

Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



New! China's Imperial Cities, Natural
Splendor & Modern Marvels

2026

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

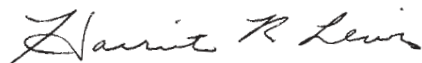
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

CONTENTS

CHINA'S IMPERIAL CITIES, NATURAL SPLENDOR & MODERN MARVELS

Your Adventure at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs,
and What's Included **4**

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary **6**

Pre-Trip Extension **19**

Post-Trip Extension **22**

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements. . . **26**

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health **29**

Money Matters: Local Currency &
Tipping Guidelines. **34**

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch **37**

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits . . . **40**

Climate & Average Temperatures **45**

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Culture & Points to Know **47**

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs,
Shipping & More **51**

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

China. **53**

Tibet **55**

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading **59**

Suggested Films & Videos **60**

Useful Websites **61**

Useful Apps **62**



Great Wall, Beijing

New! China's Imperial Cities, Natural Splendor & Modern Marvels Small Group Adventure

China: Shanghai, Guilin, Chengdu, Xian, Beijing

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

21 days starting from \$6,195

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/chn2026pricing

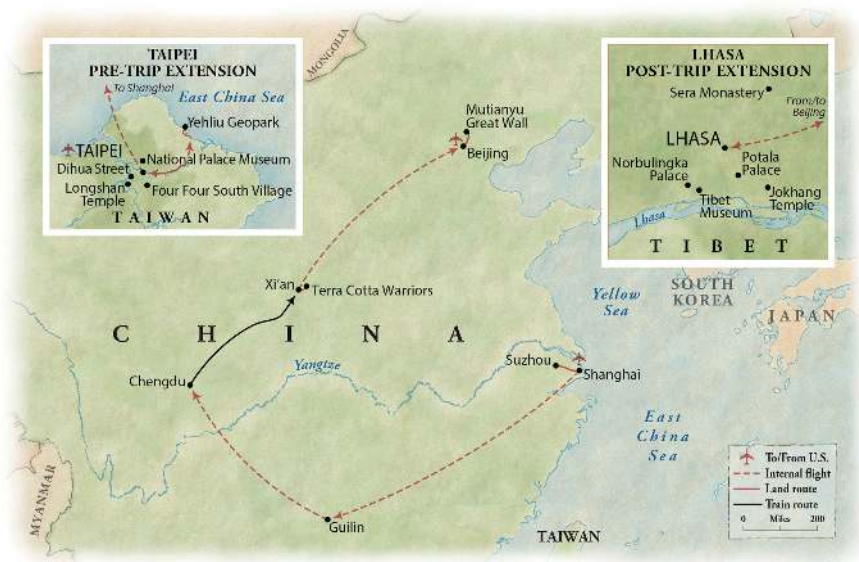
In China, the past, the present, and the future are inextricably mixed. Explore the historic and artistic corners of ultra-modern Shanghai, witness pandas in Chengdu, encounter Xian's terra cotta soldiers, and discover Beijing's greatest monuments. Get to know China's people and landscapes as you share a meal with a local family, ride on a high-speed train, and cruise among sky-piercing karst mountains. It's a grand adventure on an intimate scale, with your Trip Experience Leader providing insight that only a local can.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 18 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation and 3 internal flights
- 41 meals—18 breakfast, 12 lunches, and 11 dinners (including 2 Home-Hosted meals)
- 24 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

China's Imperial Cities, Natural Splendor & Modern Marvels



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1-2	Fly to Shanghai, China
3-6	Shanghai
7-10	Guilin
11-13	Chengdu
14-16	Xian
17-20	Beijing
21	Return to U.S.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Taipei: Modern Capital of Taiwan

PRE-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$1,495**

Lhasa: Tibet's Spiritual Heart

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$2,495**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Taipei** before your Taipei pre-trip extension from **\$120** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Shanghai** before your main adventure from **\$160** per room, per night

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 5 locations in 19 days

Physical requirements: You must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 3-5 hours of physical activities each day

Flight Time: Travel time will be 10-18 hours and will most likely have one or more connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/chn

CHINA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Savor traditional fare and lively cultural exchange when you join a family in Chengdu for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Spend **A Day in the Life** of a Dong minority group in their village outside of Guilin. Plus, discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident with a local expert before exploring the site for yourself.

China's Imperial Cities, Natural Splendor & Modern Marvels

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Taipei: Modern Capital of Taiwan*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Taipei, Taiwan

Day 3 Explore Dihua Street • Taiwanese tea tasting & cheongsam experience • Visit Longshan Temple & Herb Lane

Day 4 Visit Yehilu Geopark • Explore Shifen Old Street

Day 5 Visit National Palace Museum • Explore Four Four South Village

Day 6 Fly to Shanghai • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

You depart this evening for an overnight flight to Shanghai.

Day 2 Fly to Shanghai, China

Continue making your way to Shanghai today, losing one day en route as you cross the International Date Line. You regain this day when you fly back to the U.S. at the end of the trip.

Day 3 Arrive in Shanghai

- Destination: Shanghai
- Accommodations: Fairfield by Marriott Shanghai Jingan or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Depending on your departure city, you may arrive in Shanghai early this morning or afternoon. An O.A.T.

representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to our hotel, where you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader.

Late this afternoon, embark on an orientation walk of the neighborhood surrounding the hotel with your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers—including those who arrived early in Shanghai and those who took our optional *Taipei: Modern Capital of Taiwan* pre-trip extension.

Dinner: On your own—you may choose to venture out to find an authentic restaurant that serves local dishes. Perhaps you'll try braised eggplant, or you may sample savory, cooked frog. You also have the choice of staying at the hotel where you can dine at the on-site restaurant.

Evening: Free to relax after your flight.

Day 4 Explore Yu Garden • Visit the Bund • Welcome Dinner

- Destination: Shanghai
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Fairfield by Marriott Shanghai Jingan or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll gather for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel before boarding a bus bound for Yu Garden. Constructed in the 16th century in what is now the Old City of Shanghai this botanical oasis features all the elements of a classical Chinese garden, including pavilions, rock formations, and ponds. We'll have ample time to stroll along its serene pathways and explore its ornate halls before departing for lunch.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll continue our discoveries with a walking tour of the Bund. The Bund is perhaps the most recognizable area of Shanghai; its Art Deco buildings hug the Huangpu River and stand as a tribute to the city's wealthy past. But developers are breathing new life into this remarkable area and restoring it to its former glory. As you stroll the waterfront boulevard, notice how the European influence on Shanghai is apparent everywhere—from the historic Bank of China to the clock tower of the British Customs House.

After our visit concludes, we'll return to our hotel, where you'll enjoy a few hours to relax or explore independently.

Dinner: We'll reconvene as a group and head to a local restaurant, where we'll toast to the discoveries ahead during our Welcome Dinner.

Evening: The rest of the evening on your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader what they recommend—you may find a traditional acrobatic show, or you might walk along the stalls of a local night market.

Day 5 Explore French Concession • Visit M50 art district

- Destination: Shanghai
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Fairfield by Marriott Shanghai Jingan or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll venture to the historic Former French Concession (or French Quarter), a residential area of Shanghai whose tree-lined avenues are home to myriad European-style villas, cafés, galleries, and shops. We'll be joined by a local guide who will take us on a walk through nearby Tinazigang (also known as Taikang Road), a trendy area of narrow alleys and lanes in the French Quarter that has preserved much original architecture, including French colonial structures and Chinese-style Shikumen (or stone gate) buildings.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll make our way to 50 Moganshan Road, known colloquially as "M50"—a trendy art district that is home to over 100 studios. Built in a former industrial area, the galleries at M50 occupy disused factories and mills and are all open to the public. We'll explore this neighborhood together and enjoy the opportunity to admire some of the works on display before returning to the hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: On your own—perhaps you and your fellow travelers will walk around the area surrounding our hotel to find a traditional restaurant that serves local specialties.

Evening: Enjoy free time to make your own discoveries. You may explore Shanghai’s bar scene, or you can retire to your room to rest.

Day 6 Explore Suzhou

- Destination: Shanghai
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Fairfield by Marriott Shanghai Jingan or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we’ll set off on our daytrip to Suzhou, a 2,500-year-old city known for its exquisite gardens and traditional Chinese handcrafts that come in a variety of forms—from wood-block prints to silk embroidery.

We’ll begin our explorations at Master of the Nets Garden, an 800-year-old classic Chinese garden, whose design was inspired by the tranquility of rural fishing life. We’ll explore its ponds, pavilions, and pathways together before visiting a local silk factory where we see how classic Chinese fabric is woven. Then, we’ll make our way to the Buddhist monastery known as West Garden Temple. Occupying more than an acre and a half, it is the largest temple in Suzhou and features classical gardens, ponds, and an impressive collection of Arhat statues, built to honor Buddhist leaders who have achieved Nirvana.

Lunch: At the temple, where you’ll have a chance to sample a local vegetarian noodle dish.

Afternoon: After our temple discoveries conclude, we’ll travel further back in time to Shantang Street. Build along a canal in 825 AD, Shantang Street is often called the “First

Street in Suzhou.” It’s lined with traditional stone buildings bedecked with red lanterns, and boasts a number of artisan shops where you’ll find everything from stone carvings to embroidery. Take in the views of this enchanting old avenue as we stroll along its cobble streets and across this stone bridges before returning to Shanghai.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You may choose to retire to your room to rest before our discoveries tomorrow, or perhaps you’ll venture into the city.

Day 7 Fly to Guilin

- Destination: Guilin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Guilin Bravo Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll enjoy a leisurely start to the morning before heading to the airport for our afternoon flight to Guilin. Tucked among dramatic limestone karst mountains, Guilin is the gateway to some of China’s most dramatic natural landscapes, while also boasting several rivers, lakes, and gardens within its own borders.

Lunch: On your own at the airport.

Afternoon: Upon arrival in Guilin late this afternoon, we’ll make our way to our hotel.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: We’ll check in to the hotel after dinner and receive our room assignments. You may choose to retire to your room to rest before our discoveries tomorrow, or perhaps you’ll venture out for your first look at the city.

Day 8 Cruise the Li River • Fan painting workshop

- Destination: Guilin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Guilin Bravo Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our first full day in Guilin begins with a journey into its iconic countryside as we make our way to the Li River. Flanked on both sides by tens of thousands of sky-piercing karsts, the Li has been described in Chinese poetry as “a green silk ribbon, and the hills are jade hairpins.”

