HVGS Art and Culture Tour, China, 2017
Where to?

Our journey begins in Hong Kong. It will be a flight of several long hours just to get to this point. We will overnight in Hong Kong before flying to Beijing on the morning of the 2nd day. Beijing is a city that has transformed into a very vibrant and fashionable city. It is also the site of the 2008 Summer Olympics. At the same time, Beijing is home to China’s most famous historical sites.

From Beijing we head west to Luoyang to explore three deeply significant cultural sites: the school of Confucius, the home of Kung Fu and the Longman Grottoes with their giant, carved Buddhas.

Heading further west we reach Xian—home of the First Emperor of China and its ancient capital. It is here that 6000 terracotta warriors were found buried in Qin’s enormous funerary complex.

Finally to Shanghai. Unlike Beijing, a royal city for centuries, Shanghai’s history is not dramatic. Change was rapid for what began as a fishing village. Enter China’s first fully fledged Special Economic Zone.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

– Chinese proverb
Activities

Our tour moves through historic Beijing with tours to the Great Wall and a meal at the Farmers’ Market. We will visit a school and spend an afternoon experiencing education from an entirely new perspective. We will also visit a local family to get a better understanding of local culture. The train trips west will be on China’s high-speed trains, travelling at speeds of up to 250km/hr. In Xian we will spend time with a sculptor, recreating our own terracotta warriors, as well as cycle the fortified walls of the city. A highlight will be exploring Shanghai by night.

Social Etiquette in China

Things are very different in China. It is important that we are good travelers who are culturally aware. For example, food is never just food—it is bound up in tradition and symbolism, right down to how many toasts are given, what to do with one’s chopsticks and who sits next to the host. We will need to explore all these things before we leave.

Social media, as we know it, is banned in China. There is no Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat... The Chinese have their own social media, and many international users have adopted these, such as Weibo. We will need to learn how to communicate with people in Australia in culturally appropriate ways.

The giving and receiving of gifts is normal in China, in fact, it is rude to refuse a gift. It is also rude to accept it straight away. Gifts have huge significance, so pack lots of small tokens that can be given away.