



A Musical Discovery of China – Beijing, Xian, Shanghai

Specialist music and cultural tour

16th to 25th September 2017

Songlines Music Travel, in association with Master Travel, invites music lovers and travellers alike on this wonderful trip to explore the ancient, contemporary and next generation Chinese music. Join us on our journey through China to find the best local sounds and to immerse yourself into a true cultural adventure.

With so much choice, it can be difficult to find the best places to go to, but through the expertise of our Songlines Travel Leader who will accompany the group throughout the trip, you will gain unique access to artists and musicians, visit the best live music venues, and share intimate knowledge of the places you will visit.

Highlights include:

- Meetings with record producers and listening to local folk musicians
- Experiencing the Peking Opera with privileged behind-the-scenes access
- Visiting the music studio of the Academy Award winning composer, Tan Dun
- Exploring the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and the Terracotta Warriors
- Taking part in cooking classes, visiting families and learning about Chinese culture

Beijing



What to expect

China, a hugely diverse and enthralling country, is set to become the world's largest economy within the next 5 to 10 years. Yet still, very little is known about its culture, music and people. This trip to Beijing Xian and Shanghai will allow you to discover the sounds of a billion people, from the traditional yet innovative Peking Opera, through Mongolian folk music, to the latest underground beats.

Throughout the 10 days, we will gain a true understanding of Chinese music through meeting influential record producers, enjoying performances from local musicians, taking part in traditional instrument workshops and visiting music academies. One of the many highlights will be a visit to Tan Dun's studio in Shanghai, an Academy Award winning composer, famous for his scores in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and widely recognised for using non-traditional, organic instruments.

It's not just about music however, we will also be able to explore China's most famous sights and landscapes, and

This has been a superb trip – educational, cultural, absorbing and a feast for all the senses – the music, colours, tastes, smells and sights! Thanks to Songlines for making this accessible. I hope to take this and other trips again with Songlines.

Roxa Melita on the Songlines trip to Morocco

immerse ourselves in Chinese culture by meeting families and communities, and through the expertise of our tour leader and guides.

Beijing: where ancient meets modern

Our journey will begin in the capital Beijing, the cultural heart of China. The nation's top artists, film makers and musicians converge here, making it the perfect place to take in China's ever-evolving cultural scene. Its many museums, galleries and music venues can keep visitors busy day and night.

Upon arrival, we will get a valuable introduction into Beijing with a tour of the city, and we will head out in the evening for a welcome dinner in a Chinese courtyard restaurant before catching some live music. A more thorough exploration of the city will be had the next day, starting with a drive into Zhongshan Park to watch the locals practice their singing and take part in Tai Chi. We will take a tour of Tiananmen Square, the largest public square in the world, and the Forbidden City, a royal palace on a scale like no other. We will visit an independent record company and their recording studio for an introduction into Chinese music and in the evening we will watch a performance in the old town.

The next day, we will drive to the suburb of Beijing to visit the awe-inspiring Great Wall. We will spend the morning walking the wall and taking in the magnificent views. After a picnic lunch we will head back to the city, stopping off at a nearby village where we will visit a traditional musical instrument workshop, to witness the skills that go into making instruments such as the *Erhu*, *Guqin*, *Pipa* and *Zheng*. In the evening we will enjoy a performance at the Peking Opera, having first experienced a private backstage tour and introduction about the music and traditions.

Finally, we will visit the enchanting *Hutong*, Beijing's ancient alleyways that teem with life today, as they have done for



Peking Opera



Canal in Zhujiajiao

hundreds of years. We will take part in a cooking class and have lunch with a family, before having free time in the afternoon to do some shopping in the old town or listen to some local street music in NanLuogo Xiang and Miaohua Lane.

Overnight train to Xian

In the evening, we will travel west on an overnight sleeper train to Xian, the ancient capital of China and once the starting point on the famous Silk Road. We will spend 2 nights in Xian, thoroughly

exploring the city and staying in a beautiful garden hotel.

