



GUEST ITINERARY

CURATED CHINA JOURNEY
Dragon Discover







Shanghai

9 Days 8 Nights

Suzhou · Hangzhou · Wellness & Garden Revival

BEFORE YOU GO

Key Travel Prep

-  Please book your own international flights.
-  Travel accident insurance is included. We recommend supplemental medical and evacuation coverage for international travel.
-  Please arrange your own mobile data plan before departure.
-  Check visa requirements for your destination before booking.
-  Bring any personal prescriptions needed. If you take regular medication, bring a list for the health screening.
-  Please inform us of any dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions when booking.

See the full "Prepare for Travel" section later in Before Booking.

Overview

Nine days across three of Jiangnan's defining cities, built around slow pacing and the quiet rituals that make the region feel different from the rest of China.

Shanghai opens with a day at a leading international medical centre for a full health screening, then pivots to the city's best textures — shikumen lanes in Xintiandi, the observation deck at the top of Shanghai Tower, and a Tang-dynasty themed banquet. Suzhou slows the rhythm with the Humble Administrator's Garden, I.M. Pei's Suzhou Museum, and a hand-styled retro hair session on Pingjiang Road that turns into a qipao photo walk through 800-year-old canal lanes. Hangzhou closes the route with West Lake at a walking pace, Zhang Yimou's Impression West Lake show on the water itself, kayaking through Xixi's wetlands, and a final morning at Lingyin Temple. The journey ends as it began — in Shanghai, on the maglev to the airport at 431 km/h.

Trip Snapshot

Accommodation

8 nights at boutique hotels in Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou. Walkable to each city's signature neighbourhoods.

Airport Transfers

Private airport transfers in Shanghai on arrival and departure.

Guide & Transport

Bilingual guide and private vehicle for 9 days. High-speed rail between cities. Private group only — no mixed joiners.

Meals

Daily breakfast plus featured meals. Warehouse No. 3 creative cuisine, Songhelou classics, Tang-dynasty banquet.

Signature Experiences

Health screening, finger-wave styling, qipao photo walk, Xixi kayaking, Impression West Lake, Sky Post Office.

Trip Style

Boutique-paced Jiangnan journey. Wellness thread, heritage gardens, classical and modern Shanghai side by side.

Where You'll Stay

4-Star Equivalent

Boutique City Hotels

8 Nights

Boutique properties in central Shanghai, canal-side Suzhou, and West Lake-adjacent Hangzhou. Chosen for walking access to the day's main sites — no long morning transfers.

Itinerary

Day 1 — Arrival in Shanghai & Evening Ease

Your guide meets you at arrivals in **Shanghai** — whether you land at Pudong International or Hongqiao, a private car is waiting. From here, everything is handled.

After settling into your city-centre hotel, the rest of the day is yours to recover from the flight and adjust to local time. A quiet evening walk around the neighbourhood lets you absorb Shanghai at its everyday pace — the street-food stalls, the night lights, the texture of a city that sits somewhere between Art Deco and glass-and-steel. Your guide is available if you want a restaurant recommendation for dinner.

Day 2 — Health Screening & The Bund After Dark

 The Bund  Parkway MediCentre Xintiandi

After breakfast, a private car takes you to **Parkway MediCentre Xintiandi** — Parkway Health's flagship Shanghai clinic, occupying nearly 7,000 square metres of international-standard facilities on Middle Huaihai Road. The centre runs the full range of modern diagnostics, from MRI and CT scans to cardiovascular and oncology screening, all in one building.

The **comprehensive health screening** is a single-day package — typically four to six hours end-to-end — with English-speaking clinical staff and your bilingual guide coordinating the flow from station to station. A dedicated medical team walks you through each test, and the centre has its own on-site dining so you don't need to leave between scans. Reports are made available in both English and Chinese.

After the screening wraps, the afternoon is reserved for rest. As the light softens, the evening opens on **The Bund** (*Waitan*) — Shanghai's colonial-era waterfront, where 52 heritage buildings face the Pudong skyline across the Huangpu River. A slow walk along the promenade as the towers light up one by one is the simplest introduction to Shanghai's dual personality. Dinner is on your own tonight — your guide recommends a nearby restaurant if you'd like one.

