

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO

DATE: JUN 19 – JUL 3, 2025)

An Epic Journey Through China and Mongolia

故宫博物院

TRIP SUMMARY

As we all know, Marco Polo's travels took him to China, where he became the first European to give a detailed description of the great Chinese civilization. But what some of us may not know is that Marco Polo didn't just go to China – he went to a China which, at that time, was a part of the great Mongol empire, an empire that wiped clean the map of Eurasia in the thirteenth century, and ushered in a new age. The Mongol dynasty in China reunified the north and south that had been divided for centuries, made Beijing the country's capital, created the modern provinces of China, and introduced into the country many diverse religions and cultures—Muslim traders, Tibetan-style Buddhist lamas, and Mongol soldiers—that have shaped China's multi-ethnic nature to this day.

Modern China was made by the Mongol empire, and Marco Polo was there to witness it when it was being born. Moving in elite circles where Mongol, Turkic, and Persian were more often spoken than Chinese, he praised the brilliance and abilities of the great Mongol Khan Kubilai, admired the hardiness of the Mongol men and women who had built the empire, and was dazzled by the wealth and sophistication he found among the Chinese inhabitants of “Taidu” and “Quinsai” (today's Beijing and Hangzhou). Join us on this quest as we explore the world of Marco Polo and his legacy in China and Mongolia.

TRAVEL ROUTE



ITINERARY

DAY 1. JUNE 19 ARRIVAL IN BEIJING

Arrive in Beijing, where you will be welcomed and transferred to your hotel to check in. Enjoy a welcome Peking Duck dinner at Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant inside Ritan Park.

Beijing, the center of China's politics and culture since the time of Kubilai Khan in the 13th century, showcases China's best art and imperial culture. In addition, today's Beijing offers an excellent performance community, and a healthy variety of fine dining establishments.



DAY 2. JUNE 20. VISIT LAMA TEMPLE AND GREAT WALL



This morning, we will visit the Lama Temple (Yonghe Gong), a center for Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhist communities in Beijing. Introduced under the Mongol Empire, Tibetan Buddhism thrived with support from Mongols, Manchus, and Chinese Buddhists. The temple, once the royal residence of Qing Dynasty Emperor Yongzheng, was later converted into a Tibetan-style Buddhist temple. It features a 26-meter-tall sandalwood Buddha statue and architecture combining Han, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Manchu styles.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we will visit the Great Wall at Juyongguan, about 15 kilometers long and located in a steep valley. This section was crucial for defending against Mongol invaders. Highlights include the Yuntai (Cloud Platform), the marble foundation of a Yuan Dynasty tower, with carvings of Buddhist figures and scriptures in six languages: Chinese, Sanskrit, Mongolian, Tibetan, Tangut, and Uyghur Turkic. **(Novotel Xinqiao Beijing (4-star), Superior Room ; B, L, D)**



DAY 3. JUNE 21. BEIJING ATTRACTIONS/ FLY TO CHIFENG CITY

This morning, we will take a leisurely stroll on Tian'anmen Square and tour the Forbidden City, the imperial palace of the Ming and Qing dynasties, rebuilt on the site of Kublai Khan's palace. Located in the center of Beijing, the Forbidden City is an unrivaled masterpiece of imperial Chinese architecture. For five centuries (1416-1911), 24 emperors lived and ruled from here. If time permits, we will visit Jingshan Park and walk up Jingshan Hill for a stunning panorama of the Forbidden City and modern Beijing.





After lunch at a local restaurant, we will visit the Beijing Capital Museum. This large, modern museum, with its magnificent architecture and abundant exhibitions, contributes to Beijing's status as a historical, cultural, and international metropolis. If time permits, we will visit Beihai Park, northwest of the Forbidden City. This well-preserved imperial garden, with beautiful lakes and waterways, was designed by a Turkic architect under Kublai Khan and contains traces from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties.

