Saints, Buddhas & Dynasties

Travel through 3000 years of Chinese history and culture exploring the places and people that shaped modern China – Longmen Grottos • Shaolin Temple • Central Capital Luoyang • East Capital Kaifeng • Mencius Hometown and Temple • Confucius Hometown, Mansion, and Temple • Taishan Mountain • South Capital Nanjing

14 Days (Tour Code–ASD)

Arrive Return	Apr17 Apr30	May18 May31	Sep17 Sep30	Oct10 Oct23
Land Price in USD	4,180	4,180	4,180	4,180
Single Supplement	1,530	1,530	1,530	1,530

• Land prices are per person, double occupancy in deluxe or best available hotels. Prices include coach class intra-China airfare, ground transportation, all transfers, all sightseeing admissions, cultural events, most meals and visa processing.

• Land price does not include cost for international flights. For assistance on international airfare to China, please contact us by dialing 1-800-788-1399.

• This tour is fully escorted (for a group of 6 or more travelers) within mainland China by an English-speaking professional tour manager and is guided by an English-speaking local tour guide in each city.

Day 1 Beijing

Arrive at Beijing Capital airport and meet your tour guide. Transfer to your hotel for check-in and rest before joining other travellers for a Group Reception.

<Reception> **Grand Hotel Beijing**

Day 2 Beijing

After breakfast, begin your exploration with a walk on **Tian'anmen Square**, the world's largest public plaza. Move on to the **Forbidden City**, magnificent imperial palaces of the Ming and Qing dynasties for 500 years.

After lunch, explore some of Beijing's old **'Hutongs'** - the traditional **courtyard** residences built along narrow alleyways. Climb up the **venerable Drum and Bell Towers** for a view of the traditional neighborhoods of Beijing. Pay a visit to a private home of a local resident.

This evening enjoy the Peking Duck Dinner in a nice local restaurant.

<B-L-D> **Grand Hotel Beijing**

Day 3 Beijing → Luoyang

Morning is free for your own relaxation or exploration. The Wangfujing shopping area is only a short walk away.

In the afternoon, embark on an excursion to the Mutianyu section of the **Great Wall**, which represents the pinnacle of ancient Chinese engineering and craftsmanship. You will see stunning views of the Wall crawling along steep mountain ridges.

Transfer to the airport and take a short evening flight to Luoyang, one of the ancient capitals of China in central Henan Province. Upon arrival, check in your hotel.

<B-L> **Huayang Plaza Hotel**

Day 4 Luoyang

Luoyang is located near the Yellow River, China's "cradle of civilization." The city is well known in China as "The Capital of Nine Dynasties", having been capital periodically from the Eastern Zhou (770 BC) to the later Tang Dynasty (923-936 AD). Confucius was said to have spent

The Buddhist statues at Longmen Grottoes, Luoyang

some time in Luoyang in the 5th century BC studying and perfecting his philosophical thoughts. The people of Luoyang also claim their city was the true starting point for the famous Silk Road.

The major attraction in Luoyang is the magnificent **Longmen Grottoes**, a World Heritage Site Buddhist shrine that gives testiment to the prosperous Buddhist culture and flourishing art during the Tang Dynasty. The details in the thousands of stone sculptures carved into cliff walls have impressed visitors for over a millennia.

In the afternoon, visit the unique **Museum of Ancient Tombs**, where 25 excavated ancient tombs have been reconstructed, brick by brick. Later, stop by the charming **White Horse Temple** on the edge of the city and hear stories about how Buddhism first arrived in China across the Himalayas from India.

Enjoy a Local Cuisine Dinner in the evening.

<B-L-D> **Huayang Plaza Hotel**

Day 5 Luoyang → Shaolin Temple → Zhengzhou

After breakfast, transfer by private vehicle from Luoyang to Songshan Mountain, where the world famous **Shaolin Temple** is located. The monastery was built by the Emperor Xiao-Wen of Northern Wei Dynasty in 477 AD.

For 1500 years, hundreds of Shaolin monks in the temple have practiced the ancient tradition of meditation and Kung Fu martial arts, and have attracted followers from around the world. Visit the temple grounds including the **Stupa Forest** and have the opportunity to observe the monks in martial art practice sessions or religious rituals.

The thousand-year-old Iron Pagoda in Kaifeng

The stupa forest at Shaolin Temple, Henan Province

Continue your travel by vehicle to Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province and a transportation hub in central China. Visit the **Henan Museum** full of ancient treasures and precious arts from the 3000 year old city. Check in to your hotel and enjoy a Local Cuisine Dinner.

<B-L-D> **Sofitel Zhengzhou**

Day 6 Zhengzhou ↔ Kaifeng

Full day excursion to Kaifeng. Another ancient capital city of China, Kaifeng saw its peak as the capital of the Song Dynasty in the 10th and 11th centuries, during which time the population reached well over half a million and Silk Road trade had established a **Jewish community** of thousands whose ancesters may have migrated from Persia and Central Asia. This Jewish community is the oldest in China.

First visit the **Iron Pagoda**, built in 1049 AD during the Song Dynasty. This octagonal-base 13 storey structure stands at a current height of 56 meters (186 feet). Through history, the pagoda has experienced 38 earthquakes, six floods, and many other disasters, but it remains intact after almost 1000 years.

The Dragon Pavilion in Kaifeng

Next visit **Da Xiangguo Temple**, the oldest Buddhist monastery in the city dating from 555 AD, and **Long Ting** ("Dragon Pavilion") - a huge traditional style hall built in the Qing Dynasty that offers good view of the old section of Kaifeng. In the afternoon, take a walking tour of the city center and **local markets**.

Return to Zhengzhou by private vehicle in the evening and dinner is on your own.

