



St Michael's
Hospice



St Michael's Hospice

CONQUER

THE GREAT WALL

31st October – 8th November 2026

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Great Wall of China Trek

31 October - 8 November 2026



Great Wall of China with St Michael's Hospice 31 October – 8 November 2026



Trip overview

China

China is a giant country which boasts beaches, jungles, massive mountains, wildlife, architectural heritage and fascinating culture. The incredible variations of culture can be experienced in many ways, even just in the variations of cuisine throughout the country, from the spicy stir fries of the Szechuan province to the piquant Peking duck of Beijing. A journey to China is a mesmerising adventure that, from start to finish, leaves you with an appetite for more.

Beijing

Also known as Peking, Beijing is the capital of China and one of the most populated cities on the planet. Beijing is home to a staggering 21.5 million people in an area of only 16,000km². You will find ancient architecture next to high-rise buildings and fast-food restaurants; you will find peace and serenity in enchanting temples located next to busy highways, and of course, just slightly north of Beijing you find the awe-inspiring Great Wall. Beijing is also home to delicious cuisine so take your time to explore the restaurants, sampling Peking duck, dumplings, noodles and much more.

The Great Wall

The Great Wall of China is the longest man-made structure on the planet. The Wall was built, rebuilt and maintained from as early as the 7th Century BC to protect the Chinese empire from invaders. It stretches approximately 8850 km (5500 miles) across the rolling hills of northern China to the sea. Many sections of the Wall are unrestored, scarred by battles of the past. A visit to the Great Wall is an opportunity to step back into history and marvel at the ingenuity and tenacity of the Chinese dynasties and the millions of soldiers who defended their land.

Trek overview

This trek takes you to a remote section of the Great Wall of China, from Gubeikou to Jinshanling and Simatai. Not only will you trek on the wall itself, meticulously built and restored over thousands of years, but you will also have an opportunity to trek through wild and remote landscapes with distant views of green rolling hills, mountain peaks and one of the great wonders of the world as the backdrop. Staying in guesthouses throughout the trek allows you to gain an understanding of authentic Chinese culture as you discover more about the lifestyle of the local people and taste some incredible local cuisine.

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What is the experience like?

Who accompanies us?

The trek is accompanied by local English-speaking guides who have an excellent knowledge of trekking in the region. The guides are first-aid trained and will support you throughout your journey. You will also be supported by an excellent team of assistant staff, cooks and drivers, a Different Travel Company UK tour manager and a representative from St Michael's Hospice.

How tough is it?

The trek is rated moderate to challenging. There are many steep uphill and downhill sections to contend with and you must be prepared to carry a daypack weighing 6-7kg. Although the distances trekked may appear short, due to the hilly terrain it can take 6-7 hours to trek just 5km, as ascent and descent profile each day ranges from 515m-866m.

What is the terrain like?

The terrain is hilly and undulating with steep sections. You will not trek on the wall the entire time, often you will walk next to it through the countryside so be prepared for a variety of ground underfoot from the grassy, dry terrain of the countryside to the stone steps of the Great Wall. The Great Wall has been restored in some sections so you will find smooth paved ground with steps built up the hillside. In the original sections, the Wall may be crumbling, with earth and stone rubble that shifts underfoot like scree, making it challenging to climb. In general, you should expect to climb a lot of steps during the challenge so you must train with this in mind and ensure you do plenty of hill walking to prepare for the hills.

What kind of food will we eat?

The trek day will start with a breakfast of hot drinks, noodles, rice, eggs, Chinese dumplings and fruit. You will prepare your own packed lunch each day which will consist of sandwiches with jam or peanut butter, fresh fruit, Oreos (or similar), dried fruit and nuts etc. You should bring snacks to eat throughout the day. A freshly cooked traditional Chinese evening meal will be served at the guesthouse comprising rice, noodles, meat, tofu and vegetable dishes.

Where will we stay?

During your nights in Beijing, you will stay in hotels, and each night during the trek you will stay in local guesthouses.



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Practical information

Is there an age limit?

You must be 18+ to join this trek. It may be possible for you to participate if you are 16 or 17 years old if accompanied by a parent or guardian. There is no upper age limit.

Who can take part?

An ideal candidate for the trek would be someone who enjoys being out of their comfort zone and trying something new. Adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected so do not expect standards to be the same as you are used to at home. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable (be it because of group pace, weather conditions, local bureaucracy or other factors) and itineraries may be altered to allow for this. For you to get the most out of your challenge you must be flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. Suitable fitness preparation before departure forms part of this.

How fit do I need to be?

You should have a good level of fitness to ensure fast recovery from each day of trekking.

How should I prepare?

You must engage in training (including plenty of walking up and down hills) before departure to ensure your best chance of enjoyment on the trip. This could include hill walking, running, cycling, gym workouts, boot camps, etc. You can download several free apps to help you train and track your progress e.g. MapMyWalk, C25K, MyFitnessPal etc. Attempting to complete the trek without training will make it more challenging than necessary and will be detrimental to your experience, and the experience of your teammates.

Health Declaration

We require a medical form to be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used, and other medical issues must be specified. All your medical details are treated in the strictest confidence.

