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Hiddenchina Signature Tour Series:  
From Jiayuguan via Zhangye Danxia  
Geopark, Dafo and Matisi Monastery to  
Xining



**JIAYUGUAN PASS, ZHANGYE GEOPARK, DAFO AND MATISI MONASTERY**

- Destinations: Jiayuguan, Zhangye Danxia Geopark, Matisi Klosterm, Xining,
- Duration: 5 Days
- Tour Start in: Jiayuguan
- Tour End: Xining
- Group size: 1+ Pax
- best travel time: ideal from April - October

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

**DAY 1: BEIJING - JIAYUGUAN (NO MEALS)**

After your arrival in Jiayuguan pick-up by our local guide and driver and transfer to the hotel for check-in. Evening stroll to the local market and optional dinner.

Overnight in 3-4\* Hotel

**DAY 2: JIAYUGUAN - ZHANGYE (F)**

In the morning visit of the Jiayuguan Pass and fortress. Jiayuguan is one of the most important strategic points on the Chinese part of the Silk Road and is also considered as the west end of the Great Wall. The Built around 1372 it was extensively enlarged and reinforced in the following 200 years. There is not much of the Great Wall to be seen, but the fortress gives a great insights into the strategic importance of the area. Impressive is also the view on the snow capped Kunlun Mountains. In the afternoon drive around 3 hours to Zhangye.

Overnight in 3-4\* Hotel

**DAY 3: ZHANGYE (F)**

Early in the morning drive to Zhangye Danxia Geopark to experience the sunrise. The unique stone formations with its incredible color saturation are a feast for the eye and camera sensors and photography lovers find a true paradise here. Whether red, green, blue, yellow, the color experience is truly intensive. In the late morning drive back to Zhangye to visit Dafo Temple which is according to the legend birthplace of Kublai Khan. Here you can also find the largest reclining Buddha in China and all in all the temple is one of the most beautiful in China. After lunch drive back to Zhangye to visit the Geopark a second time, as the moving sun offers in the afternoon totally different light and color structure. In the evening drive back to Zhangye and stay overnight.





**DAY 4: ZHANGYE - XINING (F)**

Today you will have with 5 hours a relatively long drive as the tour takes us to Xining. On the way you will visit first Matisi Monastery which is located on the foot of the Qilian Mountains. Matisi means literally translated "horse hoof" monastery and is spectacularly built into a steep rock cliff. According to the legend it was here that the Chinese version of Pegasus has landed. Teh fit and fearless can climb inside the monastery a series of steep and narrow stairs to access the upper prayer rooms.

From Matisi drive through Hexi corridor and the Qilian Grasslands to Xining, a scenic very interesting and spectacular drive.

Overnight in 3-4\* Hotel.



**DAY 5: XINING - XXX (F)**

Transfer to the airport for departure flight



## **TOUR RATES**

**RATE FOR 2 PEOPLE IN PRIVATE GROUP IN DOUBLE OR TWIN ROOM: RMB 19'800 / CHF 2'880**

**SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENT: RMB 2'100 / CHF 320**

(RMB rate is the fix rate, EUR rate may change due to ROE fluctuations)

### **INCLUDED SERVICES:**

- ✚ Airport transfer in Jiayuguan and Xining
- ✚ English speaking guide on all days
- ✚ Private business Van with A/C and driver on all days
- ✚ Overnight in Double or Twin room in the mentioned hotel category
- ✚ Chinese breakfast in the hotel
- ✚ Entrance fees to Jiayuguan fortress, Zhangye Danxia Geopark (2), Dafo and Matisi Monastery

### **EXCLUDED SERVICES:**

- ✚ Lunch and dinner
- ✚ Flight to Jiayuguan and from Xining
- ✚ Tips for driver and guide
- ✚ Private expenses

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and carries also a certain amount of surprises and risks. Hiddenchina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides are trying to get out a maximum of comfort for our clients. All our guides are carefully chosen and selected by their abilities and experience. Nevertheless, there might be surprises. We hereby express that a voyage in China needs patience, adaptation and tolerance. In addition due to lack of infrastructure, in rural areas in China there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of hiddenchina.net accept - upon signing a contract - to be aware of these circumstances, and accept changes which may occur in order to keep security and comfort of the clients according to the circumstances to a maximum during the trip.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS**

Traveling in China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from “top” in selected 5\* Hotels in the big cities to “very poor”. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, the clients have to be ready for unexpected changes (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides or flooding) or other surprises. In hotels by example, it can happen that you will get phone calls in the middle of the night, offering you a special massage service. The following chapters will tell you more about what you should consider when traveling in China.

