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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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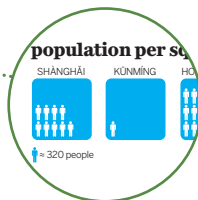
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UNDERSTAND CHINA

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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Eating & Drinking

What would you recommend?

有什么菜可以推荐的?

Yǒu shénme
tūjiàn de?

What's in that dish?

这道菜用什么东西做的?

Zhèdào cài yòng
dòngxi zuóde?

That was delicious!

真好吃!

Zhēn hǎo!

the bill, please!

THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Damian Harper

Piera Chen, Chung Wah Chow, Min Dai, David Eimer, Robert Kelly, Michael Kohn, Shawn Low, Bradley Mayhew, Daniel McCrohan, Christopher Pitts

China



Top Experiences >

Great Wall
Walking on the
Mother of Walls (p98)

Forbidden City
Imperial seat of
two dynasties (p47)

Píngyáo
China's most charming
walled town (p349)

★ ULAANBAATAR

Terracotta Warriors
Astonishing artistry from
ancient China (p367)

Shànghǎi
Paris of the East (p161)

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China's mountain
of mists (p389)

Yangzi River Cruise
China's greatest
river journey (p766)

Labrang Monastery
Suffused with Buddhist
mystery (p812)

Cycling Yángshuò
Pedalling through
gorgeous karst (p592)





Look out for these icons:



Our author's
recommendation



A green or
sustainable option



No payment
required

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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Four Weeks

Crucial China

Beijing is fundamental to this tour, so you'll need at least five days to do the **Forbidden City**, size yourself up against the **Great Wall**, wander like royalty around the **Summer Palace** and lose your bearings amid the city's **hútòng** (narrow alleyways). The magnificence of the **Yúngāng Caves** outside Dàtóng should put you in a Buddhist mood, a disposition further heightened by a few nights on monastic **Wútái Shān**. We recommend a three-day stopover in **Píngyáo**, an age-old walled town you thought all of China would look like, but actually doesn't. The historic walled city of **Kāifēng** in Hénán is the traditional home of China's small community of Chinese Jews and has a remarkable night market; move on to **Luòyáng** and the Buddhist spectacle of the **Lóngmén Caves** and the **Shàolín Temple**, also within reach. Four days' sightseeing in **Xī'ān** brings you face-to-face with the **Army of Terracotta Warriors** and gives you time for the Taoist mountain of **Huà Shān**. Xī'ān traditionally marked the start of the **Silk Road** which you can follow through **Gānsù** province all the way to the oasis-town of **Dūnhuáng**. From Dūnhuáng you can continue on into **Xīnjiāng** for a taste of the mighty northwest.



Three to Four Weeks

Yangzi River Tour

After exploring north Yunnan's ancient Naxi town of **Lijiang**, pick up the trail of the **Jinsha River** (Gold Sand River, which spills down from Tibet and swells into the Yangzi River) on a breathtaking multiday hike along **Tiger Leaping Gorge**. Rest your worn-out legs before discovering the scattered villages and old towns around Lijiang, including **Shaxi** and **Shuhe** on the old tea-horse road, and being blown away by the magnificent views of **Yulong Xueshan**. Also consider a trip from Lijiang northeast towards west Sichuan and the gorgeous **Lugu Hu** on the provincial border, where you can spend several days unwinding by the lakeside. By the time you read this, there may be buses from Lugu Lake to Xichang in Sichuan and from there on to Yibin and then Chongqing (but the long route is via Chengdu); otherwise you may have to return to Lijiang to fly to Chongqing, home of the spicy and searing Chongqing hotpot and gateway to the Three Gorges. Backtrack by bus to the stunning landscapes and natural beauty of Chishui on the Guizhou border to relax, unwind and explore the region before returning by bus to urban Chongqing. You'll need around three days in Chongqing for the sights in town and for a journey to the Buddhist Caves at Dazhu and a trip to the Yangzi River village of Songji to keep a perspective on historic, rural China. Then hop on either a hydrofoil, cruise vessel or passenger boat to Yichang in Hubei through the magnificent **Three Gorges**. Journey from Yichang to the Yangzi city of **Wuhan** via the walled town of **Jingzhou**, where it's worth spending the night. After two days in Wuhan, hop on a bus to **Lushan** in Jiangxi province, from where you can reach **Nanjing** or make your way to **Huangshan** in the Yangzi River province of Anhui. Alternatively, travel direct to Nanjing – Yangzi River capital of Jiangsu – and thread your way to **Shanghai** via a delightful string of canal towns – **Suzhou**, **Tongli**, **Luzhi** and **Zhujiajiào** – or go direct to Shanghai and plug yourself into the **East to South Village tour**.



