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KIPLING & CLARK *intinerary* | **CHINA EXPLORER – 20 DAYS**
Shanghai – Beijing – Lijiang – Zhongdian – Ringha – Kunming – Xian – Hangzhou – Suzhou

DAY 1: SHANGHAI

Today, you will arrive Shanghai Pudong International Airport. You will then be transferred to the Four Seasons Hotel, Shanghai.

Four Seasons Hotel (One Executive Suite)
Optional: Peninsula

DAY 2: SHANGHAI

Today, enjoy a full day's sightseeing.

This morning, you will visit the **Shanghai Museum**, known as one of the finest museums of ancient Chinese art. The current state-of-the-art building, located at People's Square, was opened in October 1996. Its rich and exceptionally high quality collection of bronzes and ceramics are celebrated around the world. In addition, the museum also features galleries containing calligraphy, paintings, jade, stone sculptures, Chinese seals, Chinese coins, Ming and Qing Dynasty furniture, and Chinese minority nationality art.

Next, take a walk through Shanghai's old Chinese quarter to the lovely **Yu Yuan garden**, a 16th century Ming Dynasty private garden and residence. Despite Shanghai's crowded lanes and teeming masses, the garden remains an oasis of tranquility. Its deceptive size, laid out with many corners and breezeways to give one the illusion of

size, houses in exquisite harmony the essential elements of a Chinese garden – pavilions, water, vegetation, rock formations, and bridges. The **Old Town** refers to the original Chinese city that flourished in the Ming dynasty. The architecture of the area has been restored to the original Ming period style.

Lunch will be served at a local restaurant.

Situated in the northwest of the city is the **Jade Buddha Temple**, one of two major Buddhist temples in the city of Shanghai. Currently an active place of worship, the temple was built to house two exquisite jade Buddha pieces brought from Burma. Both are of exceptional quality and artistic workmanship. Take a walk through the temple grounds and view the highlight – a six foot high seated Sakyamuni sculpture carved from one solid piece of white jade.

Proceed to **The Bund**. This waterfront area sweeping along the Huangpu River has become the center of Shanghai's foreign business establishment and the symbol of Shanghai's identity as a modern city. The name "bund" is derived from an Anglo-Indian term meaning "muddy embankment," but after the 1920's the area became a showcase for foreign enterprises, with impressive Western-style banks, trading houses, hotels, consulates, and clubs

filling the shore, with promenade along the river. British, French, American, German, Japanese, and Russian facilities were built here, in styles ranging from Neo-Classical to Art Deco, giving the area a pronounced European flavor. Foreign enterprises and facilities were forced out after the Communist victory in 1949, and many of the buildings were occupied by government offices and banks. More recently many of the stately old buildings have been renovated in recognition of their status as historical and tourist sites.

Experience another side of Shanghai as you take a short stroll along one of Shanghai's most active shopping streets – **Nanjing East Road**.

This evening, enjoy a dazzling display of spectacular agility as you attend a Chinese **Acrobatic Show** including round trip transfers.

The contortions and balancing acts are quite incredible and sometimes seem almost superhuman, or super rubber human. You will be at the edge of your seat through most of the show saying "don't fall, don't drop it!" And incredibly, they never do.

Four Seasons Hotel (One Executive Suite)
Breakfast & Lunch



DAY 3: SHANGHAI/BEIJING DAY 4: BEIJING

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to Beijing.

You will be met and transferred to the Peninsula Hotel.

This afternoon you will visit the extraordinary **Forbidden City**. Center of the Chinese world for nearly 500 years, the imperial palace remains the most complete and best preserved collection of ancient buildings in China. Called the “Forbidden City” for the exclusive nature of the emperors who built and inhabited it, the palace is a vast complex of halls, pavilions, courtyards and walls. It was within these walls that 24 emperors of two dynasties, aided by their ministers, eunuch guards, concubines and servants, acted out the drama of ruling imperial China from the early Ming Dynasty in 1420 to the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911.

Stop at **Tiananmen Square** for a stroll on the largest public plaza on earth. Lying in the center of Beijing, Tiananmen Square is thought of as the very heart of the city. The square, in spite of its past events, remains one of the most popular venues in Beijing. Here, on any given day, thousands of visitors gather to walk, fly kites, or enjoy the view of the monuments that surround the square.

This evening, enjoy a **Peking Opera** performance. Clanging cymbals, flutes and drums, acrobatic postures, dramatic voices, abrupt geometrical movements, dignified symbolic gestures, colorful mask-like make up, beautifully embroidered silk costumes – Peking opera is the pinnacle of many varied disciplines which all unfold together on the stage.

The Peninsula Beijing
(Optional: Park Hyatt or AMAN Summer Palace)
Breakfast only

Today, enjoy a full day’s sightseeing.

