

IMPERIAL HORIZONS - CHINA & MONGOLIA

18 August 2027 - 11 September 2027

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$18,500

Tour Duration: 25 days

Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$2,990



OVERVIEW

Imperial Horizons is an exciting new itinerary that takes us to China and Mongolia for a 25-day discovery of these two ancient lands. From Yunnan Province at the far eastern edge of the Himalaya, to the ancient capital Xian, then on to the vast steppes and grasslands of central Mongolia, this is an adventure of epic proportions! Our journey begins in Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, also known as 'the city of eternal spring'. We then head to in the Tibetan foothills and the beautiful 'Shangri-la' towns of Lijiang and Dali. Here we see traditional houses and shops, market squares and cobbled lanes, criss-crossed by canals and beautiful arched bridges. A short flight whisks us to Chengdu, home to the largest carved stone Buddha in the world, and also the Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. We then take a train north to Xian, before flying to Hohhot, our springboard for the next phase of our journey to the immense natural beauty and nomadic traditions of Mongolia. After a two-night stay in the capital Ulaanbaatar, we head west to the huge sand dunes and the northernmost reaches of the Gobi Desert at Elsen Tasarkhai. It was here in this wilderness that the largest concentration of dinosaurs roamed the earth, and where Genghis Khan established the capital of the great Mongol empire. Continuing west we enjoy stays at Tsenkher Hot Springs and beautiful Ugii Lake, where we have the opportunity to immerse ourselves in nomadic Mongolian culture. Our final stop is Hustai National Park, home to a small population of the only remaining wild horse species in the world - Przewalski's horse. Join us on an exciting journey that takes us from the ancient dynasties of China, to the heart of the former Mongol Empire, where breathtaking and unspoilt natural beauty is inter-woven with ancient nomadic traditions.

Tour Fitness Level: Active

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TOUR MAP



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ITINERARY

18/08/2027 Australia - Singapore

Check-in at your chosen Australian airport for the flight to Singapore. On arrival we connect with our flight to Kunming.

19/08/2027 Singapore - Kunming (LD)

Depart Singapore China Eastern MU 9648, 02.30

Arrive Kunming 07.00

Known as the 'City of Eternal Spring', Kunming is located in Yunnan province and lies some 1,890m above sea level. It is a fascinating city inhabited by a large number of minority groups. On arrival in Kunming we transfer to our hotel. In the afternoon we explore the beauty of the Western Hills and also visit the glorious garden that was built for the World Horticultural Expo in 1999.

Green Lake Hotel

Kunming

20/08/2027 Kunming (BLD)

Today we drive to the magical Stone Forest. A geological phenomenon, the 'forest' was a vast sea millions of years ago. Later the movement of tectonic plates altered the earth's crust, causing the sea to recede and the limestone floor to appear. Due to the constant seeping of rain through the cracks in the limestone, some of the stone formations dissolved and the fissures broadened, producing a mass of strange rock formations.

21/08/2027 Kunming - Dali (BLD)

After breakfast we transfer to the railway station for our fast train to Dali.

Depart Kunming 10.13

Arrive Dali 12.11

Situated on the southwestern edge of China at the crossroads to Burma and Tibet, Dali is a small town in an exquisite setting. It lies on a narrow shore between a long lake and a high mountain range. Regarded by many as one of the loveliest places in China, it has a charming village-like atmosphere, and is home to the friendly Bai minority people. After lunch we visit the legendary Temple of the Three Pagodas, whose three towers are situated at the very foot of the snow-capped Cangshan Mountain range. Later we enjoy a walking tour of Old Dali.

Landscape Hotel

Dali

22/08/2027 Dali (BLD)

Situated 20 km north of Dali is Xizhou Village, which is mostly populated by the minority Bai people. This morning we visit the village and learn about the traditions and customs of the locals as we visit the markets and embroidery workshops. After lunch we take a relaxing boat ride to the picturesque Jinsuo Island, located near the eastern bank of Erhai Lake. After our visit here we return to Dali.