### **FACE**

You may have heard it before and for the experienced China traveler it's a “must know”: In China, everything is about “giving and losing face”. Chinese people are very proud of their culture, food and traditions. Respect this fact and try not to bring a Chinese into an embarrassing situation, as he or she might lose his face in front of coworkers, friends, family members or even the authorities. Try to be polite, smile and - especially to English speaking Chinese - always praise their language skills. Chinese can be considered as reactive people. If you treat Chinese people in an arrogant and harsh way, you will be treated the same way. When you feel cheated, try to solve the situation in a gentle and charming way. You will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. For every problem in China there is a solution. It's up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is contra productive in the most cases.

### **SECURITY**

Especially large cities in China are extremely safe. Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters when foreigners are involved. However, be aware that pick pocketing happens everywhere, so keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your luggage unattended. When going out at night, China's large cities are much safer than practically all European cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking in a dark alley even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

## **HEALTH**

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor before you go on a China trip and make all the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of Malaria remedies. As the avian influenza is getting more and more a serious issue in Asia and a pandemic outbreak will happen sooner or later, the traveler should also consider buying a box of "Tamiflu" before the trip begins.

When traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. We will always take care of taking you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, your body will have to deal with a wide range of unknown food, spices and other ingredients in China and also with different bacteria and viruses than in Europe's clean environment. When being on a 3 week China trip, you have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. To cure them it is recommended to take pharmaceuticals, which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you will lose during a diarrhea. From our longtime China experience, one of the best remedies is to eat well-boiled Chinese mushrooms and bananas as well as to drink tomato juice. On many of our private trips, this helped much better than the Western medication like e.g. Imodium. Always take toilet paper with you, as you won't find any in public toilets! Travelers going to high altitude areas such as Tibet are also recommended to take a supply of Diamox in case of altitude sickness. Please get advice from your doctor.

## **CLIMATE**

China has several different climatic zones. From high-altitude to sub-tropic and desert climate, there is everything. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. E.g. in southern China, this time mostly starts late May / early June and lasts until August. This year, in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt the trip according to your travel time and avoid the areas with heavy rain.

## **LUGGAGE**

Most airlines allow you to check-in 20 kg of luggage (economy class). It is not allowed to take nutrition products (cheese, meat) as well as pornographic material. Please ensure that your "Swiss army knife" and other "dangerous products" are checked in with your luggage and not in the hand luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. So if you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of luggage to China. However, whenever you forgot something, don't worry, more or less everything you need in daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Be aware that many customs authorities like the ones in Paris and Milan can fine you heavily when finding out that you try to import faked products from China such as Yves St Laurent bags, Gucci items or Prada clothes.

## **SHOPPING**

Except for imported luxury goods and high-end electrical equipment such as beamers or imported laptops, more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Western Europe. Especially clothes can be bought at a very low price. Many shopping areas offer faked products (sometimes in extremely good quality). However, in many places where no prices are indicated you have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a faked product, especially at the airport in Paris, you can get into trouble. The fight against faked products is now at a point, that authorities can or will take away your purchase and will heavily fine you. For the golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls etc. at a very low price. For most Europeans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD you pay between 8 and 10 RMB (about 1 EURO) and most of the movies are available even before they are shown in European cinemas. The advantage is that DVD's take away only little space and weight. But be aware that in many cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards are only accepted in major stores, 5\* hotels and upwards and western restaurants. As from 1st January 2013 it is no longer possible to cash out money from Chinese ATM's with your MAESTRO Card. Only possibility is to get money at the ATM's with your credit card or change foreign currency at a bank (daily limit is USD 4'000 and passport is required. Annual limit USD 50'000 or the equivalent in foreign currency). Money can be changed at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels. Please note that you need to show your passport for changing money.