<B-L> **Sofitel Zhengzhou**

Day 7 Zhengzhou → Qufu

Experience Chinese train travel by taking a day-time train through the scenic hills and plains of Henan and Shandong to Yanzhou. Transfer by vehicle to Qufu, the small hometown of Confucius.

Confucius (he is called "*Kong Zi*" in Mandarin Chinese; 551-479 BC) is probably the greatest philosopher and educator in Chinese history. His thinking and teachings have helped to shape the Chinese culture and have influenced the cultures of many East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Confucius is often referred to as "The Saint" by ordinary Chinese.

Take a brief walking tour in the old city of Qufu before a delicious Shandong Cuisine Dinner.

<B-D> **Queli Grand Hotel**

Day 8 Qufu

We will spend the day exploring the major historic sites in Qufu related to the profound legacy left behind by Confucius. Built to commemorate him in 478 BC, the **Confucius Temple** ("*Kong Miao*" in Chinese) has been destroyed and reconstructed over the centuries. Today it comprises of more than 100 buildings and it contains many important historic relics.

Nantian Gate Vista Point on Mount Tai, Tai'an

Grand Hall in the Confucius Temple, Qufu

The **Kong Family Cemetery** ("*Kong Lin*") contains Confucius' tomb and the burial sites of thousands of his descendants. Seventy eight generations trace their lineage to the Saint. The sculptures and stone tablets are of great value for historical studies today. Serious damage was done to this site during the Cultural Revolution.

The small house of the Kong family developed into a gigantic aristocratic residence – **Confucius Mansion** ("*Kong Fu*"), of which 152 buildings remain. Combined with the temple and the family cemetery, the Qufu complex of Confucius monuments has retained its outstanding artistic and historic character due to the devotion of successive Chinese emperors and the fellow residents in Qufu over more than two thousand years.

You spend the day exploring this huge complex and learn about the teachings of the sage which has influenced billions of people across 2500 years.

<B-L-D> **Queli Grand Hotel**

Day 9 Qufu → Zoucheng → Tai'an

Morning excursion to Zoucheng, 30 kilometers south of Qufu. This is the hometown of another saint **Mencius** ("*Meng Zi*" in Mandarin; 372-289 BC), who was an itinerant Chinese philosopher and sage, and one of the principal interpreters of Confucianism. Here, visit the **Mencius Temple** and **Mencius Mansion**.

In the afternoon, travel by road to Tai'an. Tai'an is the base for climbing the **Mount Tai** (or "*Taishan*" in Chinese), one of China's five sacred mountains, which rises to 1,545 meters (5,060 feet) from the east China plains.

Visit **Tai Miao**, a huge temple complex dedicated to the mountain and with a blend of buildings from different belief systems. Religious rites have been performed here for over 3000 years. Have dinner and prepare yourself for the next day's ascent of the peak.

<B-L-D> **Taishan Huaqiao Hotel**

Day 10 Tai'an

Mount Taishan was the haunt of emperors and had earned numerous titles from the imperial court of various dynasties. Paying tribute to this holy mountain to secure its blessing became a ritual for the founder of a new dynasty throughout Chinese history.

Climb up steps to **Zhongtianmen** (*"Halfway Gate to Heaven"*) and from here you will take the cable car up to the peak. Spend a couple of hours exploring the monuments and structures at the peak and get a gorgeous view of the low lands surrounding the mountain.

Descend the mountain along the western trail which offers impressive scenery of Shandong Province.

Return to your hotel for a well deserved rest.

<B-L> **Taishan Huaqiao Hotel**

Day 11 Tai'an → Nanjing

Morning transfer to Jinan Airport and take a short flight to Nanjing, another ancient capital in southern China. Met and transfer to your hotel upon arrival.

Nanjing ("*Southern Capital*") is a city with a prominent place in Chinese history and culture. Apart from having been the capital of China for six dynasties and of the Republic of China, Nanjing has also served as a national hub of education, research, transportation and tourism throughout history. The vibrant city has fully recovered from the widespread death and destruction wrought by the Japanese Army in 1937.

After refreshing in the hotel, tour the city center, visiting the **Former Presidential Palace,** the seat of Chiang Kaishek's government until 1949, the **Ming Emperor Xiao's Tomb**, hidden in dense pine forest and noted for its huge stone sculptures, and **Dr. Sun Yatsen Memorial** – Dr. Sun was the founding father of modern China and he lead the revolution that put an end to the corrupt and incompetent Qing Dynasty in 1911.

<B-L-D> **Nanjing Jinling Hotel**

A scene from the Slender Western Lake, Yangzhou

An official's statue at the Ming Tomb in Nanjing

Day 12 Nanjing ⇔ Yangzhou

After breakfast, take a full-day excursion to **Yangzhou**, an ancient city that once served as capital for the Sui Dynasty (581-618AD) and where Marco Polo was an appointed official during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368AD).

This key trading center was established on the Grand Canal which links the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers.

First, tour the beautiful **Daming Temple**, which houses a charming pagoda and the memorial hall for its founder Japanese Buddhist monk Jianzhen.

Later, visit **Geyuan Garden**, a traditional style literati garden, and the **Tomb of Puhaddin**, who is said to be a 16th generation descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Finally, enjoy a boat ride on the famous **Slender Western Lake**.

Return to Nanjing in late afternoon and enjoy a special Huaiyang Cuisine Dinner this evening.

<B-L-D> **Nanjing Jinling Hotel**

Day 13 Nanjing → Shanghai

After breakfast, transfer to the train station for a two-hour ride to Shanghai. Met and transfer to your hotel and balance of the day is free for your own exploration where the shopping and ultra-modern architecture await.

<B> **Shanghai Ruijin Hotel**

Day 14 Return Home

Transfer to the airport and fly home. **<B>**