



"See World Differently"

Adventure Program

CN8 - A Journey Across History & Time - Exploring the Silk Road – 18 Days

Detail Day by Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Xi'an (Saturday)

Arrival in **Xi'an**, transfer to hotel. Rest of the day is left free to adjust to time difference and explore Xi'an. Dinner orientation of the Silk Road.

Overnight at Gloria Hotel (Four star)

Meals provided: D

Day 2 Xi'an to Jingchuan

The drive to **Jingchuan** in southeast Gansu will take nearly a whole day. However, this long journey will pay off when you take a dip in its natural hot spring and savor some of the local delicacies such as Guanmuo round bread.

Overnight at Xiwangmuyuan Binguang hotel (Three star, the best in area)

Meals provided: B, L, D

Day 3 Jingchuan to Guyuan via Nanshiku temple

We cross the Jing River, located more or less at the geographical center of China, before arriving at **Nanshiku Temple**. Many of the temple's caves have unfortunately fallen into disrepair, but the remaining caves are still very impressive. After lunch we will depart for **Guyuan**, a small town in southern Ningxia Province.

Overnight at Hong Bao Hotel (two star, the best in area)

Meals provided: B, L, D

Day 4 Guyuan to Tianshui via Xumishan Grotto

We depart Guyuan in the morning for **Xumishan**, an impressive set of **Buddhist grottoes** located 50 km (32 mi) south of town. Xumi is the Chinese translation of a Sanskrit word meaning 'the state of the Holy Spirit'. There are 132 caves housing 300 Buddhist statues dating back from the Northern Wei to the Sui and Tang dynasties, with the oldest ones estimated to be more than 1,400 years old. In the afternoon, we head back to Gansu Province and visit **Tianshui**, the first important Silk Road town west of Shaanxi.

Overnight at Tianshui hotel (Four star, the best in area)



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Meals provided: B, L, D

Day 5 Tianshui to Maijishan Grotto

The **grottoes of Maijishan**, approximately an hour's drive away from Tianshui, are located in a spectacular natural setting surrounded by precipitous cliffs. The surviving Buddhist caves form one of the four major temple groups in China, and date back from the Northern Wei to the Qing dynasties. A climb up its narrow steps up to the botanical garden above the caves offers a stunning view of the cliff face where you will see dozens of statues sitting in the caves. We will return to Tianshui in the evening.

Overnight at Tianshui hotel

Meals provided: B, L, D

Day 6 Tianshui to Wushan

The road from Tianshui to Lanzhou has several little-known but fascinating reminders of the Silk Road era. The main attraction of Gangu, 65 km (41 mi) west of Tianshui, is **Daxiang Shan** (Giant Statue Mountain). It gets its name from the giant 23-meter (75 ft) statue of a moustached Sakyamuni Buddha carved out of the mountain cliff during the Tang dynasty. In **Wushan**, 45 km (28 mi) farther west from Gangu, we visit the **Shuilian Dong** (Water Curtain Grottoes), which contain a number of fascinating relics, including the **Lashao Temple** and the **Thousand Buddha Cave** site. This is an extraordinary area, all the more so for being so inaccessible. Construction at the grottoes began during the Sixteen States period (304-439 AD) and continued over the dynasties. The Lashao Temple was built during the Northern Wei (386-534). There is a 30-meter-tall (100 ft) statue of Sakyamuni on the mountain cliff, with lions and elephants at his feet. The grottoes, about 30 km (20 mi) north of Wushan, can only be reached along a dried-up river bed - there is as yet no proper road leading to the caves.

Overnight at Wushan hotel (two or three star hotel)

Meals provided: B, L, D

Day 7 Wushan to Lanzhou

We depart Wushan in the morning for Lanzhou, which is 4 hours away by car. Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province, was once an important garrison town situated on major trade routes to central Asia. We will take the afternoon to explore the city's **museum** and its lively market. In the evening, we hit the **night market** to sample spicy Muslim specialties such as lamb kebabs and hamburgers or the famous Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles, which are made to order.

