

CHINA

Suggested Itinerary - Experience Three Millennia of History in China's Storied East.

Eastern China, the cradle of one of the world's oldest civilizations with evidence of several thousand years of history, as well as booming, ultra-modern cultural and commercial capitals. Traveling the region by private jet puts all of Eastern China's treasures within easy reach. From the arts and architecture of Beijing and Shanghai, to the works of China's legendary First Emperor at the Great Wall and the ancient capital of Xian, to the elegant landscapes of Hangzhou and Guilin, Nonpareil Travel opens up the best that China has to offer.

Day 1

VIP arrival in Beijing in the late afternoon, and be taken to your hotel outside the city near the Great Wall by your private car and driver. Check in to the Commune by the Great Wall, have a traditional Northern Chinese dinner at the hotel and relax for the evening

Day 2

The Great Wall is of course one of the Seven Manmade Wonders of the World, and a sight everyone should see in their lifetime. Try to fathom the years of toil required to build it as we follow its steep, winding path through the country side (1-2 hours hike), or if you prefer a less active visit, a shorter walk through Mutianyu, where the partially constructed wall will be just as exciting.

Have a picnic lunch by the wall or at Mutianyu, at the Xin Shuang Quan restaurant right near the wall, a local favorite.

Spend half a day in Sancha Village, located in the relatively dry and harsh climate of Huairou. Have tea with a family in their home, and learn about their lives and traditions.

Tonight's dinner will be a special experience: a renowned expert in the history and architecture of the Great Wall will join you for a gourmet dinner specially prepared for you by a private chef and served to you on the Great Wall itself.

Day 3

Drive to Beijing and start the day with a fascinating lesson in several hundred years of Chinese political history as you visit Tiananmen Square, the heart of the capital with an expert in Chinese political science.

Step into the daily life of China's emperors as a scholar in Chinese art gives you an exclusive tour of off-limits areas of the Forbidden City, a monumental palace that housed up to 800 buildings and 9000 rooms.

Leave the bustle of Beijing behind as you get lost in the *hutongs*, a labyrinth of narrow streets and low, graceful courtyard homes (*siheyuan*), which have housed Beijing residents for hundreds of years.

Dinner tonight will be at the CourtYard, an innovative contemporary restaurant and gallery housed in a beautiful courtyard building just across from the Forbidden City.

Day 4

This morning, further your exploration of the contemporary art world in China by visiting the best galleries in the Caochangdi area with an artist based in Beijing or a professor of art history.

Visit Panjiayuan, the capital's largest antiques and flea market, set in a vast open-air pavilion. Vendors have everything from pottery and sculpture to old machines, instruments, and Cultural Revolution kitsch laid out on blankets. Visit the Capital Museum, a brand new cultural center with wonderful state-of-the art exhibits on the history of Beijing, Chinese art, architecture, customs and traditions.

Day 5

Fly to Xian, one of the four ancient capitals of China, which ruled over the land during four different dynasties.

Xian is most famous, though, as the burial place of Emperor Qin Shi-huang: the controversial "First Emperor" who united China into one country and began the construction of the Great Wall, and whose tomb complex incorporates an entire life-size army and royal court cast in terra-cotta.

During your private visit, you will have exclusive access to the floor of the excavation site with one of the top curators, where you will be allowed to get up-close to the life-size figures to appreciate their fine details.

Visit the Great Mosque of Xian. Though it may seem surprising, Islam has strong roots in Xian; the city's Hui minority people trace their roots back to Persian and Arabic traders who arrived via the Silk Road. Continue exploring the Muslim Quarter and enjoy a distinctively Xian dinner featuring lamb at the Lao Sun Jia Restaurant, which has been in operation since 1898.

After dinner, stroll the town and mingle with local people, visiting shops that remain open until late in the evening.

Day 6

Fly from Xian to Guilin. Drive from Guilin airport, through the scenic countryside to the remarkable new Hotel of Modern Art, HOMA. Check in and explore the grounds, on-foot or by bicycle.

Your day begins with a private river cruise through the beautiful valleys of the Guilin area. After a picnic lunch, visit Fuli, a small town of only 4,000 people, boasting a rich thousand-year history. A quarter of Fuli residents earn their income from making traditional painted fans and umbrellas. A more active possibility for the afternoon is a rock climbing trip, a unique way to explore the region's startling geology.

Have a private dinner back at HOMA in their unique candle-lit cave with cathedral ceilings.

Day 7

After an early breakfast, drive through the lush countryside to the tiny village of Xiaozhai, one of a number of remote villages where the Yao live, one of 56 minority peoples recognized by the Chinese government. You will be welcomed to the village with a special singing ceremony and a glass of local wine, then be invited to the house of a local family for an informal cooking demonstration and a lunch of typical Yao dishes.

Spend the day visiting the people of the village at work on traditional fabrics and at the local school where ancient musical traditions are passed on to the next generation. Drive to Ping An where you will check in to the Li An Lodge, a luxurious guesthouse built in a traditional Chinese style without nails.

