



Overseas Adventure Travel

IMPORTANT

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Imperial China, Tibet and the Yangtze 2000



About Overseas Adventure Travel

Overseas Adventure Travel, founded in 1978, is America's leading adventure travel company. We are dedicated to providing active, mature travelers with unique opportunities for worldwide cultural and outdoor exploration — always in small exclusive groups.

OAT trips have been recommended by *The New York Times*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Travel and Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *US News & World Report*, and others. But our most impressive reviews come from our customers: Thousands of travelers have joined our trips, and 96% say they'd gladly travel with us again.

What This Trip is Like

Rating: Moderate/Challenging

About Adventure Travel in China

Unlike most group tours that visit China, ours is a small group experience that seeks to provide a more intimate and up-close view of life in the People's Republic. Traveling with no more than 15 others over the course of 20 days, you will find that camaraderie is an integral part of the experience. We seek to encounter the *humanity* of China as well as its great monuments, with built-in opportunities to meet the Chinese people where they live, work, and play. And of course, especially in the Yangtze region, we focus on China's tremendous natural endowment.

Though China is a developing country, it has made tremendous strides in the past decade with regards to its tourist infrastructure. You will find our hotels to be modern, well located, and able to offer most standard amenities. Still, overall quality of services is not consistently equal to what you would find in the United States or Europe. Travel and schedules here can be sometimes unpredictable, and there may be times when we cannot follow your published itinerary exactly. In these cases we ask that you bring an open mind and a sense of humor. We are experienced in responding to changing circumstances on the spot, and will do whatever it takes to ensure your comfort and satisfaction.

Hotel and Train Accommodations

We stay for 13 nights in first-class international hotels. In Beijing, Xian, Chengdu, Wuhan and Hong Kong, you can expect many international-class amenities. In Tibet you will enjoy clean and comfortable accommodations but with a less sophisticated array of amenities, and the occasional glitch in services, such as problems with hot water. At each hotel, you will have a private room with a private bath.

We spend one night aboard an overnight train between Beijing and Xian, in four-person sleeping compartments. Each compartment has two upper berths, two lower berths, and two washrooms. Smoking is not permitted on the train.

Yangtze River Cruise

We also spend four nights aboard a first-class Victoria Cruises Yangtze riverboat. Aboard ship, you'll stay in an outside cabin with a picture window, twin lower berths, television, and private bath. The dining rooms features fine Chinese cuisine and Western selections.

The ship, which is managed by a New York cruise company, is about 287 feet long and has a capacity of 154 passengers. It offers a full range of facilities including a night club, bar, health clinic, reading room, fitness center, gift shop, beauty salon, and laundry service.

Casual clothing is welcome on board. For the Captain's Cocktail Party and the Captain's Farewell Banquet, recommended attire is a jacket and tie for men and a dress for ladies. There will be lectures on Chinese history and culture as well as live entertainment featuring traditional Chinese performing arts. All excursions during the cruise are included.

Meals

This program includes most meals. We have purposely left out one dinner in Hong Kong so you can sample the vast array of dining options available in this most cosmopolitan of cities.

Our breakfasts are all western-style affairs that include coffee, eggs, toast, and other typical fare. Lunch and dinner is served family style in local restaurants and hotel dining rooms. We gather around tables for a generous repast, passing dishes around on a lazy Susan. Since there can be up to thirteen courses in a given sitting, there is usually something to please every palate!

Most of our travelers find the food very good and quite different from the Chinese food they are used to at home. The regional style of cooking in each city varies quite a bit. Look forward to specialties like dumplings in Xian, barley dishes in Tibet, Szechuan chili peppers in Chengdu, and our Peking Duck banquet in Beijing. Our hosts will also do their best to offer Western meal selections at many of your meals.

Food has always been a precious commodity in China and chefs are skilled at finding creative ways to prepare whatever the current harvest happens to yield. Everywhere we go, we'll find selections based on seasonal crops like watermelon, green beans, cucumbers, peppers, and more.

