

# Silk Road Explorer



## Silk Road Explorer

27 Days

Fully Inclusive from the UK

Follow the footsteps of Marco Polo to discover the history of the Silk Road; a centuries-old route strongly influenced by Muslim and Buddhist beliefs. Visit Ancient forts and desert oases, walk on the far western end of the Great Wall and experience the famous bustling Sunday Market in Kashgar.

*This tour reaches a maximum altitude of 3,100m at Xiahe.*

### Fully Inclusive price includes:

- International flights and current taxes
- Domestic transportation
- Accommodation
- All meals (excluding drinks)
- Touring with Guides and entrance fees
- Visa fees for UK passport holders

### Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

China continues to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to one country in Asia with us, then another, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own.

A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a local market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in China requires patience and potential delays are to be expected due to standards of service. There is a low level of English spoken throughout China, so your local guides or National Escort will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things do not always go to plan, are those who find their experience most rewarding. It is essential that all passengers recognize the demands of factors such as basic facilities and cultural differences they may encounter in some areas.

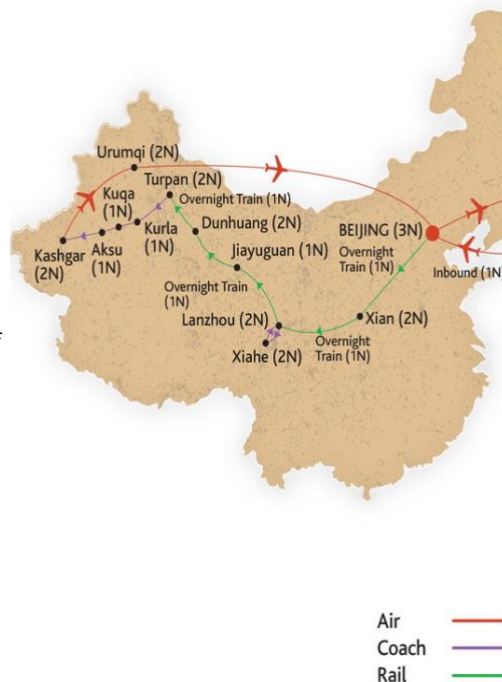
Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit [www.wendywutours.co.uk](http://www.wendywutours.co.uk) or see your preferred travel agent.

## Your Tour Dossier

This document is designed to be read in conjunction with the other pre-departure information provided by Wendy Wu Tours including the tour itinerary as described in our brochure and/or website. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour.

If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation; they will be explained here.

All passengers must read this document to ensure the itinerary is suitable for their interests and physical capabilities. This is not your final itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.



## Silk Road Explorer - Active Paced Tour

These tours can involve long periods of sightseeing on foot, climbing of stairs and getting on and off boats, and are physically more demanding. Some easy trekking may be involved, as well as travel to remote areas and areas of high altitude, reaching up to 5,000m. These tours could involve long days of driving and overnight train journeys. These programmes require a good level of fitness.

Sightseeing may involve walking and/or travelling over rough roads for extended periods. Our local guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

The more difficult aspects of this itinerary involve areas of high altitude, long driving distances and overnight train journeys. Travelling along the former Silk Road recreates the journey made by the caravans and horsemen for centuries – to experience the distance as well as the changing landscapes, faces and cultures as you move westwards. This itinerary covers an incredibly vast distance and involves longer drives and train journeys. Tourist facilities are by no means perfect in this part of the country and travellers should be prepared for some degree of 'culture shock'.

NB Please note that times and distances listed in the tour dossier are approximate.

### Days 1-2: UK/Beijing

On day 2, you will be met at Beijing International airport in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide and/or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer approx. 1hr to your hotel. When the whole group has arrived, a tour introduction will be held in the hotel. There will not be food or drinks served at this meeting; it is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in China. There is no sightseeing arranged today.

### Day 3: Beijing

We have an early rise this morning to drive approx. 1.5hrs (50km) northwest of the city to the Juyongguan Pass section of the Great Wall. The aim of this is to avoid the crowds of tourists who will arrive later in the morning, and the heat of the day. Visiting the Wall involves walking a steep path of 200m from the bus to the first section. After your group has been given an introduction to the Great Wall's unique history you will have free time to explore the rest at your own pace. This afternoon, visit the Temple of Heaven, approx. 2hrs sightseeing on foot here.