Three Weeks Silk Road Tour

Picking up roughly where the **Crucial China tour** stops, this journey takes you on an epic and unforgettable journey from **Xī'ān** through **Gānsù** to **Xīnjiāng**. From the southernmost extents of the Silk Road at **Xī'ān**, discover one of imperial China's most iconic remains at the **Army of Terracotta Warriors** and, if you want a major workout, climb the precipitous Taoist mountain of **Huà Shān** – just don't look down. Explore the Muslim Quarter and feast on local Hui specialties. Hop aboard the train to **Lánzhōu** but disembark in southeast Gānsù at **Tiānshuǐ** for the remarkable Buddhist grottoes at verdant **Màijí Shān**. From Lánzhōu you have the option of disembarking temporarily from the Silk Road to ramble along the fringes of Tibet at the Buddhist monastic settlements of **Xiàhé** and **Lángmùsì**. The **Héxí Corridor** naturally draws you on to the ancient Great Wall outpost of **Jiāyùguān**, via the Silk Road stopover town of **Wúwēi**, and the **Great Buddha Temple** with its outside effigy of a reclining Sakyamuni in **Zhāngyè**. Stand on the wind-blasted ramparts of **Jiāyùguān Fort**, the last major stronghold of imperial China, and tramp alongside westerly remnants of the **Great Wall**. The delightful oasis outpost of **Dūnhuáng** is one of China's tidiest and most pleasant towns, with the mighty **Singing Sands Mountains** pushing up from the south, a scattered array of sights in the surrounding desert and some excellent food. The town also brings you into contact with perhaps China's most splendid accumulation of Buddhist art, the spellbinding **Mógāo Caves**. Access the mighty northwestern Uighur province of **Xīnjiāng** via the melon-town of **Hāmì** before continuing to **Turpan** and **Ürümqi**; make sure you spend the night in a yurt on the shores of **Tiān Chí**. Thread your way through a string of Silk Road towns by rail to the Central Asian outpost of **Kashgar**, or reach the Uighur town via the Marco Polo-journeyed Southern Silk Road along the cusp of the Taklamakan Desert. From Kashgar, hatch exciting plans to conquer the **Karakoram Highway** or, in the other direction, work out how to get back into China proper.



Three to Four Weeks Coastal China

From **Běijīng**, hop on the high-speed train to face-lifted **Tiānjīn** en route to the Ming-dynasty garrison town of **Shānhǎiguān** on the edge of Manchuria. Beyond the ancient port town of **Xīngchéng** and on around the coast is urbane **Dàlián**, where you can weigh up trips to the North Korean border at **Dāndōng**, or the ferry crossing to **Yāntái** en route to a two-day sojourn around breezy **Qīngdǎo**, the eye-catching Shāndōng port city. Cashing in on dashing **Shànghǎi** is crucial – allow four to five days to tick off surrounding sights, including a mid-week expedition over the waves to insular **Pǔtuóshān** and a trip to the cultured former Song-dynasty capital of **Hángzhōu**. Work your way south around the coast to **Xiàmén** (Amoy) to capture some of the magic of **Gǔlàng Yǔ**, using the port town as a base to explore the **Hakka roundhouses** around **Yǒngdīng**. Conclude the tour feasting on dim sum and getting in step with the rhythms of **Hong Kong** and surrendering to the Portuguese lilt of **Macau**, or go further along the coast to the sleepy port town of **Běihǎi** in Guǎngxī and bounce over the sea in a boat to the volcanic island of **Wéizhōu**.

Ten Days Běijīng & Héběi

After satiating yourself on Běijīng's many highlights – the **Forbidden City**, **Tiān'ānmén Square**, the **Summer Palace**, the **Great Wall** and the city's charming **hútòng** – hop on an express D-class train to **Shǐjiāzhuāng** to ramble round the nearby temple town of **Zhèngdīng**. For some pastoral relaxation, adventurous travellers can make their way west from **Shǐjiāzhuāng** to the small Héběi village of **Yújiācūn**, where you can spend the night immersed in rural simplicity. Head back to **Shǐjiāzhuāng** via the panoramic **Cāngyán Shān**. For more earthy flavours of the surrounding land, head out from Běijīng to the crumbling walled town of **Jímíngyì** or the snoozy hamlet of **Chuāndìxià**; you can overnight in each. Northeast from Běijīng towards the Manchurian homelands is easily reached **Chéngdé**, with its grand imperial summer resort and awesome collection of Tibetan-style Buddhist temples, while along the coast is attractive **Shānhǎiguān**, a walled Ming-dynasty garrison town and access point to a cluster of Great Wall sights, from **Jiǎoshān** to **Jiǔménkǒu**, just over the border in **Liáoníng**.



