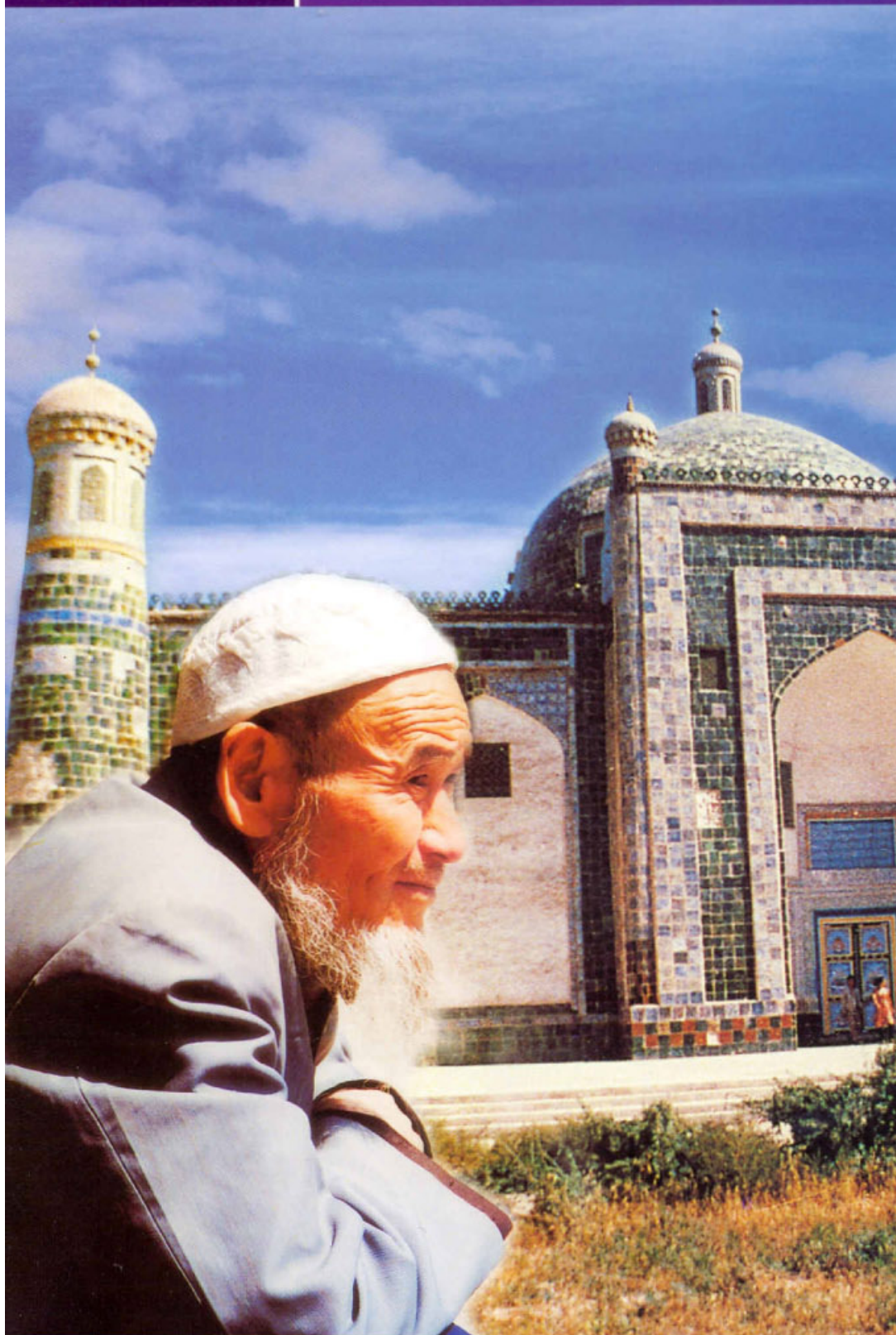


伊斯蘭

Islam



Culture Tour



English

Islam

Two of the world's great religions - Islam and Buddhism - have co-existed for thousands of centuries along the old Silk Road, each leaving monuments and buildings of staggering beauty and enriching the culture of successive Chinese dynasties.

The religion of Islam generally discourages construction of brash or bold places of worship - simplicity is the norm - but the builders of old took liberties within that framework. In the ancient capital of Xian, the city-centre mosque is a work of wooden art; a series of delightful courtyards interconnect, leading up to the main place of worship. Non-believers are welcome to stroll in its ample grounds, drinking in the atmosphere of serenity and tranquility.