We'll trace the 50-mile length of this aquatic ribbon on a half-day boat tour, which begins at a Mopanshan pier. As we cruise, we'll enjoy awe-inspiring views of the stone forest that surrounds us, while also learning about some of the legends this spectacular landscape has inspired.

While the karsts along the Li are abundant, they're just a tiny sliver of the more than 200,000 square miles of karst terrain that covers South China. In fact, the karst landscape in this region is so vast and so spectacular, it has been designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Lunch: We'll enjoy lunch onboard our river boat as we sail.

Afternoon: After disembarking at Yangshuo pier, we'll make the short drive to the old town of Fuli, which overlooks the Li. While Fuli's natural surroundings are unbeatable, the town's true claim to fame are its traditional ink-painted fans. We'll visit a local workshop where these delicate works of art are made and have the opportunity to paint a fan of our own to keep.

After our visit concludes, we'll return to Guilin, where the balance of the day is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: On your own. If you're feeling inspired by the morning's cruise, you might seek out a plate of steamed fish from the Li River—a popular choice among locals.

Evening: Free for independent discoveries, or to relax at the hotel.

Day 9 *A Day in the Life of a Dong village*

- Destination: Guilin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Guilin Bravo Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll head to the train station to begin our journey into the countryside. Our ultimate destination is a Dong village, where we'll experience *A Day in the Life of a local Chinese minority group of the same name*. En route, we'll stop at a local farmer's market to pick up a few ingredients we'll need later in the day.

When we arrive at the village, we'll be treated to a traditional welcome ceremony and meet the village leader, who will be our guide throughout today's activities. As we make our way to the home of one of the villagers, we'll witness characteristics common among Dong villages, including wooden houses supported by stilts, a drum tower, and covered bridges.

Upon arrival at the home, we'll learn how to make traditional oil tea before helping the family prepare lunch using the ingredients we purchased earlier in the day.

Lunch: We'll join other members of the Dong community for lunch, which will also be our opportunity to learn more about the life of Chinese minority groups.

Afternoon: After lunch concludes, we'll visit a family run workshop for a hands-on experience with traditional *sheng* instruments—vertical flutes made of bamboo—before beginning the journey back to Guilin.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: The evening is yours to do as you please. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 10 Tea garden experience • Lujiacun village dinner

- Destination: Guilin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Guilin Bravo Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with a visit to a local tea garden nestled in the foothills of the mountains. Upon arrival, we'll spend some time with a local tea master, who will reveal the finer points of Chinese tea culture—from cultivation practices, to service and consumption rituals, and the significance of tea in daily life. Then, we'll explore the property and put our new-found cultivation knowledge to the test as we collect tea leaves.

Lunch: We'll enjoy lunch at the tea garden, dining on dishes prepared from tea leaves and reveling in the spirit of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility symbolized by tea in Chinese culture.

Afternoon: The afternoon is yours to do as you please upon our return to the hotel. For a tranquil retreat, perhaps you'll venture to Xishan Park, where you'll find several Buddhist temples and a small lake.

Dinner: We'll reconvene late this afternoon and make our way to the village of Lujiacun, where we'll enjoy a special dinner together.

Evening: After returning from dinner, you're free to spend the evening as you please. Perhaps you'll venture out for a nightcap to toast to your discoveries in Guilin. Or return to the hotel to prepare for tomorrow's journey to Chengdu.

Day 11 Fly to Chengdu • Optional Face-changing Performance tour

- Destination: Chengdu
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tianfu Sunshine Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll have some time to finishing packing this morning before heading to the airport for our flight to Chengdu, the fourth largest city in China and the capital of the Sichuan province. But while Chengdu may be one of the country's most important economic engines, its real claims to fame are its fiery cuisine and its most adorable residents: giant pandas.

Lunch: On your own at the airport.

Afternoon: After our flight touches down in Chengdu around mid-afternoon, we'll make our way to our hotel.

Dinner: At a local restaurant within walking distance of the hotel.

Evening: Following dinner, you have the rest of the evening on your own, or you may choose to join us for an optional *Face-changing*

Performance. Face changing, or *bian lian* in Chinese, is an ancient Chinese dramatic art that is part of the traditional Sichuan style of opera. Performers wear brightly colored costumes and move to quick, dramatic music. But what is most impressive is their ability to change from one vividly colored mask to another in magically quick succession.

Day 12 Chengdu • Giant Panda Sanctuary • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Chengdu
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tianfu Sunshine Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll make our way to a Giant Panda Sanctuary, located just outside of Chengdu. Because of its location in Sichuan Province, native habitat of the giant panda, this facility has live pandas on display, the largest number you can see anywhere in the world. During our three hours here, you'll see these large, beautiful animals freely roaming and munching on bamboo in a natural environment. There are only 1,000 pandas still living in the wild in all of China, mostly in northern Sichuan and in Gansu and Shaanxi provinces, in elevations between 4,000 and 10,000 feet.

First appearing in the fossil record some three million years ago, the giant panda is under siege in this century—from habitat eradication, cyclical starvation, and poachers who get as much as \$10,000 for a giant panda hide in Hong Kong and Japan. China's ambitious ten-year conservation plan aims to preserve existing habitats, expand existing reserves, and create new reserves in an international effort to stave off the extinction of this elegant, almost mystical, animal.

Given the scale of the battle being fought for the panda's survival, places like the Giant Panda Sanctuary just outside Chengdu are essential. The sanctuary is not a zoo but a simulated habitat, with acres of space for its inhabitants to roam and thrive as nature intended. We'll take a guided tour through the sanctuary and have the rare chance to see the giant panda. You may be touched both by the plight of these lovable creatures and the hope for their recovery.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After returning to our hotel, the balance of the afternoon is yours to pursue your own interests in Chengdu.

Dinner: This evening, we'll split into even smaller groups and join local families in their homes for an enlightening **Home-Hosted Dinner**. During this special meal, you'll have the opportunity to sample homemade fare as you enjoy an intimate conversation with your host about what life in China is really like.

Evening: On your own following our return from our hosts' homes.

Day 13 Sichuan cooking experience

- Destination: Chengdu
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tianfu Sunshine Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with an activity that's sure to put a pep in our steps: a hands-on cooking experience at the Sichuan Cooking Museum. Characterized by bold and spicy flavors, often with complex floral, sour, and sweet notes, Sichuan cuisine is perhaps the most notable in all of China—and Chengdu is at the epicenter. In fact, the city is so culinarily essential that UNESCO recognized it as a City

of Gastronomy in 2010. We'll learn more about the history and composition of Sichuan cuisine at the museum, which is home to over 6,000 artifacts representing this beloved cooking style. Then, we'll have a chance to put our knowledge to the test when we head to the kitchen to prepare a Sichuan meal of our own.

Lunch: We'll savor the fruits of our labor together for lunch.

Afternoon: After returning to our hotel, the afternoon is yours to do as you please. You might choose to venture out to experience a slice of life in the People's Park, the largest green space in downtown Chengdu.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: After returning from dinner, you're free to spend the evening as you please. Perhaps you'll venture out for a final nighttime stroll around Chengdu before our departure tomorrow.

Day 14 Visit Shu Brocade & Embroidery Museum • Bullet train to Xian

- Destination: Xian
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Ramada Xian Bell Tower Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning we'll discover the delicate art of handwoven Shu brocade during a visit to the Shu Brocade & Embroidery Museum. Notable for their vibrant colors and intricate, folk-inspired designs, Shu brocade textiles have been an essential component of Sichuan culture since the tenth century BC. We'll witness different applications of this unique embroidery style and see how the patterns and techniques have evolved through the centuries before making our way to the train station for our transfer to Xian.

Lunch: On your own; you might wish to purchase something at the train station to enjoy as we travel.

Afternoon: Our bullet train departs Chengdu just after noon, we'll spend the next several hours relaxing onboard and enjoying views of the Chinese countryside.

We'll check in to our hotel in Xian late this afternoon, and the balance of the day is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a bowl of hand-pulled noodles at a local market: *Liang pi* is a popular chewy noodle dish served cold, while super wide *biang biang mian* noodles are typically slurped from a savory, hot sauce.

Evening: Free for independent discoveries. If you ventured to a market for dinner, keep your eyes peeled for vendors hammering away at vats of nuts and sugar—this so-called “hammered nut candy” is a popular dessert option in Xian.

Day 15 Discover Terra Cotta Army • Grand Circle Foundation site: Xiahe Primary School

- Destination: Xian
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ramada Xian Bell Tower Hotel

Activity Note: Our visit to the local school depends upon when school is in session.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with a visit to one of the most iconic sites in all of China: Xian's Terra Cotta Army. We'll marvel at the great ranks of life-sized soldiers, generals, charioteers, and horses. Considered one of the foremost archaeological discoveries of the 20th century, the 2,000-year-old Terra Cotta

Army was discovered by accident in 1974 by local farmers digging a well. The 6,000-plus life-sized figures are arranged in vaults at the entrance to the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi, the first Qin emperor, a major architect of the Great Wall and unifier of China. The soldiers are ranked in military order, hold actual spears and swords and, incredibly, have unique facial expressions. There is also an exhibit of a remarkable miniature model of a Qin Dynasty bronze chariot, complete with horses and coachmen.

Lunch: At the Terra Cotta Army Museum restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll make our final discoveries at the Terra Cotta Army Museum before making our way to the community-founded Xiahe Primary School (when in session), which is supported in part by donations from Grand Circle Foundation—part of the World Classroom initiative.

Grand Circle Foundation

Xiahe Primary School

Total donated: **\$16,356**

Partner since: **2018**

Once visited by President Bill Clinton, the rural Xiahe Primary School had received little in the way of financial support since the 1990s. With the help of Grand Circle Foundation, several improvements have been made to the structure itself—including replacing the gate at the school's entrance. Laptops were also purchased for the teachers and students to foster a more interactive, technology-forward learning environment.

During our visit, we'll tour the school and spend some time getting to know the students and teachers—a unique opportunity to gain some personal insight into Chinese culture.

Upon our return to our hotel, the balance of the afternoon is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: We'll reconvene this evening for dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You may choose to retire to your room to get some rest before our explorations tomorrow, or perhaps you'll discover Xian's nightlife on your own.

Day 16 Visit Temple of the Eight Immortals • Optional Tang Dynasty cultural show & dinner

- Destination: Xian
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Ramada Xian Bell Tower Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll make our way to the Temple of the Eight Immortals, the largest Taoist temple in Xian. En route, we'll stop at a local park to learn about the Taoist practice of tai chi from a local master. This low-impact exercise is believed to balance the body's *qi* (energy) through slow, deliberate movements and breathing.