### Day 4: Beijing

Check-out from the hotel this morning before sightseeing. Sightseeing in central Beijing involves approx. 3-4hrs on foot during the morning to see Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. Visiting Mao's Mausoleum is subject to the length of the queue, as so many domestic tourists visit every day. This afternoon, drive approx. 1hr to the Summer Palace in the north of the city. The palace is set over an extensive park and man-made lake complex and there is approx. 2-3hrs walking involved at this site. Transfer to Beijing West Train Station. The overnight train departs in the evening and takes approx. 12hrs (1,200km).

### Day 5: Xian

You will arrive at Xian station very early this morning and transfer to your hotel, where you can have breakfast and freshen up. Sightseeing at the Little Wild Goose Pagoda involves approx. 1hr on foot.

*NB: Check-out time in China is midday so your group's rooms are unlikely to be available. This morning you will commence sightseeing and return to hotel later to rest and freshen up.*

### Day 6: Xian

The Museum of the Terracotta Warriors is located approx. 1hr drive outside of Xian. From the bus park to the Museum entrance there is a 15mins walk, usually without any shade. There are electric carts offered by private vendors which can be organised at your own cost. There is no electric cart available for the return from Museum exit to Bus Park. Within the Museum area the warriors can be seen in 3 different "pits", which are active archaeological digs. The site is large and, towards the summer months, can be extremely hot outside. Sightseeing here involves approx. 2.5hrs on foot. To visit the City Walls this afternoon you will need to walk up the stairs onto the wall, then the Local Guide will give you time to explore at your own pace. There are options here to hire a bicycle or an electric cart to drive along the length of the walls. These are offered by private vendors and can be organised at your own cost.

### Day 7: Xian

This morning is at your leisure before checking out around midday. Sightseeing at the Shaanxi Museum, and Muslim Quarter involves approx. 2hrs on foot. Take care of your valuables while in the Muslim Quarter's alley market stalls. Transfer to Xian Station in the late afternoon. The overnight train to Lanzhou departs this evening and takes approx. 9.5hrs.

### Day 8: Lanzhou

You will arrive at Lanzhou station very early this morning and transfer to your hotel, where you can have breakfast and freshen up. Sightseeing at the riverside park involves approx. 1hr leisurely walking, and at Baita Temple involves approx. 2hrs walking and climbing some steps.

### Day 9: Bingling Caves - Day trip

Drive approx. 1.5hrs (85km) to Liouxiajia Reservoir, where you will board a speedboat to ride approx. 40mins to the caves. These boats are not built for Western ergonomics so space is limited; there is virtually no leg room and little head space. At Bingling Si there are dirt paths and wooden

walkways and stairs built around the side of the cliff face. For the last few years the upper levels of caves have been closed. Return to Lanzhou in the early evening.

*NB: Tonight your guide will advise you to pack an overnight bag for the next 3 nights - 2 nights in Xiahe as well as the overnight train journey on Day 12. Your main luggage will be transported from Lanzhou to Jiayuguan. Please bring any essentials you might need until lunchtime Day 13, in case of delays.*

#### **Day 10: Lanzhou/Xiahe**

Check-out of your hotel early this morning to drive to Xiahe – an autonomous region of Hui and Tibetan ethnic minorities. Drive 160km to Lingsha. Lunch may be later than usual as there are no suitable restaurants until reaching Lingsha. In the afternoon, drive 280km ascending to Xiahe. After checking into the hotel, it is advisable to rest in order to acclimatise to the high altitude.

#### **Day 11: Xiahe**

Exploring Labrang Monastery involves sightseeing on foot for approx. 2hrs. Walking the pilgrim circuit (*kora*) involves walking for 3km over uneven ground, climbing some slopes. Please note that you will start and finish in the same spot, so this can be done at your own pace. This afternoon, drive 12km to the Sangka grasslands where we will have free time to explore at our own pace.

