

ASIA

I N S P I R A T I O N S

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL



CHINA
TIBET
HONG KONG
VIETNAM
CAMBODIA
LAOS
BURMA
THAILAND
MALAYSIA
BORNEO
INDIA
SRI LANKA
NEPAL
BHUTAN
JAPAN
SOUTH KOREA
TAIWAN
MONGOLIA



Welcome

to ASIA Inspirations

Tailor-made travel by Wendy Wu Tours





"When I first started taking travellers to Asia over 15 years ago, it was to share my passion for the region. Not just to visit the continent but to really discover and understand it. Now you can add an extra dimension to your travel experience with ASIA Inspirations, the tailor-made service that creates the perfect holiday for you."

Wendy Wu

Personal, Flexible and Individual

ASIA Inspirations takes a very personal approach to ensure that we fully understand your travel requirements. Our itineraries are flexible, allowing us to design a bespoke holiday that is unique and individual. We want to make sure that your experience is the ideal one for you.

Experts in Asia

I grew up in China and have travelled extensively throughout Asia. All our staff members are experts in the region and have visited on many occasions. You can speak with us in the knowledge that we have a deep understanding of Asia based on first-hand experience.

Service you can Trust

With 15 years of experience, numerous travel awards and many delighted customers you can trust ASIA Inspirations to deliver the service you expect. And with ATOL protection and membership of ABTA and IATA you know your holiday with us is secure.





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Junk boat cruising Halong Bay

The ASIA Inspirations Difference

At Asia Inspirations we believe that travel is an opportunity to truly discover a destination – to understand the people and places visited, feel a real sense of culture and history and be inspired by enriching encounters.



Tai Chi master

Asia Tailor-made experts

Each tailor-made itinerary is individually crafted to capture your unique interests and aspirations. As industry leading experts in travel, from China to Northeast and Southeast Asia to the Indian subcontinent, there is no one better to discuss and share your plans and ideas with than our tailor-made specialists. Our experts will spend time discussing and considering your individual ideas and requirements, creating the perfect holiday.

Personal Service

The most important part of designing your holiday is for us to fully understand what you are looking to achieve. We will listen to your thoughts and ideas and offer you suggestions based on our extensive experience. Only then will we begin to craft an itinerary that will fully match all your requirements.

Individual Transport

While touring you will have the benefit of your own vehicle. With no other people to wait for you can travel at your leisure and maximise your sightseeing time. Travel between destinations will usually be by flight due to distances involved although travel by train is usually also an option.

Local Flavours

One of the delights of travelling in Asia is sampling the wide range of local foods. Each part of the continent has its own delicious specialities and styles of cooking for you to enjoy. Whilst we include regional delicacies in our itineraries, you also have the space to get out and explore local foods for yourself – your guide will be happy to give ideas and advice.

Accommodation Choices

For your comfort, you can select the standard of hotel that suits you. We offer a range of options in the four and five star categories, as well as our 'Inspired' range. This includes properties boasting unique or heritage experiences or unrivalled luxury. Cruising options are also popular and include the Yangtze River in China, the Mekong and Irrawaddy in Southeast Asia and the Keralan backwaters in India.

Concierge Service

For the ultimate in premium service, unrivalled luxury and exclusive experiences look no farther than our Concierge Service. Featuring privileged arrangements and incomparable accommodation, this service is designed for the most discerning of customers for whom only the very best will do. See page 128.

Private Guiding

The best way to really experience a destination is to visit in the company of your own local expert. Asia Inspiration uses professional private guides who have a passion for their country, extensive knowledge and are dedicated to achieving high service standards. You also have flexibility with the timing and pace of your sightseeing so you can linger and take photographs to your heart's content.

How to create your perfect holiday

Designing the ideal itinerary for any traveller is a harmonious blend of your ideas and our expertise. We will take into account the places you wish to visit, the experiences you want to enjoy, the durations of travel and your available budget. In this way we can ensure we create your perfect holiday.



Great Wall of China

Destinations

Browse this brochure to see all the fantastic destinations we have on offer. They are divided into four broad geographical regions: China, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent and Northeast Asia. We are able to arrange holidays that include many more destinations than we are able to feature here – just call us to find out more.

Recommendations

Our brochure is designed to inspire you with ideas of what you can see and do in each destination. Let this help you to decide on the experiences that you would like to include in your itinerary. A selection of hotels from our extensive range are also featured to indicate some of the choices available.

Inspiring Itineraries

In the final section of the brochure you'll find a number of example itineraries. These are some of our most popular holidays which can be taken as they are or modified to meet your requirements. They also work well as a starting point for creating your itinerary – mixed with your own ideas you can create the ideal journey.



Thailand

Travellers' Feedback

We love to hear from our customers. Not only do we want to make sure that we've had a hand in helping you put together your perfect holiday, it also helps us to maintain and improve our high standards. We also love to hear your travel stories and find out your holiday highlights. Here is a little look at what some of the previous Asia Inspirations customers have thought of their holidays...



You have given us the gift of unforgettable memories

"Just a quick note to say how impressed we were with Asia Inspirations with the whole recent trip to China. You have given us the gift of unforgettable memories and we are extremely grateful for that. Everything was perfect with your planning and we definitely look forward to using you again in the future. We are looking for a trip to Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Burma so will be in touch soon."

Mr Mayer
China, September 2014

The service was highly proficient

"We would like to thank you and Asia Inspirations for making our holiday so enjoyable and of course, unforgettable. The efficiency of the service both here and overseas was highly proficient. Our transfers, taxi service and the guides: David in Shanghai and Kelly in Beijing were always there for us, punctual and willing. They were very knowledgeable about the sites, happy to answer our questions and cover our itinerary. We will certainly recommend Asia Inspirations to our friends and family."

Mr and Mrs Etherton
Beijing and Shanghai, July 2013

Enjoyment without any fuss

"As ex-CEO of a global Michelin Star restaurant business I have extensive experience of the best in international travel and service. As a discerning traveller I wanted someone I could trust to also take care of those irritating issues that arise when on holiday and just manage things locally. My choice in Asia Inspirations was completely justified and we were able to enjoy our 3 week trip to China and Japan without any fuss. I would have no hesitation in recommending Asia Inspirations as your tour operator."

Mr Howard
China and Japan, July 2013



The best holiday experience that I have ever had

"I seldom fill out forms like this and never tick 'excellent' but this has been the best holiday experience that I have had. Your service, admin, tour guides and overall management was exemplary. I cannot fault it. Your attention to detail (connecting flights etc) was amazing. I have never had such service. Thank you. If in future we find ourselves visiting countries where Wendy Wu has a presence, we would insist on using you."

Mr Neale
China, September 2014

We have nothing but praise for Asia Inspirations

"Our experience was excellent, I don't see how it could be improved. My husband and I have nothing but praise for Asia Inspirations. Our holiday was fabulous and we feel that this was a result of our amazing guides. We had three guides in total all of which were very professional, knowledgeable and very attentive. Our drivers also were very professional and we felt safe travelling in their vehicles."

Mrs Ranson
China, February 2014



We would definitely recommend Asia Inspirations



"This is rather late after our holiday but finally I have time to say what a fabulous time our Cambodia, Vietnam and Singapore adventure was. We had not used Asia Inspirations before and were very impressed with all the arrangements which went like clockwork. The hotels were excellent and the food everywhere

was an absolute joy. All our guides were superb, very friendly, kind and knowledgeable – especially John in Hanoi, although to single him out is maybe unfair to the others as all the guides were excellent. John ensured that we all had a good time especially our two sons (16 and 20) who thought he was a legend! Our

Halong Bay cruise was the highlight of the holiday for all of us and with hindsight we wish we had had two nights afloat to have enjoyed the experience for longer. The Cooking School was very enjoyable and the choice of restaurants for the lunchtime meals we all agreed would never have been discovered if we had been travelling independently. S21 and the Killing Fields were tough going. When in Vietnam the two ladies decided to have a chilled day at the hotel rather than visit the Cu Chi tunnels. We were very impressed that we were contacted after breakfast to check everything was OK because we hadn't gone on that day's tour.

We would definitely recommend Asia Inspirations and will save up to do another one soon! Thank you."

Collins Family
Cambodia, July 2014





China



It is said that you haven't been to China until you have walked on the Great Wall

Discover China

China is a land of contrasts which can be thought of not as a single country but as a whole continent. Each region has a different history, culture and landscape and there is a wide variety of ethnic groups, cuisines and even languages. From the classic historical sights to natural wonders and hidden gems, this is a land which will fascinate you.



Li River landscape near Guilin

When to Travel

China is a year-round destination with the spring and autumn tending to be the most comfortable seasons. Summer is typically hot and may be wetter and more humid than at other times of the year. Winter may be cold, but there are fewer travellers and often the best prices.

Since China is a vast country, weather patterns can vary a lot from one region to another. Please speak with one of our specialists for more specific recommendations.

Classic China

When we ask our customers to define the classic sights of China we are invariably told that it is the Great Wall, the Terracotta Warriors and the Giant Pandas.

See the Great Wall near Beijing and explore other historical treasures such as the Forbidden City, Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven; discover the Terracotta Warriors in Xian where China united as one country over two thousand years ago; and visit Chengdu, home to the largest and most successful panda reserve in the world.

Add to this list the modern and cosmopolitan city of Shanghai and you have captured the essential destinations of this fascinating country.

■ Beijing
■ Chengdu

■ Xian
■ Shanghai

Favourite Landscapes

The dramatic cliffs of the Three Gorges leave a lasting impression with our travellers, and to see them while relaxing on a luxury cruise ship makes the Yangtze River a popular choice.

For a landscape favoured by artists, head south to Guilin and the Li River where the rounded limestone hills form some of China's most beautiful scenery.

Yunnan Province in the south-west of the country has diverse geography ranging from the snow-capped mountains of the Himalayan foothills to rolling hills etched with rice terraces. Add a delightful mix of ethnic minority groups and you have one of the most interesting regions in China.

■ Yangtze River
■ Yunnan

■ Guilin

Natural Wonders

China has a host of natural wonders that will amaze anyone looking to visit somewhere very special.

Sichuan Province is a particular favourite of ours with the mountains, lakes and waterfalls of Nine Villages Valley and the multi-coloured mineral pools of Huanglong. Also visit Mt Emei, a holy mountain with steep cliffs and lofty peaks.

Accessible from Shanghai, Mt Huang is regularly featured in Chinese art and evokes images of craggy cliffs and twisted pines. Learn about the rocky pinnacles of Zhangjiajie in our Undiscovered China section and discover the impressive mountains and valleys of Wulong near Chongqing.

■ Sichuan
■ Zhangjiajie

■ Mt Huang
■ Wulong



The Chengdu Panda Reserve is renowned for its successful conservation work

Off the Beaten Track

Visit Tibet to learn about Buddhism and maybe make the adventurous journey to Mt Everest Base Camp; or journey along the Silk Road in the footsteps of Marco Polo to discover a history dating back two thousand years.

Qufu and Mt Tai are where you can discover the philosophy of Confucius; and Henan Province, with the ancient capitals of Luoyang and Kaifeng, is known as the cradle of Chinese civilization. See Undiscovered China for more.

For those looking to venture more deeply into China there is a wide range of options across the country. We have included some of our favourites in this brochure but there are many more that we know and love. Please ask us about somewhere specific you have in mind or if you are looking for some novel ideas.

■ Tibet
■ Confucius Country

■ Silk Road
■ Henan



The treasure-filled Forbidden City

Beijing

Historic dynasties and the Great Wall of China

Beijing is a captivating city steeped in history. It is the nation's capital and has been for most of the previous 600 years, so it is no surprise that Beijing is home to a treasure-trove of ancient sites. For any first-time traveller to China, a visit to Beijing is essential to really understand the history and culture of this fascinating land.



Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests

Temple of Heaven

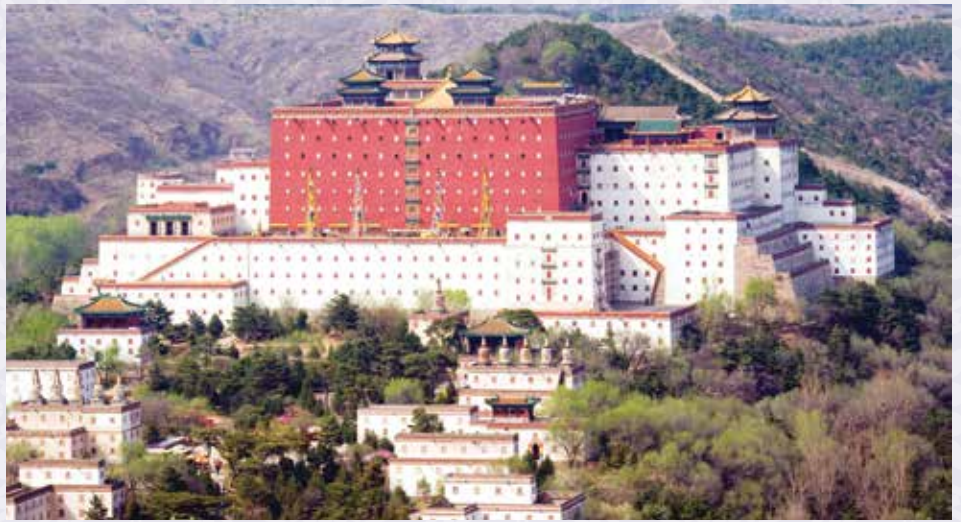
Built in the 15th century, around the same time as the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven was used by the emperors of the Ming and Qing Dynasties for ceremonies and prayers. The most important temple is the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, which is a circular wooden building constructed without the use of a single nail.

The temple complex is located in extensive grounds containing pavilions, gardens and walkways and is a popular place for the local residents. Watch out for people practicing tai chi, dancing and playing badminton.

Forbidden City

The Forbidden City was originally constructed in the 15th century and consists of almost 1,000 buildings surrounded by strong defensive walls and a moat. It represented the seat of Chinese Government for about 500 years during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Located in the heart of Beijing at the northern end of Tiananmen Square, it defines the centre of the city.

Said to be the largest collection of traditional Chinese architecture anywhere in the world, the Forbidden City is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of particular interest are a number of large halls which were reserved for specific purposes such as discussing affairs of state, rehearsing ceremonies or as the official residences of the emperor and his family. There is also a traditionally designed Imperial Garden.

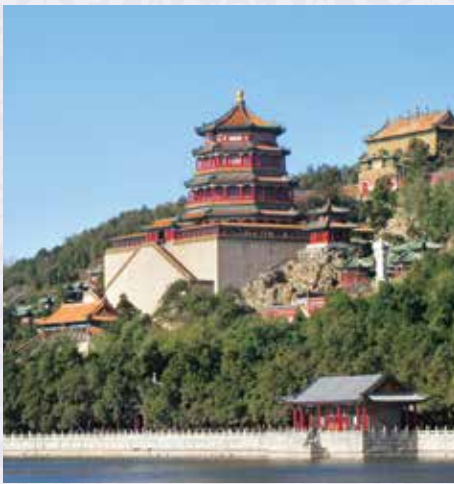


Take an overnight excursion to see the palaces and gardens of Chengde

Summer Palace

The Summer Palace is a large recreational area which is noted for its gardens, lake and traditional buildings. Originally built in 1750 and reconstructed in 1886, the Summer Palace is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site recognised for its importance as a work of Chinese landscaped garden design.

One of the most memorable features of the grounds is the Long Corridor. This intricately decorated covered walkway is over 700 metres in length and is the longest in any traditional Chinese garden. A delightful circuit is to cross Seventeen-Arch Bridge to South Lake Island and board a boat to ride across Kunming Lake. This will take you to the decorative Marble Boat from where you may return via the Long Corridor.



The Summer Palace set in landscaped gardens

Chengde Mountain Resort

Chengde is the site of a Qing Dynasty resort built for the emperors to escape the summer heat of Beijing. Set against a landscape of mountains, forests and lakes the complex features palaces, temples and gardens. They are designed in a wide range of architectural styles representing many of the regions around China.

The Chengde Mountain Resort was built over a period spanning most of the 18th century and was used by the emperors of the time for meeting high officials and foreign dignitaries. The resort is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is easily reached from Beijing by a scenic train journey.

Hutongs

The Hutong districts of Beijing are the original residential areas of the city with old buildings lining narrow streets. Many of these areas have been demolished to make way for modern developments but several have been reprieved to preserve the traditional way of life. The best way to see one of the Hutongs is using a cyclo-rickshaw with a driver who will pedal you around the area at a relaxed pace. Ride around the alleyways soaking up the atmosphere of a time long past.



Explore the Hutongs using a traditional cyclo-rickshaw

Great Wall of China

The most iconic attraction in the country is surely the Great Wall of China, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Construction started around 2,700 years ago with the different sections joined under the control of Qin Shi Huang, the First Emperor, in the 3rd century BC. Much of the wall that you will see today dates from the Ming Dynasty in the 14th century when stone and brick construction began to be used.

The sections of the Great Wall we like to visit are at Mutianyu and Juyongguan, just north of Beijing, which are well restored and with good facilities but usually do not attract as many people as at some other locations. For a more remote experience and for some extended walking we recommend a visit to Jinshanling. Be prepared for a stiff climb as your walk can sometime resemble ascending a staircase, although the commonly visited sections of the Great Wall are well maintained with good steps. The Mutianyu and Jinshanling sections both feature a cable car for those that prefer a more relaxing journey up or down.



Selected Hotels

Novotel Xinqiao ★★★★★

Novotel Xinqiao is ideally located in the city centre with Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and Wangfujing shopping street just a short walk away. Subway lines 2 & 5 are right in front of hotel. Amenities include a fitness room, massage, sauna and several restaurants. There is free Wi-Fi in all rooms and public areas.

Shangri-La Hotel Beijing ★★★★★

The Shangri-La offers elegant rooms providing a sanctuary in the busy city of Beijing. The hotel is a natural retreat with its large garden featuring Koi ponds, Chinese pavilions and soothing waterfalls. Relax and rejuvenate in the spa or 25m indoor pool and enjoy French, Cantonese and Japanese fine dining options.

Peninsula Beijing ★★★★★

The centrally located Peninsula Beijing offers the superior standard of comfort and service that is expected of the city's premier address. The hotel naturally boasts a luxury spa, indoor pool and two fine dining restaurants. The Peninsula Beijing is more than just a hotel, its long history, grand proportions and impressive setting giving it a status all of its own.

Raffles Beijing INSPIRED

Located in the centre of the city, Raffles is within walking distance of the Forbidden City and Wangfujing shopping street. Established over 100 years ago, the hotel has a French-Orient design with sumptuous and unique guestrooms. We recommend the Landmark rooms and suites which are located in the heritage building and are the perfect blend of old-world charm and modern sophistication. Raffles is also proud of its fine dining choices.

Recommendations

Essential Beijing

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Beijing and take a Hutong rickshaw ride.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Great Wall and the Summer Palace. Return via the Olympic Park to see the Bird's Nest and Water Cube. In the evening enjoy a Peking Duck dinner.
- DAY 3:** Explore the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. See a Chinese acrobatic show.
- DAY 4:** Depart Beijing for your next destination.

Beijing & Chengde

- DAYS 1-3:** As Essential Beijing.
- DAY 4:** Rail journey to Chengde and visit the Imperial Mountain Villas.
- DAY 5:** See the Puning and Putuo Zongcheng Temples and return by rail to Beijing.
- DAY 6:** Depart Beijing.

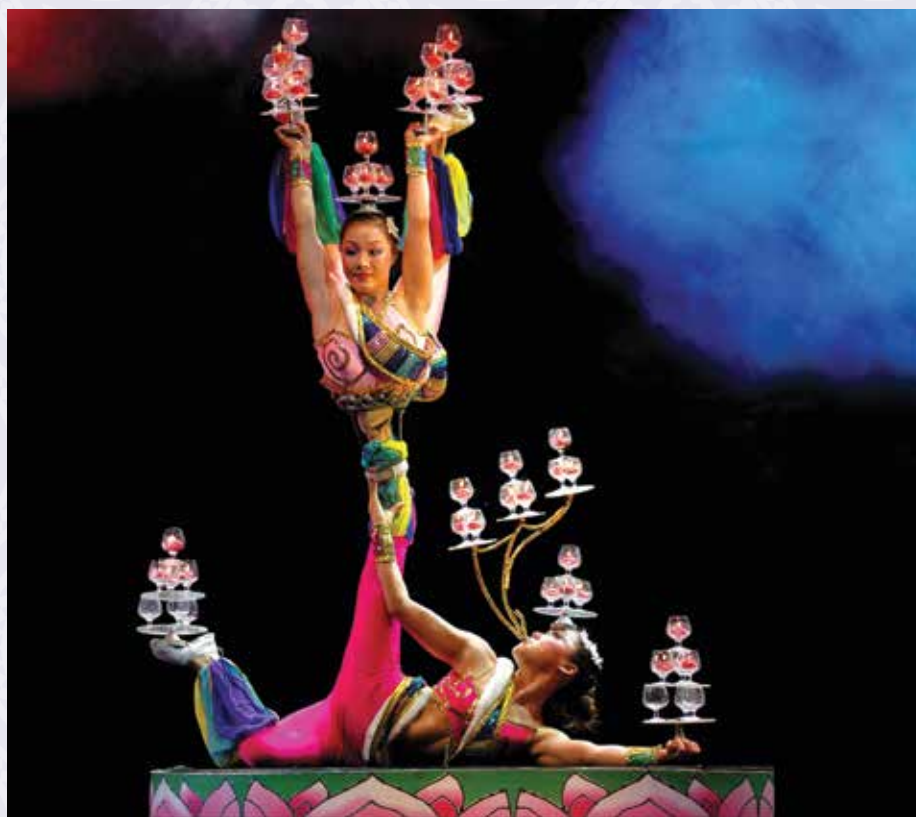
More Beijing

- DAYS 1-3:** As Essential Beijing.
- DAY 4:** Visit the Lama Temple, one of the most important Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the world. Also discover Prince Gong's Residence, an extravagant royal mansion set in large traditional gardens.
- DAY 5:** Depart Beijing for your next destination.

Options

Several days can easily be spent exploring more of historical Beijing. You may also visit Chuandixia ancient village or stay overnight near the Great Wall. Other experiences include a Kung Fu show, Tai Chi class and cooking tour.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Be amazed by the performers at a Chinese acrobatic show



Morning exercises on the Bund

Shanghai

The modern and cosmopolitan heart of China

Shanghai is the beating heart of modern China. Known as the Paris of the East, this vibrant city fuses Oriental style with cosmopolitan chic and has the best shopping, dining and nightlife in the country. Shanghai also has access to other fascinating destinations such as the garden city of Suzhou, the imperial capital of Hangzhou and beautiful Mt Huang.



The traditional Yu Gardens

Yu Gardens

Discover Shanghai's classically styled Yu Gardens. Walk past carp-filled pools, towering bamboo and exquisite rockeries to discover the historical halls and pavilions. Here the feng shui aspects of design are all-important as the water, plants and buildings blend in perfect harmony.

The Yu Gardens are at the heart of the historical Old Town. This area is well restored and features bustling pedestrianised streets lined with shops, restaurants and the traditional Huxinting Teahouse perched on stilts above a small lake.

The Bund

Shanghai's colonial past is elegantly displayed along the picturesque Bund. A walk along the waterfront past stylish buildings housing banks, hotels and the customs house offers an excellent viewpoint to understand the history of the city. Across the river the skyscrapers of the futuristic Pudong district dominate the skyline. Boasting several of the world's tallest buildings, Pudong is the financial centre of China.

Hangzhou

Historic Hangzhou dates back to the 6th century and is one of the ancient capitals of China. The central feature of the city is the attractive West Lake with a shoreline boasting verdant gardens, traditional temples and inspiring pagodas. Take a leisurely cruise across the tranquil waters of the lake and in the evening watch the spectacular West Lake Impression show directed by Zhang Yimou, creator of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

The cultural heritage of the city is best preserved in the picturesque Temple of Inspired Seclusion, one of the most important Buddhist temples in China. The colourful buildings are surrounded by gardens, trees and rocky outcrops carved with statues of Buddha. Also visit the Six Harmonies Pagoda which is built on a hillside overlooking the Qiantang River.



Explore the Garden of the Master of the Nets in Suzhou

Suzhou

Suzhou is renowned for its Chinese gardens and is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The walled gardens aim to recreate natural landscapes in miniature and feature ponds, rocks, trees and flowers as

well as traditionally-styled pavilions. The city is built on a system of waterways and you can take a boat ride on the Grand Canal to see why Suzhou is known as the Venice of the East.

Huangpu River Cruise

A great way to experience old and new Shanghai is to take an evening cruise on the Huangpu River. From the water you can truly appreciate the differences in styles with the classic and subtly lit architecture of the Bund facing the colourful and flashing displays of Pudong. For many this is the highlight of China's most vibrant city.

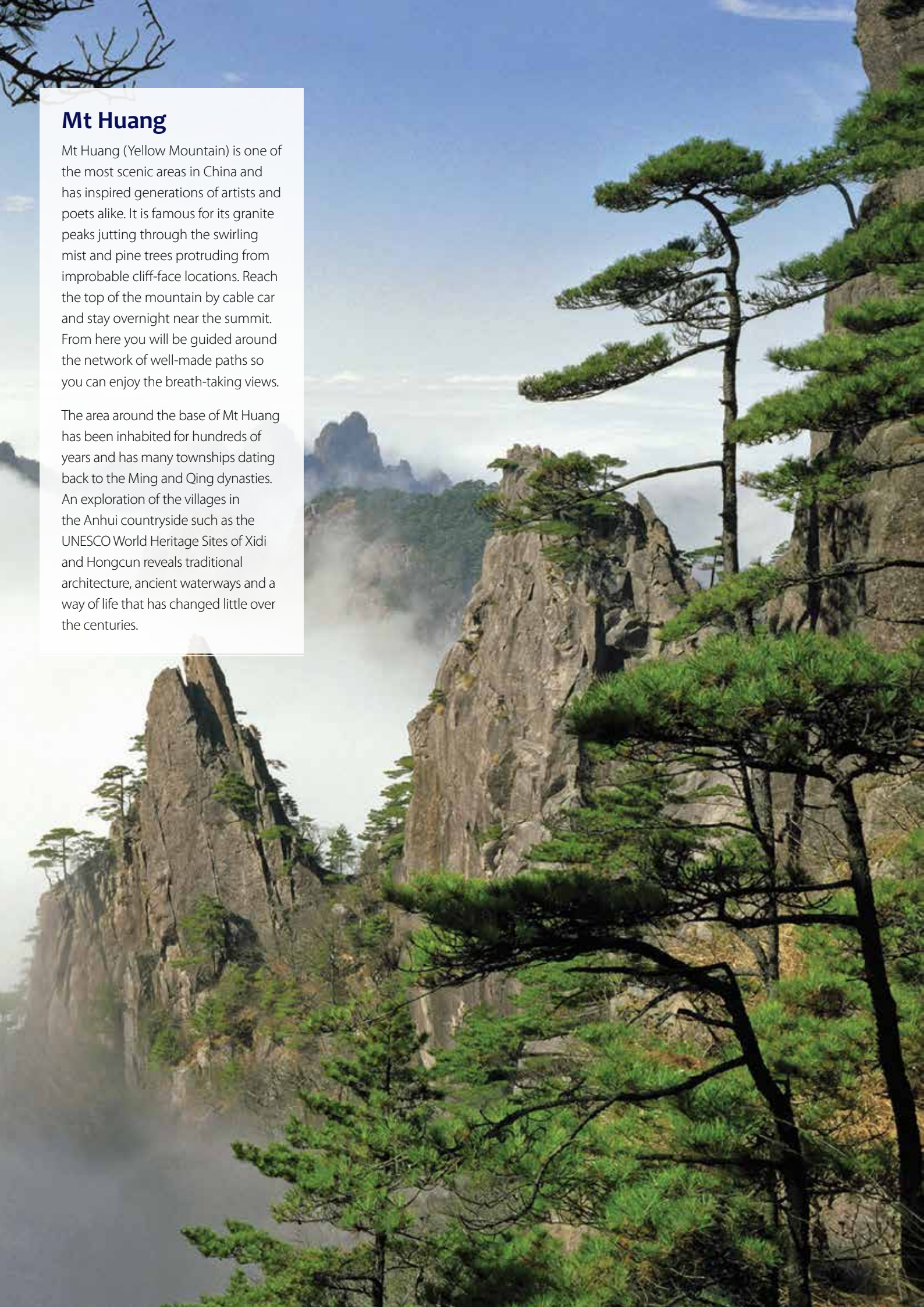


See both sides of Shanghai on an illuminating Huangpu River Cruise

Mt Huang

Mt Huang (Yellow Mountain) is one of the most scenic areas in China and has inspired generations of artists and poets alike. It is famous for its granite peaks jutting through the swirling mist and pine trees protruding from improbable cliff-face locations. Reach the top of the mountain by cable car and stay overnight near the summit. From here you will be guided around the network of well-made paths so you can enjoy the breath-taking views.

The area around the base of Mt Huang has been inhabited for hundreds of years and has many townships dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties. An exploration of the villages in the Anhui countryside such as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Xidi and Hongcun reveals traditional architecture, ancient waterways and a way of life that has changed little over the centuries.



Selected Hotels

Holiday Inn Shanghai Downtown ★★☆☆

The Holiday Inn Shanghai Downtown is a landmark in the commercial Puxi district with its two towering wings with separate marble atrium lobbies. Conveniently located, the hotel is a short taxi ride away from the main shopping and nightlife areas. The Holiday Inn has three restaurants featuring a range of cuisine and also offers a fitness centre and beauty salon.

Four Seasons Hotel Shanghai ★★★★★

At the Four Seasons you can place yourself in the heart of this bustling metropolis, just minutes from the best shopping and entertainment districts Shanghai has to offer. Facilities include extensive spa facilities, a large indoor pool and a world-class gym. Three elegant restaurants and a relaxed café provide a range of dining options.

Peninsula Shanghai **INSPIRED**

The Peninsula Shanghai boasts an exclusive location on the Bund with spectacular views across the Huangpu River. The hotel offers classic luxury, setting new standards in service and comfort with its state-of-the-art facilities. The superb amenities include a luxury spa, breath-taking pool and comprehensive gym as well as some of the best dining in the city.

Banyan Tree Hangzhou **INSPIRED**

Enveloped in lush greenery and calm waters, Banyan Tree Hangzhou provides priceless tranquillity. The resort has a unique design based on a traditional water-village and the immaculate accommodation blends traditional Chinese architecture with modern comforts. The Banyan Tree is located inside a reserve, home to a wealth of plant and animal life.

