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Lanzhou
Zhangye
Jiayuguan
Dunhuang
Turpan
Urumqi
Kanas Lake
Urumqi

This China Silk Road starts in Lanzhou and ends in Urumqi. Discover historical sites like the Maiji Grottoes, Jiayuguan Pass, Dunhuang Grottoes, Turpan, and natural wonders Zhangye Danxia Rainbow Mountain and Kanas Lake in Northern Xinjiang.

Type

Private

Duration

14 days

Trip code

SRA-07

Price

From A\$ 3,220 per person

Itinerary

This comprehensive China Silk Road tour starts in Lanzhou and takes you to the Maiji Grottoes in Tianshui, the vibrant Zhangye Danxia National Geopark, the historic Jiayuguan Pass, and the fascinating Dunhuang Grottoes. Journey further to the oasis city of Turpan and on to Urumqi. From Urumqi, the tour extends to the magnificent Kanas Lake Nature Reserve, offering breathtaking natural beauty. This tour is a perfect mix of history, culture, and captivating landscapes.

Day 01 :

Arrive at Lanzhou



You'll arrive in Lanzhou, the great capital city of the Gansu Province in northwest China. Lanzhou has been an important city along the Silk Road since ancient times. This grand city lies at the southern end of the route leading through the Hexi Corridor across Central Asia.

Day 02 :

Board the Train to Tianshui - Visit Maiji Grottoes - Return to Lanzhou



Today starts with a Bullet train ride from Lanzhou to Tianshui, a city located along the Wei River. After approximately 1.5 hours on the train, you will arrive in Tianshui. Here, you will have the opportunity to explore the magnificent **Maijishan Grottoes**, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Maijishan Grottoes are a network of caves and walkways carved into the cliffside, adorned with thousands of Buddhist statues, murals, and scriptures. As you wander through the grottoes, you will be captivated by the intricate details and vibrant colors of the Buddhist artwork. Late afternoon, take the train back to Lanzhou for overnight.

Day 03 :

Board the Train to Zhangye - Visit Zhangye Danxia Landform



In the early morning, you will board a train to Zhangye, a journey that takes approximately 5 hours (travel time may vary depending on the availability of the bullet train).

Upon arriving in Zhangye around 12:30 pm, you will be greeted at the train station and transferred to the awe-inspiring **Zhangye Danxia National Geopark**, also known as **Rainbow Mountain**.

Zhangye Danxia National Geopark is a geological wonder renowned for its vibrant and surreal colors. The mountains and rock formations showcase a breathtaking palette of reds, oranges, yellows, and blues, resembling a magnificent painting. This natural masterpiece has captivated visitors from around the world, earning its reputation as one of China's most remarkable landforms.

Take your time to explore this mesmerizing site, capturing photos of the vibrant hues and appreciating the unique geological formations shaped over millions of years. Spend the evening in Zhangye.

Day 04 :

Drive to Jiayuguan - Visit Jiayuguan Pass & Overhanging Great Wall

In the morning, you will visit the **Giant Buddha Temple** in Zhangye, home to some of the most intriguing ancient artwork along the **China Silk Road**. Inside the temple, you will have the opportunity to marvel at the Giant Buddha, a massive statue measuring 34.5 meters (about 113 feet) in length and 7.5 meters (about 25 feet) in width.

Afterwards drive about 2.5 hours to Jiayuguan, a city that marks the western end of the Great Wall of China. Upon arrival, you will visit **Jiayuguan Pass**, known as the 'First Pass Under Heaven', it is the western end of the Great Wall of China and a key point on the China Silk Road. This well-preserved defense station features ramparts, turrets, and eaves, providing a glimpse into the strategic importance of the area. If time permits, you may also have the opportunity to visit the **Overhanging Great Wall**, also known as the Xuanbi Great Wall, which offers stunning panoramic views and showcases the tactical ingenuity of ancient Chinese builders.

Spend overnight at Jiayuguan.

Day 05 :

Drive to Dunhuang, visit Echoing Sand Mountains & Crescent Lake

In the early morning, depart from Jiayuguan and continue your journey to Dunhuang (the total drive is about 6 hours), enjoy the breathtaking landscapes along the way. Upon arrival, take some time to relax and unwind.

Then head to the **Echoing Sand Mountains (The Mingsha Sand Dunes)**, renowned for the melodic sounds produced when even a gentle breeze passes through the dunes. Here you will be arranged to have a **camel riding** to add a touch of adventure to your Silk road tour, you can also engage in activities like sand sliding, immersing yourself in the unique desert experience.

Afterward walk to the enchanting **Crescent Lake**, named for its distinctive half-moon shape. Marvel at the crystal-clear waters and savor the tranquil ambiance of this oasis in the desert.

