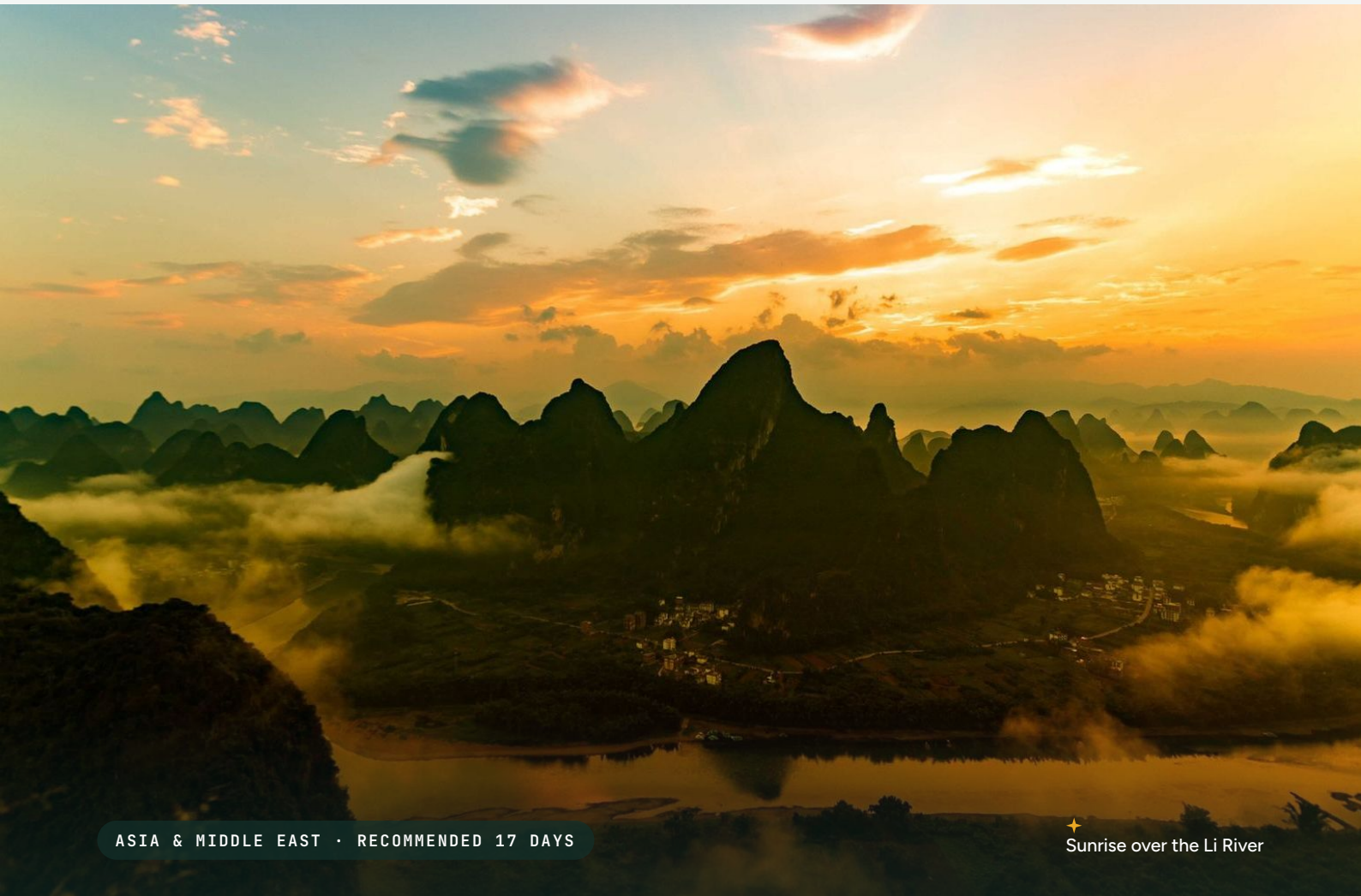




ASIA & MIDDLE EAST · RECOMMENDED 17 DAYS

✦
Sunrise over the Li River

China

Emperors, karst peaks and the Yangtze: a private journey from Beijing to Shanghai by bullet train

RECOMMENDED LENGTH

17 days

DEPARTURE

Any day

you pick the dates

TRANSPORT

Private driver

and private transfers

ESTIMATED FROM, EXCL.
FLIGHT**€1,720** p.p.