Our education in Taoism continues upon arrival at the temple. As the name promises, we'll witness statues of the legendary Eight Immortals—essential figures of prosperity and longevity in Taoist doctrine and popular elements in secular Chinese culture as well. We'll also explore the temple's various halls and annexes to learn about their significance to Taoist history, and we may encounter worshippers burning incense as they offer up prayers.

Lunch: Following our temple visit, we'll make our way to a nearby street market for lunch on our own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to tell you where to find favorite local dishes.

Afternoon: We'll return to our hotel early this afternoon, and the balance of the day is yours to do as you please. Perhaps you'll set off to visit Xian's City Wall, one of the largest ancient military defensive systems in the world.

Dinner: On your own. Or, choose to join us for an optional Tang Dynasty cultural show, which includes dinner.

Evening: Free for independent discoveries. Or, revel in the performance of ancient Chinese folk music and dance—while admiring elegant, traditional costumes—as your optional tour continues.

Day 17 Fly to Beijing

- Destination: Beijing
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express Beijing Dongzhimen or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll enjoy a relaxing morning at the hotel, with ample time to prepare for our afternoon flight to Beijing.

Lunch: On your own upon arrival at the airport.

Afternoon: Our flight to Beijing departs around midafternoon. Upon arrival, we'll transfer to our hotel and receive our room assignments.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The evening is yours to do as you please. Perhaps you'll venture out for your first look at China's capital city.

Day 18 Beijing • Explore the Forbidden City • Controversial Topic: The Tiananmen Square incident and democracy in China • Visit Tiananmen Square

- Destination: Beijing
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express Beijing Dongzhimen or similar

Activity note: Today's activities may include more than 400 stairs and a walk of about four miles.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Like the old Chinese puzzles of “boxes within boxes,” Beijing was originally laid out in a series of concentric circles. We focus on the innermost two today: The Forbidden City and the surrounding Imperial City.

We begin at the Forbidden City, or Gugong, a 9,000-room maze of courtyards, palaces, and ceremonial halls, where 24 emperors (“the Sons of Heaven”) and two dynasties ruled the Middle Kingdom. Protected by 30-foot-high walls and a 160-foot-wide moat, the Forbidden City was indeed a forbidden place; commoners were kept out for nearly 500 years. The greatest achievement of the visionary Yongle Emperor, this architectural triumph was completed in a mere 14 years by 200,000 workers. Behind its Gate of Supreme Harmony, which is flanked by bronze lions, you'll find classic buildings with interiors featuring marble floors and ceilings with grand murals. We view the exterior of the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the tallest and largest of the six main palace buildings, and stroll through an open-air exhibition detailing the history and preservation of this famous structure. We will also view two other main

halls, the Hall of Central Harmony, or Zhonghe Dian, and Hall of Preserving Harmony, known locally as Baohe Dian.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: The day's discoveries continue at Tiananmen Square. But before we make our way there, we'll meet with a local expert for a conversation about a **Controversial Topic:** the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989, and the current state of Chinese democracy.

As we explore Tiananmen Square together, this conversation will likely stand in sharp contrast to what we see before us: couples strolling, families gathered, and children flying kites. At 100 acres, Tiananmen Square is the largest public square in the world, capable of holding more than a million people. Each of the cobblestones is numbered so that parade units can line up in their assigned spots. Around its perimeter, you'll witness official buildings and legendary landmarks—including the Great Hall of the People and the towering Monument to the People's Heroes, a 125-foot granite obelisk honoring those who died in the communist revolution. The square is presided over by the giant portrait of Chairman Mao, which hangs above the Gate of Heavenly Peace and seems to stare down at the leader's own Memorial Hall. Mao is entombed in the Hall in a crystal sarcophagus, his body draped in the red flag of the People's Republic that he founded in 1949.

After we return to our hotel, you have some free time this afternoon to make your own discoveries. You may visit a Beijing *hutong*. These old residential neighborhoods consist of acres of low, flat-roofed buildings crisscrossed by narrow lanes. Here, you'll find daily life proceeding unconcerned with the great events of nations. Children playing ... the sounds and smells of food being prepared ... merchants setting up shop ... all will help you appreciate

China's humanity, which is all too often overshadowed by the grandiose monuments that dominate the experiences of most tourists.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the rest of the evening on your own. You may retire to your room to rest before our discoveries tomorrow, or perhaps you'll venture out for a nightcap.

Day 19 Explore the Great Wall • Jade factory visit

- Destination: Beijing
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express Beijing Dongzhimen or similar

Activity note: This day includes a 1.5-hour climb with about 800 steep stairs. Travelers may choose to do part of the climb, or may choose not to participate in this climb if they feel it may be too difficult.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll make our way to Mutianyu Great Wall, the most authentic sections of the Great Wall. China's Great Wall easily qualifies as the world's greatest civil engineering feat. The massive ramparts were begun in separate strategic sections between 403–221 BC. During the reign of China's first Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, some 300,000 men were put to work connecting the segments into one huge, snaking fortification. Archaeologists estimate that the wall once ran for 6,200 miles through an expanse that now covers 16 provinces.

Today, the wall is still impressive at 3,750 miles in length, stretching from the Bohai Sea to the Gobi Desert. Contrary to common belief, the Great Wall was more than just a barrier. It also served as an elevated highway linking the defensive forces along China's rugged northern

frontier. The roadway atop the wall provided a means of rapid communication and deployment of troops, arms, and food.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll make our way to a jade factory. Here, we'll see how this precious Chinese stone is transformed into jewelry and works of art. Afterward, we'll return to our hotel, and the balance of your day is free.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can provide you with recommendations of the best places to find authentic cuisine. Perhaps you'll seek out a restaurant that serves traditional Peking duck, a dish that has been enjoyed in China for hundreds of years.

Evening: Free for independent exploration. Perhaps you'll venture out into the city to find a bar where you and your fellow travelers can grab drinks.

Day 20 Beijing • Explore Summer Palace • Visit Beijing Opera School

- Destination: Beijing
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express Beijing Dongzhimen or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with a walking tour of one of Beijing's most notable treasures—the Summer Palace, which has the largest and best-preserved royal garden in China. Early in the Jin Dynasty, an imperial palace named Golden Hill Palace was built on the present site of the Summer Palace. Through the centuries, portions of the grounds and buildings were destroyed during warfare, then restored or redesigned. The Summer Palace of today is more or less the same as the palace rebuilt in 1903.

After the last Qing emperor, Puyi, was thrown out of the Summer Palace in 1924, the garden was turned into a park. Surrounded by lovely Kunming Lake and classic Chinese gardens, the palace halls and pavilions are filled with ornate furnishings and fine artwork. Today, this is a popular space for locals who come to do exercise, walk their dogs, or simply stroll. Perhaps we'll have a chance to get to know some residents as they go about their daily lives.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll travel to a local opera school (when in session), where we'll learn about China's operatic traditions and interact with the students and teachers. After returning to our hotel, the remainder of the afternoon is yours to pursue your final discoveries in Beijing.

Dinner: We'll raise a glass to our time in China over a Farewell Dinner this evening.

Evening: On your own. You might choose to venture out for one final stroll in Beijing, or return to the hotel to prepare for your flight tomorrow.

Day 21 Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return home, or continue your discoveries with our optional *Lhasa: Tibet's Spiritual Heart* post-trip extension.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Lhasa: Tibet's Spiritual Heart*

Day 1 Fly from Beijing to Lhasa, Tibet

Day 2 Lhasa • Visit Norbulingka Palace • Explore Sera Monastery • Conversation about Tibetan history

Day 3 Lhasa • Potala Palace • Visit local family

Day 4 Lhasa • Jokhang Temple • Bharkor Street • Tibetan Museum

Day 5 Fly to Beijing, China

Day 6 Beijing • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Face-changing Performance

(Day 11 \$80 per person)

Venture to one of Chengdu's premier opera houses for a performance of *Chuanju*. Characterized by lively music and song, acrobatic feats, and polished acting Sichuan opera is an indelible part of Chinese culture. Its most famous for its “face-changing” stunts, wherein performers swap out their colorful masks in a snap to convey different emotions.

Tang Dynasty cultural show & dinner

(Day 16 \$120 per person)

Experience the culinary and cultural delights of ancient Xian this evening with an optional Tang Dynasty show and dinner. The beautiful costumes, enchanting dances, and ancient music of the Tang Dynasty—a period of peace and exceptional creativity from AD 618 to 907—have been carefully re-created for your enjoyment. This type of performance has been treasured as a national art that reflects the glory and richness of the Tang Dynasty. Dinner is served before the show.

PRE-TRIP

Taipei: Modern Capital of Taiwan

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- | | |
|---|---|
| » International airfare between Taipei and Shanghai | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader |
| » 4 nights accommodation | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners | » All entrance fees |
| » 6 small group activities | » All transfers |

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Discover Taipei, where ancient Chinese traditions swirl with local folk history and a modern spirit of independence. As you explore this NEW destination for O.A.T., you'll practice beloved local customs, witness surprising natural wonders, and hear firsthand about this country's founding and its tenuous relationship with neighboring China.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart this evening on an overnight flight to Taipei.

Day 2 Arrive in Taipei, Taiwan

- Destination: Taipei
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Capital Hotel Songshan or similar

Early Morning: Upon arrival in Taipei early this morning, an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to our hotel, where you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader and receive your room assignment.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The morning is yours to relax after a lengthy flight.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Late this afternoon, embark on an orientation walk of the neighborhood surrounding the hotel with your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers—including those who arrived early in Taipei.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to recommend a delicious and convenient option near your hotel.

Evening: Free to relax after your flight.

Day 3 Explore Dihua Street • Taiwanese tea tasting & cheongsam experience • Visit Longshan Temple & Herb Lane

- Destination: Taipei
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Capital Hotel Songshan or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll enjoy a leisurely start to the morning before making our way to Dihua Street, the oldest street in Taipei and the heart of the city's traditional commercial district. In the company of a local guide, we'll explore this iconic thoroughfare, admiring its well-preserved architecture and learning about the Taiwanese wares for sale in its profusion of shops—from tea to textiles and traditional medicine.

Our walk concludes with a Taiwanese tea tasting experience, accompanied by the opportunity for women to try on a *cheongsam*—a lavishly patterned, form-fitting dress with an up-right collar that was popular in China from 1920s to 1960s. Similarly styled *changpao* robes will be available for the men in our group.