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23/08/2027 Dali - Lijiang (BLD)

This morning we drive to an altitude of 2,400m to Lijiang - often referred to as China's Shangri-la. Situated amid stunning mountain scenery on the edge of Tibet, the wonderful town of Lijiang is home to the Naxi people, a minority race whose origin is unknown, whose language and way of life is unique and whose rulers are women rather than men. Old Lijiang is a fantastic warren of traditional houses and shops, market squares and cobbled lanes, criss-crossed by canals and beautiful arched bridges. We enjoy a walking tour of this stunning town, including the Dongba Culture Museum which showcases the history and culture of the Naxi people. Later we check in to our hotel in the old town.

Intercontinental Hotel

Lijiang

24/08/2027 Lijiang (BLD)

Beautiful as the old city is, it is also surrounded by irresistible natural wonders. Today we visit Yak Meadow, which is located in the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain range. We take a chairlift up the mountain and enjoy a picnic in this beautiful area. In the afternoon we visit the Naxi village of Baisha, famous for its murals and frescoes.

25/08/2027 Lijiang - Chengdu (BLD)

This morning is at leisure to continue exploring the old town. After lunch we transfer to the airport for our flight to Chengdu.

Depart Lijiang Air China CA 2568, 15.50

Arrive Chengdu 17.20

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan province and is often referred to as the 'Country of Heaven'. On arrival in the city we enjoy dinner at a local restaurant before checking in to our hotel.

Shangrila Hotel

Chengdu

26/08/2027 Chengdu (BLD)

After breakfast we board our coach for the 90-minute journey to Leshan, home of a Giant Buddha carved out of the rock face of Mount Lingyun. Standing at 71 metres in height, its head sits at the top of the mountain, with its feet standing on the riverbank below. The Buddha was carved during the Tang Dynasty by more than 1,000 workers, beginning in 713 and finally completed in 803. It is believed to be the biggest carved stone Buddha statue in the world and was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. In the afternoon we return to Chengdu and visit the Panda Centre, which is home to more than 130 giant pandas.

27/08/2027 Chengdu - Xian (BLD)

After a leisurely breakfast we transfer to the railway station for our fast train to Xian.

Depart Chengdu D1924 11.40

Arrive Xian 15.53

On arrival in Xian we transfer to our hotel.

Grand Mercure Hotel

Xian

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28/08/2027 Xian(BLD)

Today we visit the extraordinary site of Qin Shihuang's Terracotta Warriors, known as the eighth Wonder of the World. This incredible 'army' consists of 6,000 life-size terracotta figures, which were discovered by farmers digging a well in 1974. The visit is an unforgettable experience. In the evening we have the chance to experience a cultural show dating back to the Tang Dynasty of more than 1,000 years ago.

29/08/2027 Xian - Hohhot (BLD)

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia.

Depart Xian Air China CA 8106, 11.20

Arrive Hohhot 12.40

On arrival in Hohhot we drive to the city and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Later we visit the Mongolian Museum, Dazhao Temple, and Hohhot's old town.

Shangrila Hotel

Hohhot

30/08/2027 Hohhot - Erlian - Board Train (BL)

This morning we board our coach for the drive to the Chinese border town of Erlian. After lunch here we drive to the border and complete customs formalities, then board our overnight train bound for Ulaanbaatar.

Depart Erlian 17.10

31/08/2027 Arrive Ulaanbaatar (LD)

This morning we travel through the rolling grassy steppes, which stretch 1,000 km north to south and 2,500 km east to west. Yaks, camels and Mongolian horses dot the austere landscape. The few towns and gers to be seen are testimony to man's ability to survive in, and adapt to, almost any environment.

Arrive Ulaanbaatar 10.25

On arrival into Ulaanbaatar we transfer to our hotel. After lunch we begin a city tour including Sukhbaatar Square.

Novotel

Ulaanbaatar

01/09/2027 Ulaanbaatar (BLD)

We continue exploring Ulaanbaatar today including Gandan Monastery, the main Buddhist centre of Mongolia, and Zaisan Memorial Hill, from where we get panoramic views of the city below. We then drive 50 km east of the city to the site of the extraordinary Chinggis Khan statue, a 40-metre high stainless steel structure of Genghis Khan on horseback. We take a lift inside the statue and emerge in the horse's mane for views of the surrounding countryside. After our visit here we return to Ulaanbaatar.