Recommendations

Essential Shanghai

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Shanghai and maybe ride on the super-fast Maglev train.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Old Town and Yu Gardens, stroll along the Bund and see the historical art in the Shanghai Museum. In the evening enjoy a cruise on the Huangpu River.
- DAY 3:** Depart Shanghai for your next destination.

Mt Huang & Ming Townships

- DAY 1:** Take an overnight train from Shanghai to the ancient town of Tunxi.
- DAY 2:** Ride a cable car to the summit of Mt Huang where you can walk along the trails and enjoy the view. Stay overnight on the mountain.
- DAY 3:** Return to the base of the mountain and explore Tunxi.
- DAY 4:** Visit the local Ming townships and return by overnight train to Shanghai.
- DAY 5:** Arrive in Shanghai.

Flights to Mt Huang also available.

Suzhou & Hangzhou

- DAY 1:** Transfer from Shanghai to Suzhou.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Garden of the Master of the Nets. Take a short boat ride on the Grand Canal.
- DAY 3:** Transfer to Hangzhou to experience the local markets and an oriental tea-tasting. In the evening watch the spectacular West Lake Impression show.
- DAY 4:** Visit the Temple of Inspired Seclusion and Six Harmonies Pagoda. Take a cruise on West Lake.
- DAY 5:** Transfer from Hangzhou to Shanghai or continue to your next destination.

Options

Stay longer in Shanghai to explore some of the modern areas of the city or take a day tour to one of the nearby canal towns such as Wuzhen, Zhouzhuang or Tongli.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Wuzhen is one of many charming canal towns near Shanghai



Every Terracotta Warrior has unique features

Xian

China's historical heartland

The city of Xian holds a very special place in Chinese history. Over two thousand years ago Qin Shi Huang unified China, becoming known as the First Emperor, and it is his final resting place that is protected by the Army of Terracotta Warriors. Xian is located at the eastern end of the Silk Road and this influence lives on in the bustling Muslim Quarter.



Explore the Ancient City Wall on foot or by bicycle

Terracotta Warriors

The Terracotta Warriors are one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century. The first fragments were unearthed in 1974 by local farmers digging a well and the museum remains an active archaeological site today.

The figures represent the army of Qin Shi Huang and they were entombed with the emperor to protect him in the afterlife. Each of the warriors was individually made and their unique features can be seen in the intricate detail of their faces and uniforms. They are displayed in their three original pits, the largest of which is the size of two football fields and holds six thousand foot soldiers and horses.



Tang Dynasty dancing show

Ancient City Wall

The city wall of Xian is one of the best preserved city fortifications in China. It was constructed in 1370 and is of grand scale with walls 12 metres high, 8 miles long and featuring 98 sentry buildings from where soldiers could fire arrows at the enemy.

A leisurely stroll along the top of the wall is an excellent way to appreciate the history of this fascinating city, or for a more active experience we can arrange a bicycle ride.

Selected Hotels

Grand New World Hotel Xian

★★★★

Located close to the city's West Gate, the Grand New World offers comfortable rooms designed in a classic yet contemporary style. All rooms are equipped with modern conveniences and hotel facilities include a beauty salon and foot massage.

Hotel Sofitel Xian on Renmin Square

★★★★★

Sofitel Xian on Renmin Square is located right in the heart of the city. A full range of spacious and well-appointed rooms are equipped with ultra-modern conveniences and plush interiors. Relax in the serenity of Touch Spa, take a dip in the indoor heated pool or dine in one of five restaurants offering a range of culinary experiences.

Shangri-La Hotel Xian

INSPIRED

The Shangri-La Xian is a modern sanctuary in an ancient capital and has all the features you expect from a luxury hotel. Elegant and spacious rooms set a new standard for deluxe accommodation in the city. The Spa is an idyllic retreat with treatments inspired by both East and West philosophies and the health club boasts a 25m pool and a state-of-the-art gym.

Recommendations

Essential Xian

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Xian and visit the lively Muslim Quarter.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Terracotta Warriors and walk on the city wall. In the evening enjoy a local Shui Jiao dumpling dinner and watch a traditional Tang Dynasty dancing show.
- DAY 3:** Visit the Hanyangling Mausoleum before departing for your next destination.

Options

Xian has numerous attractions to keep you for at least one extra day in the city. Visit the excellent Shaanxi Museum which houses some of the most important artefacts from China's ancient history, climb to the top of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, or learn how to make the local dumplings.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Hanyangling Mausoleum

This impressive museum is the tomb of the Han Dynasty emperor Liu Qi. The site has many similarities with the Terracotta Warriors but has a unique underground exhibition hall with glass walls and floors allowing an exceptionally close view of the excavated pits. The collection includes pottery statues that are about half human height, animal figures, weapons and everyday utensils.



2,000 year-old statues



Tribe of the Three Gorges

Yangtze River

Luxury cruising and dramatic scenery

The Yangtze River offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. Vertical cliffs rise dramatically from the water, a sight best appreciated from the comfort of a luxury cruise ship. There are side excursions so you can better understand the history and geography of the region while on-board activities and shows keep you entertained.



Luxury suite aboard the Sanctuary Yangzi Explorer

Three Gorges

The spectacular Three Gorges lie between Chongqing and Yichang. The scenery is varied with each part of the journey displaying unique characteristics. The Qutang Gorge is the narrowest of the gorges but is the most dramatic; the Wu Gorge is more beautiful with the river lined by forested mountains; while the Xiling Gorge is the longest and deepest. Enjoy the views from your ship's observation deck or from your own private balcony.

Yangtze Excursions

A highlight of your cruise is a trip along one of the river's tributaries, either the Daning River Small Gorges or Shennong Stream, both of which are noted for their narrow width and high cliffs. Also visit the Ghost City of Fengdu, a collection of Daoist temples and shrines built on a hillside overlooking the river. Further excursions such as Tribe of the Three Gorges may be offered depending on your ship's itinerary.

Three Gorges Dam

The Three Gorges Dam is one of the largest in the world. Visit the exhibition centre to learn more about this impressive feat of engineering and to look down on the dam itself. To get a real understanding of the scale of the dam, stand on deck as your ship passes through the series of five massive locks, each 280 metres long and 35 metres wide.



Daning River Small Gorges

Cruise Ships

Victoria Cruises ★★★★★

American-owned Victoria Cruises is the largest five-star fleet on the Yangtze River. All cabins have modern amenities, private bathrooms and feature private balconies. Facilities include a beauty salon, reading room, fitness area and gift shop.

The vessels have many on-board activities such as cultural lectures, Tai Chi lessons and calligraphy demonstrations. There is also a variety of evening entertainment including Chinese dancing, an historical fashion show featuring traditional costumes and a cabaret show.

Sanctuary Yangzi Explorer INSPIRED

The exclusive Yangzi Explorer offers the finest and most personalised service on the river, featuring the largest cabins (all with private balconies) and highest crew to passenger ratio. Facilities include à la carte dining, a two-floor theatre, library, fitness facilities and a luxury spa.

On-board activities include Tai Chi, Chinese cooking, calligraphy and a Mandarin lesson as well as demonstrations of silk embroidery, Chinese medicine and arts and crafts.

Recommendations

Yangtze Cruises

Yangtze Cruises usually operate between Chongqing and Yichang in either direction taking 3 nights downstream or 4 nights upstream. The itinerary includes the Three Gorges, the dam, and two other excursions.

Those wanting a longer cruise can sail between Chongqing and Shanghai. This route takes 6 or 8 nights depending on direction and additionally includes Wuhan, Mt Huang and Nanjing.

Options

Spend a night in Chongqing before or after your cruise to see this interesting city. Add another night to allow for a visit to Dazu to see the fascinating Buddhist rock carvings and frescoes. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the true hidden gems of China.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Chongqing

Chongqing is at the western terminus of your Yangtze River Cruise and is famous for its spicy food. Visit the attractive gardens of Erlin Park, the General Stilwell Museum and the traditional area of Ciqikou with its historical buildings. The city also boasts a Panda House with eight pandas and a quick visit is often possible without an overnight stay.

See pages 34-35 for more about Chongqing and the surrounding area.



Local sweet shop, Ciqikou

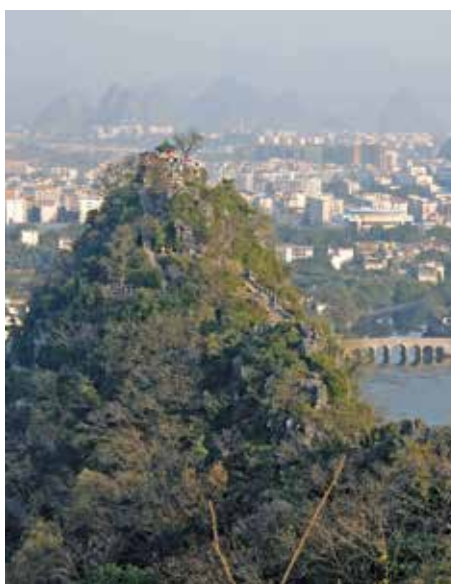


Picturesque scenery of the Li River

Guilin

The most inspirational scenery in China

The beautiful landscapes around Guilin are renowned for inspiring Chinese poets and artists alike. The mountain views often appear as the subject of ink-scroll illustrations with the meandering Li River weaving its way through the scene. This area is one of the best in China for taking it easy and simply enjoying your beautiful surroundings.



Climbing Mt Diecai

Natural Guilin

Guilin is blessed with a number of natural features within the city. The area is famous for its cave systems, and one of the best examples is Reed Flute Cave with its improbably shaped stalactites and stalagmites illuminated by coloured lights. Another large and impressive cavern is at Seven Star Park where you can also stroll around the craggy hills and pretty gardens.

At Mt Diecai you may climb to the top for views over the city and the river. Although it may feel like a lot of steps, it's worth it for the vista from the summit.

Li River

A highlight of any visit to Guilin is a leisurely cruise down the Li River past limestone hills, tranquil fishing scenes and picturesque villages. Around each curve in the river is another panorama that is equally as beautiful as the last. The journey takes around four hours so there is plenty of time to soak up the scenery and fill your camera's memory card.

The end of the cruise is at the countryside town of Yangshuo, a great place to stop for a night or two to relax and fully appreciate the landscape.



The beauty of the Li River has inspired countless poets and artists



Take time to relax in pretty Yangshuo

Yangshuo

Yangshuo is an attractive town with a relaxed pace of life. Here a favourite activity is strolling slowly along the streets, exploring markets and stopping in local cafés. After the hustle and bustle of China's big cities this is a place to unwind and enjoy your surroundings.

While in Yangshuo, an unforgettable experience is Impression Sanjie Lu, a spectacular sound and light show set on the river with hundreds of performers. The show is directed by Zhang Yimou who also created the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony. Also watch a fascinating demonstration by the cormorant fishermen who reveal their centuries-old techniques.

Outdoor Activities

There are many ways to fully immerse yourself in the spectacular scenery around Yangshuo. Choose from walking through the fields, cycling on the rural roads and pathways or rafting on one of the quiet tributaries.

This is a day for encountering the local people and making unexpected discoveries. Your guide will lead the way but you may stop to take photographs, explore the countryside and observe daily life as you wish.



Walking or cycling are good ways to explore the countryside around Yangshuo

An aerial photograph of the Longji Rice Terraces in China. The terraces are carved into a steep hillside, showing a mix of green rice fields and brown, fallow land. In the foreground, two traditional wooden houses with dark, tiled roofs are visible. The terraces curve and spiral up the hill, creating a dramatic, stepped landscape. The background shows more terraces and dense green forest.

Longji Rice Terraces

The Longji Rice Terraces are a marvel of ancient agriculture. Resembling stairs cut into the hillside, the fields were built 500 years ago during the Ming Dynasty. One popular walk is to start at the Zhuang village of Ping An for a trek of around three hours. Climb the steps through the terraces with the panorama gradually expanding until you reach the viewpoint at the top of the ridge. From here the trek becomes easier, tracing the contour around the natural bowl to a second viewpoint where you can drop back down to the village. As you walk, look out for the local Yao women who grow their silky black hair to extreme lengths.

Also known as Longsheng or the Dragon's Backbone, the rice terraces can be visited on a day trip from Guilin. But for those who want to explore more of the area, you may stay in a guesthouse in one of the small villages which will allow for longer walks and a better appreciation of the local customs.

Selected Hotels

Guilin Park Hotel ★★☆☆

Guilin Park Hotel is a four-star international hotel. Conveniently located close to the city centre, the hotel commands some of the most picturesque views in Guilin. The hotel is in an attractive setting close to a lake and surrounded by green trees and colourful flowers. The rooms feature modern amenities and three restaurants cater for a variety of tastes.

Sheraton Guilin Hotel ★★★★★

The Sheraton Guilin Hotel is ideally located along the Li River in the heart of the enchanting city of Guilin. With the completion of a full renovation, the hotel is as beautiful as the landscape it calls home. The Sheraton features an outdoor swimming pool and a gym as well as sauna and massage facilities. Two restaurants provide a relaxed atmosphere for dining.

Shangri-La Hotel, Guilin

INSPIRED

The Shangri-La Hotel Guilin is an ethereal sanctuary. The elegantly appointed guest rooms are the largest in the city and provide beautiful views over the Li River or landscaped gardens. Hotel facilities include a tranquil spa, a fully equipped gym and two swimming pools while the signature Shang Palace restaurant features fine dining and local specialities.

Yangshuo Hotels

Yangshuo offers a range of hotels characterised by their local charm. As this is a smaller town, the large international brands do not feature here but do not let that stop you from staying a while; it is one of our favourite places to relax and unwind.

Our recommended hotels in Yangshuo are the Green Lotus and New Century both of which are close to the centre. For a beautiful setting stay at the Yangshuo Resort or try the boutique Tea Cozy Hotel.

Recommendations

Essential Guilin

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Guilin and explore Seven Star Park or climb Mt Diecai.
- DAY 2:** Cruise on the Li River to Yangshuo. Explore the town and return to Guilin.
- DAY 3:** Depart Guilin for your next destination.

Guilin, Yangshuo & Longji

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Guilin and explore Seven Star Park or climb Mt Diecai.
- DAY 2:** Cruise on the Li River to Yangshuo and stay overnight. In the evening see the Impression Sanjie Lu light and sound show.
- DAY 3:** Explore the town and local markets before returning to Guilin. Visit Reed Flute Cave.
- DAY 4:** Visit Longji and walk around the rice terraces.
- DAY 5:** Depart Guilin for your next destination.

Guilin & Yangshuo

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Guilin and explore Seven Star Park or climb Mt Diecai.
- DAY 2:** Cruise on the Li River to Yangshuo and stay overnight. In the evening see the Impression Sanjie Lu light and sound show.
- DAY 3:** Explore the town and local markets before returning to Guilin. Visit Reed Flute Cave.
- DAY 4:** Depart Guilin for your next destination.

Options

Our customers regularly tell us that they wish they had spent more time here. If you like exploring beautiful landscapes it's easy to spend a week in the area. Hire a bike, jump on a raft or set off on foot knowing that the cafés and bars of Yangshuo await your return.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



The striking shapes and colours of Reed Flute Cave



Encounter the magnificent Giant Pandas

Chengdu & Sichuan

Home to adorable pandas and spectacular scenery

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province which is famous for its unique and spicy cuisine. It is also the home of Giant Panda conservation with a very successful research and breeding centre that cannot be missed. But the natural beauty of Sichuan is the best reason to linger in this scenic province.



The reserve is home to 80 pandas

Panda Reserve

With only a thousand Giant Pandas remaining in the wild, they are an endangered species. To ensure their survival, China developed a conservation centre in Chengdu which now houses over 80 pandas, the world's largest captive Giant Panda population.

The reserve comprises a large area covered by trees and bamboo, reminiscent of the pandas' natural habitat. Stroll around the grounds to observe the pandas in their enclosures and visit the informative museum to learn more about the achievements of the breeding program.

Grand Buddha of Leshan

At Leshan is the remarkable Grand Buddha which is reputed to be the world's largest stone-carved Buddhist statue. Completed in 803 AD, it stands 71 metres tall and is etched into a river cliff. It was hoped that the presence of the Buddha would help to calm the treacherous waters below which regularly swept away the fishermen. Happily, it was successful as so much rubble from the construction was deposited on the river bed that the currents changed and the waters became safer. The best way to experience the Buddha is to take a short boat ride on the now gentle waters from where the giant statue towers above.



The fingers of the Grand Buddha are each over three metres long

Mt Emei

Mt Emei (Emeishan) is one of the four holy mountains of China and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is an important centre for Chinese Buddhism and there are over 30 temples in the area. There are many pathways to allow an exploration of the mountain that is known for its steep cliffs, lofty peaks and roaring waterfalls. Walk past the towering trees and fragrant flowers to truly appreciate the beauty of this sacred place.

Mt Emei is about two hours from Chengdu by road. We recommend two nights in the area and to combine this with a visit to Leshan.



Explore the sacred peaks and natural beauty of Mt Emei

Panda Care Experience

When visiting the Chengdu Panda Reserve we can arrange unparalleled access to the pandas. Accompanied by one of the experienced keepers, you have the opportunity to assist with the animals' daily care routine. The program will vary but may include preparing natural foods, feeding the pandas, washing the pandas and cleaning the enclosure. This is a very hands-on way to experience the vital work that is carried out here.

Another option is to visit Bifengxia, about 100 miles from Chengdu, where it is possible to spend time working with the pandas on a volunteer program. The day-to-day routine involves feeding the pandas and ensuring that they and their enclosure are kept clean; however it is sometimes possible to be involved with collecting behavioural data and administering medical care. You may visit for several days which will give you plenty of time to observe and really get to know the pandas that you are caring for.



Help to care for the Giant Pandas

Nine Villages Valley

Possibly the most beautiful secret of China, Nine Villages Valley (Jiuzhaigou) is a natural wonderland. Located in the mountains of Sichuan, the national park is an idyll of forests, waterfalls and lakes, each with its own character. Five-Colour Pond boasts rich shades of green and blue while Five Flower Lake has crystal clear waters through which ancient tree trunks can be seen resting on the lake bed. Viewing the scenery at Long Lake, one can easily imagine being in the Swiss Alps or Canadian Rockies.

In the same region is the equally alluring area of Huanglong. Here natural mineral pools have formed on the hillside creating a landscape of beautiful colours. A boardwalk allows for a delightful (if energetic) hike to the temple at the head of the valley. A chairlift provides an easier option.



Selected Hotels

Yinhe Dynasty Hotel ★★★★★

The centrally located Yinhe Dynasty Hotel in Chengdu has guest rooms equipped with modern amenities. The hotel restaurants serve international cuisine and local specialties to cater for a wide range of tastes. Other facilities include an outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre, sauna and massage centre, bowling alley and billiards room.

Sheraton Chengdu Lido Hotel ★★★★★

The Sheraton is a centrally located hotel close to local amenities and boasts well-designed and beautifully appointed guestrooms. Recreational facilities include a sauna, Jacuzzi, steam room, fitness centre, massage rooms, hair salon, and an indoor swimming pool. The hotel's dining choices include traditional Chinese and western cuisine.

Shangri-La Hotel Chengdu INSPIRED

The Shangri-La Hotel is a modern sanctuary in an ancient capital with spacious rooms and luxurious comforts. Relax in the spa with a treatment based on traditional Asian therapies or rejuvenate in the superbly equipped gym and exquisite indoor swimming pool. The fine dining options include the opportunity to try the best in local Sichuan cuisine.

InterContinental Resort Juizhai Paradise INSPIRED

The Jiuzhai Paradise is an intimate retreat nestled high in the mountains near to Nine Villages Valley. The unique design is reminiscent of an ancient city protected under a glass atrium, marrying the exquisite interior with the bewitching natural beauty outside. The hotel is perfectly equipped for relaxation with its modern spa and two gorgeous pools.

Recommendations

Panda & Buddha

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Chengdu. In the evening enjoy a Sichuan dinner.
- DAY 2:** Visit Chengdu Panda Reserve and Leshan Grand Buddha.
- DAY 3:** Depart Chengdu for your next destination.

More Panda & Buddha

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Chengdu. In the evening enjoy a Sichuan dinner.
- DAY 2:** Visit Chengdu Panda Reserve and assist a keeper with the pandas' daily care. Explore the history of Chengdu by visiting pretty Wuhou Temple and ancient Jinli Street.
- DAY 3:** Visit Leshan Grand Buddha and the Qing Dynasty town of Huanglongxi.
- DAY 4:** Depart Chengdu for your next destination.

Nine Villages Valley

- DAY 1:** Fly from Chengdu to Nine Villages Valley.
- DAY 2:** Explore Nine Villages Valley National Park (using the national park transport system).
- DAY 3:** Visit Huanglong mineral pools.
- DAY 4:** Fly from Nine Villages Valley to Chengdu.

Options

Visit Dujiangyan to see the ancient Irrigation System. Constructed over two thousand years ago, this marvel of engineering not only helped agriculture but importantly reduced the risk of flooding. Also visit nearby Mt Qingcheng for its beautiful scenery and Taoist history.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



The colourful mineral pools of Huanglong



Immerse yourself in the fascinating scenery of Wulong

Chongqing

Historical city and
a scenic province

Chongqing is the western terminus for Yangtze Cruises making this an ideal place to spend a few days at the beginning or end of your river journey. Here you can see the Giant Pandas, explore the historical side of the city and visit some amazing natural scenery. And don't forget to enjoy the flavourful and spicy regional cuisine.



Dazu is one of China's hidden treasures

Old Chongqing

The traditional area of Ciqikou is a delightful place to absorb the atmosphere of the Old Town. Stroll past the historical buildings, browse in the local shops and maybe stop awhile in a relaxing café. For a more energetic look at local life, walk along the Eighteen Staircases with its market stalls, small restaurants and tumble-down houses.

Other attractions in the city include the traditional gardens of Erlin Park, the old buildings of Huguang Guild and the General Stilwell Museum which records the history of Chongqing during the Second World War.

Wulong

This mountainous area is part of the South China Karst UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here you can immerse yourself in some of the most fascinating scenery in China.

Three Bridges National Park features some of the highest natural arches in the world and you can walk down into the valley and below these impressive formations. Also trek through the Longshuixia Fissure, a deep and narrow valley with sheer cliffs. While in the area, visit Furong Cave to see its illuminated stalactites and stalagmites.

A trip to Wulong can also be combined with Black Mountain (Heishan) Valley, a narrow gorge with rushing rivers and spectacular waterfalls.

Dazu

The Buddhist relics at Dazu are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of China's hidden treasures. See the magnificent Baodin Stone Carvings and the Beishan Frescoes which date back as far as the 7th century.

Dazu is about two hours by road from Chongqing and can be visited on a day tour or with an overnight stay. It can also make an ideal stopover on the way to Chengdu.

Selected Hotels

88 Park Hotel ★★☆☆

This comfortable city-centre hotel has spacious, well-appointed rooms. Hotel facilities include a sauna, fitness centre and beauty salon. There is a Chinese restaurant where you can try the local Sichuan specialities and the hotel also features a coffee shop.

JW Marriott Hotel ★★★★★

Located in the centre of Chongqing, the JW Marriott Hotel delivers an unparalleled standard of comfort and service. This 5-star hotel has luxurious accommodation and dining options, an exclusive sports bar and a lobby lounge. You can pamper yourself at the Touch Spa, swim in the indoor pool and work out at the 24-hour gym.

Fairy Maiden Mountain Holiday Hotel ★★★★★

This hotel is conveniently located within the National Forest Park of Wulong. It is of modern construction but with a design influenced by the eastern Sichuan folk style. Facilities include an indoor pool, fitness centre, tennis and golf as well as a restaurant, lobby bar and coffee shop.

Recommendations

Essential Chongqing

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Chongqing and visit the Panda House.
- DAY 2:** Visit Erlin Park, the General Stilwell Museum and the People's Assembly Hall.
- DAY 3:** Explore historical Ciqikou and visit Huguang Guild.
- DAY 4:** Depart Chongqing for your next destination.

Add a visit to Dazu to see the Buddhist relics

Chongqing Natural Wonders

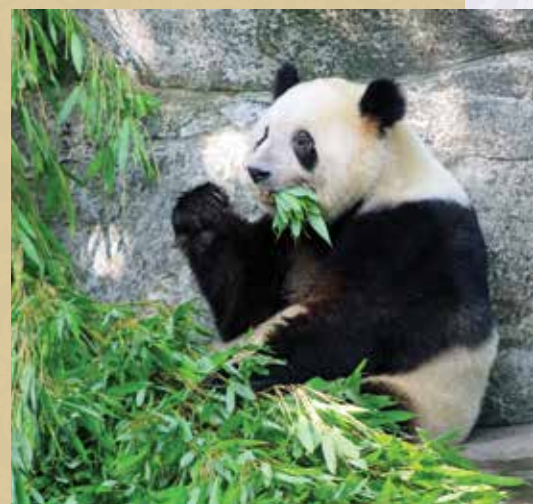
- DAY 1:** Arrive in Chongqing and visit Erlin Park, historical Ciqikou and the General Stilwell Museum.
- DAY 2:** Travel to Black Mountain Valley and trek in the gorge above the rushing waters. Continue to Wulong.
- DAY 3:** Trek through Three Bridges National Park and Longshuixia Fissure.
- DAY 4:** Explore more of Wulong and visit Furong Cave. Return to Chongqing.
- DAY 5:** Visit the Panda House and depart Chongqing for your next destination.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Chongqing Panda House

Chongqing Zoo is one of the most convenient places in China to see the Giant Pandas. Walk through the botanical gardens to reach the enclosures where eight animals can be observed at close quarters. A number of the smaller but just as endearing Red Pandas are also in residence.

Even if you don't stay overnight in the city, it is usually possible to visit the pandas en route between the cruise terminal and the airport.



See Giant Pandas in Chongqing

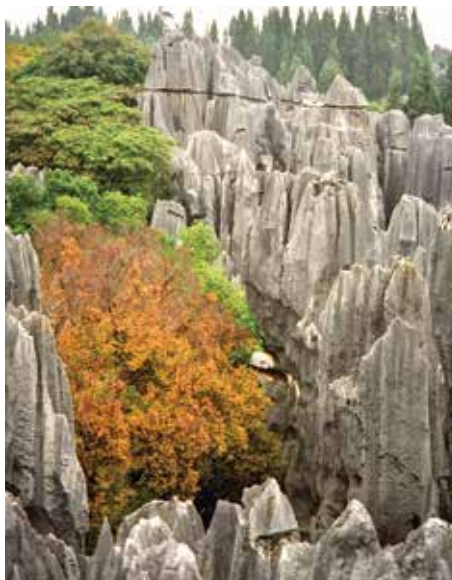


Black Dragon Pool and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang

Yunnan

A diverse region from the mountains to the tropics

Yunnan Province is one of the most delightful regions of China. From the snow-capped foothills of the Himalayas, the land drops down through valleys and rice fields to tropical Southeast Asia. And it is not just the geography that is diverse. Yunnan is home to a wide range of ethnic groups from Tibetans in the north to the Dai in the south.



Pinnacles of the Stone Forest

Stone Forest

Visit the remarkable Stone Forest (Shilin) where strangely eroded pinnacles form surreal shapes and images. Here the stone columns protrude skyward surrounded by trees and small sparkling pools in a striking area recognised by UNESCO World Heritage as part of the South China Karst. This region is also known for its ethnic minority groups and you are likely to encounter local people in traditional costume as you walk around. The Stone Forest can be accessed by a day tour from Kunming, which is the provincial capital of Yunnan and known as the City of Eternal Spring.



Discover the pretty streets and waterways of Lijiang's Old Town

Lijiang

Lijiang is the cultural and historical treasure of Yunnan Province and is set in one of the most beautiful areas of the country. The city's atmospheric Old Town is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and features cobbled streets, small waterways and traditional buildings. The pretty gardens and temples at Black Dragon Pool possess a beauty that is unsurpassed.

A truly spectacular aspect of the local scenery is Tiger Leaping Gorge, one of the deepest and most dramatic gorges in the world. This breath-taking landscape can be experienced with a trek along local trails. Another natural highlight is Jade Dragon Snow Mountain whose snowy peak is the backdrop to Lijiang. Take a cable car to one of the high meadows to experience the fresh mountain air and enjoy the fabulous views.

Zhongdian

Zhongdian, also known as Shangri-La, has a very strong Tibetan influence. Notable is the Songzanlin Monastery which is the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Yunnan and is filled with precious religious artefacts. Also take a day tour to see the natural beauty of the Baishui Terrace. These limestone pools have been created by the deposition of minerals from mountain streams over the millennia.

Xishuangbanna

In the far south of Yunnan, Xishuangbanna prefecture is geographically and ethnically similar to Southeast Asia. The region is home to the Dai ethnic group and their traditional villages feature bamboo houses raised above the ground on stilts. The tropical climate supports enormous biodiversity which can be seen at the Botanical Garden in Menglun which displays many rare and unusual plants.



Traditional village in Xishuangbanna

Dali

Delightful Dali is a relaxing town where you can stroll through the Ancient Quarter and take a boat ride on Erhai Lake. Visit the famous Three Pagodas, a beautiful sight with the cream coloured pagodas set against a dark mountainous backdrop and mirrored in the reflection pool.

For a greater insight into the traditions of the region also visit Xizhou, a local Bai village.



Reflect on the beauty of the Three Pagodas

Yuanyang Rice Terraces

Yuanyang in southern Yunnan has some of the most spectacular rice terraces in the world and is home to the Hani minority group. The fields have been cultivated over a period of 1,300 years to create what is known locally as Land Sculpture. The area is popular with photographers who capture the reflections in the curving water-filled paddies.



Selected Hotels

Lijiang Yingxianggucheng Wenyuan Hotel ★★☆☆

Located in the Old Town, this historical hotel oozes local ambience. The accommodation is built to a traditional Chinese design with rooms located around a pretty courtyard. In contrast the comfortable guest rooms are French in style. Although facilities are limited and based on local standards, this charming hotel has a character all of its own.

Crowne Plaza Lijiang Ancient Town ★★★★★

Experience old-world opulence and modern luxury at the Crowne Plaza Lijiang Ancient Town Resort. The hotel is surrounded by extensive gardens and ponds and is located right in the heart of the Old Town. Relax in the indoor pool or rejuvenate with a traditional spa treatment before dining in one of the elegantly appointed restaurants.

Banyan Tree Lijiang **INSPIRED**

The Banyan Tree Lijiang is a luxury hotel and spa resort in a magical setting. Here you will stay in a suite in a traditionally designed villa surrounded by natural landscapes. This is a place to unwind with the signature massages and therapeutic treatments or enjoy fine dining with the dramatic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain as a backdrop.