My recommended route through China, fully arranged for you as a private trip: from the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the Summer Palace in Beijing to the Terracotta Army in Xi'an, the karst peaks of the Li River at Yangshuo and Guilin, the Yangtze metropolis of Wuhan and modern Shanghai. You travel as a couple, a family or with friends, largely by high-speed train, and a private driver is waiting in every city. You start whenever you like and change the route however you like.

✓ Put together personally

✓ No group travel

✓ At your own pace

✓ Leave out or add what you like

✓ Dates completely free

✓ Eat wherever you like

Highlights

- ★ A full day at the Summer Palace, plus the Forbidden City and the hutongs of Beijing
- ★ Walking the Great Wall at Mutianyu
- ★ The Terracotta Army, cycling Xi'an's city wall and the fountain show at the Big Wild Goose Pagoda
- ★ Li River boat trip among karst peaks
- ★ Three nights in Yangshuo: by electric scooter and bamboo raft along the Yulong River, and an evening boat in Guilin
- ★ Wuhan: the Yellow Crane Tower and an evening cruise past the illuminated skyline on the Yangtze
- ★ Shanghai's Bund and the gardens of Suzhou
- ★ Crossing the country by high-speed train

Best time to travel

JAN FEB MAR **APR** MAY JUN JUL AUG **SEP** OCT NOV DEC

■ best time to travel: advice only, you travel when you like

TRAVELLERS

Private: only your own party, from 1 traveller. No group travel, no fellow travellers you don't know.

LENGTH

Recommended: 17 days · shorter or longer is always possible

DATES

Completely flexible: you leave on the day that suits you.

Your route on the map



Map: Natural Earth (public domain) · the arcs show the order of the route, not the exact road

- 1 Beijing**
4 nights · day 2–5
- 2 Xi'an**
2 nights · day 6–7
- 3 Yangshuo**
3 nights · day 8–10
- ◇ Xingping (visit on the way) day 11
- 4 Guilin**
1 night · day 11
- 5 Wuhan**
2 nights · day 12–13
- 6 Shanghai**
3 nights · day 14–16

--- overland, arrow = direction of travel - - - flight day trip
◇ airport / connection



DAY 4 The Great Wall at Mutianyu



DAY 5 Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake, Summer Palace, Beijing



DAY 7 Warriors of the Terracotta Army, Xi'an

My recommended route

This is the route as I put it together for you. It is a starting point, not a fixed programme: leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you would like to do and travel at your own pace. Everything below is arranged for you in advance.

DAY 1

Departure to Beijing VLIEGTUIG

Overnight flight from Brussels to Beijing (direct where available, otherwise one connection). You choose your own start date; book the flight yourself or let us arrange it.

DAY 2

Arrival in Beijing, the hutongs BEIJING

In Budget and Comfort you take the Airport Express to Dongzhimen and there Line 2 to Beijing Railway Station (approx. 1 hour); your hotel is a few minutes' walk away. In Premium your private driver meets you in the arrivals hall with a name sign and takes you to your hotel. In the afternoon you wander at your own pace through the hutongs around the Drum and Bell Towers, the old lanes with courtyards, teahouses and cyclists. Free evening.

DAY 3

Tiananmen and the Forbidden City BEIJING ♦ BREAKFAST

Across Tiananmen Square into the Forbidden City, heart of the empire for six centuries (named tickets). Then Jingshan Hill for the classic view over the golden roofs. My tip for the evening: Peking duck, I give you my addresses.



Corner tower and moat of the Forbidden City, Beijing

DAY 4

The Great Wall at Mutianyu BEIJING ♦ BREAKFAST

Your private driver picks you up at the hotel for the drive (approx. 1h30) to Mutianyu, a beautifully restored, green section of the Wall. Cable car up (included) and a walk of a few hours along the watchtowers, as long or as short as you like; cable car back down. Return via the Olympic site.

DAY 5

Summer Palace (full day), Temple of Heaven optional BEIJING ♦ BREAKFAST

The Summer Palace is so big that I give it a whole day. In Budget and Comfort you take the metro in the morning: Line 2 to Xuanwumen and there Line 4 to Beigongmen, at the north gate (approx. 55 min). In Premium your driver takes you to the entrance. You walk along Kunming Lake and through the Long Corridor with its thousands of paintings, climb Longevity Hill to the Tower of Buddhist Incense, see the Marble Boat and the Seventeen-Arch Bridge and stroll along the canal street of Suzhou Jie. A small boat takes you across the lake. If you still have time and energy at the end, you go on to the Temple of Heaven (optional; by metro to Tiantandongmen on Line 5, in Premium with your driver): the temple halls close in the late afternoon, but the park stays open longer and fills with dancers and card players in the evening. Free evening; I send you my favourite addresses.

