjoying the beautiful village of Chengkan. With its labyrinthine streets and elegant architecture, the ancient village of Chengkan is endowed with an air of mystery. Surrounded by eight mountains and halved by the S-shaped Longxi River, the village's location is no accident. **Its layout and placement were designed to replicate a traditional Chinese pattern known as Bagua or the Eight Diagrams**, which is derived from a classical text known as the *I-Ching* or *Book of Changes* and contains the famous Yin-Yang symbol. Read more information about [*Chengkan*](#).

The day will be quite relaxing, so that we can save our energy for the next day's hike up Mount Huang!

What's Included: Entrance ticket to Chengkan.

Dinner: Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

Accommodation: Traditional Chinese style boutique hotel



Itinerary

Day 12 The beauty of Mount Huang

After a leisurely day spent hiking up the magnificent Mount Huang, we'll be rewarded with stunning panoramic views. Keep that in mind when you feel tired during the hike!

We will take a private mini coach to Mount Huang. Our plan is the same as conquering Mount Hua, climbing up and then taking a cable car down. **If you decide you want to take a cable car up to the mountain, please let your guide know in advance.** Please be advised that, unlike Mount Hua, there is no single cablecar that takes you to the summit. Instead, you have to take one cablecar from the base to the centre, and then a second one from the centre to the summit.

Once we've finished our hike, we will take the mini coach back to the old town Tunxi.

What's Included: Entrance ticket to Mount Huang, one way cable car down Mount Huang, and one way shuttle bus to the Mount Huang scenic area.

Dinner: Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

Accommodation: Traditional Chinese style boutique hotel



Itinerary

Day 13 Uncover the Fascinating History of Nanjing

In the morning, we will take the train from Huangshan to Nanjing.

Having served as the capital for 7 separate kingdoms, one dynasty, and one revolutionary government, Nanjing is a city steeped in history and is now ranked as **one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China**.

After settling down in the hotel, we will go to visit the ancient heart of Nanjing, the **Fuzimiao District** and **Qinhuai River District**, where we'll find evidence of the city's prosperous past, such as the **Jiangnan Examination Hall**. As a matter of fact, this area was the most popular place for intellectuals to relax in the past. They would often sit drinking on their boats while composing poems, or relax as beautiful girls sang and played instruments for their entertainment. These scholars produced many beautiful yet tragic love stories, mostly about scholars who fell in love with the aforementioned "entertainment" girls. Read more about [Nanjing](#).

Dinner: We will enjoy dinner together made up of signature dishes from Jiangsu-style cuisine.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Nanjing city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 14 The Presidential Palace in Nanjing

This palace serves as a powerful reminder that, had the Chinese Nationalist Party won the civil war, Nanjing would have surely become the modern-day capital of China. Since the CNP were deeply influenced by Western cultures, you'll notice that the architecture of the palace has a certain Western flair. For many people, the palace serves as an iconic connection between old and new China.

In the afternoon, we will take the high-speed train to Shanghai. To follow the history of the city chronologically, we'll visit [the City God Temple](#) area first, followed by [the Bund](#). This forest of modern skyscrapers is a far-cry from the ancient buildings we've admired so far on our journey.

What's Included: Entrance ticket to The Presidential Palace.

Dinner: We will enjoy dinner together made up of signature dishes from Shanghai-style cuisine.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel in Shanghai city centre (can be upgraded to 4-star on request)



Itinerary

Day 15 Onward Journey

On your final day with us, you can either choose to embark on your return journey home or continue your travels. If you decide to continue traveling, we'll be on hand to help you book any travel tickets or hotels should you need us to. If you need any recommendations on where to travel, please do not hesitate to ask us.

In the morning, we will escort you to the train station or airport with plenty of time for you to catch your train or flight.

If your flight isn't until the afternoon, please let us know and we can arrange some extra sightseeing in Shanghai for you.

Please Note: You can choose to stick to this tour entirely, or you can just incorporate it as part of your wider plans to travel across China. We can provide you with information and help you with any other travel plans you may have if you need us to. We also provide a hotel booking service and a flight or train booking service for all of our members' traveling in China outside of the 15 designated days of the tour. We will also provide a consultancy service for you, which will help you to plan your journey across China and give you useful tips on traveling in China.



Prices and What's Included

Unlike other tours in China, we do not ask you to tip your tour guides and drivers each day. Instead, we pay our tour guides and drivers a fair wage, so they do not need to ask for tips.

Cost pp: £2500/7-10 people in one group, £2750/4-6 people in one group, £3500/2-3 people in one group

Single sup: £600 (Please be advised that, if you are the last person joining the tour or if there is no one in the group who you can share with, you may need to pay for the single supplement. We will advise you if this is the case when you enquire about the tour).

Including: 14 nights of accommodation; all entrance fees to the attractions mentioned in the itinerary; 6 dinners; all breakfasts; all transportation fees during designated tour times; an English speaking guide; a pdf file with useful information about Chinese history.

Accommodation: Unless there isn't one available, we will stay in 4-star hotels in the major cities. Should one not be available for any reason, we will stay in at least a 3-star hotel or the best local hotel. When we visit Pingyao Old Town and Tunxi Old Town, we will stay in a traditional courtyard hotel. *Please Note: In the Pingyao courtyard hotels we might be sleeping on traditional Chinese heated brick beds. Depending on the number of participants, hotel rooms may be shared by up to three people.*

Food: Breakfast will be provided every day and we will also provide 6 dinners consisting of local cuisine in each city. You will notice in the itinerary that we have a well-designed dinner plan, and you will always be offered a local dinner on the first day in each new city. Aside from this, you are welcome to explore the local restaurants and sample the signature dishes by yourself, although we will always be on hand to translate for you and help you order.