This morning you will visit the **Temple of Heaven**, a perfection of Ming architecture and one of the symbols of Beijing. Built in 1420, this huge site (twice the size of the Forbidden City) follows a route traversed by past emperors and their entourages in splendid procession from which the commoner had to avert his eyes. The emperors came to the Temple of Heaven during the winter solstice to offer sacrifices to Heaven and pray for bountiful harvests – momentous occasions for which the temple’s beauty and simplicity provided a fitting background.

When the Mongols swept through China in the 13th century, they built their capital at Beijing (calling it Dadu) and left some residual influences that continue to be felt to this day. Among the most lasting of the Mongol legacy was the “**hutong**”, the winding alleyways that linked the city through a network of diverse neighborhoods, each area being spun like a web of interconnecting lanes that became the lifeblood of old Beijing. Meaning, “water well” in Mongolian, the hutong once numbered in the thousands. Today, under the onslaught of urban renewal, they are quickly disappearing. For what is often considered the best chance to experience the flavor and mood of Beijing past, hop into a traditional **pedicab** this morning and explore a traditional Beijing neighborhood. Far removed from the glitz of Beijing’s high-rise department stores and office towers, the quiet sounds of the neighborhood bring to life a Beijing that flourished under the omnipotent rule of dynasties past. Conclude your morning with a visit to one of the local families homes here.

Lunch will be served at the Royal Palace.

This afternoon, you will visit the **Lama Temple**, one of the city’s most attractive temples. Originally built in 1694 as the residence of Prince Yong (later to become Emperor Yong-zheng), the site was converted into a Lama temple in keeping with the traditional custom that the residence of an heir to the throne may only be used as a temple.

To conclude your sightseeing today, visit the lively **Hongqiao Market**, a popular market for local shoppers and one of Beijing’s best places to buy Chinese pearls. Take a walk past the fresh and dried foods, to the jewelers upstairs.

The Peninsula Beijing
Lunch only

DAY 5: BEIJING

Today, enjoy a full day’s sightseeing.

Early this morning, you will be driven to the **Great Wall** at the **Mutianyu** site.

Rising from the wash of waves along China’s Bohai Gulf in the east, riding the crest of rugged forest-mantled mountains in north China and running across the grassy steppe and desert waste of the far northwest, the Great Wall is the ultimate expression of China’s past. Imposing and almost defying possibilities this stunning structure literally defined a border between worlds far removed from each other. Its towering ramparts threw up a defense against the incursions marauding nomad hordes while within its walls flourished the light of East Asian civilization – imperial China.

Much has been written about the Great Wall and all it represents but beyond the myth and legend there remains a remarkable landmark found nowhere else on earth. It is steeped in history and rich in meaning a visual line that

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defined the frontiers of civilization and today, in spite of national borders and integrity the Wall still commands the symbolic weight of its past – it is the most recognized symbol of China to people from around the world.

Its origins are much debated but it is tethered to the ladder of Chinese history born out of an age of conflict and reinforced as China evolved in its varying imperial stages. Today it has become a heritage landmark, a reminder to all of China's grand history and tradition – a beacon to all who walk upon it.

Enjoy time to walk and explore the ramparts and battlement towers that once stood at the vanguard of Chinese civilization before sitting down to lunch at **Commune** on the Wall.

There is no better or more fitting way to remember a visit to Beijing than to walk along the wall of time that symbolizes the imperial majesty that is China.

You will then proceed to **Ming Tombs**, lying 50 kilometers to the north of Beijing. Maintaining an imperial tradition that originated in the Zhou Dynasty (1066 B.C. – 221 B.C.), the Ming emperors selected the location and design of their tombs during their reign. The selection of sites (based on prevailing wind and water levels) ensured that only benevolent spirits inhabited the area. Of the 16 Ming Emperors, 13 are buried in this valley just north of Beijing.

Afterwards, visit the “**Spirit Way**”, a 6.4 kilometer long road leading to the Ming Tombs. In ancient times, the Spirit Way was forbidden to all but the emperor's funeral cortege. A walk along the Avenue of Stone Statues will

take you past twelve pairs of animals and six pairs of human figures standing guard among beautiful willow trees.

On your return to the city, time permitting, you will visit to Beijing's most active art enclave, **Factory 798**. Artists and galleries establish studios and exhibitions in these converted deserted factory spaces. The gallery publishes numerous catalogues and favours group exhibitions, showing four or five a year, giving preference to contemporary Chinese creation.

The Peninsula Beijing
Lunch only

DAY 6: BEIJING

Today, enjoy a full day's sightseeing.

This morning, visit the **Summer Palace** and enjoy a private boat ride on Lake Kunming.

Located in Haidian District, some 12 kilometers northwest of the downtown, the **Summer Palace** is the largest imperial garden in the world. It is a veritable museum of classical Chinese garden architecture. The initial construction of the Summer Palace began in 1750, commissioned by Emperor Qinglong as a gift for his mother's birthday. The construction took 15 years to complete. It had the name “Qingyi Yuan” (Garden of Clear Ripples) at that time. The plundering of foreign troops in 1860 destroyed most of the buildings, but they were renovated in 1888 by Empress Dowager Cixi, who was said to have embezzled the funds of the Imperial Navy to build the garden. After China's liberation, the garden became a park and got the name Yiheyuan (Summer Palace).