Day 3 — Xintiandi · Shanghai Tower · Tang Banquet

 Xintiandi  Shanghai Tower  Tang-Dynasty Themed Banquet  +2 more




The morning begins at **Xintiandi** — a block of Shanghai's original shikumen townhouses (stone-gate lane dwellings) restored as a pedestrianised quarter of cafes, galleries, and independent boutiques. Your guide walks you through the architecture, pausing at an outdoor cafe for coffee, and points out the small details that distinguish 1920s Shanghai from the glass-and-steel city rising around it — the brick coursing, the carved lintels, the lanes that used to connect whole neighbourhoods.

Lunch is at **Warehouse No. 3** (*San Hao Cangku*) — a creative Chinese-cuisine restaurant whose plated dishes lean on contemporary presentation without losing regional flavour.

The afternoon shifts to the **Shanghai Tower** — China's tallest skyscraper at 632 metres. A high-speed elevator carries you to the 118th-floor observation deck for a full panorama of the Huangpu River, the Bund's heritage row, and Pudong's skyline spread out below. The floor's centrepiece is the **Sky Post Office** — the highest post office in the world — where you write and send a postcard stamped with the "Top of Shanghai" postmark. It arrives home weeks after you do.

Evening is a **Tang-Dynasty Themed Banquet** (*sheng tang ya yan*) — multi-course dining styled after the aesthetics of the Tang court, with dishes presented in period-inspired ceramics and servers in Tang-era costume. A relaxed, visual dinner that closes the Shanghai chapter of the trip.

Day 4 — HSR to Suzhou · Gardens & Pei Architecture

 Humble Administrator's Garden  Suzhou Museum  Songhelou  +2 more

After a slow breakfast, a **high-speed rail segment** covers Shanghai to Suzhou in about 30 minutes — out of the metropolis, into the garden city. No early alarm needed.

Lunch in Suzhou is **Suzhou-style noodles** (*Su shi mian*) — a regional breakfast-lunch staple defined by its clear, pork-bone broth and toppings changed by season. Your guide explains the difference between a good Suzhou noodle shop and a tourist one.

The afternoon moves to the **Humble Administrator's Garden** (*Zhuozheng Yuan*) — the largest of Suzhou's classical gardens and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built in 1509 by a retired Ming-dynasty official, the garden covers 52,000 square metres of water pavilions, bridges, and connected islands, designed around the idea that wandering it should feel like moving through a Chinese landscape painting. Your guide traces the design logic as you walk — how each pavilion frames a different view, why the rocks are arranged the way they are, what the poetry carved on the lintels says.

Next door is the **Suzhou Museum** — the final major work of Chinese-American architect **I.M. Pei**, completed in 2006. Its white walls, geometric skylights, and grey-tile roofs translate the language of classical Suzhou gardens into a modernist museum. The collection inside focuses on regional paintings, calligraphy, crafts, and archaeological finds.

Dinner is at **Songhelou** — Suzhou's most storied Huaiyang-cuisine restaurant, founded in 1737 and famous for its **squirrel-shaped mandarin fish** (*songshu guiyu*), a signature dish Emperor Qianlong reportedly ordered on his visits.

Day 5 — Finger-Wave Styling & Qipao Photo Walk

 Pingjiang Road  Ah Er Hair Salon  Qipao Photo Walk  +3 more

The morning begins on **Pingjiang Road** (*Pingjiang Lu*) — Suzhou's best-preserved canal-side lane, where the Song-dynasty street plan has survived unchanged for 800 years. Tucked inside it is **Ah Er Hair Salon** (*A'Er Meifa Dian*), a 47-year-old hairdresser run by two sisters who have been styling finger-waves since the 1970s. One was once a stylist for theatre troupes. They style each client by hand, using traditional techniques that originated in Republican-era Shanghai — no perming chemicals, no heat damage, just water, comb, and patience. The sisters limit their daily capacity to about ten clients, so you book ahead and the session feels unhurried.

