



# 2009 The Silk Road

## 19 days / 18 nights

### Highlights

Beijing, Great Wall, Terracotta Warriors, Lanzhou, Bingling Caves, Xiahe, Jaiyuguan, Dunhuang, Turpan, Urumqi, Kashgar

### The Silk Road - Standard

Crest a sand dune in the Gobi Desert on this epic journey. From the imperial metropolis of Xian and her famed Army of Terracotta Warriors to the kaleidoscope of colours at Kashgar's Sunday Bazaar, prepare yourself for windswept desert fortresses, endless mirages, snowcapped peaks and lively local markets. Explore medieval Tibetan monasteries and caves which shelter thousands of ancient Buddha images, and experience the rich convergence of cultures and religions as you travel the world's greatest ancient trade route.

The quality of accommodation is a real highlight of this trip. Hotels are usually centrally located three or four-star hotels with private, western style bathrooms, air-conditioning, IDD phones and TVs. All road travel is in comfortable minibuses or mid-sized coaches. Your journey is escorted by both a Western tour leader, based on a minimum of seven travellers, and a local English-speaking guide in each location. Groups are never more than 15 travellers in size.

### Tour grading - ADVENTUROUS

Suitable for travellers with a good level of level of fitness, full and independent mobility; a keen sense of adventure is essential. The tour involves plenty of walking, two domestic flights and four overnight train journeys in air-conditioned carriages, soft sleeper bunks. You will need to be able to handle your own luggage boarding and disembarking trains, as well as climbing stairs to get around the train stations. There is also a trip on a small boat and several long drives (up to eight hours) on occasionally rough roads.

While accommodation is three to four-star or best available, this is not 'sanitised' travel; by day you will walk through markets and villages, meet local people, and sample local food. English is not widely spoken and a degree of patience and appreciation is required for travel through developing cities and stays in Chinese operated hotels.

### What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- Four overnight train journeys
- Breakfast daily and two lunches
- All transfers and road transport in modern, air-conditioned vehicles
- Two domestic flights
- All sightseeing as specified (entrance fees not included; allow \$230USD)
- Expert Western tour leader (group size seven minimum) and local guides throughout
- Tour arrival and departure transfers

### Climate

Beijing & Xian are hot and humid from June to August, very cold and dry from November to February, and otherwise pleasant and generally clear. Western areas of China along the Silk Road are very hot in summer from June to August, cool to cold in spring and autumn (April/May and Sep/Oct), and freezing in winter.

The high altitude area of Xiahe is often cool and is more likely to experience sudden changes in weather. It is possible for Xiahe to have freezing temperatures even during the spring and summer periods.

As this tour covers a huge distance and variable climates it is advisable to be prepared for fluctuating and possible extreme weather conditions on all departures.

### Itinerary

#### Day 1 - Arrive Beijing

Upon arrival in Beijing you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Tonight meet your tour leader (or local guide) for welcome drinks and a tour briefing. **Two nights NOVOTEL XINQIAO**

#### Day 2 - Beijing

Explore Beijing's fascinating hutongs by rickshaw, visit the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square and the Drum Tower. In the evening witness a spectacular acrobatics performance.

#### Day 3 - Beijing

See the Great Wall at Mutianyu. **OVERNIGHT TRAIN**

#### Day 4 - Xian

The Terracotta Warriors are Xian's crowning glory, but you will also enjoy the colourful Muslim Quarter, city wall and pagodas. **One night BELL TOWER HOTEL**

#### Day 5 - Xian

See the Terracotta Warriors outside Xian. **OVERNIGHT TRAIN**

#### Day 6 - Lanzhou

From White Pagoda Hill you will get the best views of this important trading town and the Yellow River. The friendly Hui population serves up tasty local delicacies. **One night LANZHOU LEGEND HOTEL**

#### Day 7 - Lanzhou to Xiahe

Take a boat ride to see the island Bingling Cave carvings and seated Buddha on your fascinating drive to Xiahe. **Two nights OVERSEAS TIBETAN HOTEL**

#### Day 8 - Xiahe

Take a sidestep from the Silk Road to Xiahe, the most important Tibetan town outside of Tibet and home to Labrang Monastery, a centre of Buddhist learning.

#### Day 9 - Xiahe

Drive back to Lanzhou to board your overnight train to Jiayuguan. **OVERNIGHT TRAIN**

#### Day 10 - Jiayuguan

Visit Jiayuguan Fort and climb the westernmost ramparts of the Great Wall against a landscape of endless desert and snowcapped mountains. **One night HUAYUAN HOTEL**

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### Day 11 - Jiayuguan to Dunhuang

Drive through the Gobi desert to Dunhuang, visit the Crescent Moon sand dunes and enjoy a desert camel ride. **One night INTERNATIONAL HOTEL**

### Day 12 - Dunhuang to Turpan

Visit the famed Mogao Caves before boarding your overnight train to Turpan. **OVERNIGHT TRAIN**

### Day 13 - Turpan

Explore Turpan, one of the oasis towns of the Gobi Desert, including Jiohe Ruins and the Karez Museum. **Two nights TURPAN GRAND HOTEL**

### Day 14 - Turpan

Visit the Emin Minaret and local vineyards. Explore Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves in the 'flaming mountains'.