Pacing and transportation

Except for the relaxing cruise portion of our stay, the pacing of this trip is fairly brisk, with active sightseeing days, and stays as follows: 3 nights in Beijing, 1 night on a train, 2 nights in Xian, 2 nights in Chengdu, 3 nights in Lhasa, 4 nights aboard ship, 1 night in Wuhan, and 2 nights in Hong Kong.

The normal routine on our adventure travel trips is "early to bed and early to rise." We usually get up shortly after sunrise so we can accomplish each day's activities without rushing. An early schedule also enables us to drive in the cool of the morning and beat the crowds

There are several overland transfers by minibus, and four internal flights aboard domestic Chinese airlines. These carriers provide "no frills" service and are often the only means available to reach our destinations in an efficient manner. Delays and routing changes are often part of the picture here, and we hope that like most of our travelers, you can take it in stride and develop an accepting and even lighthearted attitude. It's part of the adventure! Our flights are all short — the longest one (from Chengdu to Lhasa) lasts less than three hours.

Physical Activities

This trip is designed for people who enjoy walking and have a good baseline level of fitness and mobility. However, the minimum physical demands of the trip are not highly rigorous. Our active sightseeing schedule features many historic sites that may include steep and uneven stairs without handrails—such as the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet—and cobbled or dusty streets. Some of our city explorations occur on foot. All walking trips are optional, and you can skip as many as you like, but to get the most out of the trip you should plan on joining in at least some of them. Comfortable, well-broken-in walking shoes are a must.

Overland travel in China often takes place on roads that can be dusty and rough. During our Yangtze River cruise, there are ramps and riverbanks to negotiate as we board and exit our riverboat. Please speak with our Adventure Specialists if you are not sure about the physical demands of the trip.

Expert Trip Leaders

Our bilingual trip leaders are knowledgeable, friendly, resourceful, and delightfully pleasant traveling companions. Most are citizens and life-long residents of China.

Let your leader know about your special interests and how he or she can help you have a great trip. Our Trip Leader travels to Hong Kong with you. A bilingual local guide will also meet you in Hong Kong to assist you for the balance of your trip.

High Altitude

We fly into Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, which is located at an altitude of over 12,000 feet. You will probably feel the effects of high altitude for the first day or two. That is, you may tire easily, feel short of breath, and possibly experience headache, sleeplessness, or loss of appetite. For most people, these symptoms are mild and pass fairly quickly. See Section 5 of your Traveler's Handbook for information about Diamox, a medication that has been approved for the prevention of mountain sickness.

Average Daily Afternoon High Temperatures (°F), Humidity, & Rainfall

MONTH	Beijing			Lhasa; ,		
	Temp	% Relative Humidity (1230 hrs)	Avg Monthly Rainfall (in.)	Temp	Relative Humidity (1230 hrs)	Avg Monthly Rainfall (in.)
JAN	34	50	0.2	44	71	0
FEB	39	50	0.2	48	71	0.5
MAR	52	48	0.3	53	72	0.3
APR	70	46	0.7	60	67	0.2
MAY	81	49	1.4	67	59	1.0
JUN	88	56	3.1	75	64	2.5
JUL	88	72	9.6	74	71	4.8
AUG	86	74	5.6	72	72	3.5
SEP	79	67	2.3	70	71	2.6
OCT	68	59	0.6	62	64	0.5
NOV	48	56	0.4	55	71	0.1
DEC	37	51	0.1	48	71	0.0

MONTH	Hong Kong		
	Temp	% Relative Humidity (1230 hrs)	Avg Monthly Rainfall (in.)
JAN	64	66	1.3
FEB	63	73	1.8
MAR	67	74	2.9
APR	75	77	5.4
MAY	82	78	11.5
JUN	85	77	15.5
JUL	87	77	15.0
AUG	87	77	14.2
SEP	85	72	10.1
OCT	81	75	4.5
NOV	74	73	1.7
DEC	68	74	1.2

Please note: The data cited above reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. They reflect meteorological trends tabulated over many years and reported by various sources, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the US National Weather Service, and the New York Times *World Weather Guide*. Data shown are for sites we visit or the nearest regional equivalents. As your departure approaches you may wish to monitor current overseas weather conditions through major newspapers, various Internet sites, or the Weather Channel.