Lunch is **Suzhou-style small dishes** (*Su shi xiao dian*) — a lighter midday meal before the afternoon shoot.

After lunch, the **Qipao Photo Walk** begins. You select a qipao from the rental wardrobe, your makeup is styled to match the hair, and a **professional photographer** walks with you along Pingjiang Road, into the **Humble Administrator's Garden**, and across to **Canglang Pavilion** — the oldest surviving classical garden in Suzhou, built in 1044 AD. The bridges, moon gates, and canal reflections make every frame work. Retouched digital photos are delivered before you leave Suzhou.

Dinner is at a **small Pingjiang Road restaurant** — the kind of place tourists walk past and locals sit in. Your guide recommends the dish worth ordering.

Day 6 — HSR to Hangzhou · West Lake · Impression West Lake

📍 West Lake

🌟 Impression West Lake

+4 more

A morning **high-speed rail segment** covers Suzhou to Hangzhou in about 1 hour 40 minutes. After check-in, the afternoon belongs to **West Lake** (*Xihu*) — the UNESCO-listed freshwater lake that has shaped a thousand years of Chinese landscape poetry.

A slow walk traces the lake's two historic causeways. The **Broken Bridge** (*Duanqiao*) — famously associated with the winter-snow vista in *Legend of the White Snake* — marks the start; the willow-lined **Su Causeway** (*Sudi*), built by Song-dynasty poet Su Shi, leads across the water. A **lake-crossing boat** carries you to **Xiao Ying Zhou** (Small Fairy Island) to view the **Three Pools Mirroring the Moon** (*San Tan Yin Yue*) — the three stone pagodas in the water that appear on the back of the 1 yuan note.

As evening falls, the lake itself becomes the stage for **Impression West Lake** (*Yinxiang Xihu*) — Zhang Yimou's outdoor music, light, and dance performance, with dancers moving on a submerged stage three centimetres below the water. The show draws from West Lake's classical myths — *Legend of the White Snake*, *Butterfly Lovers* — and ends with the lake, the mountains behind it, and the night sky forming the final frame. Your guide provides English context before the show so the legends land.

Dinner before or after the performance, at a lakeside restaurant.

Day 7 — Xixi Wetland Kayaking

📍 Xixi National Wetland Park

🌟 CITYBOAT Kayaking

+1 more


A leisurely morning, then out to **Xixi National Wetland Park** (*Xixi Guojia Shidi Gongyuan*) — China's first national wetland park and the green counterweight to West Lake, covering 11 square kilometres of interlocking waterways ten minutes from central Hangzhou.

The centrepiece of the day is **CITYBOAT Kayaking** on Xixi's calm inner channels. The boats are stable, the water is flat, and the route is a slow drift between willow-lined banks and arched stone bridges — no paddling experience needed. An instructor runs through the basics before launch and paddles alongside the group. The mood is closer to meditation than exercise: water birds lift off at the boat's approach, the reeds rustle, and the high negative-ion air of the wetland is part of the point.

If you'd prefer a quieter, less-visited setting, your guide can switch the session to **Xianghu Lake** (*Xianghu*) — a smaller alternative where the scenery is equally calm and the crowds are lighter. The choice is made on the day based on group preference and conditions.

Lunch and the rest of the day are unhurried — tea, a walk along the wetland boardwalks, and time to settle into Hangzhou's quieter rhythm. Dinner on your own tonight.

Day 8 — Lingyin Temple · Qinghefang · Return to Shanghai

 Lingyin Temple

Qinghefang Street

+4 more

The morning begins at **Lingyin Temple** (*Lingyin Si*) — one of China's oldest and most important Chan Buddhist monasteries, founded in 328 AD. The approach is through a forest of old camphor trees, past the **Feilai Feng** (*Peak Flown from Afar*) cliff, whose limestone face carries **470 Song and Yuan grotto carvings** — one of the finest open-air Buddhist sculpture collections in the country. Inside the temple, the 24-metre **Sakyamuni Buddha** in the Mahavira Hall — carved from camphor wood and finished in gold — is the largest seated wooden Buddha in China. A slow visit, with time to sit quietly in one of the side halls.