In the evening, you might immerse yourself in the vibrant atmosphere of the **Shazhou Nightly Market**. Indulge in local cuisine, browse the stalls of local farmers, and discover unique handicrafts created by talented artisans.

Or, you can consider attending a captivating show at the renowned Dunhuang Theater to enrich your cultural experience. Be enthralled by the exceptional performances that showcase the artistry of some of China's finest dancers.

Day 06 :

Explore Dunhuang: Mogao Grottoes, Bullet train to Turpan

In the morning, you will be arranged to visit the **Mogao Grottoes**, also known as the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas. This remarkable UNESCO World Heritage Site is located on the ancient Silk Road and holds immense historical and cultural significance. The Mogao Grottoes feature a network of 492 temples, adorned with intricate sculptures, murals, and Buddhist artwork spanning over a thousand years. During your visit, you will enjoy a **40-minute 4D movie** that showcases the development of the grottoes, followed by **exploration of the 8 main caves** with your local guide.

Experience the serene atmosphere of the Mogao Grottoes, where the blend of art, religion, and history creates a truly captivating experience. Discover the stories behind the sculptures and murals that depict Buddhist figures, celestial beings, and scenes from Chinese history, offering a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of the Silk Road. The Dunhuang Grotto Protection and Exhibition Center will provide you with valuable insights into the history and preservation efforts of this extraordinary cultural treasure.

You'll then take the afternoon bullet train to Turpan (D55, 16:35 -19:56), a vibrant oasis city in Xinjiang and one of the most important stops along the Silk Road.

Spend the night at Turpan.

Day 07 :

Full Day Exploration in Turpan

Explore the highlights of Turpan on a full-day tour, immersing yourself in the rich history and cultural heritage of this important Silk Road city.

Starting with a morning drive to the **Gaochang Ruins**, an important stop along the ancient Silk Road. Despite being abandoned due to war and water scarcity, the remaining city walls, temples, and houses still bear witness to the past glory of this city and the culture of its ancient inhabitants, the Gaochang people.

Then continue the visiting to **Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves**, located on the west cliffs of the Wood Valley in the Flaming Mountains. Explore the vibrant murals and precious artworks that depict the development and history of Buddhism in the region.

For lunch, you will have the opportunity to savor a **traditional Uyghur meal in a local village in Tuyuk Valley**, immersing yourself in the rich culinary culture of the area.

On the way back to Turpan, you will make a stop at the **Flaming Mountain**, named for its scorching temperatures that can reach up to 47.8°C (118.04°F) during the hottest summer months.

Lastly, you will visit the **Jiaohe Ruins**, the largest and oldest earthen city in the world. The remains you see today date back to the Tang Dynasty and are remarkably well-preserved, thanks to the site's elevated location and dry climate.

Spend overnight at Turpan.

Day 08 :

Another Morning in Turpan - Drive to Urumqi

In the morning you'll tour to the **Karez underground irrigation system**, which is a vital lifeline for the city. This impressive system consists of caves, reservoirs, canals, and wells that stretch over a remarkable length of 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles). It serves as a crucial source of water, sustaining the entire region and showcasing the ingenuity of ancient engineering. Then **Emin Minaret**- an impressive structure that stands at a towering height of 44 meters (144 feet). As the largest minaret in China, it represents the architectural prowess and cultural significance of the area. Take your time to appreciate the intricate details and learn about its historical and cultural importance.

After lunch you'll head to Urumqi, known as the world's most inland city, the drive from Turpan to Urumqi will take approximately 2.5 to 3 hours, allowing you to enjoy the picturesque countryside along the way.

There you'll be able to rest and refresh on your own and you might take a walk at the **Xinjiang Grand Bazaar**, where you'll find everything from entertainment to local fare and unique goods from different cultures in and around the region.

Day 09 :

Drive to visit Heavenly Lake, then drive to Fuyun (540km, 7-8 Hour Drive)

In the morning, you will drive to visit **Heavenly Lake** in the Tianshan Mountains. This stunning mountain lake, located at an altitude of 1,980 meters (6,500 feet), offers breathtaking scenery with snowcapped peaks and picturesque surroundings. You can either trek around the lake, enjoy the boating cruise, or even take the cable car to explore Maya Mountain for the incredible view of Bogoda Peak.

Afterward, continue traveling to Fuyun County, passing by Huoshaoshan (Burning Mountain), where you will witness a sea of red, caused by burnt rocks that look as if they are still burning along the hills. Overnight at Fuyun.

Day 10 :

Drive to Burqin County, 280KM / 4-5 Hour Drive



This morning you will visit **Keketuohai National Geological Park**, known for its mines and deposit sites, the park offers a stunning natural landscape with valleys, rivers, and mine pits that will leave you amazed.

