

9 Days Chengdu, Chongqing, Yangtze River Cruise and Shanghai Tour

Trip overview

Discover the captivating diversity of China on this **9-day essential journey**, sweeping through the home of pandas, the majestic Three Gorges, and the futuristic metropolis of Shanghai. This meticulously designed tour offers a seamless blend of intimate wildlife encounters, relaxing luxury cruising, and deep cultural exploration.

Your adventure begins in **Chengdu**, where you'll come face-to-face with the adorable Giant Pandas. Next, head to **Chongqing**, the "Mountain City," to board a **luxury 5-star Yangtze River cruise**. For three nights, you will sail through the breathtaking **Three Gorges**, witnessing the raw power of nature and the engineering marvel of the Three Gorges Dam. Your journey concludes in **Shanghai**, where you'll walk the historic Bund and look out from the world's tallest skyscrapers. From the spicy flavors of Sichuan to the cosmopolitan elegance of the East Coast, this is the ultimate China experience.

- **Durations:** 9 Days
- **Destinations:** Chengdu - Chongqing - Yangtze River Cruise - Shanghai
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://asiachinatour.com/9-days-chengdu-chongqing-yangtze-shanghai-tour/>

Itinerary

Day 1: Chengdu Arrival

Welcome to the "Land of Abundance"! Upon your arrival at **Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport (CTU)**, **Tianfu International Airport (TFU)**, or one of the city's high-speed railway stations, you will be warmly greeted by your private English-speaking guide and driver.

You will then be transferred to your hotel in the city center in a comfortable private vehicle. After checking in, the rest of the day is yours to unwind or begin exploring this relaxed and vibrant city at your own pace. As the culinary capital of China, Chengdu offers an endless array of flavors—you might choose to spend your first evening strolling through the historic **Jinli Ancient Street** or **Kuanzhai Alley** (Wide and Narrow Alleys) to sample local snacks and soak in the traditional Sichuanese atmosphere.

Accommodation: Hotel in Chengdu

Meals: /

Professional Advice:

*Depending on which airport you arrive at, the transfer to the city center can take between 45 to 90 minutes. Chengdu is famous for its "teahouse culture," so we recommend finding a local park to sit and enjoy a cup of jasmine tea to instantly feel the city's slow-paced charm. If you are feeling adventurous for dinner, Chengdu's famous **Sichuan Hotpot** is a must-try, but remember to ask for "mild spicy" (wei-la) if you aren't used to the local heat!*

Day 2: Chengdu - Pandas, Zen & The Local Way of Life

After breakfast, your guide will take you to the **Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding**. To see the pandas at their most active, you will arrive in the morning as they enjoy their first bamboo meal of the day. You'll wander through the lush, bamboo-shaded pathways to observe these national treasures—from playful juveniles tumbling in the grass to peaceful adults. If you are lucky, you may even see tiny pink newborns in the **Panda Nursery**.

In the afternoon, you'll find spiritual peace at **Wenshu Monastery**, the best-preserved Buddhist temple in Chengdu. Walk through its tranquil courtyards and admire the exquisite collection of ancient calligraphy and Buddhist statues. Next, you will head to **People's Park** for a quintessential Chengdu experience: sitting at a traditional open-air teahouse. Here, you can sip jasmine tea, watch locals engage in lively games of Mahjong, and perhaps even try a famous Sichuan "ear cleaning" service. Finally, end your day at **Jinli Old Street**, where you can stroll past red lanterns and traditional wooden buildings while sampling local delicacies like "Three Cannonballs" (sticky rice balls) or spicy beef jerky.

Accommodation: Hotel in Chengdu

Meals: Breakfast

Professional Advice:

Pandas are most active in the cool morning hours and often sleep during the heat of the afternoon, so we prioritize an early start. While at People's Park, don't miss the "Matchmaking Corner," where parents post profiles of their children—it's a fascinating window into local social customs. If you're looking for souvenirs, Jinli is the best place to find high-quality Shu embroidery or traditional shadow puppets. For photography, wait until the sun sets and the lanterns in Jinli are lit up for a truly magical atmosphere.