Banyan Tree Ringha **INSPIRED**

Banyan Tree Ringha is nestled within the Shangri-La valley below snow-capped mountains near to the town of Zhongdian. Stay in a suite in an authentic Tibetan farmhouse that has been meticulously reconstructed and fitted out with modern comforts. At the Banyan Tree Ringha, the feeling of exotic isolation converges with all the comforts of a pampering resort stay.

Recommendations

Kunming & Lijiang

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Kunming.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Stone Forest.
- DAY 3:** Fly to Lijiang. Discover the Old Town and visit Black Dragon Pool.
- DAY 4:** Visit Tiger Leaping Gorge to admire the scenery.
- DAY 5:** Depart Lijiang.

Discover Yunnan

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Kunming.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Stone Forest.
- DAY 3:** Fly to Dali. Explore the Ancient Quarter, visit the Three Pagodas and cruise on Erhai Lake.
- DAY 4:** Explore Xizhou village and travel by road to Lijiang. Visit Black Dragon Pool.
- DAY 5:** Enjoy the scenery of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, see the Baisha Frescoes and the Old Town.
- DAY 6:** Visit Tiger Leaping Gorge and continue by road to Zhongdian.
- DAY 7:** Visit Baishui Terrace.
- DAY 8:** See Songzanlin Monastery and explore the Old Town.
- DAY 9:** Fly to Kunming and visit the flower market.
- DAY 10:** Depart Kunming.

Rice Terrace Explorer

- DAY 1:** Transfer by road from Kunming to Jianshui and see the Confucian Temple. Visit ancient Tuanshan village to walk along the cobbled streets and discover the traditional Zhang Family Garden.
- DAY 2:** Continue to Yuanyang and discover this Hani minority settlement.
- DAY 3:** Walk among the famous rice terraces of Yuanyang and enjoy the beautiful scenery.
- DAY 4:** Transfer by road from Yuanyang to Kunming.

Options

While in Lijiang hire a bike for the day to explore the area. In the evening enjoy an ancient Naxi music show, a performance using traditional instruments.

Also visit Xishuangbanna which is a short flight from Kunming. Two nights here is a minimum but expect to stay longer to fully discover the region.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Banyan Tree Lijiang is a luxury resort in a magical setting



Jokhang Temple is the most sacred in Tibet

Tibet

A mystical land at the roof of the world

Tibet is a mystical land that is home to many fabulous palaces, holy monasteries and sacred temples. The spiritual centre of the region is the fascinating city of Lhasa which is a living museum of Tibetan Buddhist culture. For the more adventurous, a journey away from the city will allow you to discover the true nature of Tibet.



Discover the treasures within the Potala Palace

Lhasa

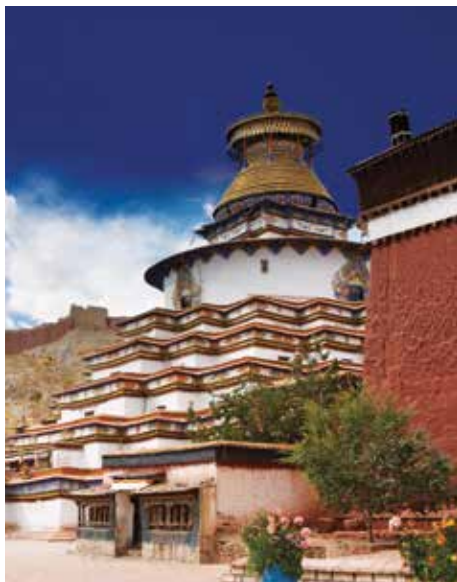
The most famous building in Lhasa is the Potala Palace, an architectural wonder that towers over the city. Discover within the thousands of rooms treasures such as intricate shrines and beautiful frescoes.

The Barkhor circuit has the atmosphere of a medieval carnival where pilgrims walk past stalls selling religious trinkets and the sound of chanted prayers fills the air. The circuit encompasses the 7th-century Jokhang Temple, the most sacred in Tibet.

Also visit Sera Monastery which has about six hundred monks in residence and Norbulingka, the former summer palace of the Dalai Lama.

Discover Tibet

There are many discoveries to make outside of Lhasa. In Shigatse visit Tashilhunpo Monastery, the traditional residence of the Panchen Lama and in Gyantse see the famous Gyantse Kumbum, the largest shrine in Tibet. But importantly, immerse yourself in the Tibetan culture to better understand life at the roof of the world. On this adventure, distances are large and conditions are basic but you will experience a land like no other.



Gyantse Kumbum

Selected Hotels

Four Points by Sheraton Lhasa ★★★★★

Situated in the eastern part of the city, the Four Points hotel is located by the Lhasa River and only ten minutes' walk from Jokhang Temple. The guest rooms are warm and inviting with a contemporary design and modern amenities.

The St Regis Lhasa Resort INSPIRED

The St Regis is the only 5-star international hotel in Tibet and features architecture inspired by local designs. Experience refined elegance and luxurious accommodation in a beautiful setting. Be seduced by three remarkable restaurants, experience healing Tibetan treatments in the splendid Iridium Spa and bask in the warmth of the sparkling Golden Energy Pool.

Other hotels in Tibet

Accommodation options outside of Lhasa are limited. Hotels in Shigatse and Gyantse have a three-star grading but with a local flavour. Do not expect western standards. The guesthouse at Everest Base Camp is extremely basic. You will travel here because of the spectacular scenery and Buddhist culture, not the quality of the hotels!

Recommendations

Essential Lhasa

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Lhasa and allow the rest of the day for acclimatisation.
- DAY 2:** Stroll around the Barkhor Circuit. Visit Jokhang Temple and Sera Monastery.
- DAY 3:** Explore the Potala Palace and Norbulingka.
- DAY 4:** Depart Lhasa for your next destination.

Discover Tibet

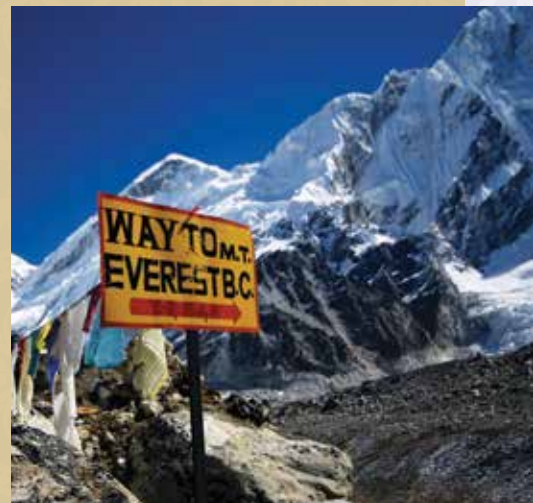
- DAYS 1-3:** As Essential Lhasa.
- DAY 4:** Travel to Gyantse and visit the Gyantse Kumbum.
- DAY 5:** Travel to Shigatse and explore the Tashilhunpo Monastery.
- DAY 6:** Return to Lhasa and visit Drepung Monastery, the largest monastery in Tibet.
- DAY 7:** Depart Lhasa for your next destination.

Ask about adding Mt Everest Base Camp

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Mt Everest Base Camp

Travel over remote roads to Rongbuk Monastery at an altitude of 5,500m. While here you can take a photo at the base camp marker, mingle with the climbers and maybe walk to Rhongpu Glacier. Visiting Everest Base Camp is a challenging journey and conditions are tough but the rewards of experiencing this remote place are immeasurable.



A remote but rewarding adventure



The well-preserved Silk Road fort at Jiayuguan

Silk Road

Follow in the footsteps
of Marco Polo

A journey along the Silk Road is an opportunity to discover an altogether different side of China. Here merchants have been trading their goods for over two thousand years and nowhere more than at the famous Kashgar market. Ideas and religion were exchanged too with Muslim and Buddhist beliefs featuring prominently in this part of the country.



Kashgar street vendor

Kashgar

Kashgar sits in a remote corner of western China but has thrived for two millennia as a crossroads on the Silk Road. The city is rightly famous for its Sunday Market with tens of thousands of people buying produce ranging from local fruits to traditional clothing and live animals.

The local inhabitants are Uighur Muslims and the Islamic influence is present at the Id Kah Mosque, the Abakh Khoja Tomb and the many bustling bazaars. You will also notice a difference in the local food which is similar to that in Central Asia.

Jiayuguan

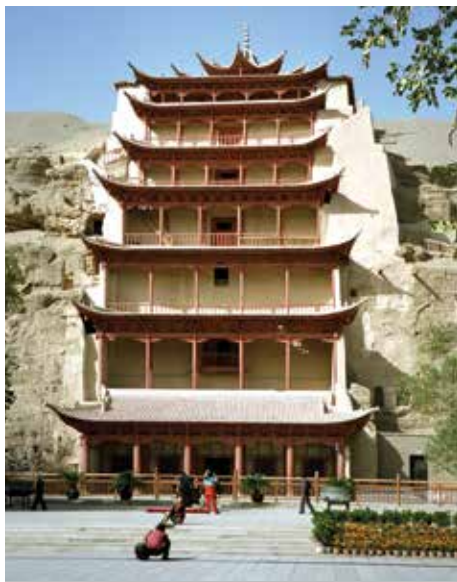
The highlight of Jiayuguan is the fortress constructed in 1372 during the Ming Dynasty to protect this remote outpost of the Chinese empire. It remains one of the largest and best preserved forts in China. Jiayuguan marks the western extremity of the Great Wall of China, which you can climb on a section known as the Overhanging Great Wall.

Turpan

Turpan is an oasis city which is cleverly irrigated by the karez system of underground channels that diverts water from the base of the Tian Shan Mountains. This provides ideal growing conditions and the city is famous within China for its grapes, raisins and wine. The area around Turpan has a long and important history seen at the ruins of ancient Gaochang city and the murals of Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves.

Dunhuang

Dunhuang is a small city that clings to the edge of the Taklimakan Desert. It is best known for the Buddhist sculptures of the Mogao Grottoes and the large collection of ancient manuscripts that were found here. While in Dunhuang, experience the desert by visiting the Singing Sand Dunes and the oasis of Crescent Moon Spring, and maybe riding a camel.



See Buddhist sculptures at the Mogao Grottoes

Silk Road Hotels

This is a remote region with small cities and few travellers. Urumqi has a few good quality hotels but beyond this accommodation is three-star at best. Rooms are clean and comfortable but cater mainly for local travellers and do not provide western luxuries.

Although most hotels in the region are basic, we hope that this does not deter you from visiting. In fact the regional nature of the facilities enables you to better understand the local way of life.



Camels in the Taklamakan Desert near Dunhuang

Recommendations

The Silk Road traverses a huge distance across western China. There are many options for travel ranging from a few days visiting one destination to an insightful three-week tour from Xian to Kashgar. Our specialists can advise about more specific itineraries.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Heavenly Lake

Travel to the far reaches of the Silk Road and you will pass through the gateway city of Urumqi. While here don't miss a day trip to Heavenly Lake, a beautiful world of lush forest, sparkling water and snow-capped peaks.

Heavenly Lake, known locally as Tian Chi, is at an elevation of 2,000 metres in the Bogda Shan range of mountains. Enjoy the scenery on a boat ride across the lake or by walking around the shore.



The sparkling waters of Heavenly Lake



Zhangjiajie inspired the scenery in the film Avatar

Undiscovered China

China's best kept secrets

China is a vast country with a myriad of opportunities. Whether your interest is nature, history or just exploring somewhere different, you are bound to find something appealing. Here are some of our favourites, and while they are popular with local visitors, you will get the feeling that you are discovering some of China's best kept secrets.



An exciting cliff-face walk in Zhangjiajie

Confucius Country

Confucius lived around 500 BC and his philosophy, based on study and personal understanding, is recognised across the globe. He was born in Qufu in Shandong Province which now has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites relating to him. The Temple of Confucius is located on the site of the philosopher's former home and is the second largest historical building complex in China; the nearby Kong Family Mansion is where the direct descendants of Confucius lived until 1937; and the Cemetery of Confucius is where you can discover the grave of the philosopher himself and thousands of his descendants.

A short distance from Qufu is the sacred Mt Tai (Taishan). Rising abruptly from the surrounding plain, the forested mountain has been a pilgrimage site for thousands of years and is known as one of the Five Great Mountains of China, underlining its importance in Chinese history. This important centre for Buddhism and Taoism has many ancient temples and was visited by Confucius. The classic route up the mountain involves an ascent of over 6,000 steps to the summit; however the views can be equally enjoyed on a ride to the top by cable car.



Holy Mt Tai has 22 temples



The ancient Longmen Grottoes near Luoyang

Henan

Henan Province is often referred to as the cradle of civilization in China. It has evidence of some of the earliest settlements in the country and was home to some of its first dynasties.

The ancient city of Luoyang has a history stretching back over 4,000 years. Here, the Longmen Grottoes are one of the most important Buddhist sites in China where there are over 100,000 Buddhist statues carved into limestone cliffs. Also visit White Horse Temple, the first Buddhist temple in China, where the picturesque grounds are a tranquil place for reflection.

Kaifeng is another ancient capital which reached its peak in the 11th century and was possibly the largest city in the world at that time. Many historical sites remain including the Iron Pagoda, Dragon Pavilion and several ancient temples.

The most well-known monastery in Henan Province is at Shaolin, home of the famous Kung-Fu Monks. Founded in the 5th century the monastery has many traditional temples as well as the Pagoda Forest dating back to the Tang Dynasty. Shaolin Monastery has long been associated with martial arts and you can witness a demonstration of the monks' skills.

Zhangjiajie

Zhangjiajie (also known as Wulingyuan) is a scenic area famous for its towering pinnacles and the region is said to be the inspiration for the mountains of Pandora in the film Avatar. The summit of the mountain is easily accessible by cable car or the impressive Bailong Elevator, which at 330 metres high claims to be the tallest outdoor elevator in the world. Either way the views of the rocky peaks, lush forests and swirling mist will astound you. Enjoy a mountain walk to make the most of the striking scenery. For the more

adventurous, take a path around an exposed cliff-face for an eagle's-eye view of the surrounding landscape. On one section, the glass-bottomed Skywalk clings precariously to the sheer rock 1,430 metres above the valley floor and is definitely not for the faint-hearted! For a more relaxing experience enjoy a boat ride across the tranquil waters of Baofeng Lake. Nestled between the peaks, this small lake perfectly captures the beauty of the area. The pristine surroundings and verdant trees give the lake a fairy-tale atmosphere.



Woman in colourful traditional dress, Zhangjiajie



Bright lights of Hong Kong Island

Hong Kong & Macau

East and west, old and new

Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city of contrasts where East meets West. Here you can dine at great restaurants, enjoy a vibrant nightlife and indulge in some shopping in the glitzy malls and bustling markets. But look a bit deeper and you will discover a more traditional way of life and some beautiful landscapes; or cross the Pearl River and visit charming Macau.



Junk boat in Victoria Harbour

Hong Kong Island

For a spectacular view over Hong Kong visit Victoria Peak, the highest mountain on the island. From the summit, look down on the skyscrapers of the business district and across Victoria Harbour to Kowloon. This is one of the most famous cityscapes in the world.

Visit Aberdeen on the opposite side of the island where you can ride on a sampan and explore the busy harbour. Also stop off at the famous Stanley Market to hunt for a bargain.

Lantau Island

Lantau can be reached by a ferry ride across Victoria Harbour. On the island you can visit the unique Tai O fishing village, where many homes are built on stilts, before heading up the winding road to Ngong Ping Plateau to see the Giant Buddha. Here you can visit the Giant Buddha Exhibition Hall and the Po Lin Monastery, where a traditional vegetarian meal is served.

End your day with a spectacular ride aboard the Ngong Ping cable car offering stunning views of the island.



The Giant Buddha looks out over Lantau Island



The verdant landscape of the New Territories

New Territories

The New Territories lie between the populous district of Kowloon and the border with mainland China. Here there is a surprising amount of natural beauty, where rolling green hills and woodland dominate the landscape. Enjoy the panorama from the lookout point on Tai Mo Shan, Hong Kong's highest peak.

Learn about Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist beliefs at the Yuen Yuen Institute, one of Hong Kong's most impressive monasteries, and visit Fanling Walled Village which is the ancestral home of a family clan. Also visit a bird sanctuary known for its pond herons and explore a traditional fishing village.

Macau

Macau, a Portuguese colony until 1999, is the oldest European settlement in the Far East and is most easily reached by hydrofoil across the Pearl River estuary. While in this UNESCO World Heritage City discover the historical sights of the ruins of the St. Paul Church and the A-Ma Temple. Also visit the Macau Museum and one of the casinos for which the city is famous. Macau can be visited on a day tour from Hong Kong or you can stay longer for further exploration.



A-Ma Temple is over 500 years old and is dedicated to seafarers and fishermen

An aerial photograph of a coastal area in Hong Kong. The image shows a steep, green hillside on the left with a dirt path winding down towards a small beach. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, with white waves crashing against the shore. In the distance, a large island with a few buildings is visible. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall scene is a beautiful coastal landscape.

Hiking Hong Kong

For a surprising contrast to the hustle and bustle of the city, take a hike on the Dragon's Back Trail. On this moderate trek of about 3 miles you will explore beautiful countryside as you walk past bamboo groves, through woodland and on to open hills. As you hike along the ridge you can enjoy a breath-taking panorama of the coastline and distant islands.

Selected Hotels

Park Hotel ★★★★★

The Park Hotel is conveniently located in Kowloon's entertainment district of Tsim Sha Tsui. The generously sized rooms have recently been revitalised to incorporate a contemporary concept coupled with modern amenities to ensure a comfortable stay. Hotel facilities include the Marigold Bar and the Park Café which offers a wide variety of cuisine.

Harbour Grand Kowloon

★★★★★

The Harbour Grand Kowloon has a stunning waterfront location in the Hung Hom district of Kowloon. It is a private retreat offering luxurious accommodation and harbour views. The hotel features a spectacular roof-top pool with an amazing panorama, a soothing spa, a modern fitness centre and diverse dining options.

Harbour Grand Hong Kong

★★★★★

The Harbour Grand Hong Kong is located in the Causeway Bay area of Hong Kong Island with all of the luxury rooms enjoying unobstructed views of Victoria Harbour. The hotel's facilities include an outdoor heated pool with views across to Kowloon, a fitness centre and an indulgent spa and massage centre.

InterContinental Grand Stanford ★★★★★

InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong is centrally located in the vibrant district of Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon. It offers travellers to Hong Kong the highest levels of service in a friendly, yet elegant five-star hotel environment. Hotel facilities include a roof-top pool, spa treatments and a fitness room.

Peninsula Hong Kong

INSPIRED

The Peninsula Hong Kong has long been regarded as one of the finest hotels in the world and the new room designs redefine classic luxury with modern comfort. For relaxation visit the luxury spa or take a dip in the magnificent 18m Roman-style swimming pool. Enjoy a range of dining options including a classic French restaurant and afternoon tea in the lobby.

The Upper House INSPIRED

The Upper House is a boutique hotel located on Hong Kong Island with easy access to entertainment, shopping and the subway. The guestrooms are quiet and spacious urban retreats that have panoramic views of the harbour or Victoria Peak.

Recommendations

Essential Hong Kong

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Hong Kong.
- DAY 2:** Take a half-day orientation tour of Hong Kong Island and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.
- DAY 3:** Options today include exploring Lantau Island, the New Territories or Macau. Alternatively take a hike on the Dragon's Back Trail.
- DAY 4:** Depart Hong Kong for your next destination.

Hong Kong & Macau

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Hong Kong.
- DAY 2:** Take a half-day orientation tour of Hong Kong Island and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.
- DAY 3:** Travel to Macau by hydrofoil and enjoy the day discovering the city.
- DAY 4:** A day at leisure in Macau for your own exploration.
- DAY 5:** Depart Macau by hydrofoil either back to Hong Kong city or directly to the airport.

Options

To really discover Hong Kong we recommend staying for a few extra days to experience more of this surprisingly diverse city. Allow enough time to fit in Lantau, the New Territories and a visit to Macau. Many other experiences are also available and include a guided shopping tour, a cooking class and an exploration of the back streets of Kowloon.

To maximise customer choice, transfers and most touring options in Hong Kong are available either on a private basis or joining with a group.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



The magnificent Roman-style pool at the Peninsula Hong Kong



Southeast Asia

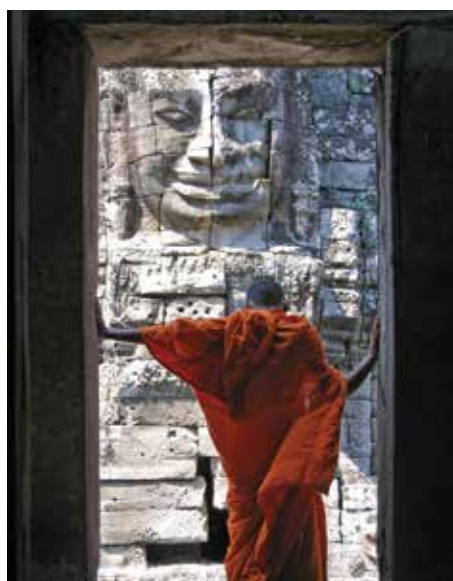




The ornate Royal Palace Museum in Luang Prabang

Discover Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has an enormous amount to offer from history and culture to adventure and relaxation. Walk in the steps of ancient civilizations, meet ethnic minority groups, enjoy picturesque scenery and unwind at a beautiful beach resort. With such diversity there is something for everyone and each visit to this fascinating region brings new discoveries.



Monk at the Bayon Temple, Angkor

When to Travel

The best time to visit Southeast Asia is generally from October to March when the weather is warm and relatively dry, although it can be cold in the mountains of the north. From April to June temperatures and humidity start to increase, while in high summer from July to September it may be very hot and wet.

There are also local weather patterns which interact with the general regional climate, so please call one of our specialists for advice.

Fascinating History

Southeast Asia has a long and varied history with numerous civilizations having left their mark on the region. The Khmer civilization constructed the amazing Temples of Angkor in Cambodia which is one of the most extensive and well preserved historical sites anywhere in the world. Another spectacular array of temples is at the Bagan Plains in Burma where over two thousand buildings still survive.

Evidence of a flourishing history is everywhere: from the trading port of Hoi An to the imperial capital of Hué in Vietnam; and at the culturally significant cities of Chiang Mai in Thailand and Mandalay in Burma. However some aspects of modern history have not been kind to the region and you may discover more about this in Saigon and Phnom Penh.

■ Temples of Angkor

■ Chiang Mai

■ Mandalay

■ Bagan

■ Hué

■ Hoi An

Beautiful Scenery

The most picturesque landscape in the region is possibly Halong Bay where limestone karst hills rise from the water forming around two thousand separate islands. Also in northern Vietnam is Sapa where the highest mountains in the country and the surrounding rice terraces provide stunning vistas. Spectacular mountain views can also be found in northern Thailand around Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai.

Laos has some alluring scenery especially the Kuang Si Falls and Mekong River near Luang Prabang, which is itself one of the most beautiful towns in Southeast Asia. In the south of the country visit the pretty area of Four Thousand Islands. Also discover Borneo with its rainforests, mountains and abundant wildlife.

■ Northern Thailand

■ Luang Prabang

■ Four Thousand Islands

■ Halong Bay

■ Sapa

■ Borneo

Local Culture

One of the best ways to really understand a country is to meet and interact with the people. A great way to do this is to visit the hill tribes at Sapa in northern Vietnam or Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai in northern Thailand. Here you can encounter the H'Mong, Dao and Akha minority groups. Walk through the small villages to see the local people in their traditional costumes and meet them at home and at work.

Another good place to observe local life is in the Mekong Delta where much of Vietnam's local produce is grown. See people working in the fields and trading in the markets. For a taste of a more religious way of life visit the monks in Luang Prabang or Mandalay; and for tribal culture visit ethnically diverse Borneo.

■ Thai Hilltribes

■ Mekong Delta

■ Luang Prabang

■ Sapa

■ Borneo

■ Mandalay



Discover Halong Bay on a relaxing junk cruise

Time to Relax

There are plenty of opportunities for relaxation in Southeast Asia. Thailand is rightly famous for its popular beach resorts including Ko Samui, Phuket and Cha'am but there are many other opportunities across the region. Vietnam is one of our favourites with beautiful sandy beaches at Mui Né and Nha Trang, Langkawi in Malaysia is a popular choice and for somewhere a bit different try the seaside resort of Sihanoukville in Cambodia.

A great way to take it easy while travelling is aboard a Pandaw River Cruise on the Mekong or Irrawaddy rivers. These luxury ships are replicas of colonial steamers and combine character with comfort for relaxation, although the itineraries provide plenty of opportunity for adventure as well. Also consider one or two nights aboard a junk boat in beautiful Halong Bay.

■ Beautiful Beaches

■ Pandaw River Cruise

■ Halong Bay Junk Cruise



Buying and Selling in the Old Quarter of Hanoi

Hanoi & Northern Vietnam

History, Hill Tribes and Halong Bay

Northern Vietnam is a region of contrasts from the hustle and bustle of historical Hanoi to the Hill Tribes of Sapa and the beauty of Halong Bay. Lose yourself in the buzz of Hanoi's Old Quarter, walk through terraced rice fields and enjoy spectacular scenery from a traditional junk boat. Spend a week here and delight in the diversity.



The quieter side of Hanoi at Hoan Kiem Lake

Hanoi

Hanoi is the capital city of Vietnam with a history dating back 1,000 years. The Old Quarter is a maze of tiny streets originally named for the traders that occupied them and today it remains a hive of activity. Here you can find temples, traditional homes and local shops that seem to sell anything and everything. There are also many restaurants and bars, and a night market at weekends, making it a great place to visit in the evening. Immersing yourself in the vibrancy of the Old Quarter may well be your most enduring memory of the city.

There are many fascinating sights to visit in Hanoi. Of particular historical importance is the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's oldest university and a temple dedicated to Confucius; and One Pillar Pagoda, a tiny temple built atop a single stone column.

To understand more about the recent history of Vietnam visit Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum to see the preserved body of the national hero and also see the traditional Stilt House where Ho Chi Minh lived and worked.

If you want to escape the buzz of the city, we recommend a stroll by Hoan Kiem Lake, a picturesque oasis right in the centre of Hanoi.



Visit Sapa and meet the H'Mong people

Sapa

Sapa is a highland district in northern Vietnam, close to the border with China and is home to the H'Mong and Dao minority groups. It is a small and pretty town nestled between the hills with French colonial buildings and a vibrant market. Sapa is best reached by the overnight train which follows the Red River valley from Hanoi. We recommend visiting in spring and autumn as the winter months can be cold and the summer may be wet.

Visiting the minority villages is the best way to truly experience the region. Meet the local people who still wear traditional costumes, see their homes built on stilts and observe life in the rice fields. Since the geography is mountainous, the fields are cut as steps into the slopes forming the terraces for which the region is famous. Walking through this steep terrain does require a reasonable level of fitness but the effort is worthwhile to enjoy the spectacular views.



Explore the rice terraces in Sapa



Halong Bay

Halong Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and possibly the most beautiful area in Vietnam. It features limestone karst hills that rise from the water forming around two thousand separate islands. The best way to see the bay is on board a traditional junk boat. Itineraries will vary but may include a visit to a local fishing village, exploring one of the many island caves and stopping at a beautiful beach for a swim.

To fully experience Halong Bay, take a one or two night junk boat cruise. Not only does this give more time to explore the bay but you can also enjoy the scenery at its most beautiful at sunset and sunrise.

Selected Hotels

Flower Garden Hotel ★★★★★

The Flower Garden Hotel is located close to the Old Quarter of Hanoi and offers comfortable rooms with modern facilities. The hotel features a piano café and a rooftop restaurant with views over the city. For relaxation visit the Orchid Spa for sauna, Jacuzzi and oriental massage treatments.

Hotel De L'Opera ★★★★★

In the centre of the city, this hotel is close to Hanoi's Opera House, the Old Quarter and Hoan Kiem Lake, and features colonial accents with theatrical interior design. The rooms are a sanctuary of comfort with hand-picked luxurious amenities and 21st Century technology. The restaurants offer both fine dining and casual options.

Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi **INSPIRED**

The Metropole is an award-winning French colonial-style property located in the heart of Hanoi with elegant rooms providing classic luxury. The hotel offers a choice of three restaurants, three bars, a heated swimming pool, health club and the refined Le Spa du Metropole.

Victoria Sapa Resort ★★★★★

The Victoria Sapa Resort is built in the style of a traditional mountain chalet with charming rooms featuring wooden accents and a private terrace. Resort facilities include an indoor swimming pool and spa. Victoria also operates exclusive carriages on the overnight train to Sapa.

Halong Violet Junk **INSPIRED**

The Halong Violet is a five star junk boat luxuriously fitted out in 1930s Indochine style. It features a boutique dining room, library and lounge, spa and gym, as well as six individually themed cabins with marble bathrooms, Jacuzzi, and balcony. Activities on board include a Tai Chi class and a Vietnamese cooking demonstration.

Private junk boats are also available.

Recommendations

Essential Hanoi

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Hanoi.
- DAY 2:** Discover the historical sights of Hanoi including the Stilt House, One Pillar Pagoda, the Temple of Literature and Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (closed Sep-Dec). Also explore the Old Quarter, Ethnology Museum and Hoan Kiem Lake. Enjoy a Water Puppet show in the evening.
- DAY 3:** Depart Hanoi for your next destination.

Hanoi & Halong Bay

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Hanoi.
- DAY 2:** Discover the historical sights of Hanoi including the Stilt House, One Pillar Pagoda, the Temple of Literature and Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (closed Sep-Dec). Also explore the Old Quarter, Ethnology Museum and Hoan Kiem Lake. Enjoy a Water Puppet show in the evening.
- DAY 3:** Transfer by road to Halong Bay and board your traditional Junk Boat. Cruise on Halong Bay and stay overnight on board.
- DAY 4:** Cruise around the islands before transferring back to Hanoi.
- DAY 5:** Depart Hanoi for your next destination.

Hill Tribes of Sapa

- DAY 1:** Transfer from your Hanoi hotel to the railway station and board your overnight train to Lao Cai.
- DAY 2:** Arrive in Lao Cai and start your discovery of Sapa. Walk through two minority villages and visit Sapa market.
- DAY 3:** Visit a minority village at the foot of Fansipan mountain and explore the rice terraces.
- DAY 4:** Morning at leisure in Sapa followed by further exploration of the region. Transfer to the railway station for your overnight train to Hanoi.
- DAY 5:** Arrive in Hanoi and transfer to your hotel.

Options

If you wish to see some of the quieter and more remote areas of Halong Bay, we recommend a two night cruise. For those with time limitations it is possible to take a short cruise returning to Hanoi the same day.

