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Expedition Details

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China's combination of epic monuments, natural beauty, and striking modern architecture make it a magical photographic destination. In Beijing, set out to photograph the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, and historic neighborhoods. Frame close-ups of Xi'an's terra-cotta warriors from the site's VIP platform. Experience the beautiful karst landscapes near Guilin, and document rural life during planting or harvest time. Cap off your journey in dazzling Shanghai.

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Day 3 — Beijing

Head out on our first morning photo shoot at the Temple of Heaven, where locals come to play chess, do morning exercise routines, and socialize. After lunch, visit Yonghegong, Beijing’s premier Lama temple, whose iconography is typically Tibetan: bold, bright, and full of color. Our festive welcome dinner tonight is at a restaurant in Beihai Park. Softly lit, overhanging with willows, the park is a great spot for night photography.

The Regent Beijing (B,L,D)

Day 4 — Beijing

Early this morning, capture the bustle of activity on vast and historic Tiananmen Square: the laughing child pulling a kite behind her; the stern-faced guards at the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong; the chattering tourist groups from the countryside, thrilled to be visiting their country’s political epicenter. Continue north to the Forbidden City. Stray off to the sides of the palace to find quiet, hidden gems. The main buildings in the middle are

impressive and worth a shot or two, but the best photos will come from the more intimate sections where fewer people visit. After lunch, stroll through one of Beijing's traditional *hutong* neighborhoods. Humming with activity, the hutongs offer a glimpse of age-old Chinese courtyard architecture—and life in Beijing before skyscrapers and traffic jams. Tonight, attend a traditional Chinese opera. Before the show, step backstage to photograph the actors as they apply their heavy makeup and dress in their elaborate costumes.

The Regent Beijing (B,L,D)

Day 5 — Beijing

Early in the morning, venture into a lively market to photograph abundant, varied, and colorful food, and maybe a smiling vendor. Later, we're off to the Great Wall. Visit the wild Jinshanling section, relatively empty of tourists. The wall is spectacular here, and it can be seen tracing the tops of the mountains for miles in either direction. There are restored and unrestored sections, providing great opportunities for comparative shots.

The Regent Beijing (B,L)

Day 6 — Beijing/Pingyao

Take the high speed train to Pingyao in the morning. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Pingyao is an exceptionally well-preserved example of a traditional Han Chinese city, founded in the 14th century. Its urban fabric shows the evolution of architectural styles and town planning in Imperial China over five centuries. Photograph the old town on a walking tour, strolling down Ming-Qing Street, the main commercial avenue in Pingyao for centuries. Visit the Rishengchang Exchange House, which was China's first, and for a time most powerful, bank. At sunset, capture images of the old city wall, built over 600 years ago.

Kylin Grand Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 7 — Pingyao

Depart early for Mian Shan, noted for its natural scenery, with Daoist and Buddhist temples build clinging to the cliffs. Visit Dragon Head Temple to photograph the sunrise over the clouds.

Explore Da Luo Gong, the largest Daoist temple in China, with hanging pathways and hidden caves throughout the complex, and have a photo shoot with a monk. Take a walk through Shuitao Valley, with dense, lush vegetation and dozens of waterfalls.

Kylin Grand Hotel (B,L)

Day 8 — Pingyao/Xi'an

Take the high speed train to Xi'an in the morning. Stop by Yangling, the tomb of the fourth Han emperor Jing Di. Here, by special arrangement, we are permitted into the restoration area, where archaeologists are working on artifacts uncovered from the tomb and its surroundings. Enjoy a rare chance to photograph 2000-year-old funerary objects up close. Drive to Xi'an's city wall, the largest complete city wall in the country. From the top of one of the guard towers, much of old Xi'an is visible. Frame the cityscape with a wide-angle lens, or zoom in on the city streets below. Walk part of the way around the wall before checking into the hotel.

Hilton Xi'an (B,L)

Day 9 — Xi'an

Depart for the tomb of China's First Emperor, known for its thousands-strong army of terra-cotta warriors. After a briefing with a director of the museum, we are allowed access to the VIP viewing area, where we'll have the opportunity to shoot one of archaeology's greatest finds up close and unobstructed. Back in the city, visit the Great Mosque, the most important mosque in eastern China, and meet the director of education for a talk on Islam in China. Today is Friday, so the mosque will be busy with worshipers, and with special permission, we'll photograph their comings and goings. Stroll along the colorful Muslim section of town before an unforgettable—and picture-worthy—banquet of artisan dumplings shaped into whimsical forms.

Hilton Xi'an (B,L,D)

Day 10 — Xi'an/Guilin/Yangshuo

A morning flight brings us to Guilin. Along the way, capture

images of the stunning karst landscape on our drive to Yangshuo, a lovely town perched on the Li River. Stop at Yulong Village to photograph the town's iconic stone arch bridge. Spend the afternoon on a photo walk, exploring Yangshuo's streets, its creeks and bridges, and the mountains that bump up against the town.

Yangshuo Resort Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 11 — Yangshuo

Enjoy a photo shoot in the quaint riverside town of Liugong, built in the traditional southern Chinese style. In the late afternoon, drive to Xingping, just north of Yangshuo. Board rafts and visit one of the small islands in the middle of the river (depending on the water level). Here, by special arrangement, photograph a cormorant fisherman at sunset.

Yangshuo Resort Hotel (B,L)

Day 12 — Yangshuo/Shanghai

Climb Xianggong Hill to capture sweeping images of the karst topography of the area. Drive back to Guilin for lunch at the Guilin Tea Research Institute, an imperial tea plantation during the Yuan Dynasty. Fly to Shanghai in the afternoon.

Garden Hotel (B,L)

Day 13 — Shanghai

Depart early to photograph the bustle of morning activities at the Bund, Shanghai's riverside promenade. Visit the Tianzifang neighborhood near the French Concession. This network of narrow streets and alleys with well-preserved examples of old Shikumen (traditional Shanghai buildings) has been restored and is now home to cafes, bars and art and photography galleries. Then walk through Yu Garden, an excellent example of a classical landscape garden. Capture details of the garden's stunning design, or set up your tripod to photograph Shanghai residents out for a stroll in this popular spot. Head over to the Bund as the afternoon sun lights up the dazzling skyscrapers of the Pudong district across the Huangpu River. Enjoy a festive farewell dinner back at the hotel.

Garden Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 14 — Shanghai/U.S.

Fly back to the United States, arriving the same day.

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Related Trips



Inside China