#### **Day 12: Xiahe/Jiayuguan via Lanzhou**

Depart early this morning for the return drive through Lingsha (lunch stop here again) to Lanzhou. After dinner, transfer to the train station; you will not return to the hotel. Your overnight train departs approx. 2030 tonight and takes 10.5hrs.

*NB: Your main luggage will be loaded by porter staff directly onto the luggage carriage; you will not be able to access it until tomorrow morning.*

#### **Day 13: Jiayuguan**

Arrive at around 0700 and drive approx. 10mins to the hotel, where you will be able to access your main luggage, have breakfast and freshen up. Sightseeing at the Jiayu Fortress involves walking approx. 2hrs on foot and climbing some stairs. You will also be able to visit the Fortress Museum if open. Drive a few km to the western end of the Great Wall. Here there will be approx. 1hr allocated to explore this section of the wall at your own pace; there are some steep sections here so be careful.

*NB: Check-out time in China is midday so you may not be able to check in to your room until then.*

#### **Day 14: Jiayuguan/Dunhuang**

Drive approx. 4hrs (380km) westward along the Hexi corridor to the city oasis of Dunhuang.

#### **Day 15: Dunhuang/Magao Grottoes**

Sightseeing at Magao involves approx. 3-4hrs on foot over the whole day. Early this morning, drive 10mins out of town

to visit the Magao Grottoes Museum for approx. 1hr. Lunch today will be a simple meal as the choice of restaurants in this area is limited. Then visit the Magao Grottoes with a site guide, spending approx. 3.5hrs exploring the caves.

*NB: Magao has high visitor numbers every day and the site guides tend to pressure groups to move through the (open) caves in less time than some people would like. It can be very difficult and awkward for our Local Guides or National Escorts to change this.*

#### **Day 16: Dunhuang/Turpa**

This morning drive approx. 10mins to the sand dunes at Crescent Moon Spring, at the edge of town. You will spend approx. 3hrs walking or riding camels. The cost of the camel ride is not included in your tour cost. Return to the hotel for an opportunity to freshen up before transferring approx. 2.5hrs to the train station in the town of Liuyuan. There are some wonderful views of ruins of the Great Wall on this stretch of road, so make sure you are on time to allow your driver to make photo stops when you request them. Your overnight train usually departs at 12am and takes 9hrs.

#### **Day 17: Turpan**

You will arrive at the station in the town of Dahayen early this morning – around 830am. Transfer approx. 45mins (60km) to your hotel in Jiaohe, where you can have breakfast and freshen up, before driving to Jiaohe Ruins. On the way you can see the Flaming Mountains. Spend approx. 2hrs exploring the ruins by either walking through the sand or riding a donkey cart for longer distances. The cost of the donkey cart is not included in tour cost. Return to the hotel.

*NB: Check-out time in China is midday so your group's rooms are unlikely to be available. This morning you will commence sightseeing and return to hotel later to rest and check-in.*

#### **Day 18: Turpan**

Easy sightseeing around town today, but it can get very hot in Grape Valley depression, so take sun protection.

*NB: for Days 19 to 21 – Although this area has laid new expressways and built surprisingly modern and sizeable cities; it remains a remote area. Due to driving distances and/or lack of facilities in this area, lunch may be served later than usual (after 2pm) each day.*

#### **Day 19: Turpan/Kurla**

Drive approx. 6hrs (360km) to Kurla. Sightseeing at the Iron Fortress involves approx. 30mins on foot.

#### **Day 20: Kurla/Kuqa**

Drive approx. 5hrs (280km) to Kuqa. This afternoon, visit the Subashi ruins, approx. 20mins drive from Kuqa. Sightseeing here involves approx. 1hr on foot.

#### **Day 21: Kuqa/Aksu**

After checking out from the hotel, drive 100km to Kyzil Thousand Buddha Caves; sightseeing here involves approx. 2hrs on foot and lots of steep, stone steps. Some of the

upper level caves are currently closed to the public. Drive a further 260km to Aksu, arriving at approx. at 6pm.

