

# TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY ADVENTURE

PRE-TRIP DOSSIER 2009/2010

# CHINA

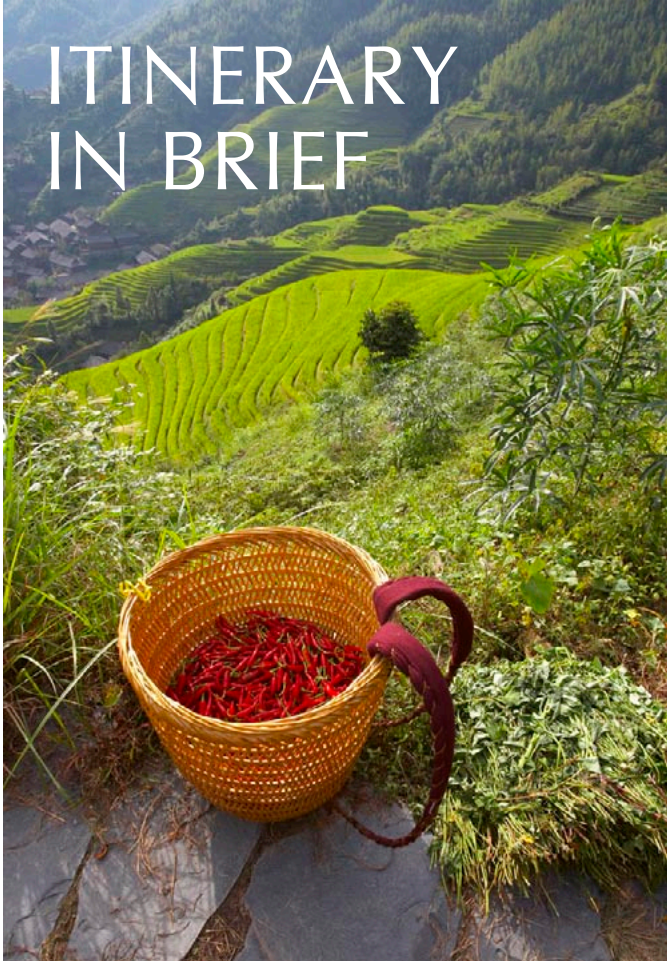


GRASSHOPPER  
ADVENTURES

PHOTOGRAPHY  
by Ewen Bell

Photo adventures designed by photographers, for photographers. Advance your photographic skills while travelling through China on a 14 day adventure. We have designed an integrated programme of travel and discussion themes to create the most wonderful opportunities you could ever imagine - for beginners and advanced photographers alike. You get 2 leaders, a maximum group size of 8 and the experience of a lifetime.

# ITINERARY IN BRIEF



## Days 1-4 : Beijing

We meet at our hotel by 5:30pm and we go somewhere very local for an included dinner. Our orientations will show you the Hutongs, join in kite flying at Tiananmen Square, visit the peaceful surrounds of the Summer Palace and reveal some off the map locations. An entire day is allocated for a day trip to the Great Wall, where you will have time to take in the scale of this remarkable achievement and explore it's many angles. An evening show by the National Acrobats is also included. On our final day we catch the overnight train to Xi'an.

## Days 5-6 : Xi'an

We visit the Terracotta Warriors after lunch and have time to experience the museum facilities at the site as well. That evening we dine in true Xi'an style and will be able to photograph some of the night-life. Our second day in Xi'an we have to ourselves, and a chance to explore the Muslim Quarter, the gardens around the city wall and try a variety of very unique cuisine styles on offer in the old part of the city. Calligraphy St will be a major attraction for the day and you can also do an optional bicycle tour around the city walls.