## **BARGAINING**

As mentioned in the "shopping" chapter, in many places you have to bargain for your price. Western tourists are mostly looked at as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the price will be set 400 – 500% above the price the vendor is ready to sell his or her merchandise. The first rule is to go below the first offered price. So when the vendor asks for 100 RMB, you can set your offer to 20-25 RMB. Then it depends on your bargaining skills at what price you will get it. A simple trick is, when it seems too expensive for you, to walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also note, always stay friendly and smile when bargaining. Once you agreed for a price, you have to buy the product. Otherwise you and the vendor will lose face.

## **LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR**

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English speaking taxi drivers or personnel in the shops. Therefore it is recommended to take a phrase book with you, where you can show what you need. Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners. However, Chinese are also very proud of their country and culture and some behavior will be strange for travelers who come to China for the first time. In many places (even sometimes in public buses) people smoke a lot and for the non-smoker, China can be a terrible place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by strange noises. The best way to get around it is to ignore it and live with it. For the smoker on the other hand China is a paradise, as it is more or less everywhere allowed to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap, although some foreign brands might be faked. Please

## Touring the surroundings of Chengdu

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also note that you might be invited to test your drinking skills. The easiest way to avoid it without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to liver problems you're not allowed to drink.



## **TIPPING**

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in the 5\* surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants or taxis and hotels (except 5\* hotels) tipping is a no-no. However, tour guides and drivers of organized tours should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid with 10 Euro per day and rely on additional income. With Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides always get a commission in the shops, where they make most of their salary. As European groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, guides and drivers have to rely on tips.

Generally a tip of RMB 30 per person and day is reasonable. When you are in a tour group it is recommended that the group collects the tips and hands it to the guides and drivers in an envelope. It is also very helpful to take some souvenirs with you, like for example watches or picture postcards from your home country.

## **SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION**

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe, but there are also topics which should be avoided and topics which are perfect for small talk.

One of the most common greetings in China is “Ni chi fan le ma?” which literally means “Have you eaten yet?” This emphasizes the importance of eating in China, and it is much more a social event than in the West, therefore food is always a welcomed topic.

In some cases you also might be confronted with rather private questions such as about your marital status and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don't feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it's just small talk. Sometimes, especially in business surroundings, people also might ask you about your salary, which is quite normal in China. Here you can escape (if you don't want to tell the truth) by telling some fictional figure, or when telling the truth and your counterpart's eyebrows rise, you explain how expensive the life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political related such as the Cultural Revolution, critics against the system or chairman Mao, the Tibet and Taiwan question, human rights or how to treat animals. If you want to have answers to these questions you might do it through your guide. Do not overload your guide with too many hard questions in the beginning though. Tactically it is wise to hide these questions in some compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are more open to discuss critical topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people tend to touch you, which is not a sign of homosexuality but just a sign of sympathy. In such a situation, when you feel uncomfortable, don't react in a rude or harsh way; just try to escape the contact by elegant means. Mostly a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

### **TRAFFIC AND TAXI**

The public transport system in China is basically quite convenient. Every major city has an airport; there are many train routes (even though there is mostly only one train per day between two destinations) and public buses. Public buses are very cheap although the comfort is sometimes a bit poor.

In the cities, the most convenient public transport is the taxi. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be careful that on major tourist sites there are also drivers trying to make extra money. When a taxi has no taximeter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. However, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end. Just tell him that you pay the negotiated price, nothing more, and nothing less. Please also note that most drivers don't speak English. So take a bilingual map, a taxi card or a guidebook with you. Tell the reception in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway fares have to be paid by the customer and not the driver (for example, in Beijing the fee for the airport expressway is 10 Yuan for passenger cars). This fee will be added to the amount shown on the taximeter.

### **USEFUL THINGS TO TAKE ON A CHINA TRIP**

Several Swiss army knives, a compass, 9:55 pharmaceuticals (see health chapter), a first-aid kit, tape, watches (not too expensive), money clip, camera (films can be bought and developed on spot for a very reasonable price), deodorant (rarely available in China), sunglasses, altimeter (for Tibet and Himalaya tours), GPS, safety belt for money, literature, guidebooks, credit-/bank card and a lot of patience.

For ladies: tampons are rarely available in China.