Lunch: At a local restaurant on Dihua Street.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll make our way to Longshan Temple, an ornately adored house of worship and one of the most important religious sites in Taipei. Built in 1740, Longshan honors Guanyin, the goddess of mercy in the local folk religion. We'll witness a large statue of Guanyin inside, along with sculpted dragons and signs featuring Chinese poetry.

Just around the corner from Longshan Temple, we'll find Herb Lane, which abounds with Chinese herbs used by traditional healers. We'll

learn about a few of these products and have a chance to taste herbal tea before returning to the hotel.

Dinner: We'll celebrate the discoveries ahead during a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own. Perhaps you'll choose to keep the celebration going by seeking out a nightcap at a nearby bar.

Day 4 Visit Yehilu Geopark • Explore Shifen Old Street

- Destination: Taipei
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Capital Hotel Songshan or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today's discoveries begin at Yehilu Geopark, a cape dotted with unusual, mushroom-shaped rock formations. Honed by waves and wind over thousands of years, these spectacular hoodoos spring from the edge of the surf, their thin, ocher-hued stalks balancing bulbous, grey-brown caps. Similar rock formations existing elsewhere—from Utah's Bryce Canyon National Park to the "fairy chimneys" of Cappadocia—but what makes Yehilu particularly unique is its proximity to the sea.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll make our way to the village of Shifen, located along the Pingxi Railway Line. Built by the Japanese at the turn of the 20th century to transport coal, the Pingxi Railway inadvertently delivered a new tradition to the mining towns along its route: releasing sky lanterns. According to legend, miners would send brightly colored lanterns into the sky to alert their families that they were safe. Over time, locals and visitor alike began writing their wishes and dreams

on the lanterns and sending them to heaven. We'll learn more about this tradition during a walking tour along Shifen Old Street, where the rail line is located. We'll return to our hotel after our tour concludes, and the balance of the day is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to make recommendations.

Evening: Free for independent discoveries. Perhaps you'll pay a visit to a lively night market.

Day 5 Visit National Palace Museum • Explore Four Four South Village

- Destination: Taipei
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Capital Hotel Songshan or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll make our way to the National Palace Museum, one of the most important cultural repositories in Taiwan. The museum houses nearly 700,000 artifacts and works of art representing nearly 5,000 years of Chinese history. As we explore its three main halls with a local guide, we'll learn the significance of some of the most important pieces.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Our journey through Chinese and Taiwanese history continues this afternoon when we make our way to Four Four South Village. Originally built in 1948 to house military personnel and their families who fled the mainland during the Chinese Civil War, the village now stands as a testament to modern-day Taiwan's humble beginnings.

During our visit, we'll meet with the third generation of these refugee families to learn more about Taiwan's founding, its relationship with China, and what its future might hold. After returning to our hotel, the remainder of the afternoon is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: We'll reconvene this evening for our final dinner together in Taipei.

Evening: Your last evening in Taiwan is free for independent exploration. Or, you might return to the hotel to prepare for our flight to China tomorrow.

Day 6 Fly to Shanghai • Join main trip

- Destination: Taipei
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart the hotel early this morning to catch our flight to Shanghai, where our *China's Imperial Cities, Natural Splendor & Modern Marvels* adventure begins.

POST-TRIP

Lhasa: Tibet's Spiritual Heart

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- | | |
|---|---|
| » International airfare between Beijing and Lhasa | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader |
| » 5 nights accommodation | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 11 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners | » All entrance fees |
| » 7 small group activities | » All transfers |

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

The Himalayas are your companion as you continue your adventures on the rooftop of the world in timeless, ethereal Tibet—the spiritual center of Buddhism. During our time in its capital, Lhasa, we'll explore timeless temples and palaces and dive deep into Tibet's history, culture, and controversies with local experts and families.

Day 1 Fly from Beijing to Lhasa, Tibet

- Destination: Lhasa
- Accommodations: Minshan Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today we will fly to an elevation of approximately 12,000 feet. We recommend staying hydrated while at high altitude.

Lunch: On your own. You may wish to purchase something at the airport to enjoy before or during our flight.

Afternoon: We'll spend the majority of the afternoon flying to Lhasa, the "City of the Sun" and the political and economic center of Tibet. The country itself has existed since the seventh century as a remote mountain theocracy based on the mystical tenets of Lamaism, a form of Tantric Indian Buddhism coupled with Tibetan shamanism. Here, feudal Lamas whose spiritual authority was matched by their complete

control of internal affairs ruled the rural population. Some reigns were benevolent, while others were ruthless.

The autonomy of the Lamas waxed and waned during various Chinese dynasties, with almost complete independence enjoyed during the Republican period (1912–1949). But things changed during China's Cultural Revolution. In 1951, through military action and pressured negotiation, China re-established its sovereignty. After years of steadily increasing oppression, a revolt broke out in 1959, and the Dalai Lama was forced to flee to India.

Widespread persecution of the Tibetan people continued, reaching a peak during the Cultural Revolution. Thousands of monks and nuns were sent to labor camps. Hundreds of ancient monasteries were destroyed. Arbitrary agricultural reforms, such as imposed planting of unfamiliar crops and the collectivization of

yak and goat herds, undermined traditional Tibetan life. The population was further destabilized when the Chinese government encouraged non-Tibetan Han Chinese people to settle in Tibet, thereby weakening the cultural foundations of the region.

In spite of these hardships, Tibetan culture has continued to thrive under the stewardship of the exiled Dalai Lama, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. A charismatic figure, he has been able to force the Chinese government into seeking normalized relations, restoring temples, allowing some religious freedoms, and permitting some degree of free enterprise. Attempts by the government to bring the Dalai Lama back to China have been unsuccessful so far. Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama, along with a growing coterie of international celebrities and activists, continues in the struggle to safeguard Tibetan human rights.

Dinner: Served onboard our flight.

Evening: Upon arrival in Lhasa, we transfer to our hotel. The remainder of the evening is yours to relax and adjust to the altitude of 12,000 feet.

Day 2 Lhasa • Visit Norbulingka Palace • Explore Sera Monastery • Conversation about Tibetan history

- Destination: Lhasa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Minshan Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following a leisurely start to the morning, we'll make our way to the spacious parks, gardens and fountains of Norbulingka Palace. This beautiful example of "Yellow Hat" architecture was built in the 1700s by the seventh Dalai Lama and served as the summer home of successive Dalai Lamas until the late 1950s.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll visit the Sera Monastery, which earned its name for the wild roses that grew all around the site centuries ago. Before 1959, the monastery was the home for more than 7,000 monks, but since then the monastery has only increased in cultural significance and emotional power. Built in 1419—the year that the sect's founder, Je Tsongkhapa, died—Sera Monastery features the largest Tsokchen (main assembly hall) in the town, four stories high and with nearly 11,000 square feet of floor space. The monastery was built to house precious gifts from the Emperor to one of Je Tsongkhapa's disciples.

Upon our return to the hotel, you'll enjoy a few hours of free time before we reconvene as a group for a conversation with a university professor about Tibetan history and culture.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Lhasa • Potala Palace • Visit local family

- Destination: Lhasa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Minshan Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's visit to Potala Palace will involve climbing approximately 360 stairs. The exact timing of our visit will be determined by the palace's admissions office; your Trip Experience Leader will update you on site.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins at one of the grandest monuments in all of Asia: the extraordinary Potala Palace. Built in the 17th century (atop the original seventh-century site), it boasts more

than 1,000 rooms, including the Red palace (where the Dalai Lama once lived), 10,000 chapels, and a labyrinth of dungeons. It took 7,000 workers and 1,500 artists and craftsmen more than 50 years to build the adjoining White and Red palaces. This Eastern architectural triumph was the world's tallest building before the creation of 20th-century skyscrapers.

With a local guide by our side, we'll make our way up to Potala Palace, involving approximately 360 stairs, where we'll encounter pilgrims who journey to this sacred Buddhist shrine from throughout Tibet. Behold a stunning array of treasures: A grand ceremonial hall with hanging brocades and painted religious scrolls, vivid murals, statues of Buddha, and a mandala made of 20,000 pearls. Of particular note are the rich gold and jewel-encrusted tombs of eight Dalai Lamas. Perched on Red Mountain, the Palace offers sweeping views of the city and surrounding peaks.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll make our way to the home of a local family to learn what it's like to live in Tibet. During this special people-to-people experience, you'll have the opportunity to ask about Tibetan Buddhism, traditional customs, and cultural identity.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a dish made with yak meat—a popular protein in this part of the world.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Lhasa • Jokhang Temple • Bharkor Street • Tibetan Museum

- Destination: Lhasa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Minshan Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following breakfast, we'll make our way to Jokhang Temple, where we are likely to see Buddhist pilgrims making clockwise circuits on their hands and knees in reverence to one of Tibet's most sacred sites. Thousands of yak-butter candles flicker inside beneath the enlightened gaze of the golden Jowo Sakyamuni, the seventh-century Buddha statue that the temple was built to house. From there, we'll continue on to Bharkor Street, the first street in the oldest section of Lhasa, which bustles with marketplace activity and religious devotion.

Lunch: At a local restaurant within the Bharkor marketplace.

Afternoon: After our lunch concludes, our discoveries continue at the Tibetan Museum, where we'll witness artifacts representing all facets of the Tibetan experience—from the region's complicated history and diverse natural resources, to local religion, customs, and arts and crafts.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 5 Fly to Beijing, China

- Destination: Beijing
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express Beijing Dongzhimen or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll make our way to the airport this morning for our return flight to Beijing.

Lunch: On your own at the airport.

Afternoon: We'll fly from Lhasa to Beijing this afternoon.

Dinner: At a local restaurant near the airport in Beijing.

Evening: On your own. You might choose to relax and prepare for your flight home tomorrow.

Day 6 Beijing • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will require 4 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Taiwan:** You will need 1 more page for a total of 5.
- **Post-trip to Tibet:** This post trip extension does not require any additional pages beyond the 4 needed for the main trip.

Visas Required

We’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **China: Visa required. Can only be obtained in advance:** You must obtain this visa before you depart. Because of the sensitive nature of the Chinese control over Tibet, your Chinese visa application should not mention that you plan to visit Tibet.
- **Taiwan (Pre-trip extension): Visa not required.** U.S. citizens do not need a visa for a stay of up to 90 days.

