



MIDDLE KINGDOM

Discover the wonderful variety of landscape, people, and culture in the center and four corners of China

Middle Kingdom is a literary translation of “Zhong Guo”, the Chinese name for their modern country (e.i. Chinese name for “China”). It dates from c.1000 B.C., when it designated the capital of Zhou Dynasty and the area under direct rule of the King situated on the North China Plain.

The land area and political entity referred to as “Zhong Guo” changed many times in history, and “Zhong Guo” did not become the formal name for the country until 1911 when Republic of China was founded. However, the sentiment that China was in the center of the world politically, culturally as well as physically had profoundly rooted in the Chinese psyche through the millennia due to the dominance of Chinese civilization in East Asia and to the lack of knowledge of the civilizations in the West.

Even today, that sentiment is still very strong among most Chinese citizens. “Yet the sentiment that allows Chinese to believe they are the center of the world runs far deeper than what is customarily associated with the term ‘complex’ and certainly involves more than what is usually thought of as pride”, observes Prof. Lucian Pye of MIT.

21 Days (Tour Code-UMK)

This tour departs on Sundays and returns on Saturdays. There are four tour departures during the year and the dates fall in the months of April, May, August, and September. Please refer to the [Dates & Prices](#) or Access China Tours website for 2012 “Tour Dates”, the current “Tour Land Price”, “Single Supplement Cost”, and “International Air Cost”. Call 1-800-788-1399 for more details.

Day 1 Depart North America

Fly to Beijing, China from your home city on a cross-Pacific flight.

Day 2 Arrive Beijing

Arrive at Beijing Capital Airport and you are met by Access China Tours service staff and transferred to your hotel in downtown.

Meet your fellow travelers and tour manager at the Evening Reception, and receive updates on sightseeing and activity schedules.

<Evening Reception>

The Peninsula Beijing

Day 3 Beijing

After breakfast, our exploration in Beijing starts from **Tiananmen Square** – the world’s largest. Next, visit the **Forbidden City**, the magnificent imperial palaces of Ming and Qing dynasties built 600 years ago.

After lunch at a local restaurant, explore by a pedicab ride some of





Beijing's old 'Hutongs' - the traditional courtyard residences cut into blocks by narrow alleyways. Climb up the nearby **Drum and Bell Towers** for a great aerial view of the old traditional neighborhood, and also visit a **private home** of local resident to hear their life stories.

Return to hotel for relaxation. Enjoy a welcome banquet featuring Peking Duck this evening.
 <B-L-D> **The Peninsula Beijing**

Day 4 Beijing

Visit the **Temple of Heaven** in the morning. The ornate structure was built of wood without using nails. Observe Beijing residents doing Taichi in the well maintained park and examine the beautiful structure of the Hall of Prayer. Stop by the lively **Liulichang Culture Street**, a bustling market where traditional arts and crafts, antiques and other goods are sold.

After lunch, take an excursion to the extraordinary **Great Wall of China**. Explore and hike on the more scenic Mutianyu section, where the Wall winds across the wooded green mountains.

For tonight's dinner, you are treated to the famous Imperial Cuisine Dinner in an elite local restaurant.
 <B-L-D> **The Peninsula Beijing**

Day 5 Beijing → Urumqi

Transfer to airport this morning and fly to Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, and major Central Asian stop on the famed Silk Road. Urumqi is unique in that it is the most inland city on earth, no other place on the planet is farther from an ocean.

Upon arrival, you are met and transferred to the city and visit **Xinjiang Museum**, where several ancient mummies, some of which are of Caucasian origin, attract visitors from around the world. Later stop by the busy **Erdaoqiao Uygur Market**, an outdoor bazaar reminiscent of Arabian nights.

Check in the hotel and enjoy a characteristic Uygur Cuisine Dinner with lively Central Asian music and dance in the evening.
 <B-L-D> **Sheraton Urumqi Hotel**

Day 6 Urumqi ↔ Turpan

Today, take a full-day excursion to Turpan, a Uygur city in a large oasis surrounded by desert and barren but stunning mountains. First visit the site of ancient **Jiaohe City** which dates back almost 2,000 years. The fortress city was built on a strategic high ground and the remains of some structures are still standing. It offers spectacular views of desert landscapes.

Turpan is another geographical superlative, the second lowest spot on earth at 505 feet below sea level (only the Dead Sea is lower). Upon arrival, visit the 200-year-old **Emin Minaret**, an Afghan style Islamic structure and the tallest building in town.





After lunch, continue sightseeing at the **Gaochang Ruins**, which reveals traces of a once prosperous kingdom during the heydays of Silk Road trade.

A visit to **Grape Valley** is a pleasant experience. Xinjiang is where grapes were first cultivated in China. You will have the opportunity to walk through the vineyards, stop by farmer's homes, and go deep underground to see the **Karez Wells** – an ingenious underground irrigation system that has been efficiently keeping all the greenery alive in the scorching summer heat since ancient times.