The information will be securely screened by a qualified medical professional, and details provided to your tour manager and local guides, so our staff are adequately informed and prepared to support you during the trip. By completing this booking form, you are giving consent for us to contact you confidentially with any follow-up questions regarding your health.

If you declare any medical conditions, you may be asked to provide more information, or we may request to contact your GP.

If your medical issues at the time of booking represent a concern for your safety and well-being or the safety and wellbeing of others in the group, you may be recommended not to take part. If this happens your booking will not be confirmed, and the deposit will be refunded.

We must be informed if any conditions or medication change, or if new conditions develop. If necessary, confirmation of fitness to travel from your GP or specialist may be required. Please note that we will never unreasonably deny participation in a trip nor contravene the Equality Act 2010.



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Health and safety assurance

Your health and safety are our top priority so rest assured that we are taking steps to ensure you not only have a memorable experience, but a safe one too.

We constantly monitor and follow the advice of the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) which provides recommendations and advice to British travellers about travel to a certain destination.

We will NEVER operate a trip in an area where there is clear and present risk to our team members, whether that is due to a health outbreak, political instability, natural disasters or anything else.

If travel restrictions either in the UK or China prevent safe travel we will look to either postpone or cancel your trip at no cost to you.

Please note that at the time of travel, there may be enhanced safety and security measures in airports, bag drop may take longer, and you may need to provide a certificate of health or proof of vaccination.

We will inform you about any information pertinent to your travel arrangements.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at info@different-travel.com.

What does it cost?

A £395 registration fee is payable at the time of booking (this can be paid in instalments by emailing accounts@different-travel.com). You can then choose one of the following payment options:

1. Sponsorship: Fundraise £3,500 for St Michael's Hospice. 80% (£2,800) is due by 7 August 2026. The remaining balance of £1,000 is due by the departure date. This includes your £2,000 tour costs balance and a £1,500 donation to the charity.
2. Flexi*: Pay your own tour costs balance of £2,000 to St Michael's Hospice and fundraise £1,500 by 7 August 2026. Payment due dates are as above.
* Any fundraising undertaken cannot be used for your trip costs.

Trip Includes:

- ✓ Return flights from London (inc. airport taxes)
- ✓ All transport in China
- ✓ Accommodation (hotel in Beijing for 3 nights, guesthouses on trek for 4 nights)
- ✓ Meals
- ✓ English-speaking guides and support crew
- ✓ Trek permits
- ✓ UK Different Travel tour manager.

Trip Does Not Include:

- ✗ Chinese visa (current cost £150-175)
- ✗ Personal expenses (e.g. drinks, souvenirs, etc.)
- ✗ Vaccinations
- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Tips (approx. £40-£45 per person)
- ✗ Trek kit and equipment



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Itinerary

Day 1 (Saturday 31 October 2026):
London to Beijing
Fly to Beijing on an overnight flight.

Day 2 (Sunday 1 November 2026):
Beijing
Arrive in Beijing and check into a central hotel in time for a group dinner and a briefing on the week ahead. If time permits, why not explore the maze of alleys (hutongs) where you will find traditional houses, small local shops and other wonders?
Meals: Dinner



Day 3 (Monday 2 November 2026):
Beijing to Gubeikou
Today we transfer by bus to the Great Wall (approx. 3 hours). After lunch we start our trek, winding our way uphill to reach an ancient and original section of the Great Wall, from where you will enjoy views of the wall stretching across the countryside. We descend next to the wall then through a forest to a small town and our first guesthouse at Gubeikou.
Trekking: Approx. 9km (3-4 hours)
Total ascent: 515 meters
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 4 (Tuesday 3 November 2026):
Gubeikou
This morning, we will transfer from our guesthouse to explore the Gubeikou section. This area is completely original, quite challenging and one of the less visited sections. It is believed to have seen more battles than any other part of the Great Wall and has long been a place of military significance. Much of the trek today is along a part of the wall which is almost completely

worn away and the terrain underfoot is rugged and uneven.
We return to the guesthouse tonight.
Trekking: Approx. 11km (6-7 hours)
Total ascent: 709 meters
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 5 (Wednesday 4 November 2026):
Gubeikou to Jinshanling
We set off early today to transfer to the start of our trek. Today we will trek up to a section of the wall known locally as the '*dragon standing on the beautiful golden mountain*'. It's easy to see how the wall resembles a dragon as it weaves across the land. The views are stunning, and you will have hundreds of great photographic opportunities. Unlike other sections of the wall, this area has seen little restoration and many of the stairs and turrets have crumbled away to leave steep stone slopes between each watch tower. We descend through forests and past farmland before transferring to our guesthouse in Jinshanling.
Trekking: Approx. 15.4km (6-7 hours)
Total ascent: 866 meters
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 6 (Thursday 5 November 2026):
Jinshanling to Simatai
Today's trek takes us along a restored section of the wall originally built in the 15th century. In contrast to the unrestored sections of the previous days, here you can see how the wall looked when it was built centuries ago. Here you will gain an appreciation of the incredible effort in building the wall and the meticulous attention to detail, tactical wisdom, and subtle beauty in its