## Days 7-8 : Rice Terraces

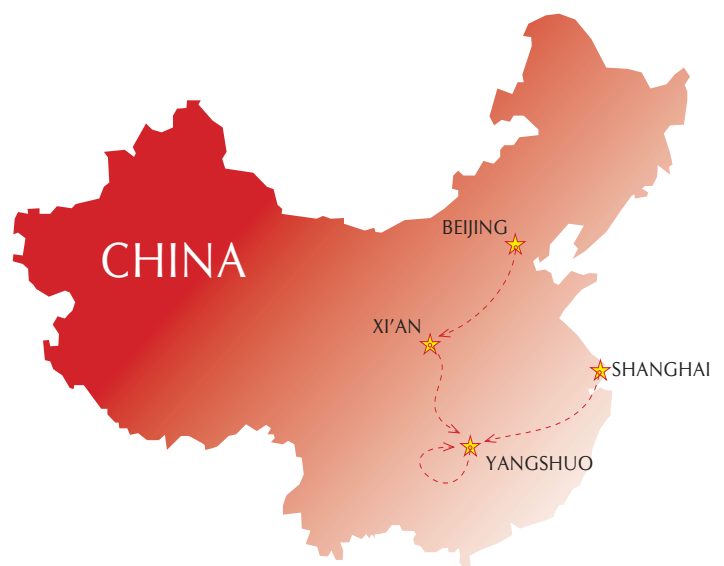
We fly into Guilin province and take private transport further into the countryside in search of the Long Ji rice terraces. Leaving the road behind for the last kilometre with reach our guest house on foot. Porters are provided to ease the burden of our backpacks. The people of this region are an ethnic minority within China and as such feature very different personal appearance, architecture and way of life. You will have a free day to explore nearby villages and terraces to collect some great images.

## Days 9-11 : Yangshuo

We travel from high country of the rice terraces and head south for the charms of Yangshuo. Our accommodation is old style boutique, based in the most interesting part of town. We arrange a cycling tour with personal guides to take you through agricultural villages, a private cooking class to learn and photograph local cuisine and a stunning sunset cruise down the river to dine at a secluded residence. Optional activities during our stay include caving, hiking up karst mountains, boat trips, calligraphy, balloon rides and cormorant fishing.

## Days 12-14 : Shanghai

You will be introduced to the old and new of Shanghai, from The Bund to the Yu Yuan Gardens. Sunset will offer unique light and atmospheric conditions for city scapes. The next day we explore an old water-town on the grand canal and take you to dinner somewhere uniquely Shanghai to conclude our travels together.



# WHO TRAVELS WITH US

Our photographic journeys appeal to both the young and old; the experienced and novice. Most tours are made up of people aged 25-65, and occasionally older or younger still. It doesn't matter what your skills and interest in photography is, you will enjoy sharing a creative and immersive experience in China.

You can read feedback from our past travellers by visiting [www.ewenbell.com](http://www.ewenbell.com)





## HOW WE TRAVEL

Experience a unique and challenging journey along one of the world's most fascinating trade routes. Pass through an amazing array of landscapes inhabited by people whose culture goes far beyond the borders of China. You will be more than a traveller, you will also be exploring new photographic techniques along the way and getting the chance to put these skills into practice. This trip will immerse you in the cultural, scenic and human richness of China's west while giving you an unparalleled opportunity to develop your own style and techniques as a photographer.

The travel style for this journey will bring you right up close to China. You will meet real people and experience a little of their lives. Key attractions are included on this itinerary, such as the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors, but we have also included out of the way destinations and the time to enjoy them. Our time in the rural parts of Yangshuo will no doubt remain a favourite memory for a lifetime.

You will never be rushed from one place to another, instead you will have time to delve a little deeper and make your own connection. This is a vital ingredient to successful travel photography and the process of cultivating your skills.

### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

This is a special way to learn about photography. Time is set aside during the trip for theme sessions which introduce techniques and concepts. After each session you will have a chance to put them into practice. There will be frequent reviews of your work and a chance to discuss your experiences for that day. The skills covered in this tour are aimed at travel photography particularly, but will benefit all areas of your work.

No matter what your level of skill or experience you will learn invaluable techniques on our travels. For 14 days we will be at your disposal to explore the high level concepts and fine detail practicalities of travel photography. Beginners can expect to learn basic skills, new ways of thinking about their photography and gain structured themes to help them take great photos in challenging conditions. Advanced photographers will also gain insight into the world of publishing travel photos and high level concepts that determine which images will be more likely to gain selection by an editor.

### ACCOMMODATION

The standard of accommodation in China is very high and will generally be very comfortable. Expect hot water, clean rooms, and climate control when staying in the city. Rural areas may offer more rustic charms where accommodation is concerned, but is always comfortable and clean. This trip operates on a twin share basis, hence single travellers will be allocated a same-sex room mate. Please ask for an elective single-supplement if you do not wish to share your accommodation for the duration of the trip.