Transportation: The high-speed train tickets from Beijing to Pingyao, Pingyao to Xi'an, Xi'an to Huashan (return tickets), Xi'an to Huangshan and Nanjing to Shanghai; the normal train ticket from Huangshan to Nanjing; and the taxi and the public bus we will use to visit attractions are all included.

If you like the look of this tour but would prefer to take it privately, we can tailor it to your specifications and design a bespoke tour for you or your group. Simply contact us on info@asiaculturaltravel.co.uk for a free email consultation with one of our travel experts.

How can I sign up to this tour?

Step 1 ⇒ Contact us directly to talk about the tour in more detail.

Step 2 ⇒ Book online and pay the £100 deposit. If you have an exclusive discount code, please enter it into the Enquiry box.

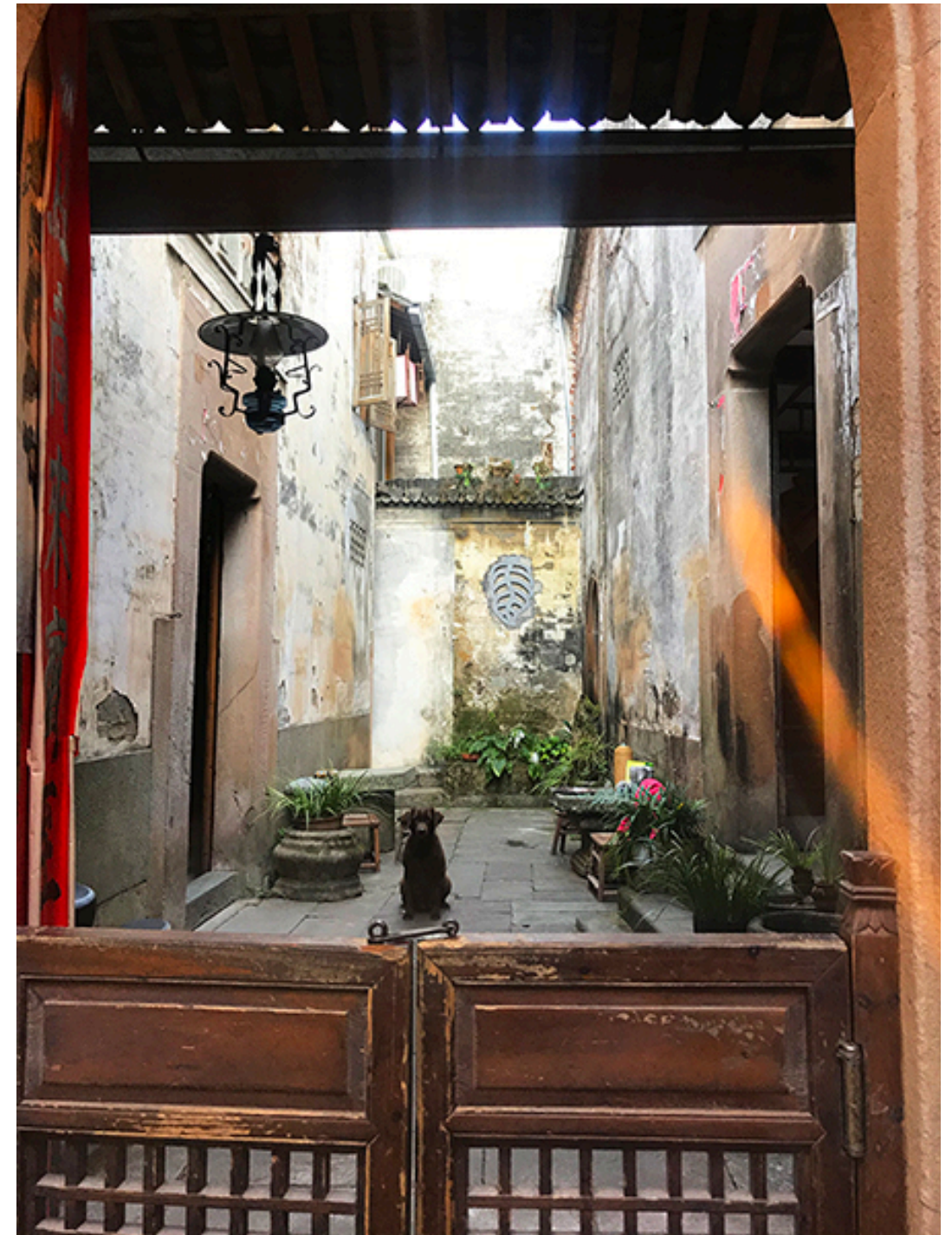
Step 3 ⇒ We will send you the invoice confirming you have been booked on the tour. Once you receive the invoice, you have 30 days to pay an additional £500, which will secure your place on the tour.

Step 4 ⇒ Please note that the final cost of the tour will be based on the number of participants and will be split into two payments. The first payment must be made within 3 months of the tour's start date and is based on the minimum price of the tour minus your £600 deposit. After that, you will need to pay the remaining balance one month before the tour is due to leave based on the tour subscription. In the meantime, we will advise you on how to apply for your visa and keep you updated on the subscription of the tour.

Step 5 ⇒ Once you have made the final payment, we will send you our exclusive tour e-book, which contains a detailed itinerary of the tour and in-depth information on the areas we'll be visiting.

Step 6 ⇒ Prepare yourself for an unforgettable adventure!

We are happy to answer any questions you may have and we will always keep you up to date on the progress of the tour subscription.





95 Hornsey Road, London N7 6DN

www.asiaculturaltravel.co.uk

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