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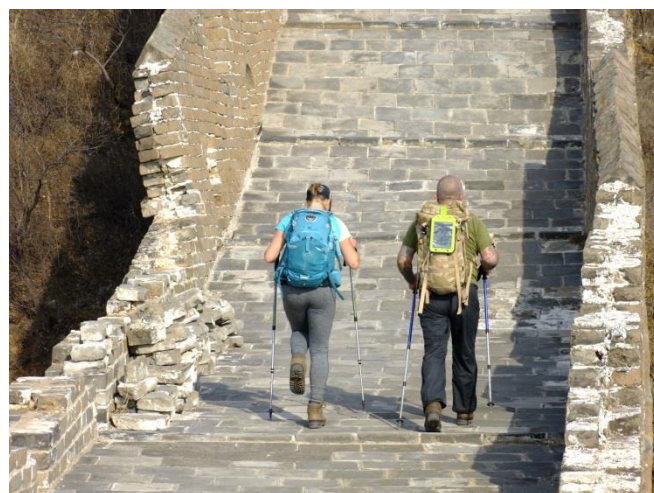


construction. We descend through the forest and return to our guesthouse.

Trekking: Approx. 8km (7 hours)

Total ascent: 697 meters

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 8 (Saturday 7 November 2026): Beijing

Today you will have guided visits to the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square before some free time and a special farewell dinner tonight.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 9 (Sunday 8 November 2026): Beijing to London

Transfer to the airport for the return flight to London which may arrive the following day, depending on flight schedules.

Meals: Breakfast.

N.B. This itinerary may change due to unusual weather patterns, the ability of the group and so on. We will do our best to keep to the set itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for changes that might occur outside of our control. In all such circumstances your guide and tour leader will have the final say in the interest of the health and safety of the group.

Day 7 (Friday 6 November 2026):

Simatai to Beijing

After breakfast, we transfer to the start of our half-day trek through the forest to a remote and rarely visited watch tower at the top of a hill. After enjoying the views from the top we descend on the same trail through the forest where we meet our vehicles which transfer us to our lunch spot and a final farewell to our trek support team. After lunch, we drive back to Beijing (approx. 3-4 hours).

Trekking: Approx. 6km (4-5 hours)

Total ascent: 539 meters

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



BEFORE YOU GO! Information to prepare you for the trip

Travel practicalities and country information
Trek knowledge
Food and drink
Kit tips

Luggage
Responsible travel and culture
Fitness, health and safety
Kit list

Travel practicalities and country information

Visas

For the majority of nationalities (including British citizens) this trip requires you to obtain a Chinese visa in advance. The current advice states that all visa applicants must make their visa application in person at the China Visa Application Service Centre. In the UK, these are currently located in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Belfast. Please note that as part of the application process, biometric data (scanned fingerprints) has to be provided (except for applicants 70 years and above). Please follow the link for the latest information: <http://www.visaforchina.org/>. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date of your visa application. The cost is £196 *at the time of writing*.

Full support information, including your invitation letter and flight confirmation details required to apply for the visa, will be provided no earlier than 2 months before departure.

Travel insurance

The Different Travel Company will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip however unexpected things can occur such as delays, medical problems, baggage loss, cancellation by you etc. The purchase of travel insurance is mandatory; you are advised to organise it at the time of booking to ensure you are covered immediately. Different Travel is an Unregulated Introducer of Campbell Irvine Ltd which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

You can find out more here: <http://www.campbellirvine.com/DifferentTravel>

Please note: most travel insurance policies protect you before departure too so it is advised to buy insurance as close to booking as possible as it may protect you against the loss of your non-refundable, non-transferable registration fee if you cancel due to injury, illness etc.

Your insurance must cover: Trekking (not at altitude) and medical evacuation.

Phone and Wi-Fi access

China is served by three mobile networks China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom. Coverage is widespread but your access to phone reception will vary depending on your home network, roaming capabilities, contract type and mobile handset. In general, most people should have reception while in the cities and possibly along some of the trek route. Wi-Fi is available in hotels (although it may be very slow and unreliable). Please contact your phone provider to find out details about costs and remember to turn off data roaming on your phone to avoid incurring high data charges. Please note that access to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and all websites owned by or affiliated with Google, are blocked due to government restrictions however there are many free VPN apps available which allow you access.

You may want to consider purchasing an eSim for use abroad. Different Travel participants can receive 15% off their first purchase with EasySim. See the discount vouchers booklet for more details.

Electricity

Electricity in China is 220V/50Hz. The plug sockets use two flat pins. Electricity is available at the hotels and the guesthouses. Please bring the necessary plug adaptor, ideally one which has USB ports so you can charge multiple devices at once. If backup access to electricity during the trek is important to you, you are advised to bring a portable power pack (power bank or battery pack) which when fully charged allows you multiple charges of USB-powered devices such as phones. You should buy a power pack with a minimum capacity of 15,000mAh and these are widely available online.

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Money

The currency of China is the Renminbi (RMB). The basic unit for this money is the yuan ¥. At the time of writing, there was approx. ¥9.1 to the pound. You need to bring money for tips (approx. £40-45), drinks and souvenirs; around £100-150 should suffice depending on how much you wish to buy.