Two Weeks

East to South Village Tour

From **Shànghǎi**, head to **Zhūjiājiǎo** in the municipality's rural west to catch its canal-side charms; if you find yourself in a canal-town mood, the water towns of Jiāngsū and north Zhèjiāng – including **Tónglǐ**, **Lùzhí**, **Wúzhèn** and **Nánxún** – are easy to get to. From either Sūzhōu or Hángzhōu, take a bus to **Túnxi** in Ānhuī to spend several days exploring the delightful clusters of ancient Huìzhōu villages of **Yìxiàn** and **Shèxiàn**. Bus it across the border to Jiāngxī province for two or three days' fabulous trekking from village to village in the gorgeous rural landscape around **Wúyuán**. Work your way to the south of the province to enter Hakka country – a hilly region dotted with fortified villages around **Lóngnán** – and give yourself four days to ramble around the neighbouring Hakka areas of **Méizhōu** and **Yǒngdìng** in Guǎngdōng and Fújiàn, where you can spend the night in an earth building and fully tap into the local rhythms. Round off the tour at coastal **Xìamén**, spending a night or two amid the colonial remains of **Gǔlàng Yǔ**.

Three Weeks

Southwest China

Four days' wining and dining in **Hong Kong** and **Macau** should whet your appetite, before you head inland to **Guìlín** and three days immersing yourself in the dreamy karst landscape of **Yángshuò**. Jump on a bus to delightful **Huángyáo** before backtracking to Guìlín and journeying north to the **Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces** and the wind-and-rain bridges and ethnic hues of **Sānjiāng**. Creep over the border to explore the minority-rich villages of eastern **Guìzhōu**, including **Lángdé**, **Shíqiáo**, **Lónglǐ**, **Bāshā** and **Zhāoxīng**, before continuing to **Guìyáng** and on by train to the capital of Yúnnán province, **Kūnmíng**. Spend a few days in Kūnmíng before penetrating north Yúnnán to explore **Dǎlǐ**, **Lǐjiāng** and **Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la)**. Consider exploring the border area with Sichuān at the remote **Lúgū Hú**, from where you can head into Sichuān. In the other direction, the fertile **Xishuāngbǎnnà** region lies in the deep south of the province, where Yúnnán's southeast Asian complexion comes to the fore. You'll be rewarded with countless hiking opportunities around China's southwest borders and a profusion of ethnic villages.



Ten Days

Qinghai to Sìchuān

A component of our **Tibet Fringes tour**, this journey skirts the flanks of Tibet on your way from Xining to Chéngdū. The scenery is magnificent but do this trip only in summer (it's too cold even in spring), and take cash and lots of food with you (you won't be able to change money or cash travellers cheques). Be prepared for bus breakdowns, irregular transport connections and simple accommodation. You can jump on a 17-hour sleeper bus or fly from **Xīnín** to the Tibetan trading town of **Yùshù** (Jyekundo), in the south of Qīnghǎi, which suffered a devastating quake in 2010 but is picking itself up. Spend several days visiting the surrounding sights and exploring the deeply Tibetan disposition of the region and its valleys. Trips south into Tibet are feasible but tricky without permits; **Nāngchén** is the end of the road if you don't have these. Hop on a bus from Yùshù to **Sěrsu** (Shíqǔ Xiàn) in north-west Sìchuān, where bus connections run through some stunning scenery past **Manigango** (perhaps with a side trip to Dege), the Tibetan town of **Gānzī** and on past **Tǎgōng** to **Kāngdìng** (Dardo) along the Sìchuān-Tibet Hwy, from where you can head west in the direction of Tibet or east to **Chéngdū**.

Three to Four Weeks

Tibet Fringes Tour

Travel permits are required for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), periodically inaccessible to foreigners and where the effort and cost of travel can be prohibitive. This tour immerses you in areas typically far more straightforward to access yet rewarding with all the colour and vibrancy of Tibet. Only undertake the entire tour in the summer months. From **Lánzhōu** in Gānsù province, go southwest to **Lángmùsì** and **Xiàhé** before penetrating **Qīnghǎi** via the monastery town of **Tóngren**, where you can pick up a *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art). From here hook up with the **Qīnghǎi to Sìchuān tour** which takes you from **Xīnín** to **Kāngdìng**, from where you can journey by bus west to **Lítáng** and on to **Bātáng** within striking distance of the Tibetan border, or travel south to **Xiāngchéng** and on to **Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la)** and the gorgeous Tibetan region of **north Yúnnán**. From Zhōngdiàn take a bus to high-altitude **Déqín**, enveloped in gorgeous mountain scenery. Ranging to the borders with Myanmar (Burma), Laos and Vietnam, the rest of this fascinating province beckons. The particularly energetic can join the **Yangzi River tour** which pulls into Shànghǎi.