# TAKE BETTER PHOTOS

Understanding your subject  
Getting closer to your subject  
Capturing intimacy and expressions  
Portrait photography on the run  
How to make use of your wide angle lens  
Landscape Photography  
Using available light for dramatic effect  
Capturing a sense of motion  
Shooting for context  
Using pattern repetition  
Colour and form  
Patience and predictability makes perfect  
Techniques unique to digital photography  
Responsible travel with a camera  
Safety issues when travelling as a foreigner

Our journeys offer two things. Firstly we provide an unparalleled opportunity to practice photography in an exotic land. We help you to get the right sunset, to access the most idyllic wilderness, to meet the real people of China and to make sure you have the time to explore your craft in the process. You won't be worried about travel and accommodation - it's taken care of for you. And you won't be rushed from hotel to hotel; you will have time to take photographs and to review them at the end of each day.

Secondly we present a series of photographic themes which introduce key concepts and techniques which will help you improve your photography. Each session will discuss a topic and outline associated techniques. A set of technical notes are provided to accompany these sessions. Your travel itinerary has been developed in conjunction with the session themes, so you can immediately practice the skills you learn.

We will also encourage people to share their work during the trip. Review is very important and can greatly assist the development of your own personal style. Throughout the trip you will be free to consult with your instructor as well. You are not confined to the sessions to talk about your work and ideas! This will be a 14 day immersion that will accelerate your learning and development.

The discussion themes designed into this trip are aimed at people with a fundamental knowledge of their camera, but who want to learn more. A basic knowledge of aperture, focal length, depth of field and exposure is useful, but not essential. We will even help you learn the technical use of your camera, if that's what you need. For more experienced photographers the itinerary alone will be an inspiration for your art, plus the chance to share skills and experience with an award winning travel journalist.

People of many different skill levels and ambition will be gathered for the journey, so expect to be in the company of diversity. This tour will appeal to anyone who wants to immerse themselves in the process of cultivating skills and exploring cultures. You will have a chance to discuss techniques and principles, then immediately go out and practice. This will not give you a qualification, but hopefully will give you confidence and direction to take better photos.

# WHY SHOOT DIGITAL

For the purpose of this journey a digital camera is the most suitable equipment to carry. We will save the debate about film vs digital for the journey, there will be plenty of time to discuss opinions! Our trip is a chance to develop new skills and the immediate feedback offered by digital cameras is hence valuable. The quality, manual control and practicality offered by Digital SLR's make them perfect for travel photography.

Your instructor will also be carrying a laptop computer for the journey, so there will be ample opportunity to review your photographs and study your image in detail.



A young child with dark hair in pigtails, wearing a bright red jacket, is sitting and holding a large, dark metal object, possibly a hammer or a tool handle, with both hands. The child is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with some structures and possibly other people in the distance.

# ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

We recommend the use of Digital SLR cameras for this journey, but you are not restricted from using any type of camera you may have, including conventional film SLRs and compact cameras. Digital SLR cameras offer excellent manual controls and plus the ability to review our work at the end of each day - a valuable part of this experience. A minimum of 4Gig of memory cards should accompany your camera, plus an additional 20Gig or greater of external storage (hard drive or laptop).

We also recommend that you carry a wide angle lens in preference to telephoto. Most of our shooting involves being close up with the subject. We strongly advise that if you own a Digital SLR camera that you purchase an equivalent 18mm lens or even wider for the purpose of this journey. (Remember that most Digital SLRs multiply a standard lens by roughly 1.5, so factor this in when determining your wide-angle). The range of 18mm to 80mm will cover almost every need, be it a single wide-angle zoom lens or two of fixed focal length.

A good quality day pack will be an essential part of the packing list. Crumpler and Lowe make excellent packs that are designed for camera equipment. Ideally your pack should be comfortable, spacious, and practical. The traditional type of 'over-the-shoulder' camera bag is not very suitable for travel photography, a day-pack is better. Remember that you will be carrying your gear for days on end, so it's worth buying something comfortable with good shoulder straps and a little extra room to fit both your camera gear and your daily necessities.

Flash equipment and tripods are not recommended. Our study themes will not address the use of advanced flash photography and the additional weight and bulk must be considered against the rare occasions of use - if used at all. Similarly for tripods, they are cumbersome and difficult to travel with. Practise and experience with using your digital equipment and fundamental skills will negate the need for tripod or monopod.