Once we have rested after our overnight journey, we will head out to get to know the city by going to see the ancient city walls, the Calligraphy street market filled with artists and their creations, and the narrow lanes of the Muslim Quarter. Here, we will watch Huayin old tunes performed by local folk musicians. The old tunes are a rhythmic vocal opera genre derived from local shadow puppet shows in Huayin, and are thought to have been performed for over 2,000 years.

Interesting facts about China and its music:

- There is evidence of a well-developed music culture in China as early as the Zhou Dynasty (1122 BC – 256 BC). Music has since developed into multiple forms and styles through succeeding dynasties, producing the rich heritage of music that can be heard today.
- In the early 20th Century, after the end of Imperial China, Chinese music was 'modernised,' with the adoption of some Western styles. Much of what Westerners now consider to be music in the traditional Chinese style can be dated to this period.
- The Communist party of the 20th Century denounced popular music and promoted revolutionary songs instead. This delayed the introduction of Chinese pop and rock music until the late 1980s/1990s.
- Cui Jian is widely acknowledged as the 'father' of Chinese rock music. In the late 1980s, his song *Nothing to my Name* was the first time an electric guitar was used in China. He became one of the most famous performers of the time, but his socially critical lyrics angered the government leading to the cancellation of his concerts.
- China's population accounts for almost one fifth of the world's inhabitants, with an estimated 1.357 billion people living in the country.
- The railway lines of China could surround the Earth's circumference twice.
- Despite the country's rapid modernisation, over 30 million Chinese inhabitants live in caves in the Shaanxi Province.
- Even though China is the same size as the USA, it only has one time zone, with the result that in winter, western parts of China don't get light until mid-morning and in summer they stay light until midnight.

Shanghai skyline at dawn

No visit to Xian would be complete without witnessing the legendary Terracotta Warriors, the colossal expanse of life-sized models of bygone soldiers which is a relic of Chinese history. After visiting these in the morning of the second day in Xian, we will head to Xian Music Academy in the afternoon for a chance to further understand traditional music culture.

Shimmering Shanghai

The next day we will take a flight to Shanghai, where we will stay for the last 3 nights of our adventure. Upon arrival we will explore the Yu Yuan Garden, the old town and the Bund, before having some free time in Xiantian, the French Quarter, in the evening.

The next day, we will drive out to the suburb Zhujiajiao, a traditional water town, where we can wander around the

The whole trip was excellent! The opportunities provided by the tour leader to meet local bands and have private performances were outstanding, memorable and very special. So was the group of fellow travellers. The two weeks passed by so fast and I enjoyed every minute. Many thanks to all involved.

Jane Foulsham on the Songlines trip to Cuba

This is an incredible tour. We had the privilege of meeting musicians in their own homes and villages – and listening to their music was an experience of a lifetime that I will never forget.

Tiki Kyte on the Songlines trip to Rajasthan

bridges, streams and small rivers, and enjoy the town's laid back lifestyle. Here is where we will also visit Tan Dun's music studio. Tan Dun is widely recognised for using non-traditional and organic instruments in his compositions. His piece, *Water Passion after St Matthew* famously uses bowls of water in place of percussion instruments, and his *Paper Concerto* relies on manipulation of paper to create music. We will spend the afternoon hearing about his innovations and watching a water music performance produced by Tan Dun.

Our adventure in China will come to a close with a day trip to Suzhou by bullet train. Known as 'the Venice of the Orient' for its many canals, we will spend a relaxing day visiting the tranquil 'Master of the Nets Garden' where we will also be able to catch some live music. On our return to Shanghai, we will have a farewell dinner and enjoy our last experience of live music in and around the Bund.

The next day, we will use the fastest train in the world to take us to the airport for the flight home.

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Please note that this is a provisional itinerary only. The final itinerary will be confirmed in your pre-departure pack which will be sent to you 2 weeks before departure.