In the late afternoon, we will transfer to the airport for the flight to Chifeng. After checking in, we will enjoy a buffet dinner at the hotel. **(Wanda Realm Hotel Chifeng (local 5-star), Deluxe Room ; B, L, D)**

DAY 4. JUNE 22. CHIFENG CITY TOUR/ DRIVE TO NINCHENG COUNTY



After breakfast, we will visit the nearby Chifeng Museum. This outstanding museum displays the mixed nomadic and sedentary cultures of Inner Mongolia, China's Mongol autonomous region. It houses the most important collection of remains from the Neolithic Hongshan culture, dating back over 6,000 years. The museum showcases splendid artifacts from the Kitans, who founded the powerful Liao dynasty in Inner Mongolia and North China, remains from the Mongol empire, and rich jewelry and clothing from Mongol princes who ruled as descendants of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan into the twentieth century. This afternoon, we will drive to Ningcheng County (100 km, ~2 hrs) to visit the site of the "Middle Capital" of the Kitan Liao dynasty. Built in 1007 at the height of the empire as the second capital of the Liao Dynasty,

today the site preserves three pagodas and some city wall ruins. The well-preserved Daming Pagoda, also known as the "Big Pagoda" or "White Pagoda," is a magnificent octagonal structure with thirteen levels of eaves. Standing about eighty meters tall, it is the largest surviving ancient pagoda from the Liao dynasty. We will also visit other architectural masterpieces, including a small pagoda built in 1163 during the succeeding Jin dynasty. We will return to Chifeng in the late afternoon.

This evening, we will have dinner at a popular hotpot restaurant, featuring organic vegetables and meat from its own ranch. **(Chifeng Wanda Realm Hotel Chifeng (local 5-star), Deluxe Room B, L, D)**

DAY 5. JUNE 23. DRIVE TO SHANGDU(XANADU)/ XILIINHOT



Early this morning, we will drive to the site of Shangdu, Marco Polo's "Xanadu" (290 km, ~6 hrs). We will spend the afternoon touring the urban layout of Shangdu, Kublai Khan's "Upper Capital." Learn about the history of the Mongol Empire in China and its unique synthesis of Mongol, Chinese, and Middle Eastern political traditions. Shangdu served as the first capital (1263-1273) of Kublai Khan and, from 1274 onwards, as the summer capital (1274-1364) of the Yuan Dynasty. In 1369, Xanadu was occupied by the Ming dynasty and garrisoned until around 1430. Today, only ruins remain, with remnants of earthen walls, the brick platform base, and grassy mounds that were once palace and temple buildings. The site, along with the Xanadu Museum, was opened to the public in 2011 and listed as a UNESCO site in 2012.



After touring Xanadu, we will continue our drive to Xilinhot (Shiliinhot) (260 km, ~4 hrs), the seat of Xilingol (Shiliingol) League in Inner Mongolia.

(Yuanhe Jianguo Hotel Xilingol (local 5-star), Guest Room ; B, L, D)

DAY 6. JUNE 24. XILINHOT /BEIJING /HANGZHOU



Transfer to the airport and fly to Hangzhou via Beijing. Known as the city of “Heaven on Earth,” Hangzhou captures the beauty of mountains and water and the harmony of nature and fine living. It was the capital of South China from 1125 to 1276 until it was peacefully conquered by the Mongols. During the Mongol Yuan dynasty, Hangzhou remained southern China’s greatest metropolis, famed in European, Arab, Persian, and Chinese accounts. Marco Polo’s descriptions of Hangzhou's wonders will guide our tour of the city.

Upon arrival, transfer to the hotel to check in and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. Dinner will be arranged at a nice local restaurant.

(Lakeview Hotel (local 4-star), Lake View Room ; B, L, D)

DAY 7. JUNE 25. HANGZHOU CITY TOUR



This morning, we will visit the China National Tea Museum to gain an in-depth understanding of the tea-making process and China’s venerable tea culture. Afterwards, we will head to the Longjing tea village. There, we will taste tea at a local family home and, if energy permits, take an easy hike around the tea plantations.

Next, we will visit the Lingyin Temple (Temple of the Soul's Retreat). Adjacent to Lingyin Temple is Feilai Peak, which features hundreds of ancient Buddhist statues carved into its cliff. Here, Buddhist clerics under the Mongols carved Tibetan-style Buddhist figures for the first time in South China. If time permits, we will take a leisurely walk at the secluded Yongfu Temple.

(Lakeview Hotel (local 4-star), Lake View Room; B, L, D)

DAY 8. JUNE 26. VISIT PHOENIX MOSQUE/DRIVE TO YANGZHOU

This morning, we will visit the Phoenix Mosque, still a functioning center of prayer for Hangzhou's Muslims. Muslims first appeared in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). In 1281, after the Mongol Empire reunified North and South China, a new mosque was built on this site. Restored in the late nineteenth century, it was named the Phoenix Mosque due to its resemblance to a flying phoenix. One of the four major ancient mosques in southeast China's coastal areas, it boasts exquisite stone-carved Arabic calligraphy from the Mongol Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties.