Other possibilities are to learn about the local cuisine in a cooking class or visit a traditional village in the countryside.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



There are many junk boat options when visiting Halong Bay



The French colonial architecture of Saigon's City Hall

Saigon & Southern Vietnam

Vibrant Vietnam and moving memories

The southern region of Vietnam is the most vibrant in the country, from the lively city of Saigon to the farming activity of the Mekong Delta. There are poignant memories too with the reminders of the American War in Vietnam. But it's also a great place to relax with the welcoming sandy beaches of Mui Né.



Colourful Ben Thanh market in the heart of Saigon

Saigon

Saigon, also known as Ho Chi Minh City, is the commercial hub of Vietnam and the country's largest metropolis. It was the capital of French Indochina during the late 19th century and much colonial architecture can still be seen today. Examples include the City Hall and Notre Dame Cathedral. Also visit Ben Thanh, Saigon's largest market, to watch the local traders and shop for handicrafts, textiles and souvenirs.

The history of Saigon is inextricably linked with the American War in Vietnam and there are many places where you can learn more

about these events. See the Reunification Palace where North Vietnamese troops signalled the end of the war when they stormed the building; and visit the War Remnants Museum which has many displays, personal accounts and images portraying the war from the Vietnamese perspective. It is a very moving experience, but be aware that some exhibits are graphic in nature.

Also see the Cu Chi Tunnels in the company of a war veteran who lived in them and discover how they were used as living quarters by the Vietnamese fighters.



Temple in Saigon



Explore the small waterways of the Mekong Delta

Mekong Delta

The Mekong Delta is known as the rice-basket of Vietnam as it is one of the most important agricultural regions in the country. As well as rice, the local produce includes fruit, vegetables, coconuts and flowers. On a visit to the delta you can really experience the Vietnamese way of life and there is no better way to do this than to take a boat on the network of waterways. Mingle with the local people at a floating market as your boat weaves its way between the traders and shoppers.

Another great way to see the Mekong Delta is on a Pandaw River Cruise. See page 122 for the full itinerary.

Mui Né

Mui Né is a delightful resort about four hours' drive from Saigon. The ride is worth it to enjoy a few days of relaxation on the white sandy beaches at the end of your Vietnam holiday.

While here you may explore the fishing harbour, local market and the large orange sand dunes. You can also take a cooking class or play a round of golf.



Mui Né has a picturesque harbour as well as delightful beaches

Tay Ninh

The town of Tay Ninh, around 60 miles from Saigon, is home to the unique Cao Dai religion and their colourful temple. Watch the midday service from a balcony above the congregation and listen to the musicians and choir that accompany the hymns and prayers.



Selected Hotels

Grand Silverland Hotel & Spa

★★★★

The Grand Silverland is a new hotel in the centre of Saigon with comfortable, modern rooms and professional service. Facilities include the relaxing KL Spa, a rooftop pool, a fitness centre and mini-golf. The Roof Garden Restaurant offers a blend of Western and Asian cuisine.

Caravelle Hotel

★★★★★

The Caravelle is a landmark hotel in the heart of Saigon with a nostalgic history. It has been fully transformed into a modern, chic and luxurious property offering spacious and comfortable rooms for discerning guests. Facilities include the Kara Salon & Spa, a relaxing outdoor pool and a fitness centre. There are fine dining options as well as a rooftop bar.

Park Hyatt Saigon

INSPIRED

The Park Hyatt is a centrally located grand boutique property and the leading hotel in the city. The rooms redefine urban luxury, blending sophisticated design and décor with the latest modern comforts. The hotel features world-class restaurants and bars as well as an outdoor pool, fitness centre and the Xuan Spa, a tranquil urban retreat.

Mia Resort Mui Né

★★★★★

The Mia Resort is a small and exclusive boutique resort located on a white sand beach in the centre of Mui Né. The rooms combine the best of traditional Vietnamese style with contemporary western living and are set in lush tropical gardens. There is also a beautiful mosaic swimming pool right on the sea front.

Princess D'Annam Resort & Spa

INSPIRED

The Princess D'Annam Resort & Spa is the first all-villa luxury boutique resort in Vietnam and is set on the secluded and pristine Ke Ga Bay. The resort mixes modernist sensibility and post-colonial ambience and features four swimming pools, two restaurants, and a sumptuous spa complex.

Pandaw Cruise Ship

INSPIRED

Sail up the Mekong in a replica of a colonial river steamer. Pandaw Cruises combine a real adventure experience with incredible comfort, fine dining, cocktails and choice wines, not to mention extraordinary levels of service. The charm, craftsmanship and character of the vessel make this an inspired choice.

Recommendations

Saigon & Mekong Delta

DAY 1: Arrive in Saigon.

DAY 2: A half day tour of the city including the Central Post Office, Notre Dame Cathedral, Reunification Palace and War Remnants Museum. Enjoy free time at Ben Thanh Market.

DAY 3: A day tour to the Mekong Delta where you will take a boat on the waterways and visit the local village.

DAY 4: Explore the Cu Chi Tunnels and visit Tay Ninh to see a service at the Cao Dai temple.

DAY 5: Depart Saigon for your next destination.

Mekong Delta Escape

DAY 1: Transfer from your Saigon hotel to Ben Tre where you will take a boat on the waterways and visit the local villages. Continue by road to Can Tho.

DAY 2: Explore the Cai Rang floating market and visit a historical residence with Vietnamese and French architecture. Take a short walk past flower farms, rice fields and fruit gardens.

DAY 3: Return to Saigon.

Mui Né Beach Stay

DAY 1: Transfer by road from Saigon to Mui Né.

DAYS 2-4: The time is your own to relax on the beach or to arrange activities locally. The number of days you stay here can be varied to suit your available time.

DAY 5: Transfer by road to Saigon.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



A beach stay at Mui Né is a great way to end a Vietnam holiday



The colourful harbour in Hoi An

Central Vietnam

Historical Hoi An and imperial Huế

The central region of Vietnam is a laid-back part of the country which allows for some relaxation to be mixed in with an exploration of the historical heart of the country. No visit should miss delightful Hoi An, a trading port with a fascinating past and a charming character. It is one of our favourite places in Southeast Asia.



Take a gentle stroll around Hoi An and make your own discoveries

Hoi An

On any Vietnam holiday Hoi An is a great place to take it easy for a day or two between the energetic cities of Hanoi and Saigon. This historical town was a busy trading port between the 15th and 19th centuries and is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The old town is small enough to explore on foot and you will discover many important sights that reflect Hoi An's multinational nature. These include a traditional merchant's home, the Japanese covered bridge, a Chinese temple and the local market. However a lot of the fun of being in Hoi An is just to stroll around the pretty streets or visit the sandy beach.

Huế

The city of Huế was the imperial capital of the Nguyen Dynasty in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Their seat of power was the citadel which contains a Forbidden City modelled on the one in Beijing. The citadel sits on the banks of the Perfume River which is said to get its name from the fragrant flowers that fall into the water.

Huế also has many other historical sights including the tombs of the emperors Tu Duc and Khai Dinh, as well as Thien Mu Pagoda, said to be the tallest in Vietnam.



Khai Dinh Royal Tombs in Huế

Selected Hotels

Vinh Hung Riverside Resort & Spa ★★☆☆

The Vinh Hung Resort is located on the banks of the Thu Bon River and exudes local charm. It is set in secluded gardens and is just a five minute walk from the Old Town of Hoi An. The hotel features two swimming pools, spa treatments and a beauty salon.

Life Heritage Resort Hoi An ★★☆☆

Located along the Thu Bon River, the Life Heritage Resort is a short stroll from the Old Town. Featuring a mix of local and colonial styles, the resort offers spacious accommodation with a unique ambience. Relax in the swimming pool and at the tranquil spa.

The Nam Hai **INSPIRED**

The Nam Hai is a stunning all-villa resort located on pristine Hoi An Beach. This award-winning property provides impeccable service amid lush landscaping and features a serene spa, gourmet cuisine and a palm-fringed swimming pool.

Recommendations

Heart of Vietnam

- DAY 1:** Arrive at Danang airport and transfer to Hoi An stopping at Marble Mountains.
- DAY 2:** Walking tour of Hoi An with the afternoon at leisure.
- DAY 3:** A day for your own exploration of Hoi An and relaxation.
- DAY 4:** Transfer by road to Huế. Visit the Royal Tombs of Tu Duc and Khai Dinh.
- DAY 5:** Take a cyclo tour to the Imperial Citadel and visit Thien Mu Pagoda. Take a boat ride along the Perfume River and explore Dong Ba Market.
- DAY 6:** Depart Huế for your next destination.

Options

Day tours from Hoi An include My Lai, the location of the infamous massacre during the Vietnam War and My Son, the ancient Cham temples that are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

For relaxation spend some extra time enjoying the beaches of Hoi An or visit the seaside resort town of Nha Trang.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Beaches of Nha Trang

Nha Trang is a seaside town popular for its pristine beaches. It is a well-developed resort offering a variety of accommodation, dining and entertainment options.

While here you can go snorkelling, scuba diving or take a boat ride around the nearby islands. Nha Trang is a short flight from Saigon or Danang (Hoi An).



Pristine beaches of Nha Trang



Temples of Angkor

Cambodia

Captivating temples
and hidden charms

Angkor Wat is why most people visit Cambodia and with good reason. This temple and the other historical buildings at the Angkor complex represent some of the finest examples of ancient architecture anywhere in the world. But also spend time discovering other aspects of the country from the moving history of Phnom Penh to local life in Battambang.



The Bayon Temple has faces gazing in all four directions



See Khmer art in the National Museum

Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh is the capital city of Cambodia. It is situated on the banks of the Mekong River and has a mixture of traditional and French colonial architecture.

Visit the Royal Palace which is the residence of the King of Cambodia and in the grounds see the Silver Pagoda. This houses many national treasures including the Emerald Buddha, a life-sized statue decorated with nearly ten thousand diamonds. Also explore the National Museum which displays a large collection of Khmer art.

Cambodia suffered a cruel episode in the late 1970s at the hands of the Khmer Rouge when Pol Pot's forces killed and tortured many of his enemies. One of the schools in Phnom Penh was turned into the S-21 prison camp which has now become the Tuol Sleng Genocide museum.

There are many graphic displays but visiting the museum is a deeply moving experience. From S-21 many of the prisoners were marched to the notorious Killing Fields which you may visit just outside the city.

Battambang

The charming town of Battambang has some of the best preserved French colonial architecture in the country and there are also a number of temples in the area. Visit Phnom Banan and climb the hill to reach the 12th-century Prasat Bannon Temple. At the top enjoy the view over the surrounding plains. Also visit La Maison de Coco, an organisation that assists underprivileged local families.

Battambang can be visited on the way between Phnom Penh and Angkor for a chance to experience local life in Cambodia. During the high water season (August – February) you can take a speedboat down the Stoeng Sangke River and across Tonle Sap to Siem Reap.



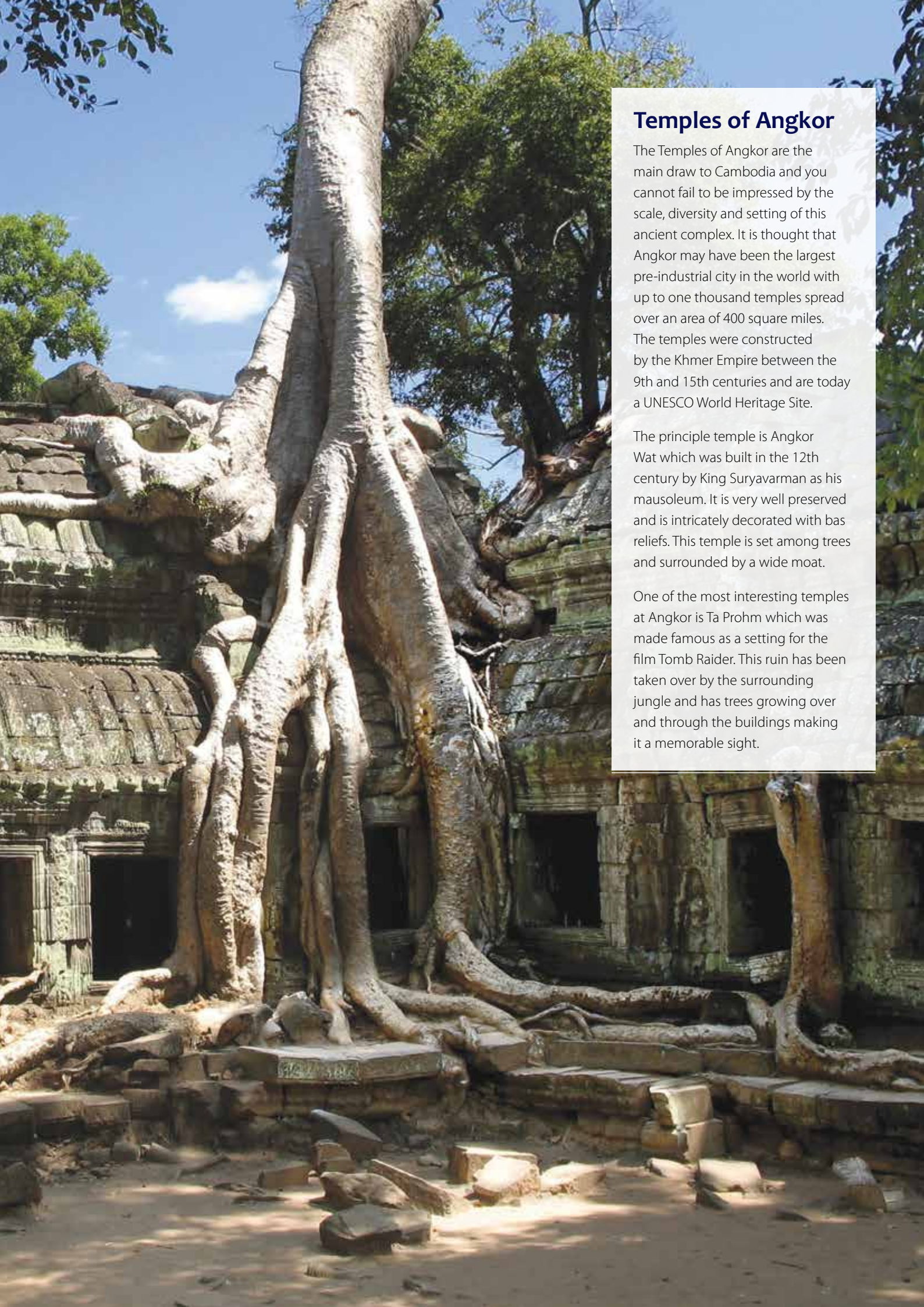
The local way of life on Tonle Sap near Battambang

Sihanoukville

With white sand and a laid-back atmosphere, Sihanoukville is a beautiful yet relatively undiscovered seaside destination. Relax on the beaches, enjoy the local cuisine or take a trip to the nearby tropical islands. Snorkelling, scuba diving and fishing are also available. Along the seashore, restaurants and bars provide fun into the night. Sihanoukville is situated on the Gulf of Thailand, 3-4 hours from Phnom Penh by road.



The sun sets on another lazy day in Sihanoukville



Temples of Angkor

The Temples of Angkor are the main draw to Cambodia and you cannot fail to be impressed by the scale, diversity and setting of this ancient complex. It is thought that Angkor may have been the largest pre-industrial city in the world with up to one thousand temples spread over an area of 400 square miles. The temples were constructed by the Khmer Empire between the 9th and 15th centuries and are today a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The principle temple is Angkor Wat which was built in the 12th century by King Suryavarman as his mausoleum. It is very well preserved and is intricately decorated with bas reliefs. This temple is set among trees and surrounded by a wide moat.

One of the most interesting temples at Angkor is Ta Prohm which was made famous as a setting for the film Tomb Raider. This ruin has been taken over by the surrounding jungle and has trees growing over and through the buildings making it a memorable sight.

Selected Hotels

Tara Angkor Hotel ★★★★★

The Tara Angkor is a stylish property with elegant rooms and modern facilities. The hotel boasts two restaurants, a lobby bar, a swimming pool, Jacuzzi, fitness room and a sauna. For relaxation visit the Tara Spa which offers a full range of holistic treatments.

Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor INSPIRED

Spread over 15 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor exudes old-world Cambodian grandeur infused with the best of modern comforts. Facilities include the award-winning Raffles Spa, a 35 metre pool and an array of fine dining choices.

Sunway Hotel Phnom Penh ★★★★★

The Sunway Hotel offers comfortable and spacious rooms with modern conveniences. The hotel features a spa, beauty salon and fitness centre and the Sun Café Restaurant provides a mix of local and international cuisine.

Raffles Hotel Le Royal INSPIRED

Raffles sets the benchmark for refined enchantment in Phnom Penh. The epitome of sophistication, this luxurious hotel's French colonial elegance is complemented by modern comforts. Facilities include Raffles Spa, a swimming pool and fine dining.

Pandaw Cruise Ship INSPIRED

Sail up the Mekong in a replica of a colonial river steamer. Pandaw Cruises combine a real adventure experience with incredible comfort, fine dining, cocktails and choice wines, not to mention extraordinary levels of service. The charm, craftsmanship and character of the vessel make this an inspired choice.

Recommendations

Classic Cambodia

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Phnom Penh.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng Museum or have free time to explore the local markets. See the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda. Enjoy a sunset cruise on the Mekong River.
- DAY 3:** Fly to Siem Reap and explore Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat.
- DAY 4:** Take a boat to visit a floating village (high water season) or visit the National Silk Centre to learn about silk production (low water season). Visit the temples of Banteay Srei and Banteay Samre.
- DAY 5:** Explore more of the Angkor complex including Ta Prohm. Depart Siem Reap for your next destination.

Mekong Cruise

Take a 7 night cruise on the Mekong River from Saigon in Vietnam to Kampong Cham in Cambodia with Pandaw Cruises. Explore the Mekong Delta and Phnom Penh and transfer to Siem Reap. Add Saigon and the Temples of Angkor to complete your holiday. See page 122 for the full itinerary.

Temples in Depth

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Siem Reap. If time permits visit some of the Rolous group of temples.
- DAY 2:** Watch sunrise over Angkor Wat. Visit Angkor Thom, the Bayon and Ta Prohm. Return to Angkor Wat for sunset.
- DAY 3:** Take a boat to visit a floating village (high water season) or visit the National Silk Centre to learn about silk production (low water season). Explore the Small Circuit of Temples.
- DAY 4:** Explore Banteay Srei and the Grand Circuit of Temples. Depart Siem Reap for your next destination.

A 2 night itinerary is also available

Options

Stop for two nights in Battambang as you make your way by road from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap. Please ask about beach stay options in Sihanoukville.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Local Cambodian produce at a market in Phnom Penh



Take part in a traditional dawn alms ritual in Luang Prabang

Laos

A beautiful land
of Buddhism

Visit Laos to discover a relaxed country with traditional values. Buddhism is still a part of everyday life here as evidenced by the numerous temples and active monks. It is also a land of beauty with verdant hills, sparkling waterfalls, and the meandering Mekong River which runs the entire length of the country.



Wat Xieng Thong is one of many historical temples in Luang Prabang

Luang Prabang

Luang Prabang is our personal highlight of Laos. Situated on the banks of the Mekong River this relaxed town has countless temples and is thronging with monks wearing saffron and orange robes. Celebrate tradition as you join in the dawn alms ritual.

There is also much to experience outside of the town. A cruise along the Mekong will take you to Pak Ou Caves where there are hundreds of miniature Buddhist statues. Visit the beautiful Kuang Si Falls where the water cascades down the forested hillside and tumbles through turquoise pools. And see the traditional way of life as you explore the H'Mong village of Ban Na Ouane.

Four Thousand Islands

Four Thousand Islands (Si Phan Don) is an area of the Mekong River in southern Laos. Stay on the largest island, Don Khong, and explore the river by boat. Discover more of this undeveloped part of the country as you walk through the local villages on the way to the Laphi Waterfalls.

Vientiane

Vientiane is the capital city of Laos with much of historical importance. Pha That Luang is a large stupa with a golden spire and Wat Si Saket is an important Buddhist Temple built 200 years ago. The more recent Patuxai Victory Monument celebrates independence from the French.



The beautiful Kuang Si Falls

Selected Hotels

Maison Souvannaphoum Hotel ★★★★★

This delightful hotel in Luang Prabang is the former residence of Prince Souvannaphoum. The rooms combine colonial architecture with contemporary décor and the hotel staff provides impeccable service. Relax in the pool or at the Angsana Spa which is set amid the picturesque garden.

Green Park Boutique Hotel ★★★★★

The Green Park in Vientiane blends the contemporary architecture of Laos with elegant interiors to create a stylish and relaxing hotel. Rooms are spacious and classically furnished with a private balcony or terrace. Hotel facilities include the Champa Lao Spa, a fitness room and a swimming pool.

Pon Arena Hotel ★★★★★

The Pon Arena is a new hotel constructed in a traditional style on Don Khong Island. The hotel is located on the waterfront and you can enjoy dinner at the terrace restaurant overlooking the Mekong. Hotel facilities are limited but the rooms are comfortable and the welcome is warm.

Recommendations

Laos Explorer

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Vientiane. Visit Wat Si Saket, Pha That Luang Stupa and the Patuxai Victory Monument.
- DAY 2:** Fly to Pakse and take a boat on the Mekong River to Champassak. Visit Wat Phu, take an elephant ride and continue by road to Don Khong.
- DAY 3:** Take a boat around Four Thousand Islands and visit Laphi Falls. Return to Pakse.
- DAY 4:** Fly to Luang Prabang and visit the beautiful temples. View the town from Phousi Hill.
- DAY 5:** Take part in a dawn alms ritual with the local monks and enjoy a boat ride on the Mekong to Pak Ou Caves. Enjoy a Ramayana performance in the evening.
- DAY 6:** Visit Ban Na Ouane village and Kuang Si Falls where you can walk in the forest or swim in one of the clear pools.
- DAY 7:** Depart Luang Prabang.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Plain of Jars

One of the strangest places in Southeast Asia is the Plain of Jars. Scattered around the plateau near to Phonsavan are numerous sites where large stone jars between one and three metres in height have been mysteriously located. The purpose of the jars is not known for sure but they may have been part of ancient burial practices. The Plain of Jars can be accessed by a short flight from Luang Prabang or Vientiane. We recommend a two night stay.



The mysterious Plain of Jars



Crossing the U Bein Bridge

Burma

A land of temples
and tradition

Burma (Myanmar) is a country steeped in mystique and rooted in tradition from the ancient city of Bagan to the cultural centre of Mandalay. Relatively unexplored by tourists, this magical country is now opening up, offering a unique opportunity to discover a culture that is a world away from our own.



Experience Buddhist culture in Burma

Mandalay

Mandalay is the second largest city in Burma and is located on the banks of the Irrawaddy River. The city is rich in culture and history and home to thousands of young monks at Mahaghandayon Monastery. In this area you will find the world's longest teak bridge, the U Bein Bridge, at Amarapura; the world's largest book at Kuthodaw Pagoda; and one of the world's largest bells at Mingun.

Irrawaddy Cruise

A relaxing way to see the sights of Burma is aboard a cruise ship on the Irrawaddy River. Orient Express offers a 7 night itinerary on the Road to Mandalay ship including the ancient city of Bagan. See page 122 for the full itinerary. Contact us for more options with Orient Express or Pandaw Cruises.

Rangoon

The former capital of Burma, Rangoon (Yangon) is a bustling city featuring colonial architecture and ancient pagodas. The magnificent golden Shwedagon Pagoda is a symbol of the city, glittering in the sunlight by day and illuminated at night. It is the most important pagoda in Burma and it is said that this religious site enshrines strands of Buddha's hair. Also visit Bogyoke Market with its colonial architecture and cobblestone streets. Here you can buy antiques, handicrafts and jewellery or spend time people-watching.



Shwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon

Selected Hotels

Mandalay Hill Resort Hotel

★★★★

Sitting at the foot of Mandalay Hill, this hotel is one of the best in the city with views over the Royal Palace and the hill. The guest rooms are spacious and beautifully furnished. Facilities include a pool, fitness room and the Mandalay Spa which is nestled in the large tropical garden.

The Governor's Residence

★★★★★

A romantic colonial mansion dating from the 1920s, The Governor's Residence in Rangoon conjures up a bygone era while offering every modern pleasure. Enjoy a dip in the fan-shaped swimming pool or relax with a Burmese spa treatment. Set in a verdant garden, the hotel is truly magical.

Road to Mandalay

INSPIRED

The Road to Mandalay cruise ship accesses the sights and sounds of Burma in Orient-Express style and luxury. The spacious en suite cabins are fully air-conditioned and beautifully furnished. The restaurant offers a wide range of cuisine and the ship also features a small pool and fitness room.

Recommendations

Essential Rangoon

DAY 1: Arrive in Rangoon.

DAY 2: A walking tour of the city to include Shwedagon Pagoda, Sule Pagoda, the Reclining Buddha, Bogyoke Market and the Night Market.

DAY 3: Depart Rangoon for your next destination.

Essential Mandalay

DAY 1: Arrive in Mandalay.

DAY 2: Visit U Bein Bridge, Mahaghandayon Monastery and Kuthodaw Pagoda. Drive to the top of Mandalay Hill to watch the sun set.

DAY 3: Take a boat ride to Mingun to see the Mantara Pagoda and the Mingun Bell. Travel to Ava and take a horse drawn carriage to visit Bagaya Monastery and the remains of the Royal Palace. Visit Sagaing Hill for a view of the numerous pagodas and monasteries below.

DAY 4: Depart Mandalay.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.

Bagan

Bagan is an ancient city that was built between the 9th and 13th centuries. At its peak the city was home to as many as 200,000 people and was an important study centre attracting students from many other countries. Originally ten thousand temples and pagodas were constructed and over two thousand still remain today. It's an amazing sight to view these magnificent buildings stretching across the Bagan Plain as far as the eye can see.



There are 2,000 temples on the Bagan Plain



Try your haggling skills at a floating market

Thailand

Hill tribes and
beautiful beaches

Thailand is one of the most popular countries of Southeast Asia with a lot to offer. Bangkok is one of the most vibrant cities in the region while Chiang Mai has a strong cultural background and Chiang Rai provides the opportunity to meet the hill tribe minority groups. And no one can ignore the amazing beaches which are the perfect way to end any holiday.



The opulent Grand Palace in Bangkok

Bangkok

Bangkok is Thailand's capital city and a modern metropolis full of life. The frenetic pace is often the first impression visitors have, yet beneath the hustle and bustle there are many hidden gems waiting to be discovered.

The Grand Palace is the former residence of the Thai monarchy. The complex of buildings, halls and pavilions have attractive white walls, orange and green roofs, and golden spires. Within the gardens and courtyards of the palace is Wat Phra Kaew which houses the Emerald Buddha.

Bangkok is famous for its floating markets where the canals are lined with boats piled high with fruit, vegetables and even souvenirs for tourists. Watch the hive of activity as traders try to make a sale and maybe learn some haggling techniques from the locals.

Another fascinating market is the Railway Track Market in Samut Songkram where the stalls are located right over the rails. As a train approaches the pedestrians scuttle off the tracks and the stallholders pull back their awnings to allow the locomotive to pass.



Local transport, Bangkok

Chiang Rai

Chiang Rai is the northern-most province of Thailand and is also one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the country. This area is abundant with natural scenery with lush rice terraces, tea plantations, hills scattered with orchids and the mountains of Burma and Laos visible in the distance. The region is known for the number of hill tribes that live in the mountain villages including the Yao and Akha minority groups. Visit Ban Lorch, an Akha village where you can meet the local people who wear traditional costume while weaving textiles and pounding rice. While in Chiang Rai also visit the unorthodox White Temple with its ornate carvings and unusual statues.



The beautiful but bizarre White Temple

Beach Stays

Thailand is famous for its beautiful palm-lined beaches which are among the best in the world. Enjoy this little piece of paradise while sitting on the soft sand and swimming in the crystal-clear waters.

Relaxing at Ko Samui, Phuket or Cha'am is a great way to finish a holiday in the region so try to fit in a few days of beach-time at one of these resorts before flying home.



Beautiful beaches and crystal-clear waters



Chiang Mai

Chiang Mai is the largest and culturally most significant city in northern Thailand. It has a rich history dating back to the 13th century and some of the ancient city wall and moat still exist today. There are numerous historical temples with the most important being Wat Doi Suthep which sits atop a hill overlooking the city. See the ornate buildings and pagodas dripping in gold and shimmering in the sunlight.

A popular excursion from Chiang Mai is to visit the Chiang Dao Elephant Camp. Here you can learn about the animals and watch how they are trained. While you are here you may take a ride on one of the elephants.

Selected Hotels

FuramaXclusive Sathorn

★★★★★

The FuramaXclusive is a boutique-style hotel in the Silom district of Bangkok. The guestrooms are stylishly furnished for a luxurious yet cosy feel and have extensive room facilities. The hotel features an outdoor swimming pool, gym and sauna.

Pullman Bangkok Hotel G

★★★★★

Located in the Silom district, the newly renovated Pullman Bangkok Hotel G provides style and class. The laid-back rooms have a contemporary design and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city skyline. This trendy hotel features a fitness centre, open-air pool and a spa.

Le Méridien Chiang Mai

★★★★★

Le Méridien Chiang Mai presents an intriguing blend of Le Méridien's European heritage and local Lanna Era style. The luxurious rooms have a clean, contemporary Asian design with glass and marble bathrooms. Hotel facilities include an outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre and a luxury spa.

Le Méridien Chiang Rai

★★★★★

Chic and stylish, Le Méridien promises an enchanting stay for any traveller or adventurer. The spacious and elegant rooms have a contemporary design and private balconies. Soothing treatments may be arranged at Parvati Spa or you can take a relaxing swim in the outdoor pool.

The Tongsai Bay **INSPIRED**

Hidden among 25 acres of breathtaking natural beauty on Ko Samui, The Tongsai Bay is renowned for its tranquillity and it claims to be the most romantic hotel on the island. Stay in a spacious beachfront suite with views out to sea and enjoy the secluded private beach, complementary water sports, Prana Spa and large outdoor pool.

Recommendations

Essential Bangkok

DAY 1: Arrive in Bangkok.

DAY 2: Visit Wat Pho and the Grand Palace. Take a long-tailed boat ride to the Pak Klong Talat flower market. In the evening enjoy a traditional dance performance and dinner.

DAY 3: Visit the Damneon Saduak floating market and the Railway Track Market in Samut Songkram. The afternoon is free for your own sightseeing.

DAY 4: Depart Bangkok for your next destination.

Chiang Mai & Elephant Camp

DAY 1: Arrive in Chiang Mai.

DAY 2: Visit Wat Doi Suthep, Wat Chedi Luang and a handicraft village followed by a traditional Thai noodle lunch. The afternoon is free for your own sightseeing.

DAY 3: Visit Chiang Dao Elephant Camp and take a gentle ride on a bamboo raft along the Ping River. In the evening enjoy a traditional song and dance performance with dinner.

