



China on a Shoestring

Country(ies): China

Tour type: Shoestring

Transport: Trains, buses & public transport

Group size: Min: 7 | Max: 20

Days: 27 days

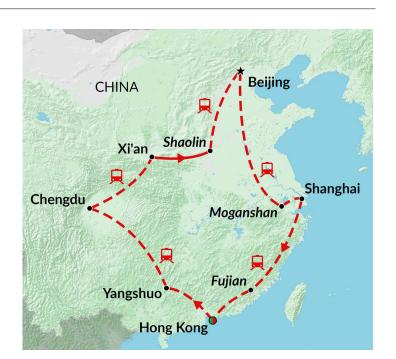
Start Location: Hong Kong, China

End Location: Hong Kong, China

Meals: Breakfasts - 0, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 0

Highlights:

Bright lights of Hong Kong, active adventure in Yangshuo, cute Pandas, the Terracotta Warriors, Kung Fu monks of Shaolin, bustling Beijing & Great Wall of China, rural landscapes of Fujian & Hangzhou, night out in lively Shanghai



Itinerary

Day 1: Meet in Hong Kong. Visit Victoria Peak

Your Hong Kong to Beijing adventure starts today! After arriving in bustling Hong Kong, make your way to your hostel where you can drop your belongings. Meet your adventure leader early this afternoon.

We'll then take you for your first glimpse of incredible Hong Kong, with a trip up Victoria Peak to see the sunset over the skyline. After that, we're heading to Tsim Sha Tsui, where you'll watch the 'Symphony of Light' show from the Avenue of Stars. Finally, if your busy day has you ready to eat, you're in luck. You'll head to the Temple Street Night Market, where your Adventure Leader will be on hand to show you the best places to grab a late dinner.

OVERNIGHT: Hong Kong hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 2: Head to Yangshuo

At 10:00 AM, the group should meet in the hostel reception for the final briefing and check-out. Immediately afterwards, you will leave the hostel and take the MTR to Austin Station, exiting at the adjacent Hong Kong West Kowloon Station. From here, you will board the high-speed train destined for Guilin West Station (Gui-lin Xi). Upon arriving at Guilin West Station, a private coach will be waiting to provide the transfer directly to your accommodation in Yangshuo, where you will check in to the hostel. The remainder of the evening is free for you to explore the town at your leisure, culminating in your first group dinner in China.

OVERNIGHT: Yangshuo hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 3: Yangshuo (free day, options available)

You have a free day in Yangshuo today. To help you make the most of your time here, why not try some of these exciting optional activities?

- Try your hand at cooking up some traditional Chinese foods, at a friendly culinary institute.
- Enjoy kayaking among the mountains along the Li River!
- Experience some relaxing Chinese traditional therapies like Hot Cupping!

OVERNIGHT: Yangshuo hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 4: Yangshuo, bike ride & bamboo rafting

Today begins with an unmissable bike ride around the local area, along with a cruise down the Yulong River on bamboo rafts. If you're bringing your camera (which you definitely should!) – make sure it's waterproof!

Later, you have the option of heading to the Moon Hill complex to get dirty! In this cave complex, you'll find mud baths and hot springs galore. In the evening, you have the option of joining your fellow travellers for a spot of fun out in the local area.

OVERNIGHT: Yangshuo hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 5: Yangshuo, free day (optional excursions available)

You day if free today to relax and enjoy the idyllic setting, or alternatively you can try your hand out at one of the many adventure activities on offer. These include rock climbing, kayaking, fishing, mountain biking and more. You can also jump on bikes to explore the surrounding countryside.

OVERNIGHT: Yangshuo hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 6: Travel to Chongqing. Yangtze cruise and visit Hongya Cave

You'll say goodbye to Yangshuo this morning and take the bus back to Guilin to board the train to Chongqing. Upon arrival, you'll check in to your hostel and have a chance to freshen up. The afternoon's main activity will be a cruise on the magnificent Yangtze River. As evening approaches, you will head to Hongya Cave to take in the stunning night views of the complex before having dinner at one of the many nearby eateries.