Included in our Package Price:

- **Round-trip international airfare** — from West Coast cities to Beijing, returning from Hong Kong to West Coast cities
- 13 nights hotel accommodations
- 4 nights on the Yangtze River aboard a first-class Victoria Cruises riverboat
- 1 night on a train between Beijing and Xian
- 51 meals: 18 breakfasts, 16 lunches, 17 dinners
- 1 bottle of drinking water per day in China
- Expert trip leaders to accompany you throughout the trip
- Local city guides in all destinations
- Sightseeing and activities as described in the itinerary, including cultural performances, home visits, and other activities
- All admissions and entry fees for included sightseeing
- All land transportation and flights within China
- All airport transfers for group flights
- Tips for included meals
- Baggage portorage
- 5% Frequent Traveler Discount off your next OAT trip

Not Included:

- Air taxes (see your invoice for exact amounts)
- Additional departure taxes payable in local currency at overseas airports (total approximately \$42, subject to changes in Chinese policy and changes in exchange rates):

X'ian—RMB 50 (Renmimbi/Chinese Yuan), approx. \$6 USD

Chengdu—RMB 50, approx. \$6 USD

Lhasa—RMB 50, approx. \$6 USD

Wuhan—RMB 90, approx. \$11 USD

Hong Kong—HKD \$100 (Hong Kong Dollars), approx. \$13 USD

- Optional gratuities to trip leaders and local guides
- Travel insurance
- Beverages other than the 1 bottle of water provided daily and tea, coffee, or bottled water included with meals
- Laundry and personal items
- Visa fees, about \$80

Hotel in Vancouver

Some passengers may need to overnight in Vancouver before the trip. We can make this reservation for you at an additional cost. Please call for details.

Tipping Suggestions

All tipping on your trip is optional, and the amounts you give, if any, are strictly your own decision. Many travelers ask us for suggestions, so we offer the following guidelines.

- Many travelers budget between 5% and 6% of their trip cost for all tips.
- Your trip leader will tip hotel porters for one bag per person. For your hotel housekeeping staff, if you want to give something extra, a tip worth \$1 or less is sufficient.
- The trip leader or a volunteer group member can 'pass the hat' for your bus drivers and local guides. Please note that drivers and guides should be tipped separately. We suggest tipping drivers about \$1 per day and local guides about \$2.50 per day. This works out as follows, based on days spent in each city:
 - Beijing: local guide \$7.50, driver \$4
 - Xi'an: local guide \$5, driver \$2
 - Yangtze cruise excursion guides: \$3 to \$5
 - Yangtze cruise staff: \$30 to \$40
 - Lhasa: local guide \$7.50, driver \$3
 - Chengdu: local guide \$5, driver \$2
 - Wuhan: local guide \$2.50, driver \$1
 - Hong Kong: local guide \$5, driver \$2
- For a tip to the trip leader, many people give between \$100 and \$120.
- Remember that amounts given, if any, are a personal decision, and every group member does not need to give the same amount.

Imperial China, Tibet, & the Yangtze River

An exploration of China's rarest cultural and natural treasures, including the Yangtze Gorges, the Terra Cotta Army, and a unique visit to Tibet. Also with a visit to Hong Kong.