Day 3: Chengdu to Chongqing - High-Speed Rail & "Mountain City" Exploration

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the railway station for a swift **bullet train journey** to Chongqing. Crossing the Sichuan Basin in just 1.5 to 2 hours, you'll arrive at Chongqing North Railway Station, where your local private guide and driver will be waiting to welcome you to China's most dramatic "Mountain City."

After checking into your hotel and enjoying a short rest, your exploration begins at **Ciqikou Old Town** (Porcelain Village). Once a busy port during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, its steep, narrow lanes are now lined with traditional teahouses, handicraft shops, and local snack stalls—don't miss the famous "Mao Xue Wang" or crispy fried dough twists. Next, you will visit the **Three**

Gorges Museum, located directly opposite the People's Grand Hall. This world-class museum provides essential context for your upcoming cruise, showcasing the history, culture, and incredible engineering feats of the Yangtze River region. The rest of your day is free to explore the neon-lit streets of this vertical metropolis at your own pace.

Accommodation: Hotel in Chongqing

Meals: Breakfast

Professional Advice:

*Chongqing is known as a "3D City"—you might find that the 10th floor of one building is actually the ground level of another! For your free evening, we highly recommend visiting **Hongya Cave** (Hongyadong). This stilt-house complex built into the cliffside looks spectacular when illuminated at night and bears a striking resemblance to the bathhouse in the movie *Spirited Away*. Be prepared for plenty of steps; comfortable walking shoes are a must in this hilly terrain.*

Day 4: Chongqing - Ancient Art & Cruise Embarkation

After breakfast, you will travel out of the city to the **Dazu Rock Carvings**, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the four great grotto clusters in China. Dating back as far as the 7th century, these carvings represent the pinnacle of Chinese rock art. You will explore the **Baodingshan** site, where thousands of remarkably preserved statues are carved directly into the horseshoe-shaped cliff. These intricate works blend Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian teachings, with the 31-meter-long **Reclining Buddha** and the shimmering **Thousand-Hand Guanyin** serving as the undeniable highlights.

In the late afternoon, you will return to the city and transfer to **Chaotianmen Port**, located at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing Rivers. After a smooth check-in process, you will board your **luxury Yangtze River cruise ship**. Take some time to explore the ship's amenities and enjoy the stunning "Cyberpunk" night view of Chongqing's skyline from the sundeck. At **9:00 pm**, the ship will weigh anchor and begin its majestic journey downstream into the heart of China.

Accommodation: Luxury Yangtze River Cruise Ship

Meals: Breakfast

Professional Advice:

The drive to Dazu takes approximately 2 hours each way, but the artistic detail and historical significance make it well worth the trip. Once on board the cruise, the ship's staff will provide a detailed briefing on the next few days' itinerary. We recommend keeping a light jacket handy for the sundeck, as the river breeze can be cool at night. Chaotianmen Port is very busy; your guide will ensure you reach the correct pier for your specific ship, so you can relax and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere.

Day 5: Yangtze River Cruise - Ancient Wonders & Cultural Immersion

The morning begins with a scenic buffet breakfast as the ship glides along the mist-shrouded Yangtze. Today, depending on your specific cruise line's schedule, you will participate in a shore excursion to either the "Pearl of the Yangtze" or the "City of Spirits."

If your itinerary visits **Shibaozhai Pagoda**, you will marvel at a 400-year-old architectural wonder. This 12-story vermilion pavilion was built flush against a sheer cliff without the use of nails, earning it a reputation as one of the "eight strangest buildings in the world." For those visiting

Fengdu Ghost City, you will explore a fascinating complex of temples and shrines dedicated to the Chinese afterlife. This site offers a unique deep dive into the fusion of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist beliefs regarding the journey of the soul.

In the evening, enjoy a formal **Captain's Welcome Reception**. After dinner, the ship's crew—many of whom are talented performers—will put on a vibrant cultural show featuring traditional dance and music, followed by evening entertainment in the lounge.

