



China Wildlife & Culture Highlights

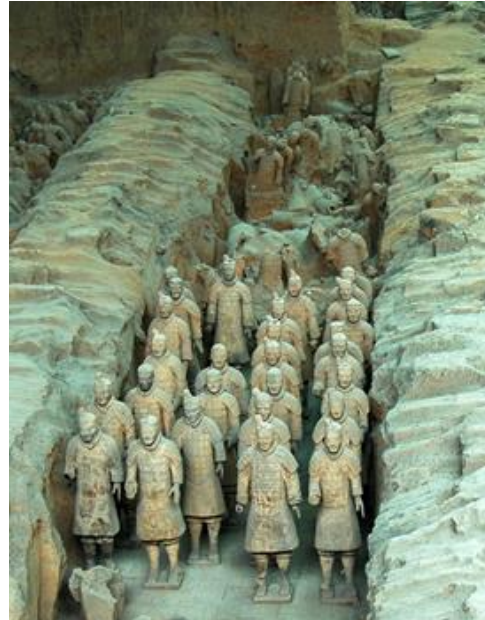
16 Days China Wildlife & Culture Highlights

Oct 12-27, 2023



Outline

- Day 1: Beijing, China
- Day 2: Beijing / Yanqing
- Day 3: Yeyahu Lake / Beijing
- Day 4: Beijing / Xi'an
- Day 5: Xian / Foping
- Day 6: Foping / Yangxian
- Day 7: Yangxian / Tangjiahe
- Day 8-9: Tangjiahe
- Day 10: Tangjiahe / Dujiangyan
- Day 11: Dujiangyan / Wolong
- Day 12-13: Balang Mountain
- Day 14: Wolong / Chengdu
- Day 15: Chengdu
- Day 16: Chengdu / Depart