OVERNIGHT: Chongqing hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 7: Chongqing (free day). Optional activities

Today is a free day for you to explore Chongqing at your own pace, or you may choose to join one of our optional activities.

The morning offers a unique exploration of the city, beginning with an optional visit to Liziba Station to witness the incredible sight of the monorail passing directly through a residential building. Following this, you will delve into Chongqing's fascinating 'underground culture' by visiting some of the unique air-raid shelters. The morning concludes with a stop at the impressive People's Great Hall.

In the afternoon, you could head to Chaotianmen Dock to see the spectacular confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing Rivers. Afterwards, make your way to Eling Park, a quiet oasis perched atop a hill, where you can enjoy a spot of hiking, refreshing breezes, and glimpses of the Yangtze River.

OVERNIGHT: Chongqing hostel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Train to Chengdu. Optional afternoon activity

Today, you'll say goodbye to Chongqing and board the train for Chengdu. After you arrive and check in to your hostel, your Adventure Leader will join you for an optional afternoon outing. You'll first visit the bustling local life at People's Park before exploring the charming historic lanes of Kuanzhai Alley.

OVERNIGHT: Chengdu hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 9: Chengdu's Pandas, Learn Mandarin & Optional Sichuan Opera

Today's main activity is a visit to the Giant Panda Breeding & Research Center, the world's largest and most important facility of its kind, where you will have the chance to see the pandas. Please note that this visit must be booked in advance. Later, you will have an included Mandarin Lesson led by your Adventure Leader. In the evening, you can choose to enjoy an optional treat: a traditional Sichuan Opera & Culture Show.

OVERNIGHT: Chengdu hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 10: Chengdu (free day). Optional activities

Are you ready for a big adventure? Today offers an exciting optional trip out to Leshan to see the world's largest stone Buddha, a magnificent figure carved directly into the cliffs overlooking the river. Once back in Chengdu, why not "fire things up" with a classic local experience: the city's famous hot pot, known for its spicy, flavour-packed broth loved by locals. When night falls, the rest of the city is yours to explore; just round up your crew and see where the evening takes you.

OVERNIGHT: Chengdu hotel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 11: Xi'an Bound - Cycle the City Walls or Explore the Muslim Quarter

Say goodbye to your Adventure Leader in Chengdu and take the train to Xi'an, one of China's most historic cities. After checking in to your accommodation, the city is yours to explore. You might choose to hire a bike and cycle along the ancient Ming Dynasty City Walls for a unique, elevated view of Xi'an. Alternatively, head into the city centre to visit the Bell and Drum Towers and wander through the vibrant Muslim Quarter, where the spirit of the Silk Road is palpable through its history and local culture. Stay here for the evening, tucking into the area's mouth-watering street food before browsing the nearby Silk Road Market for a relaxed end to the day.

OVERNIGHT: Xi'an hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 12: Witness The Terracotta Warriors & Explore Xi'an

Today is dedicated to one of China's absolute highlights: the magnificent Terracotta Warriors. You'll visit the site where thousands of life-sized soldiers stand guard over the mausoleum of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, an unforgettable experience to see them up close. The afternoon is then free for you to explore as you wish. A great option is to visit the Big Goose Pagoda and stay in the area until the evening to catch the spectacular music and light show that illuminates the square.

OVERNIGHT: Xi-an hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 13: Master Kung Fu at Shaolin Temple & Mandarin Lesson

It's time to hop on the bus to Dengfeng for your exciting "Dragon Moment"! The day revolves around Kung Fu, starting with a practical lesson at a local school led by a master from the legendary Shaolin Temple. Afterwards, you can sit back and watch the professionals in action during an impressive Kung Fu show. Later, you'll sharpen your linguistic skills with another Mandarin lesson to build on what you've already learned. If the group is keen, you can round off the night with a pub quiz for some friendly competition.

