



Chinese Crackers Family Adventure Holiday Trip Notes

Highlights

- Great Wall and Forbidden City
- Camel riding in the desert
- Terracotta Warriors
- Panda sanctuary in Chengdu
- Bicycle ride around the Yangshuo countryside



Factfile

At Imaginative Traveller we always aim to provide accurate information for our travellers. Unfortunately information such as the price of optional activities is occasionally subject to change, and this means that we are constantly revising our trip dossiers. In order to ensure that you have the most up to date information for your trip we suggest that you check the trip notes for your tour around one month before departure.

Code: FACC

Style: Family

Maximum group size: 20

Staffing: Fully escorted by Imaginative Traveller tour leader. Services of local guides at selected sights.
Transport: Public and private bus, soft sleeper train, plane (flights: Beijing to Yinchuan, Xi'an to Chengdu, Chengdu to Guilin), bike & taxi.
Accommodation: 10 nights in tourist class hotels, 1 night under the stars in the desert, 2 nights soft sleeper train. The single supplement does not apply to the night under the stars nor to the 2 nights on the sleeper train.
Activities: Optional hike on the Great Wall, optional rafting and sand tobogganing in Shapotou, cycling in Yangshuo. Note: Bike helmets are not provided with bicycles in China), camel ride and extensive walking at sights.
Meals: Meals are only included on the camel safari. Please allow US\$20 per day (in Hong Kong) and US\$6-8 per day (elsewhere) for additional meals.
Entrance fees: Not included. Allow US\$30 for the duration of the trip for sites listed as part of the itinerary. China has many other sights and activities that you may want to visit or participate in. If you intend visiting a wide range of different sights and taking part in many of the optional activities, you should allow up to approx. US\$30 for this.
Tipping: To avoid embarrassment and save you money, all tours operate a tipping kitty. Please allow US\$15-20 per week for this tour. This does not include a tip for the tour leader. This is entirely at your own discretion but if you are happy with their services we would recommend an amount of US\$3 per person per day.

Note: Some activities in Shapotou may not be available out of season.

For comparability, all prices in this dossier are quoted in one currency. We use the US Dollar since that is familiar to most. However, once on tour you will need to pay for all goods and services in the local currency (with the exception of the local payment which must be paid in US Dollars in good condition, unmarked notes). See your Country Dossier for details of exchange rates.

Local Payment

There is a local payment of US\$440 on this tour. This must be paid to the Tour Leader in cash in US Dollars or Chinese Yuan on Day 1 of the tour.

Travel money



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Country Dossiers and Pre-Departure Information

This Trip Dossier is designed to be read in conjunction with our China Country Dossier and Pre-Departure Information. Pre-Departure Information is available in sections online or as a booklet from your booking agent. (Please note those who book online will not be sent a Pre-Departure Booklet and will need to download it). It is essential that you read this dossier, the China Country Dossier and the Pre-Departure Information in full before you travel.

Arrivals

For details of arrival transfers or making your own way to the tour meeting point, please refer to the Country Dossier and your Pre-Departure Information.

Free Arrival Transfer

Arrival transfers are included for all clients arriving in Beijing on Day 1 or before Day 1 if extra accommodation is booked with The Imaginative Traveller. If you have booked your flights separately from your tour please ensure that you inform your tour booking agent of your flight details at least one month before departure to avoid payment of an administration fee.

Tour Briefing

Once all the members of your group have arrived, your tour leader will organise an introductory briefing (usually after 6pm on day 1). This meeting will give you an overview of all the exciting things that you will be seeing during your tour and include lots of practical information on how to get most of your time in China. You will need to bring with you your passport, all tour vouchers and a copy of your insurance policy to this briefing so that your tour leader can obtain important details that are essential to the running of the tour.

Important Note: it is a condition of joining our tours that you are in possession of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you do not have a policy you will be required to purchase one from your tour leader in order to join the tour.

Hotel meeting Points

Start Point:

R J Brown Hotel

19 Xin Nong Street, Tianqiaou, Xuanwu District, Beijing

北京瑞洁宾馆

北京市宣武区天桥新农街19号

BEIJINGPhone: (86) 10 83133338

End Point:

Stanford Hillview Hotel

Observatory Road Tsim Sha Tsui Kowloon Hong Kong

Phone: (852) 27227822

Itinerary

DAY 1 - BEIJING

Arrival day in Beijing

13 million people and 10 million bicycles populate Beijing, capital city of the People's Republic of China. There is so much to see and do that you may want to book extra time here to allow yourself to experience other facets of this fascinating city. We visit some of the most famous sites, such as Tiananmen Square, which is the largest public square in the world and contains the mausoleum of Chairman Mao. But there's still plenty for you to explore in your free time, whether it's shopping, sight seeing or entertainment. In the evenings your tour leader can arrange a visit to either the dramatic and colourful Beijing Opera or the exhilarating Acrobats. You can also enjoy a meal at a Peking Duck restaurant in the home city of this famous dish.