Accessing cash

You can purchase Chinese yuan in advance from UK Bureau de Changes but the rate of exchange is very poor, so this is not recommended. There are many ATMs in Beijing if you wish to withdraw cash, but some banks block overseas transactions so inform your bank before departure. Please note that your bank may charge for overseas withdrawals and transactions so check before travel. There is no access to ATMs while trekking so you must bring enough cash with you for the trek.

If you prefer to exchange cash locally you are recommended to take pounds sterling and change it to yuan. Do not bring Scottish or Channel Islands notes as these will be rejected by the local Bureau de Changes. The hotel may exchange limited amounts of cash however there is usually a hefty commission charge.

Tipping

Tipping your trek team is welcomed and we would recommend allowing around £40-45 in total for tips per trekker.

Photocopies

Remember to photocopy all your documents (insurance details, passport, credit/debit cards etc.) and take a copy with you during the trip, stored separately from the original copies. You should also consider leaving a copy with a trusted family member or friend. You may also wish to upload your documents to cloud storage such as Dropbox or Google Drive. If you lose any of your documents, you will then have access to a copy with you and online.

Photography

When taking photographs of the local people, you must ask their permission to avoid offending, especially elderly people. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome. In China, the local people may ask to have a photo taken with you, especially if you are very tall or have blonde hair.

Religion

Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism are the main religions of China. Spirituality plays an important part in the lives of Chinese people, particularly regarding ancestor worship, which is an ancient Chinese belief and original Chinese religion.

Books

There are several guidebooks available about China including:

Lonely Planet China (Published 2021 ISBN: 9781787016774) £20.99

Rough Guide to China (Published 2017 ISBN: 978-0241274002) £12.99

Bradt Travel Guide Great Wall of China (Published 2006 ISBN: 1841621587) £3.43

NB: Guidebooks which contain maps showing Taiwan as independent from China are banned in China and officials may confiscate these books if discovered.

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Language

Putonghua (普通话) meaning 'Common Speech' is the national language of mainland China. Also known as Mandarin, this is spoken by 837 million people worldwide. Mandarin is a very tonal language and uses Chinese characters for written text. Pinyin is the Romanised version of Chinese words which can make understanding the language simpler for non-Chinese.

Useful Chinese phrases:

Tones

1. First tone (ā)

Flat, high pitch — more sung instead of spoken

2. Second tone (á)

Low to middle, rising — pronounced like the end of a question phrase (What?)

3. Third tone (ǎ)

Middle to low to high, dipping — Note: For two consecutive words in the 3rd tone, the first word is pronounced as if it is in the 2nd tone.

4. Fourth tone (à)

High to low, rapidly falling — pronounced like a command (Stop!)

5. A fifth tone

This is a neutral tone, which is rarely used by itself but frequently occurs as the second part of a phrase.

Basics

Hello.

你好。 Nǐ hǎo.

How are you?

你好吗？ Nǐ hǎo ma?

Fine, thank you.

很好，谢谢。 Hěn hǎo, xièxie.

My name is ____.

我叫 ____。 Wǒ jiào ____.

Please.

请。 Qǐng.

Thank you.

谢谢。 Xièxiè.

You're welcome.

不客气。 Bú kèqi.

Excuse me. (getting attention)

请问 qǐng wèn

I'm sorry.

对不起。 Duìbùqǐ.

Goodbye

再见。 Zàijiàn

Do you speak English?

你会说英语吗？ Nǐ huì shuō Yīngyǔ ma?

I don't understand.

我听不懂。 Wǒ tīng bù dǒng.

Where is the toilet?

厕所在哪里？ Cèsuǒ zài nǎlǐ?

Numbers

Western numerals have become more common, but Chinese numerals are still used, particularly in markets.

0 〇, 零

líng

1 一

yī

2 二

èr

3 三

sān

4 四

sì

5 五

wǔ

6 六

liù

7 七

qī

8 八

bā

9 九

jiǔ

10 十

shí

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Trek knowledge

Accommodation

You will stay in a hotel in Beijing and guesthouses during the trek. Accommodation is on a twin or triple-share basis throughout. A single occupancy room (at a supplement) may be possible, subject to availability. During the trek, you may occupy two or more neighbouring guesthouses depending on the final group size, but you will share your meals and be able to relax in the evenings as a group.

Hygiene and bathroom facilities

The hotels have en-suite facilities with flushing toilets and hot showers. Toilet paper should always be placed in the bin, not flushed.

During the trek, there are basic toilet and shower facilities available (shared). Towels are provided.

Toiletries are not provided at the guesthouses so please bring your own. Toilet paper is provided only in limited quantities at the guesthouses so you will need to bring your own for use here and for use on the trek and at any public toilets (where toilet paper is never provided).

During the trek, you will need to pack up any toilet paper you use to dispose of properly at your guesthouse bin. NEVER leave toilet paper, fruit peel, nut shells or other litter on the trail.

You are recommended to bring a small pack of baby wipes and hand sanitiser for your general hygiene throughout the day (e.g. to clean your hands after toilet visits and/or before lunch).