DAY 4: Depart Chiang Mai for your next destination.

Northern Thailand & Hill Tribes

DAY 1: Arrive in Chiang Rai.

DAY 2: Visit the White Temple and the Hill Tribe Museum. The afternoon is at leisure.

DAY 3: Visit Mae Salong and Ban Lorch. See the tea plantations and meet the Yao and Akha hill tribes.

DAY 4: Travel to the H'Mong Hill Tribe Lodge where you will stay overnight. Walk, ride an elephant and travel by jeep as you pass forests, farms and villages along the way. Enjoy a local BBQ dinner and cultural show.

DAY 5: Visit Wat Doi Suthep and Wat Chedi Luang followed by a traditional Thai noodle lunch. The afternoon is at leisure in Chiang Mai.

DAY 6: Depart Chiang Mai.

Options

Contact us about the many choices for beach stays. Visit Kanchanaburi to see the infamous Bridge over the River Kwai.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Relax on the sandy beaches of Cha'am



See the orang-utans at Semenggoh Wildlife Centre

Malaysia & Borneo

Diverse culture and abundant wildlife

Malaysia is a culturally and geographically diverse nation combining Peninsula Malaysia, part of Borneo and numerous smaller islands. Kuala Lumpur is surprisingly cosmopolitan; Borneo offers a tropical mix of virgin rainforests, tribal cultures and abundant wildlife; while Langkawi is a great place to relax and enjoy the beaches.



The National Mosque of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur, usually referred to as simply KL, is a vibrant modern city and Malaysia's answer to Singapore. KL's development is best illustrated by the iconic Petronas Towers, one of the tallest buildings in the world, and still the highest twin towers.

The city is a rich mix of many cultures with Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnicity overlaid by colonial and Islamic influences. KL is the gateway to Malaysia and makes for a great stopover if you are flying via the city.



Kuala Lumpur skyline

Sarawak (Borneo)

Sarawak, in the north-western part of Borneo, has a very diverse ethnic mix including the native Iban people, Chinese and Malay as well as many other minority groups. To understand more about these cultures visit the Sarawak Cultural Village surrounded by forests and mountains to discover the arts, foods, music and dance of the region.

There are many opportunities to look for wildlife in Sarawak. Visit the Bako National Park where commonly spotted animals

include proboscis monkeys, silver leaf monkeys, long-tailed macaques, wild boars, monitor lizards and numerous species of birds.

Also visit Semenggoh Wildlife Centre, an orang-utan rehabilitation centre that trains orphaned orang-utans how to survive in the wild. Learn about the work here and take a walk to the feeding area to watch the orang-utans come down from the trees to eat.



Proboscis monkeys can be seen in both Sarawak and Sabah

Sabah (Borneo)

Sabah, in the north of Borneo, has a rich ecosystem dominated by the forested slopes of Mt Kinabalu. Visit Poring Hot Spring to observe wildlife from the canopy walkway 100 feet above the forest floor and take a dip in one of the soothing, hot mineral springs. In Kinabalu National Park explore the mountain gardens which are home to many species of orchids, pitcher plants, birds, insects and butterflies.

Visit the wetlands for a river safari past the mangrove forest and sago palms. This is home to proboscis monkeys that can be observed making their way to the riverbank as dusk falls. Also take a leisurely trip to Mantanani Kechil Island. Relax on the white sandy beach and keep a look out for dugongs, also known as sea-cows.



Explore the forested slopes of Mt Kinabalu



Langkawi

Langkawi is an archipelago in the Andaman Sea with beautiful beaches and turquoise waters. As well as relaxing here, you can also enjoy the local scenery and wildlife. Join a boat safari through Langkawi Geopark, a unique ecosystem where you can look out for monkeys, kingfishers, lizards and Langkawi Eagles.

Selected Hotels

Swiss Garden Hotel ★★★★★

Located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, the Swiss Garden Hotel has been recently refurbished and offers travellers a refined experience with modern amenities. Indulge in tropical spa treatments at the Samsara Spa, take a dip in the swimming pool or relax on the sundeck.

The Ritz-Carlton ★★★★★

The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur redefines the art of the luxury hotel experience in Asia. The spacious rooms have a modern elegance and feature marble bathrooms. The hotel facilities include a full service spa, sauna, Jacuzzi and a swimming pool resembling a tropical oasis.

Berjaya Langkawi ★★★★★

Cocooned within a rainforest sanctuary, this resort embraces boundless views of emerald waters and green-cushioned mountains. Rooms combine rustic Malay architecture with a modern touch. With inspired spa treatments you are filled with a sense of natural connection and harmonious retreat.

Hyatt Regency Kinabalu

★★★★★

The Hyatt Regency is a luxury hotel in the heart of Kota Kinabalu where the spacious rooms are exquisitely designed with sophisticated comfort in mind. The hotel features six restaurants, an outdoor swimming pool and the Avantang Spa.

Grand Margherita Hotel

★★★★★

The Grand Margherita Hotel in Kuching is situated by the riverfront and commands an unrivalled view of the picturesque Sarawak River and colourful Malay villages. The hotel features comfortable modern rooms, an outdoor swimming pool and a range of dining options.

Recommendations

Borneo Discovery

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Kuching in Sarawak and stay for four nights.
- DAY 2:** Visit Sarawak Cultural Village and enjoy a dance performance. Return to Kuching and see the ancient Chinese temple and the Sarawak Museum.
- DAY 3:** Visit Bako village and board a boat to Bako National Park to observe the wildlife.
- DAY 4:** Travel to Semenggoh Wildlife Centre to see the orang-utans.
- DAY 5:** Fly to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah and stay for four nights. Visit the night markets.
- DAY 6:** Visit the Mari Mari Cultural Village to learn about the history of Sabah. Continue to the wetlands and join a river safari with the chance to see proboscis monkeys.
- DAY 7:** Travel to Poring Hot Springs to watch for wildlife and take a dip in the hot springs. Continue to Kinabalu National Park and explore the mountain gardens.
- DAY 8:** Join a boat transfer to Mantanani Kechil Island and relax on the white sandy beach. Enjoy a BBQ lunch and keep an eye out for the native dugongs.
- DAY 9:** Depart Kota Kinabalu.

Essential KL

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Kuala Lumpur.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Kings Palace, the National Museum and the National Mosque. Also see Independence Square, Chinatown and the Petronas Twin Towers.
- DAY 3:** Depart Kuala Lumpur for your next destination.

Langkawi Beach Stay

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Langkawi.
- DAY 2:** Join a boat safari through the Langkawi Geopark.
- DAY 3:** Day at leisure to enjoy the beautiful beaches.
- DAY 4:** Depart Langkawi for your next destination.

Options

Borneo has many possibilities for a longer stay. Ask one of our specialists about staying in a traditional longhouse, visiting the Mulu Caves or climbing Mt Kinabalu. Also contact us about visiting Sandakan to see Sepilok Orang-Utan Sanctuary and Selingan Turtle Island.

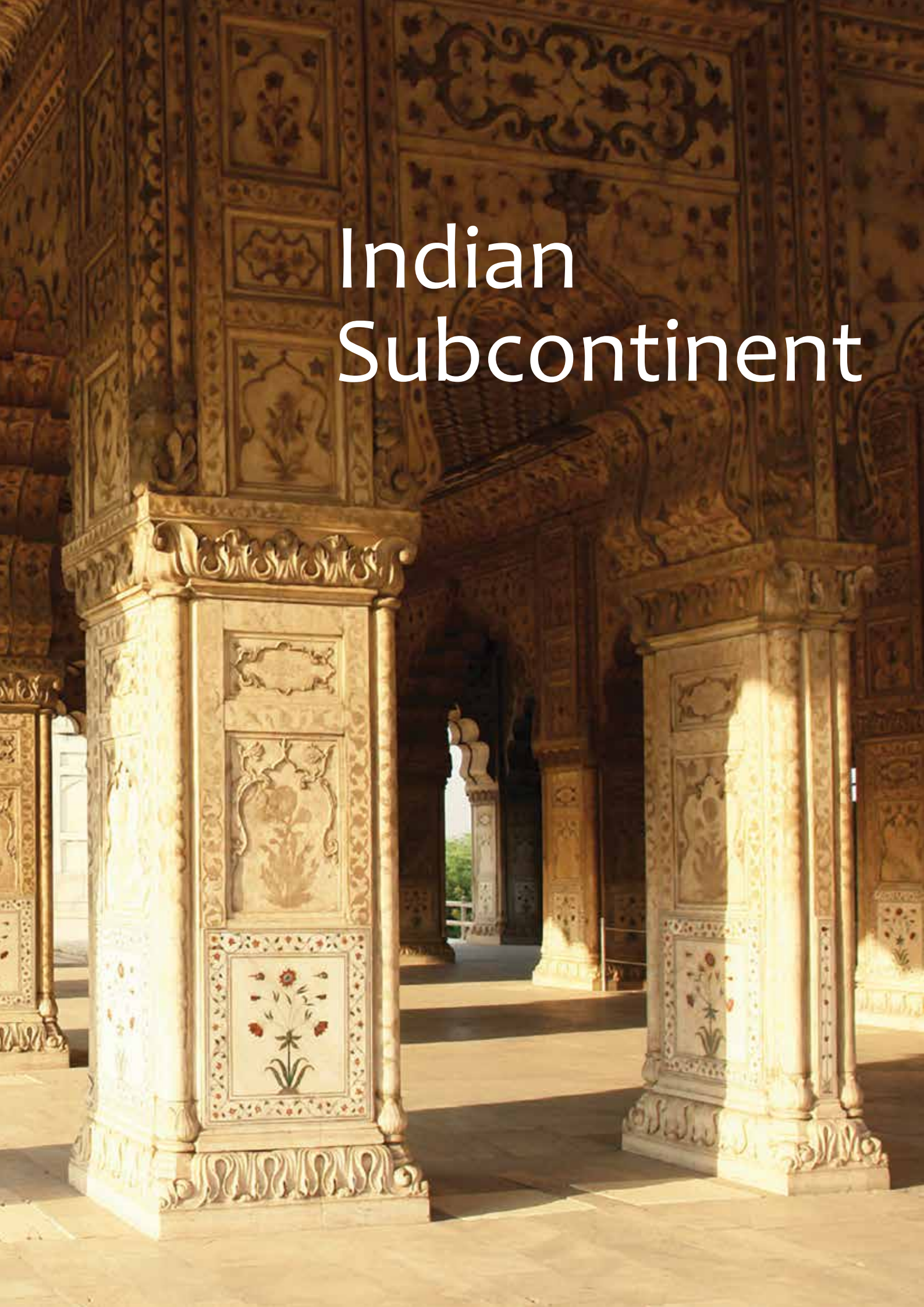
For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Stay in a traditional longhouse



Indian Subcontinent





The Taj Mahal is best seen at sunrise

Discover the Indian Subcontinent

The Indian Subcontinent is a vast and diverse region offering much of historical, cultural and natural interest. There is a myriad of monuments, amazing mountain scenery and numerous wildlife parks as well as plenty of opportunities to relax. From the snow-capped Himalayan peaks to the warmth of the Indian Ocean, an incredible land awaits.



Local woman at Fatehpur Sikri

When to Travel

The traditional time to visit India is in the cooler months between October and April although it can sometimes get cold in Delhi in mid-winter. Summers can be scorching hot and also humid if you are by the coast. Visits to the Himalayas are best taken from late spring to early autumn due to the cooler temperatures at higher altitudes.

There are also local weather patterns which interact with the general regional climate so please call one of our specialists for advice.

Historical Monuments

India has a very rich history and many monuments of the Moghul past can be seen in the cities of the Golden Triangle. The most famous sites include the iconic Taj Mahal, the Jama Masjid Mosque in Delhi and the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri as well as numerous forts. Look further afield and you will find the palaces and monasteries of Sikkim and Ladakh; and Portuguese heritage in the former colony of Goa.

There are many important historical sites in other countries of the region. In Sri Lanka you can visit the precipitous Lion's Rock Fortress and the ancient Dambulla Rock Temple. The Kathmandu Valley in Nepal is home to the historical cities of Patan and Bhaktapur; and you can discover the fortress-like dzongs in Bhutan.

- Golden Triangle
- Kathmandu Valley
- Sri Lanka
- Sikkim
- Ladakh
- Bhutan

Himalayan Scenery

The mountain scenery of the Himalayas is some of the most spectacular in the world. Visit the hill station of Shimla to see the heritage of the British Raj; discover Dharamshala and see the residence of the Dalai Lama in McLeodGanj; and have views of Kanchenjunga in Sikkim. For a more remote and higher altitude experience explore the stark but beautiful region of Ladakh in the far north of India.

Nepal offers the chance to see the soaring peaks of Everest and Annapurna with the option for some trekking for those that want a more active holiday. Mountainous Bhutan quietly preserves its traditions and pristine environment, giving travellers a unique experience in a little-visited land.

- Shimla
- Nepal
- Dharamshala
- Sikkim
- Ladakh
- Bhutan

Tigers and More

A highlight for many travellers to India is the chance to see a tiger, with the best opportunities usually at Ranthambore and Corbett national parks. Tigers are very elusive but there are many other animals that are commonly spotted here such as leopards, elephants, deer and a wide variety of bird life. Periyar National Park is another good location for wildlife watching.

Sri Lanka has several notable parks. Yala National Park is known for its elephant population as well as leopards, deer, wild boar, crocodiles, water buffalo and monkeys. Also visit the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home and Sinharaja Forest Reserve. If you are in Nepal then make a visit to Chitwan National Park to look out for rhino, crocodiles, elephants and maybe even tigers.

- Ranthambore NP
- Periyar NP
- Chitwan NP
- Corbett NP
- Yala NP
- Sinharaja



Ranthambore National Park is usually the best place to see a tiger

Time to Relax

One of the best places to take it easy in India is in the southern state of Kerala. Here you can take a lazy backwater cruise on a kettuvallam houseboat as you watch the local scenes pass by. Then visit Kovalam where you can mix beach time with holistic Ayurveda treatments.

Another popular option for a relaxing beach stay is in Goa with its idyllic golden sands. This small Indian province has a backdrop of Portuguese colonisation to add historical interest to your visit.

Sri Lanka has an enormous amount to offer from historical sites to hill stations and wildlife parks all within easy reach of each other. Add to this the welcoming beaches and you can create your own mix of activity and relaxation.

- Kerala Backwater Cruising
- Ayurveda Treatments
- Golden Sands of Goa
- Beaches of Sri Lanka

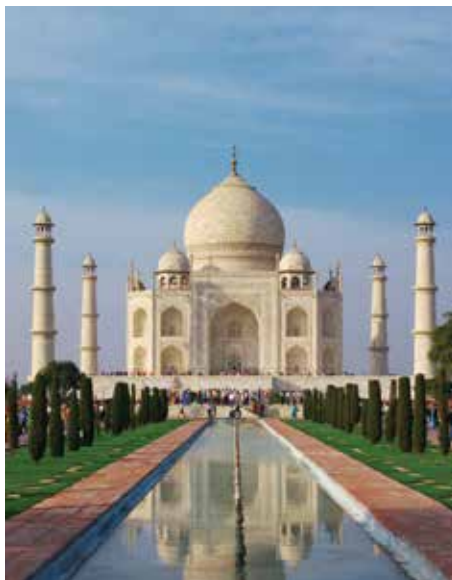


The Palace of the Winds with its hundreds of tiny windows

Golden Triangle

The classic route of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur

For a first time visitor to India, the Golden Triangle encapsulates the real highlights of this vast and diverse country. Explore Delhi both new and old, see the Taj Mahal and visit the Pink City of Jaipur. From here you can discover the deserts of Rajasthan or go in search of the elusive tigers.



In memory of Mumtaz

Agra

The most iconic sight in India is surely the Taj Mahal and it is for this reason that most people visit Agra. The best time to experience the site is at sunrise to see the gentle light reflecting on the white marble walls making the building glow. Shah Jahan built this mausoleum in memory of his wife Mumtaz and it is a monument to love.

While in the city also visit Agra Fort, a walled compound founded in the 16th century by Emperor Akbar the Great. However it was during the rule of Shah Jahan that fort took its current form with the construction of two beautiful white marble mosques.

Delhi

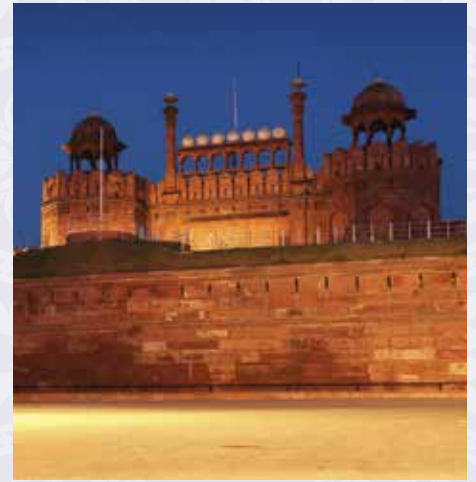
Delhi is a city of two distinct parts. Old Delhi retains its bustling bazaars, historical buildings and places of worship that illustrate India's rich past and religious mix. New Delhi is the capital city and is filled with modern developments and tree-lined boulevards.

Delhi's most famous monument is Red Fort, constructed in the 17th century by the Moghul emperor Shah Jahan. The red sandstone walls enclose a colossal and powerful building that is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Humayun's Tomb was commissioned in the 16th century and is an ornate building set in beautiful gardens. It is said to have influenced the design of the Taj Mahal.

To understand more about India's religious influences visit the Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, and Jama Masjid, the country's largest mosque.

India is renowned for its markets so make a point to visit Chandni Chowk one of the busiest bazaars in the old part of the city and Connaught Place in New Delhi.



The Red Fort

Jaipur & Rajasthan

The third city of India's Golden Triangle is Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. It is known as the Pink City because of the colour of the stone from which many of the historical buildings are constructed, the most famous of which is the Palace of the Winds.

In the forested hills near the city is Amer (Amber) Fort, an impressive 16th century construction that overlooks Maota Lake.

From Jaipur you can explore the Thar Desert where you may stay in a tented camp and ride a camel; discover the Blue City of Jodhpur which sits below the imposing Mehrangarh Fort; and visit Udaipur to cruise on Lake Pichola and see the famous Lake Palace.



Ride a camel in the Thar Desert

Fatehpur Sikri

This abandoned city provides a unique window on the history of the Moghul Empire. Constructed in the 16th century by Akbar the Great, Fatehpur Sikri functioned as the capital for only 10 years before the emperor moved his capital to Lahore. This well-preserved collection of red sandstone buildings is an exceptional example of the architecture of the period with the mosque being one of the largest in India.



One of the best-preserved examples of Moghul architecture

Tiger Reserves

Tigers are synonymous with India and the opportunity to observe one in the wild is often a highlight of any holiday in the country. The most famous reserve is at Ranthambore where there may be the greatest chance of spotting one of the elusive creatures. Also look out for leopards, deer and hyenas.

In the foothills of the Himalayas you can search for wildlife in Corbett National Park, the oldest in the country. As well as tigers, the park has populations of leopards, elephants, deer and crocodiles.

Please remember that tigers are rare animals and sightings cannot be guaranteed.



Selected Hotels

The Claridges New Delhi ★★★★★

Graceful architecture, elegant décor, and a seamless blend of old-world charm and contemporary facilities define The Claridges. The spacious guestrooms offer the comfort of home in a luxurious hotel setting, along with modern conveniences. Hotel facilities include an outdoor swimming pool and the tranquil Claridges Spa.

Oberoi Maidens Hotel **INSPIRED**

Maidens Hotel is one of Delhi's oldest hotels and has retained its colonial character and architecture. The accommodation has spacious rooms with high ceilings and is set amid lush gardens and shady trees. While not as opulent as its Oberoi sister hotels, Maidens has a unique nostalgic charm.

Jaypee Palace Hotel ★★★★★

The Jaypee Palace in Agra is a glorious blend of red sandstone and marble offering luxurious rooms. The hotel is spread over 25 acres of elegantly landscaped greenery with water features and endless walkways. Amenities include a swimming pool located amid exotic flowerbeds, an Ayurveda health spa, a gym and many sports facilities.

Samode Haveli Jaipur **INSPIRED**

A nobleman's urban abode restored to perfection, the Haveli is an oasis of serenity in the depths of the lively city. Few hotels can match the historic ambience of this 175-year-old residence with its ornate architecture and intricate decoration. The Haveli may not have every modern convenience but it has a charm that is hard to beat.

Manvar Desert Camp **INSPIRED**

The Manvar Camp consists of 30 colourfully decorated safari-style tents surrounded by sand dunes. This is a true desert experience. All tents have electricity and attached washrooms with hot and cold water, but facilities are commensurate with the wilderness location. The camp is open from mid-September to mid-April.

Recommendations

Essential Delhi

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Delhi.
- DAY 2:** Visit India Gate, the Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb. Continue to Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple and Jama Masjid and also explore Chandni Chowk and Connaught Place.
- DAY 3:** Depart Delhi for your next destination.

Delhi to the Taj Mahal

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Delhi.
- DAY 2:** Visit India Gate, the Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb. Continue to Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple and Jama Masjid and also explore Chandni Chowk and Connaught Place.
- DAY 3:** Travel by road to Agra stopping at Sikandra to see the marble tomb of Akbar.
- DAY 4:** Visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise and explore Agra Fort.
- DAY 5:** Return by road to Delhi.

Golden Triangle & Rajasthan

For fully inclusive itineraries encompassing the whole of the Golden Triangle and exploring Rajasthan please see page 123. If you love Indian food then consider our Flavours of India itinerary on page 124 to learn more about local delicacies and culinary techniques.

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

- DAY 1:** Travel by train and road from Delhi to Ranthambore.
- DAY 2:** Take morning and afternoon canter safaris to search for the elusive tigers and spot other wildlife in the park.
- DAY 3:** Take another safari this morning for another chance to track down a tiger before returning to Delhi.

Corbett National Park

- DAY 1:** Transfer from Delhi airport or your Delhi hotel to Corbett National Park, located in the foothills of the Himalayas.
- DAY 2:** Take early morning and afternoon canter safaris to look out for tigers, elephants, leopards, sambar deer and crocodiles.
- DAY 3:** Take another safari early this morning and return to Delhi.

Options

Visit one of the hill stations or mountain regions featured overleaf to experience the Indian Himalayas. Make a pilgrimage to Varanasi to see the Ganges River and experience one of the holiest cities in India. And leisure time in Goa is a relaxing way to complete any holiday in India.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Jama Masjid is the largest mosque in India

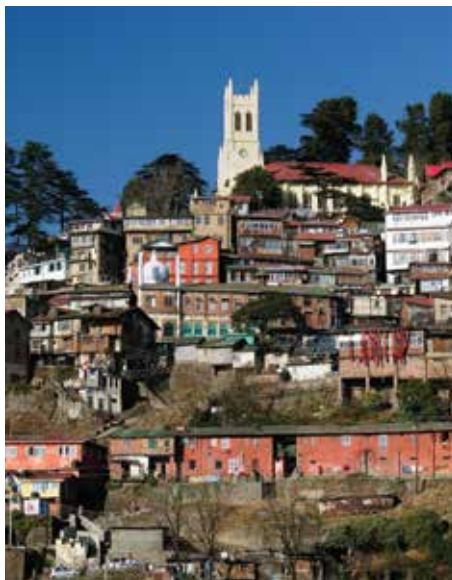


Monks spinning prayer wheels in McLeodGanj

Indian Himalayas

Discover the mountains and hill stations

The Himalayan foothills can provide welcome relief from the heat of the Indian summer and also the hustle and bustle of the major cities. Here you can walk in the steps of the British Raj, visit the residence of the Dalai Lama, learn about Buddhist beliefs and enjoy spectacular views of the mountains.



The hill station of Shimla

Shimla

The hill station of Shimla was regarded as the summer capital of the British Raj. Surrounded by pine forests, oak trees and rhododendrons it is the perfect place to escape the heat of the lowlands. To get there you can enjoy the excitement of travelling by the narrow gauge Toy Train.

While in Shimla you can admire the colonial architecture including the Christ Church, the second oldest church in Northern India. Also discover the story behind Scandal Point and visit the Himalayan Aviary, a sanctuary for numerous birds.

Dharamshala & McLeodGanj

Dharamshala is a town set in the forested hills of Himachal Pradesh and has a backdrop of snow covered peaks. This area is most famous for the nearby village of McLeodGanj which has been the official residence of the Dalai Lama since 1960. As well as the Dalai Lama temple complex, the village has several Buddhist Monasteries and many Tibetan refugees.

When visiting Dharamshala it is easy to combine with Amritsar to see the famous Golden Temple; and also the hill station and tea gardens of Palampur.

Sikkim

The region of Sikkim is nestled in the Himalayan foothills between Nepal and Bhutan. Ride the Toy Train to Darjeeling then cross into Sikkim to the town of Pelling where you can enjoy panoramic views of the Himalayas including Mt Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world. Visit Pemayangtse Monastery and the holy Khecheopalri Lake.

Continue to Gangtok where you can visit the Tashiding Monastery and the Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary, which is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna including the Red Panda.

Ladakh

Ladakh is a mountainous region in the far north of India that is often referred to as Little Tibet. The capital, Leh, is at an altitude of 3,500 metres and is set in a barren but starkly beautiful landscape. Here you can visit the Shankar Gompa belonging to the Yellow Hat sect of Buddhism, the ruined 17th century Leh Palace and the current royal residence and museum, Stok Palace.

As you explore the surrounding towns you will discover numerous other gompas and monasteries as well as learn about life in this harsh environment. Due to the climate in Ladakh it is only possible to visit from June to September.

Selected Hotels

Wildflower Hall INSPIRED

Situated high in the Himalayas near Shimla, Wildflower Hall is a fairy-tale luxury resort set in virgin woods of pine and cedar. This Oberoi Resort recreates the grand style of the colonial era with rich furnishings and spectacular views making the rooms very special retreats. Facilities include a heated indoor pool and a relaxing spa offering holistic treatments.

The Elgin Mount Pandim Hotel ★★★★★

The Elgin Mount Pandim in Pelling is set in virgin forest and landscaped gardens and reflects the old-world charm created by its first owners, the royal family of Sikkim. Each of the rooms is individually designed and all have magnificent views overlooking the Singalila range. The hotel features a rejuvenating spa and multi-cuisine dining.

Recommendations

Shimla Short Stay

- DAY 1:** Take the train from Delhi to Kalka and then connect with the narrow gauge train to Shimla.
- DAY 2:** See the Christ Church, walk around Scandal Point and visit the Himalayan Aviary.
- DAY 3:** Visit the Viceregal Lodge located on Observatory Hill. Then transfer to Kalka for your return train ride to Delhi.

Please speak with one of our tailor-made specialists about further options for adding a Himalayas tour to your holiday in India. We can advise on how to reach the region, the best itineraries, local features and when to travel.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



The starkly beautiful landscape of Ladakh



The huge cantilevered fishing nets in Kochi

Southern India

Backwater cruising and golden beaches

Kerala is located on the Malabar Coast of south-west India. Here much of the local life is defined either by the sea or by the extensive network of waterways that fringe the coast. It is an ideal place for some relaxing activities whether cruising on the Kerala backwaters, enjoying Ayurveda treatments or simply taking it easy on the beach.



Kathakali performer

Kochi

The city of Kochi (Cochin) is a blend of many different cultures from the colonial rule of the British and Portuguese to Jewish communities and Chinese business. Visit some of the old churches and the synagogue and then head down to the sea to watch the fishermen with their huge Chinese cantilevered nets.

In Kochi you can also witness a traditional Kathakali dance where the performers wear extravagant costumes and make-up, and are accompanied by singing and percussive music.

Goa

Magnificent scenic beauty and the architectural splendour of its temples, churches and old houses have made Goa a favourite among visitors to India. Goa has a long history but the strongest mark was left by the Portuguese who colonised the enclave from the 16th century until 1961. The historical buildings are recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and include the Basilica of Bom Jesus, Sé Cathedral of Santa Catarina and the Church of St. Cajetao.

Of course we cannot forget the beaches which are a major attraction of Goa. Miles of beautiful golden sand touch the warm Indian Ocean making this an idyllic place to relax at the end of your holiday.



The golden sands of Goa



Periyar National Park is set in the scenic beauty of the Cardamom Hills

Periyar National Park

Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is set in the Cardamom Hills near to Thekkady. The park has great scenic charm with a rich biodiversity and is a repository of rare flora and fauna. Periyar is known as a tiger reserve, although the creatures are extremely elusive and are very unlikely to be observed. More easily seen are some of the one thousand elephants. Also look out for leopards, palm civets and sambars as well as many varieties of birds.

Ayurveda Treatments

Ayurveda treatments are traditional Hindu methods which can help to relax and soothe. Using a combination of herbal oils, massage, yoga and meditation, Ayurveda aims to restore health and balance. Select a treatment plan that is personal to you to focus on rejuvenation, de-stressing or detoxification. With consultancy and treatments by a qualified Ayurveda doctor this is the perfect way to complete your Indian holiday.



Rejuvenate with a traditional Ayurveda treatment

Kerala Cruising

Cruise the backwaters of Kerala on a kettuvallam, a houseboat that is converted from a traditional rice barge. Observe small villages, temples and schools and enjoy authentic Keralan food as you make your way slowly through the network of canals. This is a very relaxing way to gain an insight into life by the water.



Selected Hotels

Malabar House ★★☆☆

The Malabar House is in the heart of historical Fort Cochin and has a history dating back to 1755. This heritage hotel has 17 unique rooms and suites which are designed to the last detail and furnished with select antiques and art. The Malabar House has an Ayurveda spa and a swimming pool.

Spice Village, Periyar **INSPIRED**

Spice Village is the essence of a mountain tribal village, re-imagined for the modern traveller and a tribute to ancient ways of life. Set among the trees, this delightful retreat offers an outdoor swimming pool and Ayurveda treatments. The simple but comfortable accommodation at Spice Village is possibly unlike anywhere you have stayed before.

The Leela Kovalam ★★★★★

The Leela Kovalam has a cliff-top setting looking out over pristine beaches and is known for its world class dining, seamless service, and palatial accommodations. Here you can spoil yourself in Indian opulence. And with a personal and professional approach, the Divya Spa is the perfect place for Ayurveda treatments.

Vivanta by Taj – Fort Aguada **INSPIRED**

This hotel is Goa at its best: romantic, charming and vibrant and set above the 16th century ramparts of a Portuguese Fort. Relax in the infinity pool or rejuvenate at Jiva Spa which offers Ayurveda and other treatments. There is a choice of restaurants and you can dine overlooking the sea.

