

絲路

Ancient
Silk Road



Ancient Silk Road

It was the world's first superhighway, a series of desert and mountain crossing that enabled silk to make its way from the ancient Chinese capital of Xian. The Silk Road allowed links between China and the West to flourish, an exchange of art, ideas and culture as well as trade.

Long before Xian became famed internationally for its silk, China's first emperor was embarking on a remarkable project which has survived almost intact to this day, over a spell of two thousand years. The terracotta warrior tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang, with its rows and rows of thousands of clay warriors - each with a different expression - is one of the most stupendous sights in the world.

Visitors to today's Silk Road begin their journey in Xian, marvelling at the inventiveness of the Emperor who, as well as unifying the country and introducing standard weights and measures began work on the Great Wall, a structure which survives to this day along parts of the Silk Road route.

Xian, with its delightful Chinese-style wooden mosque and high city walls, is the ideal starting point for tours along the Silk Road, beginning in the same place as camel trains of yore. These days, air travel allows visitors to fly over the vast Gobi Desert, alighting in the oasis town of Dunhuang, home to a unique collection of Buddhist cave paintings, originally paid for by Silk Road traders to ensure good fortune on their way through the sand dunes.

Although foreign archaeologists raided some of the best treasures in the caves early in the last century, carting them back to Europe and the United States, there is much left to admire. Close to the town itself is the Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel, a modern-day architectural marvel, built in the style of ancient dynasties, which backs onto the desert itself.

A train ride away - across part of the Gobi Desert once more - is the oasis town of Turpan, famous throughout China for its juicy grapes. An inventive irrigation system allows melting snow from the Tian Shan mountain range to flow in channels through city streets and fields, giving Turpan a plentiful year-round supply of the desert's most rare and precious commodity.

That natural asset has allowed Turpan to flourish over the centuries. It was the site for two ancient cities, the hilltop Jiaohe, built in a fabulous, hill-top location, and the once-thriving Gaochang, which was a vibrant cosmopolitan centre in its day, welcoming traders, artisans, scholars and artists.

The people who live in the shadow of the rich red mountains surrounding Turpan are from the Uygur minority, renowned for their warmth and hospitality. Uygurs are particularly fond of singing and dancing: the women dress for performances in vivid red dresses, with the men attired in colourful braided waistcoats and trousers.

The Uygurs are followers of Islam, as are the Kazakh nomad herders who spend part of their year around the shores of Heavenly Lake, close to the Xinjiang region capital city of Urumqi. The rich blue of the lake and the bright green of the meadows contrast with the stark white of the snow-capped mountains.

For supplies, the herders and nomads head into cities and towns, where sprawling bazaars sell everything from sizzling lamb kebabs to rolls of embroidered material to ceremonial knives. The biggest bazaar of all is the weekly Kashgar market, where herders come from far afield to trade sheep and goats.

Visiting this far-flung part of China is a chance to seamlessly mix modern-paced adventure with ancient culture. The arts and crafts of the region, strong since the Silk Road era, are still thriving: contemporary skills follow traditions dating back thousands of years, to the First Emperor himself.

1 Hong Kong / Xian

Approx. 2.5 hours flight

Take a direct flight to Xian - the capital of 12 dynasties in Chinese history and starting point for the great trade caravans of the ancient Silk Road. The importance and prosperity of this ancient capital left behind a wealth of valuable historical sites and fabulous archaeological discoveries.

Accommodation at the Xian Hyatt Hotel or similar

(D)

2 Xian

The day's highlight will be a visit to the amazing Terracotta Warriors - a world famous archaeological site. Next you will visit the Huaqing Hot Spring, once the favourite bathhouse for the Tang Dynasty Concubine Yang Guifei. Browse the National Museum of Shaanxi History. Enjoy a dumpling banquet.

Accommodation at the Xian Hyatt Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

3 Xian / Dunhuang

Approx. 2.5 hours flight

Fly to Dunhuang, meaning "Blazing Beacon", was the centre of cultural and economic exchange between the East and the West. Leading institutes of the world regard the Dunhuang collection as an important source of studying Chinese culture, with a stream called "Dunhuangology". Visits will be made to the County Museum, with exhibits from Mogao Caves and sacrificial objects from the Han to Tang Dynasties; and the Yangguan Pass, south-west of Dunhuang with eroded Han Dynasty beacon towers.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel

(B,L&D)

4 Dunhuang / Liuyuan Station / Turpan

Overnight train

Spend the morning at the world-renowned Mogao Caves - the largest and richest ancient art treasure in the world and also "World Heritages" site by the UNESCO in 1987. Try sand surfing or camel riding around the Mingsha Sand Dunes and mysterious Crescent Moon Lake. Transferred to the Station for an overnight train to Turpan.