Ten Days

Northeast Tour

With **Běijīng** as a start point, hop on a train to stylish **Dàlián**, but plan to spend a few days exploring the historic walled coastal towns of **Shānhǎiguān** and **Xīngchéng** en route. You'll need several days for Dàlián's sights, including the historic port of **Lǔshùn** and an adorable coastline. Border watchers will be keen to get to **Dāndōng**, on the border with North Korea, for its peculiar frisson. Take a boat tour along the Yālǔ River, dine on North Korean food and visit **Tiger Mountain Great Wall**. Consider a trip by rail and bus to **Heaven Lake** in **Chángbái Shān** (the largest nature reserve in China) via **Tōnghuà**. Straddling the North Korea border, the volcanic lake is a stunning sight, but is only accessible from mid-June to September. Alternatively, take the train to **Shěnyáng** and visit its Qing dynasty Imperial Palace and the tomb of Huang Taiji, founder of the Qing-dynasty. Hop on a bus or a train to **Hǎ'ěrbīn** to **Dàolǚ District** and wonder at the city's Russian and Jewish ancestry. If you simply can't stop travelling, make a meal of it by journeying to China's **North Pole Village** and try to catch the aurora borealis in **Mòhé**.

One Week

Běijīng to Mongolia

After exhausting Běijīng's superb sight-seeing, and wining and dining choices, jump aboard a train to **Hohhot** in **Inner Mongolia** where a late-July arrival should coincide with the Naadam festivities at Genghale to the north, when the grasslands are turning green. Explore Hohhot's lama-series and temples and make a trip to the grasslands outside town for a taste of the epic Inner Mongolian prairie. From Hohhot you can either directly take the train direct to **Ulaanbataar** in Mongolia, or an alternative route to Mongolia is to first journey by train from Hohhot to **Shàng-dū** – vanished site of Kublai Khan's celebrated palace at **Xanadu** – and then on to **Hǎilǎ'ěr** in the far north of Inner Mongolia, towards the border with Mongolia and Russia. The grasslands outside Hǎilǎ'ěr are a real highlight, so consider spending the night under the stars in a yurt on the prairie. If you are Russia-bound, you can enter the country via the nearby trading town of **Mǎnzhōulǐ** on the border. Alternatively, hop on a train from Hǎilǎ'ěr to Hǎ'ěrbīn in Hēilóngjiāng (to hook up with the **Northeast tour**) or jump aboard a flight to Choibalsan in Eastern Mongolia.

**David Eimer**

[Shaanxi \(Shǎnxī\), Húnán, Guizhōu, Yúnnán](#) David first came to China in 1988. Since then, he has travelled across the country, from the far west to the Russian and Korean borders in the northeast, through the south and southwest and along the eastern coast. After stints as a journalist in LA and London, he succumbed to his fascination with China in 2005 and moved to Běijīng. As well as contributing to newspapers and magazines, David worked on the last edition of

China for Lonely Planet, has co-authored the *Beijing* and *Shanghai* city guides and wrote the most recent *Beijing Encounter*.

**Robert Kelly**

[Liáoníng, Jílín, Hēilóngjiāng, Hǎinán](#) Ever since he learned that his dad's airline job meant he could fly for peanuts, Robert has been travelling. He first landed in China in the mid-80s, and has popped around Asia ever since, eventually settling down in Taiwan 15 years ago. For this book, Robert researched the very southern point and the very northern tip of China. If there was ever a perfect lesson in the need to avoid summaries and stereotypes when talking about

China, this was it. This is Robert's sixth title for Lonely Planet.

**Michael Kohn**

[Xīnjiāng, Níngxià, Inner Mongolia](#) Michael grew up in Northern California and made his first trip to China in 1994. He jumped ship in Hong Kong, went to Tibet and later hiked along the Great Wall. Michael has returned to China a dozen times. This is his second tour of duty on Lonely Planet's *China* guide. He has also updated Lonely Planet guides to Tibet, Central Asia and Mongolia and has written two books of his own. Michael is currently based in Ulaanbaatar. His

work can be read online at www.michaelkohn.us.

