



CHINA'S TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE 2009

July 13-23 Eclipse Program July 23-30 Tibet Program

Departure: July 13-23, 10 Days – 9 Nights

Cost: \$3,195* from Beijing China

Day 1 Mon July 13

Depart U.S. for Beijing

Day 2 Tue July 14

Arrive Beijing. Transfer to your hotel in Beijing's city center, close to Tiananmen Square and the Wanfujing shopping district. Follow receipt of your welcome package and instructions, spend the afternoon getting acquainted with the hotel amenities and nearby sites, or simply unpack, unwind, and relax in your comfortable accommodations. Light Meal

Day 3 Wed July 15

An American buffet breakfast will be followed by an orientation lecture.

Today, you will visit the Great Wall of China at Mu Tian Yu. Dating back more than 2,000 years, the Great Wall is over 6,350 km, from Jianyuguan Pass in the west and to Shanhaiguan Pass in the east. You have the option to hike to the top of the Wall or take a tram, after which you can careen down an Olympic-like bobsled course, maneuvering from the top of the wall to the base below.

After lunch, with an orientation lecture, you will have a couple hours in the afternoon to relax or explore independently. Please note that English speaking guides/interpreters will be available to escort participants during periods scheduled as free or independent time.

A lecture by one of our renowned astronomers will accompany an early dinner (about 5:30). Later, with a small group of 12-15, you have the opportunity to visit a typical Beijing family's home in an apartment high-rise for snacks and refreshment, and questions and answers. BLD

Day 4 Thu July 16

After breakfast, we will visit the Temple of Heaven. Built in the 15th century, it was where Ming and Qing emperors offered sacrifices to their Gods and prayed for good harvests. Among the grounds of ancient juniper, cedar, and pine trees, listen to song birds and observe a multitude of ethnic practices that occur every morning, from tai chi and ribbon dancing to street calligraphy.

During lunch, one of our renowned astronomers will regale you with mysteries of the Universe.

This afternoon, attend a workshop with one of China's nationally recognized Master artists. You can choose from several ancient art forms, including kite making, brush painting/calligraphy, and tai chi. When not attending a workshop, you will be free for independent exploration and shopping in the Wanfujing shopping district.

After a quick noodle dinner, attend *The Legendary Kung Fu* - an astounding and captivating "Broadway caliber" show of dance, acrobatics, and martial arts. BLD

Day 5 - Fri July 17

After breakfast, we will stroll through Tiananmen Square on our way to visit the Forbidden City, which served as home and audience hall of the Ming and Qing emperors. Built between the years 1406 and 1420, the Forbidden City has over 9,000 rooms, utilized 100,000 artisans and a million laborers during construction.

We will return to the hotel after lunch, after which participants are free to relax and enjoy the hotel amenities or explore the neighborhood. Again, English speaking guides/interpreters will be available to escort you, if desired.

At about 3:30, we will regroup for transfer to the Beijing National Planetarium. This remarkable facility features two state-of-the-art planetariums, as well as a 4-D theater. We plan a planetarium show and several presentations by renowned American astronomers/astrophysicists, followed by a catered reception/dinner. BLD

Day 6 Sat July 18

After an early breakfast, we will transfer to the Beijing airport for our flight to Xian, the ancient capital of China. Lunch will be served on our flight.

Following check-in at our hotel, we will tour the Xian's massive ancient city wall. This is great place to purchase a kite from a local vendor and fly it. Later, participants will be given the opportunity to explore Xian's ethnic open market.

A multi-course dumpling dinner and Tang dynasty show has been arranged for the evening. BLD

Day 7 Sun July 19

After breakfast, we will be graced with a special lecture by Tian Jing, Deputy Director and lead archeologist of the Museum of the Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses of Emperor Qin Shihuang.

Today's excursions begin with a visit to the Da Ci'en Temple and Big Wild Goose Pagoda, magnificent and ancient Buddhist structures, which date from the 6th century. From this antiquity, we will move to modern art gallery that features exquisite life rendering paintings by Xian region farmers.

After lunch, we will visit the Tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang, guarded by thousands of terra-cotta warriors and horses. Protected by massive canopies, this site includes three extensive "dig locations," as well as the museum exhibition hall.

Following dinner of local specialties, participants will be free for the evening. BLD

Day 8 Mon July 20

After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Shanghai, moving closer to our viewing destination for China's Total Solar Eclipse of 2009.

Upon arrival in Shanghai we will take the time to visit The Bund (Zhongshan Road), 1500 meters of Shanghai's famous waterfront and the center of Shanghai's politics, economy and culture hundreds of years ago. From The Bund, west views exhibit a kaleidoscope of consulates, banks, businesses, and newspaper offices of Gothic, Baroque, Romanesque, Classicism, and Renaissance architecture, while to the east are unobstructed views of the famous Oriental Pearl TV Tower the Jin Mao Tower. We will also have time to explore Shanghai's old shopping district of narrow streets and open free-wheeling kiosks and markets.