Afterwards, we will tour the West Lake, which Marco Polo admired, and enjoy a private paddle boat ride on the lake. Following lunch at a local restaurant, we will drive to Yangzhou. Upon arrival, we will transfer to the hotel to check in.

(Crowne Plaza Yangzhou (5-star), Superior Room ; B, L, D)



DAY 9. JUNE 27. MARCO POLO MEMORIAL HALL

This morning, we will visit the Marco Polo Memorial Hall. Scholars believe Marco Polo served as a salt official in Yangzhou from 1282 to 1284 during his 17 years in China. The memorial hall commemorates Marco Polo's adventures and contributions with valuable pictures and notes. Afterwards, we will visit the Lu's Salt Merchant Residence known for its splendid architecture and exquisite brick carvings, including well-preserved archways and a library. Built in the late Qing Dynasty, the Lu's Salt Merchant Residence is the largest of its kind in Yangzhou. The Salt Monopoly, a main financial resource of imperial China, was detailed by Marco Polo in his writings.

After a dim sum lunch at a local restaurant, we will visit Ge Garden. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), wealthy salt merchants in Yangzhou began constructing gardens and residences, and Ge Garden is a fine example. It is known for its exquisite rock layouts that simulate different scenery through the four seasons.

Following our garden visit, we will take a leisurely stroll along the Slender West Lake. Considered the soul of Yangzhou's charm, Slender West Lake offers picturesque and idyllic scenery, unique arch bridges over waterways, and picturesque gardens and historic buildings along its banks. Dinner will be enjoyed at a local restaurant by the Slender West Lake.

(Crowne Plaza Yangzhou (5-star), Superior Room ; B, L, D)

DAY 10. JUNE 28. FLY BACK TO BEIJING

After breakfast this morning, we will transfer to the airport and fly to Beijing. Upon arrival, we will transfer to the hotel to check in. The rest of the day is free for leisure activities. In the evening, we will have a farewell dinner at a branch restaurant of Haidilao Hot Pot, one of the most famous hot pot restaurants in China. Known for its outstanding hospitality and authentic Sichuan cuisine, Haidilao Hot Pot promises a delightful dining experience to conclude our journey before departing for Mongolia.

DAY 11. JUNE 29. BEIJING EN-ROUTE TO MONGOLIA

This morning, transfer to the Beijing Railway Station for your international train to Ulaanbaatar (Ulan Bator). Dinner is served aboard.

DAY 12. JUNE 30 DRIVE TO GOBI-ALTAI PROVINCE/ GUN GALUUT NATURE RESERVE

Watch the Gobi Desert pass by your window until you reach Choir. Transfer to a ger camp at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve. Visit a traditional Mongolian family and enjoy horse riding. Overnight in gers. (Ger Camp; B,L,D)



DAY 13. JULY 1. GENGHIS KHAN EQUESTRIAN STATUE/ TONYUKUK MONUMENT

Travel north to Ulaanbaatar, stopping at the vast Chinggis Khan statue and the Tonyukuk Monument. Continue to Ulaanbaatar and check into your hotel. Dinner will be at a local restaurant. (Hotel Blue Sky or similar; Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



DAY 14-15, JULY 2-3- ULAANBAATAR CITY TOUR/ DEPARTURE



In the morning, we will visit Gandan Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia. Following this, we will explore the National History and Fine Arts Museums, where we can view unique artifacts from Mongolia's archaeological expeditions and one of the world's greatest collections of Tibetan-style Buddhist art.

The remainder of the afternoon is free for last-minute shopping and sightseeing in Ulaanbaatar. In the evening, enjoy a traditional Mongolian performance followed by a farewell dinner at a fine local restaurant. We will take a group picture in front of the Marco Polo statue, newly erected near Ulaanbaatar's Chinggis Khan Square. (B;L;D)

On the last day, transfer to the airport for your departure home. (B)



B = Breakfast | L = Lunch | D = Dinner

Ger camp = The traditional portable, circular, wooden dwelling used by the nomadic peoples.

Field camp = A bit more sophisticated camping/glamping, more permanent in nature.

Tent camp = Expedition style, often moving regularly and smaller in size and scale.

MONGOLIA QUEST RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER THE ABOVE ITINERARY IF DEEMED NECESSARY.