Accommodation: Luxury Yangtze River Cruise Ship

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Professional Advice:

If visiting Shibaozhai, be prepared for some climbing—the wooden stairs inside the pagoda are steep, but the view of the river from the top is spectacular. For Fengdu, the site involves quite a few stairs as well; however, a cable car is usually available for a small fee if you prefer a more relaxed ascent. Onboard, the evening shows are a great way to mingle with fellow travelers. Be sure to check the daily ship newsletter (usually delivered to your cabin) for the exact timing of activities and the next day's "Three Gorges" passage.

Day 6: The Three Gorges - Mist, Canyons & Emerald Streams

Today marks the scenic highlight of your Yangtze journey. Early in the morning, find a spot on the sundeck as the ship enters **Qutang Gorge**. Though it is the shortest of the Three Gorges at only 8 kilometers, its "Kui Gate" entrance is so iconic it is featured on the back of the Chinese 10-yuan note. Witness the dramatic limestone cliffs that flank the river like massive skyscrapers.

Next, the ship sails into the 45-kilometer-long **Wu Gorge**, renowned for its deep, serene beauty and the "Twelve Peaks" that are often shrouded in mystical mountain mists. Look out for the famous **Goddess Peak**, which stands like a graceful maiden guarding the river.

In the afternoon, you will board smaller boats for an intimate side excursion into the **Lesser Three Gorges** (or the Shennong/Goddess Stream, depending on water levels). These narrower tributaries offer a closer look at the raw natural beauty of the region—think emerald-green water, sheer vertical cliffs, and "hanging coffins" tucked into ancient caves. Keep your eyes peeled for wild monkeys playing on the riverbanks and various rare water birds soaring above the hidden waterfalls.

Accommodation: Luxury Yangtze River Cruise Ship

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Professional Advice:

The Qutang Gorge passage happens quickly, so listen for the ship's public announcements so you don't miss the Kui Gate! For the afternoon excursion, we recommend bringing your binoculars for birdwatching and monkey spotting. Even if the sun is out, the breeze in the narrow canyons can be quite cool, so a light windbreaker is a smart addition to your day bag. This is widely considered the best photography day of the entire trip, so ensure your camera batteries are fully charged.

Day 7: Three Gorges Dam to Shanghai - Engineering Marvels & The Bright Lights

Your final morning on the river brings you to the grand finale of the Yangtze cruise. After breakfast, you will disembark at **Maoping Port** in Xiling Gorge. A coach will take you to the **Three Gorges Dam** site, the world's largest and most ambitious hydroelectric project. From the viewing platforms, you will appreciate the sheer scale of this engineering masterpiece, designed to tame the Yangtze's floodwaters while generating immense power and improving navigation for international shipping.

Around noon, you will be driven to the **Yichang Sanxia Tourist Center**, marking the end of your cruise service. Your private driver will then escort you to **Yichang Sanxia Airport (YIH)** for your flight to **Shanghai**. Upon landing in China's premier cosmopolitan hub, your local Shanghai guide and driver will meet you and transfer you to your hotel. As you drive through the city, you'll immediately feel the shift in energy from the serene river canyons to the neon-lit, futuristic pulse of the "Pearl of the Orient."

Accommodation: Hotel in Shanghai

Meals: Breakfast

Professional Advice:

The Three Gorges Dam area has strict security; please ensure you have your passport with you for the site entry. At the dam, the "Five-Stage Ship Lock" is a fascinating sight—it's like a giant water staircase for massive cargo ships. Upon arrival in Shanghai, if you have any energy left after your flight, we recommend a quiet evening walk near your hotel to experience the city's unique blend of colonial history and modern luxury. The contrast between the misty Wu Gorge and the glowing skyscrapers of Pudong is one of the most striking experiences this tour offers.