Walk within the pleasure gardens of

the controversial Empress Dowager, Ci Xi (1835 – 1908), who so loved her summer retreat that local legend suggests she used money, allotted to reform the Imperial Chinese Navy, to refurbish the Summer Palace, which had razed by a joint Anglo-French attack in 1860. Fact or fable it does not matter, for the Summer Palace (Yi He Yuan) delights all who visit. Built around the shimmering waters of Kunming Lake and dotted with delicate pavilions, temples and pagodas, the palace recalls Coleridge's Xanadu – where stately buildings rise amidst the cool green pines and fragrant blossom trees.

Lunch will be served at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, visit the **Confucian Temple** that is now the Capital Museum and houses a display of the culture and history of Beijing. Confucius was born in Qufu, China and the temple in Beijing is among the largest Confucian temples outside Qufu.

Continue from the Confucian Temple to the shops and galleries which line the hutongs of the city's historic **Liulichang District** – some 700 years ago this district became the center for the artisans' guilds (its name refers to the production of glazed enamel roof tiles used for the Forbidden City) – since the early 1980s the shops, galleries and market areas have been restored to reflect the rich tradition of arts and crafts that so distinguishes Beijing.

The Peninsula Beijing
Lunch only



DAY 7: BEIJING/LIJIANG

Today, you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to Lijiang.

Arrive Lijiang where you will be transferred to the Banyan Tree.

Banyan Tree (One Garden Villa)

No meals

DAY 8-9: LIJIANG

Enjoy two full day's sightseeing in Lijiang.

Located 11 kilometres (7 miles) northwest of Lijiang on the lower slopes of the majestic Yuelongxueshan (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain), **Yufengsi** (The Jade Summit Temple) commands a magnificent situation overlooking the vast sweep of the Baishan Plain. The temple is an interesting *mélange* of styles incorporating Tantric Buddhist, Chinese Mahayana Buddhist and Naxi pragmatism into its eclectic make-up. The temple is ostensibly a "Red" Hat Tibetan Sect Temple but it is more a *mélange* of different beliefs and practices. The temple is laid out on terraces connected by a gently rising stairway.

The most delightful of the main temple buildings lies on the top terrace and is well worth the effort (the climb at 8,000 + feet can be a bit taxing). This is the main hall of worship laid out on an exquisite pebbled floor that is decorated with mosaics. An ancient camellia tree, believed to be over 400 years in age, and called the "Tree of 20,000 blossoms" graces the courtyard. Each year in February the tree bursts forth in an explosion of colour (pink and white) a time-honoured tradition drawing thousands of excited visitors.

Baisha Village & Baisha Murals –

The village of Baisha (White Sand) lies on the vast plain that unfolds at the base of the Yuelongxueshan (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain). Visitors may find the village a bit of a quandary – past capital of the Naxi Kingdom before the Mongol invasions of the 13th century and site of the fascinating Baisha Murals it now appears to be nothing more than a sleepy village of mud packed and stone farm houses, dusty lanes and an annoying array of hawker stalls eager to pounce upon the bus loads of Chinese tourists now flocking to the Lijiang region.

But suspend judgment and look beyond and around the obvious – Baisha is an important link to the historic integrity of the Naxi people and the Murals are – market withstanding – a worthwhile visit.

The murals once number more than 220 and date to the mid-16th century when the Naxi culture had fully absorbed and melded a variety of outside philosophical influences – Tantric Buddhist teachings from neighbouring Tibet, Mahayana traditions from China and the teachings of Daoist texts also from China. Respect for certain aspects of each belief system were incorporated into the traditional animist beliefs of the Naxi. This unique rendering of faith was beautifully displayed in a series of exquisite murals that today number but a few housed in a lovely Ming period structure, the Babaoji Gong. Time, earthquakes and the destructive tendencies of the Cultural Revolution are responsible for the loss of the wondrous murals (save for the remaining pieces now on view).

The murals on view mix and represent the essential tenets of each belief system so that you have Daoist immortals, Mahayana Arhats, Tantric demons and Naxi Dongba all portrayed on a single canvas.

Time should also be taken to wander and explore the village beyond the market stalls and the Murals. You may be lucky and meet up with Dr. Ho, a colourful local character who has earned a place in Yunnan folklore. Now approaching 80 years of age, Dr. Ho is one of the last links to Joseph Rock the Austro-American botanist, doctor and adventurer who made Lijiang his home from 1921 – 1949. It was through Rock's colourful articles published in the National Geographic in the 1930s that Lijiang and the wondrous Naxi culture were introduced to the world. Dr. Ho was taught English and botany by Rock; in turn Dr. Ho guided Rock through the meadows of the Yuelongxue Shan where he (Rock) collected medicinal plants and wildflowers for his botanical research.