Several other mosques along the Silk Road route also have distinctive designs. In Xining, the main Islamic place of worship is strongly influenced by the more flamboyant Chinese architectural style, the only building of its kind in the country.

Close to the oasis town of Turpan is a mosque of gorgeous simplicity that has survived for hundreds of years. The Emin minaret is built of local sandstone in the simple local Uygur style and, when seen against a deep blue sky and fading late afternoon sun, is an architectural work of staggering beauty.

Islam was founded in the sixth century, by the prophet Mohammed, and gradually spread east, reaching China by land, from the Central Asian States, and by sea from ships that called into the eastern ports of Guangzhou and Fuzhou in the ninth century. Its popularity was helped when the ruler Hulega, a descendant of the great warrior Genghis Khan, who ruled most of the Central Asian area in the 11th century, adopted Islam as the national religion.

Islam is part of China's rich cultural heritage which has been assimilated and accepted over the centuries, enriching the religious and ethnic tapestry of the country. Traces of ancient Islamic settlements can be found in various parts of China, particularly in the Far West of the country where the religion and culture of these Central Asian people thrives.

The Uygur people in Xinjiang Province, thought to be of Turkish descent, practise a liberal-leaning style of Islam. The Uygurs like nothing better than a large-scale party; a wedding or family celebration is an excuse for young women to dress in rich red dresses, and the men to don their finest embroidered waistcoats. The singing and dancing at these fun celebrations can go on until the early hours of the morning.

The Uygur people are known for being warm-hearted and hospitable. Wander around the bazaars of Urumqi or Kashgar and stall-holders will offer samples of grapes, nuts and lamb kebabs. Richly decorated carpets, jewel-encrusted knives and bright scarves are for sale at other stalls.

Although the Islamic and Buddhist cultures lived side by side there was little inter-marriage, with the notable exception of the famed beauty Abakh Hoja, who became a prized concubine of Manchu Emperor Qianlong.

There are other pockets of Islam followers in the far west of China - the Kazakhs, who graze their sheep along the steep banks of the beautiful Heavenly Lake follow the religion, as do many people in the town where the Tibetan Buddhist stronghold of Ta'er Lamasery is located. This very place, known for the artistic creativity of its Yellow Hat sect followers, is where the Dalai Lama spent his early years.

It also has settlements of Huis descendants of Arabian merchants who spread out all over China from the seaports of Fuzhou and Guangzhou and are still prominent devotees of the Islamic religion.

Mutual respect and tolerance mean there is generally little conflict. Indeed, when faced with the sheer beauty of parts of this region a harmonious mood tends to prevail. The vast expanse of Qinghai Lake with its endless sky and outer fringe of plain and snowy mountains, acts as a spiritual uplift for followers of all faiths.

Itinerary One 6 Days Xining & Linxia (CZ)

1 Hong Kong / Guangzhou

Direct train

Meet at the Guangzhou Station. Visit the Huaisheng Mosque, meaning "Remember the Sage", in memory of the prophet. The original mosque is said to be the first Islamic building in China, built by the first Muslim missionary to China in AD627.

Accommodation at the China Hotel or similar

(D)

2 Guangzhou / Xining

Approx. 3 hours flight

Visit the Chen Clan Academy, a family shrine housed in a large compound, with nice stone carvings and sculptures. Fly to Xining - the capital of Qinghai Province.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Tsongkha Hotel

(B,L&D)

3 Xining

Travel to the Sun & Moon Hills before proceeding to the Qinghai Lake - China's largest inland salt water lake and artists' paradise, renowned for its mirrored pastel sunrise, azure beauty at midday and the indigo blues of sunset - a natural scenery of vastness, beauty, mystery and quietness. Visit the Dongguan Mosque - one of the four largest mosques in northwest China which attracts large crowds of worshippers.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Tsongkha Hotel

(B,L&D)

4 Xining / Linxia

Coach

Visit the Ta'er Lamasery, the birthplace of the founder of the Yellow Sect. Mural paintings, butter flowers and embossed embroideries are famed as "Three Extremely Excellent Arts" of the Ta'er Lamasery. Leave for Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, also known as "Little Mecca" because of its important role in the spread of Islam from Central Asia over China and as a centre for religious scholarship. Visit the Nanguan Mosque and Hong Yuan, the main park in Linxia.