After dinner at a Shanghai Restaurant, we will commute to Suzhou, cradle of the Wu culture and one of the oldest towns in the Yangtze Basin. Following check-in at our hotel, participants will be free for the evening. BLD

Day 9 Tue July 21

After a leisurely breakfast and lecture, we will explore the area of Suzhou. Key highlights will include:

Tiger Hill for its natural beauty, as well as historical sites, including: the Sword-Testing Rock – a rock in two pieces, supposedly cleaved by a legendary sword; the Spring of Simplicity and Honesty; Sword pond, beneath which a treasure of some 3,000 swords are believed to have been buried; and the Yunyan Pagoda, a pagoda seven stories in height whose main architectural feature is its lean – built in the 10th Century, it predates and is taller than the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Suzhou's Venice-like canals, on which we will explore by boat, reveal the city's ancient neighborhoods, as well as: Pan Gate, part of Suzhou's ancient city wall built in 514 B.C. and reconstructed in the 11th year of the Zhizheng's reign (1333-1370) toward the end of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368); and, the Precious Belt Bridge, named after the local prefect Wang Zhongshu, who in a selfless act, sold his precious belt in

order to help finance its construction. The current structure dates to the Ming Dynasty era reconstruction of 1446 AD. In preparation for the Eclipse, lunch will be accompanied by an expert lecture on the Sun and related topics. Afterward, we will visit a working silk factory and museum where you can witness the entire silk manufacturing process, from larvae to exquisite silk cloth. Here you will also have the opportunity to shop for promised gifts.

Retire early tonight in preparation for the morning Total Solar Eclipse. BLD

Day 10 Wed July 22

With box breakfasts we will depart the hotel at 5:30 AM for transfer to a municipal park-land near Jia Xing and our rendezvous with viewing the Total Solar Eclipse, predicted at 09:40 local time. In order to maximize our eclipse viewing experience, we will position ourselves as close to the center of the eclipse path as possible. There will be time to set up cameras and prepare for mid-day darkness. Following the eclipse, hopefully, in awe and celebration, we will return to Suzhou.

In the afternoon, participants will free to relax or explore the streets of Suzhou, including the Shilu Pedestrian Shopping Street. Named after "Stone Road" in English, the shopping district was paved with stones in late Qing Dynasty.

Tonight's celebration dinner is planned in our hotel's top-floor rotating restaurant. BLD

Day 11 Thu July 23

Following breakfast at the hotel, we will say farewell to our Suzhou hosts and transfer to the Shanghai airport for return flights to the U.S. For those taking the add-on to Tibet, the flight will be to Lhasa. B

**The trip price is based on double occupancy and includes: all accommodations (5 star throughout), meals identified in itinerary, transportation within China (air and bus), guide services, museum/special site entrance fees, and performance tickets, starting with your airport transfer in Beijing on Day 2 and ending at the Shanghai Airport on Day11, as described in the itinerary. The single supplement is \$1,285. Discounts for children: Child under 12-years old, with extra bed (-\$490); Child under 12-years old, sharing a double bed in a standard double room (-\$800). Discount for 3rd person in room, with extra bed: (-\$180).*

The trip price does not include: airfare to or from China, gratuities for local guides and drivers, meals when independent, alcoholic beverages, and items of a personal nature. The trip cost is subject to change, dependent upon the exchange rate and unexpected changes in transportation and ground operator costs. The trip is based on a projected RMB:USD exchange rate of 6.5:1.

TIBET AND THE QINGHAI-TIBET RAILROAD

Add-on to the China's Total Solar Eclipse 2009

Dates: July 23-30, 10 Days – 9 Nights

Cost: \$3,120* from Shanghai China

The People's Republic of China has realized its long-held dream of extending rail service across "the roof of the world." The landmark Qinghai-Tibet (Qingzang) Railway crosses the Tibetan Plateau connecting China's cities to Lhasa, the cultural and spiritual heart of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Some fifty years in the making, the railway's first leg, between Xining and Golmud, was completed over twenty years ago. However, construction of the final stretch, extending from Golmud to Lhasa, presented the project's most daunting challenges.

Pressurized like a jet, the "Sky Train," is a marvel of modern engineering, with much of the rail bed crossing fragile permafrost. At altitudes exceeding 3-mi/5-km, Tibet's first railway counts the world's loftiest train depot and highest rail tunnel among its credits. 2007 marked its first year of full operation.

Day 11 Thu July 23

From Shanghai, fly to Tibet. Upon arrival, you will be met by our local guides who will provide transfer to Lhasa. On the way, enjoy the spectacular highland views along the Yarlong Tsangpo River (the longest river in Tibet). Following check-in at your hotel, you will be free for the evening to relax and acclimatize. BLD

Day 12 Fri July 24

The first day of sightseeing begins with Lhasa's cardinal landmark- Potala Palace, a structure of massive portions. You have probably seen images of this towering structure, but the "up-close-in-personal" view of the Potala is awe-inspiring. It takes at least two hours to visit rooms, halls, and chapels of the Potala Palace.