Day 8

After breakfast, embark on a day hike through the Longsheng rice terraces for an idyllic morning marvelling at these agricultural feats of engineering. End your hike in

Dazhai, a Yao village where you can rest your legs and enjoy a picnic lunch packed for you by Li An Lodge.

Return to the guesthouse, which is located in the Old Town. Have a traditional Chinese massage to soothe any overextended muscles and have dinner back at Li An Lodge or in town.

Day 9

Drive from Longsheng to Guilin and fly to Hangzhou. Check in to the Fuchun Resort, one of the most exclusive spa and golf resorts in Asia. Hangzhou is 75 miles southwest of Shanghai.

Go to West Lake for a private cruise on the waters that inspired the Chinese saying, "In heaven there is paradise; on earth, Suzhou and Hangzhou." Have a picnic lunch packed by the resort at quiet, secluded spot on the lakeshore.

Depending on the event schedule at the Hangzhou Grand Theatre, the second largest theatre in China, drop in to a dress rehearsal of today's programme and go backstage to meet the performers. At the resort, have a private dinner, which the chef will especially prepare an outdoor barbecue for you on the hotel grounds by the Fuchun River.

Day 10

Drive to Dragon Well, the confluence of the southern and northern ridges of West Lake. The tea grown here is the Bordeaux of Chinese teas, and consists of all the tea grown in the valleys around Hangzhou that are watered by this one source. Have lunch at the tiny Longjing restaurant, set in the middle of a tea plantation.

Return to Hangzhou for a traditional medicine check-up. Follow your session with a Chinese reflexology foot massage. Return to the Fuchun for dinner or dine at 28 HuBin Road at the Hangzhou Hyatt Regency.

Day 11

Drive 1.5 hours or take a 20-minute helicopter ride to Suzhou, an important city renowned for its historical and cultural. Meet with a well-known local artist in the Master of Nets Garden - the smallest but most exquisite and best preserved of all the gardens in Suzhou.

Cruise down the Grand Canal, ancient China's major waterway on which construction began in 485 BC. Stop in the sleepy water town of Tongli, built over seven islands created by 15 rivers and 5 lakes. A highlight of Tongli is the superb Tiusi Garden, which incorporates classical principles dating from the late Qing period (19th century).

Drive from Tongli to Suzhou, and continue drive 1.5 hours, or take a 20-minute helicopter ride on to Shanghai.

Day 12

Shanghai, one of Asia's most dynamic metropolises, buzzes with new architecture, world-class dining, shopping, arts and nightlife. For a bit of adventure, venture to the stalls on Changle and Xiangyang roads (as do Shanghai's top chefs, one of whom will be joining you) for a breakfast of meat and vegetable steamed buns, scallion flatbread and egg-filled crepes.

Visit the Shanghai Museum in the center of the city, containing one of the world's finest collections of Chinese art and antiquities. Have lunch at South Beauty, owned by art collector Zhang Lan. Across People's Park, visit the small Museum of Contemporary Art

(MOCA) Shanghai, which displays works representing China's booming art scene as well as international art.

At sunset, stroll Shanghai's landmark waterfront, The Bund, a vestige of the city's capitalist days in the first half of the 20th century. Dinner will be at M on the Bund, located at the top of the 1921 Nissin Shipping Building.

Day 13

One of the best places to view (or even buy) contemporary art in Shanghai is among the galleries in the Moganshan Lu (M50) warehouse district. Here a leading expert in contemporary Chinese art will join you. Explore Xintiandi, the result of an old shikumen restoration project whereby the classic stone buildings were saved and turned into boutiques, clubs and restaurants.

Get a taste of Shanghai's commercial, Jazz-Age heyday while strolling the tree-shaded streets of the French Concession. For dinner, try Yè Shanghai in Xintiandi, within the French Concession, which offers a modern interpretation of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghainese cuisines.

Day 14

Go to the old Chinese city and the Yu Gardens, the most celebrated classical Chinese gardens in Shanghai. For a lesson in the striking contrast between old and new Shanghai, a local expert in architecture and historical preservation will take you to the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall. For your final afternoon in China, explore Shanghai's many cosmopolitan pleasures.

Your farewell dinner will be a spectacular meal at Jean-Georges, one of the world's top-rated restaurants, located in Three on the Bund, an exclusive club situated right on Shanghai's famous waterfront.

Day 15

Flight home.

New Zealand, Dunedin Office

6 Haywood Street, Mornington, Dunedin 9011, New Zealand

Katya French

Travel Coordinator, Director

Phone: +64 3 455 1344

Mobile: +64 21 487 609

e-mail: katya@nonpareiltravel.com

Singapore Office

157 Kew Crescent, Kew Green, Singapore 466 146

Irina Francken

Travel Coordinator

Phone: +65 65 62 44 803

Mobile: +65 816 13 972

e-mail: bookings@nonpareiltravel.com