



Manchuria & the Yellow River Hinterland

China



DAY 1 Arrive Shanghai

On arrival at Shanghai Airport you will be met by a representative of Goddard & Howse and transferred to your hotel. The hotel is located in an area that was once part of the French Concession. Narrow streets lined with plane trees and characterized by architecture of the 1900s, are interspersed with parks, shopping centres, restaurants and street stalls.

Accommodation: Radisson Blu Plaza Xing Guo Hotel

DAY 2 Shanghai

This morning we stroll along tree-lined streets in an area of the old French Concession observing the ne art deco architecture, scenes of jumbled telephone wires, washing hanging from poles protruding from upstairs windows and many specialist shops and restaurants. We head for one of the main attractions of Shanghai the famous Bund, a relatively open walkway lining the western bank of the Huangpu River with a backdrop of Western colonial architecture, including such landmarks as the old Peace Hotel and the Bank of China. On the opposite bank, the Pudong side, towering testaments to the emerging new China bombard our visual senses. The Jinmao Tower, the even taller and newly-opened World Trade Centre looking like a giant beer cap opener. We scale the Jinmao building rapidly in a lift at 9m/sec and emerge on the 88th floor. We continue to the brilliantly restored colonial stone gate architecture of Xintiandi (New Heaven and Earth). We will visit the site of the first National Congress of the Communist party of China in 1921 and spend time enjoying the atmosphere and ambience of this cosmopolitan area of Shanghai.

Accommodation: Radisson Blu Plaza Xing Guo Hotel

DAY 3 Shanghai

A free day to explore this city of contrasts. We suggest viewing the coins, Ming furniture, bronzes and the like in the superb Shanghai Museum, or visit the mid-lake tea pavilion in the Yu gardens across the zigzag bridge and drink jasmine tea from a glass teapot.

Accommodation: Radisson Blu Plaza Xing Guo Hotel

DAY 4 Harbin

After breakfast our luggage is transported to the airport while we head for metro line 2 to access the 430 kmph magnetic levitation train to Pudong Airport. We board the Maglev at Longyang station and zip through the eastern suburbs in just seven minutes. Our flight to Harbin takes just under three hours. Our drive to our hotel takes about 45 minutes. This evening we try typical Dongbei (Manchurian cuisine).

Accommodation: Modern Hotel



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DAY 5 Harbin

Based in a cobblestoned street featuring cupola-topped art nouveau mansions, you can savour the reminders of the old Russian presence, including a visit to the green baroque-style Qiulin Store, once one of the largest department stores in East Asia. Russian merchants and engineers fled Czarist Russia and came to Manchuria to establish trading businesses or to build the rail network servicing the Trans-Siberian route and the regional lines to the forests and coal mines. In the Qiulin Store we will see local fare such as the swirled crusty bread (dalieba) and red sausage (hongchang). Sightseeing venues include St Sophia's Orthodox Church, the beautiful Temple of Bliss and the sombre Unit 731 Museum.

Accommodation: Modern Hotel

DAY 6 Beijing

We transfer to the station for our CRH (China Railway High-speed) train that dashes through the Manchurian plains before skirting the eastern end of the Great Wall on the Bohai Gulf before gliding into Beijing just over eight hours later. We emerge into the north capital's peak-hour traffic and we will see the glistening new glass high-rise commercial centres lining beautiful wide avenues, quite a contrast to the narrow streets of Shanghai.

Accommodation: Novotel Peace Hotel

DAY 7 Beijing

Highlights today include the magnificent Temple of Heaven and the Forbidden City where we begin our introduction into the lives and times of Chinese dynasties. We will visit Tiananmen Square and see Mao's tomb. Then a surprise. We head to Factory 798, formerly a huge weapons factory that now serves as a daring expression of modern art and ideas. Whether you see astounding paintings like dozens of nude figures clambering up the bubbles of the blue Olympic Water Cube, an image of a man tattooed on his back with a map of China, some grotesque renditions of Socialist art, or some modern pottery, you can only marvel at the eclectic collections. In the late afternoon we visit the Hutongs, a maze of small streets and courtyard houses set close to the Forbidden City. We will visit a small house and learn of times past in the Qing dynasty and later during the Cultural Revolution. Dinner is included tonight in a local house.

Accommodation: Novotel Peace Hotel

DAY 8 Beijing

This morning we set off for a unique experience, the Great Wall of China. We try and avoid the traffic on our way to the north-east to visit the spectacular Mutianyu section of the Great Wall with its steep angles and awesome vistas. We take a cable car to the foot of the wall guard tower where there are panoramic views in all directions. There will be as much time as we need to explore the wall, reflect on the architecture and the sheer size of this wonder of the world.

Accommodation: Novotel Peace Hotel

DAY 9 Beijing to Pingyao

This morning we have free time to enjoy some shopping or catching up on the diary. We drive to Beijing West railway station to meet our fast train to Pingyao (train times to be confirmed). On arrival we will be met by our local guide and transferred to our Hotel.