Finally, full travel insurance and coverage for your 'additional items' is absolutely necessary. Standard travel insurance is generally inadequate to cover the value of your equipment unless you stipulate your equipment when buying insurance. It costs very little, so don't be caught short. Please check very carefully that you are fully covered and have completed all necessary details to qualify for suitable coverage.



## ABOUT YOUR LEADERS

You will enjoy the company of two leaders for this journey. One is there to help you travel, the other to help you learn about travel photography.

Jason Williams have been operating small group adventure tours for over 7 years. He lives in Asia and operates about 15 trips each year, including this photography adventure. Jason operates many trips for other, more well known, travel companies. By dealing directly with his company, Grasshopper Adventures, you get the best price, exceptional service and the most customised itinerary possible. You wont find a better tour operator.

Ewen Bell has been a commercial photographer since 1990 and has experience in many aspects of photography – scientific, travel, commercial and personal. Ewen’s work is published in brochures for numerous travel companies and appears in regular travel publications including the Escape Weekend editions across Australia, Melbourne’s Herald Sun travel section and Vacations and Travel Magazine.

Ewen was chosen as the 2007 Australian Travel Photographer of the Year by the ASTW.

# RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

At all times during our journey we need to be mindful of how our presence can impact on the cultures we wish to observe. Travel photography carries an even greater burden to ensure that you respect cultural beliefs and personal privacy. We never take photos of people without their express consent; instead we will learn techniques to enable you to overcome language barriers.



# DETAILED ITINERARY

## **Day 1 : Beijing**

### **Theme : Get Closer**

On the first day we are scheduled to meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30pm. We start our first night getting to know our group. Your dinner is included at a very rustic little eatery in Beijing where we will be introduced to some of the characteristics that make Peking cuisine unique. We also discuss the fundamentals and philosophy of the photographic journey ahead.

## **Day 2 : Beijing**

### **Theme : Follow the light**

We begin the photographic discussion with a photo-walk and orientation through some of Beijings oldest and best preserved Hutongs. This will provide an in-depth opportunity to meet locals and become more familiar with their culture. The walk will also provide one-on-one time with the photographic instructor in order to assist you with any basic skills relating to SLR photography. We finish the walk near the Forbidden City and allow free time that afternoon to explore.

That evening we take you to experience the talents of the Beijing Acrobats for a colourful and impressive display of skill.

## **Day 3 : The Great Wall**

### **Theme : Landscapes**

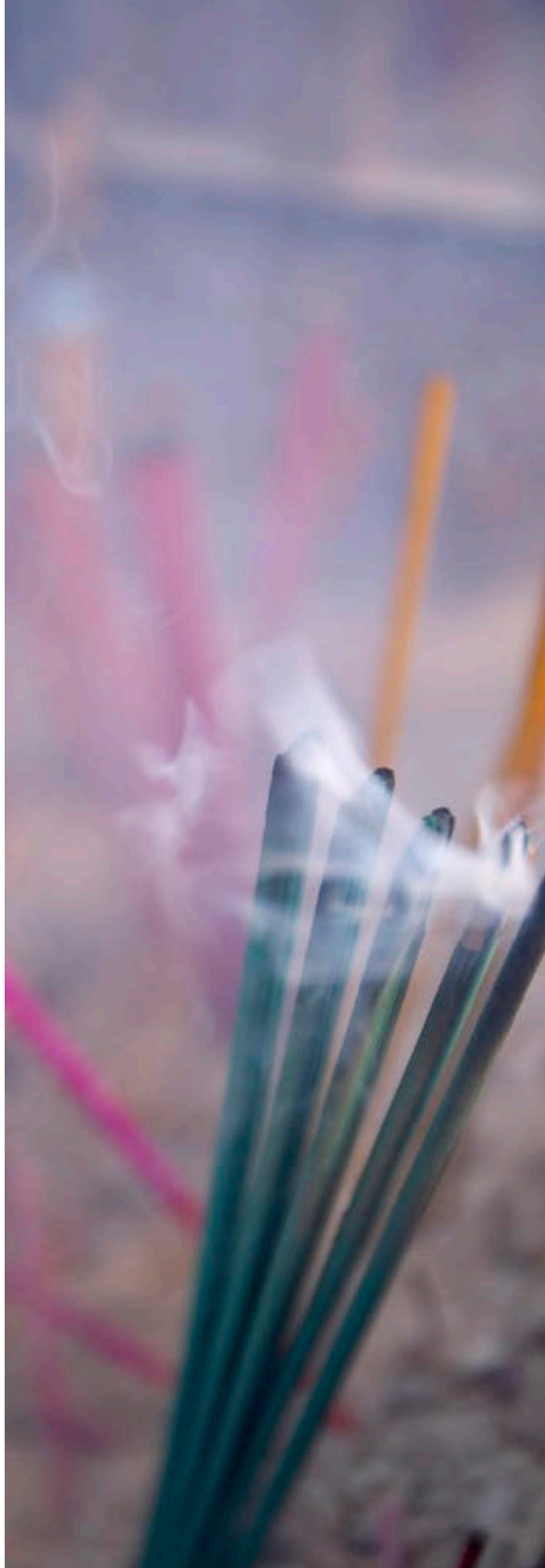
We board our private bus in the late morning for the long drive to a section of the Great Wall called Si Ma Tai. During the bus ride we will discuss some of the historical aspects of the Great Wall and techniques for landscape photography. We stay late into the afternoon to catch some of the late light and will have dinner at a village near the Great Wall.

