

# Powerhouse China – Present to the Past (13 days)

China



**Please note: This itinerary can be modified to best suit your school's aims, learning objectives and budget.**

China is enormous in every respect! From cosmopolitan cities to ancient capitals and remarkable diversity, this 13-day trip is explicitly designed for curious students eager to gain insight into this impressive nation's social fabric and political system.

Starting in Beijing, we will explore the immense changes this city has undergone over the last 70 years, transitioning from a feudal to a socialist and then to a capitalist society. Excursions to the awe-inspiring Great Wall of China, Tiananmen Square,

and the intriguing Hutongs are all on the agenda before we journey by fast train to Shanghai. Then, for a contrasting change of scenery, we will travel to the picturesque provinces of Guilin and Longsheng, as well as the lesser-known Yangshuo County – a beautiful region along the Lijiang River, famed for its ancient customs and stunning landscapes.

This itinerary provides not only a comprehensive impression of this vast nation but also aims to familiarise students with the realities of modern China beyond its surface and to examine its social and economic impacts. This two-week program delves into themes of social change, environmental degradation, and the rapid economic growth China is experiencing, while also focusing on future technologies and government policies designed to guide the nation forward sustainably on a global stage.

The trip is crafted to deepen students' understanding of Asia and provide a memorable introduction to a country poised to continue significantly influencing other nations in the coming decades.

## Day 1

### Arrive Beijing

We are greeted by our tour leader upon arrival at Beijing's International Airport and board our bus to travel to our downtown hotel without delay. En route, our tour leader briefs us on everything we need to know when travelling in China, including a short Mandarin language lesson as we learn more about this city and its turbulent past. A city constantly reimagining itself as it races towards the future, Beijing is as compelling as it is complex. This evening, there is a brief opportunity to stroll through the streets surrounding our hotel before we settle in for a much-anticipated night's rest. (meals: dinner)

## Day 2

### Beijing (City excursion)



Awakening to the sounds of millions of people going about their daily routines, we set out to visit the Summer Palace after breakfast. The Summer Palace is a vast natural garden built on the foundations of Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake. The natural hills and open water landscape combine with manmade features such as pavilions, halls, palaces, temples, and bridges to form a harmonious ensemble. Despite suffering several attacks over the centuries, the Palace survived the Cultural Revolution and was opened to the public in recent years.

This afternoon, we visit the Temple of Heaven, where the Emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties offered sacrifices and prayed to the heavens for good harvests. Listed as a World Heritage site, the Temple of Heaven represents classical Chinese architecture, serving as a model for buildings across Asia. Here, we experience Tai Chi, a form of martial arts consisting of slow, controlled movements. Time permitting, we head to Wangfujing arts and shopping street to view fine arts and crafts on display or, alternatively, Art Zone 798, located in a former industrial factory complex showcasing contemporary art that reflects China's socially conscious scene. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

## Day 3

### Beijing (Great Wall of China excursion)



China's most incredible engineering triumph and a must-see sight is the Great Wall. This structure meanders from scattered Manchurian walls to windswept rubble in the Gobi region before petering out in the deserts of Xīnjiāng. Travelling by cable car, we visit the most renowned and robust part of the Wall, which undulates majestically over the peaks and hills of Běijīng. It is often mistakenly assumed that the Wall is a continuous structure; in reality, it exists in sections interspersed with natural defences (such as steep mountains) that did not require additional fortifications.

While travelling in and around Beijing, we also learn about China's environmental policy, an issue particularly pressing due to its cities' pollution and poor air quality. Additionally, the government has attempted to counter land degradation by embarking on a massive green initiative known as the Three-North Shelterbelt Program (Green Great Wall initiative). This entails a vast human effort to plant wind-breaking forest strips designed to curb the expansion of the Gobi Desert in Inner Mongolia.