Lunch before the afternoon's second chapter.

The afternoon moves to **Qinghefang Street** (*Qinghefang*) — Hangzhou's Song-dynasty commercial street, the surviving piece of old Lin'an when the city was the capital of the Southern Song. Your guide leads the walk, stopping at **Hu Qing Yu Tang** (*Hu Qing Yu Tang*) — China's largest surviving late-Qing traditional medicine hall, a working pharmacy since 1874 with an adjacent museum — and at the **Zhu Bingren Bronze Art Museum**, the country's only copper-sculpture museum, a Jiangnan courtyard building clad in 56 tons of copper. Longjing tea and silk make good souvenir stops along the street.

In the evening, the **high-speed rail returns** you to Shanghai — about an hour — for a final night at your Shanghai hotel before departure.

Day 9 — Duty-Free Morning & Maglev Departure

A relaxed morning for **duty-free shopping** — cosmetics, leather goods, tea, and health products at Shanghai's downtown duty-free centre. Your guide walks you through the tax-free claim process if needed.

In the afternoon, your guide escorts you to **Longyang Road Station** for the **Shanghai Maglev** — the world's first commercial magnetic-levitation line, covering the 30-kilometre run to Pudong International Airport in eight minutes at a top speed of 431 km/h. A fitting close to a trip that has already moved between Shanghai's historical and futuristic registers several times.

At the airport, your guide sees you through check-in and says goodbye.

Before Booking

✓ What's Included

Transport — Private airport transfers on arrival and departure, daily ground transportation by private vehicle throughout the tour, three high-speed rail segments (Shanghai–Suzhou, Suzhou–Hangzhou, Hangzhou–Shanghai), and the Shanghai Maglev to Pudong Airport on the final day.

Guide — Professional bilingual guide for the full 9-day journey, with specialist instructors for kayaking and retro styling experiences.

Accommodation — 8 nights at boutique hotels across Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou, chosen for central location.

Meals — Daily breakfast plus selected lunches and dinners named in the itinerary, including Warehouse No. 3 creative Chinese cuisine, Songhelou's classic Suzhou menu, and a Tang-dynasty themed banquet.

Entrance Fees — All scheduled sightseeing sites, including Shanghai Tower observation deck, Humble Administrator's Garden, Suzhou Museum, West Lake and its lake-crossing boat, Xixi National Wetland Park, and Lingyin Temple.

Experiences — Parkway MediCentre health screening, hand-styled finger-wave hair session with qipao photo walk on Pingjiang Road, Xixi wetland kayaking (CITYBOAT), Impression West Lake lakeside performance, and Sky Post Office postcard from the 118th floor of Shanghai Tower.

Insurance — Travel accident insurance included for the full journey.

Pricing Promise — Everything in the itinerary is included in the tour price. Optional packages and room choices, if any, are shown clearly before payment. No hidden on-trip charges.


+ Booking Options


Everything in the itinerary is included in the tour price. No paid activity packages apply to this route.


Room-type options such as a single-room supplement can be added at booking if you are travelling solo — contact us when placing your order.


Prepare for Travel

 Please book your own international flights.

 Travel accident insurance is included. We recommend supplemental medical and evacuation coverage for international travel.

 Please arrange your own mobile data plan before departure.

 Check visa requirements for your destination before booking.

 Bring any personal prescriptions needed. If you take regular medication, bring a list for the health screening.

 Please inform us of any dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions when booking.

🏠 Most scheduled venues accept international credit cards. For smaller shops, please have local cash or a local mobile payment app ready.

🏞️ Gentle pace throughout. The Xixi kayaking is low-intensity — no prior experience needed. Most walking is on flat paths and garden lanes.

🌤️ Jiangnan has hot humid summers, mild damp winters, and comfortable spring and autumn shoulders. Light layers year-round, rain gear in spring and autumn, sun protection in summer.