- **Tibet (Post trip extension): Tibet does not require a visa for entry, but you will need a permit.** O.A.T. will help obtain this permit for you onsite. Travelers on this extension will need a multiple-entry visa for China.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Travel Protection Required:

For new bookings starting 1/1/25, Overseas Adventure Travel requires all travelers purchase travel protection with Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000, due to the remote nature of your adventure.

O.A.T. Travel Protection:

If you **purchase your Travel Protection Plan** through O.A.T., no further action will be needed, as the Medical Evacuation coverage and Medical Expense coverage meets these requirements.

Your Own Travel Protection:

If you purchase your own travel protection, we recommend you review the plan to ensure Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000 is included. Once you confirm your plan meets the requirements, you will need to email the following information to **TravelCoverage@oattravel.com**:

- Traveler Name(s)
- Reservation Number
- Trip Protection Provider
- Policy Number
- Date of Purchase
- Copy of your Policy Documents

You can also contact our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814** to review this policy. You will be required to provide proof of coverage by 60 days prior to departure at the latest.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 5 locations in 19 days
- One 4- to 6-hour long bus ride, one 4-hour train ride, and 3 internal flights of 1-2 hours each

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 3-5 hours of physical activities each day
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

CLIMATE

- The hottest months are June to August (mid-day temperatures can reach 100°F); the coolest months are November to March (mid-day temperatures from 40-50°F)

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Walk on city streets, rugged paths, unpaved roads, and steep, uneven stairs at some sites
- Travel by 16-passenger air-conditioned minibus, smaller boats, and high-speed train
- A 4- to 6-hour long drive, a 4-hour rail journey, and three internal flights of 1-2 hours

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than in the U.S. and offer simple amenities
- All accommodations feature private baths
- Outside of our accommodations, some public restrooms will be limited to Asian-style squat toilets

STAIRS

- Our travelers frequently comment on how many stairs there are in China. Even a restaurant or hotel lobby might be one or two flights up without an elevator—be prepared to climb at least 30 steps three or four times a day.
- See PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS (previous page) for a list of which days will be especially challenging, with lots of stairs.

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- A pain medication. You might need this in the unlikely event of an injury in a location where medical attention would be delayed.
- Motion sickness medicine, if you are susceptible (for long bus rides and the ship).
- Altitude sickness medication. This adventure includes a stay in Tibet at an altitude of 12,000 feet. At this altitude, almost everyone feels some of the symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). These symptoms include headache, nausea, loss of appetite, trouble with sleep, and lack of energy.
- Anti-malaria medication: At time of writing, the CDC did recommend discussing anti-malaria medication with your doctor for travel along the Yangtze River.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.

- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Special Meal Requests

If you have a dietary preference (i.e. Atkins diet, low-salt, etc.) or religious diet, please let us know at least 30 days prior to your departure. Keep in mind that these types of special meal requests **are not guaranteed**; especially in China where most restaurants do not offer them due to cultural differences. But since most meals in China are served family-style, with a variety of meat and vegetarian options, most travelers will find something they can enjoy.

Water

- Tap water is not safe to drink. Bottled water is readily available.
- Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly.
- Carry a bottle in your daypack at all times.
- Bottled drinks and hot drinks that have been boiled are safe to drink.
- Carry a handkerchief to dry the tops of bottled drinks before and after opening.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals, and fresh fruits and salads at these establishments are generally as safe as they are in restaurants in the U.S. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Carry a handkerchief to dry any wet utensils or plates.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked fruit and other foods. Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe—avoid lettuce and other unpeeled produce.

Electricity Supply

You may bring sleep apnea (CPAP) devices on the main trip or the Shanghai extension, but please be aware that adapter and/or converter may be needed. Sleep apnea machines are not recommended for the other extensions because a constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays. At the camps in Mongolia electricity is only available in the evening, from approximately 8:30pm to 11pm. We strongly recommend bringing a flashlight with you if you are taking this extension.

Altitude Illness

In Tibet, you will be staying overnight at about 12,000 feet above sea level. You will probably feel some effects of this altitude when you first arrive. Even if you've been to high elevations previously, you could have a different reaction this time. For most people, the symptoms are mild, and will pass in a day or so.

You should take it easy, avoid smoking and alcohol, and drink plenty of fluids. Some people take an altitude sickness medication, starting when they arrive or one day before. Don't take sleeping medications, as they suppress respiration. The most common symptoms are lightheadedness, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite. If these are bothersome, you should start to take medication. Even though you may experience a decreased appetite, force yourself to eat soups and some foods.

If these 'normal' altitude symptoms become unmanageable, it is critical that you inform your Trip Experience Leader. Please let the leader know if you experience any of the following: serious difficulty breathing, mental confusion, a severe and unremitting headache, continued difficulty breathing after a period of rest, or poor physical coordination (ataxia).

TIP: Even if your risk is medium to low, it may be worthwhile to bring a medication with you so that you have it on hand for immediate use if needed. No one wants to buy medication they don't need, but on the other hand, no one wants to interrupt their trip for a doctor's visit.

Altitude sickness can also occasionally occur during the optional extension to Mongolia, where we spend some time at 4,300 feet above sea level in Ulaanbaatar.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency instead. U.S. dollars may be accepted on the extensions to Tibet and Taiwan.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

China: Chinese yuan renminbi (CNY)

Tibet: Chinese yuan renminbi (CNY)

Taiwan: New Taiwan Dollar (NTD)

How to Exchange Money

You can change money when you arrive at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. Please note torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted for exchange. In some countries you do not even need to exchange money at all—you can use U.S. dollars. For more information on what type of currency can be used on this trip, see the “Currency” section.

You can also exchange money at a local ATM on an international network. An ATM will allow you to withdraw money from your U.S. account in local currency; your bank at home will calculate the conversion rate and charge you in U.S. dollars.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

China: ATMs are very common in cities and towns, but may not be available in rural villages.

Tibet: ATMs may be difficult to find or may be out of service, especially in smaller towns and rural villages.

Taiwan: ATMs are very common in Taipei city.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

China: Credit card use is common at hotels and shops, although many restaurants are still “cash only”. Credit card use is less common in rural villages or remote areas, like Tibet.

Tibet: Credit card use is less common in Tibet and many places are “cash only.”

Taiwan: Credit card use is common at hotels and shops, although some small vendors will only accept cash.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don’t assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don’t work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **Waiters:** Tipping at restaurants is not a part of Chinese culture or tradition, and several establishments in mainland China actually have a strict no tipping policy. Restaurants that cater to tourists may add a service charge (typically 10%).
- **Taxi drivers:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, ship crew, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communications

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use an app like WeChat, which is a similar app to WhatsApp, or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Internet access on this adventure will be a mix of WiFi—either in the rooms or just in the public area like the lobby—and computers in the hotel lobby or business center. Some hotels will charge for the use of WiFi; others will not.

Limited Web & Social Media in China

The Chinese government restricts access to certain websites and social media platforms. The exact list is always changing, but a few big names—Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram—are usually off limits. This can be frustrating if your email is linked to Google as a gmail account or if you were hoping to post regularly to Facebook. If you are dependent on having email or social media access while in China, it may be worthwhile to research alternatives about a month before your trip. Some travelers have had success using email accounts other than Google, like Yahoo or Outlook. Others recommend a VPN service (Virtual Private Network) which tricks the “Great Firewall” into thinking your computer isn’t in China. The situation is always in flux, so even if you have a plan in place, it may be worthwhile to reconfirm that your alternative isn’t itself blocked.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

China: +86

Taiwan: +886

Tibet: +86

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Checked bag is limited to 44 lbs total . Carry-on is limited to 11 lbs total .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: Checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or suitcase.
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p>Our regional office would like to stress that this itinerary allows one carry-on bag per person. (An additional personal item, like a purse or a camera bag is OK, but not a second piece of luggage.) The Chinese aviation authorities have stated there is a “one carry-on per person rule” for all flights inside China. How strictly this rule will be enforced remains to be seen.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

Checked Luggage

One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.

Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

If you decide to bring a wheeled carry-on bag, be sure to include the wheels when you measure its dimensions or factor the space the wheels take up when selecting a carry-on as Chinese overhead compartments may be smaller, particularly on our motor coaches and smaller aircraft.

Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Please Note: Even if you usually do not lock your luggage, you should bring a small padlock or luggage lock because some Chinese airports require that all luggage be locked.

Clothing Suggestions

Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. You may visit hotels that offer laundry service. However, it is recommended that you pack clothing that can dry out overnight just in case your only option is to hand wash. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. We recommend you wear sturdy walking shoes, light hiking boots, or similar supportive sports shoes that offer good traction.

Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual, consisting of basic pants or everyday skirts, shirts, and sportswear.
- Your dress should be somewhat conservative, to be respectful of the local, traditional culture.

Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using **www.weather.com** and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight-fitting jeans for comfort and ease of movement.
- ☐ Walking shorts: Cut long for modesty
- ☐ For women—1 or 2 travel skirts: Our female Trip Experience Leaders suggest that a skirt is especially convenient when using Asian-style squat toilets.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking or running shoes
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater
- ☐ Fleece jacket or heavy sweater for Tibet
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels/ship will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses, sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger

- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET (30%–35% strength)
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes (not individual packets) and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- ☐ Small gifts for Home-Hosted visits. This is not required—it is up to you to decide if you wish to bring a gift or not. However, please note that this trip features more than one home visit. Check your itinerary for details.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in China (including Tibet) is 220 volts. Electricity in Taiwan is 110 volts, the same as in the U.S. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. **Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo.** Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

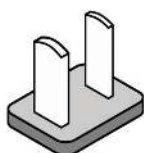
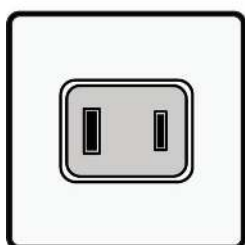
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

China: A (same as the U.S.)

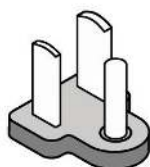
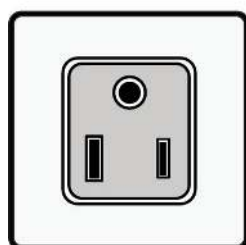
Tibet: A (same as the U.S.)

Taiwan: A and B (same as the U.S.)

Type A



Type B



Availability

You may bring sleep apnea (CPAC) devices on the main trip, but please be aware that an adapter and/or converter may be needed.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Beijing, China: Beijing is considered to be in the North-Central region, where spring and autumn are pleasantly warm, and summer hot and humid. Rain falls year-round. Winters occasionally bring snow. Temperature-wise this region can be compared to the Northeast of the U.S., similar to New York City or Boston.

