



Shanghai and Hong Kong

10 day tour – Shanghai | Hangzhou | Hong Kong
17 – 26 July 2009

HIGHLIGHTS

- Viewing the longest total solar eclipse for the next 123 years
- Viewing the Qiantang tidal bore, one of the wonders of Asia
- Enjoy the views of Hong Kong from Victoria Peak
- Explore the ancient city of Hangzhou and stroll around West Lake Park
- Have a meal on Shanghai's famous waterfront, The Bund



SUMMARY

A short tour taking in the eclipse and two of the great Chinese metropolises, Shanghai and Hong Kong. These cities are both places of dazzling contrasts. Modern, bustling, successful China creates the backdrop, yet ancient temples, quiet gardens and stunning scenery are set against this in an incongruous way. What is certain is that in these cities, where east meets west, you will enjoy the sheer variety that they have to offer.

Our tour starts in Shanghai, one of the most important cultural, commercial and industrial centres in China, before heading south-west for the solar eclipse. Our base is the beautiful and ancient city of Hangzhou where we will enjoy several days exploring the city. It is in its own right a magnificent city, both for its culture and history as well as its stunning natural setting – the views from Ten West Lake Prospects are not to be missed and neither is Hangzhou's most famous attraction, West Lake Park itself. We then have the chance to observe the awe-inspiring natural event, that is the Qiantang tidal bore, before preparing for the highlight of our trip, the total solar eclipse.

We leave Hangzhou the day after the eclipse to spend several days in Hong Kong – it truly is like no other place in the world – shopping, temples, gardens, ferry trips across the famous harbour and the views from Victoria Peak combine to make a particularly memorable experience.



JOINING THE TRIP

Clients Joining the Trip in the UK

Duration: 10 days
Depart Friday 17th July, return Sunday 26th July 2009

Flight details

If you have booked a flight inclusive trip, you will receive your individual flight and ticketing details detailing your airline and departure airport. Please check your ticket details for your baggage allowance. We use the services of a number of scheduled airlines – details of your flights have been posted with your invoice, however if you have any queries please do not hesitate to call us.

Arrival – on arrival at Shanghai Airport on the morning of Saturday 18th July, you will be met by an Explorers representative who will show you to our transfer vehicle to your Shanghai Hotel.

Clients Joining the Tour in Shanghai (Land Only)

Duration: 9 days
Start Shanghai Saturday 18th July, end Hong Kong Sunday 26th July 2009

Flights - all land only clients or clients travelling from outside the UK should arrange their flights to arrive in Shanghai on the morning of Saturday 18th July. Should this timing not be possible, please contact the Explorers office to receive further advice.

Joining the Tour at Shanghai Airport – if you arrive at the same time as or before the main group flight, you may be able to take the group transfer to our hotel free of charge. Please contact the Explorers office if you wish to take the Group Transfer.

Joining the Group at the Hotel and Private Transfers – if you choose to make your own way or if you miss the group transfer, you must get to our Shanghai hotel at your own expense (details of the hotel will be sent to you nearer to your departure). If you would like to join the afternoon city tour, please ensure you are at the hotel by mid-morning.

If you would like us to organise a private transfer for you, the cost is £45 for 2 people and £65 for 3-5 people and is payable before departure. Please ensure that you provide us with all relevant information at least 4 weeks before departure. Please note that the cost of a taxi is likely to be about £25, should you decide to make your way independently.

Final Joining Instructions for All clients

Around 3 weeks before departure, we will send you your final joining instructions. These will detail all routine and emergency contact details, as well as names, addresses and contact details of the main hotels in which you will be staying.

OUR ITINERARY

Day 1 of our itinerary is Saturday 18th July 2009

Day 1 Start Shanghai

Those on the group flight will arrive in the morning, before we then transfer to our Shanghai hotel. Most of the group will have arrived by late morning. The evening is free to take in Shanghai's vibrant nightlife

Day 2 Exploring Shanghai

We spend the morning exploring Shanghai, taking in the famous sites of the Jade Buddha Temple, Yuyuan Garden and the Bund. After lunch you have the opportunity to explore Shanghai at your own pace. Get a birds' eye view of the city from the top of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, take a stroll down Shanghai's famous waterfront (The Bund), or take a boat ride on the Huangpu River.