Longquan Village – a traditional, rural Naxi village that has enjoyed a history of over 800 years – a wonderful setting for photography and taking in the charms of the countryside.

Heilongtan Park – a lovely city park that was developed around a series of fresh-water springs that bubble up from the base of the Yuelongzue Shan (the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain) which towers 18,000 feet over the city.

Continue on to the **Dongba Museum** a fine facility that exhibits some fascinating examples of Naxi religious traditions as well as a series of old photographs of Lijiang's Old Town. The term Dongba refers to both the Shaman or wise man of Naxi society and the pictographic script that is a core element defining the literary culture of the Naxi. The shaman figure is one selected to be the keeper of secrets, the conduit to the world of nature. The script is one of the last examples of a pictographic script in use today. The Dongba script is used only by the



Dongba shaman and is directly tied to the ancient belief system of the people.

Joseph Rock spent many years compiling a lexicon of Dongba script pictographs and their meaning. The photographs on view are drawn from both the collection of Joseph Rock as well as other old photographs that capture the vitality and charm of the Old Town in the early decades of the 20th century.

Next, enjoy a visit to **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain**. Lijiang sits at an elevation of 2,400 meters (7,800 feet) near the base of the majestic, Yuelongxueshan (the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain) that rises to a snow-crowned pinnacle more than 5,500 meters (18,300 feet) in height. The mountain is a powerful symbol for the region's Naxi people, the dominant minority group. The Naxi are a Tibetan people who migrated to the plain some 1,500 years ago (from the higher elevations of northern and eastern Tibet). They are a matriarchal society (one of the last on earth) who hold to devout beliefs in the sanctity of nature. Their creation myths and sacred shamanistic rituals emphasize the power of nature and what we, as children of nature, should do to keep nature in balance.

Enjoy a walking tour of the **Old Town** and climb to the top of **Wang Ga Lou** for a birds eye view of the old town.

Measuring two kilometers by two kilometers the rectangle enclosure of cobble lanes and stone and timber houses that make up the Old Town of Lijiang ranks among the most picturesque and memorable of city settings in all of China.

The Old Town (gazetted by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site) dates to the

13th century when the Mongol forces of Kublai Khan swept southward through Yunnan province as they set out to consolidate their control over China. The original capital of the Naxi kingdom at Baisha was moved to Dayan (today's Lijiang) and since that time has remained the most distinctive example of Naxi culture.

The best way to experience the charm of the Old Town is to get out and walk it – the labyrinth of alleys, while seemingly confusing, all lead to the rectangular central square market that marks the center of the Old Town. Each day the square becomes a focal point of commerce with hawker stalls lining the perimeter selling local handicrafts, savory snack foods and assorted bric-a-brac.

The stringent requirements of the UNESCO title will help insure that the Old Town is saved for future generations. While the surrounding "New City" of Lijiang continues to erect sparkling high-rise hotel and commercial buildings and the roads are widened into express highways the antiquated charm and idyllic setting of Lijiang's Old Town will remain the heart of all that is so special about this region.

Naxi Ancient Music Ensemble Performance – one evening enjoy a performance of ancient Chinese court music and Naxi (and other minority) folk songs as performed by the Naxi Ancient Music Orchestra conducted by Xuan Ke a colorful individual who is credited with reviving ancient musical traditions. Due to its relative isolation, and because of an infusion of Han Chinese culture to the Lijiang region during the Ming dynasty, ancient musical traditions survived in the Lijiang region (while undergoing change and suppression elsewhere).

Xuan Ke, son of a wealthy Naxi/Tibetan family Naxi Ancient Music Ensemble Performance was musical prodigy and scholar who has spent his life researching and teaching both western and Chinese music to the musicians of Lijiang. The orchestra was re-established after the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and with an increase in tourism to the Lijiang region it has become a popular draw with both foreign and domestic travelers.

*Banyan Tree (One Garden Villa)
Breakfast and Lunch*

DAY 10: LIJIANG/ ZHONGDIAN/RINGHA

This morning you will be collected and transferred overland to Zhongdian.

En route you will travel north from Lijiang to the Deqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture visitors should take the time to stop and experience the scenic splendour of the Hutiaoxia (**Tiger Leaping Gorge**) that, after the Three Gorges of the Yangzi River in Hubei and Sichuan provinces, is the most famous natural scenic highlight along the course of the Yangzi River.

The Gorge measures more than 46 kilometres in length (approximately 28 miles) and drops some 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) making it among the deepest and most dramatic natural formations in Asia. Colourful Tibetan and Naxi legends relate the creation of the gorges with the river and its two flanking mountains – the massive Yuelongxueshan (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain) and Mount Habba – were once humans caught in a tragic love triangle that rendered them into their present state. The reference to "Tiger Leaping" is due to the extreme narrowness of the gorge (in places);



narrow enough for a tiger to leap the gorge in a single bound.