LAND PRICES

Based on 6-9 participants:	\$7,370 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 10-12 participants:	\$6,590 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 13+ participants:	\$6,370 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Optional single supplement:	\$950 (including a single tent)

LAND PRICES INCLUDE:	LAND PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All internal flights of economy class in China, starting from and till Beijing; • Beijing /Ulaanbaatar train, the soft sleeper berth (every four passengers sharing one cabin); • All hotel accommodation on double occupancy, including breakfasts; All transportation; • All tour and entrance fees in Mongolia and China; • Daily meals based on a set menu in China and Mongolia as indicated by B, L or D; • Group arrival, departure transfers; • English speaking national guide throughout your stay; • Bottled waters throughout the trip. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International airfare; • Personal laundry; • Drinks not mentioned in the itinerary; • Travel insurance; • Medical evacuation costs; • Excess baggage charges; • Visa fees; • Gratuities; • Photography and video fees • Any other item not mentioned as included.

HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

You may book any trip with us by filling out our Trip Application Form, which you can download using Adobe Acrobat Reader and can send to us as an electronic file via e-mail at

- **Info@MongoliaQuest.com**

All reservations are subject to deposit of \$400 per person. Deposits are refundable until 90 days prior to the start of the program less a \$250 administrative fee. Please arrange a wire transfer to Mongolia Quest bank account as per following instructions:

Beneficiary name: MONGOLIA QUEST LLC

Beneficiary's address:

Suite #00, Apt.26B, 1st Horoo, 13th Sud-district, Sukhbaatar District,
Ulaanbaatar 14230, Mongolia;

Tel: (976) 7000 9747

Email: info@MongoliaQuest.com

Beneficiary's account number: 3005111070

Beneficiary's bank name: Golomt bank

Beneficiary's bank address:

Monnis branch

3rd floor, Monnis tower, Chinggis avenue

Khoroo #1, Sukhbaatar district

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Beneficiary's bank swift code: GLMTMNUB

Once we receive your trip application form, we will send you information about how to wire your deposit to us, and a confirmation letter with information related with visa and international airfare reservations. You will also receive our pre-departure Travel Guide, which will include information on weather, suggested reading list, a list of items to pack, etc.

About 4 weeks prior to your arrival date, we will send you Final Departure Information which will include your final itinerary along with any other necessary updated information regarding the logistics of your trip.

PAYMENT AND CANCELLATION POLICY

As mentioned above, a deposit of \$400 per person is required to reserve space for the trip that you have chosen. Full payment is due 90 days prior to the start of the trip. In the case of a cancellation, please contact us in written form.

Notification of cancellation must be received in writing by Mongolia Quest. At the time, we receive your written cancellation, the following penalties will apply:

- **Up to 90 days** prior to departure: **\$250 per person** handling fee;
- **89-60 days** prior to departure: **20% of the trip cost** per person;
- **60-45 days** prior to departure: **50% of the trip cost** per person;
- **44-30 days** prior to departure: **75% of the trip cost**, per person;
- **29 days** prior to departure, or after the trip starts: **no-refund**.

Some airfares may be nonrefundable. Once an expedition has departed, there will be no refunds from MQ for any unused portions of the trip. The above policy also applies to all extensions and independent travel arrangements made in conjunction with this program.

Tier pricing

Our prices are based on tier pricing. At the time of booking, we will bill you for the amount based on the confirmed number of trip participants. In case the number of travelers increases at the last moment, we will reimburse the balance of your payment in accordance with the corresponding tier pricing, after you return home.

TRAVEL NOTES

How to get to Mongolia

The official Mongolian international civil flight carriers Mongolian Airlines or MIAT. Currently it serves flights between Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Frankfurt. Other popular airlines include Asiana, Pusan and Turkish airlines. South Korea is the most common international gateway city to Ulaanbaatar. Mongolian Airlines and Turkish Airlines fly daily to/from Istanbul. If you are coming from Europe, you may also find Turkish Airlines a convenient connection. During the summer season, if no seats are available on any of these major carriers, there are ways to fly to Mongolia through local cities in China and Russia. Please contact us for more information. The seats are usually in high demand and booking needs to be done well in advance.

Visa Information

U.S, Canadian, Japanese, Australian and citizens of most European counties are allowed to enter Mongolia without a visa for up to 30 days. All other nationals are required to get a visa before entering Mongolia.