20 days: 13 nights in comfortable hotels. 1 night aboard an overnight train, 4 nights aboard a First-Class Yangtze River Victoria Cruises riverboat

Optional Extension: 5-day post-trip extension to Bali

- Cruise down the imperiled Yangtze Gorges before they disappear forever beneath the waters of a controversial dam
- Witness the realities of life in Tibet when you visit a local home in exotic Lhasa
- Explore Lhasa's awe-inspiring Potala Palace
- Enjoy a rare tour of Beijing's authentic *hutong* neighborhoods
- Explore the imperial riches of Beijing's Forbidden City and Summer Palace
- Walk along the Great Wall of China
- Enjoy a visit to the magnificent Terra Cotta Army in Xian
- Experience the new Hong Kong during its historic transition back to Chinese rule

Travel to China's furthest reaches as we seek out the great treasures of the mysterious Middle Kingdom. On this adventure program you'll delve deep into China's imperial history, cruise down the spectacular and soon-too-be-lost Three Gorges of the Yangtze, and seek out the side of China that is hidden from the ordinary tourist. From Beijing, to the Terra Cotta Army of Xian, to Tibet, Hong Kong, and beyond, let China's great story unfold for you.

To reserve your trip call 1-800-955-1925

Itinerary

We have indicated the hotels where we stay each night and the meals (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner) included each day.

Day 1 Depart the USA from Vancouver

We depart from Vancouver early in the evening and fly nonstop to Beijing on Canadian Pacific Airlines. Due to flight schedules, you may need to spend the night in Vancouver before your flight departs. We can arrange a hotel for you. See the note under "Not Included" on page 6.

Meals in flight

Overnight Flight

Day 2 Arrive in China

Meet your trip leader in Beijing

We fly across the International Dateline and arrive in Beijing in the late afternoon. Flight duration is about 12 hours. Your trip leader meets your flight and is with you throughout your time in China. We check into our hotel, where we have a welcome briefing including some language tips and a buffet dinner.

Meals in flight, Dinner

Beijing Hotel

Day 3 Great Wall of China

Ming Tombs

This morning we drive by minibus through the outskirts of Beijing to Badaling, our entry point to the Great Wall of China. China's Great Wall easily qualifies as the world's greatest civil engineering feat. The massive ramparts were begun in separate strategic sections between 403-221 BC. During the reign of China's first Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, some 300,000 men were put to work connecting the segments into one huge, snaking fortification. Archaeologists estimate that the wall once ran for 6,200 miles through an expanse that now covers 16 provinces. Today, the wall is still impressive at 3,750 miles in length (from the Bohai Sea to the Gobi Desert).

Contrary to common belief, the Great Wall was more than just a barrier. Instead, it served as an elevated highway linking the defensive forces along China's rugged northern frontier. The roadway atop the wall provided a means of rapid communication and deployment of troops, arms, and food. The section of the wall we visit is about 21 feet high and 18-21 feet wide - broad enough for ten men to march abreast.

Today we also see the Ming Tombs (*Shisanling*), where 13 emperors of the Ming Dynasty are interred. Animal sculptures set among pines and cypresses line the route to the underground palaces where the coffins of the emperors and their wives rest.

We have lunch in a local restaurant today. After returning to our hotel, we have a welcome dinner featuring Peking Duck at a Beijing restaurant.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Beijing Hotel

Day 4 Explore Beijing: Forbidden City Tiananmen Square Old Hutong

Beijing, the modern political and administrative center of China, is also the greatest single repository of monuments and treasures from the imperial era. Today you'll see some of the most notable of them.

Like the old Chinese puzzles of "boxes within boxes," Beijing was originally laid out in a series of concentric circles. We focus on the innermost two today: the Forbidden City, and surrounding Imperial City. We begin our exploration at grand Tiananmen Square. At 100 acres, it is the largest public square in the world, capable of holding more than a million people. Each of the cobbles is numbered so that parade units can line up in their assigned spots. But as you explore, you may remember more somber events as we recall the tragic student demonstrations that took place here in 1989. Lined with official buildings, Tiananmen is presided over by the giant portrait of Mao, which hangs above the Gate of Heavenly Peace and seems to stare down at the leader's own Memorial Hall. Here Mao is entombed in a crystal sarcophagus, his body draped in the red flag of the People's Republic that he founded in 1949.

