Tang - Golden Passage

See China's ancient and modern capitals of culture and commerce Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guilin, and Hong Kong

The Tang Dynasty (618-907AD) was founded by the Li clan, who seized power during the decline and collapse of the previous Sui Empire. With its capital at Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), the most populous city in the world at the time, Tang is regarded by most historians as a high point in Chinese civilization as well as a golden age of cosmopolitan culture. Tang's territory, acquired through military campaigns by its early rulers, was greater than that of Han period, and rivaled that of the later Yuan and Qing dynasties.

In Chinese history, Tang was largely an era of stability and progress. It is considered the greatest age for Chinese poetry, and two of China's most famous historical poets, Du Fu and Li Bai, wrote in the era. Many famous visual artists lived during this period, such as the renowned painters Han Gan, Zhang Xuan, and Zhou Fang. There was a rich variety of historical literature compiled by scholars, as well as encyclopedia and geography books.

18 Days (Tour Code-HGP)

This tour departs on Fridays and returns on Mondays. There are six departures during the year and the dates fall in April, May, June, September, October, and November. Please refer to the Dates & Prices or Access China Tours website for 2010 and 2011 "Tour Dates", the current "Tour Land Price", "Single Supplement Cost", and "International Air Cost". Or call 1-800-788-1399.

Day 1 Depart North America

Fly to China from your nearest airport and via the best routing. We can book your international air individually for your convenience.

Day 2 Arrive Beijing

Arrive at Beijing Capital Airport. You are met by ACT service staff and transferred by vehicle to your fine hotel. Meet your fellow travelers at the Evening Reception and learn more about upcoming activities.

<Evening Reception> **The Peninsula Beijing**

Day 3 Beijing

Your exploration of Beijing starts in **Tiananmen Square** – the world's largest. Observe the ultra-modern **'Egg' - the National Performing Arts Center**. Next, visit the **Forbidden City**, the magnificent imperial palaces of Ming and Qing dynasties which were built almost 600 years ago.

After lunch, explore by a pedicab ride some of Beijing's old **Hutongs** (alleyways) and traditional **courtyards**. Climb up the nearby **Drum** and

Bell Towers for a great aerial view of the traditional neighborhood below. Visit a local home.

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** early this morning. Observe Beijing residents doing traditional Taichi and other exercises in the tranquil parklands. Behold the beautiful Hall of Prayers, one of four UNESCO World Heritage sites you will visit in Beijing.

Stop by the lively **Silk Market**, a bustling place where buyers and vendors bargain hard over clothes, accesseries, beddings, traditional arts and crafts.

After lunch, go to visit the enchanting **Summer Palace**, a renown imperial retreat of the Qing dynasty. Enjoy a boat ride on tranquil Kunming Lake.

For tonight's dinner, savor the famous Imperial Cuisine in a courtyard restaurant that was favored by the Ming and Qing Emperors .

<B-L-D> **The Peninsula Beijing**

Day 5 Beijing

Put on your hiking shoes for an excursion to the extraordinary **Great Wall** of China. The rugged and scenic Mutianyu section is a fine example of the Ming era construction. Stop by a small **mountain village** for lunch and meet local rural residents.

Return to hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to discover more of Beijing's treasures or to just relax.

<B-L> **The Peninsula Beijing**

Day 6 Beijing → Xi'an

After breakfast visit the trendy **798 Art Complex** on the way to view some Chinese modern art created by Beijing's newest artisans. Go to airport and fly to Xi'an, the ancient capital of the Qin and many of the following dynasties.

After refreshing in hotel, go to visit the massive ancient **City Walls** and a nearby street market.

Tonight, enjoy a special Xi'an Cuisine Dinner in an elite local restaurant.

<B-L-D> **Sofitel on Renmin Square**

Day 7 Xi'an

A morning excursion takes you to the magnificent 2,200-year-old **Terracotta Warriors** of China's first Emperor - Qin Shihuang, one of the first UNESCO World Heritage sites. This archaeological excavation site is a stunning exhibit of over 7000 individually unique ancient terracotta life-size statues.

Upon returning to the city, visit the elegant **Big Goose Pagoda** which has survived over a millenia of war and earthquakes. Tour the fine **Xi'an History Museum** for its wonderful collection of ancient relics spanning almost 3,000 years.

In the evening, you will enjoy a Special Dumpling Dinner in a local restaurant followed by an elaborate **Tang Dynasty Style Stage Show**.

<B-L-D> **Sofitel on Renmin Square**

Day 8 Xi'an → Shanghai

This morning visit the **Great Mosque** and the **Muslim Market** in a neighborhood dating back to the Silk Road. Later, transfer to airport for an afternoon flight to Shanghai. On the way, visit the remarkable **Yangling Archaeological Site Museum** that displays priceless antiquities found in this Han imperial tomb.

Upon arrival in Shanghai, financial center of China, take the **Maglev Train** at 430 kph to the city and transfer to hotel by vehicle. Evening is free time and dinner is on your own tonight.

<B-L> **Four Seasons Shanghai**

Day 9 Shanghai

After breakfast in your hotel, you will visit the exquisite **Yuyuan Garden** and the European Art-Deco architecture of the **Bund**. Gaze across the river at the towering structures of modern Pudong district.

In the afternoon, visit the marvelous **Shanghai Museum**, whose galleries contain fine collections of art and artifacts dating back millennia.