Alila Diwa Goa ★★★★★

Set amid the serene landscape of lush, verdant rice plantations relaxation reigns at Alila Diwa Goa. Enter a sanctuary of contemporary elegance inspired by traditional Goan design with rooms that offer havens of space, comfort and serenity. And lose yourself in a world of sheer self-indulgence at Spa Alila.

Recommendations

Kochi & Kerala Cruising

DAY 1: Arrive in Kochi.

DAY 2: Transfer to Alleppey to board your kettuvallam houseboat for two nights.

DAY 3: Cruise through the waterways learning about local life.

DAY 4: Disembark in Nedumudy and return to Kochi.

DAY 5: Explore Kochi including the Santa Cruz Basilica, St. Francis Church and the Jewish Synagogue. Also see the unique Chinese fishing nets. Watch a Kathakali dance performance in the evening.

DAY 6: Depart Kochi.

Ayurveda & Beach

DAY 1: Arrive in Trivandrum and transfer to Kovalam.

DAYS 2-7: Choose from a number of different focused treatment plans. Your package will include a health and lifestyle consultancy, 90 minutes of Ayurveda treatment per day as well as yoga and meditation sessions. At other times you are free to relax on the beach or enjoy local activities.

DAY 8: Optional tour in Trivandrum.

DAY 9: Transfer to Trivandrum.

Shorter packages are available on request.

Golden Beaches of Goa

DAY 1: Arrive in Goa.

DAY 2: Enjoy a tour of Goa starting with a visit to Altinho Hill and Dona Paula. Continue to Old Goa to see the Basilica of Bom Jesus, Sé Cathedral, St. Cajetao, the Church of Lady Rosary and St. Monica. Also visit the local market in Panjim City.

DAYS 3-4: Enjoy free time on the beach or in further exploration of Goa.

DAY 5: Depart Goa for your next destination.

South India Discovery

For a fully inclusive itinerary exploring more of South India see page 124.

Options

Include a visit to the hill station of Munnar in the Western Ghats to see the tea plantations.

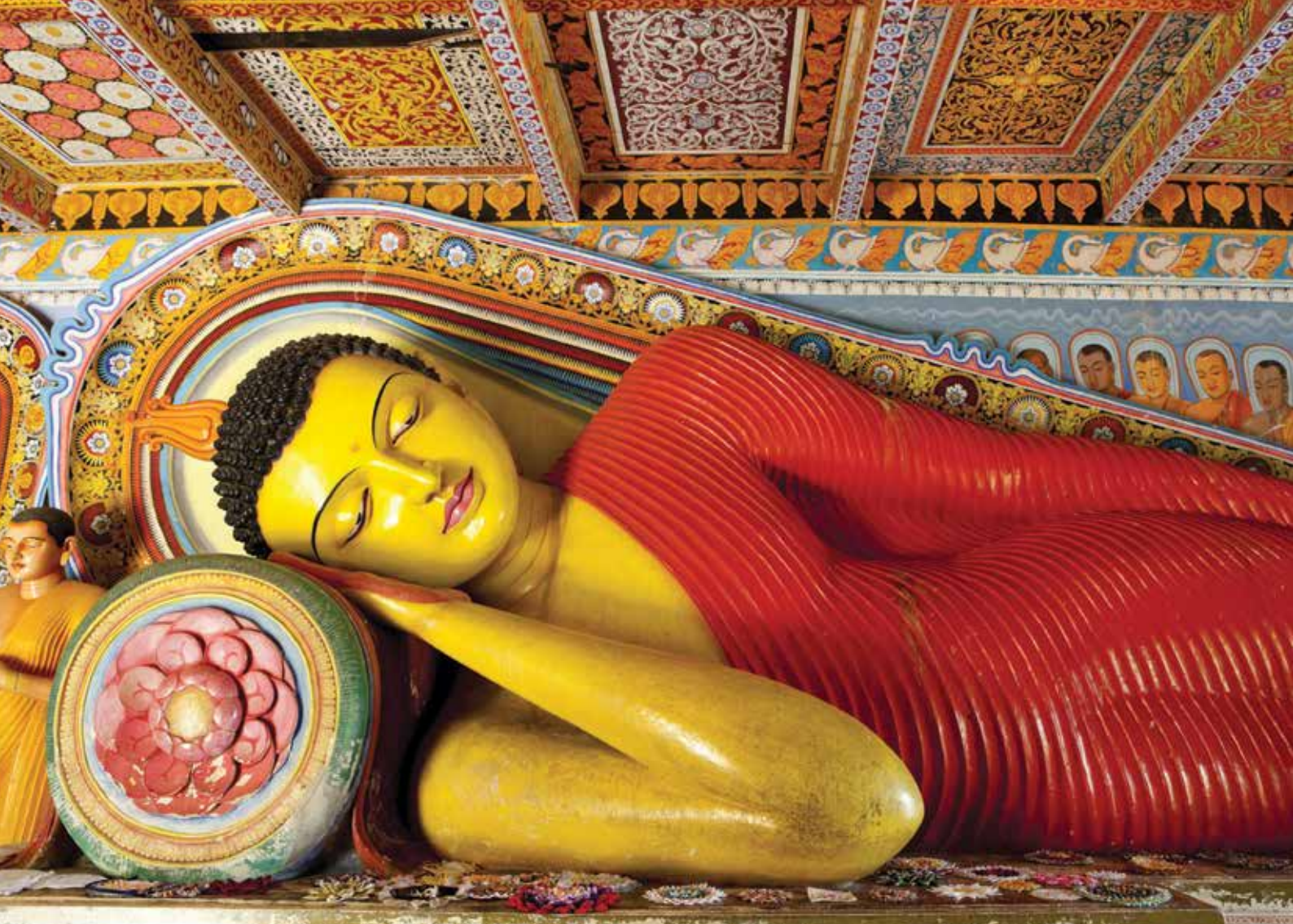
For a more in-depth understanding of family life in Kerala, please ask one of our specialists about homestays in the region.

A complete two-week anti-stress package is available at the Kalari Kovilakom involving Ayurveda treatments to leave you relaxed, detoxified and transformed.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Tea plantations in Munnar

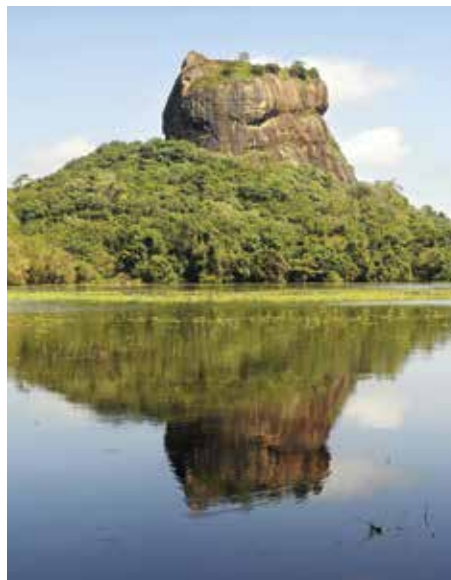


Discover the reclining Buddha at the Isurumuniya Rock Temple

Sri Lanka

The island of serendipity

Sri Lanka is an island of enormous diversity which is sure to reward you with many delightful experiences. Whether you are looking to immerse yourself in the island's fascinating history, learn about the tea industry, watch for wildlife or relax at a beach resort, you can find them all here.



Lion Rock Fortress

Historical Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a long and rich history with many well preserved sites across the island. Lion's Rock Fortress in Sigiriya was built by King Kasyapa in the 5th century and is perched precariously atop a sheer-sided rock that rises abruptly from the surrounding plain. Nearby is the Dambulla Rock Temple built in the 3rd century BC, which has five caves containing numerous statues and paintings of Buddha. Also visit the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy which is said to hold a tooth from Buddha that was rescued from his funeral pyre.

National Parks

One of the most important national parks in Sri Lanka is at Yala on the south coast. This reserve is noted both for its elephant population and also having one of the highest concentrations of leopards in the world. Also look out for spotted deer, wild boar, crocodiles, water buffalo and monkeys. Nearby is Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home which specialises in elephant welfare and conservation including caring for orphaned animals.

At Sinharaja Forest Reserve a small part of the virgin rainforest has been preserved. This is an important biosphere reserve that protects the endemic species and the original vegetation.

Nuwara Eliya

This town in the hill country is sometimes referred to as Sri Lanka's Little England. It is here that the British could relax in the temperate climate and create a piece of home, with many of the original colonial buildings still remaining today.

Nuwara Eliya is the centre of the tea industry in Sri Lanka and to discover more visit a tea plantation and factory.

Selected Hotels

Heritage Kandalama

INSPIRED

The Heritage Kandalama is a luxury hotel located in the middle of the cultural triangle. Surrounded by forest and situated below a granite outcrop the buildings blend seamlessly into the landscape. The hotel features a Six Senses Spa, three swimming pools and a gym.

Heritage Tea Factory

INSPIRED

A unique hotel located in a converted tea factory. The comfortable rooms in this four-star accommodation have natural wood fittings, modern conveniences and views overlooking the tea plantations. The hotel features a spa, gym and a putting green.

Jetwing Lighthouse ★★★★★

The Lighthouse hotel is situated on the coast just outside of Galle. The deluxe rooms feature teak furniture, luxury bathrooms and private terraces. The hotel's facilities include two large swimming pools, a spa offering traditional treatments and both casual and fine dining options.

Recommendations

The Cultural Triangle

DAY 1: Travel by road from Colombo to Sigiriya and stay for three nights. Explore Lion Rock Fortress, the landscaped gardens and the Heavenly Maidens frescoes.

DAY 2: Discover Polonnaruwa, an ancient capital of Sri Lanka with well-preserved stupas, frescoes and statues. Visit the rock temples at Gal Vihara.

DAY 3: Explore Anuradhapura, a celebrated ancient city with the sacred Bo Tree planted over 2,000 years ago. Also visit the 3rd century Isurumuniya Rock Temple.

DAY 4: See Dambulla Rock Temple, visit a spice garden and enjoy a cookery demonstration. Continue by road to Kandy and stay for two nights.

DAY 5: Visit the botanical gardens, enter the Temple of the Tooth and explore the remains of the Royal Palace. In the evening enjoy a cultural dance show and dinner.

DAY 6: Return to Colombo.

Sri Lanka at a Glance

For a fully inclusive itinerary exploring the south of Sri Lanka see page 125.



Stilt fishermen near Galle

Beach Stays

As an island, Sri Lanka offers a lot of opportunity for staying by the sea. There are numerous sandy shores and also the opportunity to combine with other activities.

At Bentota you can explore the wetlands and mangroves, while in Galle you can discover the historical Dutch Fort and maybe see the famous stilt fishermen. But we understand if you just want to relax on the beach.



Relax on the beach



The historical buildings of Patan Durbar Square

Nepal

Historical heritage
and Himalayan vistas

Nepal is famous for its mountain vistas and trekking opportunities but there is so much more to this Himalayan country. Explore Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur where you will discover historical palaces, temples and ancient monuments set against a diverse cultural background. And visit Chitwan National Park in the sub-tropical lowlands to watch for wildlife.



Bodhnath Stupa, Kathmandu

Kathmandu

Kathmandu is the capital of Nepal and has a strong Buddhist and Hindu heritage. Two of the most memorable sights of the city are the stupas at Bodhnath and Swayambhunath which feature the eyes of Buddha looking in all four directions. Also visit Pashupatinath Temple, one of the most important Hindu Temples of Shiva in the world.

Adjoining Kathmandu is Patan, Nepal's second city and home to a number of important historical sites. Walk through Patan Durbar Square and visit the Royal Palace with its temples and religious shrines.

Bhaktapur

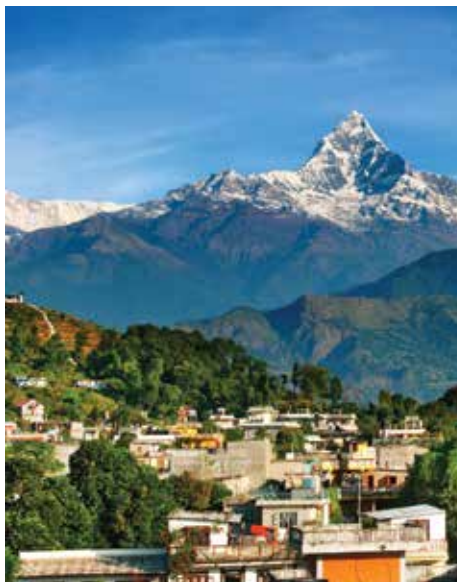
Bhaktapur is a historical town that is renowned for its architecture, temples and ancient monuments. Walk through Bhaktapur Durbar Square and see the Golden Gate and the Palace of 55 Windows, a 15th century building with unique woodcarving. Also visit the intricately decorated Changu Narayan, an ancient Hindu temple.

Chitwan National Park

The Royal Chitwan National Park is located in the subtropical lowlands of the Terai. Here you can explore the park on foot, by jeep, by boat or even on the back of an elephant. Look out for the one-horned rhino and crocodiles and you may also be able to spot the elusive Bengal Tiger.

Pokhara

Pokhara is Nepal's third largest city and is the gateway to the Annapurna Region. Visit the Mountain Museum to learn about the people who live here, the environment and the mountaineers; and take a short hike to the World Peace Pagoda from where there are panoramic views of the mountains. You can also enjoy a boat ride on pretty Lake Phewa and visit Barahi Temple built on one of the islands. Pokhara is one of the main trekking centres of Nepal and there are opportunities to join a group to explore more of this beautiful area.



Pokhara with Mt Machhapuchhre

Selected Hotels

Hotel Shangri-La ★★★★★

Hotel Shangri-La is a local boutique hotel in Kathmandu. Set in attractive gardens the hotel offers comfortable and elegant rooms. Hotel Shangri-La features a spa, swimming pool and tennis court; and dining options include an Indian restaurant and garden café.

Hotel Landmark Pokhara ★★ ★

The Landmark is a heritage hotel constructed from local brick and carved wood demonstrating the best of Nepali craftsmanship. The hotel features a spa, an award-winning restaurant and complimentary Wi-Fi.

Club Himalaya ★★ ★

Club Himalaya is a comfortable hotel sitting atop a hill in Nagarkot with all rooms enjoying beautiful views of the mountains from their private balconies. The hotel facilities include an indoor swimming pool, spa treatments, two restaurants and a bar.

Recommendations

Discover Nepal

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Kathmandu.
- DAY 2:** Travel by road to Nagarkot, a mountain resort village.
- DAY 3:** Spend the day exploring Nagarkot and enjoying the mountain scenery. In clear weather Mt Everest is visible.
- DAY 4:** Visit Bhaktapur to see the historical sights and return to Kathmandu.
- DAY 5:** Visit Patan to see Patan Durbar Square and the Royal Palace. Return to Kathmandu to see the Pashupatinath Temple and visit the Bodhnath and Swayambhunath Stupas.
- DAY 6:** Depart Kathmandu.

Chitwan National Park

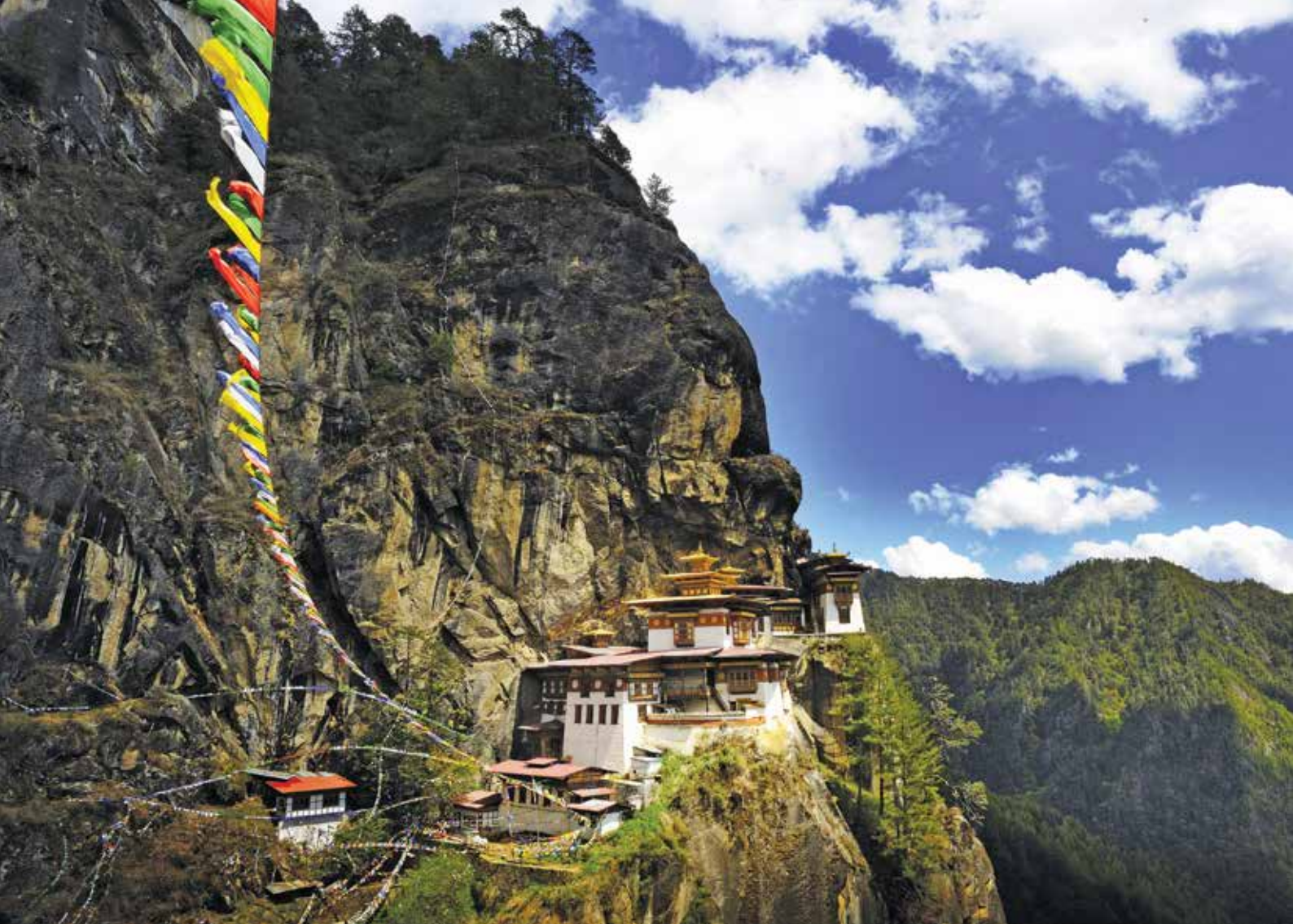
- DAY 1:** Transfer by road from Kathmandu to Chitwan (5-6 hours). Enjoy a jungle safari by jeep.
- DAY 2:** Enjoy an early-morning nature walk. Take a canoe along the river to see the elephants bathing. In the evening enjoy a traditional dance performance and campfire dinner.
- DAY 3:** Return to Kathmandu.

Taste of Nepal

For a fully inclusive itinerary exploring more of Nepal see page 125.



View the Himalayas from the picturesque town of Nagarkot

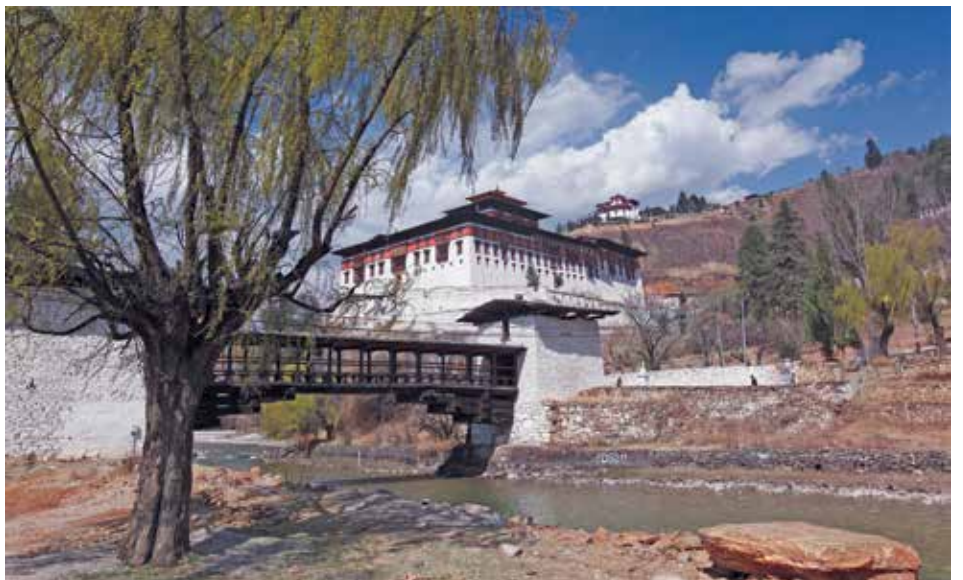


The Tiger's Nest Monastery clings to a cliff face in the Paro Valley

Bhutan

Land of the Thunder Dragon

Bhutan is a mountainous kingdom with lush valleys, sacred monasteries and fortress-style dzongs. The country has a strong desire to preserve its traditions and environment with tourist numbers limited to this effect. But if you are one of the lucky few to visit this charming land you will experience an ancient culture like no other.



The Rinpung Dzong in Paro contains 14 shrines and chapels

Paro

Located in one of the most historical areas of Bhutan, Paro Valley boasts a large number of monasteries and dzongs (fortress-style buildings). The most famous is Taktsang Monastery, popularly known as the Tiger's Nest, which clings to the cliff-side in the upper Paro Valley. Hike up the trail to reach this sacred Buddhist site.

Visit the well-preserved Rinpung Dzong which contains 14 shrines and chapels and is home of the Paro Festival. The Dzong sits next to a river which is crossed by an ancient cantilevered bridge. On the hill above is Ta Dzong, a seven-storied watchtower that houses the National Museum of Bhutan. Other historical sites include Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan; and Drukgyal Dzong which was a fortress to protect against invading Tibetans but is now in ruins.

Punakha

Until 1955 Punakha was the capital of Bhutan and its most iconic building, Punakha Dzong, was the former seat of government. This building is the second largest dzong in Bhutan and is set at the confluence of two rivers and flanked with jacaranda trees. Just outside Punakha is Chimi Lhakhang, also known as the Temple of Fertility. Here you will discover its unusual history and why infertile women from all over the world have made a pilgrimage here.

Thimphu

Thimphu is the capital of Bhutan and its commercial hub. One of the most impressive buildings in the city is Tashi Chhoe Dzong, a Buddhist monastery and fortress which is now the seat of Bhutan's government. Simtikha Dzong is a small building but important as it is the first of its kind built in Bhutan and houses a national language institute.

Other important centres within Thimphu include the new National Library which preserves traditional and sacred texts and the Institute for Zorig Chusum, a centre for Bhutanese art education.

Selected Hotels

Amankora Paro **INSPIRED**

Amankora has created a series of lodges in Bhutan, all creatively unique and sympathetically balanced to their environment. At the Paro resort there are six dwellings with four suites each, two on the ground floor and two on the upper floor. The 24 suites are similar in design featuring natural rammed-earth walls, gently sloping roofs and wood-panelled interiors with a king-size bed, a traditional bukhari (wood-burning stove) and a large terrazzo-clad bath.

Amankora also have properties in Thimphu, Punakha, Gangtey and Bumthang.

Uma by COMO, Paro ★★★★★

Uma by COMO, Paro, is an intimate resort with an enviable location in the Paro Valley. The nine private villas and 20 luxury rooms combine traditional Bhutanese craftsmanship with clean-lined contemporary design. The resort amenities include a spa with holistic Asian-inspired treatments and award-winning cuisine.

Uma by COMO, Punakha

★★★★★

Uma by COMO, Punakha, is a luxury lodge located at the far western end of the lush Punakha Valley. Every room commands sweeping views of the valley and the Mo Chu River as it winds its way through the rice fields and orchards. A range of massages and therapies are available at the COMO Shambhala Retreat nestled in a woodland glade near to the hotel.

Taj Tashi Thimphu ★★★★★

In keeping with the enchanting surroundings, the hotel is a blend of Bhutan's Dzong architecture and modern design. Adorned with classical hand-drawn Buddhist murals, its 66 elegant guestrooms afford guests striking highlights of the region's art and colour. The hotel features the serene atmosphere of Jiva Spa for exclusive signature treatments.

Recommendations

Discover Bhutan

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Paro and transfer to Thimphu.
- DAY 2:** Visit the National Library, Institute for Zorig Chusum, the National Memorial Chorten and the Folk Heritage and National Heritage Museums. Also explore Tashi Chhoe Dzong.
- DAY 3:** Visit Simtokha Dzong and continue to Paro to see Ta Dzong and Rinpung Dzong.
- DAY 4:** Hike up to Tiger's Nest Monastery. Also visit Drukgyal Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang.
- DAY 5:** Depart Paro for your next destination.

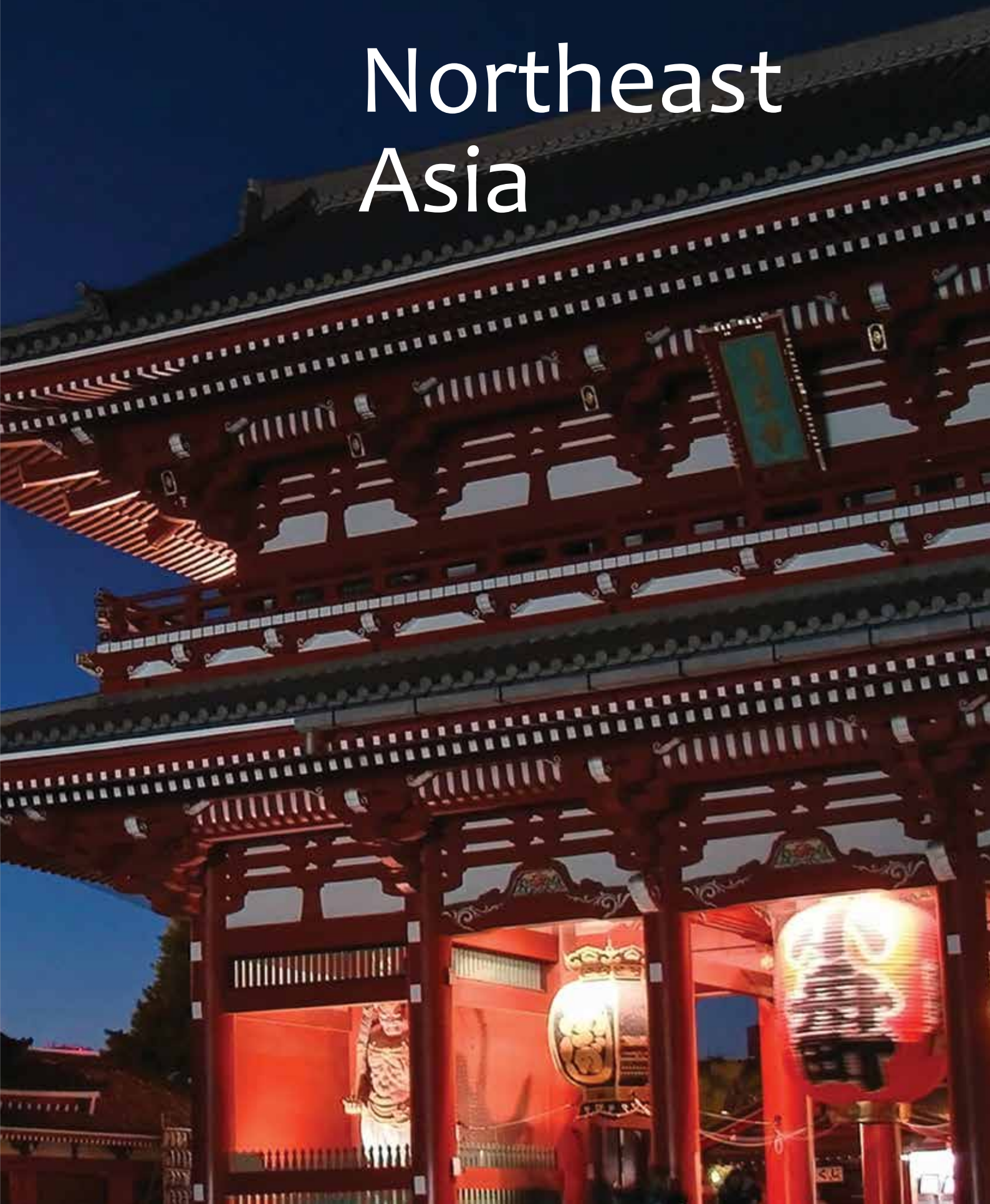
Land of the Thunder Dragon

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Paro and transfer to Thimphu.
- DAY 2:** Visit the National Library, Institute for Zorig Chusum, the National Memorial Chorten and the Folk Heritage and National Heritage Museums. Also explore Tashi Chhoe Dzong.
- DAY 3:** Drive to Punakha via Dochu La where you can see the Himalayan peaks if the weather is clear. Visit Punakha Dzong and the Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten.
- DAY 4:** Visit Wangdue Phodrang Old Town and market and the Temple of Fertility.
- DAY 5:** Return to Paro and see Simtokha Dzong en-route. Visit Ta Dzong and Rinpung Dzong.
- DAY 6:** Hike up to Tiger's Nest Monastery. Also visit Drukgyal Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang.
- DAY 7:** Depart Paro for your next destination.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Northeast Asia





Wen Wu Temple overlooking Sun Moon Lake in Taiwan

Discover Northeast Asia

Northeast Asia is a diverse region from the Gobi Desert and Mongolian Steppe to sub-tropical Taiwan. Korea seamlessly blends both old and new into a cosmopolitan yet traditional country. However it is Japan that provides the greatest contrasts where its unique culture overlaps with a very modern society making it unlike anywhere else on earth.



Naadam Festival, Mongolia

When to Travel

Spring and autumn are often the best seasons to visit Japan and South Korea when the weather tends to be warm and rainfall is lowest. The cherry blossom usually flowers from late March to early May. Taiwan has temperate weather from September to December and also in the spring. Northerly Mongolia is best visited in the summer.

There are many local differences from the extreme climate of Mongolia to the sub-tropical weather of Taiwan, so please call one of our specialists for advice.

Historical Perspectives

The long and proud history of Japan can best be seen in Kyoto which was the imperial capital for over a thousand years. Here you can discover historical castles, elaborate palaces, Buddhist temples and beautiful pavilions. Also visit nearby Nara, an even older capital city with its famous temple and shrine.

The Gobi Desert has a surprising amount of historical interest including the ruins of the ancient town of Karakorum and the Erdene-Zuu monastery. And the old Taiwanese capital of Tainan is rich in historical sites. In South Korea explore Gyeongji, an ancient city dating back over two millennia, while for more recent history visit Panmunjom where the Cold War lives on.