## **Day 4 : Beijing**

### **Theme : Digital Techniques**

The early morning is free to revisit locations in Beijing and practice techniques covered on days 2 and 3. At midday we head to the Summer Palace to capture the beautiful gardens and museums. That evening we board an overnight train and will have a chance to review and discuss our work.

Optional places to visit during our stay in Beijing include The Forbidden City, The Temple of Heaven, Tienanmen Square and the nightlife of Chaoyang.



### **Day 5 : Xi'an**

#### **Theme : Telling a Story**

Following our arrival in Xi'an we enjoy breakfast and then take the short journey into the country-side to visit the Terracotta Warriors. The visit is included in the itinerary for interest as much as photographic study, but a telephoto lens of 150mm is still sufficient to take photos of the warriors. In the afternoon we will have an orientation of Xi'an to discover the Muslim Quarter and its laneways. Evening dinner is included but expect to shoot further into the night and capture some of the street ambience.

### **Day 6 : Xi'an**

You are free all day to return to locations around Xi'an and photograph subjects of interest. The calligraphy streets in particular are fascinating and ideal for photographers. In the evening we board another overnight train and review our work from the past two days.

### **Day 7 : Rice Terraces**

#### **Theme : Portraiture**

We begin the day with an internal flight to the Guangxi province and then take a private bus to the edge of rural villages in the rice terraces. Once we arrive in the rice terraces we are taken on an orientation to a view point and then will be free to wander through the terraces and village and apply the themes of colour and portraiture.

Your main challenge here is to photograph the local people with a feeling that goes beyond the average tourist shot. These people are a little bit too camera friendly, and hence natural emotions are hard to capture. Dinner is provided at our guest house and we hope to review our days work with the group.

### **Day 8 : Rice Terraces**

A free day is provided to study the village in detail or to explore some of the surrounding terraces. Less than one-hour walking from our village takes you into areas with new ethnic groups and remote communities. Alternately, this is a great time to catch up on reviewing your photos and resting for the last half of the tour.

### **Day 9 : Yangshuo**

#### **Theme : Still Life**

After arriving in the rural town of Yangshuo you will be free to photograph the beautiful river banks of the village and explore the trinkets and treasures of Yangshuo's markets. That evening we dine on the rooftop of one of the local restaurants.



### Day 10 : Yangshuo

The morning is free for optional activities such as hot-air ballooning and hiking to the lookout. After lunch we will head down the river on a private boat to photograph the sunset at the famous stretch of river near Xiping. We return to town just after dark in time for the night market.

### Day 11 : Yangshuo

#### Theme : Still Life

A bicycle day is planned to get us out of the main town and into the surrounding villages. You will have one guide for every two people. The day will give you a chance to completely immerse in the rural culture, including having lunch at a farmer's house.

A free night is scheduled for dinner and many western options are available in Yangshuo, including the famous Apple Crumble at *Drifters*.

### Day 12 : Shanghai

#### Theme : Colour and Repetition

Our visit in Shanghai marks the closing of our journey and after such a busy schedule many people enjoy the chance to slow down a little. Our flight arrives after lunch, so we have a chance to discuss the theme of colour and repetition before we arrive.

We take you to a favourite location for lunch and then provide a brief orientation of The Bund and Shanghai's features. You will be free to wander and photograph for the remainder of the afternoon.