Today the Tiger Leaping Gorge has become an increasingly popular centre for trekkers who come from around the world to make this scenic crossing.

You will also stop at the “**First Bend**” in the **Yangzi River**, a major geographic landmark for all Chinese. The drive takes approximately 80 minutes and provides you with some wonderful opportunities to enjoy the vast panorama of northwest Yunnan. Leaving Lijiang pass Lashi Hai (Tiger Lake) a scenic lake dotted along its shoreline with some Naxi villages. The lake area is noted for its fine fruit orchards with the apples grown here regarded as the finest in Yunnan.

Climbing up to a pass at more than 2,600 metres (8,600 feet) you begin to descend along a switchback road to the valley of the Yangzi, which, in Yunnan, is called the Jinshajiang River (Golden Sands River). The unfolding vista is stunning as the rugged mountains guarding the watery ribbon of river unfold onto a patchwork quilt of farm fields planted in wheat, tobacco, sunflowers, corn and orchards of tangerines and pomegranates. The elevation here at 1,800 metres (5,900 + feet) favours a warm microclimate that allows for the production of subtropical fruits.

DAY 11: LIJIANG/ ZHONGDIAN/RINGHA

The “First Bend” marks the point where the Yangzi, after having flowed directly south from the high, icy plains of Tibet, turns sharply north for over 100 kilometres (60 miles) before turning east and continuing its course into Sichuan province. The Chinese believe the “First Bend” is a significant

spot as the two other great river systems which flow parallel with the Yangzi out of Tibet – the Mekong and the Salween Rivers – both flow out of China into Southeast Asia.

Arrive Zhongdian, you will travel for another 40 minutes to Ringha and to the Banyan Tree, Ringha.

*Banyan Tree (One Tibetan Suite)
Breakfast and Lunch*

DAY 12-13: RINGHA / ZHONGDIAN / RINGHA

Enjoy two full day’s sightseeing.

Head to the **Napa Hai Forest Reserve**.

Often called Asia’s greatest “flower and plant nursery” the Zhongdian region supports the greatest number and widest variety of temperate plant life on earth.

This is nowhere better represented than at Napa Hai and vast swath of land that is framed by forested mountains and centred on a sweeping meadow that floods each spring and summer to form a vast, shallow lake.

The drive to Napa Hai takes approximately 30 minutes and follows the Yunnan/Tibet Highway. The road rises above the rolling meadowland entering onto a small range of mountains that are home to a remarkable variety of plants. Now protected by the provincial government this delicate ecosystem includes such common garden species (in their original wild form) as rose, gentian, iris, holly, primrose, briar rose, edelweiss and the most elusive of all flowers the lovely Himalayan blue poppy.

During the summer months these mountains block the free flow of rainwater that accumulates on the meadowland. The flooded plain takes

on the appearance of a vast lake that can, in years of heavy rain, extend for several kilometers.

Proceed to the **Sumsanling Monastery**, which was created in 1679 by the Fifth Dalai lama. In 1958 the monastery complex still accommodated about 1300 monks of the Gelugpa Sect. It is a pity that in 1959 this monastery was almost completely devastated during the tragic Civilization Revolution but it was systematic reconstructed in 1982. Today several hundred monks in the prayer halls do their Buddhist exercises again. Characterized by Its Han-Chinese and Tibetan construction style, the monastery is considered as the most important monastery of Gelukpa-sect in Yunnan province. The mural paintings and wood carvings in the monastery are quite fine. On 29th of November every year in Chinese traditional lunar calendar an important religious party called Gedong-party is held here. People dance with masks to pray for luck of the next year.

Spend time at **Ringha Village** (Pristine Khamph Tibetan Village). Ringha is a distant and secluded hideaway of great beauty and peacefulness, where harmony reigns, the gods walk among the people, and man and nature embrace. It’s massive heavy timber and daub houses adorned with exquisite carvings on the doors, lintels and roof eaves house several generations of family members. The roofs fly prayer flags that indicate whether the family has a monk in the family – a singular badge of family honor to the devout Khampha.

You will also have the chance to explore the market, which sells some of the local fare from Ringha.

Zhongdian Old Town – The old town quarter of Zhongdian is a pleasant



excursion to another time and place. Its winding alley ways laid in stone are not unlike the yellow brick road to Oz – leaving the newer construction behind you enter an enclave of tradition – wood and daub houses, smoke charred Tibetan shrines and winding cobble alleys paint a portrait of the past. Here Tibetan, Naxi and Han families live and work together recalling what Yunnan must have been like not too long ago.

A visit to **Gonjo Craft Village**, which is well known for its woodcarvings and wooden tableware will be also included.

*Banyan Tree (One Tibetan Suite)
Breakfast and Lunch*

DAY 14: RINGHA/ ZHONGDIAN/KUNMING/ XIAN

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to Xian via Kunming.

Arrive Xian where you will be transferred to the Shangri-la Golden Flower Hotel.