Return to Urumqi by late afternoon and enjoy a free evening.

<B-L> **Sheraton Urumqi Hotel**

Day 7 Urumqi → Dunhuang

After breakfast in hotel, take a half-day excursion to the beautiful **Heavenly Lake** set among towering alpine peaks of the Tianshan Mountains. The snow-capped Mt. Bogda (18,000 feet) is brilliantly reflected in the crystal clear water of the alpine lake.

You will also have the opportunity to visit the **yurt homes** of the local Kazakh herdsmen. Xinjiang is home to a dozen of China's 55 ethnic minorities.

Transfer to Urumqi airport in the afternoon and board a flight to Dunhuang, Gansu province. In two hours you will effortlessly fly across the deserts that took trade caravans months to cross.

After check-in at the hotel, have a local cuisine dinner in a hotel restaurant.

<B-L-D> **Grand Soluxe Shazhou Hotel**

Day 8 Dunhuang

Dunhuang is home to a UNESCO World Heritage

Site, the incomparable and fascinating Buddhist art at the **Mogao Caves**.

Spend half a day exploring the site, each carved into cliffs facing the desert. Many of the murals, sculptures, and relief were created over 1,500 years ago. The dry desert air has well preserved the original paintings and pigments. A research institute has been established on the site to study and to protect these precious artistic and religious treasures.

In the afternoon, tour the mountains of sand dunes and the oasis **Crescent Spring Lake**, and **Singing Sand Dunes** in the Gobi Desert. Optional camel rides over the sand dunes are available.

Later visit a buzzing outdoor **market place** in the city and have dinner in a local restaurant.

<B-L-D> **Grand Soluxe Shazhou Hotel**

Day 9 Dunhuang → Xi'an

Morning transfer to airport and fly to Xi'an. You are greeted by guide upon arrival and transferred to hotel for check-in and rest.



After lunch on your own, visit the ancient **City Wall** (more than 13 kilometers long surrounding the core of the city) and **Shuyuanmen Market**, an active trading ground for buying and selling real or fake antiques, curios, arts and crafts.

In the evening, you enjoy a Local Cuisine Dinner followed by a wonderful **Tang Dynasty Stage Show**.
<B-D> **Sofitel on Renmin Square**

Day 10 Xi'an

Take a morning excursion to the extraordinary 2,200-year-old **Terracotta Warriors** of China's first Emperor - Qin Shihuang, discovered in 1974. It is a stunning exhibit of more than 7,000 ancient terracotta soldiers, horses, and other artifacts, which are well laid-out and easy to view.

Upon returning to the city, visit the elegant **Big Goose Pagoda** and tour the exquisite **Xi'an History Museum** for its wonderful collections. Enjoy some free time in late afternoon and evening.
<B-L> **Sofitel on Renmin Square**

Day 11 Xi'an → Lhasa

After breakfast, transfer to airport, and on the way, visit the remarkable **Yangling Archaeological Site & Museum** that displays priceless antiquities found on this very spot - an imperial tomb of the Han Dynasty.

Fly over high mountains to Lhasa – capital of Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region and the “holy city” for Tibetan Buddhism believers worldwide.

Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel and balance of the day is free for adjusting to the high altitude. Dinner is in the hotel restaurant.
<B-D> **St. Regis Lhasa**

Day 12 Lhasa

Now here you are, on the roof of the world! Begin your Tibet exploration with a visit to the magnificent **Jokhang Monastery**, a 1,300-year-old golden-roofed shrine whose labyrinth of rooms contains a beautiful gold statue of the Buddha Sakyamuni.

Coming out of the Jokhang, you are right in the center of fascinating **Barkhor** area, lined with the stalls of an outdoor market selling all kinds of Tibetan goods and crafts. Move on to visit **Sera Monastery**, where you may see young monks practicing debating skills in small groups. Visit a **Tibetan family** later in the day. Enjoy a Special Dinner in the evening.
<B-L-D> **St. Regis Lhasa**

Day 13 Lhasa

Your visit to the monumental **Potala Palace** is the highlight of your trip to Tibet. The great hilltop 13-story palace encloses private quarters as well as countless prayer halls, chapels and shrines where monks chant and devotees offer their ceremonial scarves or yak butter lamps. The Tibetan's profound devotion to the Buddhist faith is well demonstrated in this sacred site.

After lunch, visit **Norbulingka**, a resort style park



reserved for the Tibetan elite in the old days and now open to everyone. Also pay a visit to a **village** outside Lhasa City and meet local residents.

Balance of the day and evening are free for your own relaxation and dinner is on your own.
<B-L> **St. Regis Lhasa**



indeed like a dense forest. Paths and stairs wind along the corridors, past rock pools to cliff balconies, for intriguing vistas. Also explore the **local markets** and **villages** of ethnic Sani people.