Next, we visit the Forbidden City, a stunning. 9,000-room maze of courtyards, palaces, apartments, and storehouses. Surrounded by a moat and a 35-ft.-high wall, it was once off-limits to all but the emperor and his court. Here, with absolute authority, 24 Chinese emperors – the "Sons of Heaven" – ruled China from the Dragon Throne. You can see that seat of power in the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the tallest and largest of the six main palace buildings.

You'll also get a glimpse of the humble life of the ordinary Chinese on an included tour of Beijing's *hutong*. These old residential neighborhoods consist of acres of low, flat-roofed buildings crisscrossed by narrow lanes. On a guided walking tour down some of these passageways, you'll find everyday life proceeding unconcerned with the great events of nations. Children playing ... the sounds and smells of food being prepared ... merchants setting up shop - all will help you appreciate China's humanity, which is all too often overshadowed by the grandiose monuments that dominate the experiences of most tourists.

We have dinner at a Beijing restaurant. This evening, admission to the Peking Opera is included so you can enjoy a Chinese opera performance if you wish.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Beijing Hotel

Day 5 Visit the Imperial Summer Palace Board Train for Xian

After breakfast, you have the morning at leisure. Your Trip Leader will guide an elective walk to Tiananmen Square for anyone wishing to spend more time there, including a ride on the Beijing subway. We check out of our hotel and go to lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch we visit the ancient Imperial Summer Palace, a vast parkland built by the infamous Dowager Empress Ci Xi in 1888 atop an earlier royal site. Notorious for her Machiavellian ways, the Empress built her private playground with funds pilfered from the Chinese navy. In a masterstroke of irony, she capped off her extravagance with an opulent Marble Boat that sits on

the edge of the park's Kunming Lake. But the final irony belongs to the ordinary Chinese people, who now flock to this once private playground to picnic, boat, and ogle the remnants of imperial decadence. Given its popularity, the Summer Palace is a great place to see how everyday Chinese families enjoy their leisure.

While at the Summer Palace you can walk along the Long Corridor, a covered wooden bridge whose ceiling is adorned with hundreds of paintings; and explore the various palaces and halls, many of which are filled with priceless artifacts (such as jewel-encrusted furniture). Nearby, you'll also explore Tiantan, the Temple of Heaven. Constructed entirely without nails, it is almost perfect in its symmetry.

In the late afternoon, we will transfer to the railroad station and board a train for Xian on which we have booked sleeping accommodations. We dine on board on a picnic dinner packed for us by the Beijing hotel.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight train

Day 6 Xian—Chinese Cultural Demonstrations Big Wild Goose Pagoda and Shaanxi History Museum

Our train arrives early this morning in Xian. We transfer to our hotel upon arrival, check in, and have breakfast. Later in the morning, we see a Tai Chi demonstration in the hotel's garden. Next we see a Chinese noodle making demonstration, which will doubtless whet our appetites for lunch, which we eat immediately afterwards.

Xian was once the largest city in the world, and the capital of 11 dynasties. Though its glory days are long over, it is still a cultural and intellectual capital, boasting some 11 universities, a thriving artist's community, and a burgeoning film industry, too. Today's explorations take us to the Big Wild Goose Pagoda and the Shaanxi History Museum

Tonight, we enjoy a dumpling banquet, then a cultural show at the Shaanxi Grand Opera House that recreates the Tang Dynasty era.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Xian Garden Hotel

Day 7 The Terra Cotta Army of Xian Ban Po Museum

Today, we marvel at the great ranks of life-sized soldiers, generals, charioteers, and horses of Xian's Terra Cotta Army. Just unearthed in 1974, the 6,000-plus figures, each with unique features, are ranked in military order in vaults at the entrance to the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi, the first Qin emperor, builder of the Great Wall and unifier of China. We tour all three of the excavations with the expert guidance of a museum curator during part of our tour. Outside the museum you can peek into the bustling free market, where you can find everything from kitchen implements to tee shirts to herbal remedies.