Difficulty

This tour is classified as moderate to challenging for someone of a good general level of fitness. The Great Wall is built on rolling hills, and some sections have hundreds of thousands of stairs, some of which have begun to crumble and are more like steep gravel slopes. Each day you can expect to walk for 5-8 hours on various types of terrain. The activity level is high so don't expect it to be easy. You will need to train in preparation for this.

Weather

Temperatures will be dependent upon the weather which is usually mild and dry at this time of year. On average the temperature will average around 10°C during the day, dropping down to -1°C at night. It's important to be prepared for all weather conditions and temperatures by packing non-cotton trek layers and waterproofs. It's better to have warm layers and waterproofs and not need them than to not have any when you need them! Although the temperatures and conditions above are historically accurate, climate change can impact the seasons so you may experience uncharacteristic conditions during the trip which are out of our control. Should this happen, the guide will assess the situation and make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and ultimately, the safety of the group as a whole.

Time difference

China is 8 hours ahead of the UK. At this time of year, there are around 11 hours of daylight with sunrise around 6.45am and sunset at 5.15pm (Twilight: 5am and 7pm).

Food and drink

Water

It is not recommended that you drink or brush your teeth with tap water in China. You should use bottled, boiled or purified water. It is best to avoid ice in drinks. Most hotels have kettles so you can boil water, allow it to cool, and use this to brush your teeth or fill your water bottle. Bottled water is provided during the trek. Jasmine and green teas will be served at most evening meals. At breakfast, you can also make yourself instant coffee or tea. If you have any preferences (e.g. decaf, herbal tea, etc.) you should bring a supply from home.

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Keeping hydrated

During the trek, you will need to drink at least 3 litres of water per day to stay hydrated, *plus* any soups or hot drinks served. Electrolyte tablets (e.g. Nuun, High5, PowerBar, etc.) are flavoured effervescent tablets which contain salts and minerals which are naturally lost from your body when you sweat. Adding these tablets to your water, not only offers flavour to your water but can help prevent dehydration before it begins. Electrolyte tablets are widely available in outdoor stores and online for around £8 for 12 tablets. You may also wish to bring a small supply of rehydration salts (e.g. Dioralyte) which treat dehydration.

Water bottle

You will need to bring your bottles to carry at least three litres of water per day. Some people will bring a 2-3 litre CamelBak hydration system (for effortless access to water while you trek) plus one 1-litre water bottle (e.g. plastic Nalgene or metal Sigg bottle). Some people prefer to bring three 1-litre bottles. The choice is yours. If you're bringing a CamelBak hydration system, a separate 1-litre bottle is essential as it can be used as a backup if your hydration system fails. Please write your name on all your bottles in a marker pen. Please note that 'own brand' and cheap hydration systems are notorious for splitting, leaking or valves not functioning properly. CamelBak and Platypus are the leaders in this market because their products are significantly better quality and more reliable.

Dietary requirements

Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking. Dietary requests may not be possible to cater for without advance arrangement. Most special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for but please note that we cannot guarantee that food preparation will take place in a contamination-free environment.

Food

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included throughout the trip as specified in the itinerary. During your time in Beijing, you will eat at local restaurants and during the trek, your guesthouse hosts will prepare your breakfast and dinner. Typical dishes served include vegetables, tofu, and meat in a variety of different styles and sauces, soups, noodles and rice. Vegetarian choices are easily catered for. You will prepare and carry a packed lunch each day with a selection of bread for making sandwiches from peanut butter, jam or chocolate spread, fresh fruit, nuts and biscuits. You may bring your snacks to supplement this.

Snacks

You may wish to bring a selection of snacks for energy, a pick-me-up or a little taste of home. Please bring snacks you have tried before (and enjoy!) so they are appetising to you. Items such as sweets, individually wrapped cake bars, protein bars and dried fruit are ideal but don't forget to bring savoury treats such as salted nuts, Cheddar biscuits or salted crackers.

Kit Tips

Discount

When you book you will receive a discount voucher booklet. Please check the documents section of your online profile.

Clothing

Your clothes should be made of technical fabrics designed to wick sweat away from your body which keeps clothes dry and smelling fresh. Nylon, polyester, polypropylene and merino fabrics are all effective technical fabrics. Cotton clothes absorb sweat, stay damp and can lead to chafing, and discomfort (and get smelly fast). Technical items can be worn for days without smelling meaning you don't need to buy, or pack, as many items of clothing.

Sports, gym, or running clothes are usually non-cotton so check what you have already before you go shopping. If you select the right garments, you can comfortably wear them for the entire trek. It can get cool at night and in the mornings so please bring a warm layer (e.g. fleece, hoody, or light insulated jacket) and a hat.

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Top clothing tips!

A loose-fitting, non-cotton long-sleeved shirt will keep you cool better than a short-sleeved t-shirt as technically covering your skin keeps you in the shade. It also helps prevent sunburn. A long-sleeved shirt also offers the flexibility to roll sleeves up and down as required. Lightweight non-cotton zip-off/convertible trek trousers are also ideal for the same reason that they keep your skin in the shade; however, sports leggings and shorts are fine too.

Beijing dress code

People in China dress smartly, often wearing designer fashion. Short shorts and skirts, and very tight or low-cut tops should be avoided to avoid unwanted attention. Please note that t-shirts with dates of Chinese political significance or offensive or controversial slogans (such as 1989 or 'Free Tibet') are not tolerated and being detained by police and having the offending clothing confiscated and given an alternative is a possibility.