En route to the hotel you will visit the current **City Wall**. This wall dates to the early Ming period (it was built between 1374 – 1378) and is the third major city wall in the Xian area. There was a wall built during the Han dynasty (2nd century B.C.) and then another during the Tang dynasty (618 – 907). The present wall is magnificent – in fact it is one of the few extant walls left in China. The city wall once had four main gates (in each of the cardinal directions) but today, in light of the increased traffic flow there are now 16 gate entrances into and out of the old city. The wall is faced with brick and mounted by battlement towers that once stood watch over the city. Up

until the early part of the 20th century the city walls were an important mode of defense against attack.

*Shangri-la Golden Flower Hotel
(One Horizon Floor Room)
Breakfast*

DAY 15: XIAN

Today, enjoy a full day's sightseeing.

This morning, you will travel overland to Lintong County, site of the single greatest archeological find of the 20th century: the **Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses Excavation**.

(Access to the second level of Pit #1 as well as meeting with Museum curator will be arranged).

The dig lies 46 kilometers to the east of the city of Xian and is now made easily accessible by a new highway. The drive will give you the chance to view the fertile loess fields of Shaanxi; an ever replenished supply of soil which has been the foundation of civilization. For millions of years the annual flow and deposition of mineral rich dust or loess soil over a region of north central China (Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Henan provinces) has provided farmers with a renewable source of nutrients for grain crops for thousands of years.

The Terra-Cotta site is made up of three distinct dig “pits”; the Bronze Chariot Museum; and a theatre in the round, which shows a short film on the history of the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (220 B.C. - 209 B.C.) and the construction of his mausoleum.

As most people now know the site was rediscovered by accident in 1974 when a local farmer, Yang Zhifa, and his production team were digging a well. They accidentally unearthed some pieces of terra-cotta figures (not a head

as is commonly said), which were turned over to the local archaeological authorities.

The archaeologists quickly understood the significance of this find. Records written by the Han historian, Sima Qian, in the first century B.C. clearly confirmed that the massive burial complex of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty lay in this region. A full brigade of archaeologists and technicians was sent to the sight and over the ensuing years thousands of figures - warriors and horses - were unearthed, catalogued and restored. They were put back into their original situation and eventually provided researchers with a clue to meaning of this extraordinary find.

The site represents just a portion of a greater funerary sight - which would include the tomb and satellite tombs of the emperor and his retinue. The current dig is made up entirely of military figures, which the professor, Wang Xueli (formerly the director of the Terra-Cotta Dig), says represents a classic example of 2nd century B.C. Chinese military might.

Next, continue your exploration of Xian – truly a walk along the road of Chinese history – by focusing on one of the greatest of all ancient Chinese historic periods, the Tang dynasty (618 – 907), often called the most golden of all Chinese historic eras.

The Tang was period when China was truly the most open and dazzling of ancient civilizations enjoying trade and cultural relations with kingdoms as far afield as the Eastern Roman Empire (from its capital at Constantinople). Your first stop is the **Great Mosque** of Xian, one of the most beautiful and unusual of structures in Xian.



First constructed in the years 742 - 743 by Persian merchants who traveled to Xian (then called Changan) by the caravan routes on the Silk Road, the mosque has been moved from its original site and the refurbished and expanded over the course of Ming and Qing dynasties.

The Chinese Muslims in Xian are generally of the Hui Minority group. The Hui, who speak Chinese and read character script, trace their descent through two waves of migration into China. The first occurred during the Tang dynasty with the intermarriage of Chinese women to Persian merchants. The second, and more important migration came in the 14th century with the arrival of thousands of central Asian soldiers who served in the armies of the Mongol Empire. These devout Muslims (from Samarkand and the Golden Horde) also intermarried with Chinese women further strengthening the position of Islam in China.

The Hui adhere to the strict tenets of Islam abstaining from pork and alcohol. The area around the mosque is generally considered to be the “**Muslim quarter**” and their white skullcaps distinguish the Hui faithful. During the evening hours the area comes to life as a bustling night market with colorful stalls selling flavorful Muslim snack foods including spicy shish kebab, flat breads, piquant lamb dumplings, and hand thrown noodles.

China has an estimated population of 25 - 30 million Muslims - overwhelming non-Han - who lived (for the most part) in some of the most sensitive frontier regions of the country (especially in the far northwest).

The establishment of the newly independent Turkic countries from the former soviet of Soviet Central Asian republics (including Turkmenistan,

Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan) has led to an aspiration by Chinese Muslims to increase direct relations with these countries. They share cultural and religious ties that are steeped in the historic development of central Asia.

A Dumpling lunch will be served at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, continue on to visit the **Small Wild Goose Pagoda**, less frequently included on a tourist itinerary, is actually one of the most aesthetically pleasing structures in Xian. The pagoda, standing 140 feet high amidst a garden setting, was built in the year 684 in honor of the Tang Dynasty Emperor Gaozong. If you wish, you may climb to the top of the pagoda for a panoramic view of Xian.

