

TREK THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA OPEN CHALLENGE

10 - 18 OCTOBER 2009

China leaves a lasting impression on all who go there. It is a country immersed in history, mythology and ancient traditions. This huge mass of land has the largest population on Earth. Highlights include the Great Wall, Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. That's what this trek is all about; beauty, culture, people and above all a real physical and mental challenge which will earn every penny of sponsorship raised.

Day 1

Depart UK

Overnight direct flight from London Heathrow to Beijing.

Day 2

Beijing

Morning arrival in Beijing. Transfer (50 km / 1 hour) to our overnight accommodation at Yanyuan Resort. The rest of the day is free to acclimatise. After dinner this evening we hear more about the week ahead.

Day 3

Great Wall at Mutianyu

3 - 4 hours trekking approx.

Early transfer of 20 km / 30 minutes approx. to start our first day of the trek. We set off up Trout Valley where we catch our first views of the magnificent Great Wall of China at close range. After 45 minutes – 1 hour we reach the Wall. It is a challenging climb on a dirt trail lined with trees which is quite steep, but once you reach the top the views are absolutely stunning. There will be the chance to catch our breath and take some pictures. We then trek along the Wall, renovated to resemble its original grandeur. The panoramic vistas on the way are outstanding. The main challenge of today is climbing 400 steps up to the highest restored watch tower in this section. After lunch we continue on the wall for a further hour before making our way back down either on foot (approx 30 minutes) through scrub forest or it's possible to choose to descend via a mile-long toboggan (participants do this at their own risk), by cable car. There will be free time to explore the market and tourist centre of Mutianyu before transferring to the Qi Hu Hotel (30 km / 45 minutes approx.) to overnight.

Day 4

Black Dragon Paw Park

6 – 7 hours trekking approx.

We start the day with a transfer of about an hour (55 km). The morning trek starts with a gentle hike along a picturesque shallow valley with stream crossings, small waterfalls and a small Chinese settlement. After 45 minutes we stop for a quick water break, from here the walking gets much tougher as we climb a dirt trail over a ridge and into the Black Dragon Paw Park itself. There is one very steep section and staff will be on hand to help you. We then drop down the other side of the ridge over rocky terrain, at times slippery. We continue past many of the small rock-pools and reach the edge of the Black Dragon Paw Park for lunch. Afterwards we head uphill through heavy undergrowth until we arrive at the tallest single tower on this section of the Wall. It is possible to go inside and up to the top for panoramic views over the surrounding countryside. From there it's a gentle descent via a jeep track to reach the main road then a 30-40 minute transfer to the Yunhu Hotel.

Day 5

Great Wall at Gubeikou

5 - 6 hours trekking approx.

Transfer (55 km / 1 hour approx.) to the village of Gubeikou. In this area the Great Wall sits precariously along the Yanshan Mountains and is architecturally one of the most striking sections of the entire Wall. We follow a road which leads us up to the wall and we then trek eastbound along the Wall towards Jinshanling. Some sections date back to the Ming Dynasty and are un-restored which gives you a completely different experience to what you see the first day. Here the wall is approx 2-3 metres wide with a path in the centre, there are no side walls and it's overgrown. En-route we encounter many magnificent watchtowers. In fact Gubeikou used to be an important checkpoint on the Wall. Today it is one of the least-visited parts of the Wall in the Beijing area. Early afternoon we descend into a valley through fields for a picnic lunch where the Gubeikou Wall meets the Jinshanling Wall. Afterwards we climb back up to the Wall and continue trekking to the village of Shalingzi. Coach transfer 8 km / 15 minutes to the traditional Chinese-styled Longevity Travelling Palace Lodge.

Day 6

Great Wall at Jinshanling

6 - 7 hours trekking approx.

We start the day with the 8 km / 15 minute transfer back to Shalingzi. From there we set off towards the Great Wall at Jinshanling which dates back to the Ming Dynasty. It has some unusual features such as "obstacle walls" which are walls within walls used for defending against enemies who had already scaled the Wall. We trek along a dirt track for around 40 minutes until the Wall comes into view. It's then a 30 minute climb up to the Wall itself. Once we reach it we trek up and down past 14 watchtowers to lunch. Initially we walk on newly restored wall then onto less-well preserved wall. Some of the steps are very steep and quite large both up and down which makes for tough trekking. The highest point is about 700 metres above sea level and the views and scenery are incredible. After lunch there are another series of watchtowers to negotiate but things get a little easier as the steps are not so steep. After crossing a suspension bridge at Simatai and final watchtower we take a 30 minute transfer back to the Longevity Travelling Palace Lodge.

Day 7

Great Wall at Simatai

4 hours trekking approx.

An early start today for a sunrise walk on the Great Wall at Simatai. The Great Wall at Simatai also dates back from the Ming Dynasty and it boasts some 135 watchtowers. This morning we transfer approx 20 minutes back to where we left off yesterday to complete the final stage of this challenge. The trek today is short and sharp with very steep sections and some sheer drops and we climb more than 1200 steps. We leave the Wall to trek down through villages and celebrate the end of the trek. We then transfer to a hotel in Beijing (140 km / 3 hours approx). Afternoon optional foot massage to ease those aching limbs. Tonight we enjoy a celebratory dinner.

Day 8

Beijing

We have free time today to explore Beijing either independently or as part of an optional tour including the Forbidden City. Evening is free to explore Beijing. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Beijing.

Day 9

Beijing - London

We leave Beijing for the flight back to London.

This is a complex itinerary and may be subject to change

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