Accommodation at the Linxia Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

5 Linxia / Lanzhou

Coach

Drive to Lanzhou and visit the Bingling Temple with a set of Buddhist grottoes carved into the cliffs of a 60 meters high gorge. The creators of these grottoes dangled from ropes while carving their masterpieces into the face of the cliffs - one has to wonder how many artisans fell to their deaths. Visit the Liujiaxia Reservoir.

Accommodation at the Legend Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

6 Lanzhou / Guangzhou

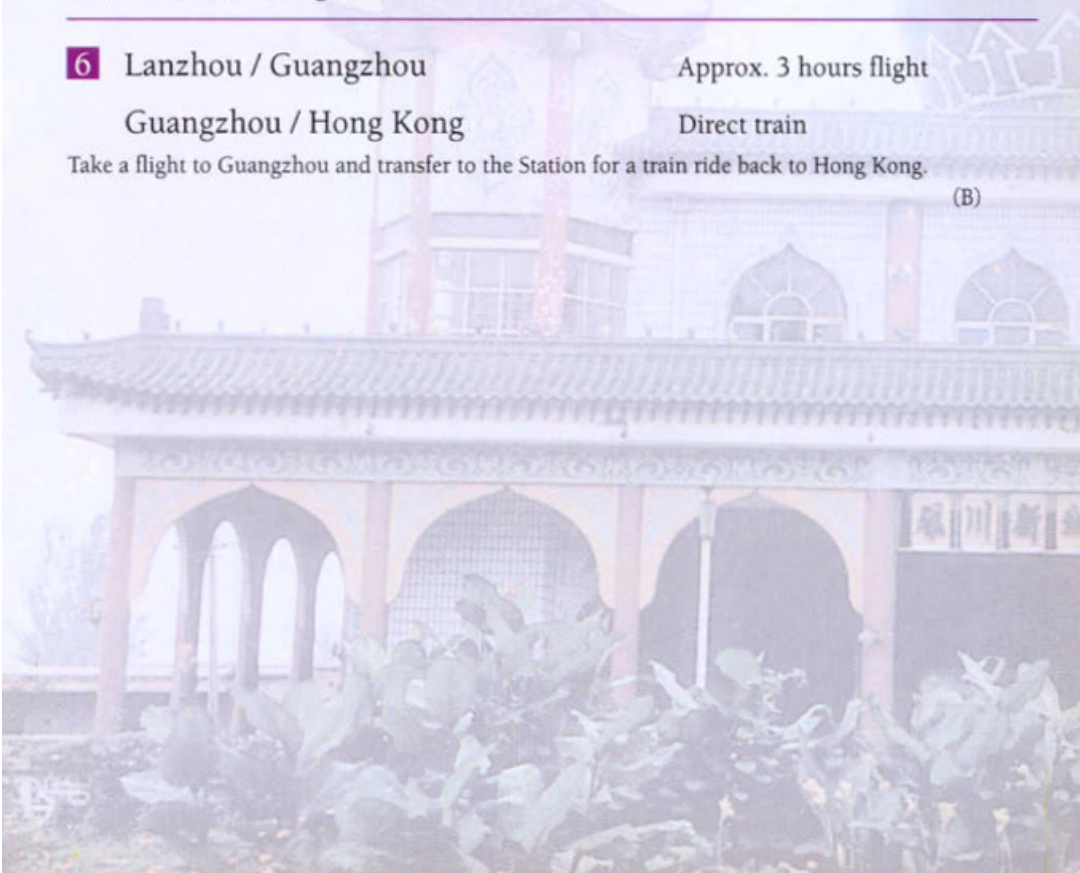
Approx. 3 hours flight

Guangzhou / Hong Kong

Direct train

Take a flight to Guangzhou and transfer to the Station for a train ride back to Hong Kong.

(B)



Itinerary Two 10 Days Xinjiang & Guangzhou (CZ)

1 Hong Kong / Guangzhou

Direct train

Guangzhou / Urumqi

Approx. 5 hours flight

Meet at the Guangzhou Station and transfer to the domestic airport to connect a flight to Urumqi - the capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(D)

2 Urumqi / Kashgar

Approx. 1.5 hours flight

Start with a boat ride around the Heavenly Lake which is surrounded by alpine meadows and rugged snow-capped mountains densely covered in fir, pine and cypress. Visit the Xinjiang Regional Museum with exhibits on archaeological treasures from the Silk Road including 3000-year-old mummies and the Bazaar. After dinner, take a flight to Kashgar.

