



INDEPENDENT TRAVEL GUIDE

CHINA: BEIJING & SHANGHAI

A tested 9-day family route through two megacities

BALU_TRAVEL

BEFORE THE TRIP

The route combines imperial Beijing, a Great Wall day and the modern energy of Shanghai.



- Visa rules can change. Check current requirements and remember that the validity dates are day-month-year.
- Bring some cash and connect Alipay to a foreign card. A spare card is useful.
- An eSIM works for data. WeChat is essential inside China, while a VPN may be needed for familiar services.
- Download offline maps before departure. Maps.me helped us when Google Maps was unreliable.

Save passport copies, hotel names and key addresses in Chinese.

DAY 1 - FORBIDDEN CITY AND PEKING DUCK

Start with Beijing's most famous historic complex and finish with a proper first dinner.



- Book the Forbidden City online in advance. If your date is sold out, check nearby parks and return on another day.
- Allow most of the day for the palace grounds and the surrounding area.
- Dinner was at Michelin-listed Siji Minfu for Peking duck. Arrive early: queues grow quickly.
- In the evening, take a rickshaw ride through the hutongs for a completely different side of the city.

Popular attractions often require passport details at booking.

DAY 2 - SUMMER PALACE AND A HUTONG FOOD WALK

A slower day with architecture, water and local food.



- The Summer Palace is a huge combination of gardens, pavilions and Kunming Lake. Wear comfortable shoes.
- Plan time for the lakeside promenade and the main viewpoints rather than trying to see every corner.
- In the evening, explore the hutongs and build your own tasting route: dumplings, street snacks, grilled food and dessert.
- Short taxi rides between distant food stops save a lot of energy.

DAY 3 - SHILINXIA VIEWPOINT

Shilinxia is about 110 km from Beijing and makes a dramatic mountain day trip.



- The glass viewing platform is reached by cable car and walking trails.
- Bring water and a light snack. Shops at the top are limited and expensive.
- Weather can change quickly in the mountains, so keep the day flexible.
- The viewpoint is impressive even in mist, but clear days give the best photographs.

Check cable car operation and visibility on the morning of the trip.

DAY 4 - GREAT WALL

The Great Wall deserves a full day and an early start.



- We used the funicular in one direction and a toboggan-style descent in the other.
- The route is easier when you choose one section in advance instead of improvising on arrival.
- Take water, sun protection and shoes with good grip.
- A driver is the simplest family option if you want to avoid several transport changes.

TRANSFER - BEIJING TO SHANGHAI

The high-speed train takes about four hours and is the easiest city-to-city option.



- Buy tickets in advance, especially around weekends and holidays.
- Arrive early enough for security and the long walk through the station.
- Keep passports handy: they are used for ticket checks.
- Pack snacks and a light layer for the air-conditioned carriage.

Train tickets and travel updates are shared in the Balu_travel channel.

DAY 5 - OLD TOWN AND PUDONG SKYLINE

Use the first Shanghai day for contrasts: historic lanes by day and skyscrapers after dark.



- Walk the Old Town area before the busiest evening period.
- Browse small shops, food stalls and lantern-filled streets.
- Continue to Pudong or a river viewpoint for the illuminated skyline.
- Leave room in the plan for simply walking: Shanghai rewards detours.

DAY 6 - SHANGHAI DISNEYLAND

A full theme-park day for the family.



- Two adults chose fast rides while our son preferred the calmer attractions.
- Pirates of the Caribbean became the family favourite.
- Stay for the final light and fireworks show if everyone still has energy.
- Buy tickets early and check the current park app for opening hours and ride closures.

Comfortable shoes matter more than any perfect park strategy.

DAYS 7-9 - THE BUND, JADE BUDDHA AND ART

Finish with the waterfront, a quieter temple and contemporary Shanghai.



- Walk The Bund for the classic view across the Huangpu River.
- Visit the Jade Buddha Temple for a calmer morning and beautiful courtyards.
- The Museum of Contemporary Art was a strong final stop and offered free entry during our visit.
- Plan restaurants as separate destinations: in China, a park visit can easily include a long search for food.

Verify opening hours and free-entry rules before visiting.