Tibet: Due to its unique geographical characteristics, Tibet is cold in winter, cool in summer, and generally dry, receiving only 18 inches of rain or snow a year. Sunlight is extremely intense. The thin air neither blocks nor holds heat, so sunshine feels warm, shadows are chilly, and temperatures can vary greatly within a day, exceeding 84 F in summer, and plunging below 40 F the same night. Lhasa's nighttime lows in winter are around 16 F. The higher you go the colder it gets, and the winds in winter are ferocious. If you are traveling to Tibet in the months of November, December, January, February or March it is important to bring a warm winter jacket.

Shanghai, China: Shanghai is a coastal city with long, warm, humid summers. Autumn is typically cooler with some rain; heavier showers fall in spring.

Southeast China: This region encompasses the lower Yangtze River Valley and includes the city of Guilin. The climate here is semitropical, comparable to the Gulf Coast of Florida. Summers are very warm and humid. In fall temperatures are a bit lower, and usually the humidity has diminished significantly.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	BEIJING, CHINA			LHASA (TIBET)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	34 to 17	52 to 33	0.2	44 to 13	26	0.1
FEB	39 to 22	53 to 32	0.2	48 to 19	26	0.5
MAR	52 to 33	60 to 32	0.3	51 to 25	31	0.3
APR	67 to 47	63 to 33	0.7	61 to 34	34	0.2
MAY	78 to 57	71 to 40	1.3	66 to 40	43	1.0
JUN	85 to 66	79 to 47	3.1	72 to 48	54	2.5
JUL	86 to 72	89 to 62	8.8	71 to 50	68	4.8
AUG	85 to 69	90 to 63	6.7	69 to 49	72	3.5
SEP	78 to 59	84 to 51	2.3	67 to 45	65	2.6
OCT	66 to 47	76 to 47	0.7	62 to 34	49	0.5
NOV	49 to 32	66 to 47	0.4	53 to 21	37	0.1
DEC	37 to 22	57 to 42	0.1	46 to 15	36	0.0

MONTH	SHANGHAI, CHINA			TAIPEI, TAIWAN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	45 to 34	84 to 65	1.8	67-56	84	3.5
FEB	47 to 36	84 to 64	2.4	68-57	84	5.8
MAR	53 to 42	87 to 68	3.3	72-60	84	6.5
APR	65 to 52	88 to 67	3.7	79-66	83	7.2
MAY	74 to 61	90 to 67	4.1	84-72	82	8.1
JUN	81 to 69	92 to 73	6.8	90-77	81	12.7
JUL	88 to 77	92 to 74	5.7	93-79	78	10.6
AUG	87 to 77	92 to 73	5.4	92-79	78	10.5
SEP	72 to 59	88 to 66	2.7	88-76	80	7.4
OCT	61 to 48	86 to 64	2.1	81-71	81	4.6
NOV	61 to 48	86 to 64	2.1	76-66	81	2.8
DEC	51 to 37	84 to 61	1.5	69-59	83	3

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Culture & Points to Know

For the adventurous soul, the challenges of traveling in China—in addition to the country's amazing 5,000-year history—make it a uniquely rewarding destination. Be prepared for high levels of pollution (especially if you have respiratory problems), congestion, cigarette smoke, and pungent smells in cities. You may want to consider bringing a face mask due to the air quality in Beijing and Xi'an, especially for departures in early spring (March) and early winter (late October–December). Poverty, particularly in Beijing's hutongs, can be striking. In rural areas, be prepared to receive attention as a Westerner. Lastly, be warned that sometimes when we use public restrooms we must make do with Asian-style squat toilets. Rest assured, however, that all our hotels feature Western-style seated toilets.

Traveling in Tibet

For many Americans, Tibet is an independent country under Chinese occupation. Your Trip Experience Leader and many other Chinese that you will meet may not agree on this opinion. They may feel that Tibet has greatly benefited from its association with China. We encourage you to discuss it with them, but please be aware that in China this is a controversial topic.

Because of the controversial and sensitive nature of Chinese control over Tibet, the Chinese government will occasionally close the border to Tibet without prior notice. Should this occur during your trip, O.A.T. will make alternative arrangements, such as diverting your group to Kunming, China. (In the past, 81% of travelers on the diverted itinerary still continued to rate the trip excellent.)

The Chinese government may also impose limits on what can and cannot be accessed within Tibet, so there may be need for last-minute changes to the planned activities during your trip. In these cases we ask that you bring an open mind and a sense of humor.

Although China controls Tibet's external affairs, the spiritual leader of the Tibetans is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness encourages international travel to Tibet as a way for the outside world to learn of current conditions there.

Your trip includes admission fees to the monasteries, but these usually go to a ‘management committee’ controlled by Chinese authorities rather than directly to the monastery. Most monasteries are genuine religious institutions, with a certain degree of monastic training in progress. If you would like to make a donation directly to individual monks you may do so.

You can support local businesses by seeking out Tibetan merchants, but please keep in mind that there are now such a large number of Chinese immigrants doing business in Tibet that they are not entirely unavoidable. Don’t buy antiques or products made from endangered animal species.

If you wish to show your appreciation of Tibetan culture, the best thing you can do is observe simple cultural practices. Always walk clockwise within monastery halls and around religious monuments. When visiting monasteries and temples, dress properly, take hats off, and do not smoke.

Home-Hosed Visits

Please note that this trip features more than one home or family visit (check your itinerary for details). Therefore if you enjoy giving a small host/hostess gift at these events, you may wish to bring more than one. Generally we recommend you pick something edible or practical that your hosts can use. Or you can wait until you arrive and purchase something locally with the help of your Trip Experience Leader. He or she can give you details on what the family may need or like.

Language Barrier

You can have some great “conversations” with local people who do not speak English, even if you don’t speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling. Keep in mind, however, that it is always good form to know at least a few words in the local language.

Your attire is a key part of your non-verbal presentation. Your clothing should show a respect for local tradition. This means you should dress in a relatively modest style. Avoid revealing or tight-fitting outfits and excessive jewelry.

A Word About Travel in Tibet

For many Americans, Tibet is an independent country under Chinese occupation. Your Trip Experience Leader and many other Chinese that you will meet may not agree on this opinion. They may feel that Tibet has greatly benefited from its association with China. We encourage you to discuss it with them, but please be aware that in China this is a controversial topic. Because of the controversial and sensitive nature of Chinese control over Tibet, the Chinese government will occasionally close the border to Tibet without prior notice. Should this occur during your trip, O.A.T. will make alternative arrangements, such as diverting your group to Kunming, China. (In the past, 81% of travelers on the diverted itinerary still continued to rate the trip excellent.) The

Chinese government may also impose limits on what can and cannot be accessed within Tibet, so there may be need for last-minute changes to the planned activities during your trip. In these cases we ask that you bring an open mind and a sense of humor.

Although China controls Tibet's external affairs, the spiritual leader of the Tibetans is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness encourages international travel to Tibet as a way for the outside world to learn of current conditions there. Your trip includes admission fees to the monasteries, but these usually go to a 'management committee' controlled by Chinese authorities rather than directly to the monastery. Most monasteries are genuine religious institutions, with a certain degree of monastic training in progress. If you would like to make a donation directly to individual monks you may do so. You can support local businesses by seeking out Tibetan merchants, but please keep in mind that there are now such a large number of Chinese immigrants doing business in Tibet that they are not entirely unavoidable. Don't buy antiques or products made from endangered animal species. If you wish to show your appreciation of Tibetan culture, the best thing you can do is observe simple cultural practices. Always walk clockwise within monastery halls and around religious monuments. When visiting monasteries and temples, dress properly, take hats off, and do not smoke.

Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

Chinese Cuisine

It's impossible to categorize "Chinese" cuisine since the country covers such a large land mass of varied geography and climates. But as a general guide, **noodles** and **dumplings** are more prominent in China's wheat-growing north; and **steamed rice** is favored in the warmer south. The cuisine of each region reflects the local culture, history, climate, terrain, and local ingredients. But wherever you are, the variety of culinary delights is sure to satisfy the fussiest of palates.

Travelers in **northern China** will find vegetable- and meat-based dishes flavored with ingredients like **garlic, scallions, leeks, and chilies**. Sugars, wines, and vinegars impart a sourness and sweetness to the dishes of **China's eastern provinces**. Dishes use pork and poultry, but **seafood** is far more common with the abundant fish and shellfish from the Yangtze and its tributaries. You'll spice up your life in **China's western provinces** like Sichuan, Hunan, and Yunnan. Alternatives are available, of course, but it's a highly spiced cuisine featuring an abundance of local fruits and vegetable, along with pork, beef, poultry, and tofu. Many consider the country's best cuisine is from **China's southern regions**. It's where chefs take pride in working their magic on ingredients from all over China along with the region's own abundance of produce, seafood, and meats.

- **Jiaozi:** A meat or vegetable filled **dumplings** dipped in a black vinegar sauce.
- **Zhou:** A rice porridge that is served as a side with the *mantou* or *baozi*.
- **Mantou** or **baozi:** Steamed buns that are often a popular breakfast item.
- **Mapo doufu:** A dish made from soft tofu cubes and bright red chili sauce.
- **Hundun tang:** The dumplings in this wonton soup are often filled with shrimp, fish, or pork and covered in a broth.
- **Lo mai gai:** Also called Chinese sticky rice. A glutinous rice is used to get the sticky glue-like texture.
- **Yue bing** or **mooncake:** A traditional delicacy that can be spicy, sweet, salty, or salty sweet.

Tibetan Cuisine

Situated at the top of the world, Tibet has a climate and topography that is, to say the least, challenging to agriculture. The rugged terrain is only suitable for cultivating hardy vegetables like cabbage, mustard greens, grains such as barley and wheat, and root vegetables like carrots, potatoes and turnips. (Rice only grows in southern Tibet and is reserved for special occasions.)

Even though Buddhism encourages vegetarianism, this is just not practicable here since vegetables are scarce. So the diet relies heavily on dairy products like yak butter, and meat—mainly livestock like yak, goat, beef, or mutton. Though Tibet has many rivers, fish is not widely consumed for reasons of sustainability: a common Buddhist maxim says that “it is better to eat large animals [like yaks or goats] than fish or small animals, since fewer lives need to be sacrificed to feed the same amount of people.” The typical Tibetan menu will offer a variety of soups, stews, noodle dishes, braises and dumplings.