Please Note: In the build-up to the 2008 Olympics, authorities in Beijing are cleaning up and renovating some of the city's incredible wealth of heritage sites. Whilst this should not effect your overall enjoyment it may not be possible to visit certain areas of some sites, for example a part of the Forbidden City is currently restricted to visitors. Cleaning up is already completed on some of the city's other famous landmarks such as the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace and Chairman Mao's Mausoleum. These sites are now even more beautiful than in the past and definitely worth a visit.

DAY 2 - BEIJING

A full day excursion to the Great Wall with the chance to take a hike along one of the most beautiful sections.

Great Wall

This is perhaps China's most famous and beautiful site. Starting in the north east of the country it snakes across mountains and deserts for over six thousand kilometres forming a continuous barrier against the marauding tribes which threatened successive dynasties from the north. It is a stunning testament to the power of the dynasties, which were involved in building it. We have a full day excursion to hike along the undulating crest of one of the most spectacular and least visited sections of the Great Wall.

DAY 3 - BEIJING:

Visit Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. Free afternoon to explore Beijing's other sights - perhaps take a boat out on the lake at the Summer Palace. In the evening there is the option to watch the incredible Beijing acrobats.

Forbidden City

Home of the Emperors for 500 years, local Chinese were forbidden from approaching the Imperial Palace. Fortunately all that has changed and we are allowed to enter this spectacular complex. We can visit the most important buildings, then duck off to wander around some of the quieter courtyards and buildings.

Summer Palace

Situated in a beautiful park, the Summer Palace was the holiday resort of Chinese Emperors during the hottest months in Beijing. Visiting the beautiful buildings and gardens on the edge of Kunming Lake you will also find the palace a haven from the bustle of the city.

DAY 4 - ZHONGWEI

Fly to Yinchuan and continue to Zhongwei. Free time to explore.

Zhongwei

Zhongwei is an interesting small town that is little visited by foreign tourists. The Gao Miao Buddhist Temple is well worth a visit and is a magnificent jumble of different building styles and featuring elements of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism but also Christianity and other religions. Zhongwei also has some of the best noodles in northern China so it is well worth trying a steaming bowl (if you can manage with the chopsticks).

DAY 5 - SHAPOTOU - CAMEL SAFARI

A day of activities - we transfer to Shapotou on the banks of the great Yellow River and the southern fringes of the Gobi Desert. We have the chance to raft down the Yellow River on inflatable sheepskins and to go sand-tobogganing. In the afternoon we ride out into the desert on camels for an overnight camp. (D)

Camel Safari

We set off into the desert on Bactrian (two hump) camels, accompanied by experienced local camel herders. If you are unsure about riding your camel, you can join together in a camel train, but most people become fairly proficient camel riders within a short space of time and are happy to ride alone.

We ride for approximately 4 hours in the afternoon and 2 hours in the morning. There are no villages in this sand sea, just magnificent dunes. Our staff look after you well; they set up camp and provide all meals during the safari. You need a small daypack to keep some clothing and personal belongings. The night is spent camping out under the stars. Tents, mattresses and blankets will be provided, but we recommend that you bring a sleeping sheet.

DAY 6 - SHAPATOU - XI'AN

See the sunrise in the desert and take a morning ride on our camels. After a chance to freshen up back in Zhongwei we catch an overnight train to Xi'an. (B)

Shapotou

Situated about 16km west of Zhongwei, on the fringes of the Tengger desert, is the small settlement of Shapotou. It is centered around the Desert Research Centre which, for the last forty years, has been working on methods to control the sand dunes and prevent desertification. Their efforts have met with considerable success through the use of the 'chequerboard method' - grids of straw thatch are implanted in the sands and then used to hold trees and plants in place. Several thousand hectares of land have already been reclaimed in this way, creating a dramatic contrast between the green and the desert. We come to Shapotou, not for the greenery, but because it is an adventure playground. This is time to burn off some excess energy and have a great deal of fun. Be prepared!