Overnight at Yangguan Dasha hotel (the best in area)



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Meals provided: B, L, D

Day 8: Fly from Lanzhou to Kashgar via Urumqi

We take a morning flight from Lanzhou to **Urumqi**, a growing metropolis and relatively modern outpost along the Silk Road. Afterwards, we drive to Hong Shan Park for a trip orientation, after which we fly to Kashgar in the evening and have a late supper at a local restaurant.

Overnight at Kashgar Barony Hotel (Four hotel)

Meals Provided: D

Day 9: Kashgar



Kashgar is the largest oasis city in Chinese Central Asia. We first drive to visit the **Abakh Khoja Mausoleum**, a peaceful memorial to one of Xinjiang's early Muslim leaders. Afterwards, we schedule our arrival to coincide with the **livestock market** and **Sunday bazaar**. The livestock market is an incredibly exciting place, where local farmers come to buy and sell lamb, cattle and other livestock every week. The colorful and lively bazaar provides a great opportunity to pick up some of the Silk Road's most interesting souvenirs, from hand made hats of the different minorities in Xinjiang, to traditional musical instruments, to bags of fresh spices. The people, the sights, the smells are all very different from what we

are used to in the city. If you're up for a bit of a culinary adventure, you can sample some of the traditional specialties such as laghman, a kind of noodle, poluo, a tasty fried rice pilaf, or even goat's head soup! Of course, the most popular food, lamb kebab seasoned with Xinjiang spices, is everywhere.

After lunch, we visit the Id **Kah Mosque**, the largest in China. This beautifully decorated mosque more closely resembles a mosque in Pakistan or Afghanistan than China, and will attract up to 10,000 worshippers for Friday prayers. Outside the Mosque, we visit the handicraft street where we can pick up all sorts of hand-made items, from copperware to musical instruments to traditional hats. In the evening, we dine with a **local family** and experience the warm hospitality of the Uighurs.

Overnight: Kashgar Barony Hotel

Meals: B L D



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Day 10: Kashgar to Khotan

The modern conveniences of air-conditioned vehicles provides a much more comfortable alternative to traversing this route than on camel back. The road to Khotan (500 km, and bumpy at times) is lined with many small oasis towns, and we make occasional stops to stretch our legs. **Yarkand (Shache)**, for example, once had a larger bazaar than Kashgar and today remains well known for the high quality knives that are made here. Around noon, we stop at another oasis town and to eat a picnic under the shade of some poplar trees. In the late afternoon, we arrive at **Khotan**. We first go to hotel to check in and freshen up before riding a camel to the desert for a BBQ dinner.

Overnight: Khotan Hotel

Meals: B L D

Day 11: Khotan to Kucha via Tazhong



For centuries, Khotan was an important supplier of jade, silk, and carpets on the Silk Road. These goods - such as the traditional hand woven **Aidelaixi silk**, and intricately embroidered wool carpets - were treasured in China and Central Asia for their outstanding craftsmanship. We visit one or two family workshops to see how carpets, silk, and other handicrafts are traditionally made, and have the opportunity to pick up some of these treasures for ourselves. We then set out for **Tazhong**, crossing over the heart of the **Taklamakan Desert**. If departing during the summer, we have the option to camp overnight in the desert. As we sit beneath the enormous desert night sky, warming ourselves around a

campfire, we can begin to appreciate our relation to the vast and uncompromising wilderness around us.

Overnight: Camping

Meals: B L D

Day 12: Ta Zhong to Kucha



Having "survived" our night in the desert – a feat many once feared to do – we awaken to the calm of early morning. We enjoy a hot breakfast, complete with fresh coffee, before packing up our things and getting back on the road, for today we still have 600 km to travel, 450 of which are in the **Taklamakan Desert** and the remainder of which cross salt planes



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on the desert's edge. In the late afternoon, we arrive in **Kucha**, our fascinating journey around one of the world's most feared deserts nearly complete.

This quaint town, not often visited today, was once the center of a Buddhist civilization in the Tarim Basin. On the outskirts of the present day town lie the ruins of an ancient Buddhist Monastery whose immense size indicates the previous importance of Buddhism here. Scattered around the surrounding mountains, which themselves possess an almost alien beauty, are several grotto complexes, the most important of which is the Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves.