Afterwards, we visit the Ban Po Museum, with its striking Neolithic artifacts. These indicate that a human settlement was established here as long 6,000 years ago. We will also see the old city wall of Xian, which dates from the Ming Dynasty.

We have a special Mongolian Hot Pot dinner this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Xian Garden Hotel

Day 8 Fly to Chengdu

We have a leisurely breakfast this morning, then transfer to the airport and take a short flight to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. Upon arrival in Chengdu, we have lunch at a local restaurant.

This large city has been known as the "City of Hibiscus" for 1,000 years, ever since its tenth-century ruler, Chang Meng, ordered hibiscus planted on the city walls. This afternoon we take a walking tour and take in the bustling scene at the local free market. The city is a great place to shop for typical Sichuan handicrafts including brocade, bamboo, and silk items.

Afterwards, we check into our hotel, where we have dinner this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Jin Jiang Hotel

Day 9 Chengdu

After breakfast, we visit the Panda Sanctuary just outside Chengdu. Because of its location in Sichuan Province, native habitat of the giant panda, this facility has about eight pandas on display, the largest number you can see anywhere in the world. Chengdu is a center of efforts to restore panda populations, and you may be touched both by the plight of these loveable animals and the hope for their recovery. We have lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon, we visit a local school. Here we gain insight into Chinese culture from its most charming ambassadors. Chinese children. We have dinner back at our hotel this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Jin Jiang Hotel

Day 10 Fly to Lhasa, Tibet Visit a Lhasa home

We have an early wake-up today for our morning flight to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. We check into our hotel upon arrival and you have much of the day at leisure to relax and acclimatize to the 12,000-foot altitude. Later in the afternoon, we will enjoy an introduction to the culture of Tibet as we visit a Lhasa family that has invited us to have tea in their home. Also today, a lecturer from Tibet University will enlighten us about Tibetan history and folk customs.

For 350 years, Lhasa, the "City of the Sun" has been at the political and economic center of Tibet. The country itself has existed since the 7th century, a remote mountain theocracy based on the mystical tenets of Lamaism, a form of Tantric Indian Buddhism coupled with Tibetan shamanism. Here, the rural population was ruled by feudal Lamas whose spiritual authority was matched by their complete control of internal affairs. Some reigns were benevolent, others, ruthless.

The autonomy of the lamas waxed and waned during various Chinese dynasties, with almost complete independence enjoyed during the Republican period (1912-1949). But things changed with the Revolution. In 1951, through military action and pressured negotiation, China reestablished its sovereignty. After years of steadily increasing oppression, a revolt broke out in 1959, and the Dalai Lama was forced to flee to India.

Widespread persecution of the Tibetan people continued, reaching a peak during the Cultural Revolution. Thousands of monks and nuns were sent to labor camps. Hundreds of ancient

monasteries were destroyed wholesale. Arbitrary agricultural reforms, such as imposed planting of unfamiliar crops and the collectivization of yak and goat herds, undermined traditional Tibetan life. The population was further destabilized when the Chinese government encouraged non-Tibetan Han Chinese people to settle in Tibet, thereby weakening the cultural foundations of the region.

Meanwhile, Tibetan culture has continued to thrive despite great hardship under the stewardship of the exiled Dalai Lama, who received the Noble Peace Prize in 1989. As one of the most charismatic figures of our century, he has been able to force the Chinese government into seeking normalized relations, restoring temples, allowing some religious freedoms, and permitting some degree of free enterprise. Attempts by the government to court the Dalai Lama back to China have been unsuccessful so far. Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama, along with a growing coterie of international celebrities and activists, continues in the struggle to safeguard Tibetan human rights. And the world remains fascinated by the Tibetan mystique.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tibet Hotel

Day 11 Lhasa

Potala Palace and Sera Monastery

Today we see one of the grandest monuments in Asia, if not the world: the extraordinary Potala Palace. Built in the 17th century (atop the original 7th century site), it boasts more than 1,000 rooms, including the Red Palace (where the Dalai Lama once lived), 10,000 chapels, and a labyrinth of mysterious dungeons. We spend three hours exploring the thirteen-story structure. After lunch, we move on to the Sera Monastery, an active temple where we see many pilgrims and monks in training.