Afterwards, drive about 3.5-hour drive to Burqin, a small county in the area that borders Russia, Kazakstan and Mongolia. Upon arrival, you have the chance to freely explore the city on your own. In the late afternoon you'll head out to visit **Five-colored Beach (Wucaitan in Chinese)**, named for the stunning layers of multi-colored rock overlooking the crystal clear waters of Irtysh River below. You'll catch the best time to see the rock around sunset, when the different colors of rock shine and dance in the lights of the sky above. You'll then stay overnight in Burqin county.

Day 11 :

Drive to Jiadengyu - Visit Kanas Lake Nature Reserve - Return to Jiadengyu

In the early morning you'll take a 2 hour drive to Jiadengyu, which is the entrance to the Kanas Lake Nature Reserve. The reserve is known for its stunning landscapes, crystal-clear lakes, lush forests, and snow-capped mountains. The highlight of the reserve is Kanas Lake, a mesmerizing body of water with turquoise hues that change with the seasons. Kanas Lake is a great place for outdoor activities, and your options include hiking, boating, horse riding and river rafting (these activities are on your own expense).

Today we suggest that you take the shuttle bus or boat and enjoy the scenery in **Lying Dragon Bay, Immortal Bay and Moon Bay**. These bays are the most well-known and beautiful spots in the area. You'll then stay overnight at a hotel near Jiadengyu, or, if your budget allows, you can choose to stay at a hotel inside the Kanas Lake Nature Reserve.

Day 12 :

Another Day in Kanas Lake - Afternoon Head to Hemu Village & Visit a Local Tuwa Family.

You'll have the whole morning to enjoy more beauty of the **Kanas Lake Nature Reserve**. We recommend visiting the **Guan Yu Tai** (Fish Watching Pavilion), the highest point within the reserve that offers a stunning panoramic view of the entire lake. Kanas Lake is renowned for its ever-changing colors, which transform from deep green to sky blue, gray, and white throughout the day. As you ascend to higher vantage points, you'll be treated to a captivating display of vibrant hues.

In the afternoon, drive to **Hemu Village**. Hemu Village has been recognized by China's National Geographic as one of the six most beautiful villages in the country. Take the opportunity to immerse yourself in the local culture by visiting Tuwa families, experiencing their way of life, and learning about their rich traditions. After the visit, you'll rest in the hotel of Hemu Village.

Day 13 :

Visit Hemu Village - Drive to Karamay and visit the Urho Ghost City, 500Km, about 8 hours drive

Rise early and commence a **one-hour trek** up the wooden steps leading to the grassland on the hill opposite the village, where a breathtaking sunrise awaits. The panoramic view from this vantage point is simply majestic, showcasing the entire village with its wooden houses, birch trees, and a vibrant green river winding its way through the landscape. You also have the option for a short horse riding experience on the grassland.

Continues exploration in Hemu village with a visit to the Tuwa people, whose simple lifestyle and distinctive character have left many visitors deeply impressed.

After lunch in the village, you'll set out for Karamay, making a pit stop at the **Urho Ghost City**, also known as Wuerhe Wind City. This unique wind-eroded geological area earned its ghostly name not from spectral inhabitants but from the frequent howling winds that give it an eerie ambiance. Today you will be driven to pass through the sprawling Hundred Mile Oil Zone.

Stay overnight at Karamay.

Day 14 :

Drive back to Urumqi (320KM/4.5 hours drive), Departure.



Enjoy the drive back to Urumqi, end this great China Silk Road tour. In Urumqi, there are flights available to most major cities in China.

Inclusions

Tour notes:

Please note prices are based in CNY.

General inclusions:

2 bottles of mineral water provided daily.

All required government taxes and fees.

Domestic travel accident insurance.

Meals allowance for your guide and driver.

3 Stars hotel (shared twin room, private bathroom and daily breakfast)

Hotel accommodation is based on double occupancy (two persons sharing 1 standard twin room with private bathroom)

All entrance tickets as noted in the tour's itinerary.

Guide fluent in English, Chinese or Japanese that is certified by the state tourism build and from the local community. (If your native language is not listed please let us know, we are certain we can assist your needs.)

Airport and/or train station pick-up and drop-off.

All domestic flight and train tickets. Economy-class for flights and soft sleeper / seat for train tickets.

All vehicles are provided with air-conditioning (A/C).

Transportation will be provided via a comfortable and clean car, minivan or tourist bus depending upon the groups size.

General exclusions:

Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks, internet access, fax, telephone calls etc.

Tips for your guide and driver.

Optional Attractions that are not specified in the itinerary.

Flight and/or railway ticket(s) to the first city of the tour and departure from the last city of the tour.

Meals not specified in the itinerary.

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