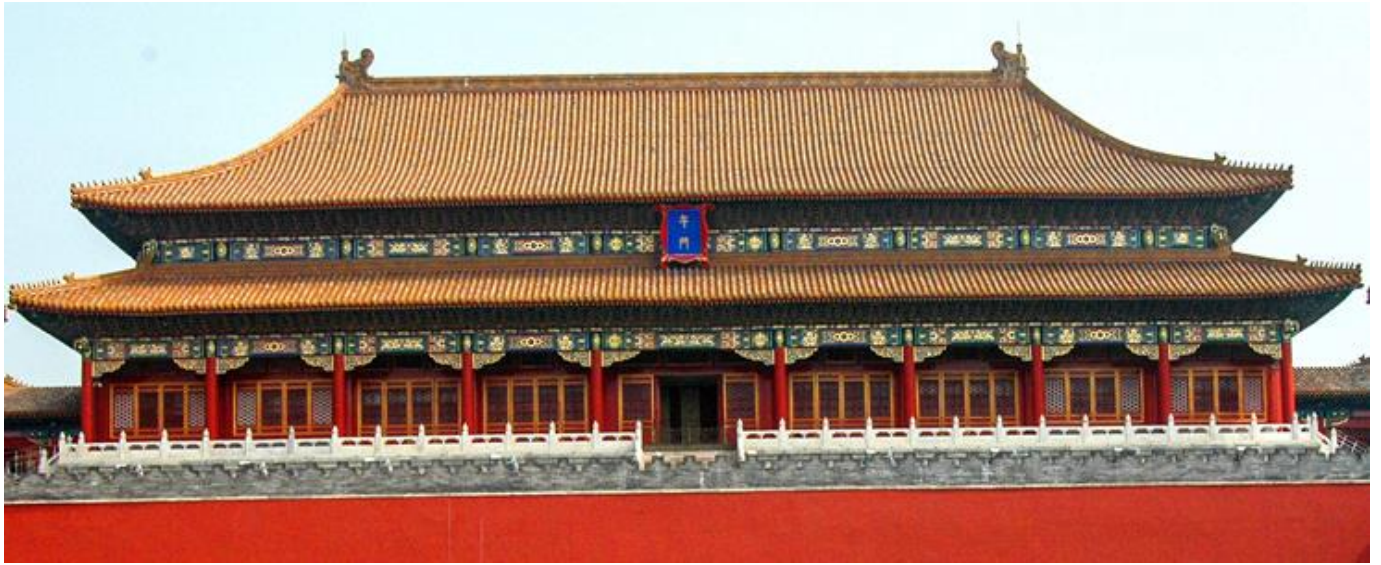
Terra Cotta Warriors



Overview

For people who have interests in both Chinese culture and nature, and hope to see them in one trip, this trip is the best choice for them. With a nature guide working as the tour leader who will show you the natural charms of China during your trip and a local guide in each place focusing on cultural explanation, this trip provides you with a unique chance to see a real China, from both nature and culture perspective. On this trip, we will visit the most classic cultural sites located in the two ancient Chinese capitals Beijing and Xi'an, including the Great Wall, Forbidden City, and Terra-Cotta Warriors. At the same time, we will also visit Mount Qingcheng and Dujiangyan Irrigation System in Sichuan to experience the indigenous Daoism and the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang.

Wildlife and birding experiences on this trip are incomparable. We will visit the Minshan Mountains, Hengduan Mountains, Qinling Mountains, 3 of the 6 mountain ranges which stand out as the most important habitats for wild pandas and their companion animals. We can expect wildlife like Takin, Chinese Goral, Golden Snub-nosed Monkey, and birds like Chinese Monal, Golden Pheasant, Temminck's Tragopan, White Eared Pheasant, Blood Pheasant, Streaked Rosefinch, Dark-breasted Rosefinch, Dark-rumped Rosefinch, Crimson-browed Finch, etc.