Travelling through Beijing in the late afternoon, we see the iconic Beijing Olympic Games stadium, commonly called the 'Bird's Nest.' Tonight, we enjoy a Peking duck meal, Beijing's iconic dish, which consists of thin slices of tender, roasted duck meat with crispy skin wrapped in a thin crepe (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 4

### Beijing (Hutongs & arts precinct activity)



Few places can match the extraordinary historical panorama on display in Běijīng. The city hosts no fewer than six UNESCO World Heritage Sites, some of which we visit on our trip. We begin the morning by exploring the enchanting hùtòngs, a crisscross network of narrow streets and alleys constructed as residential areas with communal facilities, divided according to social classes. A visit to the Chinese Military History Museum reveals the tumultuous events that have shaped modern China. Among the exhibits are depictions of past conflicts with Japan, the Korean/US war, and internal nationalist struggles, in addition to an impressive display of the growing navy fleet in the Pacific and the

story of how China obtained its first aircraft carrier (from Ukraine). This museum offers a fascinating experience for students wishing to gain greater insight into the national mindset and how authorities have portrayed past events within a socialist framework.

This afternoon, there is time for a short climb to the top of a drum tower to enjoy a bird's-eye view of the city, before learning the secrets of an iconic Chinese dish—the humble dumpling. We participate in a cooking class hosted by a family whose ancestors have perfected dumpling-making over generations. They also demonstrate the art of painting decorative bottles from the inside facing out.

Later, we visit the city's Liulichang Art Precinct, packed with shops selling an array of political propaganda art, calligraphy, and antiques—some of which may even be genuine! (meals: breakfast, lunch)

## Day 5

### Beijing - Shanghai (Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square)



This morning, we set off to Beijing's historic Forbidden City, the residence of twenty-four emperors from the Ming and Qing Dynasties over many centuries. The Palace was also the political and ceremonial centre of the Chinese government and a place of intrigue for generations of ordinary people who revered its status. We explore this amazing complex and its Halls of Harmony, alongside many local visitors, in the world's largest and best-preserved palace complex. Here, stories reveal various internal dramas, royal jealousies, protocol, and the role of concubines.

Late in the morning, we visit Tiananmen Square. This vast public space was the site of highly publicised pro-democracy protests in the late 1980s, ending when

Chinese troops retook the square where protesters had camped for weeks. Known to the outside world as the Tiananmen Square massacre, these events led to the deaths of several thousand people.

Lunch is at a popular Buddhist vegetarian restaurant before we bid farewell to Beijing and head for Shanghai. Our transport between the two cities is one of the world's fastest trains, reaching speeds of 300 kilometres per hour—faster even than Japan's iconic bullet trains. China's state-owned rail system is a significant source of pride for the Chinese people.

NB: Comfortable walking shoes are required for the Forbidden City visit (3 hours). (meals: breakfast, lunch) Train time: BEIJING – SHANGHAI 15:00 – 19:30

## Day 6

### Shanghai (city exploratory excursion)

This morning, we awaken to the energy of China's model city, Shanghai. This commercial and industrial hub is renowned for being the country's most modern city and contrasts with Beijing, being larger, busier, and with a more orderly and international feel.

Our first outing is to the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre, where we learn about urban development in China and its quest for progress as it seeks to implement its much-touted 'Belt and Road' Initiative. With some trade-offs and social costs, we observe the fruition of Shanghai's 20-year and 50-year plans.



Later, we explore the city's French Concession, one of four precincts established by French colonial officials in the 1800s to create a foothold in China, only to be abruptly expelled following the Japanese invasion during World War II. Students of political history and revolutions will be intrigued to visit the residence of Sun Yat-Sen, China's famous Nationalist leader who was ousted with the advent of communism.

