



# China



In terms of area, China is the largest country in the world and is situated in eastern Asia on the western shore of the Pacific Ocean. It has a population of over 1.25 billion people and a population density of around 130 per sq km. Mandarin is the language which is most commonly used and it is thought to have been written and spoken for over 6,000 years.

Isabelle Bending spent 9 nights touring China with Cox and Kings in June 2009. Read her report to find out more or call 0121 250 2211 or 01543 412768 to arrange your trip to China.



## Flight

We took the coach from Birmingham directly to Heathrow Terminal 5 where I was really impressed with how bright and spacious it was. Our flight from Heathrow to Beijing was 9 hours and 30 minutes and when we checked in we found that we were travelling Club class – now that’s the way to go!

50 Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield  
T: 0121 250 2211  
E: [holidays@btgl.co.uk](mailto:holidays@btgl.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)



10a Bird Street, Lichfield  
T: 01543 412768  
E: [holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk](mailto:holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)

## Our hotel in Beijing



On arrival at Beijing Airport we were met by our tour guide and transferred to our first hotel, **The Hotel Peninsula Palace**. This 5\* hotel is perfectly located for The Forbidden City and is within walking distance of Tiananmen Square and shops.

Our accommodation was everything you'd expect from China's capital city - the room was spacious and it had a big, white marble bathroom which was really luxurious.

## Sightseeing in Beijing



### Tiananmen Square

Tiananmen Square is a large plaza named after the Tiananmen, Gate Of Heavenly Peace. The square is over 100 acres in size which makes it the largest open square in the world and it has been the site of many famous political protests.

A visit to Tiananmen Square is thoroughly recommended and definitely worth visiting to take pictures of the monuments and gate to the Forbidden City.



### Jinshanling Pass and the Great Wall of China

Jinshanling Pass is the first pass at the west end of the Wall and this is where we took the steps onto the Great Wall of China.

Stretching from the Gobi desert to the Yellow Sea, the Great Wall of China is the largest man made structure on earth. The original wall was built over 2,000 years ago by thousands of political prisoners and it used an estimated 180 million cubic meters of packed earth.

You can take a cable car from Jinshanling Pass to see spectacular views of the Great Wall of China.



### The Bird's Nest Stadium

The Bird's Nest Stadium was designed and built for the summer 2008 Olympic Games and is the largest steel structure in the world. Designed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, it is now known as the National Stadium and there are plans to have a shopping and entertainment complex built within it in the near future. Anyone who visits Beijing must pay a visit to the National Stadium as there are some great photograph opportunities which shouldn't be missed.



### The Water Cube

Also built for the Summer 2008 Olympic Games, The Water Cube has a total land surface of 65,000 square meters and a spectator capacity of 17,000. Although called the Water Cube, the aquatics centre is really a rectangular box where swimmers broke 25 world records during the last Olympic Games.



### Pedicab tour of the Hutongs

Hutongs are narrow streets or alleys which are most commonly associated with Beijing. Our tour of the Hutongs in a pedicab was a great opportunity to learn about how Chinese people lived in the past. Tourists are sometimes invited to visit a local family's house to experience authentic Beijing life. The pedicab transports passengers around the intricate winding courtyards and it is a real experience!

### Our hotel in Xian



From Beijing we flew for 90 minutes to Xian which is one of the oldest cities in China. Xian is one of the four Great Ancient Capitals of China and has been a part of lots of important dynasties in the country's history.

Our hotel in Xian was the 5\* **Sofitel Wanda Hotel** which is situated in the city's central business district. The hotel offers easy access to the Exhibition Centre, subway and major attractions and features 417 luxury rooms with 43 suites, 4 restaurants and a Health Club.

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E: [holidays@btgl.co.uk](mailto:holidays@btgl.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)

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Travel Group

10a Bird Street, Lichfield  
T: 01543 412768  
E: [holidays@broadsllichfield.co.uk](mailto:holidays@broadsllichfield.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)



### Sightseeing in Xian

The highlight of our trip to Xian was the tour of the Terracotta Army. The site was accidentally discovered in 1974 and is estimated to contain over 8,000 terracotta soldiers, 130 chariots and 520 horses, the majority of which are still buried in the pits. The figures date from 210 BC and are of varying heights, according to rank, and are all unique.

### Old City Muslim Quarter

The quarter itself is approximately 5 square kilometres starting at the West Gate and ending at the Bell Tower. It contains a multitude of small side streets and walking paths that could get even the most experienced orienteer confused but is a really interesting place to visit.

### Our Hotel in Guilin



Guilin is in the southern Ghangxi province and is known as one of the most beautiful parts of China. The countryside is reminiscent of a traditional Chinese landscape and is surrounded by the Li River.

The flight from Xian to Guilin took around 120 minutes. On arrival we were taken to our third hotel which was the **Sheraton Guilin**, which is ideally situated along the Li River in the heart of Guilin City. There are 430 newly renovated guest rooms, 17 suites, a fitness centre and pool. The hotel is adjacent to the walking street and main shopping area and is a short walk from Elephant Trunk Hill, which is named due to the huge hill which is shaped like an elephant drinking from the river.

### Sightseeing in Guilin



### Li River Cruise

Anyone visiting China should take a cruise on the 50 mile Li River which gives the opportunity to see a very beautiful part of the country. We floated past mountains, trees and waterfalls and into the pretty fishing village of Yangshou.

## Our hotel in Shanghai



Our final hotel was the **Grand Hyatt Hotel** in Shanghai, which is one of the highest hotels in the world - It is situated between the 53rd and 87th floors of the Jin Mao Tower. The hotel bar is called Cloud 9 and offers breathtaking 360 degree views of Shanghai from the 87rd floor.

## Sightseeing in Shanghai



Over the years, Shanghai has grown to become one of the most dynamic cities in the world. It is very cosmopolitan and full of lovely restaurants and modern buildings – definitely not to be missed.

We visited The Shanghai Museum which is set in a newly designed building in the 'People's Park'. It's full of interesting exhibits dating back to Neolithic times and includes the famous bronze collection which displays calligraphy, paintings and Ming and Qing era dynasty furniture.

## Summary

Overall, The Cox and Kings China experience was fantastic! We saw some spectacular, historic sights, stayed in some beautiful hotels and dined in some excellent restaurants. China really is a world in itself and is thoroughly recommended as a destination for a holiday with a difference!