Overnight: Kucha Hotel

Meals: B L D

Day 13: Kucha

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In the morning, we first head out to the Kizilya "Grand Canyon", an amazing natural canyon of deep red sandstone, where we take a short hike along the canyon floor. This entire area north of Kucha is covered by Sandstone Mountains, which have been shaped in bizarre ways after years of wind and water erosion. We stop occasionally to explore, and may even come across a herd of camels grazing in the surrounding pastures.

We then head to the Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves, having lunch at the grotto compound before visiting the caves themselves. The Grottos hold some of the most impressive Buddhist art in Central Asia and date to the third century. Unfortunately, many of the finer frescoes were defaced when Islam came to the region and by foreign archeologists in the early twentieth century; however, what remains offers a glimpse of their original splendor. The surrounding countryside is a pretty area of mulberry and poplar trees and streams, which make for a very pleasant afternoon.

Overnight at Kucha hotel

Meals Provided: B L D

Day 14, Kucha to Urumqi

After breakfast , we take a morning flight back to **Urumqi**.



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On arrival, we visit the **Xinjiang Regional Museum**. Although the facilities here are not as modern as other museums around China, the collection does contain some interesting treasures from the Silk Road and Xinjiang's minority cultures. Of particular interest are several mummies, including "The Beauty of Loulan," whose physique and attire attest to both the diversity and wealth found along the Silk Road thousands of years ago. Then we visit the Erdaoqiao Uighur Community to further understand the daily life of the Uighur community.

Overnight at Urumqi hotel (four star)

Meals Provided: B L D

Day 15, Excursion to Heavenly Lake



After breakfast, we visit the **Heavenly Lake**, near Urumqi. This pristine lake is situated at a refreshing height of 2,000m and is surrounded by jagged snow-covered peaks, forests of pine trees and green meadows. If we like, we can take a boat ride on the lake and then hike up to the less visited sections.

With luck, we might see Black Grouse, Pallid Scops-Owl, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Boreal Owl, Three-toed Woodpecker, White-winged

Redstart, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Wallcreeper, Black headed Mountain-Finch, Great Rosefinch, Red Crossbill, White-winged Snowfinch or Yellow billed Chough.

For tonight, we will stay in a Yurt.

Overnight at Urumqi Hotel

Meals Provided: B L D

Day 16, Urumqi

We start early in the morning: today is set aside exploring birds around the lake or hike further into the mountains to further explore the natural environment. Other than birds, we may see snow leopards, ibex and other mountain animals living in this region.

We will return to Urumqi in the early evening for a dinner with a performance of traditional Uighur music, which concludes our Xinjiang trip on a high note.

Overnight at Urumqi Hotel

Meals Provided: B L D



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Day 17, Fly back to Shanghai

Today we take a morning flight back to Beijing where you will be met and transfer to a hotel to rest. A celebrating farewell dinner will conclude this Chinese Turkestan journey when everybody will share his or her experiences in a joyful atmosphere.

Overnight at Shanghai Old House

Meals Provided: B L D

Day 18, Fly back home

After breakfast, you are transferred to Beijing international airport for your flight back home. Service ends.

Quotation for Group (more than 4pax, guaranteed group departure)

2008

Land Prices (CAD)

| Dates | Spring 12-30April | Summer 7-25June 5-23July | Autumn 06-24Sep | |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Land cost: 4-18pax | 4,600 | 4,700 | 4,600 | |
| Single supplement | 655 | 655 | 655 | |

Flights

Call for international air.

Small group, base on 4 pax for group departure

Call your tour expert for tailor-made adventure journey

Price includes:

- Domestic economy flights and airport taxes.
- Land transfers for whole trip
- All accommodations on a twin-sharing basis, at the hotels specified in the itinerary where available
- All admissions and activity expenses as noted on itinerary
- Meals, drinking water, and soft drinks during meals as program indicates
- All programs as per itinerary
- Private tour guide and driver
- Tour leader service along the whole trip when group size is bigger than 10pax.

Price excludes:



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- Discretionary gratuities for drivers, local guides, and staff
- Expenses of personal nature, e.g. mini-bar, laundry, telecommunications, alcoholic beverages etc.
- Travel insurance
- Excursions not included in the itinerary
- International flights and airport taxes
- GST