? FAQ

Where does the tour start and end?

Starts and ends in Shanghai. Private airport transfers are included on arrival and departure.

How do we get around during the tour?

By private vehicle with a dedicated driver in each city, and high-speed rail for the three intercity segments (Shanghai–Suzhou, Suzhou–Hangzhou, Hangzhou–Shanghai). Your bilingual guide travels with you throughout. On departure morning, the Shanghai Maglev covers the final stretch to Pudong Airport at 431 km/h.

What does the health screening include?

A comprehensive day at Parkway MediCentre Xintiandi — an international-standard clinic with MRI, CT, and the full range of modern diagnostic imaging. The screening typically takes four to six hours. Your bilingual guide coordinates the process end-to-end; the centre has its own on-site dining, so you don't need to leave between tests.

Is the health screening conducted in English?

Parkway MediCentre's clinical staff include English-speaking doctors and nurses, and your bilingual guide accompanies you through every step and translates where needed. Reports are available in both English and Chinese.

What does the Pingjiang Road retro styling session include?

A hand-styled finger-wave hair session at Ah Er — a 47-year-old Pingjiang Road salon that styles hair without perming chemicals, using traditional techniques that originated in the Republican era. Qipao rental, full makeup styling, and a professional photo walk through the canal lanes, the Humble Administrator's Garden, and Canglang Pavilion are included. Retouched digital photos are delivered before you leave Suzhou.

How physically demanding is the tour?

Gentle throughout. The garden walks are on flat paved paths, the Xixi kayaking is low-intensity (calm water, no experience needed), and most days are built around slow pacing — no hiking, no altitude, no early mornings. The itinerary suits travellers who want to travel well without physical strain.

What is the kayaking experience at Xixi like?

A CITYBOAT-organised session on Xixi's interlocking wetland channels — the water is flat and calm, the boats are stable, and the route is a slow drift between willow-lined banks. No paddling experience is needed. An alternative quieter option at Xianghu Lake is available if you prefer a less-visited setting; your guide confirms on the day based on group preference and conditions.

Is the Impression West Lake show in English?

The show is a music, light, and dance spectacle staged on the lake itself — almost entirely visual and musical, so no

language barrier. Your guide provides English context before the performance on the legends it draws from (Legend of the White Snake, Butterfly Lovers) so you follow the story easily.

What is the cancellation policy?

Our cancellation and refund policy is tiered based on how far in advance you cancel. Full details at [Terms & Conditions](#).

Should I book pre/post-tour accommodation?

Day 1 is a rest day to recover from your flight, so arriving earlier that morning works well. Day 9 is a relaxed duty-free shopping morning followed by the Maglev to Pudong Airport — any evening international flight gives you plenty of buffer.

Can I fly a drone during the tour?

China requires all drone operators (including foreign visitors) to register with the CAAC before flying. Many heritage sites and city centres are no-fly zones — West Lake, the Humble Administrator's Garden, and Lingyin Temple all restrict drone use. Inform your guide in advance if you plan to bring a drone.

Local Names

Waitan WAI-tan

The Bund — 52 heritage buildings facing Pudong's skyline across the Huangpu River

Xintiandi shin-tee-EN-dee

Shanghai's shikumen quarter — stone-gate townhouses turned cafes and galleries

Zhuozheng Yuan jwoh-JUHNG-ywen

The Humble Administrator's Garden — UNESCO-listed, built 1509, largest in Suzhou

Pingjiang Lu PING-jee-ahng LOO

Pingjiang Road — Song-dynasty street plan unchanged for 800 years

Xihu shee-HOO

West Lake — UNESCO-listed Hangzhou lake that defined Chinese landscape poetry

Xixi shee-SHEE

Xixi Wetland — China's first national wetland park, 11 km² of water channels

Lingyin Si ling-YIN

Lingyin Temple — founded 328 AD beside a cliff carved with 470 Buddhas

Qinghefang ching-huh-FAHNG

Qinghefang — the surviving piece of Lin'an, capital of the Southern Song