- **Momo:** Juicy dumplings filled with beef or yak meat, or even just veggies and cheese; and seasoned with garlic, onion, ginger, cilantro, soy sauce and **erma**, a Sichuan peppercorn.
- **Cha sha momo:** Dumplings filled with chicken that may be steamed or fried and formed in various shapes, such as crescents or the round, pleated purse shape.
- **Tsampa:** Chewy dough made from roasted barley flour and salty butter tea. It is eaten as is, or cooked in a porridge.

- **Po cha:** A strong tea with yak butter, milk and salt. Tibetans sip it every day.
- **Thenthuk:** The name of this dish means “pull noodles,” since small pieces of pasta dough are torn and tossed into the cooking pot. The broth is based on meat and typically flavored with ginger, garlic, and onion with a dash of black vinegar.
- **Thukpa bhatuk:** Beef soup, with egg-shaped *bhatsa* noodles accompanied by garlic, onion, daikon radish, cilantro, spinach, tomato, and scallion.
- **Thukpa gyathuk:** Tibetan version of Chinese *lo mein*.
- **Churpi:** Smoky cubes of yak yogurt-based cheese that have been dried till rock hard.
- **Khapse:** A plain, crunchy fried biscuit, but the shape is anything but plain: look for elaborate braids, spirals, lotus flowers, and diamonds of dough.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor’s terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop’s contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don’t assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

China

Throughout China, you’ll discover wonderful buys on a variety of gifts like chopsticks, signature seals (which are known as “chops”), cloisonné, Mao hats, and silk scarves. These goods—and much, much more—are available at local stores. You can pay with local currency or credit cards. Occasionally shops will take U.S. currency or traveler’s checks, but this is becoming more and more rare.

One thing to note about shopping in China is that bargaining is allowed (even expected) at open-air booths/street vendors, but at these types of businesses you must pay with cash only. Beware of counterfeit RMB given by street vendors as change—pay in exact change whenever possible, and you’ll avoid being cheated.

Tibet

Tibet offers an array of exquisitely-made handicrafts like Tibetan prayer wheels, turquoise bracelets, Buddhist prayer beads, and aromatic incense along with hand-made burners. Art collectors will admire the masterfully-crafted Tibetan *thangka* paintings; and colorful handmade rugs and carpets. Tibetan jewelry is also prized, including colorful *dzi* (agate) beads, and turquoise. Bear in mind that when jewelers say something is “Tibetan silver” it will usually be an alloy of about 30% silver and 70% brass. **Pulu** is Tibetan wool that is used to make blankets, hats, shoes, and clothing.

Please do not purchase items made from wild animals, such as tiger horns, yak bone items, antelope adornments, or furs. Many of them will not be allowed in the States, aside from the humane and environmental concerns of encouraging this trade. Tibetan knives are also popular souvenirs, but they must be shipped home as they will not be allowed on the plane. Be careful also when purchasing Tibetan medicines. They are often hawked at bazaars but to ensure the best quality, you are better off buying them from traditional hospitals or reliable medicine companies. Bargaining is expected in all the markets. Your Trip Experience Leader can advise you on all the above.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **www.cbp.gov** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

China

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 3,705,407 square miles
- **Capital:** Beijing
- **Languages:** Standard Chinese (Mandarin) is the official language; Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese) are also spoken, along with various Chinese dialects
- **Ethnicity:** Han Chinese 91.6%, Zhuang 1.3%, other (includes Hui, Manchu, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibetan, Mongol, Dong, Buyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh, Dai and other nationalities) 7.1%
- **Location:** China is bordered by Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, India, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Vietnam.
- **Geography:** The geography of China must be viewed in terms of its grand proportions. China's vast area of nearly 4 million square miles ranks third behind Russia and Canada. The Himalayas on China's border with India are the world's tallest mountains. More than two-thirds of China's land area is mountainous or desert.
- **Population:** 1,425,671,352 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Buddhist 18.2%, Christian 5.1%, Muslim 1.8%, folk religion 21.9%, Hindu < .1%, Jewish < .1%, other 0.7% (includes Daoist), unaffiliated 52.2%
- **Time Zone:** Officially all of China is on Beijing time, which is 12 hours ahead of EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in China (add an hour for daylight saving time). Unofficially, residents in distant provinces may use a local time zone for everyday use and Beijing time for official purposes. Hong Kong is also on Beijing time.

National Holidays: China

In addition to the holidays listed below, China celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as the Chinese New Year, Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and more. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

Late Jan/Early Feb Spring Festival (moves each year)

April Qingming Festival (tomb-sweeping day; moves each year)

05/01 Labor Day

June Dragon Boat Festival (moves each year)

10/01-10/07 Golden Week

China: A Brief History

Archaeological records of a highly developed civilization in the area now known as China date back to around 4000 B.C., suggesting that the Chinese people have shared a common culture longer than any other people on earth. China's first dynasty, the Shang, is believed to have been established around 1800 B.C. Over the next several centuries, while primarily an agricultural society split into many feudal states, China had already made great advancements in the areas of science and mathematics and were producing fine art, including jade and ceramic products and bronze castings.

It would take a lifetime to fully understand Chinese history, but if there is one common thread that runs through its entire sweep, it is China's Dynasties, the series of Emperors and Empresses from the same bloodline who ruled over the lands in one form or another for the next two thousand years. And the glue that held together China's Dynasties from about 200 B.C. until 1911 A.D. was Confucius. His teachings were the bedrock that kept the Chinese people unified and allowed for the relative stability of China's dynastic system of government for almost 40 centuries.

Down through the centuries, China remained largely an agricultural society. Confucianism, along with Taoism and Buddhism, were the prevailing philosophical and ethical guides and with minimal foreign influences, Chinese culture flourished. Then, late 14th century, trade with the west was introduced, including something that would prove disastrous to Chinese culture for the next 300 years: opium. By the late 19th century, opium addiction had severely damaged Chinese society, draining vast amounts of wealth overseas. Eventually, it led to a war with Britain, a chief source of the deadly drug. The Chinese, who had failed to keep pace with western arms technology, were soundly defeated and forced into a series of uneven treaties.

By the dawn of the 20th century, China was wracked with internal rebellion and economic stagnation. A Western-influenced political leader named Sun Yet-sen convinced the Chinese to adopt a republican form of government in 1911, touching off a prolonged period of civil war. Then, in 1949, bolstered by the success of Russia following World War II, Communists rose to power and took control of the government, establishing the People's Republic of China.

The first 30 years of rule by the Communist Party were marked by cycles of failed economic policies, disunity, and political purges. The 1960s and early 1970s saw a period of economic, political, and social change known as the Cultural Revolution, described by Mao Zedong (the Chairman of the Communist Party) as a movement to counteract “liberal bourgeoisie” elements that wanted to return to capitalism. Through speeches and other propaganda, the Party leadership affiliated certain Chinese traditions with Western decadence; both were to be condemned and purged.

Although the Cultural Revolution officially ended in 1969, most historians agree it continued until Mao’s death in 1976. After Mao’s passing, backlash led to the arrest of four influential Party leaders, called the Gang of Four (one of whom was Mao’s widow). The public began to turn away from the hardline communism that had dominated China, and in the mid-1980s, the government adopted far-reaching economic reforms with market-oriented incentives. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s reforms were slowly introduced, and in 2003, the Party even changed its membership rules to include a new type of member, known as “red capitalists”. Nonetheless, modern China is still far from being an openly democratic or capitalist society; today they name their new political system “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

Tibet

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Title:** The Tibet Autonomous Region (or Xizang Autonomous Region) is a province-level autonomous region of the People’s Republic of China
- **Area:** 474,300 square miles
- **Capital:** Lhasa
- **Languages:** Standard Chinese (Mandarin) is the official language
- **Ethnicity:** 90% Tibetan, 8% Han, 0.3% Monpa, 0.3% Hui, 0.2% others
- **Location:** Tibet is bordered by China, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, India, by the disputed Kashmir region to the west; and by the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang to the northwest.
- **Geography:** Mountains and plateaux; the Himalayas on Tibet’s border with Nepal and India are the world’s tallest mountains.
- **Population:** 3,600,000 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Buddhist 78%; others include Bon, Chinese folk religions, Islam, and Christianity
- **Time Zone:** Officially Tibet is on Beijing time, which is 12 hours ahead of EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in Lhasa (add an hour for daylight saving time). Unofficially, residents in distant provinces may use a local time zone for everyday use and Beijing time for official purposes. Tibet is 2 hours behind Beijing time.

National Holidays: Tibet

In addition to the holidays listed below, Tibet celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as the Tibetan New Year, Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and more. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

Late Jan/Early Feb Spring Festival (moves each year)

April Qingming Festival (tomb-sweeping day; moves each year)

05/01 Labor Day

05/26 Saga Dawa Duchen (Buddha's Birthday)

Tibet: A Brief History

The earliest humans likely inhabited Tibet nearly 20,000 years ago. But by 3,000 BC, they had intermingled with Neolithic immigrants from northern China. Turkic people and people from the Yellow River basin also contributed to the Tibetan mix, as did Dardics and Indians in the south.

Between the 7th and 9th centuries AD, Tibet was a unified state that dominated much of Central Asia. Its military captured the Chinese Tang Dynasty capital, Changan (Xian), in 763 AD. Early Tibetans practiced a shamanistic religion called Bon. But there was a seed change in the 8th century: the introduction of Buddhism. The first Buddhist monastery was built at Samye in 779.

In the 9th century, Tibet split into warring states and the empire disintegrated. There was a Buddhist renaissance in the 10th century and with it, the flourishing of several schools of Buddhist thought. But Tibet remained a collection of squabbling warlords. In 1240, the Mongols invaded and in 1247, the grandson of Genghis Khan, Köten, made the Tibetan lama of the Sakya monastery his personal priest and viceroy—the first in a centuries-long series of priest-rulers.

In the 16th century, the Ge-lugs-pa or “yellow hat” sect of Buddhism became prominent, boosted by their revival of the Tibetan-Mongol alliance. Sonam Gyatso was given the title Dalai Lama, however he was called the *third* Dalai Lama, and the two previous lamas were posthumously named. The third Dalai Lama was regarded as their reincarnation—and the embodiment of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, an enlightened being who is the mythic progenitor of the Tibetans. The Lamaist succession has since been maintained by the discovery of a child, into whom the spirit of the deceased lama is believed to have entered.