Forbidden City



Highlights

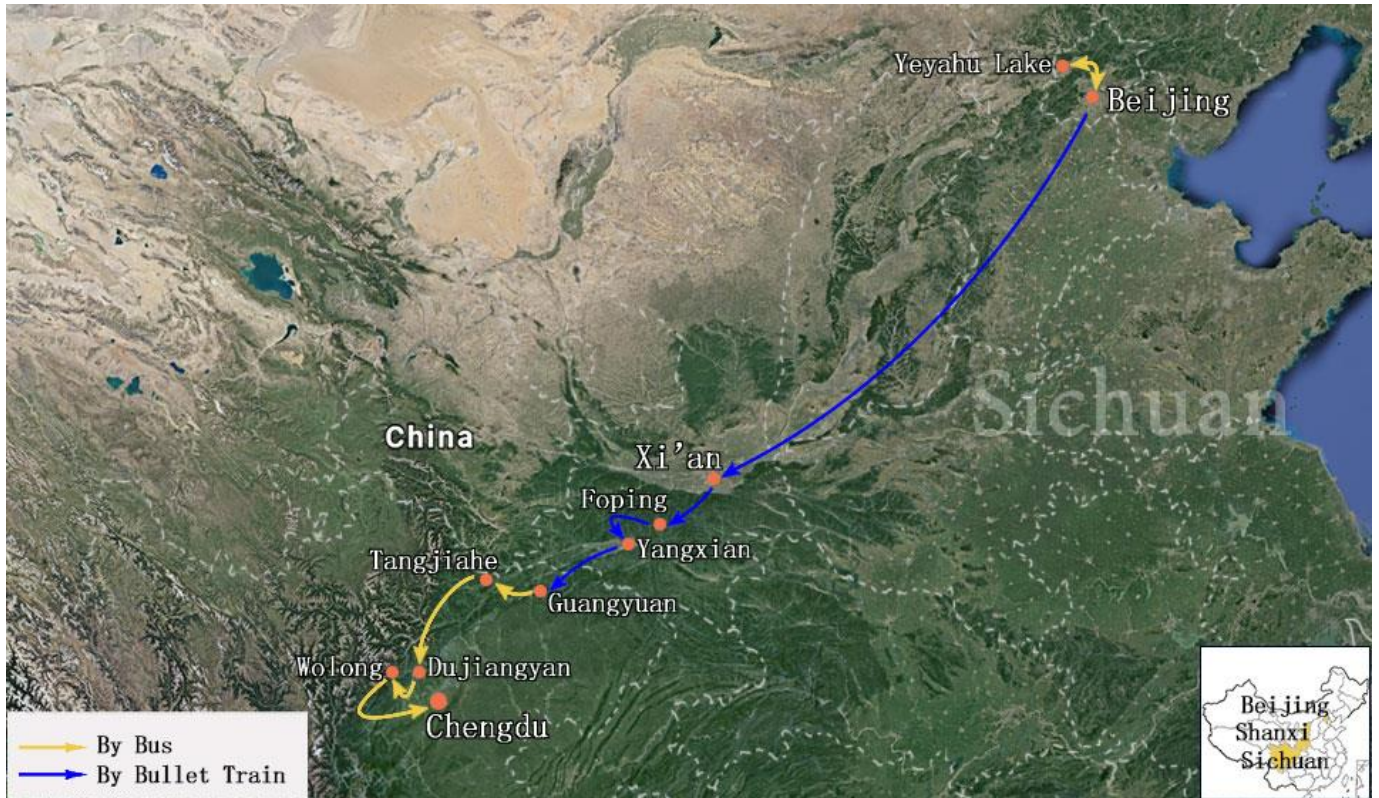
1. Visit of Great Wall, Forbidden City, Terra-Cotta Warriors, Temple of Heaven, Mount Qingcheng, Dujiangyan Irrigation System.
2. Visiting Balang Mountain, the "kingdom of pheasants" for Chinese Monal, Tibetan Snowcock, Tibetan Partridge, Chesnut-throated Partridge, etc.
3. Visiting Tangjiahe Nature Reserve, one of the best places for wildlife safari in China.
4. The breath-taking scenery of lush mountains and snow-capped mountains.
5. Experienced wildlife and culture guides ensure you a lifetime traveling experience.
6. A small group size of no more than 8 travelers.
7. Years of working as a local partner for some prestigious western companies specialized in birds and wildlife.
8. A strong logistic team in the office to ensure our trip goes smoothly and every participant has a comfortable and memorable journey.

Tour Info Sheet

Highlight Birds	Crested Ibis, Golden Pheasant, Azure-winged Magpie, Barred Laughingthrush, White-throated Laughingthrush, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Black-faced Laughingthrush, Red-winged Laughingthrush, Blue Whistling Thrush, Brown Dipper, Plumbeous Redstart, White-capped Redstart, Crested Kingfisher, White-crowned Forktail, Little Forktail, Speckled Wood Pigeon, Grey-capped Woodpecker, White-backed Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Mountain Bulbul, Spectacled Fulvetta, Yellow-bellied Tit, Sooty Bushtit, White-collared Yuhina, Slaty Bunting, Bearded Reedling, Pallas's Bunting, Sichuan Leaf Warbler, Sulphur-breasted Warbler, Rufous-faced Warbler, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, etc.
Numbers of Species to Expect	120-150
Ease of Birding	mostly easy birding with a few tricky species
Highlight Mammals	Golden Snub-nosed Monkey, Leopard Cat, Hog Badger, Takin, Tibetan Macaque, Reeves's Muntjac, Chinese Goral, Tufted Deer, Sambar, Masked Palm Civet, etc.
Other Attractions	wild panda habitat, delicate food, Forbidden City, Great Wall, Terra-Cotta Warriors, Beijing Roast Duck, Sichuan Hot Pot
Photography Opportunities	good photography chances for birds, mammals, people, and scenery
Habitats Covered	subtropical forests, woodlands, wetlands, snow mountains
Expected Climate	mostly comfortable, rain is possible, cold on Balang Mountain
Physical Requirements	mostly easy, demanding but optional on certain parts
Accommodation	very comfortable
Transportation	19-seat van



Map




Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Beijing, China.