Footwear

You should bring lightweight, breathable trekking boots with good ankle support and a high-quality flexible sole, such as Vibram; walking trainers are unsuitable. If you are buying a new pair of boots, please try on lots of pairs before you buy; don't buy online unless you've tried them on first. Please ensure you buy new boots well in advance of departure, so you have time to break them in properly. You are strongly advised to wear your boots on the plane (or take in your hand baggage) in case there are any problems or delays with your luggage. Comfortable boots are the most difficult item to replace at short notice.

Socks

The socks you choose must be high-quality, non-cotton and will not slip down in your boots which causes blisters. Never wear cotton socks which absorb sweat making them damp and more likely to rub against your feet, causing blisters. Socks containing Coolmax (a brand of polyester) or nylon have wicking properties which means that they pull sweat away from the skin for it to evaporate. Good brands to consider include Bridgedale, Smartwool and Brasher.

Hiking poles

Hiking poles can be very useful on ascents and descents, particularly when carrying a heavy pack on uneven terrain. Poles are also very useful for stability. They are not mandatory but are recommended. You should use them on your training walks to familiarise yourself with how to use them. If you bring hiking poles they must fit inside your suitcase/kitbag for the international flight.

Headwear

A hat with a wide brim is recommended and/or a Buff ([see buffwear.co.uk](http://buffwear.co.uk)).

Sunglasses

These are important even on overcast days. They must offer 100% UV protection, and polarized sunglasses are ideal. Taking a spare pair is recommended.

Cobber neck cooling wrap

A highly recommended accessory for the trek is a body-cooling neck wrap known as a 'Cobber'. When this neck wrap is submerged in water the poly-crystals absorb it making them swell and turn cold. You wear it around your neck, and it cools the blood flowing through your carotid arteries and keeps your body temperature down. They can be purchased for less than £10 from eBay or Amazon.

Head torch

This is a vital piece of kit. Petzl is one brand which makes good quality headlamps but there are many head torches available from other companies. Please ensure you take an LED torch as the ones with bulbs are not bright enough. Do not bring a wind-up head torch as these are unreliable. Keep your head torch in your backpack every day. Please ensure you put fresh batteries in before departure and bring some spare batteries.

Luggage

This trip is different to a standard holiday so you will need the following four luggage items:

1. A small daypack

You are responsible for carrying your daypack containing essentials for each day. We recommend you bring a 25-litre rucksack which must have a hip belt and a chest strap. High-quality brands to consider when looking for a suitable pack include Osprey, Berghaus and Lowe Alpine (amongst others) and you are **strongly advised** to visit a reputable store like Cotswold to have your backpack fitted, as they come in a variety of sizes, and some brands offer male and female specific fits. You can expect to carry your first aid kit, sun cream, three litres of water, snacks, toilet paper, wet wipes and a camera. It could weigh 6-8kg when packed, so you should make your selection carefully and ensure it fits correctly and is comfortable. You will not have access to your main pack while trekking.

2. A kit bag/holdall

You will need a soft-sided kit bag to hold your trek-specific items such as a change of clothes, toiletries and so on. This kitbag will be transported by vehicle and must weigh no more than 8kg. This can be a holdall, duffle bag or large rucksack and it doesn't matter what size it is as long as all your kit fits inside. A suitcase or holdall with wheels is not suitable.

If you wish you can use this bag to hold your checked luggage for the flights; just ensure you bring a small separate bag you can store items in not required for the trek, at the hotel while you're trekking.



3. A suitcase (optional)

For the flights, you may be more comfortable packing all your items (including your empty trek kit bag) into a suitcase. This is entirely your choice. If you bring a suitcase, it will be stored at the hotel along with anything not required for the trek (e.g. toiletries, travel clothes, books etc.).

4. You should bring combination padlocks to secure your luggage.

Responsible travel and culture

Culture Shock

China is quite different to the UK so you may experience some initial culture shock. Though the country is open to foreign visitors you should be aware of political and cultural sensitivities before you travel.

If you are curious about something you have seen, please enquire with your local guides so you can gain a deeper understanding of the culture. Take it slowly, be open-minded and learn about the local culture to put these differences into perspective.

Human rights

The issue of human rights in China is incredibly complex. There have been many reports of human rights violations in the country over the years and as such some may feel uncomfortable about travelling and supporting the regime.

The Different Travel Company will not tolerate any form of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, human trafficking or exploitation as defined by the Modern Slavery Act 2015 within our business or supply chain. We endeavour to do our best to protect the rights of humans and animals by refusing to get involved in any kind of exploitation. The customs of the destination visited should, however, be observed and time taken to understand that human societies are diverse and Western values may not be understood, let alone practised.

We understand that all cultures are equally valid and believe that indigenous cultures should be respected. By speaking out, you may inadvertently put yourself, or the very people you are trying to help, at risk.

Different Travel is proud of our responsible tourism policy, and we pride ourselves in giving back to the community we visit. This is one way you can help - by staying local, eating local and using local guides.