Wander around the former **French Concession**, represented by the leafy **Fuxing Park** and colonial era achitecture. Stop by **Xintiandi**, a redeveloped neighborhood with trendy pubs, coffee shops, chic restaurants, and fashion stores frequented by Shanghai's new yuppies.

After a fine dinner, go to a Shanghai theater to enjoy an amazing **Acrobatic Show**.

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

Day 10 Shanghai

After breakfast visit the **Jinmao Building** in Pudong District, the 7th tallest in the world. Stop by **Ohel Moshe Synagogue** in the "old ghetto" to reflect upon the scarcely reported history of Jews living in China. Later, go to visit **Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center** for an awe-inspiring perspective on the city's future development.

Afternoon is free for you to explore on your own. World Expo 2010 runs from May through October.

Tonight, you and your fellow travelers are invited to enjoy a genuine Shanghai Cuisine Dinner in a fine local restaurant.

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

Day 11 Shanghai ➔ Wuzhen ➔ Hangzhou

Travel by vehicle to the countryside and visit the water village of **Wuzhen**. Here, rivers and canals criss-cross the town and local residents maintain the traditional way of life in centuries-old courtyards and houses. Have lunch in a village restaurant.

Continue travel to Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province and cultural gem of China.

After check in at the hotel and refreshing, pay a visit to **Huqingyutang**, a venerable old pharmacy selling Chinese herbs and remedies with an attached museum dedicated to the four-thousand-year art of traditional Chinese medicine.

This evening, enjoy a **Hangzhou Cuisine Dinner** with its delicately flavored seafood.

<B-L-D> **Shangri-la Hotel Hangzhou**

Day 12 Hangzhou

For centuries, Hangzhou has been known for the beauty and tranquility of **West Lake,** nestled in the city center. Its blue mists and soft hills have been the inspiration for countless poets and artists throughout the centuries. Enjoy a relaxing boat ride on the lake and pleasant strolls in the gardens and bamboo groves along the lakeshore.

Next, visit the **Lingyin Monastery** in the suburban hills to witness the active practice of praying and worshipping. This spectacular temple is one of the most celebrated Buddhist monasteries in China.

The city is flanked to the west by hills cultivated with lush tea bushes that produce the highly regarded Longjing Tea. Visit a **Tea Plantation** and the **China**

Tea Museum to learn about the ancient art of tea cultivation. Evening is free and dinner is on own.

<B-L> **Shangri-la Hotel Hangzhou**

Day 13 Hangzhou → Guilin

Transfer to the airport and fly over the southern mountains of China to Guilin, perhaps China's most scenic city. You are met and transfer to hotel.

After some rest and your own lunch in the hotel, go out with your guide to visit **Ludi Cave** - a fantastic display of geological processes. Climb up the **Fubo Hill** for a bird's-eye view of the city. To conclude the day, you will enjoy an evening **Lake Cruise** through the city waterways of lights and bridges.

<B-D> **Sheraton Guilin Hotel**

Day 14 Guilin ⇔ Longsheng

Guilin is home to some of China's most beautiful landscapes. Its lush limestone peaks and tranquil rivers create endless panoramas.

After breakfast, travel to the mountainous Longsheng area by vehicle for a full-day excursion to see beautiful **Rice Terraces** and to visit **villages of ethnic Dong and Yao peoples**, two of China's fifty five ethnic minorities. Some moderate climbing is involved so you will need comfortable walking shoes. Those who cannot hike can still enjoy all the scenery as sedan-chair service is available.

Return to Guilin by late afternoon. Enjoy a Sichuan Cuisine Dinner in a local restaurant.

<B-L-D> **Sheraton Guilin Hotel**

Day 15 Guilin → Yangshuo → Hong Kong

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

Get off the boat in **Yangshuo**, a lovely and tourist-friendly small town with streets lined with small hotels, countless souvenir shops selling traditional ornaments, jewelry and paintings, and restaurants serving international foods. Explore the lively street market and also visit **a farmer's village home** nestled in the panoramic landscape.

Bid farewell to Guilin and take a late afternoon flight to Hong Kong. Transfer to hotel upon arrival.

<B-L> **Kowloon Shangri-la Hong Kong**

Day 16 Hong Kong

Hong Kong has always been inextricably linked to mainland China through family ties, trade, economy and traditions. Although returned in 1997, the British legacy is still quite apparent due to 155 years of colonial rule.

Take a half-day guided tour of Hong Kong Island. Ascend by cable car to the top of **Victoria Peak** for a spectacular view of the harbor, hills and masterpieces of modern architecture. Later visit the south side of the island and the characteristic fishing **Village of Aberdeen**, where life styles seem unchanged for centuries. Finish your tour at beautiful **Repulse Bay** with sandy beaches facing the South China Sea.

The afternoon and evening are at leisure. English signage and shopping opportunities abound in the Pearl of the Orient.

<B> **Kowloon Shangri-la Hong Kong**

Day 17 Hong Kong

Today is unscheduled for you to explore the city on your own. There are quite a few good museums and busy temples in the city worth visiting. The shopping on Nathan Road, at Stanley Market, and in Central District are almost irresistable. Enjoy seeing Hong Kong by ferry, double decker bus or by foot.

<B> **Kowloon Shangri-la Hong Kong**

Day 18 Return Home

Enjoy breakfast in your hotel. Transfer to airport and board your homebound flight. Arrive in North America on the same day. **<B>**