Time permitting, we visit the Shanghai Museum, displaying exquisite ancient bronzes, jade, ethnic minority costumes, and jewellery. One museum hallway is dedicated to the history of currency, depicting the evolution of money from miniature bronze farm implements dating back over 2,000 years to printed paper money of the 20th century. Our last stop is Shanghai's famous Nanjing Road. This quarter of Shanghai, made famous in movies and literature, was once home to a horse racetrack, several casinos, and gambling dens but has since given way to today's massive shopping malls. For the politically astute, an optional excursion is available to visit the Propaganda Art Museum, one of the most impressive private museums in the country, showcasing original posters, books, and postcards depicting the socialist industrial might of China's early communist leaders. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 7

### Shanghai (The Bund, Huang Pu River, Yu Gardens & Yuyuan Bazaar)



A thorough exploration of Shanghai begins in the Wai Tan district (Shanghai Bund), renowned for its landmark buildings and colonial-style architecture. This area is considered one of the must-see places in Shanghai and offers us a taste of the city's pulse and vibrant energy. From here, we view the towering skyscrapers and the impressive Oriental Pearl TV Tower across the Huangpu River. Next, we visit the Yu Gardens and Yuyuan Bazaar and enjoy a Chinese tea tasting, learning about its medicinal properties.

While the Chinese government has made great efforts to control runaway urbanisation and migration over the past two decades, many communities in the city have been impacted and marginalised by its rapid growth. Our tour leader explains the government's efforts to manage urban growth, pollution, and development as it attempts to regulate the economy while fostering a sense of contentment among Shanghai's residents. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 8

### Shanghai (Industry and manufacturing activity)



Today's program provides insight into the industrial prowess of the motor industry with a special visit to a leading automobile manufacturing plant. We tour the facility in electric buggies, observing robots welding and assembling vehicles on the plant floor as we pass through the entire production line. We are introduced to Chinese work practices and technologies that rival those of Japanese and German manufacturers. Here, we learn about innovations in driverless and battery technology and have the opportunity to ask questions about the plant's management.

While on the topic of automobiles, we make a jaw-dropping stop at the Shanghai Auto Museum, home to one of the world's finest collections of race-winning Ferraris, rare Lamborghinis, and some of the earliest Daimler Benz cars produced. After lunch, we head to the city's renowned 'M50' art district, where over 100 art galleries showcase contemporary art in all forms. This industrial warehouse site, converted into art galleries, is popular with young Chinese artists pushing cultural boundaries. This former industrial setting includes graffiti-lined streets, cafés, and industrial relics, not to mention the art itself, and is often referred to as the Soho of Shanghai. If that wasn't enough for one day, our final activity is a boat cruise on the Huangpu River to gain another perspective of the city. (meals: breakfast, dinner)



## Day 9

### Shanghai – Guilin - Longsheng



We bid farewell to Shanghai and depart on our flight to the tranquillity of Guangxi Province in the country's southeast.

Upon arrival at Guilin Airport, we travel through the city by private bus to reach the terraced landscapes of Longsheng. With no time to lose, we take a short walk up to Ping An village, our accommodation site for the evening. Tonight, while staying in this rustic village, we enjoy the stunning views of the region's rice fields as they cascade in swirls down into a valley carved out over hundreds of years. According to historical records, the fields were first constructed during the Yuan Dynasty by the Zhuang and Yao minority tribes,

whose lifestyles have changed little over the centuries. We observe old wells, stone-covered bridges, and handmade irrigation systems among the various villages. A local Zhuang family invites us into one of the oldest traditional houses in the region. Here, we step back in time, admire the wooden architectural style, and mingle with a proud family eager to share their passion for history and culture

(meals: breakfast, dinner) **Flight: SHANGHAI – GUILIN**

## Day 10

### Longsheng (rural village excursion) - Guilin



Incredibly, the countryside in this remote corner of China remained unknown to travellers until the mid-1990s, when photographs of its natural and manmade landscapes first appeared in travel literature. Rising to 1,000 metres, the terraced fields are an incredible feat of farm engineering on these hills dotted with minority villages.

Today, we set out on a rewarding hike up to the Nine Dragons & Five Tigers viewing point to fully appreciate these sublime, curvaceous layers of terraces.