Met by your AlpineBirding private guide or driver at the airport, then drive directly to the hotel. We can explore the city a bit if time permits. At our welcome dinner tonight, we will have the first taste of Beijing cuisine.

Day 2: Beijing to Yanqing after Forbidden City & Great Wall.

In the morning, we will drive to Forbidden City, the Chinese imperial palace from the mid-Ming Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty which is the last dynasty in Chinese history. It was originally built in 1406, for almost 500 years, it served as the seat-bed of the emperors in the Ming and Qing dynasties as well as the ceremonial and political center of the Chinese government. Following our visit to the Forbidden City, we will drive on to the Badaling Great Wall and visit it in the less-crowded afternoon time. The Badaling Great Wall is the best-preserved and most complete section with an extremely beautiful natural landscape. We will drive a short distance to Yanqing to spend the night.

Day 3: Yanqing to Beijing via Yeyahu Lake.

Drive a short distance to Yeyahu Lake and start birding there in search of waterfowls including Gadwall, Chinese Spot-billed Duck, Ferruginous Pochard, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Smew, Black-necked Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Eurasian Spoonbill, as well as other birds like the Azure-winged Magpie, Marsh Tit, Bearded Reedling, Pallas's Bunting and the spares Falcated Duck, Chinese Grey Shrike, Red-breasted Merganser. After our exploration, we will drive back to the downtown area of Beijing.



Eurasian Wigeon

Day 4: Visit Hutong, then take a train to Xi'an and visit the Muslim Quarter.

We will begin the morning by exploring one of Beijing's old hutongs and explore the unique architecture and authentic Chinese street life. Then we will drive to the train station to catch a comfortable bullet train to Xi'an. A leisure walk at the Muslim Quarter is optional tonight.

Day 5: Xian to Foping after Terra Cotta Warriors.

In the morning, we will visit the Terra-Cotta Warriors, the eighth wonder of the world which was created to guard the tomb of Qin Shihuang, the first emperor to unite ancient China. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Terra Cotta Warriors is one of the most remarkable archaeological discoveries of all time. After leisurely admire this vast array of soldiers, we will take a short bullet train ride to Foping.



Terra Cotta Warriors

Day 6: Foping to Yangxian.

Spend the morning birding and searching the habitat in Foping for species like Brown Dipper, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Little Forktail, etc., then we will transfer to Yangxian to spend the night.



Crested Ibis

Day 7: Yangxian to Tangjiahe Nature Reserve.

Located to the south of the Qingling Mountain Range, the species boundary between the south and the north, Yangxian is a very unique birding spot where we can see the endangered Crested Ibis. It was considered an extinct species until 7 Crested Ibises were found in Yangxian in the 1980s, while the population has gradually grown up to 3,000. We will spend the whole morning here until being transferred to the train station to catch our train to Guangyuan. We will take a bus from Guangyuan and drive on a breathtaking country road to the wild panda

habitat, Tangjiahe. En route, we will visit a beautiful and peaceful ancient town hide in the deep Mingshan Mountains which has a history of over 1,700 years.

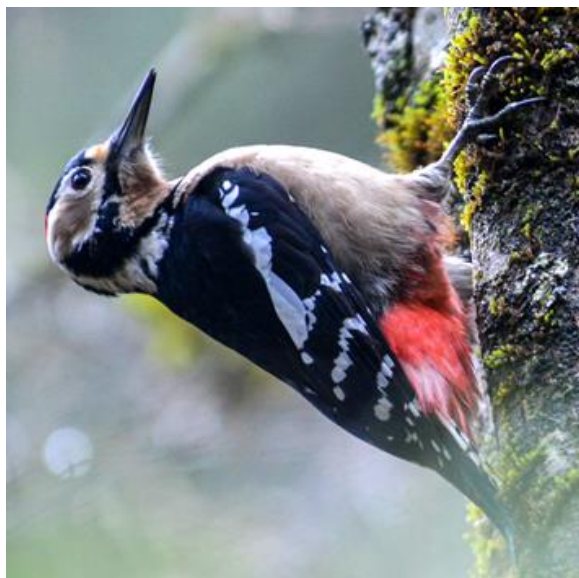
Day 8-9: Tangjiahe Nature Reserve.