In 1642, the Mongols eliminated any serious threat to the Ge-lugs-pa Dalai Lamas, including the upstart Red Hat sect. The Ge-lugs-pa ruled Tibet for the next few centuries. In 1707, when a Mongol tribe called the Dzungars invaded Tibet, the wary Chinese sent a representative called an Amban to Tibet, stationed troops there, and saw themselves as the overlords of Tibet.

Tibet remained isolated and forgotten until the mid-19th century, when it aroused the interest of Britain—at first as a trade route to China, and then as a bulwark against Russian interference in India. Britain entered Tibet and forced it to sign a treaty allowing trade with the British Empire and excluding foreign (Russian) influence. Fearing Britain's imperial designs, China invaded

Tibet in 1909. By 1914, the British and Chinese signed the Shimla Convention, which divided Tibet into Inner and Outer Tibet. The Dalai Lama ruled Outer Tibet, and China was given partial control over Inner Tibet. Two world wars stalled any real attempts to modernize the region.

Tibet remained an isolated, feudal society. Most of the land was owned by monasteries or aristocrats, and the majority of people were serfs. In 1950, China began the annexation of Tibet. In 1951, Tibetan representatives were called to Beijing where under duress, they signed a *Seventeen Point Agreement* that declared China's sovereignty. The Chinese at first allowed the manorial lords to continue to run their estates, and accorded the Dalai Lama's government nominal powers. But there were sporadic guerilla uprisings, and China responded with a program that many have likened to cultural genocide, forcing relocations of local people, outlawing the Tibetan language, importing Han Chinese settlers, and destroying monasteries.

The Dalai Lama's appeal to the United Nations was denied, and he received no international support. A rebellion was crushed in 1959, and the Dalai Lama fled to India, where he has resided ever since, heading a government-in-exile and leading a community of 80,000 Tibetan refugees.

Under Chinese rule serfdom was abolished and in 1965, and Tibet was made an autonomous region. The Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. In 1992 his government-in-exile published guidelines for a free democratic constitution. In an unprecedented move in 2011, the Dalai Lama stepped down as head of state to focus on spiritual duties. Though China considers him dangerous, His Holiness is committed to a middle-way approach where an autonomous Tibet would remain within the People's Republic. As for the future, he suggests that there may not be another Dalai Lama unless Tibetan people want one. At the present time, the Tibetan economy is growing rapidly, and the region is rich in minerals.

Taiwan

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 13, 976 square miles
- **Capital:** Taipei City
- **Languages:** Standard Chinese (Mandarin) is the official language; Hokkien-Taiwanese, and Taiwanese Mandarin are also spoken, along with various Chinese dialects
- **Ethnicity:** Han Chinese and Han Taiwanese
- **Location:** Taiwan is an island located about 100 miles off the coast of China, in the western Pacific Ocean.
- **Geography:** Two-thirds of the island are made up of forest-covered mountains. The remaining one-third of the western island is characterized by its flat coastal plains.
- **Population:** 23,112,793 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Buddhist 35.3%, Taoist 33.2%, Christian 3.9%, other 9.4%, unaffiliated 18.2%

- **Time Zone:** Taiwan is on China Standard Time, which is 12 hours ahead of EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in China (add an hour for daylight saving time).

National Holidays: Taiwan

In addition to the holidays listed below, Taiwan celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as the Chinese New Year, Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and more. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [**www.timeanddate.com/holidays**](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/30 Lunar New Year

05/01 Labor Day

May Dragon Boat Festival (moves each year)

10/06 Mid-Autumn Festival

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

China

The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II by Iris Chang (2012, Non-Fiction) An account of events that unfolded in December 1937, when the Japanese army swept into China's then-capital, the ancient city of Nanking, and more than 300,000 Chinese civilians were raped, tortured, and murdered. Chang's heart-wrenching work is told through three perspectives—the Japanese soldiers, the Chinese, and the small group of Americans and Europeans (including a Nazi Party member) who created a safety zone that saved thousands of Chinese.

The Good Earth by Pearl Buck (Literature) A modern classic that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1931. Drawing heavily on her personal experience as a young newlywed in rural China, it is the plainly told story of a poor farmer and his stalwart wife. The book captures the daily life of China's poorest people.

The Great Wall, China Against the World, 1000 BC–2000 AD by Julia Lovell (History) Everything you ever wanted to know about the Great Wall. And if you are interested in images of the Wall, consider ***The Great Wall, From Beginning to End*** by Michael Yamashita and William Lindesay (History/Photography) Lindesay's informative text accompanies 160 photographs by Yamashita, who spent a year photographing along the 4,000-mile expanse for National Geographic.

The River at the Center of the World by Simon Winchester (Travel Narrative) In this wide-ranging overview of the Yangtze veteran journalist Simon Winchester travels upstream into China's heartland. An excellent introduction to the great river that is at the symbolic and literal heart of China.

China Road by Rob Gifford (Travel Narrative) On the road from Shanghai west to the Gobi and China's distant border with Kazakhstan, Gifford writes with warmth and affection of his many encounters along fabled Route 312 with fellow travelers, truckers, and ordinary folk.

Tibet

The Dragon in the Land of Snows: The History of Modern Tibet since 1947 by Tsering Shakya (1999, History) A nuanced look at how and why the Chinese annexed Tibet, and how the rest of the world let it happen.

My Journey to Lhasa: The Classic Story of the Only Western Woman Who Succeeded in Entering the Forbidden City by Alexandra David-Néel (1927, Travel Memoir) The remarkable true story of a genteel Frenchwoman who disguised herself as a beggar, endured the most dangerous and primitive travel conditions, and used her command of Tibetan dialects to penetrate the Forbidden City of Lhasa. David-Néel was the first western woman to be received by any Dalai Lama. She went on to become a premier scholar of Asia.

The Hotel on the Roof of the World by Alec le Sueur (2001, Travel Memoir) It wasn't easy managing a Holiday Inn in Lhasa when Tibet first re-opened to the world during the 1980s and '90s. But it was awfully funny.

Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama by the Dalai Lama XIV (1991, Autobiography) In this frank and gripping story, His Holiness explores his own growth as he mastered the mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism, while balancing the practical needs of his people against the realities of Chinese Communism.

Suggested Films & Videos

China

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000, Action) A worldwide sensation, this movie pays tribute to the Kung Fu genre but also updates it for a new audience. The central question of what it means to be faithful is wrapped up in an exciting plot about the theft of a famed sword.

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (1994, Comedy) A gentle comedy about finding romance and purpose. The plot centers on a famous chef, now retired and widowed, who expresses his love for his three daughters through the elaborate meals that he creates.

Mulan (1998, Family) Have kids or grandkids who are curious about where you're going? This Disney animated movie is a great way to introduce them to a classic Chinese legend.&

The Last Emperor (1987, Biography) A biopic about the romantic yet sad life of China's last emperor who was finally dethroned in 1917. Beautiful camera work, gorgeous colors, and full of pageantry.

The Painted Veil (2006, Romance) Love, betrayal, and possible redemption between two missionaries in rural China during the 1930s. Was filmed on location in the area surrounding Guilin.

Tibet

Seven Years in Tibet (1997, Drama) Based on the true story of Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer (Brad Pitt), who escaped a British POW camp in the Himalayas during World War II, and ended up in Tibet, where he becomes a tutor and friend to the young Dalai Lama.

Kundun (1997, Biopic) Director Martin Scorsese looks at the early life and education of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama. The film begins in 1937, when lamas discovered the young Tenzin and administered unusual tests determine if he was indeed the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama. It concludes in 1959, with his exile to India. Notable among other things for its stunning cinematography.

The Cup (2000, Comedy/Drama) This delightful film drops Hollywood's worshipful attitude about Tibet to show a more realistic and affectionate portrait. We follow some young Tibetan monks living in an Indian monastery as they get joyously caught up the World Cup soccer finals,

orchestrate a scheme to rent a television set, play jokes on each other, and sneak out to ogle Victoria's Secret catalogs. Meanwhile, the head of their monastery ponders how to teach dharma in a rapidly changing world.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

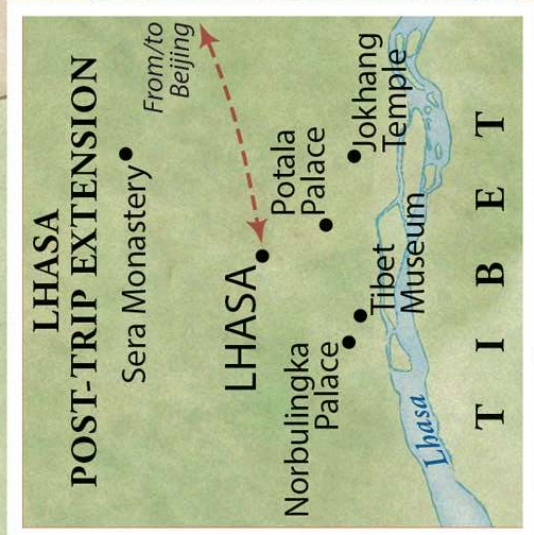
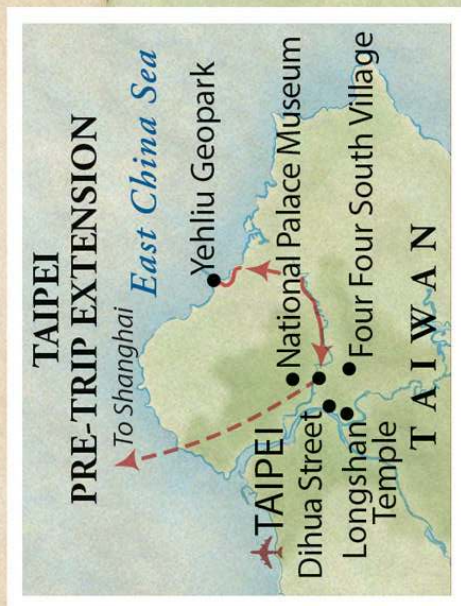
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



SHARE YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

We invite you to share your videos, slideshows, and photos of your past O.A.T. adventures to help inspire your fellow travelers. Go to www.oattravel.com/myplanner to upload your photos or videos, and they may be featured on our website.

Most Popular Videos, Slideshows & Photos from our O.A.T. Adventures Created by O.A.T. Travelers



Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



1-800-955-1925 | www.oattravel.com

CONNECT WITH US:  



World's Best
#4 Best Intimate-Ship
Ocean Cruise Line



Readers' Choice
Named to the Best
Tour Operators list



USA Today
#6 Best Educational
Tour Companies



"Best Tours"
Named one of the
"Best Tours"