DAY 6

High-speed train to Xi'an, evening at the Bell and Drum Towers XI'AN ♦ BREAKFAST

Your driver takes you to the station for the high-speed train (approx. 4h30, up to 350 km/h). In Xi'an, start of the Silk Road, in Budget and Comfort you take the metro: Line 2 from the North station (Beikezhan) to the Bell Tower (Zhonglou), approx. 30 min (in Budget one more stop on Line 6 to Guangjijie). In Premium a driver meets you at the station exit and takes you to your hotel. In the evening you simply walk through the centre: to the illuminated Bell Tower and Drum Tower, then into the evening market of the Muslim Quarter (Huimin Street), with street food such as roujiamo and lamb skewers. You choose where you eat.

DAY 7

Terracotta Army and cycling the city wall XI'AN ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning your private driver takes you to Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Terracotta Army (approx. 1h): thousands of warriors, each with an individual face (named tickets). In the afternoon you cycle along the top of the 14 km Ming city wall, looking out over the roofs of the old town (entrance and bike hire included). You finish at the Big Wild Goose Pagoda with the fountain show on the North Square, set to music and lit up in the evening (times change with the season, I give them to you). My tip: stay there for dinner, in the streets around the pagoda and the Datang Everbright pedestrian street; you choose where.

DAY 8

Fly to Guilin, straight on to Yangshuo YANGSHUO ♦ BREAKFAST

Free morning, with a time slot at the Shaanxi History Museum (subject to availability). Your driver takes you to the airport for the domestic flight to Guilin (approx. 2h15; the high-speed train takes approx. 10h). A private driver meets you and drives straight on to Yangshuo (approx. 1h15); you visit Guilin itself at the end of your stay. Check in at your hotel among the rice fields and karst peaks.

DAY 9

Li River cruise YANGSHUO ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning your driver takes you upstream to Mopanshan pier (approx. 1h15). Then one of Asia's most beautiful boat trips: approx. 4h downstream on the Li River between karst peaks, bamboo groves and water buffalo, back to Yangshuo. Free afternoon in town; optional evening light show 'Impression Liu Sanjie' on the river, with the illuminated karst peaks as a backdrop.

DAY 10

By electric scooter along the Yulong River YANGSHUO ♦ BREAKFAST

Today you rent an electric scooter (hire included). I recommend it instead of a bicycle: among the karst mountains the lanes go up and down a lot, and this way you get further without effort. You ride along quiet village lanes beside the Yulong River, past rice fields and old bridges, with a ride on your own bamboo raft on the way. Afternoon cooking class starting at the market: beer fish, stuffed vegetables and more.



Karst mountains along the Yulong River near Yangshuo

DAY 11

Xingping, then on to Guilin GUILIN ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning your driver takes you to the old village of Xingping (approx. 45 min), where the landscape on the 20-yuan note was drawn. Optional climb of Laozhai Hill for a spectacular panorama over the Li River. Xingping lies on the way north: afterwards your driver continues to Guilin (approx. 1h30). In the afternoon you walk along the Li River to Elephant Trunk Hill, the symbol of the city, where a rock arch dips into the water like a drinking trunk. In the evening you take the evening boat through the 'Two Rivers and Four Lakes', under the illuminated bridges and past the old city wall, then walk along the Sun and Moon Pagodas reflected in Shan Lake.

DAY 12

Reed Flute Cave, by train to Wuhan WUHAN ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning your driver takes you to Reed Flute Cave (approx. 20 min), a limestone cave on the edge of the city with illuminated stalactites and inscriptions more than 1,200 years old. Then private transfer to Guilin North station (approx. 30 min) and high-speed train to Wuhan (approx. 4h), the big city on the Yangtze. In Budget and Comfort you take the metro in Wuhan: Line 4 to Hongshan Square and there, on the same platform, Line 2 to Jiangnan Road (approx. 45 min). In Premium a driver meets you at the station. Free evening: stroll along Jiangnan pedestrian street and the colonial Hankou Bund.