Hiding in the depth of the Mingshan Mountains, Tangjiahe is one of the panda reserves in China that hosts a variety of rare mammals and birds. Tangjiahe is also known as a premier biodiversity hotspot, consisting of murmuring streams, lush mixed broadleaf-conifer forests, and cliffs. These factors have made it one of the best places to search for mammals and birds in China. Our main activities here will be arranged in the mornings and late afternoons. We will focus on two main valleys at low elevation and one trail that winds up to the middle elevation area.

The Golden Pheasant is our very top target at low elevation, we normally have a good chance of spotting some. With some patient search along the streams, we can encounter Brown Dipper, Plumbeous Water Redstart, White-capped Water Redstart, without much difficulty, we can also find Crested Kingfisher, White-crowned Forktail, and



Golden Pheasant



Great Spotted Woodpecker

Little Forktail. There is a chance to find the spectacular Tawny Fish Owl, but it requires a good amount of work and some luck.

In the broad-leaved forest, we will look for Speckled Wood Pigeon, Grey-capped Woodpecker, White-backed Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Mountain Bulbul, Spectacled Fulvetta, Yellow-bellied Tit, Sooty Bushtit, White-collared Yuhina, Slaty Bunting, Bianchi's Warbler, Martens's Warbler, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Sulphur-breasted Warbler, Rufous-faced Warbler, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, etc.

We will spend one morning doing a special hike. We will get there early to ensure we get the best chance to try Temminck's Tragopan. The dense, broadleaf foliage and bamboo forest are also home to other interesting species including Rufous-capped Babbler, Barred Laughingthrush, White-throated Laughingthrush, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Black-faced Laughingthrush, Red-winged Laughingthrush, Blue Whistling Thrush, etc. Occasionally, we can see Spectacled Parrotbill and Koklass Pheasant in this area.

Our mammal safari is sure to be one of the highlights of this trip. Takin is relatively easy to find and sometimes can be spotted from a close distance. Other widespread species like Tibetan Macaque, Reeves's Muntjac, Asian Wild Boar like wandering along the riverside, while Chinese Goral is often spotted along the steep cliffs. We may also see some challengeable species like Hog Badger, Leopard Cat, Serow, Yellow-throated Marten, Tufted Deer, and with some luck, even the elusive Asiatic Black Bear.



Takin

Day 10: Tangjiahe to Dujiangyan.

We will have a short birding hike around the hotel in the early morning before we complete a 6-hour drive to Dujiangyan.



Mount Qingcheng

Day 11: Dujiangyan to Wolong after Mount Qingcheng & Dujiangyan Irrigation System.

Located near the scenic city of Dujiangyan, Mount Qingcheng is one of the best places to gain a deeper understanding of China's indigenous religion of Daoism. With a history spanning thousands of years, Qingcheng is a host to a variety of Daoist monasteries showcasing the elegant architecture of Daoist traditions. Visitors can navigate a series of staircases winding up through peaceful forests in search of practitioners and temples dedicated to notable Daoist deities and figures. The peaceful atmosphere and cultural significance of Mount Qingcheng

have even earned its global recognition as a UNESCO world heritage site. The beautiful environment of Qingcheng is also home to a good variety of birds inhabiting the lush forest such as Great Barbet, Black-headed Sibia, Elliot's Laughingthrush, and Red-billed Blue Magpie.

Once we finish the visit to Mount Qingcheng, we depart for the Dujiangyan Irrigation System. This ancient project was built more than 2,200 years ago and is still working now. As a result of its cultural significance in the area, the Dujiangyan Irrigation System was designated as a UNESCO world heritage site. Following the visit, we will drive on to Wolong.