Time permitting, visit to the Shaanxi Provincial Archaeological Institute and meeting with an Archeological expert will be arranged.

*Shangri-la Golden Flower Hotel
(One Horizon Floor Room)
Breakfast and Lunch*

DAY 16: XIAN/HANGZHOU

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your China Southern Airlines flight to Hangzhou.

Arrive Hangzhou where you will be transferred to the Shangri-La Hotel.

This afternoon you will visit the **Zhejiang Provincial Museum**, formerly known as the West Lake Museum, which was built in 1929. Situated at the southern foot of the Solitary Hill, it affords a picturesque lake view.

Devoted to the collection, study and display of various objects, Zhejiang Provincial Museum is the most

comprehensive on the humanity studies. Of over 100,000 treasured cultural relics, the world-famous ones are pottery and lacquer wares, wooden, bone and ivory objects dating from the Hemudu Culture (5200 BC-4500BC), jade articles and silk fabrics from the Liangzhu Culture, bronze wares from the State of Yue in the Warring States Period (475 BC-221 BC), celadon wares from the Yue Kiln, Longquan Kiln and the Imperial Kiln of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), the Guiji Mirror and the Huzhou Mirror as well as works of the calligraphers and artists of Zhejiang Province in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Continue on to visit the **Liu He Pagoda** (Pagoda of six harmonies), which was built in 970 AD during the Song dynasty. The Pagoda is a brick and wooden structure that is around 197 feet tall and has 13 floors. It is famous for its octagonal pagoda standing high on the slope of Yuelun Hill by the Qiantang River. You will have the opportunity to climb up to the top through internal stone stairs to enjoy the beautiful view of the Qiantang River and surroundings.

You will also embark on a private boat on **West Lake**. Originally a shallow sea inlet, due to the laying down of silt, this six square kilometres of water became the famous West Lake. The lake comprises five distinct sections - Outer Lake, North Inner Lake, Yuehu Lake, West Inner Lake and Lesser South Lake. In the past it was a favorite imperial retreat due to the beautiful hilly peaks on three of its sides. In fact it is often compared to a traditional Chinese Garden, but on a much grander scale.

*Shangri-la Hotel
(One Horizon West Lake View Room)
Breakfast and Lunch*



DAY 17: HANGZHOU/ SUZHOU

Today, enjoy a full day's sightseeing.

This morning you will be driven through lush hills ringing the countryside to visit the village of **Mei Jia Wu Tea Plantation** to experience how tea is picked and cured and also enjoy a traditional tea ceremony.

Me Jia Wu is set in the heart of the Longjing Tea growing areas around Hangzhou and it is famous for its fine Long Jing Cha also known as Dragon Well Green Tea. Dragon Tea is known for its highest grade of taste, colour, fragrance and is believed to be high in anti-oxidents, an important element for cancer resistance.

Proceed to the **Hangzhou Botanical Garden**, which is located at the foot of Jade Spring Hill northwest of West Lake. The garden occupies 231 hectares (571 acres) and holds approximately 4000 species of plants, which have been placed there since the founding year of 1956. The garden is the biggest botanical sanctuary in China and is a research base of plants and species of plants. The garden is grouped into species gardens which include economical plants, the botany classification area, the osmanthus and crape myrtle garden, the bamboo garden, the arbor garden, the medicinal plant garden, the lily magnolia and camellia garden and so on. The scenery of Appreciating Plum Blossom in Lingfeng Temple is situated inside Qingzhi Castle of Hangzhou Botanical Garden. As early as the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten States (907-960), a Buddhist temple named Lingfeng was built here. Hangzhou Botanical Garden has also been equipped with many leisure infrastructures including a golf course.

Lunch will be served at a local restaurant.

After lunch, you will visit **Lingyin Temple** – founded in 326 by the Indian monk, Huili, the temple draws on crowds of faithful Buddhist from across China and its neighbouring countries (including Japan, South Korea, Thailand and other Asian nations). Chan is the Chinese Buddhist philosophy that influenced the Zen sect of Japan emphasizing meditation and strict adherence to a life of abstinence as the means to achieve a higher state of awakening or enlightenment. Although the temple continues to impress with its ornately carved halls, verdant gardens and rock formations, it once was home to over 3,000 monks from across China and other Asian nations, a center for mediation and learning.

You will also visit the **Chinese Medicine Museum**, which is housed in a striking Qing period structure that continues to serve the community as a popular Chinese medicine shop and pharmacy. The shop includes a fine exhibition gallery tracing the development of traditional Chinese medicine as well as some examples of herbal remedies. Rachele, can you talk to me about this one.

Following your sightseeing, you will be transferred overland to Suzhou and to the Sheraton Hotel, Suzhou.

*Sheraton Hotel (One Deluxe Room)
Breakfast and Lunch*

DAY 18: SUZHOU/ SHANGHAI

Enjoy a full day's sightseeing in Suzhou.