Day 8: Shanghai - A Symphony of Tradition and Modernity

Your exploration of China's most cosmopolitan city begins at **People's Square**, the leafy heart of Shanghai. You will visit the **Shanghai Museum**, a world-class institution whose architecture resembles a traditional Chinese bronze cooking vessel. Inside, you'll journey through eleven galleries housing priceless treasures, including ancient bronzes, delicate ceramics, and intricate jade carvings that span thousands of years of Chinese history.

Next, you will experience the city's pulse with a walk down **Nanjing Road**, Shanghai's premier shopping thoroughfare. This bustling pedestrian street leads you directly to **the Bund**, the city's iconic waterfront. Standing here, you are flanked by the majestic "Gallery of Nations"—a row of colonial-era heritage buildings—while across the Huangpu River, the futuristic skyline of Pudong rises like a forest of steel and glass. Your cultural journey continues at **Yu Yuan Garden**, a Ming Dynasty masterpiece. This five-acre sanctuary offers a peaceful retreat with its exquisite rockeries, lotus ponds, and winding dragon walls.

In the afternoon, you will cross the river to **Lujiazui**, the financial hub of Asia. You'll be surrounded by architectural giants, including the Oriental Pearl Tower and the Shanghai Tower. Your guide will take you to the **88th-story Observation Deck of the Jin Mao Tower**. From this incredible height, you will enjoy a mind-blowing, 360-degree view of the winding river and the sprawling metropolis below. After a full day of discovery, you will be driven back to your hotel.

Accommodation: Hotel in Shanghai

Meals: Breakfast

Professional Advice:

Shanghai involves a fair amount of walking, especially through the museum and along the Bund,

so comfortable shoes are essential. At Yu Yuan Garden, the surrounding "Old City" market is a fantastic place to try the famous **Nanxiang Steamed Buns (Xiao Long Bao)**, but be prepared for a queue! When visiting the Jin Mao Tower, if the weather is clear, try to time your photos to capture the contrast between the historic Bund and the modern skyscrapers. For your final evening in Shanghai, a cruise on the Huangpu River or a visit to the Xintiandi entertainment district are excellent ways to celebrate your last night.

Day 9: Shanghai Departure

Enjoy a final breakfast at your hotel, perhaps savoring a few last local delights like *Shengjianbao* (pan-fried pork buns). Depending on your flight or train schedule, you might have some time for a final stroll through the nearby French Concession, known for its plane-tree-lined streets and historic villas, or a quick visit to a local silk market for high-quality souvenirs.

At the designated time, your private English-speaking guide and driver will meet you in the hotel lobby. You will be transferred in comfort to **Shanghai Pudong International Airport (PVG)**, **Hongqiao International Airport (SHA)**, or one of the city's major railway stations for your onward journey. As you head toward your next destination, you'll carry with you the diverse memories of China—from the playful pandas of Chengdu and the misty majesty of the Three Gorges to the dazzling skyline of Shanghai. We wish you a smooth and pleasant trip!

Accommodation: /

Meals: Breakfast

Professional Advice:

*Shanghai is a massive city, and traffic to Pudong Airport can be unpredictable, especially during morning rush hours. We typically recommend leaving your hotel at least 3.5 to 4 hours before an international flight and 2.5 hours before a domestic flight or high-speed train. If you are departing from Pudong Airport, you might consider asking your guide about experiencing the **Maglev**, the world's fastest commercial magnetic levitation train, which can reach speeds of 430 km/h (267 mph) on its way to the airport—a fittingly futuristic end to your China adventure!*

Booking Policy

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation by Customer

- Cancellation received before 60 days: FREE of charge
- Cancellation received from 30 days to 59 days prior arrival date: 20% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 15 days to 29 days prior arrival date: 40% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 7 days to 14 days prior arrival date: 70% of total rate
- Cancellation received less than 7 days prior arrival date or No show: 100% of total rate

Children Policy

The rate for children applicable for one child sharing a twin or double cabin with two adults.

- For infant (<04 years old): Free of Charge
 - 04 - 11 years old without bed: 50% adult rate
 - 04 - 11 years old with extra bed: 75% adult rate
 - Above 11 years old with extra bed: 100% adult rate
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