That evening a Shanghai style dinner is provided and we can discuss the theme a little further.

### Day 13: Shanghai

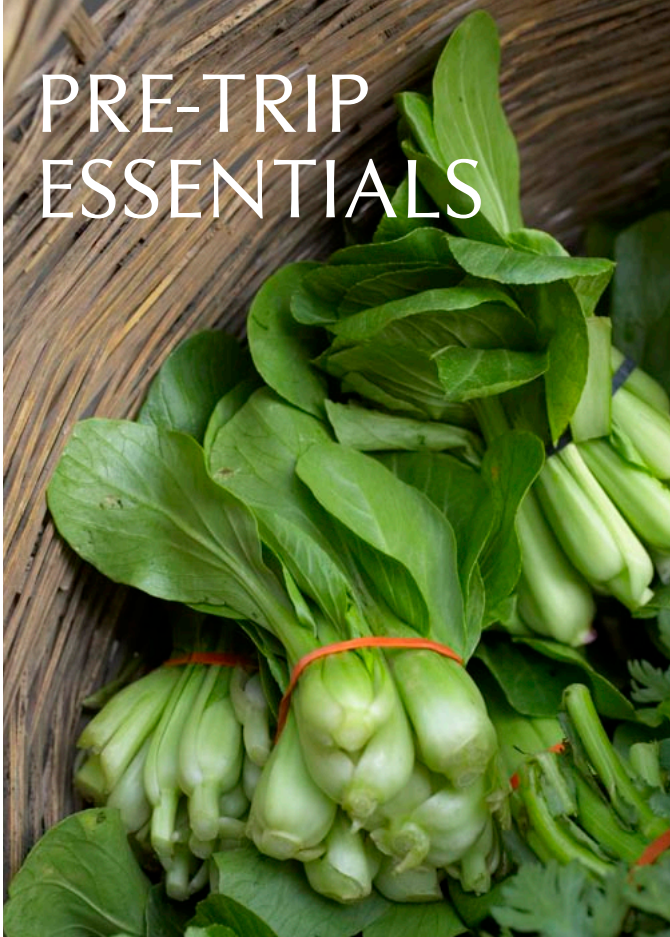
As a final treat as a group we will visit one of the unique water-towns that were built along the Grand Canal during the Ming Dynasty. They allow us to step back in time and see another way of life, with traditions and community life that has not been modernised like Shanghai itself. This will be a long day but a feast for the camera.

### Day 14: Shanghai

This is our checkout day. The hotel rooms are held until 12noon and people who want to stay on for an extra day or two should arrange accommodation well in advance.



# PRE-TRIP ESSENTIALS



## Group Size

8 maximum. Each group will have the services of a tour leader, photographic instructor and various local guides.

## Additional Accommodation

Should you require extra accommodation in Beijing or Hong Kong we can offer you competitive rates at our hotel. Room costs will be advised upon request and may vary according to season and proximity to date of travel.

## Health

There are no specific health requirements for travelling in China, however, we recommend that you visit a travel medicine doctor before travelling. You should carry a well stocked first aid kit with you when you travel. All Grasshopper Adventures Group Leaders are first aid trained, however, they are not permitted to distribute any medications.

## Money

The official currency of China is Renminbi or Yuan which should be used for all transactions. China has a modern banking systems with ATMs and money changers in most larger or tourist towns. In China it possible to use Visa/Mastercard and Cirrus/Maestro cards, however, we do advise that you carry some cash currency from home as a backup. Travellers Cheques are not always as easy to change by comparison. Most international currencies can be exchanged in larger cities so it is not necessary to bring only US Dollars - AUD, EUR, CAD, NZD are all accepted at banks in major centres.

The current exchange rate is: US\$1 = 7.3 Yuan

## Costs

We recommend that you allow approximately US\$15 for food and general living costs per day. Shopping money should be considered extra to this amount. Some meals are included with travel days and discussion sessions, but you will have the opportunity to choose between dining with the group or alone on most occasions.

## Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

## Phrase Book

A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people that you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas you should learn a few words of Chinese. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book (unless you are really good at charades). We can recommend the Lonely Planet Mandarin Phrase Book, 2007 edition.