OVERNIGHT: Dengfeng hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 14: Free day in Dengfeng. Optional activities

For today's activities, you have a choice of two fantastic optional activities. You can opt to visit the legendary Shaolin Temple, the birthplace of Kung Fu. While there, you could hike up to Dharma Cave, a key spiritual spot for Buddhist pilgrims, and take in the sweeping views of the temples and shrines below. If you prefer a different kind of cultural experience, another excellent option is a trip to the Longmen Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site filled with thousands of intricate, carved Buddhas. As you have an early start tomorrow, it might be sensible to use your free evening to relax and get an early night.

OVERNIGHT: Dengfeng hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 15: Camp Under the Stars on The Great Wall

It's an early start today, as you'll be catching the bullet train to Beijing! After arriving, you'll drop off your bags before heading straight out to the magnificent Great Wall of China. Get ready for a memorable afternoon hiking along a fascinating, partly unrestored section of the wall. As the sun begins to set behind the mountains, you'll set

up camp on a quiet, deserted stretch to spend a truly special night under the stars on one of the Wonders of the World. To make the evening even more unique, you'll have a Mandarin lesson around the campfire.

(Please note: due to cold weather, from October 1st to the end of April, you will stay in a guesthouse near the Wall instead of camping).

OVERNIGHT: Beijing hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 16: Beijing (free day, options available)

Wake up to potentially breathtaking sunrise views over the Great Wall—it truly doesn't get more epic than this (weather permitting, of course). Once you're back in Beijing, the rest of the day is yours to play with. You could head to the lively and quirky galleries of the 798 Art District, spend a peaceful afternoon chilling out in the stunning gardens of the Summer Palace, or simply round up your crew to explore more of the city's highlights together.

OVERNIGHT: Beijing hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 17: Beijing. Free day

You can begin the day with the option to wander across Tiananmen Square before entering the awe-inspiring Forbidden City. With a history spanning 24 emperors and encompassing 980 buildings, this imperial palace is absolutely bursting with stories. For the best views in the city, be sure to climb Jingshan Park and look out over the palace grounds sprawling below. When evening arrives, you have a choice: you can go big with a thrilling Chinese acrobatics and circus show, or keep it delicious by trying Beijing's most famous dish, Peking Roast Duck. This incredible meal was once reserved exclusively for emperors and trust us, it is on a completely different level to your usual takeaway.

OVERNIGHT: Beijing hostel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

Day 18: Beijing - Markets, Temple of Heaven & Hutong Strolls

Your final day in Beijing offers the flexibility to tailor your experience. You could start by exploring the city's renowned fake goods markets before heading to the serene Temple of Heaven nearby. Alternatively, immerse yourself in the past in the Nanluoguxiang district, one of Beijing's most beautifully preserved historical areas. Here, you can wander through the maze of hutongs (narrow alleyways) and traditional siheyuan courtyards, pausing at quaint cafés, lively bars, and small handicraft shops. In the evening, transfer to the station to board your overnight train to Hangzhou.

OVERNIGHT: Overnight train to Hangzhou

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 19: Arrive Hangzhou, West Lake visit & Sunset Hike

After arriving in Hangzhou this morning, transfer to your hostel for a late breakfast. We hope you slept on the train! Next, we're off to the famous West Lake, ready to take a stunning boat tour to one of the Lake's beautiful islands.

Once you've checked in this afternoon, you'll have some free time. If you're keen to stay vertical, why not check out China's National Tea Museum, or the Lingvin Temple?

This evening, it's an unmissable hike up Jiuyao Mountain to see the stunning sunset from there. Before you head back down to street level for dinner and a free evening to explore. Make sure you check out Hefang Road – the most famous ancient street in town!

OVERNIGHT: Hangzhou hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 20: Nine Creeks Hike, transfer to Shanghai

This morning you have time to take a hike through misty woods to the Nine Creeks. Returning to the hostel for lunch we then catch the bullet train to Shanghai where we transfer via metro to your hostel.

OVERNIGHT: Shanghai hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 21: Shanghai, optional Mandarin Lesson (optional excursions available)

After a lazy morining, you have the option to join a Mandarin Lesson. This extra special class will be held by professional teachers, all the way from the Mandarin Garden Chinese Language School.