Accommodation at the Seman Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

3 Kashgar

Full day tour to the Karakuli Lake, a pristine spot 196 kilometers from Kashgar. Horses, yaks and camels graze on the rich pasturage. Return to Kashgar.

Accommodation at the Seman Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

4 Kashgar / Urumqi

Approx. 1.5 hours flight

Look for your favourite souvenirs or items in the Bazaar which is the focus of activity in Kashgar. Visit Abakh Hoja's Tomb (Fragrant Concubine of Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong), Aidakh Mosque and a Uygur family.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

5 Urumqi / Turpan

Coach

Travel to Turpan, visit the Ancient City of Jiaohe, a UNESCO "Natural Heritage" site; the Karez, an amazing irrigation system which made Turpan a rich oasis; and the Emin Minaret, a typical Uygur architecture. Enjoy the Uygur performance after dinner.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Turpan Oasis Hotel

(B,L&D)

6 Turpan / Hami

Coach

Drive past the Flaming Mountain, made famous by the story of the Monkey King, to the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves. Take the donkey cart ride around the Ancient City of Gaochang which contains traces of Nestorian, Christian, Persian and Manichean influences before drive to Hami.

Accommodation at the Jiageda Guesthouse or similar

(B,L&D)

7 Hami

Hami is a rich agricultural oasis growing more than 30 types of delicious, crisp and fragrant Hami melons. Visit the Tombs of the Hami Kings; the Gai Si's Tomb, the holy tomb dedicated to the memory of Gai Si, one of the three Muslim missionaries believed to have come from the Middle East during the 7th century; and the Hami Cultural Office Museum with exhibits of the corpses and other finds from the 3000-year-old graves excavated at Wupu.

Accommodation at the Jiageda Guesthouse or similar

(B,L&D)

8 Hami / Urumqi

Coach

Return to Urumqi.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

9 Urumqi / Guangzhou

Approx. 5 hours flight

Arrival to Guangzhou - the capital of Guangdong Province. Visit the Huaisheng Mosque, meaning "Remember the Sage", in memory of the prophet. The original mosque is said to be the first Islamic building in China, built by the first Muslim missionary to China in AD627. Onward to the Chen Clan Academy, a family shrine housed in a large compound, with nice stone carvings and sculptures.