In the late afternoon, you have a chance to take a ride in a traditional yak skin boat. This requires some agility and a sense of adventure—the boats accommodate just one or two passengers each, and it is important to avoid stepping directly on their thin yak-skin hulls. We have a Tibetan dinner this evening at a local restaurant.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tibet Hotel

Day 12 Lhasa

The Barkhor and Jokhang Temple

After breakfast today, we head for the Barkhor, a quadrangle of streets in the oldest part of Lhasa that bustles with marketplace activity and religious devotion. We enter the 1300-year-old Jokhang Temple, where we are likely to see Buddhist pilgrims making clockwise circuits on their hands and knees in reverence to one of Tibet's most sacred sites. Thousands of yak-butter candles flicker inside beneath the enlightened gaze of the golden Jowo Sakyamuni, the seventh-century Buddha statue that the temple was built to house.

When we step outside again, you have free time to enjoy the Barkhor market or return to our hotel. In the afternoon we visit a Tibetan school. We enjoy a Western-style dinner at our hotel this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tibet Hotel

Day 13 Fly to Chengdu

Overland to Chongqing

Board Yangtze Cruise Ship

We rise early for breakfast, then transfer to the Lhasa airport for our morning flight back to Chengdu. After lunch in Chengdu, we take a four-hour drive through the countryside to Chongqing. We board our Yangtze cruise ship upon arrival and have dinner on board this evening. We spend our first night on board tonight.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Victoria Cruises ship

Day 14 Yangtze River cruise

Ghost City of Fengdu

This morning we set sail on one of the world's great river journeys. The staff of our cruise vessel will welcome us with a briefing about the three major gorges of the Yangtze, which total about 115 miles and were formed by the river carving through limestone highlands. Our voyage takes us deep into the heartland where cities give way to remote villages and towering cliffs. We'll have ample opportunity to stroll through charming rural towns, marvel at incredible scenery, browse among the shops and stalls of local market areas, and to see an otherworldly place that will soon be gone forever.

Departing from Chongqing about 9:00 am. we pass hilly terrain en route to our first stop in Fengdu, the "Ghost City." We disembark to explore some of its 700 temples on Mingshan Hill, many of them containing statues of ghosts and demons. This evening you're invited to the Captain's Cocktail Party aboard ship.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Victoria Cruises ship

Day 15 Cruising Qutang Gorge

Lesser Three Gorges

Wu Gorge

This morning we enter the first of the Three Gorges, the Qutang. Although the shortest of the three, the Qutang is by far the most dramatic, with sheer cliffs and such remarkable features: as the Meng Liang staircase, painstakingly carved by a loyal bodyguard attempting to recover his master's body from the cliff face.

At Wushan, we disembark for an excursion along the Danning River via bus and sampan boats to see the exquisite Lesser Three Gorges: Dragon-Gate Gorge, Misty Gorge, and Emerald Gorge. Each is more spectacular than the one before. We'll pass between sheer precipices, stopping at sandy shoals and quiet lagoons.

This afternoon we continue down the Yangtze through Wu Gorge, renowned for the quiet beauty of its forested mountains. The Twelve Peaks are ranked alongside the gorge. The great Chinese poet Qu Yuan leapt into the river to his death here in 288 BC, an event marked each spring with dragon boat races. At Zigui this evening after dinner, we enjoy a local cultural show.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Victoria Cruise ship

Three Gorges Dam**Prefectural Museum at Jingzhou**

We transit the longest gorge – 40-mile-long Xiling — today. In the past, this part of the river hid dangerous shoals, but they have been largely eliminated. Orange orchards cover the banks of the gorge.