■ Kyoto

■ Karakorum

■ Gyeongji

■ Nara

■ Tainan

■ Panmunjom

Striking Landscapes

The open landscapes of Mongolia leave a lasting impression on any visitor. The Gobi desert covers a vast part of the south of the country with large areas of barren rock, stony desert, huge dunes and mountains. In the north this gives way to the more fertile steppe with its rolling grasslands and forest-covered slopes.

Japan's most iconic scenery is the volcanic cone of Mt Fuji along with nearby Mt Hakone. But also take time to discover the alpine scenery around the historical town of Takayama. Visit Sun Moon Lake in Taiwan with its mountainous backdrop and in South Korea take some time out on sub-tropical Jeju Island with its volcanic geology, gushing waterfalls and beautiful beaches.

■ Gobi Desert

■ Mongolian Steppe

■ Mt Fuji & Hakone

■ Takayama

■ Sun Moon Lake

■ Jeju Island

Traditional Culture

Many people in Mongolia still have a traditional lifestyle and live in simple ger homes. Visit Gorkhi-Terelj National Park to meet the nomadic Mongolians and learn about their way of life. In July watch the Naadam Festival to see traditional Mongolian costumes and competitions that date back to the time of Genghis Khan.

Japan may be a modern country but it has very strong and deep-rooted traditions. For a taste of the Buddhist life visit Koya-San and stay in a shukubo lodge where you can witness the daily life of the monks. Also experience some traditional Japanese activities by staying at a ryokan, bathing at an onsen and meeting a geisha.

■ Mongolian nomads

■ Naadam Festival

■ Shukubo lodge

■ Ryokan hotels

■ Onsen bathing

■ Meet a geisha



Explore the vibrant streets of modern Osaka

Modern Asia

Asia has developed rapidly over the last few decades and now has some of the most modern cities in the world. Tokyo has been a world-class city for many years and still leads the way in terms of technology, accommodation and nightlife. Each of its districts has a different style so there is plenty of choice to keep you entertained. Not to be outdone, Osaka competes for the limelight with the Dotonbori district offering a wide range of restaurants.

While Japan may take the lead, there are many modern cities in Taiwan and South Korea. Taipei, Kaohsiung, Seoul and Busan all offer facilities which you would expect to find in a global city even though they retain their traditional roots.

■ Tokyo

■ Taipei

■ Seoul

■ Osaka

■ Kaohsiung

■ Busan



The beautiful Golden Pavilion in Kyoto

Japan

A modern country with a traditional culture

Japan is a country with a long and often isolated history that has resulted in a rich culture quite different from anywhere else. It has one of the world's most advanced economies and yet it is still a very traditional society. From food and clothing to worship and customs, your experience in Japan will be like no other.



Meet a geisha for a traditional Japanese experience

Kyoto

Kyoto has a long and famous history as the former imperial capital of Japan, so it's not surprising that this city has a wealth of historical and cultural sights.

Visit Nijo Castle which was built in the 17th century by the local shoguns and explore the adjacent Ninomaru Palace with its elaborate design and decoration. A must-see sight is the Golden Pavilion which is set beside a lake and surrounded by beautiful gardens. Originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun, after his death it became a Buddhist Temple. Also visit the Daitoku-ji Zen temple complex which is famous for its rock gardens, and don't miss the Buddhist Kiyomizu Temple which is built on a hillside and has impressive views over the city.

Nara

Not far from Kyoto is Nara, the capital of Japan in the 8th century. This ancient city has some of the country's most famous and historically significant sights.

Visit Todai-ji Temple, the world's largest wooden building and home to the world's largest bronze statue of Buddha. Also see Kasuga Taisha. This celebrated Shinto shrine dates back to the 8th century and is adorned with thousands of stone and bronze lanterns. The shrine is close to the large Deer Park which is famous for its sika deer that are regarded as sacred messengers of the Shinto gods.



The modern face of Tokyo

Tokyo

Tokyo is a city of contrasts where the latest in modern technology meets Shinto Buddhist traditions. It is a burgeoning metropolis that is intriguing, unexpected and contradictory but will certainly provide an unforgettable experience. Visit as part of a longer tour to Japan or stop over for a few days if flying via the city.

For a traditional perspective of Tokyo visit Meiji-Jingu, the city's most important shrine which is set in a beautiful forested park, and explore the historical district of Asakusa to see Senso-ji Temple, the oldest in Tokyo.

Also stroll around the peaceful Hamarikyu Gardens and visit the teahouse. Japanese tea has a very distinctive flavour and once tasted is never forgotten.

The modern side of Tokyo is colourful, exciting and buzzing with energy. Visit the vibrant district of Shinjuku which is famous for shopping and entertainment and explore Ginza with its upmarket dining and retail choices. Also discover Omotesando, commonly referred to as Tokyo's Champs Elysées and Harajuku, a magnet for the city's youth with their unique fashion style.

Traditional Japan

There are many other destinations around Japan that illustrate the country's history and traditions. Visit alpine Takayama and enjoy strolling past historical buildings in the beautifully preserved old town. Also visit nearby Shirakawago to see the traditional mountain farmhouses built with steeply sloping roofs. Kanazawa is another historical town and is famous for the Kenrokuen Garden, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan.

A favourite place of ours is Koya-San. This mountain is home to the Shingon Buddhist sect and features numerous temples. Stay in a lodge known as a shukubo and in the morning watch the monks chanting their prayers.

To experience traditional Japanese accommodation stay at a ryokan with its tatami floors, sliding doors and futon beds. Also ask us about bathing at an onsen and meeting a geisha.



UNESCO-listed Shirakawago



Mt Fuji & Hakone

Take the opportunity to escape from Tokyo to see Mt Fuji and the beautiful Five Lakes Region. Mt Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan, rising to 3,776 metres and its beauty derives from its almost symmetrical volcanic cone. Also visit nearby Hakone. Here you can take a cruise on Lake Ashi, visit Hakone-en Gardens and ride the Komagatake cable car for fabulous views over the mountains.

Selected Hotels

Hotel Century Southern Tower

★★★★

The Hotel Century Southern Tower is located in Shinjuku with great views over the city. All rooms are stylishly decorated with modern earthy tones and high quality bed linen. There is a choice of dining with restaurants offering Teppanyaki, Chinese and French influenced cuisine. You can also work out in the hotel's fitness corner.

Palace Hotel, Tokyo **INSPIRED**

Boasting some of the best accommodation in Tokyo, the Palace Hotel was completely rebuilt in 2012 and offers modern facilities coupled with the highest standards of service. Guest rooms are some of the largest in the city and enjoy views over the Imperial Palace gardens. The hotel has a fitness room, luxury spa and swimming pool.

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kyoto

★★★★

The ANA Hotel is centrally located opposite Nijo Castle and features many traditional touches. The hotel offers a range of restaurants, an indoor swimming pool, beauty treatments and a gym. There is even a small Japanese garden with its own waterfall!

Hotel Granvia Kyoto ★★★★★

Possibly the best hotel in Kyoto, the Granvia offers luxurious accommodation and first class service. Hotel services include a swimming pool, gym, sauna and Jacuzzi. There are several top quality restaurants offering a selection of local and international food as well as three bar lounges.

Gora Tensui **INSPIRED**

The Gora Tensui in Hakone offers the very best in Japanese hospitality combined with luxurious guestrooms that are a mix of Japanese and modern Western design. The hotel has a wide range of onsen baths both indoor and outdoor with water fed from the hot springs and the restaurant prides itself on its creative and unique cuisine.

Recommendations

Essential Tokyo

DAY 1: Arrive in Tokyo.

DAY 2: Visit Meiji-Jingu and the districts of Harajuku and Omotesando. Also explore Ginza, walk in the Imperial Palace gardens and visit Asakusa to see Senso-ji Temple.

DAY 3: A day at leisure to enjoy this amazing city.

DAY 4: Depart Tokyo for your next destination.

This itinerary makes a great stopover package if flying via Tokyo

Tokyo & Mt Fuji

DAY 1: Arrive in Tokyo.

DAY 2: Visit Meiji-Jingu and the districts of Harajuku and Omotesando. Also explore Ginza, walk in the Imperial Palace gardens and visit Asakusa to see Senso-ji Temple.

DAY 3: Travel by coach to Mt Fuji and take in the views from the fifth station (weather permitting). Take a cruise on Lake Ashi, visit Hakone-en Gardens and ride the cable car. Return to Tokyo by bullet train.

DAY 4: Depart Tokyo for your next destination.

Add an overnight stay in Hakone to enjoy traditional Japanese hospitality

Kyoto & Nara

DAY 1: Arrive in Kyoto.

DAY 2: Explore Kyoto with your local guide using the city's bus system. Visit Nijo Castle, the Golden Pavilion and the Daitoku-ji Zen temple complex. Explore the food markets to purchase ingredients for a culinary class and cook your own evening meal.

DAY 3: Travel to Nara by train with your local guide. Visit Todai-ji Temple and Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Return to Kyoto and visit Kiyomizu Temple.

DAY 4: Depart Kyoto for your next destination.

Options

Visit Hiroshima to see the famous Peace Park and Museum. Travel to nearby Miyajima to see the floating Torii Gate and the island's many shrines and temples.

Arrange for your international flight to depart from the modern city of Osaka. Here you can visit Osaka Castle, take a cruise on the Yodogawa River and enjoy the vibrant nightlife.

For more ideas see our inspiring itineraries on pages 114-127, visit our website or contact one of our tailor-made specialists who will assist with creating your perfect holiday.



Buy traditional Japanese gifts along Nakamise Shopping Street



Bulguksa Temple is one of the many ancient sights in Gyeongju

South Korea

Rich history and a cosmopolitan culture

South Korea is a country with two distinct characters: the traditional and historical, as well as the sleek and cosmopolitan. In many towns you will find new fashionable districts adjacent to old areas with a maze of alleyways and street markets. South Korea has much to offer the avid traveller with its rich history, vibrant culture and modern society.



Traditional Korean architecture at Gyeongbok Palace

Seoul

Seoul is the vibrant capital of South Korea. As well as being one of the country's oldest cities, it is also Korea's financial, political, commercial and cultural centre. This mixture of old and new offers visitors plenty of sightseeing opportunities.

Visit Gyeongbok Palace to see the Changing of the Guard and discover Jogyesa Temple, an important centre of Korean Buddhism. Also explore Insadong Antique Alley for traditional arts and crafts and visit the top of the Seoul Tower for views over the city.

Busan

Located in the southeast of the Korean Peninsula, Busan is the second largest city after Seoul. A dynamic port city offering a relaxed and laid back atmosphere, it boasts superb beaches, scenic cliffs and mountains which provide excellent hiking opportunities. Hot springs are scattered throughout the city.

Gyeongju

Gyeongju was the capital of the Silla Dynasty that reigned from the first Century BC right up until the tenth Century AD. The town is now like an open-air museum housing a seemingly endless array of tombs, temples, shrines, castles and gardens. This is one of the best places to learn about the history of the Korean Peninsula and is easily combined with a visit to Busan.

Panmunjom

For a taste of the Cold War that is still alive today, join an official tour group to visit the border village of Panmunjom. This is the place where the armistice was signed which halted the fighting in the Korean War.

Situated in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), this heavily guarded site is the location of several huts where negotiations between the two countries have taken place. The buildings straddle the border and it is possible to enter one and technically cross into North Korea but you will not be allowed out of the door at the far end!

Selected Hotels

Lotte Hotel, Seoul ★★★★★

With a convenient central location, the Lotte Hotel offers some of the finest accommodation in the city with spacious and stylish guestrooms. The hotel features a luxury spa, indoor swimming pool, golf practice range and fitness room. A variety of restaurants offers Asian and international cuisine.

Paradise Hotel Busan ★★★★★

The Paradise Hotel is located at Haeundae Beach and is a member of the Leading Hotels of the World. Facilities include an outdoor pool, a spa and sauna as well as several dining options catering to different tastes.

Lotte Hotel, Jeju ★★★★★

The Lotte Hotel, Jeju is a resort complex close to Jungmun Beach. Facilities include the largest outdoor swimming pool in Jeju, an outdoor spa with garden and a fitness centre with gym, sauna and indoor pool. There is a variety of dining options including the unique garden buffet featuring the Volcano Fountain Show.

Recommendations

Seoul & Panmunjom

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Seoul.
- DAY 2:** Explore Gyeongbok Palace and witness the Changing of the Guard Ceremony, visit the National Folk Museum and see Jogyesa Temple. Also visit the Korean Folk Village followed by either a Ginseng or Amethyst Factory.
- DAY 3:** Visit Panmunjom to discover more about the history of the Korean War and the DMZ.
- DAY 4:** Depart Seoul for your next destination.

Busan & Gyeongju

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Busan.
- DAY 2:** Enjoy a half-day tour of Busan visiting Yonggungsa Temple, Nurimaru APEC House, Busan Tower, BIFF Square, Jagalchi Fish Market and Kukje Market. Travel to Gyeongju.
- DAY 3:** Take a full-day tour around Gyeongju visiting the magnificent Bulguksa Temple and the Seokguram Grotto. Also visit the National Museum, Tumuli Park, Anapji Pond and Cheongseongdae, the world's oldest astronomical observatory.
- DAY 4:** Transfer to Busan airport.

Jeju Island

Jeju is South Korea's largest sub-tropical island and is located off the south coast. It boasts many spectacular geographical features such as the Hallasan Volcano and picturesque waterfalls as well as delightful beaches. Its culture, traditions and dialect are also remarkably different to those of the mainland. As Korea's most southerly region, temperatures here are generally warmer than the rest of the country and this makes it a popular holiday and honeymoon destination.



Jeju Island has many picturesque waterfalls



Taipei 101 is one of the world's tallest buildings

Taiwan

Island of diversity

Taiwan is regarded as one of the most diverse destinations in Asia with an infusion of cultural influences that you are not likely to find in any other country. There are majestic peaks, rolling hills and other natural landscapes as well as temples and pulsating cities. Although part of China, Taiwan has followed a separate path since 1949.



Buddhist worship at Lungshan Temple

Taipei

Taipei is the capital of Taiwan and also the largest city. As the political, economic, and cultural centre of Taiwan it offers fascinating contrasts with its mix of modern and traditional. Sightseeing in this energetic city includes views from the top of Taipei 101, some of the greatest collections of Chinese cultural relics, and the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial. There are also many interesting but lesser-known attractions and strolling along the small alleys can allow you to experience the real Taipei.

Tainan

Tainan is the ancient capital of Taiwan and as the island's oldest city it is rich in historic sites and cultural heritage including the Confucius Temple. Also see the Chihkan Tower which was built in 1653 by Dutch colonisers. Learn about Tainan's complex history of comebacks and renewals which have inspired its popular nickname, the Phoenix City.

Kaohsiung

Kaohsiung is located in the south of the island and is the second largest city in Taiwan. Known as the Harbour Capital, sightseeing includes Fo Guang Shan Monastery which is the largest Buddhist monastery in Taiwan and features a Buddhist Culture Museum. Also see the Spring and Autumn Pavilion and the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda.

Taroko National Park

Taroko is one of Taiwan's eight national parks and is located in the east of the island near to the city of Hualien. The name Taroko means magnificent and beautiful and those who visit are bound to agree. The park has many impressive natural features including the Taroko Gorge which spectacularly cuts its way through the marble mountains. Also see the Eternal Spring Shrine that sits above the rushing waters of the Changchun Falls.

Selected Hotels

Regent Taipei ★★★★★

Situated in the vibrant Zhongshan district, Regent Taipei offers spacious and luxurious accommodation. The hotel features a rejuvenating spa, rooftop pool, gym, sauna and a Jacuzzi. There are seven exquisite restaurants featuring cuisine from around the world and the Regent Galleria is home to 50 designer boutiques.

The Landis Taipei ★★★★★

The Landis is a luxury hotel with service standards second to none. Located in the Zhongshan district it features the Jurlique Spa and a health centre. The hotel has four restaurants offering international cuisine.

Ambassador Kaohsiung

★★★★★

The Ambassador Hotel sits on the banks of the Love River and combines the best of Chinese and Western hospitality. The hotel hosts six restaurants providing delicious local and international cuisines and facilities include an outdoor swimming pool, gym and spa.

Recommendations

Essential Taipei

- DAY 1:** Arrive in Taipei.
- DAY 2:** Visit the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and Taipei 101 building for a birds-eye view of Taipei. Also see Lungshan Temple, Dihua Street and the National Palace Museum.
- DAY 3:** Visit Yangmingshan National Park for an easy hike. Also visit Zhongshan Hall and explore the night market.
- DAY 4:** Depart Taipei.

Discover Taiwan

- DAY 1:** Travel from Taipei to Sun Moon Lake and visit Wen Wu Temple.
- DAY 2:** Travel to Tainan and see Chihkan Tower and the Confucius Temple. Continue to Kaohsiung and visit the pavilion and pagoda.
- DAY 3:** Visit Fo Guang Shan Monastery and the Buddhist Culture Museum. Continue to Chihpen, famous for its hot springs.
- DAY 4:** Travel along the east coast via Sioyeliou, Dulan, Tunghe Bridge and Sansientai to Hualien.
- DAY 5:** Visit Taroko National Park and return to Taipei.

This itinerary is offered as part of a group tour or individually.

Sun Moon Lake

Sun Moon Lake is the largest body of water in Taiwan and is so named because the eastern part of the lake is round like the sun and the western side is shaped like a crescent moon. The lake is located in central Taiwan and is set against a beautiful mountain backdrop.

There are several temples in the vicinity of the lake including the impressive Wen Wu complex which is built on a hillside overlooking the water.



Discover beautiful Sun Moon Lake



The Flaming Cliffs of Bayanzag

Mongolia

Land of
the khans

Mongolia is a large, sparsely populated country with vast tracts covering the Gobi Desert and the Mongolian Steppe. Discover ancient cities and ruined monasteries in the desert, a glacier in the mountains and the grasslands and forests of the steppe. And stay in a ger with a nomadic family to learn about traditional Mongolian life.



Stay in a ger for a taste of traditional Mongolian life

Ulaanbaatar

Ulaanbaatar is located on the Tuul River against a backdrop of the Khaikhan Mountains. It is centred on Sukhbaatar Square with its statue of Damdin Sukhbaatar, the leader of the Mongolian Revolution in 1921. While here explore the Tibetan-style Gandan Monastery which has 150 monks in residence and is the most significant monastery in Mongolia. Also visit Zaisan Memorial Hill where there is an impressive communist-era memorial and great views over the city below.

Gobi Desert

The Gobi Desert is one of the defining features of Mongolia covering a large part of the south of the country. There is a surprising amount to see on a journey through the desert with some unexpected discoveries such as temples and monasteries, an important fossil site, an ancient city and even a glacier! You'll also have the opportunity to stay in ger camps, the traditional Mongolian dwellings.

Gorkhi-Terelj National Park

This national park is located approximately fifty miles from Ulaanbaatar and is the third largest protected area in Mongolia. Its open grasslands and forest-covered mountains are a contrast to the Gobi's desert landscape. The park is home to nomadic Mongolians, offering you a chance to interact with the local people. Optional activities here include horse riding, mountain biking and Mongolian barbeque classes.

Naadam Festival

The Naadam Festival is the largest and most famous annual festival in Mongolia and is awash with colours and traditional costumes. Held in July each year in Ulaanbaatar, the event dates back to the Genghis Khan period. Witness the sporting prowess of the Mongolian men as they compete in wrestling, horse racing and archery. These are known as the three manly games although women also take part in the horse racing and archery events.

Selected Hotels

Kempinski Hotel Khan Palace

★★★★

The Kempinski is possibly the best hotel in Ulaanbaatar offering world-renowned and individual services. The inimitable charm of the guestrooms creates a luxurious ambiance and delivers a privileged lifestyle for travellers. Dining options include Mongolian, European and Japanese cuisine. The hotel also features a luxury spa and gym facilities.

Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel

★★★★

Located in the heart of Ulaanbaatar, the recently opened Tuushin Hotel has modern rooms fitted to a high standard and a staff that are proud of their attentive service. The hotel also features three restaurants, a beauty spa, a sauna, and a fitness centre.

Terelj Hotel

★★★★★

The Terelj Hotel is a luxurious alternative to staying in a ger when visiting Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. This elegant resort provides the highest standards of comfort while providing access to pristine countryside. Hotel facilities include a rejuvenating spa, indoor pool set in a colonnaded pavilion and a fitness suite.

Ger Camps

Outside of Ulaanbaatar, accommodation choices are restricted and we highly recommend staying in a ger (also known as a yurt). These traditional dwellings are circular in shape and consist of a wooden frame covered in felt. They are used by nomadic peoples and can be quickly disassembled and reassembled when they need to move location.

Gers are typically basic in nature although those used by tourists may have more modern facilities incorporated or offered in a nearby building. Please contact us for details of specific camps.

Recommendations

Ulaanbaatar & Terelj

DAY 1: Arrive in Ulaanbaatar.

DAY 2: Visit the Bogd Khaan Palace Museum and the Winter Palace. Visit Sukhbaatar Square and Government House to see the nine state banners as well as Zaisan Hill for panoramic views of the city. Enjoy a traditional Mongolian dinner.

DAY 3: Explore the Museum of Mongolian History and the Museum of Natural History. Also visit Gandan Monastery and the local markets.

DAY 4: Travel to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. Explore Turtle Rock and hike to Aryabal Monastery to visit a local nomadic family. Stay overnight in a ger.

DAY 5: Spend time with the local family and learn about their lifestyle including the preparation of dairy products. Return to Ulaanbaatar.

DAY 6: Depart Ulaanbaatar.

Alternatively stay at Terelj Hotel in the national park

Gobi Desert Discovery

DAY 1: Depart from Ulaanbaatar. Visit Baga Gazriin Chuluu Lake and the ruins of the Sum Khukh Burd Temple.

DAY 2: Visit the Sangiin Dalai Temple and continue to Bayanzag.

DAY 3: Visit the Flaming Cliffs, the site of numerous fossil discoveries. Continue to the Yoln Am National Park and hike to the gorge and glacier.

DAY 4: Drive to Khongoryn Els. Visit the Seruun Bulag Spring and walk on the famous Singing Sand Dunes.

DAYS 5-6: Travel to Ongiin Khiid and visit the monastery ruins. Continue to the ancient imperial capital of Karakorum.

DAY 7: Visit the ruins of Karakorum and Erdene-Zuu, once one of the largest monasteries in Mongolia. Return to Ulaanbaatar.

This itinerary uses ger camp accommodation



Inspiring Itineraries



Inspiring Itineraries

Here you will find a selection of itineraries that have been popular with past travellers. They are a great choice if you are looking for a tour that visits the main sights of a region and with specially negotiated prices they represent excellent value. One of these itineraries may suit you perfectly or you may modify them or we can design something completely unique.



Monks at the ancient temples of Angkor

Guide Prices

To help you to choose an itinerary that fits your budget we have provided guide prices. These are per person based on two people sharing a room. The guide price is an indicative amount purely to aid your planning and the actual price may vary significantly from this. In particular prices are seasonal and will depend on the cost of flights, hotels and other services at the time of booking as well as any alterations you make to the itinerary. Please ask for an individual quote and one of our specialists will provide prices that are specific to you.

Inclusions

Unless stated otherwise, the guide prices for the suggested itineraries include the following: international flights in economy class, transfers, accommodation, touring with private guides and private vehicle, entrance fees and visa fees for UK and EU passport holders. Inclusive meals will vary. If you wish to alter the inclusions just let us know.

Accommodation

Hotels are usually available in a range of standards from 4-star to the best available. Inspired accommodation is not necessarily the most luxurious, but instead may be notable for its individuality, specific location or heritage. Since Inspired hotels vary significantly and have many options, prices are on request. If you wish you may select accommodation in different categories in different locations.

Extensions and Stopovers

There are many options for adding to our inspiring itineraries. Popular choices include Hong Kong (pages 46-49), Thailand (pages 72-75) and Malaysia (pages 76-79), however we can add any destination of your choice in Asia. Read through the brochure and also see page 127 for more tour extensions and stopovers.

Visit our Website

Visit www.asiainspirations.co.uk for more information and a even wider range of tours. Here you can find detailed day-to-day itineraries and picture galleries to help you find the right holiday for you. There is also a convenient Quote Request feature so you may contact us online if you wish. The website is regularly updated with new destinations, hotels and tours, so please visit for the latest information.

Your Personal Itinerary

Please contact one of our tailor-made specialists to discuss your travel plans so we may answer your questions and give further advice. We will then provide a detailed and individually-tailored itinerary that will include a price that is specific to you.

China Express

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Shanghai.

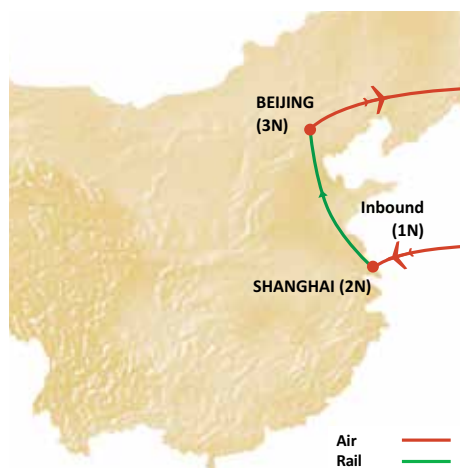
DAY 3: Visit the Old Town and Yu Gardens and take a walk along the Bund. Also visit the Jade Buddha Temple. In the evening enjoy a dinner of Shanghai cuisine followed by a Huangpu River Cruise.

DAY 4: Visit the Shanghai Museum and transfer to the railway station. Ride the bullet train to Beijing. The journey of 800 miles takes around 5 hours with a maximum speed of nearly 200mph.

DAY 5: Stroll across Tiananmen Square and visit the Forbidden City. Also explore the unique Temple of Heaven.

DAY 6: Walk on the Great Wall and visit the Summer Palace. In the evening enjoy a Peking Duck dinner followed by a Chinese acrobatic show.

DAY 7: Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £2,415

5 star around £3,045

INSPIRED on request

In Pursuit of Pandas

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Beijing.

DAY 3: Explore Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. Enjoy a Peking Duck Dinner.

DAY 4: Visit the Great Wall and Summer Palace. See a Chinese acrobatic show.

DAY 5: Fly to Xian and walk on the ancient city wall. Enjoy a Shui Jiao dumpling dinner and Tang Dynasty dancing show.

DAY 6: See the Terracotta Warriors and fly to Chengdu.

DAY 7: Visit the Leshan Grand Buddha and Huanglongxi Ancient Town. Enjoy a Sichuan meal in the evening.

DAY 8: Visit the Chengdu Panda Reserve with an optional Panda Care Experience at additional cost. Explore Jinli Street.

DAY 9: Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £2,840

5 star around £3,465

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour



Discover Giant Pandas in Chengdu

Glories of China

- DAY 1:** Depart UK.
- DAY 2:** Arrive in Shanghai.
- DAY 3:** Visit the Old Town and Yu Gardens. Also visit the Shanghai Museum.
- DAY 4:** Walk along the Bund and explore Xintiandi. Take an evening Huangpu River Cruise.
- DAY 5:** Fly to Guilin and visit Seven Star Park.
- DAY 6:** Cruise on the Li River to Yangshuo.
- DAY 7:** Discover the beautiful countryside around Yangshuo. The afternoon is at leisure with optional activities including cycling, rafting and walking.
- DAY 8:** Explore Mt Diecai. Fly to Xian and enjoy a Shui Jiao dumpling dinner and Tang Dynasty dancing show.
- DAY 9:** See the Terracotta Warriors and walk on the ancient city wall.
- DAY 10:** Visit the Little Wild Goose Pagoda, the Shaanxi Museum and the Muslim Quarter. Fly to Beijing and enjoy a Peking Duck dinner.
- DAY 11:** Stroll across Tiananmen Square and discover the Forbidden City.



- DAY 12:** Visit the Great Wall and Temple of Heaven.
- DAY 13:** Visit the Summer Palace and see a Chinese acrobatic show.
- DAY 14:** Fly to the UK.

Guide Prices

4 star around £3,360

5 star around £4,095

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour



Admire the scenery of the Li River

A China Experience

- DAY 1:** Depart UK.
- DAY 2:** Arrive in Shanghai.
- DAY 3:** Explore Wuzhen with its narrow canals, old buildings and flagstone streets.
- DAY 4:** Visit the Old Town and Yu Gardens. Walk along the Bund, visit the Shanghai Museum and explore the historic area of Xintiandi. Take an evening Huangpu River Cruise.
- DAY 5:** Fly to Xian and enjoy a Shui Jiao dumpling dinner and Tang Dynasty dancing show.
- DAY 6:** See the Terracotta Warriors and walk on the ancient city wall.
- DAY 7:** Visit the Little Wild Goose Pagoda, the Shaanxi Museum and the Muslim Quarter. Fly to Beijing.
- DAY 8:** Explore Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. See a Chinese acrobatic show.
- DAY 9:** Visit the Great Wall and Summer Palace. Enjoy a Peking Duck dinner.
- DAY 10:** Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £2,840

5 star around £3,465

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour

Majestic Yangtze

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Shanghai.

DAY 3: Visit the Old Town and Yu Gardens. Walk along the Bund, visit the Shanghai Museum and take an evening Huangpu River Cruise.

DAYS 4-7: Fly to Yichang and board your Yangtze Cruise ship for 4 nights.

DAY 8: Disembark in Chongqing and take the bullet train to Chengdu.

DAY 9: Visit the Chengdu Panda Reserve. Fly to Xian and enjoy a Shui Jiao dumpling dinner and Tang Dynasty dancing show.

DAY 10: See the Terracotta Warriors and walk on the ancient city wall.

DAY 11: Visit the Little Wild Goose Pagoda, the Shaanxi Museum and the Muslim Quarter. Fly to Beijing.

DAY 12: Visit the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace. See a Chinese acrobatic show.

DAY 13: Visit the Great Wall and Temple of Heaven. Enjoy a Peking Duck dinner.

DAY 14: Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £3,465

5 star around £4,305

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour

Wonders of China

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Beijing.

DAY 3: Explore Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. Enjoy a Peking Duck Dinner.

DAY 4: Visit the Great Wall and Summer Palace. See a Chinese acrobatic show.

DAY 5: Fly to Xian and enjoy a Shui Jiao dumpling dinner and Tang Dynasty dancing show.

DAY 6: See the Terracotta Warriors and walk on the ancient city wall.

DAYS 7-10: Fly to Wuhan and transfer to Yichang by train. Board your Yangtze Cruise ship for 4 nights.

DAY 11: Disembark in Chongqing and visit the Panda House. Fly to Guilin and visit Reed Flute Cave.

DAY 12: Cruise on the Li River to Yangshuo.