### Day 15 - Turpan to Kashgar

Drive west to Urumqi to catch your evening flight to Kashgar. **Two nights TAXINAN BARONY HOTEL**

### Day 16 - Kashgar

Discover the Id Kah Mosque, Abkah Hoja Tomb and take a walking tour through the Old City.

### Day 17 - Kashgar to Urumqi

Witness the amazing Sunday Bazaar before returning to Urumqi on an evening flight. **Two nights XINJIANG HOTEL**

### Day 18 - Urumqi

Enjoy a day trip to stunning alpine Lake Tianchi.

### Day 19 - Depart Urumqi

Today you will be transferred to the airport for your onward journey.

## Hotel Brief

### Overnight Train

First class, air-conditioned carriage with soft sleeper four-berth shared cabin. Lower or upper bunk, clean linen provided.

### Lanzhou Legend Hotel in Lanzhou

A comfortable hotel situated in the centre of town. Well located for independent exploration of this very local, bustling Chinese city.

### Overseas Tibetan Hotel in Xiahe

A very simple, basic abode with friendly Nepalese and Tibetan staff, right in the middle of town and a short walk from the monastery.

### Huayuan Hotel in Jiayuguan

A comfortable hotel well located in the middle of the new town directly facing the central square and park.

### International Hotel in Dunhuang

Neat, modern hotel with good rooms, situated close to the centre of town and only minutes from the bustling night market.

### Turpan Grand Hotel in Turpan

Spacious rooms and comfortable beds make this hotel our favourite. Also located close to the bazaar and night markets.

### Taxinan Barony Hotel in Kashgar

Good pleasant rooms with a convenient location within walking distance to the old town and Id Kah Mosque.

### Xinjiang Grand Hotel in Urumqi

Reliable hotel with spacious, comfortable rooms, good service, and an excellent location right in the centre of town on People's Park.

## Visa Requirements

All persons entering China require a visa. Travellers need a tourist visa which must be obtained from a Chinese Embassy or Consulate abroad before arrival and is valid for all international points of entry into China. More detailed visa information is available in our pre-departure information. It is your responsibility to make sure that visa requirements are fulfilled.

## Health Issues

Good medical advice usually recommends vaccinations/prophylactics in advance of travel to China. We suggest that you consult with your doctor to discuss health care needs specific to your holiday.

## Insurance

You must be comprehensively insured as a condition of travelling with Travel Indochina. Insurance should include cover for personal accident and medical expenses, evacuation and repatriation, baggage loss, and cancellation or curtailment of your holiday. Your booking will not be confirmed if you cannot confirm possession of appropriate insurance, and our ground operations have the right to prevent you from travelling in the event that you cannot present your insurance details at the start of the tour. Your travel agent can organise travel insurance for you.

## Recommended Reading

- Foreign Devils on the Silk Road - Peter Hopkirk
- Life Along the Silk Road - Susan Whitfield
- Silk Road: Monks, Warriors & Merchants - Luce Boulnois and Helen Loveday
- Shadow of the Silk Road - Colin Thubron
- Odyssey Guide to the Silk Road: Xi'an to Kashgar
- China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power - Nicholas Kristoff and Sheryl Wudunn

## A Responsible Travel Indochina

Travel Indochina practices a thorough, realistic Responsible Travel Policy, full details of which can be found in our website. Our policy includes a 'Guide to Responsible Travel', full of useful pointers which will make you a more 'responsible' traveller in Asia.

## Pre and post tour arrangements

If you would like to book pre or post tour hotel arrangements or are interested in doing additional quality touring before or after your Small Group journey, either contact Travel Indochina or your local travel agent.

## What next

Once your booking has been confirmed and you have paid in full you will receive a detailed itinerary for this tour, detailing day by day arrangements, as well as a pre-departure guide containing valuable information designed to help you get the most out of your holiday.

## About Travel Indochina

Travel Indochina has been operating small group journeys to Asia since 1993. Based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, our idea is simple - escape the tourist traps to explore the essence of Asia's history, culture, natural beauty and most importantly, Asia's people. Another feature is the quality, character and location of our accommodation. Our travellers enjoy the combination of well thought out itineraries, tasteful accommodation, insightful western and local leaders, value for money, and our experience and base in the region.

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