Accommodation on the train (soft-sleeper)

(B,L&D)

5 Turpan

Transferred to hotel for breakfast and a rest. After lunch, visit the Emin Minaret, a typical Uygur architecture; the Karez - an amazing irrigation system which made Turpan a rich oasis; and the Ancient City of Jiaohe - a UNESCO "Natural Heritage" site. Be the guest of a Uygur family and savour specialties like milk tea, nan, shish kebabs, poluo rice etc. Return to the hotel for the Uygur performance.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Turpan Oasis Hotel

(B,L&D)

6 Turpan / Urumqi

Coach

Drive past the Flaming Mountain, made famous by the story of the Monkey King; take a donkey cart ride around the Ancient City of Gaochang which contains traces of Nestorian, Christian, Persian and Manichean influences; and the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves. Travel to Urumqi - the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Enjoy souvenirs-shopping at the Bazaar.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

7 Urumqi

Cruise around the Heavenly Lake which is surrounded by alpine meadows and rugged snow-capped mountains densely covered in fir, pine and cypress. After lunch, visit the Xinjiang Regional Museum with exhibits on archaeological treasures from the Silk Road including 3000-year-old mummies and the carpet factory.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

8 Urumqi / Xian

Approx. 3 hours flight

Xian / Hong Kong

Approx. 2.5 hours flight

Take a flight to Xian to connect with a flight back to Hong Kong.

(B)

1 Hong Kong / Guangzhou

Direct Train

Guangzhou / Xining

Approx. 2.5 hours flight

Met at the Guangzhou Station and transferred to the domestic airport to connect with a flight to Xining - the capital of Qinghai Province.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Tsongkha Hotel

(D)

2 Xining

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. Afternoon travel to the Sun & Moon Hills before proceed onward to the Qinghai Lake - China's largest inland salt water lake and artists' paradise. It is 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.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Tsongkha Hotel

(B,L&D)

3 Xining / Zhangye

Coach

Travel via the Qilian Mountain through beautiful landscape and grasslands to Zhangye, one of the important towns on the Hexi Corridor. Visit the Giant Buddha Temple which houses China's largest 34.5 meters reclining Buddha and a local home.

Accommodation at the Zhangye Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

4 Zhangye / Jiuquan

Coach

In the morning visit the Matisi Scenery Zone & Grottoes. Onward to Jiuquan for lunch and visit the Wine Spring Garden, Jiuquan Museum, the local specialty 'Night-glowing cup' factory.

Accommodation at the Jiuquan Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

5 Jiuquan / Jiayuguan / Dunhuang

Coach

Visit the Fortress of Jiayuguan Pass - an impressive site along the Hexi Corridor and the Great Wall Museum. Arrival to Dunhuang - a national historic and cultural city.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel

(B,L&D)

6 Dunhuang

Spend the morning at the Mogao Caves - the world's richest treasure - trove of Buddhist manuscripts, wall paintings and statuary. After lunch, visit the County Museum. Try sand surfing or camel riding around the Mingsha Sand Dunes and Crescent Moon Lake. Explore the Night Market.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel

(B,L&D)

7 Dunhuang / Urumqi

Approx. 2 hours flight

Fly to Urumqi - the capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Browse the Xinjiang Regional Museum with exhibits on Xinjiang's ethnic culture and archaeological treasures from the Silk Road including 3000-year-old mummies. Enjoy shopping at the Bazaar.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

8 Urumqi / Turpan

Coach

Cruise around the Heavenly Lake which is surrounded by alpine meadows and rugged snow-capped mountains densely covered in fir, pine and cypress. Drive to the oasis town of Turpan. Visit the Karez - an amazing irrigation system which made Turpan a rich oasis; and the Emin Minaret, a typical Uygur architecture. Be the guest of a Uygur family and savour specialties like milk tea, nan, shish kebabs, poluo rice etc. Return to the hotel for the Uygur performance.

Accommodation at the Silk Road Turpan Oasis Hotel

(B,L&D)

9 Turpan / Urumqi

Coach

Urumqi / Kashgar

Approx. 1.5 hours flight

Visit the Ancient City of Jiaohe - a World Heritage site. Drive past the Flaming Mountain, made famous by the story of the Monkey King, to visit the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves. Return to Urumqi. Take an evening flight to Kashgar.

Accommodation at the Seman Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

10 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)

11 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 the Abakh Hoja's Tomb (Fragrant Concubine of Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong) and Aidakh Mosque. Return to Urumqi.

Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar

(B,L&D)

12 Urumqi / Guangzhou

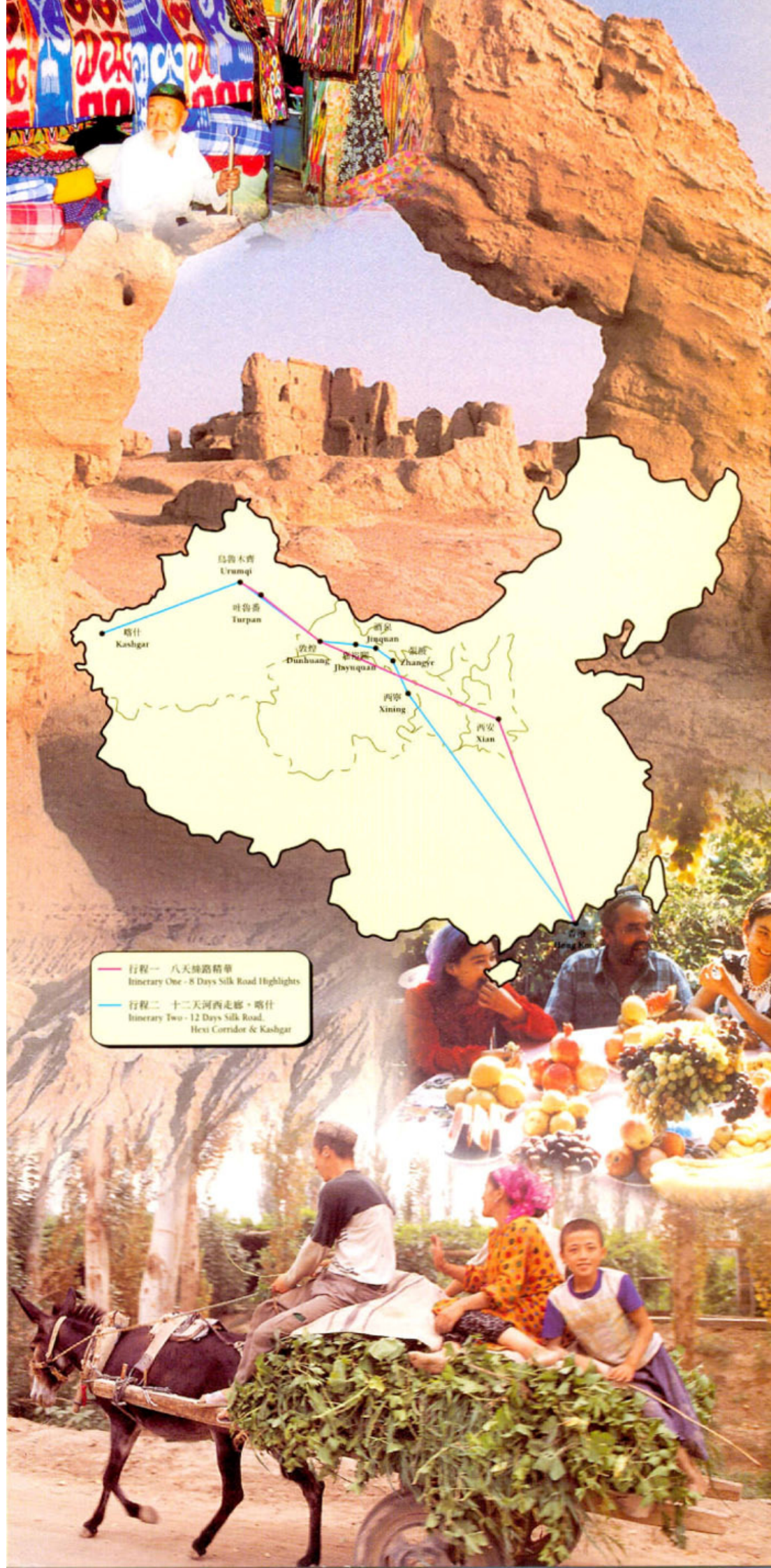
Approx. 5 hours flight

Guangzhou / Hong Kong

Direct Train

Fly to Guangzhou. Met and transferred to the Station for a train ride back to Hong Kong.

(B)



行程一 八天丝路精华
Itinerary One - 8 Days Silk Road Highlights

行程二 十二天河西走廊·喀什
Itinerary Two - 12 Days Silk Road,
Hexi Corridor & Kashgar

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絲路旅遊



Silk Road Travel

絲路旅遊有限公司

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