**Shawn Low**

[Shāndōng, Jiāngsū, Fújiàn, Ānhuī](#) Shawn left his Singapore home for Melbourne and made his way into Lonely Planet as a book editor. Since then, he's done a stint as a commissioning editor, authored guides to Singapore and Southeast Asia, and is now Lonely Planet's Asia-Pacific Travel Editor. His fascination with China began after he was dispatched to Yúnnán to host an episode of National Geographic & Lonely Planet's *Roads Less Travelled*. Returning to China as an

author felt like an obvious thing to do – so he did.

**Bradley Mayhew**

[Tibet](#) A mountain junkie, Bradley has been visiting the Tibetan plateau for 20 years, since studying Chinese at Oxford University. Bradley has coordinated the last four editions of the *Tibet* guide and is also the co-author of Lonely Planet's *Bhutan*, *Nepal*, *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya* and *Central Asia*, as well as the *Odyssey Guide to Uzbekistan*. He has lectured on Central Asia to the Royal Geographical Society and was the subject of a Arte/SWR documentary retracing

the route of Marco Polo. See what he's up to at www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com.

**Daniel McCrohan**

[Sīchuān, Chóngqīng, Qīnghǎi](#) Daniel trained as journalist in the UK and worked for several years on newspapers before turning to travel writing. An Asia fanatic, he travelled extensively throughout the continent for more than 15 years before settling down in China in 2005. He now lives with his wife and their children in a courtyard home in one of Běijīng's *hútòng* (alleyways). Daniel has worked on Lonely Planet guides to China, India, Shànghǎi and Tibet. He also worked as a

presenter for the Lonely Planet TV series *Best in China*. Find him on www.danielmccrohan.com.

**Christopher Pitts**

[Shànghǎi, Jiāngxī](#) A Philadelphia native, Chris started off his university years studying classical Chinese poetry before a week in 1990s Shànghǎi (en route to school in Kūnmíng) abruptly changed his focus to the idiosyncracies of modern China. After spending several years in Asia memorising Chinese characters, he abruptly traded it all in and moved to Paris, where he currently lives with his family, Perrine, Elliot and Céleste. He works as a freelance writer, editor and

translator for various publishers. Visit his website at www.christopherpitts.net.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Damian Harper

Coordinating author, *Běijīng, Journey to the Great Wall, Tiānjīn & Héběi, Cruising the Yangzi, Gānsù* After graduating with a degree in Chinese (modern and classical) from London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Damian moved to pre-handover Hong Kong. He then embarked on an epic nine-province journey for the 6th edition of Lonely Planet's *China*. Since then he has worked on five further editions and has worked in Shànghǎi and Běijīng (developing a Mandarin accent somewhere between the two), contributing to multiple editions of the Lonely Planet *Beijing* and *Shanghai* city guides.



Piera Chen

Hong Kong, Macau Piera has been travelling to Macau since she was six. Over the years, while working in Hong Kong, it was poetry readings, *fado* (Portuguese music) concerts, and a masterfully executed *pato de cabidela* (duck stewed in its own blood) that kept luring her back. For this book, she spoke to insiders of the casino industry, and for both the Hong Kong and Macau chapters, she scoured the streets for indie music dives, art spaces, and other unpolished gems. Piera also co-authored the 14th Lonely Planet *Hong Kong & Macau* city guide.



Chung Wah Chow

Guǎngdōng, Guǎngxī Chung Wah is a Hong Kong native who has travelled extensively in the mainland. The sheer diversity of China's languages has always fascinated her. Cantonese, Hakka, Tai, Uighur, Teochew and Hokkien – she loves them all. With an advanced degree in translation studies, a penchant for travel and discovering new sounds and words, Chung Wah merged her talents by becoming a travel writer. She contributed to the previous Lonely Planet edition of *China* and co-authored Lonely Planet's *Hong Kong & Macau* city guide.



Min Dai

Zhèjiāng, Shānxī, Hénán, Húběi Min Dai grew up in the old town of balmy Qīngdǎo on the Shāndōng coast before studying for four years at Běijīng Normal University. She moved to London in the mid-1990s but her seaside roots see her holidaying occasionally in Brighton, Hastings, Margate and even Bournemouth. Min Dai has also lived in Shànghǎi, Běijīng, Hong Kong and Singapore and returns to China frequently to visit family and friends and to journey across

her homeland. Married with two children, Min Dai has worked on two editions of Lonely Planet's *China*.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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