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Relationships and LGBT

Attitudes towards the LGBT+ community around the world can be vastly different from those in the UK. In China, homosexual acts are not explicitly prohibited by law. However, given the conservative nature of China, you should respect local traditions, customs, laws, and religions to ensure your actions do not offend.

As such we would advise couples, regardless of sexual orientation, to avoid public displays of affection. For further advice from the [FCDO click here](#).

Animal welfare issues

In China, animal welfare issues are unfortunately plain to see and there are no laws governing acts of cruelty to animals. Please do not take photographs as this encourages this abhorrent animal welfare practice. We also request that you be cautious of traditional Chinese medicines that may involve animal parts – tiger bones, bear bile, rhino horn is common - as well as fur products.

The Different Travel Company are proud to be partnered with Four Paws, a global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. We have signed a pledge to take a stand against the dog and cat meat trade. You can read more about it [here](#).

Responsible travel

We are environmentally conscious and aim to minimise our impact as much as possible. Key points:

- Never leave toilet paper or litter on the trail.
- Do not dispose of fruit peel, cores, or seeds on the ground; although they decompose eventually, they are unsightly and may attract animals.
- Turn off lights when not in rooms.
- Minimise your water usage by having short showers.

Begging

In cities such as Beijing, you may find people begging for money or food. As part of our responsible tourism policy, we strongly advise against giving directly to beggars or offering gifts to children. Gift-giving can lead to individuals pestering other travellers as they believe begging is more profitable than searching for work or attending school. Sweets should not be given to children as dental care is difficult to obtain and tooth decay can lead to long-term health problems.

Haggling

China provides splendid shopping opportunities but where there are no price tags on items it is expected that you will haggle. The first price is sometimes up to five times more than the value of the item but remember that you should engage with the vendor to encourage rapport before haggling then only pay what you think is a fair price for the item, not trying to get the price as low as possible.

Spitting

Spitting on the ground (or into a plastic bag, if on public transport) is common in China although in recent years it has been considered less acceptable. It is possible that you will see (and hear) people spitting. The government has initiated a campaign to reduce spitting, but it remains a common part of the Chinese lifestyle.

Mealtime etiquette

Never stand chopsticks upright in your rice bowl. This represents incense for the dead and is considered a wish for the death of those around you. Diners use their chopsticks to take food from communal bowls as serving utensils are not provided unless requested.

You should not play with your chopsticks, hit them together to make noise or gesticulate with them. When eating rice, you should bring the bowl to your bottom lip, and using the chopsticks, scoop the rice into your mouth to avoid spilling it over the table.

It is polite to leave a little food on the plate at the end of your meal to honour your host's generosity.

When someone is refilling your tea, tapping the table with two fingers is used to show thanks.

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Etiquette

- Greet people with a handshake or a nod – bowing as they do in Japan or Korea is not necessary. Handshakes should not be too firm – this can be taken as a sign of aggression.
- Always address the eldest or most senior person first as a sign of respect.
- Dress appropriately for entering temples and religious sites (see above for advice on clothing).
- Observe sacred sites and religious buildings with respect. Loud conversation, noise, horseplay, and other inappropriate behaviour are unacceptable and will disturb other visitors. Please behave quietly and calmly and respect other visitors.
- Monks are revered and respected. Permission should be sought before taking pictures of people, particularly monks.
- Women should not touch nor sit too close to monks.
- In temples and religious sites please note that touching carvings, sitting on fragile structures, leaning on temple walls, applying graffiti, or removing rocks or artefacts from these places is forbidden.
- Images, statues, or likenesses of Buddha should not be used in selfies, clambered over, or treated in any manner that could be construed as disrespect.
- Never touch someone on the head as it is considered the most sacred part of a person's body.
- Avoid writing in red ink – it is a symbol of protest or criticism.
- It is socially unacceptable to make any critical or defamatory comments about the government, state leaders, politics, recent history, or issues relating to Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet. These are sensitive topics and should be avoided in conversation.
- Respect other accommodation guests by keeping noise to a minimum, especially early in the morning and late at night.
- Be respectful to your guides and hosts; do not forget to say please and thank you.
- Be considerate of the feelings of other group members.

Fitness, health and safety

Fitness training

You should start training as soon as you book this trip. The best form of training for a trek is to get outside and start walking. If you're not a regular walker, start slowly with short distances then as you get more comfortable, increase your mileage and add in more challenging terrain until you can comfortably walk for several consecutive days, for around 8 hours at a time, on hilly terrain while maintaining a comfortable pace without needing to stop more than frequently than once an hour for a 5-minute rest.

Hillwalking while carrying a fully packed backpack and wearing your hiking boots should feature predominantly in your training as this will help prepare your body for the terrain and baggage load you will experience during the trek.

Other activities which can complement hill walking include running, cycling, gym workouts and boot camps etc. Developing your core and leg muscle strength is also important so exercises such as squats, lunges, push-ups, planks and crunches will really enhance your training. These exercises can be done at home; no gym is needed.

You can download several free apps, which will help you train and track your progress. E.g. MapMyWalk, C25K (couch to 5k run), MyFitnessPal.