In the afternoon, you will visit the Jokhang Temple, the spiritual center of Tibet. Pilgrims from every corner of Tibet trek long distances to the temple every day. The temple is the product of Han, Tibetan, and Nepalese architectural techniques. Later, you will visit Barkhor, the oldest street in a very traditional city of Tibet. BLD

Day 13 Sat July 25

About 8-km west of central Lhasa is Drepung, once the world's largest monastery with about 10,000 monks. This day begins with a visit to these white monastic buildings piled up on the hillside. The walk up to the hill is pleasant and invigorating, contrasted by solemn ambience inside the halls and chapels. Near the crest of the hillside, you will have excellent views of Lhasa and the distant mountains.

Drepung is one of Lhasa's two great Gelugpa monasteries, the other is Sera, approximately 5-km north of central Lhasa. Sera is not as grandiose as Drepung, but is more serene, surrounded by many small temples. The 'Buddhism Scriptures Debating' in Sera is very famous. BLD

Day 14 Sun July 26

By tour bus, we will drive from Lhasa to Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet. En route, way up on the highland, you will witness the magnificent Tibetan mountain landscape. We will stop for lunch at Yamdrok-Tso Lake, and then proceed to the top of Gangbala (4,794 meters). Though the air is thin, this is good place for a hike, with views of the Karola Summit at 5,050 meters.

Later in the afternoon, we will visit the Pelkor Chode Monastery at Gyantse. Pelkor Choede is important in Tibetan Buddhism history because it houses three sects in harmony - Sakyapa, Kadampa and Gelugpa, which at one time quarreled and fought. The Bodhi Dagoba, the Main Assembly Hall, murals and Zhacang (hall for the monks) are the most renowned parts of the monastery.

Late in the afternoon we will check into the best hotel in Shigatse (3*). BLD

Day 15 Mon July 27

In the morning we will visit Shigatse's Tashilumpo Monastery, which is the seat of the Panchen Lama sect, Tibetan Buddhism's second leading religious group. The monastery is characterized by traditional Tibetan monastic halls, chapels and other structures, connected by steep steps and narrow cobblestone alleys; these, combined with golden roofs and white, red and black exterior walls create a striking composition.

We will drive back to Lhasa after lunch. Free time will proceed dinner and a vivid presentation of Tibetan dancing and singing. BLD

Day 16 Tue July 28

At approximately 7:00 a.m. we will transfer to the train station for a 8:00 a.m. departure on the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. A rarified experience, for the next 26 hours you travel through the exotic high plateau of Tibet, offering captivating panoramas of the snow-capped Kunlun Range, the salt waters of Qinghai and Namtso Lakes, and sprawling tundra grasslands where yak and chiru graze and rare snow lotus bloom. The train continues on through the fantastic landscapes of western China's ancient silk road route to Xining. BLD

Day 18 Wed July 29

We disembark the Qinghai-Tibet Railway mid to late morning in Xining. Following transfer to our hotel and lunch, we will undertake a brief city tour, incorporating the local TU Minority's commune and families, as well as the 600-year old Dongguan Mosque, with its splendid and diversiform towers, walls and halls.

Participants will be free to relax or explore independently prior to dinner. BLD

Day 19 Thu July 30

After breakfast, we will transfer to the Xining airport for our flight to Beijing, connecting to afternoon and evening flights to the U.S. B

Note: A Bridge to China is happy to make optional transfer and hotel arrangements in the Beijing city center or near the airport for those morning flights on July 31.

A Bridge to China™ is pleased to meet individual needs, as well as provide pre or post-tour itineraries in Beijing, Shanghai, or elsewhere in China.

**The Tibet add-on price is based on double occupancy and includes: all accommodations (5* in Lhasa and Xining and 3* in Shigatse (the best available), meals identified in itinerary, transportation within China and Tibet (air, bus, train), guide services, museum/special site entrance fees, and performance tickets, starting with your airport transfer in Shanghai on July 23 and ending at the Beijing Airport on July 30, as described in the itinerary. The single supplement for the Tibet add-on is \$695.*

Accommodations on the Qinghai-Tibet train are First-class soft sleeper. Due to limited soft sleeper berths, the train must be booked for 4 participants per compartment.

The trip price does not include: airfare to or from China, gratuities for local guides and drivers, meals when independent, alcoholic beverages, and items of a personal nature. The trip cost is subject to change, dependent upon the exchange rate and unexpected changes in transportation and ground operator costs. The trip is based on a projected RMB:USD exchange rate of 6.5:1

150 to 200 participants are expected on the Eclipse segment of this tour and 30 to 40 participants are expected on the Tibet add-on. In either case, the "larger" group will be split into more intimate groups of 12 to 15, each with an expert guide/interpreter for excursions to historic sites and points of interest.