Enjoy a delicious Yunnan Cuisine Dinner at an elite local restaurant followed by an incredible ethnic stage show **Dynamic Yunnan**.

<B-L-D>

Green Lake Hotel

Day 16 Kunming → Guilin

This morning, go to the **West Hills** to get a bird's-eye view of the **Dianchi Lake** and the city. The vista across the azure lake is spectacular.

After lunch, transfer to the airport and wing on to Guilin. Transfer and check in hotel upon arrival.

Guilin is one of the most scenic cities in all of China. After some rest and a Local Cuisine Dinner, enjoy a **Guilin Night Cruise** through a chain of lakes with beautiful display of lights in the center of city.

<B-L-D>

Shangri-La Hotel Guilin

Day 14 Lhasa → Kunming

After breakfast in hotel, transfer to airport and fly to Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province. Kunming, adored by the Chinese as “the city of eternal spring”, enjoys year round mild temperature and comfortable weather due to its low latitude (25 degrees) and high altitude (1890 m/6,200 ft). The city also has its unique character thanks to the many ethnic minorities living in and around Kunming.

Visit the thousand-year-old **Yuantong Temple**, northern Yunnan's major Buddhist site and an active place of pilgrimage. Then tour the **Daguan Lou** (Grand View Pavilion), which was built in 1690. The two front pillars contain a poetic couplet of some 180 characters, describing the beauty of Kunming on one side, and the history of Yunnan on the other.

Take a walk through the tree-lined city center and have dinner in a local restaurant.

<B-D>

Green Lake Hotel

Day 15 Kunming ↔ Stone Forest

Today's sightseeing begins with a visit to the **Golden Temple**, a Daoist monastery that features a charming prayer hall constructed completely with bronze and copper. It's one of a kind site to visit.

Take an excursion to the **Stone Forest**, about 90 kilometers through rolling hills southeast of Kunming. This area offers visitors a unique natural landscape of stark limestone pillars twisted and sculpted by the elements. From a distance, these stone pillars look

Day 17 Guilin ↔ Yangshuo

Today, we board a cruise boat for a relaxing four-hour **Li River Cruise**. The cruise will give you a chance to savor the unique and lovely views of the area's extraordinary landscape of sheer limestone peaks, rice paddies, and tranquil waters that have inspired thousands of famous Chinese scroll paintings.

Disembark the boat in **Yangshuo**, a charming and foreinger user-friendly small town with streets lined with small hotels, countless souvenir shops selling traditional ornaments, jewelry and paintings of peaks,





and restaurants serving international foods.

Explore the lively street market and also visit **farmers' village homes** nestled in the panoramic landscape before a **local cuisine dinner**.

This evening, enjoy a fantastic sound and light river show **Impressions Liusanjie** created by the film director Zhang Yimou. Return to Guilin by vehicle.
<B-L-D> **Shangri-La Hotel Guilin**

Day 18 Guilin → Shanghai

Bid farewell to charming Guilin and its glorious scenery and take a late morning flight to Shanghai and transfer to your luxury hotel upon arrival.

Visit the exquisite traditional **Yuyuan Garden** and the European Art-Deco architecture of **the Bund** for an interesting experience of East meets West. Gaze across Huangpu River at the towering structures of ultra-modern Pudong special economic zone.

Tonight's dinner is to try the city's signature dish Shanghai Steamed Dumplings in a local restaurant.
<B-D> **Four Seasons Hotel Shanghai**

Day 19 Shanghai

Today, visit the marvelous **Shanghai Museum**. Its galleries showcase world-class collections of ancient art and artifacts dating back millennia. The Bronze Gallery is the world's finest, a must-see section.

Wander around in the former **French Concession**, represented by the leafy **Fuxing Park** and the colonial architecture in the area. Stop for lunch at **Xintiandi**, a redeveloped, chic old neighborhood with trendy pubs, cafes, restaurants, and shops frequented by Shanghai's new wealthy citizens.

In the afternoon, visit **Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center** for an awe-inspiring perspective

on the city's future development. Shanghai's modern architecture is amongst the world's most bold and innovative due to the rapid economic development.

Later in the day, stop by **Ohel Moshe Synagogue** building in the "old ghetto" district to reflect upon the scarcely reported history of Jewish people living in China. Dinner is on your own tonight.
<B-L>

Four Seasons Hotel Shanghai

Day 20 Shanghai

Today is a free day for you to explore wonderful Shanghai on your own. An optional excursion to garden city Suzhou is available.

This evening, enjoy a farewell Shanghai Cuisine Dinner in a nice restaurant followed by a stunning **Acrobatic Performance**.

<B-D> **Four Seasons Hotel Shanghai**

Day 21 Return Home

Transfer to the airport and board your homebound flight. Arrive in North America on the same day. ****