Dujiangyan Irrigation System



Grandala

Day 12-13: Balang Mountain.

We will spend two days birding on this fascinating birding site. Balang Mountain is the first high mountain standing between the Sichuan Basin and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, from the foot to the pass, the elevation rises sharply from 2,000m to 4,500m which provides a wide variety of habitats to support a lot of creatures. The mountain pass at around 4,500 meters is the highest point we will reach on this entire tour. Around the snow line of the alpine flowstone slope, we will search for the scurrying Snow Partridge, Tibetan Snowcock, and Grandala. Other high altitude specials we can see include Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture), Golden Eagle, Red-billed Chough, Yellow-billed Chough, Alpine

Accentor, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Snow Pigeon, Red-fronted Rosefinch, Rosy Pipit, etc.

We will also spend some time at the lower elevations around the timberline where alpine meadows and scrubs carpet the snow-covered mountain. We will visit this area several times in search of birds including the endemic Chinese Monal, White Eared Pheasant, Chestnut-throated Partridge, as well as Blood Pheasant, Koklass Pheasant, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Chinese Fulvetta, Streaked Rosefinch, Dark-breasted Rosefinch, Dark-rumped Rosefinch, Crimson-browed Finch, Common Rosefinch, Kessler's Thrush (White-backed Thrush), Rufous-vented Tit, Sichuan Tit, Alpine Leaf Warbler, Giant Laughingthrush, White-throated Redstart, etc.



Streaked Rosefinch

Additionally, we will visit the broad-leaved forest and bamboo undergrowth lower down for Eurasian Nutcracker, Green-backed Tit, Yellow-streaked Warbler, Buff-throated Warbler, Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler, White-collared Yuhina, Chinese Babax, Chestnut Thrush, Daurian Redstart, Slaty Bunting, Yellow-throated Bunting, etc. Golden Pheasant's call normally can be heard here, but it normally hides in the bush, we may see it with luck.

Day 14: Wolong Panda Base to Chengdu, then visit Jinli Street.

Start early this morning to catch up with the active time of pandas at different ages and quiet time in the morning, so that we can enjoy some less-crowded stay at the Wolong Panda Base. Here we also have good chances to see birds like White-browed Laughingthrush, Chinese Bulbul, Chinese Babax, etc.



Giant Panda

In the afternoon, we will drive back to Chengdu and visit Jinli Street, one of the oldest commercial streets in China featuring traditional architectures of Qing and Ming dynasties (1644-1911), and modeled after the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms". Ranked at the top of the 21 world's most beautiful streets by CNN Travel in 2019, Jinli Street has something for everyone including delicious street food, handcrafted souvenirs, and live entertainment. We will experience the famous hot pot for dinner tonight.

Day 15: Chengdu City Exploration (Jinsha Site Museum, Kuanzhai Alleys, People's Park).

Served as the capital of the Ancient Shu Kingdom from 12th to 7th century B.C., the Jinsha archaeological site is a speaking witness of the brilliant ancient civilization in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, and it provides crucial evidence to the theory that the origins of ancient Chinese civilization came from multiple sources. Jinsha has probably the richest gold and jade wares and the most centralized elephant tusks in the world. Watching the massive gold, bronze, jade, stone, ivory could bring you to traverse space-time back to 3,000 years to see this brilliant civilization.

This afternoon, we will explore the city more and enjoy its typical laid-back lifestyle by visiting Kuaizhai Alleys, a commercial street that once served as a living area of Manchu soldiers in the Qing Dynasty, now it is an alive place where you can find interesting food and souvenirs. We will also visit the People's Park nearby to experience local people's daily life.



Kuaizhai Alley

Tonight, an interesting Sichuan opera is optional. We can enjoy the eye-catching performances of fire breathing and face changing at a local theater.

Day 16: Departure from Chengdu.

Following a lovely breakfast at the hotel, you will be transferred to the airport to depart from Chengdu. This will conclude the services for this scheduled itinerary from AlpineBirding.



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