Near the outlet of Xiling Gorge at Sandouping Village we'll come upon the construction site of Three Gorges Dam. This behemoth structure will eventually measure 606 feet high and 6,500 feet long. Although a dam was proposed as long ago as 1919 by Sun Yat-sen, the present site was selected by an American team of engineers in the early 1940s. The project gained momentum in the 1980s and began in earnest in 1990. In 1997, the cofferdam was completed and the main structure begun. The dam will have two five-stage locks to raise and lower ships to the different river levels. Each lock in the five stages will be 65 feet high and 910 feet long.

The dam is scheduled for completion around 2009. The massive project has pitted China's economic interests against the concerns of historic preservationists and environmentalists worldwide. In addition to flooding some of the world's most spectacular scenic areas and rich ecosystems to a depth of 325 feet, the waters will submerge some 35 notable historic sites (some of which will be relocated). The 632 square miles of inundated terrain will include 13 cities, 140 towns, 1,352 villages, 657 factories, and 66,000 acres of cultivated land. Approximately 1.3 million people will be relocated to new towns now being constructed above the high water mark.

The Chinese government points to the benefits of the Three Gorges Dam, including its ability to control the area's severe flooding, the huge and much-needed hydroelectric potential, the opening of the upper Yangtze to 10,000-ton ships, and the irrigation value of the impounded water. When completed, the Three Gorges Dam will be the world's largest.

This evening, the captain hosts a Farewell Banquet.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Victoria Cruises ship

Day 17 Finish Yangtze River Cruise**Wuhan**

Cruising the river below the gorges today, we see the terrain flatten out. We arrive at our final destination, Wuhan, after lunch. The present-day city is composed of three towns — Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang — that grew up on both sides of the Yangtze. Recent archaeological discoveries indicate that settlement here began about 3,000 years ago. The Wuhan Bridge across the Yangtze, completed in 1957, was a landmark project that united north and south China by rail for the first time. The 260-foot high span carries trains on one level and highway traffic on the other. We'll visit the Yellow Crane Tower, a reconstruction of a lookout that first occupied this site in AD 223. We also visit the Provincial Museum, which houses many artifacts from the long history of this important settlement. We dine at our hotel this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Wuhan Hotel

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Day 18 Fly to Hong Kong

Independent exploration

Today you fly from Wuhan to Hong Kong. Be prepared to be flexible on the timing of this flight, which is scheduled for mid-afternoon but may take place in the morning. Your Trip Leader will escort you to your hotel and help you get oriented. Time permitting, you'll be free to browse the myriad shops on Nathan Road, sail the Star Ferry between Hong Kong and Kowloon islands, or hunt for bargains at the Jade Market.

Dinner tonight is on your own. The dining in Hong Kong is superb, with hundreds of restaurants serving every imaginable type of international cuisine.

Breakfast

Grand Stanford Harbour View Hotel

Day 19 Explore Hong Kong

Focus: Transition to the People's Republic

Our guided explorations of Hong Kong will feature some of this densely populated city-state's most famous attractions, balanced by a look at the cultural transition to rule by China. We'll begin with the view from atop Victoria Peak. In the famed floating fishing village of Aberdeen - now more like a floating city — we board a junk for a harbor cruise. Afterwards, we visit a nearby apartment complex, where families live in small quarters and reconcile their long-time Hong Kong values of upward mobility with the new imperatives of Chinese rule. You'll see typical living quarters, meet some residents, and get a frank and fascinating glimpse of life behind the scenes.

We have lunch at a local restaurant and return to our hotel. You have the balance of the afternoon free to relax or explore on your own. Tonight, we celebrate our adventure with a delicious Farewell Banquet at a popular local restaurant.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Grand Stanford Harbour View Hotel:

Day 20 Fly to Vancouver

Our homeward flight to Vancouver leaves mid-afternoon, so you'll have time in the morning to explore on your own or take advantage of last-minute shopping bargains. Flying back across the International Dateline, we arrive in Vancouver in the morning of the same calendar day. If you're going on the trip extension to Bali, you'll leave Hong Kong in the morning.

Breakfast