Accommodation: Jing's Residence



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DAY 10 Pingyao

Pingyao is one of China's hidden gems, a 2700-year-old walled city (Pingyao) with World Heritage classification. This morning we have a look at Pingyao old town. It has survived the upheavals of China's recent past relatively intact and has not met the bulldozer ravages unleashed on so many other towns. Old buildings, timber frames cracked and etched with time and darkened with soot, line narrow streets. Courtyard houses much like those you see in Zhang Yimou period film classics are part of the scene. We check out the quality statues and treasures of the Shuanglin Temple then drive out of town to see the classic Wang Family Mansion.

Accommodation: Jing's Residence

DAY 11 Xian

This morning we will transfer to the railway station for our fast train service to Xian, home of the Terracotta Warriors. Train times will be advised the previous day with plenty of time to prepare.

Accommodation: Grand Mercure

DAY 12 Terracotta Warriors

This morning we will visit the tomb of Qin Shi Huang to see the Terracotta Warriors. The excursion will take most of the morning, the site is vast and there is plenty to see at a comfortable pace. Later this afternoon we return to Xian.

Accommodation: Grand Mercure

DAY 13 Lanzhou

This morning we will prepare for departure then visit the Hanyanling Tombs (200BC) where the Emperor Liu Qi and his Empress Wang were laid to rest. Rarely visited by tourists this beautifully presented museum will leave a wonderful impression. We transfer to the airport for our flight to Lanzhou in the Gansu Corridor, our gateway to the upper reaches of the Yellow River and some Tibetan monasteries. We transfer to our hotel.

Accommodation: Sunshine Hotel

DAY 14 Xiahe

We depart from Lanzhou and head south west through arid valleys of terraced farms and sheep herding. This area of Gansu province is populated by the Muslim minority group called Hui. Along the way we will see many mosques and farming of corn, potatoes and carrots. The Hui people have lived in this region since the 8th century. The landscape changes as we head south, mountains rising in the distance as we near the Ganan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Suddenly the countryside becomes greener and mosques are replaced by Tibetan monasteries. Xiahe is located by the Da Xiahe River and has a frontier feel about it. Here you will see Tibetan nomads, pilgrims, Muslims with wispy beards and monks wandering the streets talking on their mobile phones. The temperature will be cool and the altitude is over 2900 metres.

Accommodation: Jiusheng International Hotel

DAY 15 Grasslands to Langmusi

A spectacular drive ahead as we drive onto the grasslands almost 3400 meters above sea level. Here we meet the Tibetan nomads and their herds of yaks, sometimes up to 500 hundred grazing on the green grass of early summer. These indigenous people move across the grassland, living in Yak hair tents, fastened with many ropes against the wind and the changeable weather conditions. During the winter the grasslands are covered with snow. The scenery is unforgettable and we will take our time to pause and take some photographs. Our destination is the small monastery town of Langmusi. The town is tucked away in the corner of a river valley, mountains soaring and pine trees lining the hill side. Free time this afternoon.

Accommodation: Langmusi Hotel



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DAY 16 Jiuzhaigou National Park

Another great day of exploring as we drive further south along the Tibetan Grasslands. The nomads are always busy, moving their tents by packing up all their belongings onto a Yak and heading for greener pastures. The men on their horses, the women by foot. It is a tough life up here where the air is thin and no vegetables or crops can grow. The Yak is the main source of sustenance providing meat and milk that can be churned into yak butter and mixed with green tea. They say a Tibetan nomad will only wash three times in their life, when they are born, when they marry and when they die. We will reach Jiuzhaigou National Park in the late afternoon and check into our hotel.

Accommodation: Howard Johnston Hotel

DAY 17 Jiuzhaigou National Park

This morning we visit the World Heritage wonderland of Nine Hamlet Canyon (Jiuzhaigou). Here nine Tibetan hamlets lie amidst turquoise, limpid lakes with a background of multi hued forests and towering snow capped peaks. We will visit the best highlights of the park on comfortable walking tracks, water all around us, the scenery green and lush.

Accommodation: Howard Johnston Hotel

DAY 18 Jiuzhaigou National Park

Today we have an optional tour visiting the cataracts, plank walkways and spectacular sights. There is free time for us to explore the park in greater detail on the marked walking tracks or simply relax in a most beautiful part of the world.

Accommodation: Howard Johnston Hotel

DAY 19 Chengdu

This morning we transfer to the airport for a short flight to the Sichuan provincial capital of Chengdu. The afternoon is free.

Accommodation: Celebrity City Hotel

DAY 20 Chengdu

This morning we will drive to the Panda Research base. Here we can see how the Chinese are preserving the Panda's by developing a highly successful breeding program. It is estimated that there are only 1590 pandas left in the wild. The Panda base is well laid out with excellent enclosures and we can see the Pandas close up, munching on their bamboo and relaxing.

Accommodation: Celebrity City Hotel

DAY 21 Departure

Farewell to Chengdu and China. Continue your travels or return home.



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