DAY 13

Wuhan: museum, Yellow Crane Tower and the Yangtze by night WUHAN ♦ BREAKFAST

A day with car and driver. My tip for the morning: 'hot dry noodles' in Hubu Alley. Then the Hubei Provincial Museum with the 2,400-year-old bronze bells of Marquis Yi (with short concert). In the afternoon the Yellow Crane Tower, with the view over the Yangtze and the great bridge. In the evening an evening boat takes you along the Yangtze, with the Wuhan skyline lighting up on both banks.

DAY 14

High-speed train to Shanghai SHANGHAI ♦ BREAKFAST

In Budget and Comfort you take the metro to Wuhan station (Line 2 to Hongshan Square, there Line 4, approx. 45 min); in Premium your driver takes you. High-speed train to Shanghai Hongqiao (approx. 4h30–5h). The metro takes you to your hotel in about half an hour. Free evening: the Bund and the illuminated Pudong skyline, best seen from the water.

DAY 15

Shanghai: old and new SHANGHAI ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning you walk through Yu Garden and the old town, then the plane-tree avenues and art deco villas of the French Concession and the shikumen lanes of Tianzifang. Free afternoon, for instance for the view from the Shanghai Tower.



Pudong's illuminated skyline seen from the Bund, Shanghai

DAY 16 **Water towns: Suzhou** SHANGHAI ♦ BREAKFAST

By train (approx. 30 min) to Suzhou: the classical Humble Administrator's Garden (UNESCO) and a boat ride along the Pingjiang Lu canals. Back in Shanghai a free last evening; I am happy to send you my addresses for a farewell dinner.

DAY 17 **Return flight** ♦ BREAKFAST

The metro and the Maglev, China's fastest train (430 km/h), take you quickly to Pudong airport for the day flight to Brussels, arriving the same day.

What I arrange for you

1 Airport pickup

In Budget and Comfort you take the Airport Express from Beijing airport (PEK) to Dongzhimen and there Line 2 to Beijing Railway Station, approx. 1 hour (indicative price CNY 29 pp); your hotel is a few minutes' walk away. In Premium your private driver waits in the arrivals hall (PEK or Daxing) with a name sign; you receive his name, photo and number plate by WhatsApp beforehand. In Premium you can take the metro too: in China the metro is often faster. On the last day, at every level, you take the metro and the Maglev to Shanghai Pudong airport.

2 Hotels

Every night is booked and confirmed in advance, at the level you choose: Budget, Comfort or Premium. Prefer another hotel? I change it.

3 Transport

A private driver and private transfers for the whole route, with domestic flights, trains and boats where they make sense. All booked in advance.

4 Activities, at your pace

The activities and entrance tickets on the route. No guide or group travels with you: you set the pace, and anything you would rather skip, you simply leave out.

5 Eat wherever you like

Breakfast is included, as are the meals at remote camps and lodges where there is no alternative. For the rest I give you my restaurant tips, but you are completely free to choose where you eat. I never send you somewhere because it earns me something.

Estimated prices per person

PER PERSON, BASED ON 2 TRAVELLERS, EXCL. INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL	Self-drive	Private driver
	rental car, everything pre-booked	private transfers and driver
Budget simple, clean and well located	—	€1,720 p.p.
Comfort characterful mid-range	—	€2,150 p.p.
Premium the best addresses on the ground	—	€3,130 p.p.

WITH 4 TRAVELLERS approx. 14% off per person: you share the car and driver. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €1,850 p.p.

TRAVELLING SOLO supplement of approx. 65%: you carry the room and transport alone. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €3,550 p.p.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT I book your flight as part of your trip; the flight price for your dates is in your personal quote. Flight Brussels–Beijing, returning from Shanghai, not included: allow about € 600–880 p.p. depending on the month (July and August are the most expensive). I find you the best flight with your quote.

SELF-DRIVE: NOT OFFERED ON THIS ROUTE

We do not offer self-drive in China. A Belgian or international driving permit is not valid there (you need a temporary Chinese licence), road signs and navigation are largely in Chinese only and the distances are huge. The high-speed train is faster and more comfortable, and a private driver is waiting for you in every city.