Later in the day, there is an option to join a visit to the Yu Gardens, a busy historical site, formerly the site of a lavish family home. You could also visit People's Square before heading to the worlds busiest shopping street 'Nanjing Road'

In the evenings, you can enjoy Shanghai's lively bar scene, and perhaps try out the largest bar crawl in China "the Drunken Dragon Pub Crawl". If you're looking for something a little more sophisticated try sipping champagne in a hot tub on the rooftop of a skyscraper, taking in Shanghai's spectacular skyline.

OVERNIGHT: Shanghai hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 22: Shanghai, free day (optional excursions available)

Today is another free day in Shanghai. There's lots to do to keep yourself busy, with plenty of sightseeing and shopping on offer. Alternatively you can let us do it for you and choose to take one of the many optional sightseeing tour available (see the Options tab for all available local options).

OVERNIGHT: Shanghai hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 23: Shanghai Your Way - French Concession & Jinmao Tower City View

Start your day exploring the charming French Concession, taking time to visit a secret propaganda museum and wander through the artsy lanes of Tianzifang. Later, experience a contrast as you travel to the financial district for a taste of ultra-modern Shanghai. Here, your entry includes access to the Jinmao Tower, where you can take in incredible panoramic views from the observation platform. For the adventurous, there is an optional skywalk 340 metres up. The evening is free; your Adventure Leader will provide recommendations for local food and drink spots. However, be sure to get an early night, as tomorrow begins bright and early.

OVERNIGHT: Shanghai hostel

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 24: Fujian Bound & Hakka Roundhouse Stay

Today, we take a bullet train to Nanjing in Fujian Province to meet your new Adventure Leader. From there, a minivan will transport us deep into the stunning tea-growing hills to explore a traditional Hakka tulou—the unique, centuries-old mud homes. Tonight is a truly rare opportunity, as you will be staying inside one of these historical roundhouses, allowing you to fully absorb the atmosphere and history of this incredible setting. Your evening is free to relax and socialise: you might choose to join a movie night, head out for karaoke, or even practise your Mandarin with the locals.

OVERNIGHT: Fujian guesthouse

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 25: Explore Hakka Villages & Tea Fields

Lace up your boots for an immersive day exploring the stunning Fujian countryside. We'll start by wandering through the UNESCO-listed Hakka tulou (roundhouses) and strolling through several picture-perfect villages. Take in the charm of the endless tea fields before participating in a traditional tea ceremony and tasting. In the afternoon, you can hike up into the mountains for magnificent, sweeping views and drop by the very plantations where the region's famous leaves are cultivated.

OVERNIGHT: Fujian guesthouse

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 26: Cycle Through the Fujian Countryside

Get ready to jump on a bike and cycle deep into Fujian's incredible tea country. You'll follow winding trails and be surrounded by epic views. We'll make a stop at the biggest Hakka tulou (roundhouse), where you can head inside and climb upstairs to explore its many hidden nooks and corners. Continue pedalling through the lush landscape until you roll into a nearby village for a genuine slice of local life.

OVERNIGHT: Fujian guesthouse

MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Day 27: Train to Hong Kong, tour ends

This morning, we'll take a minibus back to Zhangzhou Station, ready to transfer by train back to Hong Kong. It's here that your China backpacking tour comes to the end, and you'll bid farewell to your fellow travellers.

OVERNIGHT: N/A MEALS: None EXTRAS:

Included:

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary in basic hostels
- All transport and transfers in trains, buses & public transport
- Sightseeing tours as detailed in the itinerary
- Visa invitation letter
- Entry fees to included activities and attractions
- Bilingual western and local adventure leaders

Excluded:

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (mandatory, get quote here)
- Airport arrival & departure transfer service (optional on request)
- All meals
- Optional activies
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tour guide tips
- Any other items not mentioned above

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Private Room Supplement (CHSHCS)

Min numbers: 1

This tour is based on twin-share accommodation, with single bookers paired up with another traveller of the same sex in the group. If the final group make-up means that no room share is available, you do not need to pay this supplement. However, if you would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour, then please add this option to your booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

Extra day in Hong Kong - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is not included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra day in Hong Kong - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is not included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

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