02/09/2027 Ulaanbaatar - Elsen Tsasarkhai (BLD)

Today we immerse ourselves in the nature, culture and tradition of Mongolia with a visit to the Mongol Nomadic Cultural Heritage Centre. We then begin the 140km drive to Elsen Tsasarkhai, a picturesque area with sand dunes, steppes, mountains, forests and mineral water sources. At nearby Khogno Khan

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Mountain we visit the Erdene Khamba monastery ruins, which date from the 17th century. At its height the monastery housed around 1,000 lamas.

Ger Camp

Elsen Tasarkhai

03/09/2027 Elsen Tasarkhai (BLD)

After breakfast at our camp we drive to the sand dunes where we have the opportunity to do some light trekking, or perhaps ride camels through the dunes. We return to our ger camp for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at leisure in the peaceful surrounds.

04/09/2027 Elsen Tasarkhai - Kharkhorin - Tsenkher Hot Springs (BLD)

Leaving Elsen Tasarkhai, we drive 80 kms to Kharkhorin, located near the Orkhon River - one of the biggest and most scenic rivers in Mongolia. The former capital of Mongolia, Kharkhorin is home to the country's oldest monastery - Erdene Zuu - built in 1585. Erdene Zuu is surrounded by four walls, with a gate in every side, and comprising 108 stupas. We also visit the Kharkhorin Museum which houses a scale model of the city as it may have looked in the 1250s. After our visit here we continue our drive to Tsenkher Hot Springs, our home for the next two nights.

Wooden Houses

Tsenkher Hot Springs

05/09/2027 Tsenkher Hot Springs (BLD)

A full day today to soak up the serenity of the Mongolian countryside. This is a great spot for a little light trekking in the forest, or to the valley along the

natural spring river. We also have the opportunity to enjoy a spot of horse riding in our scenic surrounds.

06/09/2027 Tsenkher Hot Springs - Ugii Lake (BLD)

After breakfast at our camp we begin our 160km drive to Ugii Lake, stopping en route at the Bilge Khan complex. This site was built during the Turkic Khaganate, which flourished during the 6th and 7th centuries in Mongolia, and consists of monumental structures and stone inscriptions that reflect the culture, art and politics of the Turkic people. During the excavation of the memorial in 2001, more than 2000 artifacts were found and the most important one among them was a gemstone inlaid golden crown of Bilge Khan, the last king of the Turkic Empire. After our visit here we continue on the Ugii Lake.

Wooden Houses

Ugii Lake

07/09/2027 Ugii Lake (BLD)

Located 1,337 meters above sea level, Ugii Lake is a freshwater lake that covers an area of 25 square kilometres, and is known for its rich bird and fish diversity. This morning we take a boat trip on the lake, looking out for some of the 150 species of birds, which include Swan Geese, Dalmatian Pelicans, and Siberian Cranes. Later we have the opportunity to try our hand at traditional Mongolian archery.

08/09/2027 Ugii Lake - Hustai National Park (BLD)

A special day today as we head to Hustai National Park, home to the only remaining wild horse species in the world - Przewalski's horse, or 'Takhi' in Mongolian. Once found throughout the steppes of

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Eurasia, by the 1960s they were found only in Mongolia's Gobi region, and by 1969 they were declared extinct in the wild. However, thanks to captive breeding programmes, the species has made a remarkable comeback, and today 380 Przewalski's horses roam and graze within Hustai National Park – the only place in the world where they exist within their historic range. After lunch at our camp we set out in search of these remarkable animals.

Ger Camp

Hustai National Park

09/09/2027 Hustai National Park - Ulaanbaatar (BLD)

This morning we enjoy breakfast at our camp, then board our coach for the three-hour drive to Ulaanbaatar. In the afternoon we visit the State Department Store – a treasure trove of authentic Mongolian souvenirs, with textiles and crafts by around more than a thousand local artisans. In the evening we enjoy a farewell dinner at the end of our momentous tour!

Novotel

Ulaanbaatar

10/09/2027 Ulaanbaatar - Beijing - Singapore (B)

After an early breakfast this morning we transfer to the airport for our flight home.

Depart Ulaanbaatar Air China CA 902, 11.50

Arrive Beijing 13.55

Depart Beijing Singapore Airlines SQ 807, 16.35

Arrive Singapore 22.50.

On arrival in Singapore connect with the flight to your chosen Australian capital city.

11/09/2027 Arrive Australia

We arrive home in Australia today.