Suzhou is one of China's major silk producing areas and the cultivation of the mulberry tree has been one of the

foundations of its economy since the Han dynasty, 2,000 years ago.

Where Shanghai has opened its doors to the West, Suzhou is the quintessential Chinese city. During your visit you have the opportunity to retrace the 2,500 years of history that the city has enjoyed.

Included in your itinerary of sights are some of the private gardens which earned Suzhou renown throughout China. During the late Ming and early Qing dynasties (16th to 19th centuries) wealthy officials made their homes in Suzhou, constructing classical gardens which incorporated the philosophical ideals of Daoism and Chinese art aesthetics.

Completely sealed off from the outside world, these gardens were islands of tranquillity creating an environment where meditation, creating an environment where meditation, contemplation and debate could be practiced. Two of the most notable gardens are the **Wang Shi Yuan (the Master of the Nets Garden)** and the **Zhuo Zheng Yuan (the Garden of the Humble Administrator)** both of which are included on your itinerary. The Master of the Nets is one of the smallest but most exquisite of gardens in Suzhou. Laid out originally in the 11th century during the Song dynasty it drew its name from the Daoist ideal aspired to by one of the original owners. To emulate that natural lifestyle of the fisherman represented the ultimate release from the affectations of daily life in ancient China.

The garden fell into a long period of disrepair but was refurbished again during the late Ming and was one of the outstanding garden residences of Suzhou through the end of World War II

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(relatives of Chiang Kai Shek occupied the garden during the war years).

The Garden of the Humble Administrator is one of the largest and most natural of gardens in Suzhou. It has several manmade ponds and waterways which create an island feeling. Several fine pavilions, strategically situated to provide visitors with different views, provide the bridge between the natural and the manmade. The garden also maintains an area for the cultivation of bonzai, a tradition which actually began in China prior to being adopted by the Japanese.

The term bonzai is derived from the Chinese, “Pen” (a planter or pot) “Zai” (a vegetative growth) and was part of the court tradition during the Sui and Tang periods.

In addition to the gardens visit the Water Gate the oldest landmark in Suzhou dating to the 5th century B.C. when the city was the capital of the powerful Wu Kingdom. Its massive battlements and complex system of defense reveal the level of sophistication that Chinese civilization had attained over 2,000 years ago.

Lunch will be served at the Bamboo Grove Hotel.

After lunch, continue on to visit the **Silk embroidery institute** where the exquisite art of needle point embroidery has been practiced since the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907); and tour the silk spinning factory where the entire process of manufacturing silk from the cocoon stage is carried out.

Continuing with the traditions of silk production, the **Silk Museum** (opened in 1994) provides an interesting overview of the role silk has played in the development of Suzhou. Through the 2,500 history of the city, silk has been an integral part of the livelihood of Suzhou.

The museum exhibits early forms of weaving looms, silk fabrics, and pieces of traditional Suzhou style embroidery

which still can be found in the rural villages of Jiangsu province.

Next, you will visit **Suzhou Industrial Park**, a cooperative project of priority between the Chinese and Singaporean governments which opened in February 1994. Over the past ten years the park and the economy is Suzhou has now grown by over 50% and 120, 000 new jobs have been created.

You will also explore the **town** which is famous for its Baoshen Temple built in the Liang Dynasty. The clay sculptures from that period still survive. However, the most interesting place to visit is the “Rice Firm”. The site of a former rice merchant’s store and dwellings now houses a very interesting display of all kind of implements connected with rice production and processing. A walk along the old streets is equally interesting. There are a few souvenir shops and the peddlers are non-aggressive.

Later this afternoon, you will travel overland to Shanghai and to the Four Seasons Hotel.

Four Seasons Hotel (One Executive Suite) Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 19: SHANGHAI

At around 1.30 p.m. you will be dropped off at the Peace Hotel where you will meet your local guide for touring to **Zhujiajiao**. With natural scenery of little bridges spanning bubbling streams, the ancient river town of Zhujiajiao is built on top of crisscrossing waterways flowing from Dianshan Lake.

The town, occupying an area of 47 square kilometers, has a simple and elegant Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture that is quintessentially southern Chinese. Nine long streets run along the rivers and a thousand

buildings flank both sides. The quiet streets, paved with stone slabs, secluded alleyways and arched stone bridges all express the beauty of the water, said to be the soul of the town. Depart your hotel this morning for an excursion to charming Zhujiajiao (approximately 45 minutes drive). A walking tour of the town will take you through many exhibition halls that introduce the traditions and customs of life south of the Yangtze River.

Late this afternoon you will return to the city and to your hotel.

Four Seasons Hotel (One Executive Suite) Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 20: DEPART SHANGHAI

Morning at leisure.

This afternoon, you will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight back to the U.S.

Breakfast only

— END OF SERVICES —

COSTS: USD24,880 per couple, including private guide/driver throughout, all 5 star hotels, meals as noted, and all internal air (as of Summer 2010)



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