DAY 7 - XI'AN

A free day to explore this wonderful ancient city. Visit the Muslim quarter or take a bike ride on top of the city walls.

Xi'an

Xi'an is famous for the Terracotta Warriors. Commissioned by Emperor Qin Shi Huang around 2200 years ago as an army of sculptures, they are unique and awe-inspiring works of art. But Xi'an has so much more to offer and we have enough free time to explore a variety of sites in the city. There are Taoist and Buddhist temples, a peaceful and uniquely Chinese mosque, and one of China's most impressive museums. We can cycle along the top of the city walls, climb one of the ancient pagodas, or go bargain hunting and enjoy a snack from the street stalls in the lively Muslim markets.

DAY 8 - XI'AN - CHENGDU

Excursion to the Terracotta Warriors and the First Emperor's tomb. After a picnic lunch we take a flight to Chengdu.

DAY 9 - CHENGDU

Excursion to the Panda Sanctuary, where we see these delightful animals, as well as their less well known cousin, the red panda. Free afternoon to explore the many parks for which Chengdu is famous, or perhaps sample the delicious local food.

Chengdu

Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, is a vibrant, modern city of almost 12 million people, which still manages to retain some of its older characteristics and traditions. You can experience the 200-year-old Sichuan Opera. The singing, comedy, puppets and incredible 'changing faces' act performed in old halls or courtyard buildings are a feast for the eyes. For a relaxing afternoon, visit one of Chengdu's parks or temples, scattered with teahouses. You can while away an afternoon sipping tea and watching the locals play chess, cards or mah-jongg. You may even be invited to give it a try yourself. No visit is complete without a meal in a local Sichuan restaurant. Sichuan cuisine is famed the world over.

DAY 10 - YANGSHUO

A flight to Guilin before continuing to the enchanting small town of Yangshuo, in the heart of one of the most beautiful areas of China. We have laid on a fun session of activities - cooking, tai-chi and painting / calligraphy - you might even learn how to write your name in Chinese characters! For those who want to be energetic, there are plenty of other opportunities including climbing, caving and bike riding.

Yangshuo

Often remembered as the highlight of a trip to China, Yangshuo has some of the most spectacular scenery and one of the most relaxed atmospheres in the country. You can hop onto a bicycle and head off the beaten track for a ride into the countryside, which is like cycling through a traditional Chinese painting! Mountains, rivers, bamboo, rice paddies and water buffaloes - there's something new at every turn. Then in the evening it's time to relax for a meal or a drink in one of the many cafés that line the famous West Street or perhaps watch the spectacular Liu San Jie show.

Chinese Activities

Something for everyone today, all activities are optional and are the perfect way to learn something new. You can choose to improve your language skills or learn how to write your name in Chinese characters. In the morning you have the option to go down to the beautiful riverfront and perform the ancient art of tai'chi; expect a lot of interest from the locals!

DAY 11 - YANGSHUO

A bike ride through this amazing landscape, and an opportunity for a swim to cool off.

Liu San Jie Show

The one hour show is directed by Zhang Yimou, director of many famous Chinese movies - including 'Hero', and 'House of Flying Daggers' - and also responsible for the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympics. It tells the story of the 'Third Sister Liu' who was renowned for her lyrical singing. She lived in nearby Liuzhou, before she travelled on a bamboo raft to Yangshuo, where she fell in love and settled. The performance showcases the ethnic diversity of the region, incorporating over 500 singers and dancers - many of whom are local farmers. They perform on and around the beautiful Li River against the backdrop of the incredibly illuminated karst mountains. The Liu San Jie show takes place at 8pm most nights (except when the river is in flood) at the confluence of the Li and Yulong rivers on the outskirts of Yangshuo. The ticket price is US\$25, excluding transport.

DAY 12 - YANGSHUO - SHENZHEN

A free day to do as you please or hunt for souvenirs in the excellent markets. In the evening we board an overnight train to Shenzhen.

DAY 13 - HONG KONG

Take the MTR train to Kowloon. The rest of the day is free to explore this bustling metropolis.

Hong Kong

At the crossroads between East and West, you'll find that Hong Kong is one of the most exciting cities in the world. It has a stunning harbour location, gleaming skyscrapers, and revels in the reputation of a city that never sleeps. The territory's five million inhabitants spend their time either furiously making money or furiously spending it. Shopping is a major preoccupation and you may also find it hard to resist. Hong Kong has good museums and numerous markets for you to explore. One of our favourite activities is catching the Star Ferry from Kowloon to Hong Kong Island and then the funicular up The Peak, to enjoy the spectacular views of the city by day or night. The city boasts a vibrant nightlife and you may want to end your day with a drink in one of Hong Kong's many bars or restaurants.