WITH A PRIVATE DRIVER

Between cities you travel by high-speed train with reserved seats (one domestic flight Xi'an – Guilin). In Chinese cities the metro is often the fastest and most efficient way to get around. That is why in Budget and Comfort you take the metro where it is convenient: from Beijing airport to your hotel, to the Summer Palace, from Xi'an station to your hotel and to and from Wuhan station. In Premium a private driver takes you on those legs, but you can choose the metro too: in China the metro is often faster. For the out-of-town excursions (the Wall, the Terracotta Army, the Li River, Xingping and Guilin) and the other transfers a private driver takes you at every level. Drivers rarely speak English: that is why I give you address cards in Chinese, and you can always call me or send me a WhatsApp. In Shanghai you take the metro from the station to your hotel at every level, and on the last day the metro and the Maglev to the airport. You pay metro tickets with the transport QR code in Alipay or at the ticket machine. Within the cities you get around easily on foot, by metro or with Didi.

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation.

Estimated price. In high season the price can be higher, in low season lower; your exact price is in your personal quote.

Three accommodation levels

Budget

Well-reviewed, simple city hotels (3*) close to the metro, with breakfast; in Yangshuo a well-kept family hotel. Indicative price approx. €35–50 per room per night.

Comfort

Centrally located 4*-level hotels with breakfast and a boutique hotel with a view in Yangshuo. Indicative price approx. €60–105 per room per night.

Premium

5* hotels and characterful boutique hotels in top locations (near the Forbidden City, on the Bund), a resort among the karst peaks in Yangshuo, a larger car. Indicative price approx. €130–210 per room per night. True luxury (suites in international flagship hotels) on request.

Possible guided moments

Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

- ★ Beijing: the Forbidden City and Jingshan, or the Summer Palace with a local guide
- ★ Xi'an: the Terracotta Army with a guide who tells the story of Emperor Qin Shi Huang
- ★ Yangshuo: the ride along the Yulong River with a local guide who knows the village lanes
- ★ Wuhan: the Hubei Provincial Museum and the Yellow Crane Tower with a guide
- ★ Shanghai and Suzhou: the old town, the French Concession and the Suzhou gardens with a guide

Ideas to adapt the route

- Shorter (12–13 days): drop Wuhan and fly from Guilin to Shanghai, cut Yangshuo to 2 nights or skip the night in Guilin
- Longer: add the Longji rice terraces (+1–2 days from Guilin), Hangzhou or the Yellow Mountains (Huangshan)
- Swap Wuhan for Chengdu (pandas) or Zhangjiajie
- Reverse direction: start in Shanghai and end in Beijing
- Upgrade: 1st-class train seats, a private guide on all days or luggage forwarding between hotels

Included

- ✓ Preparation meeting before departure: together with you I set up Alipay and WeChat Pay, and I explain how to handle an eSIM and a VPN
- ✓ From Beijing airport to your hotel (Budget and Comfort: Airport Express and metro; Premium: private driver) and on the last day metro and Maglev to Shanghai airport
- ✓ 15 nights with breakfast at the level you choose (Budget, Comfort or Premium)
- ✓ Private car with driver for the transfers and the excursions to the Wall, the Terracotta Army, the Li River, Xingping and Guilin, and a day in Wuhan; in Budget and Comfort metro tickets where the metro is more efficient (Summer Palace, Xi'an station, Wuhan stations), in Premium a driver there too
- ✓ High-speed trains Beijing – Xi'an, Guilin – Wuhan, Wuhan – Shanghai, Shanghai – Suzhou return with reserved seats (2nd class)
- ✓ Domestic flight Xi'an – Guilin, with direct private transfer to Yangshuo
- ✓ Li River cruise, bike hire on Xi'an's city wall, electric scooter hire and bamboo raft in Yangshuo, cooking class, Two Rivers and Four Lakes evening boat in Guilin and Yangtze evening cruise in Wuhan
- ✓ Entrance fees as per programme (incl. Mutianyu cable car), named tickets
- ✓ Restaurant tips for every stop: you choose where you eat

Not included

- International flight (Brussels – Beijing / Shanghai – Brussels; allow approx. €600–880 pp, depending on the month); we are happy to book it for you
- Visa if required (see practical info)
- Travel and cancellation insurance (travel assistance insurance mandatory)
- Lunches, dinners and drinks (I give you my addresses, you choose)
- A local guide for an activity (on request)
- Tips for drivers (guideline approx. €5 pp per day)
- Optional: Temple of Heaven, Impression Liu Sanjie show, Shanghai Tower

Practical information

VISA (BELGIAN CITIZENS)

Until 31 December 2026 Belgians can enter China visa-free for tourism for up to 30 days. Whether this is extended into 2027 is not yet known (it has been extended year by year): check before booking. Without an extension a tourist visa is needed via the Chinese Visa Application Service Center in Brussels. Passport valid for at least 6 months.