Please note that attempting to complete the trek without any training may make the experience unnecessarily difficult and detrimental to your experience, and also the experience of your teammates. The local guides, in consultation with your Different travel tour manager, may advise that if you are not fit enough to continue, you leave the trek.

Vaccinations and travel health

Different Travel regrets that we cannot provide medical advice or recommendations. You are advised to seek medical advice at least 8 weeks before travelling from your GP or travel health professional for a consultation tailored to your medical history and to ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up to date. For general information visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.travelhealthpro.org.uk. Please note that failure to be adequately vaccinated or take necessary prophylactic medication can invalidate travel insurance policies as it is considered that you have not taken necessary precautions.

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First aid kit

You should bring a small first aid kit of essential items, which is for your own personal use, and keep it in your backpack. Suggested items to include personal prescription medicine, Compeed blister plasters, painkillers, plasters, antiseptic wipes, anti-histamine tablets, indigestion remedy, Imodium (Loperamide), rehydration sachets, lip balm with SPF, antiseptic cream, zinc oxide tape etc. Please keep the contents to a minimum as you must carry it yourself.

Zinc Oxide tape

This tape is useful to prevent blisters. When you feel your boots start to rub against your feet, you should stop and remove any debris from your boots and check your feet. If a hot spot is developing (a red, sore area without broken skin) you can apply zinc oxide tape to the area, and it will stop (or slow down) a blister developing. If you are too late to prevent the blister, you should clean the area and apply a Compeed blister plaster instead.

Emergencies and evacuations

In the unlikely event of a serious illness or accident, the local team will ensure you are transferred as swiftly as possible to the nearest hospital. Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for airlifting/emergency evacuations as this can be required to reach casualties on more remote trails. You are recommended to bring a credit card in case you need to pay for emergency medical treatment upfront.

Safety

Please take common-sense precautions while travelling, to ensure your safety and the protection of your belongings. For example, leave flashy jewellery, watches, and accessories at home, keep wallets out of sight stowed in a handbag or backpack rather than sticking out of a pocket, don't leave bags unattended at any time, carry cameras in their cases rather than carrying them openly with the camera strap, split the cash into different pockets rather than carrying all your money in one place, especially immediately after you have used the ATM, and so on.

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Kit List – Great Wall of China

The kit you take can make the difference between being 'just a trek' or a 'memorable trek'.

Our kit lists are put together with feedback from our own experiences and those of participants who have taken part in our previous trips. The items on this list do not take into account your personal preferences based on your previous experiences, or individual requirements.

PLEASE NOTE: This list is just a guideline and is not exhaustive or take into account personal preferences.

For information about items on this list please refer to the trip dossier or contact The Different Travel Company on info@different-travel.com

*Please consider eco-friendly or biodegradable options.

ESSENTIAL

SUGGESTED

OPTIONAL

DOCUMENTS & FLIGHT ESSENTIALS	✓
Passport + copy	
E-Tickets + pre departure info	
Chinese visa	
Travel insurance	
ATM and credit card (s)	
Cash (£ Sterling)	
Pen for immigration forms	
Sunglasses (preferably polarized)	
Mobile phone + charger	
Camera + spare batteries	

LUGGAGE	✓
Suitcase/large holdall for flight	
Kit bag for trek	
Daypack (25 – 30 litres)	
Hand Luggage (take note of dimensions from airline)	
Combination padlocks	

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	✓
Trekking boots: either worn on flight or carried in hand luggage	
Trek trousers	
Non-cotton, technical t-shirts	
Non-cotton long sleeved top/shirt	
Trek socks	
Underwear	
Warm fleece or sweater	
Thermal base layers (top and bottoms)	
Light-weight warm jacket (e.g. down or Primaloft)	
Waterproof jacket and trousers	
Light poncho (can be bought locally)	
Thermal base layer trousers and top	
Sun hat with brim	
Warm hat for night	
Pyjamas	
Cobber cooling neck towel/Buff	
Trainers for camp	

HEALTH AND HYGIENE*	✓
Hygiene kit to include: toothbrush and toothpaste, antiperspirant deodorant, wet wipes, shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, moisturiser	
Personal first aid kit to include: prescription medicine, insect repellent, ibuprofen, paracetamol, plasters, blister plasters (e.g. Compeed), Imodium, rehydration salts (Dioralyte), indigestion remedy, antiseptic cream (e.g. Savlon), Anti-histamine cream/tablets, lip balm with SPF protection, zinc oxide tape, nail scissors/tweezers, muscle rub (e.g. Deep Heat), throat lozenges, decongestant, Vaseline	
Toilet bag: toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitiser, nappy sacks	
Hairbrush/comb/nail brush	
Feminine care products	

OTHER KIT	✓
Sleeping bag liner (cotton/silk)	
Sun block (high SPF)	
2 ltr water hydration system (e.g. Camelbak)	
1 ltr water bottle	
LED head torch + spare batteries	
Adaptor (multi-prong)	
Ear plugs	
Casual clothing + shoes for travel/free days/evenings	
Hiking poles – to be stowed in hold luggage for flight	
Energy food/snack bars	
Electrolyte tablets (e.g. Nuun)	
Bags for dirty washing	
Spare glasses/contact lenses	
Portable power bank	
Books/packs of cards	
Travel pillow	