DAY 14 - HONG KONG

Tour ends after breakfast. (B)

Itinerary Notes

For those with limited time, wishing to make the most of their stay in Hong Kong, we offer an upgrade at the end of the tour, flying from Guilin to Hong Kong airport instead of the overnight train. This package includes a coach transfer in Hong Kong and one extra night in the hotel there.

Some activities in Shapotou may not be available out of season.

Supplementary Information

Hotel Meeting Point

UK travellers & those booking over the Internet:

Details of the meeting point hotel will be printed on the tour vouchers you will receive one month prior to departure.

Overseas travellers:

Your local agent will provide vouchers with details of your meeting point hotel.

As meeting point hotels may be subject to change we recommend you check the details online one month prior to departure.

Visas

You will need to obtain the following visas for this tour. Contact your travel agent for current prices:

Available on Arrival

- Hong Kong single entry

Required in Advance

- China single entry

If the visa application form requires a contact address in the destination, please give either your meeting point hotel or the address of our local contact (which you will find in the China Country Dossier).

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of the correct visas for your holiday and onward travel. The Imaginative Traveller cannot accept responsibility for anyone who is refused entry to a country because they lack the correct documentation.

Border Taxes

- CHINA

Entry by air - nil

Exit by land - nil

- HONG KONG

Entry by land - nil
Exit by air - nil

Special Luggage Requirements

The Pre-Departure Information includes an extensive luggage checklist. However there are some special requirements for this tour.

- Sleeping sheet
- Walking boots or sturdy trainers
- Daypack (for Camel Safari)
- Backpack or easy to carry luggage

(Please ensure you have a bag which you find easy to carry)

Although it may be difficult, try not to pack too many **clothes**. Most hotels have a cheap and efficient laundry service and you can usually buy anything you might need locally (and cheaply). Don't bring lots of **footwear** - one pair of sandals and one pair of sturdy trainers per person is usually plenty. You do not need to bring **towels** for the family as they will be provided in the hotels.

We strongly recommend that you bring a good quality, high factor **suncream** to protect your skin (and that of your children). You also need to make sure that you have a **hat** for all the family – essential for protection against the sun. It is also a good idea to bring an **insect repellent**(with a high concentration of DEET). For children under ten a natural repellent (with no DEET) should be used (natural repellents are available from all good outdoor shops).

You may also want to bring **portable games** that you can play with the kids when on bus journeys or the overnight train.

Make sure that you don't forget any **medication** or **vitamin supplements** that your children require as these will probably not be available locally. An emergency first aid kit is carried by your tour leader however this kit DOES NOT include any kind of oral medications. You should bring **personal medical supplies**, including rehydration salts, supply of plasters, aspirins, necessary medicines, etc.

Availability of helmets

Protective helmets of a reliable standard are not available locally and as a result we are unfortunately not able to supply these. If you intend to take part in activities such as bike, horse, donkey or camel rides, and would like to wear a helmet, you should therefore consider bringing one with you.

Fitness

None of the activities featured in this trip require special training or skills, just a reasonable level of fitness and a willingness to participate. If you are in any doubt contact your doctor for advice.

We generally find that the children in a group are amongst the fittest. However, please do bear in mind that your children in particular may find the heat to be problematic, especially when they first arrive in the country. You need to make sure that they wear a hat, drink a lot of water, and don't run around too much in the heat of the day, particularly at the start of the holiday. It is a good idea to contact your doctor before travelling to see if they have any special recommendations for travelling with children.

Room Arrangements

All our prices are based on two people sharing a twin or double room. However, if there are three people in your family (one parent and two children, or two parents and one child) we can try to accommodate you in a triple room. Triple rooms vary in style – it may be a room with a double and a single bed, or three single beds, or a double bed with a fold down mattress / extra bed added. If there are five members of your family the same idea applies – you will get one twin / double room and we can try to arrange a triple room for the remaining three people.

However, if you would prefer we can try to match up the third person with someone else on the tour – if you are two parents and a child, for example, we may be able to put your child in a room with another child of the same sex.

If you are a family of four (or two, or six) then we will provide you with two twin / double rooms and you can choose who shares with whom.

At all times we will try our hardest to ensure that families will be accommodated in rooms that are located near to each other. However, this is not always possible.