HEALTH

No mandatory vaccinations. Recommended: routine vaccines and hepatitis A; Japanese encephalitis only for long rural stays. Air pollution can be high in Beijing and Wuhan. Consult wanda.be (ITG).

CURRENCY & PAYMENT

Chinese yuan renminbi (CNY); €1 ≈ CNY 8. Almost everything is paid with Alipay or WeChat Pay, linked to your own bank card; bring some cash too. In a preparation meeting before departure I set up both apps with you and we test them, so you can pay from day one.

FLIGHT TIME FROM BRUSSELS

Approx. 10–11h direct, 13–16h with one connection.

TIME DIFFERENCE

China (UTC+8): +6h in Belgian summer, +7h in winter.

LANGUAGE

Mandarin (Standard Chinese); limited English outside hotels. A translation app is essential. Google, WhatsApp and many Western apps do not work over the local internet in China. In the preparation meeting I explain how to handle an eSIM (or roaming via your home provider) and a VPN, so you stay reachable and your apps keep working.

MEALS

Breakfast is included every day. For the other meals I give you my addresses and favourite restaurants (Peking duck in Beijing, dumplings and street food in Xi'an, beer fish in Yangshuo, 'hot dry noodles' in Wuhan), but I don't include them in the price: that way you choose where and when you eat.

GUIDES

By default you travel without a guide. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

As of September 2026 — check diplomatie.belgium.be (travel advice) and wanda.be (health) before you travel.

Travelling responsibly

This trip uses high-speed trains instead of domestic flights wherever possible (only Xi'an – Guilin is flown because the train takes approx. 10 hours). In Yangshuo you stay in a small hotel with local staff and explore by electric scooter and bamboo raft instead of by car. We work with local drivers and, if you want one, local guides, and I recommend family restaurants, so your money ends up locally.



Steennot Travels

Contact & booking

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Put together personally by Yari, down to the last detail. — Yari Steennot

No group travel and no fixed dates: you travel privately, at your own pace. Leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you like. I give you my restaurant tips, but you choose freely where you eat: nobody sends you to expensive restaurants for a commission.

MY CONTACT ON THE GROUND: [\[contact name\]](#)

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation. Ask for a no-obligation personal intake call or a proposal. Other dates, more or fewer days, something left out or added? Everything can be adapted.

This trip is a package under the Belgian Act of 21 November 2017 on the sale of package travel, linked travel arrangements and travel services. Before you sign, you receive the standard information form and our travel conditions. Steennot Travels is insured against insolvency with [insurer, address, policy number — to be completed]: in case of insolvency, payments are refunded and, where transport is included, repatriation is guaranteed. All prices are indicative estimates; the binding price is the one in your booking confirmation.

Photo credits

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COVER Sunrise over the Li River — Photo: Rod Waddington · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Li_River_Sunrise_\(33351308078\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Li_River_Sunrise_(33351308078).jpg) · *cropped, resized*

DAY 3 Corner tower and moat of the Forbidden City, Beijing — Photo: Daniel Case · CC BY-SA 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forbidden_City_northwest_corner_tower_and_moat.jpg · *resized*

DAY 4 The Great Wall at Mutianyu — Photo: Francesco Bini · CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mutianyu,_grande_muraglia_cinese,_veduta_\(autunno_2024\)_11.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mutianyu,_grande_muraglia_cinese,_veduta_(autunno_2024)_11.jpg) · *cropped, resized*

DAY 5 Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake, Summer Palace, Beijing — Photo: xiquinhosilva (Xiquinho Silva) · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Longevity_Hill_of_the_Summer_Palace.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 7 Warriors of the Terracotta Army, Xi'an — Photo: Gary Lee Todd, Ph.D. · CC0 1.0 (creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qin_Terracotta_Army,_Pit_1_09.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 10 Karst mountains along the Yulong River near Yangshuo — Photo: Zhangzhugang · CC BY-SA 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yangshuo_Yulong_He_2012.09.30_09-43-32.jpg · *resized*

DAY 14 Pudong's illuminated skyline seen from the Bund, Shanghai — Photo: Lloyd Tudor · CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_skyline_of_Pudong_at_night.jpg · *resized*