Saturday 16th September: Beijing **b l d**

AM: Upon arrival into Beijing, you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel, where you can relax after your flight.

PM: Meet our tour leader and the rest of the group in the hotel lobby, before being taken out on a city tour.

EVE: Enjoy a welcome dinner and experience our first night of music in the city.

Sunday 17th September: Beijing **b l d**

AM: Drive to Zhongshan Park, then visit Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City.

PM: Visit an independent record company for an introduction to Chinese music.

EVE: Watch a live music performance in The School in the old town.

Monday 18th September: Beijing **b l d**

AM: Drive to the Great Wall of China, have lunch on the wall.

PM: Visit a traditional music instrument workshop.

EVE: Have a backstage tour of the Peking Opera and enjoy a live performance.

Tuesday 19th September: Beijing – Xian **b l**

AM: Visit the Hutong, have a rickshaw ride, a cookery lesson and lunch with a family.

PM: Free time to do some shopping or listen to some street music.

EVE: Travel to Xian on the overnight sleeper train.



Terracotta Warriors

Wednesday 20th September: Xian **l**

AM: Transfer to the hotel and rest after the overnight journey.

PM: Explore the city and watch Huayin old tunes in the Muslim Quarter.

EVE: Experience some live music in Xian's bars.

Thursday 21st September: Xian **b l**

AM: Drive to the Terracotta Warriors.

PM: Visit the Xian Music Academy to hear more about Chinese music culture.

Friday 22nd September: Xian – Shanghai **b**

AM: Fly to Shanghai and transfer to the hotel.

PM: Visit the Yu Yuan Garden, the old town and the Bund.

EVE: Free time in Xintiandi, the French Quarter.

Saturday 23rd September: Shanghai **b l**

AM/PM: Day trip to Zhujiajiao, a traditional water town. Visit Tan Dun's studio and watch a performance.

EVE: More time to experience Shanghai's night life.

Sunday 24th September: Shanghai – Suzhou – Shanghai **b l d**

AM/PM: Day trip to Suzhou by bullet train.

EVE: Farewell dinner and live music by the Bund.

Monday 25th September: Shanghai – London **b**

AM: Drive to Meglev train station and travel to the airport using the fastest train in the world.

Key: **b** Breakfast **l** Lunch **d** Dinner

Tour price excluding flights to/from Beijing/Shanghai: £2,895 per person

Secure your place with a £290 deposit with the remainder payable in instalments

Single travellers: A single supplement of **£495** is payable if you wish to guarantee a single room. This does not apply if you opt to share a twin room with a fellow participant.

The cost includes:

- Accommodation: 8 nights in hotel accommodation on a Twin share basis, with breakfast included. A single room is available on payment of a supplement
- 1 night on overnight sleeper train between Beijing and Xian
- Transfers to hotels
- Internal flight from Xian to Shanghai

- Ground transportation within China
- The services of a Songlines Music Travel Leader and local guide
- All visits and musical activities as per the itinerary
- Pre-departure information

The cost excludes:

- International flights to Beijing and from Shanghai
- Visas and travel insurance. Please ensure you purchase adequate insurance cover before you leave home.
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary

Early Bird booking: £2,795 per person

valid only until
 28th April 2017

*After 28th April 2017, the tour price will be fixed at £2,895 for all travellers

- Alcoholic drinks, dinners, snacks or any purchases of a personal nature
- Tips to the hotel staff, drivers and guides
- Anything not specified in the inclusions and itinerary above

International flights to Beijing and from Shanghai

We would be delighted to arrange your flights to and from Beijing/Shanghai if you wish. Please contact the Master Travel office on +44 (0)20 7501 6375/6741 or tours@mastertravel.co.uk for current prices and availability.

Please note that all itineraries in China are subject to change according to local conditions. Due to the nature of the tour, places are limited.



Drummer at a festival



Playing Guzheng



Dragon at a festival