Please tell your travel agent your rooming preferences at the time of booking so that we can try to arrange these in advance.

Transport

Train

The Railway system in China is vast and quite efficient but delays do sometimes occur and are potentially lengthy. Our itineraries have been designed with this in mind, and it is unlikely that any delays will have a major impact on the sightseeing content of your tour. We travel 'Soft Sleeper' in closed lockable four berth compartments. A wash basin and toilets are located at the end of each carriage. These are usually Chinese style (i.e. 'squat') toilets though more and more trains feature at least one western toilet. All bedding is provided. Meals are served on the train, but due to poor hygiene in the kitchen, we suggest you purchase your own food before each journey. Your tour leader will indicate places to purchase food before you board. Hot water is provided on each carriage, so tea and pot-noodles are an easy option for travellers. Alternatively, ample food supplies can be bought on the platform.

Plane

Flights included in your tour are made with one of the regional Chinese airlines. Almost of all these flights are on Boeing or Airbus planes. A light snack and drinks are usually included. In the event of flight delays or cancellations we will attempt to make alternative arrangements so as to keep the tour operating as close to the original itinerary as possible.

Private Bus

During the tour we use private air conditioned buses for the included sightseeing tours. There is a no smoking policy on all our tour buses – however there are tea and toilet breaks every couple of hours or so. The only exception to this rule is the driver. Major roads are good, enabling our coaches to cover distances quickly. Even so the country is vast and, as a guideline, we have noted approximate driving times in the itinerary above.

Public Bus

We will use public buses on some occasions on this tour to reach the more remote areas. Local buses are variable in standard across China. Generally efficient and fast, you may still occasionally find yourself sharing the bus with an assortment of chickens and an amazing variety of luggage – all part of the experience!

Travelling with Children

Our tours are designed with families in mind – they are at a relaxed pace with a mixture of sightseeing and free time. Wherever possible we have made sure that you will have at least two nights (and sometimes more) in the same hotel. This means that you aren't constantly having to un-pack and re-pack for the whole family. All of our family trips are escorted by experienced Imaginative Traveller tour leaders who will help your whole family to get the best possible experience out of their tour. They will explain local customs and will point out things of interest to all the family. However, they are not baby sitters – our trips are designed for those who want to explore exciting destinations with their families. Of course you have the opportunity to 'sit out' of some activities if you want to, but you will need to make sure that your children are accompanied by one of the adults in your party at all times.

Our tour leaders cannot take responsibility at any time for looking after children.

Culture Shock

By travelling with The Imaginative Family you are choosing to discover a country as it is – rather than be cocooned in a sterile resort. Naturally many countries have cultures very different from your own and most travellers experience some level of culture shock. Although the chance to learn about new customs is a positive part of our style of travel, strange or odd customs, sounds and smells can sometimes be overwhelming. It is important to make sure that your children feel comfortable although they will probably be more adaptable than most adults and will almost certainly take everything in their stride!

Health and Hygiene

Standards of hygiene can sometimes be lower than at home but if you take a few simple precautions it is simple to keep your family healthy while you are away. In most cases food is freshly prepared for you, however it will probably contain ingredients that you are not familiar with or may be prepared in a different way. This change in diet is one of the most common causes of upset tummies. Therefore it is a good idea to treat food and drink with caution – at least in the first few days of your holiday. It is a good idea to avoid tap water (even for cleaning teeth) and to beware of ice in drinks. Bottled water is widely available and both you and your children should drink plenty (much more than you probably would do at home). Finally, and most importantly, try to ensure that both you and your children keep your hands clean – especially before you eat. Antiseptic **wet wipes** or antiseptic hand gel (which you can use without water) are essential.

General information

Price includes:

- Staffing as shown in the 'Factfinder'
- Accommodation, meals, transportation, and sightseeing excursions as per itinerary.
- Transfer to hotel on arrival.

Price does not include:

- Visa costs
- Border Taxes
- Entrance fees
- Drinks, tips, laundry and other items of a personal nature.
- International flights
- Departure transfers
- Meals other than those listed
- Single supplement does not include the night under the stars nor to the 2 nights on the sleeper train.

Are You Ready To Go?

Before you travel it is essential that you read ALL of the following documents which you can obtain from your booking agent:

- Trip Notes (this document)
- China Country Dossier
- Pre-Departure Information

The itinerary and supplementary information has been compiled with care and provided in good faith. However it may be subject to change, and does not form part of a contract between the client and The Imaginative Traveller.