#### **Day 22: Aksu/Kashgar**

Drive nearly approx. 7hrs (500km) to Kashgar. With no restaurant facilities in this area, your guides will organise lunch by purchasing supplies and instructing the restaurant staff on how to prepare it for your group. Arrive in Kashgar at approx. 5pm (Beijing time).

#### **Day 23: Kashgar**

Easy sightseeing today. Please watch your valuables within the market streets near Id Kah Mosque.

#### **Day 24: Kashgar/Urumqi**

Visit the animal market first this morning, now held at a new location outside the city and spend approx. 1hr here. Please pay attention to the activities going on around you. Men test riding their ponies, for example, have been known to collide with oblivious bystanders. Beware of pickpockets within and around the Bazaar. Tonight, fly to Urumqi (flight duration 1.5hrs) then transfer to the hotel and check-in.

#### **Day 25: Urumqi**

Drive approx. 2hrs (120km) up to Heavenly Lake, change to an "environmental bus" at the Bus Park to drive a further

10mins up to the lake. You will be given the option to either enjoy a short boat cruise or a walk on the boardwalks along the shore. You will spend approx. 2hrs here, before returning to Urumqi.

#### **Day 26: Urumqi/Beijing**

There will be easy sightseeing this morning then fly to Beijing (flight duration 4hrs) and transfer to your hotel for an overnight stay.

#### **Day 27: Depart Beijing**

Transfer from your hotel to Beijing Airport for your flight to the UK. Depending on your chosen airline, some flights to the UK will arrive the same day, whereas others will arrive the following day.

#### **Land Only**

If you are travelling on a land only basis, then you will need to make your own way to the starting hotel in Beijing on Day 2. On Day 27, you will checkout from your Beijing hotel, and continue as per your own arrangements.

Please refer to the Wendy Wu Tours brochure and/or website for details on departure dates, prices, itineraries, inclusions and tour extensions available as well as full booking conditions.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Before You Leave**

**Itinerary Changes** - The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in China are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Roads in China have generally been improved over recent years, but some road construction and/or weather conditions may still lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day to day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

- The flights between Kashgar and Urumqi are operated on a loop system, meaning one plane will fly up and down several times a day. Unfortunately this means that any delays are passed on to all later flights and flight departure times are extremely subject to change. Your guide will phone the airport to check the situation during the day and keep you informed of any changes.
- If time permits during your Beijing touring you will be taken through the Beijing Olympic precinct to view and photograph such sites as the Beijing Olympic Stadium (the Bird's Nest) and the Aquatic Centre (water cube). This would normally occur on the day you visit the Great Wall.

**Visas** - A visa is required for entry into China. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. We will require your passport, completed visa application form, and 1 passport photo, taken within the last 6 months, to process your visa. We will require all this information 8 weeks prior to departure. As per our standard visa processing service, we will have your passport for at least 4 weeks. Any passports and visa applications that require an express 2 week service, or that are received in our office less than 6 weeks prior to departure, will incur a £50 per passport express fee.

In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the Chinese embassy and or be required to attend an interview at the embassy in London. If this is the case we will notify you as soon as possible.

Please note that if you intend to arrive more than 24 hours before your tour commences or intend to stay in China after your tour has ended and **you are NOT staying in a hotel** you will need to register with the local Public Security Bureau. If you are staying in a hotel, registration is done on your behalf as part of the check-in process.

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your GP or a travel doctor for advice on vaccinations and travel health. [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) is a comprehensive website that you may also find useful.

Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit [www.wendywutours.co.uk](http://www.wendywutours.co.uk) or see your preferred travel agent.

**Climate** - Please refer to our website for detailed temperature charts.

**Insurance** - It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurers and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### **What to Expect on Tour**

**Development** - Although China is developing quickly, it still lacks international standards of civil infrastructure and therefore tourist facilities. For example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade; concepts of personal responsibility are different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK. However, all of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense as well as refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guides.

**Group Size** - All our Group tours to China are guaranteed to run subject to a minimum of 8 travellers and a National Escort will accompany each group of over 10. The maximum group size varies depending on the tour, but is usually no more than 28 passengers.