Day 3 To Hangzhou

We leave Shanghai after breakfast and make the 3 hour journey to our base for the eclipse, the ancient city of Hangzhou. We spend the afternoon enjoying the beautiful architecture, visiting the famous Temple of Souls' Retreat and taking a walk around Hangzhou's most famous attraction, West Lake Park.

Day 4 Exploring Hangzhou and The Tidal Bore

This morning we head for our viewing point just outside Hangzhou for the Qiantang tidal bore. The bore, the world's largest, can be up to 9m high, travels at up to 25mph and is an unnerving sight as it roars out of the Pacific and up the river – an impressive natural spectacle not to be missed.

During the afternoon, we have free time to explore more of Hangzhou's cultural and historical sites including Solitary Hill, the Six Harmonies Pagoda and the Ling Yin Temple. For a stunning vista, visit the Ten West Lake Prospects giving outstanding views of the mountain, lakes and city. We reconvene in the evening for an eclipse briefing from our renowned astronomer, Dr. John Mason, followed by dinner for all clients at our hotel.

Day 5 Eclipse Day

This morning is an early start to get to our eclipse observation point which will be within 1-2 hours drive of our hotel. The weather will play a key part in the day and we will need to be flexible in our choice of observation point to ensure we have the best chance of having a clear view of the eclipse. The Explorers team will be monitoring the weather overnight to make sure we are heading to the pre-planned observation point where the weather is likely to be clearest.

These plans are strictly provisional and timings may change – you will be provided with up-to-date timings and latest weather conditions and forecasts at the eclipse briefing. Please note that weather conditions may mean that it is not possible to view the eclipse. Our provisional timetable is:

- 0500 – Breakfast
- 0530 – Depart for eclipse observation
- 0700 – Arrive at observation point
- 0820 – First Contact
- 0930 – Totality
- 1100 – Fourth Contact
- 1230 – Eclipse Lunch

Days 6, 7, 8 Hong Kong (Unguided)

We leave Hangzhou the afternoon following the eclipse day, allowing us a morning to relax and take a last stroll around this great city. Our flight is mid-afternoon getting us into the inimitable metropolis of Hong Kong by early evening. You will be met by your Explorers representative who will arrange your transfer to your hotel, before you're free to enjoy your first taste of the Hong Kong nightlife. The Hong Kong leg of your tour is not guided so you are free to set your own itinerary and make best use of your time seeing what you would like to see. Should you wish, your local representative will be able to arrange guided tours or excursions for you.

Hong Kong is a shock to the senses, a unique blend of eastern and western influences. It is in a remarkable setting, with so much packed into a very compact area. The best way to get your bearings in this fast-moving city, is to see it from Victoria Peak. A cable-driven tram takes you to the top where you get spectacular views of the city landscape, the harbour and Kowloon. When you're back down in the city, take a boat ride across Victoria Harbour to really savour the city from a different perspective. There is much more to Hong Kong that you will no doubt discover, as well as great shopping, restaurants and nightlife, to make sure you have a weekend to remember.

Day 9 End Hong Kong

Our group flights depart in the morning and arrive back in the UK in the afternoon. Those on group flights will be transferred to the airport. If you are not on the group flights and would like to take the morning airport transfer, please contact the Explorers office to book your place.

Please Note – occasionally, it is not possible to follow the itinerary exactly as stated in our brochure or in our Expedition Notes. This can be for example due to weather, political or logistical reasons. Where we have to make changes to the itinerary, we make the best alternative arrangements possible under the circumstances. We would ask you to keep a flexible outlook and remember that any change is all part of the experience.

OTHER USEFUL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Weather

July is hot and humid in all of the places we visit with average temperatures of around 33°C (92°F), although they can exceed 35°C (95°F). The weather can also be changeable and whilst July and August are the sunniest months of the year, they are also quite wet and rain showers should be expected.

Local Time - GMT +8 hours

Language - Mandarin

Currency Information

The unit of currency in China is the Yuan Renminbi (CNY or RMB), colloquially known as "Kwai". At the time of publication £1 = 10 CNY. Unlimited foreign currency may be imported and exported. You are advised to bring a small amount of spending money with you either in Chinese Yuan or in US\$. ATMs are widely available in the large cities and accessing cash in this way is likely to be the best value for money. Its safest to use Bank of China, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and HSBC ATMs. Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard and American Express) are also widely accepted in the larger cities. You can also choose to bring Travellers' Cheques which can be cashed in many hotels and we recommend taking US\$ or GB£ cheques issued by Thomas Cook or American Express. Allow about £200-300 (USD\$300-450) for optional activities and meals not included.