## Packing

You will be required to carry your own luggage when checking into or out of hotels and bags will need to be loaded on and off trains and up and down stairs at stations. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack or small wheelie bag - please keep maximum weight to around 15kg. This trip covers rural and northern areas during the cooler seasons so temperatures can plummet at night. Please remember to bring warm clothes for cold nights and chilly mornings.

You should consider bringing the following items:

- Long trousers
- Shorts
- Shirts
- Hat (sun & woolly)
- Fleece Jacket
- Sandals/Light Shoes
- Sunglasses
- Light Rain Coat
- Toiletries
- Small Towel
- Sunscreen
- First Aid Kit
- Mosquito Repellent
- Alarm Clock
- Passport (with 6 months validity and spare pages)
- Passport photo
- Travel Insurance details
- Flight Tickets
- Money - Cash/ATM-Card/Credit Card
- Mandarin Phrase Book

## Important

All information in this Profile is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures.

# GETTING THERE

## Visa for China

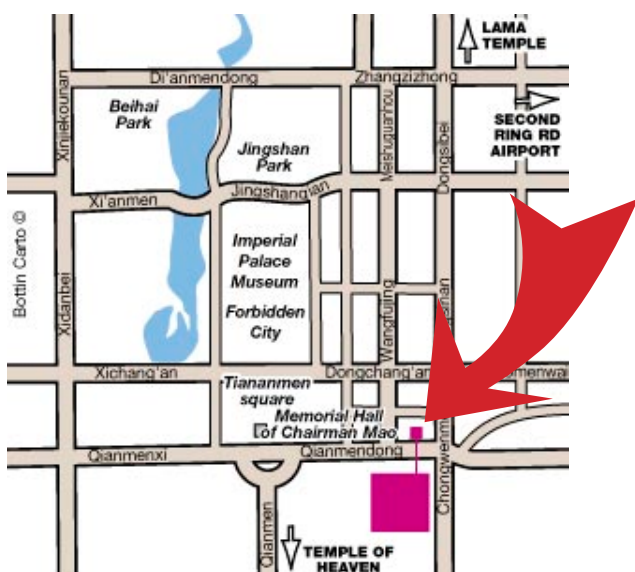
It usually takes only 4 working days to have your visa application processed in Australia, The United States and the United Kingdom. Additional fees can be paid to get your visa completed on a next-day basis. If you live in a city without a China Consulate then please allow additional time for courier delivery. Before you apply please check your passport to ensure that there is room for a entry/exit stamps (two spare pages) and that it has at least 6 months validation remaining.

Residents of the United States can find the nearest China Consulate in the following cities...

San Francisco, CA  
Los Angeles, CA  
Houston, TX  
New York, NY  
Chicago, IL  
Washington, DC

Download a form online here...  
<http://www.china-embassy.org>

Residents of other countries can find their China Consulate from the following website...  
<http://china.embassyhomepage.com>



## Arrival in Beijing

Beijing airport can be a confusing experience for the first-time visitor. There are few restrictions on 'limousine' operators from touting for business as you step out of the customs gates with your luggage. Many people will offer you a taxi and claim to be a taxi, but infact are seeking a higher fare for their service and do not operate a taxi meter.

You need to look for the taxi signs and head outside to the taxi queue. Most drivers will not speak English and for this reason we have attached a copy of the hotel address in Chinese to show your driver. Beijing is a city of 10 million people - do not expect your diver to know every hotel in the city.

When you board the taxi expect the meter to start running soon after you start to move off. Drivers are typically more concerned to get moving than begin charging you for the journey. The taxi meters print out information about your driver, the taxi and trip start time. A pre-recorded message is played in Mandarin and English to welcome you to the taxi. When you arrive at the hotel the meter prints the remaining portion of the receipt and the driver will hand this to you for keeping.

The fare should be around 100 Renminbi or less, but may be higher if you were lucky enough to get one of the newer and more comfortable vehicles (they charge a higher rate per kilometre).

## Starting Hotel

This is your starting hotel - please keep a copy of this page with you when you arrive in Beijing to assist your taxi driver in finding your hotel - they may use their mobile phone to telephone the hotel enroute to get specific directions. The Novotel is well known to westerners, but the Chinese name is more useful with taxi drivers. It is pronounced a little bit like "shin-chow-bei-jing"...

**Novotel Xin Qiao Beijing**  
**2 Dong Jiao Min Xiang**  
**100005 BEIJING**  
**(+86)10/65133366**