**Accommodation** - Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and China. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

**Altitude** - This itinerary visits the following areas of high altitude:

- Xiahe. Sightseeing and hotel are above an altitude of 3,100m.

If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your Doctor before undertaking this itinerary.

### **Rail Journeys**

This trip involves four overnight train journeys which are in first class soft sleeper compartments where each cabin consists of four berths (sharing). There is also one daytime rail journey using soft seat class.

**Traffic / Road Construction** - Roads in this region have generally been improved over recent years, but road or weather conditions may still lengthen driving times. Road construction work in China usually encompasses an enormous section of road - not a couple of kilometres as you would be used to. For this reason, the timings listed above are approximations only.

**Meals** - This itinerary travels through a region of China where far fewer foreign, especially western tourists visit. Hence the hotels and restaurants are unaccustomed to catering for western travellers – you will find that the style of food and ingredients change when you travel west of Xian. Wheat is grown here rather than rice, therefore noodles and flat bread feature heavily. There is little variety; for example, mutton is the only meat available and is a major feature of the diet in Xinjiang and Gansu provinces. The most common dishes are mutton kebabs with *naan* (Hui flat bread) or noodle soups with mutton. There are fewer vegetables grown or available in this region – vegetarians may find the lack of vegetable dishes difficult and should consider carefully the suitability of this itinerary.

In the other areas of China; more often visited by western tourists, the hotels serve some western dishes for breakfast. In this region there will be few if any western dishes for breakfast. Chinese and Hui breakfast dishes include *lagman* (fresh noodles), mutton soup, cold vegetable/pickle dishes, bean curd noodles, soups, *congee* (a rice porridge), steamed buns with pork or sweet red bean and green tea. Black tea and coffee are not always served, but can usually be requested. You may also be served fruit, a fried egg, or toast – although the bread tends to be very sweet and unlike the bread we have in the UK. Fresh milk is not generally available.

The local (Muslim) culture also means that some restaurants don't serve alcohol and it is inappropriate to bring your own. In this case please consider that you can enjoy a beer etc. later in your hotel room or bar.

If you like you can bring some supplements with you from the UK. Tea/coffee bags, UHT milk containers, drinking chocolate, instant soups or noodles, biscuits and energy bars are all a good idea. There are also some small supermarkets in Urumqi and Kashgar where you can also try to purchase similar items (except milk). Refer to your [Suggested Packing List](#) for details. Please note that long driving distances or flight times, for example, may delay/alter your meal time.

Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit [www.wendywutours.co.uk](http://www.wendywutours.co.uk) or see your preferred travel agent.

**Different names of towns** - Many places in China have several different names, including some of those which we have used in our brochure, maps and itineraries. You may find it confusing when researching your tour but please remember the fact that there are so many languages and cultures in this region. For example, in Xinjiang or Gansu Province a town may have four different names used in the Chinese (Mandarin), Uyghur, Tibetan and Kazakh languages. The Tibetan name is frequently spelt phonetically when used by English speakers, so 'x' becomes 'sh'. The result could be five different names for one place.

Here is a list of some places along the Silk Road Explorer and their alternatives:

Xiahe / Labuleng

Kashgar / Kashi

Urumqi / Wulumuqi

Turpan / Turfan

Lingsha / Linxia

Kurla / Korla

**Tipping** - As with most countries, tipping is a way of life in China. For our passengers' convenience we ask for a compulsory amount to be paid at the beginning of our group tours to cover tipping for guides, drivers, restaurant staff etc. Approximate tipping amounts can be found in our brochure and/or website; however exact tipping amounts will be stated in your final documentation pack.

**Optional Extras** - Our tours are planned to be as fully inclusive as possible. However, from time-to-time your National Escort or Local Guide may suggest optional tours/sightseeing in addition to the standard sightseeing planned for that city. Such options are at an additional cost, with prices ranging from 100 – 300 Yuan per person (payable in local currency).

If you do not wish to take part in any optional extras, you will have the option of enjoying some free time at leisure or to return to the hotel.

#### **After Your Booking**

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form, help sheet, and a China travel guide. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, badge, lanyard, suggested packing list and a phrase book, along with your final itinerary and international etickets.

Last Updated June 2011