Accommodation at the China Hotel or similar

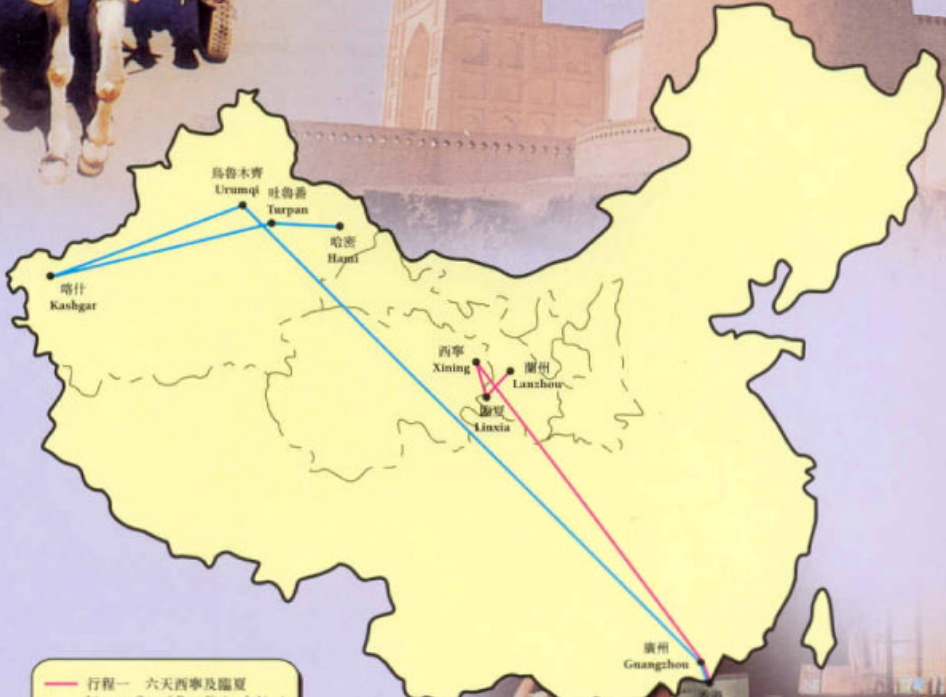
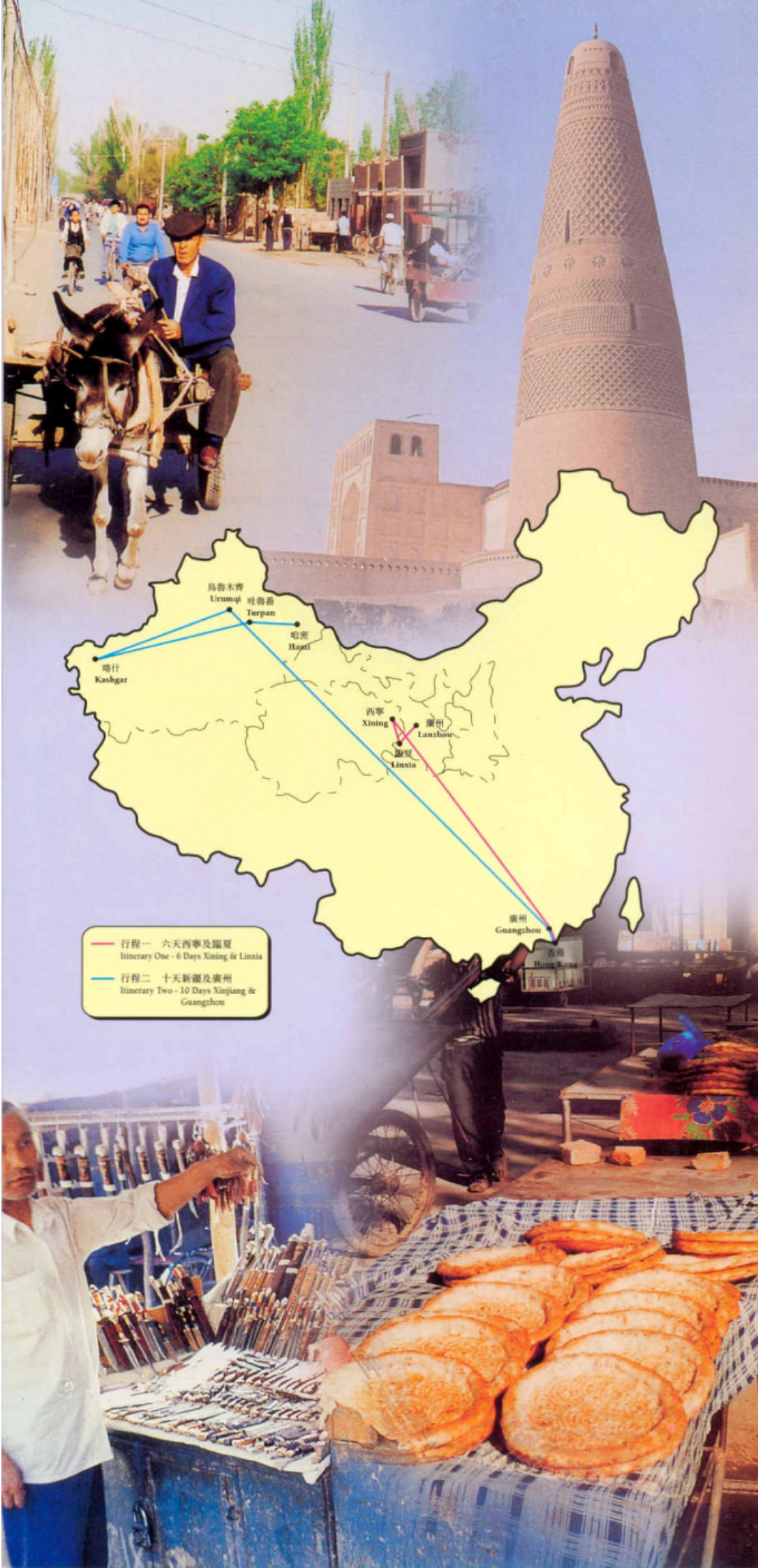
(B,L&D)

10 Guangzhou / Hong Kong

Direct train

Transfer to the Guangzhou Station for a train ride back to Hong Kong.

(B)

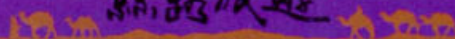


- 行程一 六天西寧及臨夏
Itinerary One - 6 Days Xining & Linxia
- 行程二 十天新疆及廣州
Itinerary Two - 10 Days Xinjiang & Guangzhou

伊斯蘭

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絲路旅遊



Silk Road Travel

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