Tipping

Tipping is of course entirely at your own discretion, however, it has become customary in China. For bellboys or waiters, 1 to 5 US dollars may be appropriate as the tip. For bills in restaurants, 10% to 15% is the generally acceptable amount. For tour guides and drivers, 1 to 5 US dollars a day per person is reasonable.

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. Almost all nationalities including British, Canadian, American and Australian require a single entry visa for China, which must be obtained in advance. If you think you may be exempt you must check requirements with your local embassy or consulate.

UK residents can apply direct to the Chinese Embassy by visiting www.visaforchina.org.uk, calling on 0207 842 0960, or visiting them at Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct London, EC1A 2AT. The cost at the time of publication for a single entry visa is £30 and a double entry visa is £45, plus a £34.50 application service fee. The cost of the visa and service fee is not included in the tour price. We recommend that you apply for your visa at least 6 weeks before departure.

For UK residents living in the south of the UK, you can use the services of our preferred visa-processing agency, Travcour (UK). For general visa advice and for application forms, please contact them on 020 7223 5295 or <http://www.travcour.com/>.

Please note: It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa. The information offered above is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of visa services, local immigration nor customs officials, and accept no responsibility for their actions.

Vaccinations and Health

There are no compulsory vaccinations required for China. Yellow Fever certificates are required if arriving from an infected area. However, diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, Japanese B encephalitis, polio, TB, tetanus and typhoid are recommended in some circumstances and there is a limited risk of malaria. Please consult your doctor or vaccination centre for up-to-date information.

Insurance

It is a condition of joining this trip that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks. We offer comprehensive AXA travel insurance from £49.99 per person.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR TRIP

Tour Leaders and Guides

Your trip is led by local Chinese tour leaders (and occasionally UK leaders) appropriate to the size of your group. Your first afternoon in Shanghai will be guided but your second day is free for you to explore. When you arrive in Hangzhou, you will join clients from all of the other itineraries. At this point, there will be a number of tour guides and Explorers staff on hand to assist you in anything you might need and to advise you on the day's events. The Hong Kong leg of your trip is not guided although you will be met at the airport by one of our representatives who will arrange a transfer to your hotel and can advise on excursions and sight-seeing. Your representative will also arrange for your pick-up from your Hong Kong hotel on departure for your flight home.

Your Accommodation

We generally stay in comfortable 3 and 4 star hotels for the duration of our trip. Most will have the facilities you would expect of international hotels including air-conditioned rooms, internet access, bars and restaurants, gymnasium, laundry services and currency exchange services. Details of your Hong Kong and Shanghai hotels will be provided closer to the time of departure.

Food and Meals

Breakfasts are provided every day except for your arrival day. Some lunches are provided and this will be stated in the itinerary. Evening meals are provided every day except for the last night. Following the eclipse, we will enjoy a banquet lunch.

Vegetarians: Unfortunately, the choice for vegetarians can be very limited although the hotels and restaurants will do their best to accommodate your requirements. Please consult your leader who will help you choose suitable dishes.



Transport

Road travel on this trip is relatively limited and journeys between our main destinations should be no more than 3 hours in a private air-conditioned coach. All international flights are economy/coach unless you have chosen to upgrade. All domestic flights are economy/coach.

Don't Forget....

Clothing – pack light, quick-drying clothes as it will be hot and humid. Waterproofs – make sure you pack light waterproof gear as rain showers will be a feature of our trip. Binoculars – always useful especially on eclipse day.

Emergency Contact Details

The Explorers UK Office Number is 0044 (0)1276 406 877 and our email address is astro@explorers.co.uk. We can be contacted 9am-5pm GMT or 5pm-1am Chinese time from Monday to Saturday. When we send you your final documentation, we will also provide contact details for our local operator.

And Finally

The information in these Expedition Notes is given in good faith, and is designed as a guide to help you prepare for and enjoy your holiday. On the ground, circumstances beyond our control may demand that certain details relating to the holiday may change, therefore you should be aware that this holiday is subject to unexpected changes. Information in these Expedition Notes supersede the information provided in the brochure.

Explorers Travel club is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator meaning your monies are safe when you book with us. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2941 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).