DAY 13: Discover the beautiful countryside around Yangshuo. The afternoon is at leisure with optional activities including cycling, rafting and walking.

DAY 14: Fly to Shanghai and visit the Shanghai Museum.



DAY 15: Visit the Old Town and Yu Gardens. Walk along the Bund, discover Pudong and explore the historical area of Xintiandi. Take an evening Huangpu River Cruise.

DAY 16: Fly to the UK.

Guide Prices

4 star around £3,675

5 star around £4,520

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour



Walk on the magnificent Great Wall

Vietnam Impressions

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Hanoi.

DAY 3: Explore the Old Quarter, One Pillar Pagoda and Temple of Literature. Visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum (closed Sep-Dec) and the Stilt House. In the evening enjoy a Water Puppet performance.

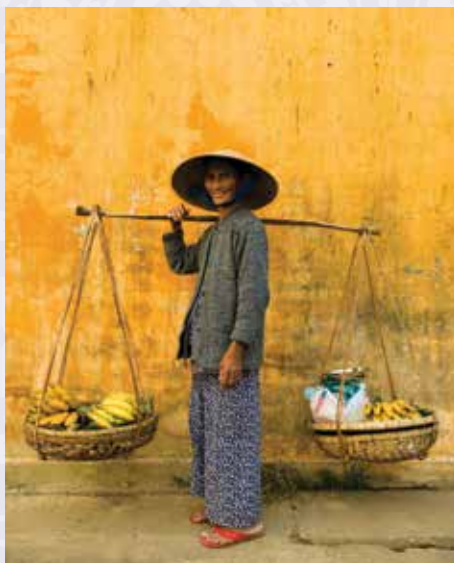
DAY 4: Day junk-boat cruise on Halong Bay.

DAY 5: Fly to Danang, transfer to Hoi An via Marble Mountains. In the evening enjoy a cookery class.

DAY 6: Walking tour of Hoi An with the afternoon at leisure.

DAY 7: Fly to Saigon. See Notre Dame Cathedral, the Reunification Palace, Central Post Office, War Remnants Museum and Ben Thanh Market.

DAY 8: Visit the Cu Chi Tunnels and attend the noon service at the Cao Dai Temple in Tay Ninh.



Streets of Hoi An

DAY 9: Visit Ben Tre to explore the waterways of the Mekong Delta. Return to Saigon and take an evening flight to the UK.

DAY 10: Arrive UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £3,840

5 star around £3,360

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour

Vietnam Panorama

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Saigon.

DAY 3: See Notre Dame Cathedral, the Reunification Palace, Central Post Office, War Remnants Museum and the markets.

DAY 4: Visit Ben Tre to explore the waterways of the Mekong Delta and travel to Can Tho to stay overnight.

DAY 5: Further exploration of the Mekong Delta. Return to Saigon.

DAY 6: Visit the Cu Chi Tunnels and attend the noon service at the Cao Dai Temple.

DAY 7: Travel by road to Dalat and discover this picturesque hill station.

DAY 8: Explore Dalat town and its market. Visit Trai Mat village by train.

DAY 9: Travel by road to Nha Trang and take a cruise around the islands.

DAY 10: Travel by road to Qui Nhon via the Po Nagar Cham Towers.

DAY 11: Visit My Lai and continue to Hoi An.

DAY 12: Walking tour of Hoi An with the afternoon at leisure.

DAY 13: Travel by road to Hue via Marble Mountains. Ride by cyclo to the citadel.

DAY 14: Cruise on the Perfume River. See Thien Mu Pagoda and the Royal Tombs.

DAY 15: Fly to Hanoi. Explore the Old Quarter and see the Fine Arts Museum.

DAY 16: Visit One Pillar Pagoda and Temple of Literature, Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum (closed Sep-Dec) and the Stilt House. In the evening enjoy a Water Puppet performance.

DAY 17: Day junk-boat cruise on Halong Bay.

DAY 18: Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £3,780

5 star around £4,200

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour

Vietnam & Cambodia Explorer

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Hanoi.

DAY 3: Explore the Old Quarter, One Pillar Pagoda and Temple of Literature. Visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum (closed Sep-Dec) and the Stilt House. In the evening enjoy a Water Puppet performance.

DAY 4: Day junk-boat cruise on Halong Bay.

DAY 5: Fly to Danang, transfer to Hoi An via Marble Mountains. In the evening enjoy a cookery class.



Cyclist in Saigon

DAY 6: Walking tour of Hoi An with the afternoon at leisure.

DAY 7: Fly to Saigon. See Notre Dame Cathedral, the Reunification Palace, Central Post Office, War Remnants Museum and Ben Thanh Market.

DAY 8: Visit the Cu Chi Tunnels and attend the noon service at the Cao Dai Temple in Tay Ninh.

DAY 9: Visit Ben Tre to explore the waterways of the Mekong Delta. Fly to Siem Reap.

DAYS 10-11: Explore Angkor Wat and the other main temples.

DAY 12: Fly to Phnom Penh. Visit the Tuol Sleng Museum and the Killing Fields. Enjoy a sunset cruise on the Mekong River.

DAY 13: Visit the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda. Take an evening flight to the UK.

DAY 14: Arrive UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £3,675

5 star around £3,990

INSPIRED on request

Highlights of Indochina

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Phnom Penh.

DAY 3: Visit the Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng Museum. See the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda. Enjoy a sunset cruise on the Mekong River.

DAY 4: Fly to Siem Reap. Explore Angkor Wat and the other main temples.

DAY 5: A full day discovering more temples at the Angkor complex.

DAY 6: Fly to Luang Prabang.

DAY 7: Explore Luang Prabang and visit the Kuang Si Falls.

DAY 8: Dawn alms ritual with the local monks and take a boat to Pak Ou Caves. Evening Ramayana performance.

DAY 9: Fly to Vientiane and take a tour of the city.

DAY 10: Fly to Hanoi.

DAY 11: Explore the Old Quarter, One Pillar Pagoda and Temple of Literature. Visit Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum (closed Sep-Dec) and the Stilt House. Enjoy a Water Puppet performance.

DAY 12: Day cruise on Halong Bay.

DAY 13: Fly to Danang, transfer to Hoi An. In the evening enjoy a cookery class.

DAY 14: Walking tour of Hoi An with the afternoon at leisure.

DAY 15: Fly to Saigon. See Notre Dame Cathedral, the Reunification Palace, Central Post Office, War Remnants Museum and Ben Thanh Market.

DAY 16: Visit the Cu Chi Tunnels and attend the noon service at the Cao Dai Temple.

DAY 17: Explore the Mekong Delta. Take an evening flight to the UK.

DAY 18: Arrive UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £4,095

5 star around £4,725

INSPIRED on request

Mekong Cruise & Angkor

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Saigon.

DAY 3: A half-day tour of the city and enjoy free time at Ben Thanh Market.

DAY 4: Board your Pandaw cruise ship.

DAY 5: Explore the Mekong Delta with a visit to Cai Be floating market and a sampan excursion through the waterways.

DAY 6: Visit a Chiam tribal village, a catfish farm and enjoy a trishaw ride around Chau Doc. Cross into Cambodia.

DAY 7: Take a personal cyclo tour of Phnom Penh. Optional excursion to Tuol Sleng Museum and the Killing Fields.

DAY 8: Excursion up the Tonle River by boat or road (depending on water levels) to Kampong Chhnang and explore the wetlands by motorboat.

DAY 9: Visit Chong Koh silk weaving village and Peam Chi Kang village to see a local school and monastery.

DAY 10: Climb to Wat Hanchey, a pagoda with views over the Mekong. Visit the holy mountains of Phnom Pros and Phnom Srey and the village of Choeungkok.



DAY 11: Disembark your Pandaw Cruise and transfer to Siem Reap.

DAY 12: Watch sunrise over Angkor Wat. Visit Angkor Thom, the Bayon and Ta Prohm.

DAY 13: Take a boat trip on Tonle Sap or learn about silk production (depending on water levels). Explore the Small Circuit of Temples.

DAY 14: Explore Banteay Srei and the Grand Circuit of Temples. Fly to the UK.

DAY 15: Arrive UK.

Guide Price

Around £5,150 with Pandaw River Cruises and 5 star hotels



Explore the waterways of the Mekong Delta

Irrawaddy Adventure

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive Rangoon.

DAY 3: A walking tour of the city to include Shwedagon Pagoda, Sule Pagoda, the Reclining Buddha, Bogyoke Market and the Night Market.

DAY 4: Fly to Mandalay and visit the main sights of the city. Board the Road to Mandalay cruise ship.

DAY 5: Discover Burmese life in a local village. Cruise downriver.

DAY 6: Discover the ancient city of Bagan.

DAY 7: Visit Mount Popa where monasteries and pagodas sit on top of a rocky crag.

DAY 8: Explore Bagan's local markets. Cruise upriver.

DAY 9: Visit Sagaing, a religious centre and famous for its silversmiths.

DAY 10: Visit Maymyo, a colonial hill station.

DAY 11: Disembark and fly to Rangoon.

DAYS 12-13: Fly to the UK.



Guide Price

Around £4,520 with Orient Express and 5 star hotels

Golden Triangle

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Delhi.

DAY 3: Visit India Gate, the Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb. Continue to Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple and Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India. Also explore the markets of Chandni Chowk and Connaught Place.

DAY 4: Travel by road to Agra stopping at Sikandra to see the marble tomb of Akbar.

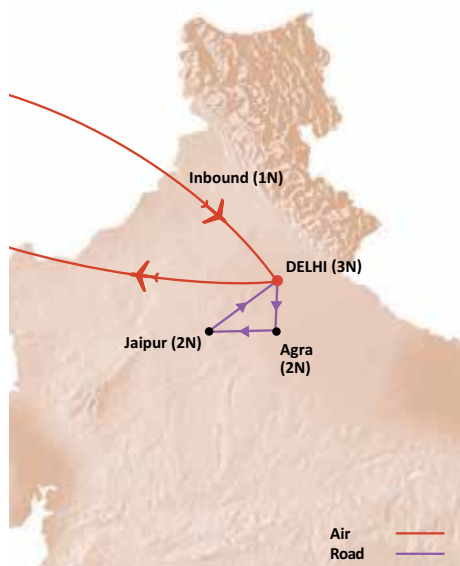
DAY 5: Visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise and explore Agra Fort.

DAY 6: Visit the abandoned Moghul city of Fatehpur Sikri and continue to Jaipur.

DAY 7: See the Palace of the Winds before exploring Amer Fort. Visit the City Palace, Jantar Mantar Observatory and the local bazaar at Choti Choper.

DAY 8: Return to Delhi by road.

DAY 9: Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

4 star around £2,205

5 star around £2,520

INSPIRED on request

Golden Triangle & Rajasthan

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Delhi.

DAY 3: Visit India Gate, the Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb. Continue to Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple and Jama Masjid and also explore Chandni Chowk and Connaught Place.

DAY 4: Travel by road to Agra stopping at Sikandra to see the marble tomb of Akbar.

DAY 5: Visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise and explore Agra Fort.

DAY 6: Visit Fatehpur Sikri and continue to Jaipur.

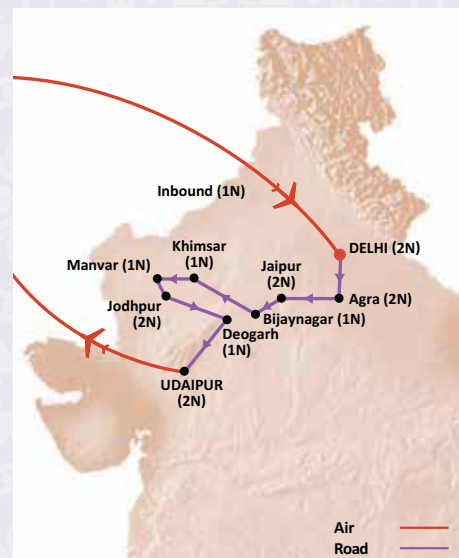
DAY 7: See the Palace of the Winds before exploring Amer Fort. Visit the City Palace, Jantar Mantar Observatory and the local bazaar at Choti Choper.

DAY 8: Visit Kishangarh Fort. Continue to Bijaynagar and see the local market.

DAY 9: Travel to Khimsar and stay in a converted 15th century fortress.

DAY 10: Travel to Manvar. Enjoy a camel and jeep safari in the desert and stay in a tented camp.

DAY 11: Drive from Manvar to Jodhpur.



DAY 12: Visit Mehrangarh Fort and the museum in Umaid Bhawan Palace.

DAY 13: See Kumbhalgarh Fort and continue to Deogarh.

DAY 14: Visit the Jain temples at Ranakpur and continue to Udaipur. Take a cruise on Lake Pichola.

DAY 15: Visit the City Palace, Sahelion Ki Bari and the Folk Museum.

DAY 16: Fly to the UK via Mumbai or Delhi.

Guide Price

Around £2,840 staying in heritage hotels



Colours of Rajasthan

Flavours of India

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Delhi.

DAY 3: Visit the Red Fort and Jama Masjid. Sample the local speciality waswan for lunch and in the evening visit a family home for a cooking lesson.

DAY 4: Travel by road to Agra and visit Agra Fort. In the evening sample a wide variety of local kebab dishes.

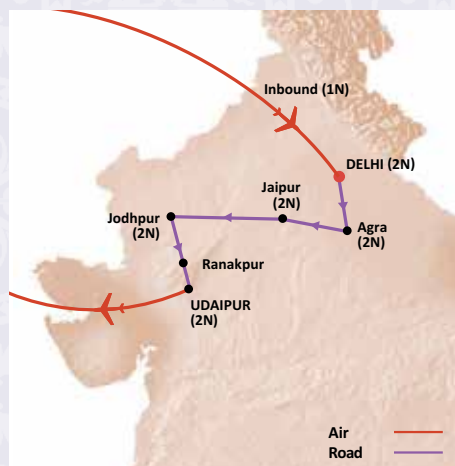
DAY 5: Visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise. Lunch is at a south Indian speciality restaurant.

DAY 6: Visit Fatehpur Sikri and stop in Bharatpur for a traditional Rajasthani lunch. Visit a rural family home and continue to Jaipur.

DAY 7: Visit Amer Fort, the City Palace and Jantar Mantar Observatory. Dinner will be at a rooftop restaurant with a live demonstration of Rajasthani cooking.

DAY 8: Drive from Jaipur to Jodhpur.

DAY 9: Visit Mehrangarh Fort and sample Marwari and Rajasthani food at a family home for lunch. Visit Mandore Gardens and the Sardar Market.



DAY 10: Visit the Jain temples at Ranakpur and continue to Udaipur. Lunch is at a palace serving multi-cuisine dishes.

DAY 11: Visit the City Palace, Jagdish Temple, Sahelion Ki Bari and cruise on Lake Pichola. Also enjoy a demonstration of local cooking.

DAY 12: Fly to the UK via Mumbai or Delhi.

Guide Price

Around £2,590 staying in heritage hotels



Experience the local flavours

South India Discovery

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Kochi.

DAY 3: Explore Kochi including the Santa Cruz Basilica, St. Francis Church and the Jewish Synagogue. Also see the unique Chinese fishing nets. Watch a Kathakali dance performance in the evening.

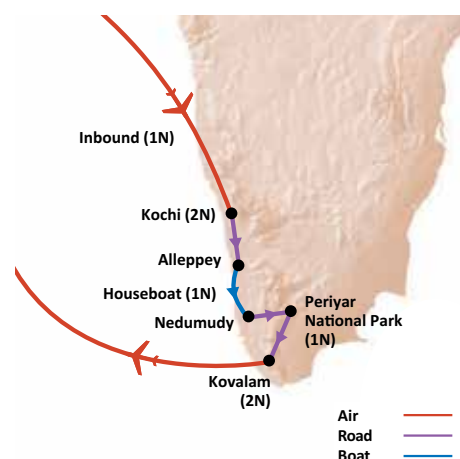
DAY 4: Transfer to Alleppey to board your kettuvallam houseboat. Cruise through the backwaters observing local life and stay on board overnight.

DAY 5: Disembark in Nedumudy and travel by road to Periyar National Park. Take a walk in the wildlife sanctuary which has over one thousand elephants.

DAY 6: Visit a local spice village and market. Continue to Kovalam.

DAY 7: Visit Trivandrum to see the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Kuthiramalika Palace, Sree Chitra Art Gallery and Napier Museum. Also explore the local fruit and vegetable market.

DAY 8: Fly to the UK.



Guide Prices

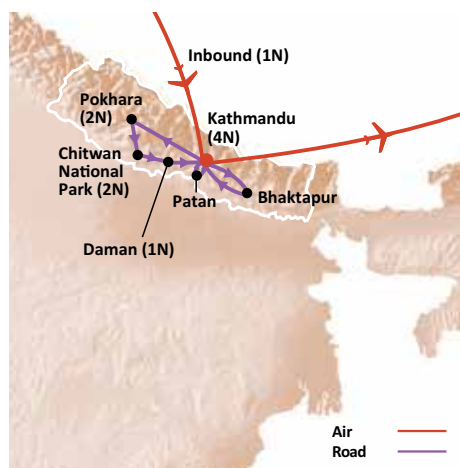
4 star around £1,995

5 star around £2,205

INSPIRED on request

Taste of Nepal

- DAY 1:** Depart UK.
- DAY 2:** Arrive in Kathmandu.
- DAY 3:** Spend the day exploring Patan and Kathmandu discovering palaces, temples and stupas.
- DAY 4:** Visit Bhaktapur to see the Golden Gate, Palace of 55 Windows and Changu Narayan. Return to Kathmandu.
- DAY 5:** Travel to Pokhara by road and visit the Barahi Temple.
- DAY 6:** Visit the Mountain Museum, enjoy a boat ride on Lake Phewa and take a short hike to the World Peace Pagoda.
- DAY 7:** Travel to Chitwan National Park and enjoy a jeep safari.
- DAY 8:** Take a morning and afternoon safari in the park.
- DAY 9:** Travel to Daman and visit the local monastery.
- DAY 10:** Return to Kathmandu.
- DAY 11:** Fly to the UK.

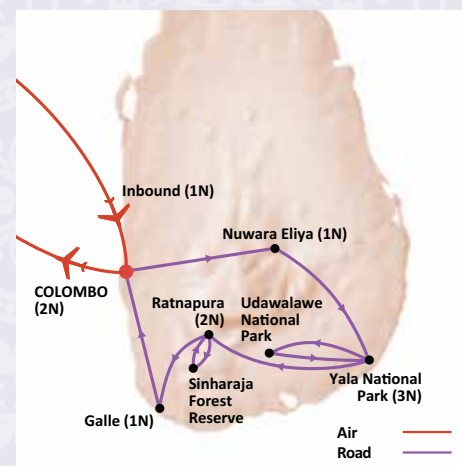


Guide Price

Around £2,625 based on a mix of local 3 and 4 star hotels

Sri Lanka at a Glance

- DAY 1:** Depart UK.
- DAY 2:** Arrive in Colombo.
- DAY 3:** Tour of the city including the Fort District and Pettah Market. Visit Kelaniya Buddhist Temple, Davatagaha Mosque, the Dutch Wolvendaal Church and the Colombo Museum. Travel to Nuwara Eliya and visit a tea estate.
- DAY 4:** Visit Sita Amman Temple and Hakgala Botanical Gardens. Travel by road to Yala National Park and enjoy an evening jeep safari.
- DAY 5:** Take a morning and evening jeep safari in Yala National Park. The reserve is noted for its leopards and large elephant population as well as many other animals.
- DAY 6:** Visit Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home which specialises in elephant welfare and cares for orphaned animals. Return to Yala.
- DAY 7:** Travel to Ratnapura to see the famous Ceylon Sapphires being mined.



- DAY 8:** Visit the Sinharaja Forest Reserve and return to Ratnapura.
- DAY 9:** Travel to Galle. See the lighthouse and Old Town and explore the Dutch Fort.
- DAY 10:** Return to Colombo.
- DAY 11:** Fly to the UK.

Guide Prices

4 star around £2,625

5 star around £3,050

INSPIRED on request



Tea Plantation, Sri Lanka

Discover Japan

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Tokyo.

DAY 3: Visit the shrine of Meiji-Jingu and the districts of Harajuku and Omotesando. Also explore Ginza, walk in the gardens of the Imperial Palace and visit Asakusa to see Senso-ji Temple, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple.

DAY 4: Join a group to travel to Mt Fuji and take in the views from the fifth station (weather permitting). Continue to Hakone to take a cruise on Lake Ashi and ride the Mt Komagatake cable car. Return to Tokyo by bullet train.

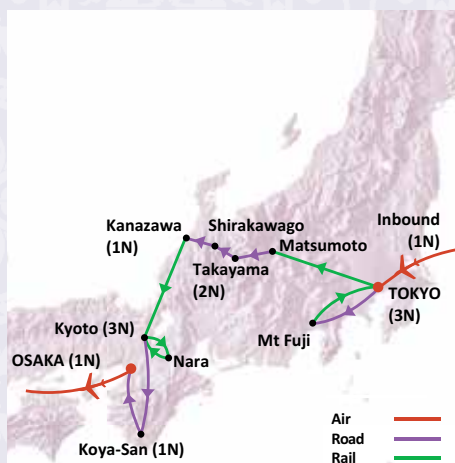
DAY 5: Travel to Matsumoto by train. Visit the sixteenth-century castle and continue to Takayama by express bus.

DAY 6: A full day tour of Takayama. Visit the museums, open houses and Hida Folk Village and walk along the temple trail.

DAY 7: Take the bus to Shirakawago to see the traditional farmhouses with steeply slanting roofs. Continue to Kanazawa by express bus.

DAY 8: Enjoy a walking tour of Kanazawa including Kenrokuen Garden. Take the express train to Kyoto.

DAY 9: A full day tour of Kyoto including the Golden Pavilion, a Zen temple and Nijo castle. Visit a traditional townhouse, learn about the tea ceremony and enjoy a bento lunch.



DAY 10: Take a day tour to Nara to see Todai-ji Temple, the world's largest wooden building and Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Also visit Fushimi Inari Shrine.

DAY 11: Transfer to Koya-San, an important Buddhist centre. Explore the mountain and stay in traditional temple lodgings.

DAY 12: Transfer to Osaka. In the afternoon visit Osaka Castle and take a cruise on Yodogawa River.

DAY 13: Fly to the UK.

Some elements of this itinerary are unguided and some use public transport

Guide Prices

4 star around £5,460

5 star around £5,775

INSPIRED on request

Also available as a group tour



Mt Fuji and cherry blossoms

Japan Impressions

DAY 1: Depart UK.

DAY 2: Arrive in Tokyo.

DAY 3: Visit the shrine of Meiji-Jingu and the districts of Harajuku and Omotesando. Also explore Ginza, walk in the gardens of the Imperial Palace and visit Asakusa to see Senso-ji Temple, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple.

DAY 4: Join a group to travel to Mt Fuji and take in the views from the fifth station (weather permitting). Continue to Hakone to take a cruise on Lake Ashi and ride the Mt Komagatake cable car. Return to Tokyo by bullet train.

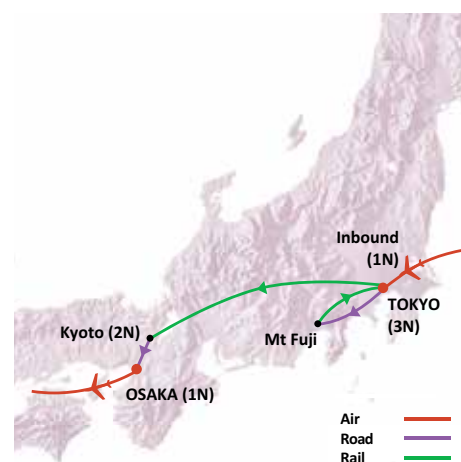
DAY 5: Travel to Kyoto by bullet train. Visit a traditional teahouse and enjoy a drink and snacks in the company of a geisha.

DAY 6: A full day tour of the historical sights of Kyoto including the Golden Pavilion, Daitoku-ji Zen temple complex and Nijo Castle.

DAY 7: Transfer to Osaka. In the afternoon visit Osaka Castle and take a cruise on Yodogawa River.

DAY 8: Fly to the UK.

Some elements of this itinerary are unguided and some use public transport



Guide Prices

4 star around £3,675

5 star around £3,990

INSPIRED on request

Hainan Island

Hainan is an island paradise in the South China Sea and a great place to relax at the end of your holiday. Known as the Hawaii of China, the island boasts clear blue waters and white sandy beaches. Here you can swim, play a round of golf and enjoy the excellent local cuisine. Also try out the Nantian Hot Springs with its many different treatments.

There are many places of interest around the island. Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone provides an insight into Hainan's

culture and the spirituality of Buddhism. Visit the traditionally designed Nanshan Temple, walk around the beautiful parks and see the 108m tall Guan Yin Buddha statue.

To experience the natural side of Hainan Island visit Jianfengling Natural Reserve. This is the largest tropical rainforest in China and is filled with exotic birds. Another option is Monkey Island (actually a peninsula) which is home to 2,000 macaque monkeys. Reach the reserve by cable car with great views over the forest and the sea.



Relax on a Hainan beach



Discover the diverse and vibrant city of Singapore

Singapore

Ethnically diverse Singapore offers a fascinating blend of Chinese, Malay and Indian traditions with a British colonial backdrop. While here visit the riverfront Merlion Park and the historical Buddhist-Taoist temple of Thian Hock Keng. Stroll around the National Orchid Garden and also visit Little India.

For a fun day out visit the island of Sentosa, Singapore's playground. Arrive by cable car and enjoy the many attractions and shows or relax on one of the beaches. Other popular activities in Singapore are enjoying the cuisine and immersing yourself in a shoppers' paradise.

Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Qatar

Several airlines from the Middle East offer excellent connections to Asia including Emirates via Dubai, Etihad Airways via Abu Dhabi and Qatar Airways via Doha. Here is your opportunity to break your journey and sample the Arabian Peninsula.

In each of these cities you have the opportunity to experience the contrast between old narrow lanes and gleaming modern buildings, traditional souks and sophisticated shopping malls. Visit the

local museums to understand the history and rapid development of the region and try out some of the local food such as shawarma and falafel.

If you are visiting Dubai, other options include discovering the fortress village of Hatta in the desert or taking a cruise on a traditional dhow. Dubai also has some excellent beaches if you are looking for relaxation. And since Dubai and Abu Dhabi are both cities in the United Arab Emirates they can easily be combined.



Dubai is a fascinating stopover destination



Exclusive experiences and ultimate luxury at the Peninsula Hong Kong

Concierge Service

Delivering the ultimate in premium service, unrivalled luxury and exclusive experiences our Concierge Service is designed for the most discerning of customers for whom only the very best will do. Call one of our specialists to discover how the Concierge Service can meet your exacting requirements.



Shangri-La service

Premium Service

The Concierge Service is designed for travellers who want to experience the very best of a destination and to do it completely on their own terms. With an exceptionally flexible approach we are able to ensure that your holiday is tailored to the finest detail.

Exclusive, bespoke itineraries are created by our passionate specialists who ensure you see what you want to see, the way you want to see it. We are committed to fulfilling your travel expectations from the time you contact us to the time you return home.



Professional private guiding

Exceptional Guiding

Our professional private guides will escort you to the heart of each destination. With their high level of service and attention to detail, they are integral in unveiling the fascinating nuances of each locale.

Dedicated to ensuring that every unique itinerary delivers the ultimate in freedom, our guides even allow itinerary changes on the go. Both driver and guide are available to you throughout the day and into the evening offering a personal chauffeur service. We will also provide you with a local mobile telephone so that you can contact your guide at any time.

Exclusive Experiences

As specialists in Asia with extensive contacts throughout the region, we offer many services and venues unavailable to the majority of travellers. Our exclusive service starts immediately on arrival with a VIP airport transfer. You are welcomed at the arrival gate and provided with baggage handling and assistance through immigration and customs.

The experiences we can provide are very broad and here are just a few examples. Witness the remarkable Terracotta Warriors from an exclusive viewing platform while in the company of an archaeologist who will provide expert explanations; learn the ancient art of Tai Chi with a private lesson by a local Tai Chi master; practice painting in the local style or learn calligraphy in a private art class with an accomplished local artist; and enjoy a private cooking class to learn about the local culinary techniques.

If you are looking for a more active experience ask us about walking and cycling options. Exploring with your private guide in this way allows a more intimate view of local life.

These are just a few of the many possibilities offered to our Concierge clients. We encourage you to bring us your own ideas so that together we can realise your ultimate holiday.

Fine Dining

Food is an important part of life in Asia, and the major cities offer contemporary restaurants meeting the highest international standards. All of our destinations allow travellers to experience a taste of the local cuisine, which varies widely throughout the region.

In Shanghai, enjoy the timeless elegance of Meilongzhen, a traditional restaurant popular with VIPs from all over the world. Visit The Schoolhouse close to the Great Wall, where elegant dining incorporates local influences. And in Chengdu, Ba Shu Ren Jia is famous for the flavourful dishes of Sichuan Province.

We can also arrange entry to many exclusive venues, such as the historic China Club in Beijing and the cosmopolitan Bar Rouge at Bund 18 in Shanghai.



Dim sum

Ultimate Luxury

The Concierge Service partners with only the finest hotels to provide you with the highest levels of comfort and service. We feature hotels such as Peninsula, Shangri-La, St. Regis and Banyan Tree that represent the most prestigious addresses within each city and offer the best in international and Asian hospitality. With each hotel we are able to provide advice about room upgrades, suites and club access.



Enjoy luxury and tranquillity at the Banyan Tree Hangzhou



British Airways offers direct flights to many Asian destinations

Useful Information

Flights

ASIA Inspirations works with reputable scheduled international airlines and reliable domestic airlines for internal flights. Having enjoyed an excellent working relationship with British Airways for many years we are proud to be a British Airways Preferred Partner and can offer direct flights to a number of Asian destinations. We also work with many other high quality airlines including Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Etihad Airways and others.

Ask about upgrades to premium economy, business class and first class.

Insurance

It is essential that you have adequate travel insurance when booking with ASIA Inspirations. If you already have your own policy, please provide us with the details so we have a record in case of emergency. Please speak with one of our specialists if you would like details of our recommended policy.

Visa Service

Many countries in Asia require a visa and ASIA Inspirations can provide a visa service at a reasonable charge for most countries that we visit. Please contact us for further information about this service.

Other Services

ASIA Inspirations is able to arrange airport lounge passes, airport parking and airport hotels to ensure you have a smooth and comfortable getaway. Let us know if you would like to voluntarily offset your flight carbon emissions.

Terms & Conditions

Your booking is subject to the terms and conditions of ASIA Inspirations by Wendy Wu Tours. These will be supplied with your personal itinerary prior to booking and are also available on our website.



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