THE LIST OF THE COUNTRIES TO BE EXEMPTED FROM VISA REQUIREMENTS TO VISIT MONGOLIA UP TO 30 DAYS IN THE YEARS OF 2023-2025

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Czech Republic • Republic of Austria • Kingdom of Belgium • Hungary • Hellenic Republic • Kingdom of Denmark • Kingdom of Spain • Italian Republic • Republic of Latvia • Republic of Lithuania • Swiss Confederation • Republic of Bulgaria • Republic of Ireland • Republic of Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principality of Liechtenstein • Grand Duchy of Luxembourg • Republic of Malta • Kingdom of the Netherlands • Republic of Poland • Portuguese Republic • Slovak Republic • Republic of Slovenia • Republic of Finland • Republic of Croatia • Canada | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingdom of Sweden • French Republic • Republic of Estonia • Kingdom of Norway • Republic of Iceland • Republic of Cyprus • Romania • Principality of Monaco • United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland • Commonwealth of Australia • New Zealand |
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Weather

Mongolia enjoys over 280 sunny days a year. However, because Mongolia has a continental weather pattern, weather can fluctuate drastically during any given day. We recommend packing warm clothes even if you are coming during the hottest months. Our pre-departure information will provide details regarding the weather along with a suggested packing list. Layering is the best plan to be ready for a wide array of Mongolian weather patterns.

Accommodation



Newly renovated Soviet era hotels are located at some of the best locations in downtown Ulaanbaatar. They offer comfortable rooms and friendly services. There are also newer hotels like Kempinski Khan Palace, Ramada Ulaanbaatar and Best Western Inn. The countryside accommodations are arranged in “ger camps,” which provide authentic nomadic felt tents with centralized bathroom and toilet facilities located nearby. They offer clean, comfortable beds and plentiful meals.

Safety

Mongolia is devoid of any political, religious and ethnic sectarian conflicts and is considered one of the safest countries in the world for international travelers. However, like in any other country, crimes do happen, so a good sense of caution and respect shown to the locals can help to avoid unnecessary confrontations. Mongolians are generally hospitable people who love to interact with foreigners.

Food



Mongolia’s capital, Ulaanbaatar, hosts an excellent collection of fine restaurants of international cuisine. In the countryside, tour establishments offer hearty meals with a balance of meat and vegetables. Meat in Mongolians excellent in that the whole country is essentially “free-range” terrain. Even your strictest dietary restrictions can now be met with proper information in advance and preparation by us.

Information about Currency and Payment Methods

Mongolia's national currency is called tugrik and the exchange rate is about 3,400 tugrik to a US dollar. Major currencies can be exchanged at the hotels and pawnshops, and ATM machines are widely available throughout Ulaanbaatar and provincial centers. However, Australian dollars can usually only be exchanged at banks. Traveler's checks can be cashed at banks and major credit cards are accepted at most places in the capital, but only Mongolian cash is accepted in the countryside. We recommend that you travel with Mongolian national currency equal to at least \$200 when touring in the countryside.

Souvenirs

Like any other places, Mongolia offers great souvenirs ranging from camel wool sweaters to cashmere scarves and traditional wooden puzzle games. Mongolian vodkas can be an excellent gift. At several stores, you can also find a range of traditional Mongolian musical instruments such as the famed Morin Khuur or "horse headed fiddle." Bargaining is not very customary; most items are sold for the price on their labels. If you plan to shop for souvenirs, we recommend purchasing locally as many items as possible since your purchases will be a direct contribution to the local community.

Travel Insurance

With Mongolia stretching over 1.5 million square kilometers and its population concentrated in the cities, we will be traveling through some remote areas away from good roads and medical facilities. We strongly recommend that you consider getting standard emergency medical evacuation insurance as a means to protect yourself from unexpected accidents that can happen during any trip. Nothing is better than traveling with peace of mind knowing that you have prepared for the trip as much as possible in advance

Traveling with Mongolia Quest

Because it is still a developing country, traveling in Mongolia requires a sense of humor and patience. New roads and bridges are being built every year, but the paved road system is still limited in the countryside. You may experience flight delays and find road conditions bumpy and dusty. But the experience of traveling in Mongolia will far exceed some personal compromises in comfort. We like to say that the best part of traveling in Mongolia is spontaneous events and interactions, which lead to unexpected interactions, discoveries, and experiences that will make your trip unique and memorable. At Mongolia Quest, we ensure the integrity of your overall itinerary but at the same time, will go out of our way to make necessary changes in order to enrich your travel experience with us.

ENJOY YOUR TRIP!