We sample some of the local delicacies unique to the area, then depart

Longsheng for our journey back to Guilin in time for dinner. Tonight, we enjoy a

different culinary experience as we taste Guangxi cuisine, renowned for its spicier flavours, markedly different from the hearty style of food usually associated with Chinese cuisine (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 11

### Guilin - Yangshuo (rafting activity)

The Li River and its surroundings are renowned for their stunning karst landscape. This iconic scenery, famously featured in countless Chinese films and depicted on Chinese currency, is instantly recognisable. A journey on the Li River is a highlight of any visit to this region, and this morning, we experience it firsthand, navigating the waterways on rafts with local crews. Our journey offers a glimpse into the daily lives of local farmers, with water buffalos patrolling the fields, farmworkers harvesting rice, and fishermen drifting by on bamboo rafts.

In the afternoon, we arrive in Yangshuo and visit the ancient village of Fuli, where we explore the renowned Chinese arts of fan making and calligraphy, guided by a local expert with over 30 years of experience. We also have the opportunity to create our own fan and write our names in Chinese characters. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

## Day 12

### Yangshuo



After breakfast, we set out to visit the Silver Cave, one of the world's largest and most impressive caves. Famous for its unusually shaped formations, the cave is presented with typical Chinese flair, complete with coloured lights and ambient music!

Lunch takes a hands-on twist as we prepare it ourselves, stepping behind the wok for a cooking lesson where we learn the art of stir-frying, noodle making, and dumpling crafting. This activity is led by a professional Chinese chef and his wife, who share their culinary expertise and insights into essential locally produced ingredients.

After enjoying a meal of several homemade dishes, we visit a local farmhouse belonging to an elderly couple striving to preserve a traditional lifestyle amid changing times. They show us their process for making tofu and demonstrate some of their handicrafts. (meals: breakfast, dinner)

## Day 13

### Yangshuo – Depart Guilin

This morning, there is a brief opportunity to visit an ancient cobblestoned village, now a rarity in this ever-changing country. This final activity offers us a valuable moment of calm to reflect on our experiences before preparing for departure.

We leave this quiet village, seemingly a lifetime away from bustling Shanghai and Beijing, and head to Guilin Airport to board our flight home. Our tour leader bids us farewell after assisting with our onward travel arrangements. (meals: breakfast)

## Summary

### Grading

**Moderate;** To get the most out of this trip, you need to be in good health. However, anyone with a good level of fitness will be able to take part. Some outdoor activities include physical exertion, and there may be long periods of exposure to the elements. You will be expected to walk every day and carry your luggage for short distances. The itinerary may include bike riding, climbing steps and trekking. If your itinerary includes community service work of any description, you will be expected to work diligently during this component. Conditions here may be basic with simple accommodation and bathroom facilities. Suitable packing lists will be provided to match the content of the itinerary.

### Accommodation

School tours: Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels usually hold a 3-star equivalent rating. Separate sleeping areas and bathrooms are provided for boys, girls, and staff members at homestays.

### Transport

Depending on the tour, modes of transport may include modern air-conditioned private coach, boat, train, plane.

### Your Tour Leader

A tour leader accompanies all group tours. Your tour leader is the person who most influences the success of your trip. They have been meticulously trained and are very experienced in running tours. Every tour leader is locally employed, therefore they are the best person to showcase their country and culture. Their expertise and knowledge creates an insightful and authentic experience of the region. They are with you throughout your trip from breakfast time until the group returns to the hotel in the evening. They are contactable 24/7.

For more information on the role of the tour leader, local guides and accompanying teachers, please refer to our website.

### Group Size

School tours: Minimum group size is 16 students with a minimum of 2 staff members.

There are no maximum participant numbers on any tour.

## Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$2,350

Based on a minimum of:

16 students & 2 accompanying teachers/staff members.

\*Smaller or larger group sizes priced on application

### Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- Professional *Adventure Travel* tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- Extensive destination-specific risk management and assessment
- Meals (and drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24-hour **IN COUNTRY** support
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings
- Tips for tour leaders, local guides & drivers

### Exclusions

- International flights to/from China
- Travel Visa costs (if required)
- Spending money
- Travel insurance

### Contact Details

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