

great wall cycle challenge, q&a



how big is the group?

Each group is intended to be a minimum of 12 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 25 people due to the Wilderness environment in which the expedition is taking place

who do we fly with?

You will be flying from London Heathrow to Beijing. The flying time is approx. 9-10 hours. Your flight tickets will be issued to you upon departure at the airport. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance).

do I need a visa?

UK Citizens DO require a visa to enter China. You cannot obtain visas upon entry to China. We will supply you with the relevant form and expedition confirmation details in order for you to do so 3 months prior to departure. You will also need 1 passport photo, a passport with 6 months to run from the end of your expedition and £30 single entry tourist visa fee. Also see Travel Tips.

what's the luggage allowance?

Luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum - details on what to pack are provided in your Kit List. 15kgs is the maximum allowance. On your outward journey, please take your cycling gear in your hand luggage in case any luggage gets delayed. Each day when you begin to ride, your personal kit will be transported to the next hotel. You will only need to have a handle bar bag or bum bag with you during the day and you will be able to access your day pack at rest stops. You will be responsible for loading and unloading your luggage from the vans, which will transit them between locations.

what will the accommodation be like?

The accommodation ranges from fairly basic, but adequate to excellent hotels, lodges and inns. The hotels in Beijing will be of a three star standard and very comfortable. The accommodation throughout the ride will be based on two or three sharing a room throughout. All rooms are en-suite. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with, please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

what are the toilet/washing facilities like?

These range from very basic (squatting behind a bush during cycling) to normal Western standards in the accommodation. There will be en-suite toilet and washing facilities at the hotels and lodges.

will my valuables be safe?

Generally speaking, yes, but if you don't need it, don't bring it, is a good rule. Safety deposit boxes are usually provided in Beijing for guests' use in the hotels but otherwise use a padlock on your luggage when in transit to reduce the risk of theft. Carry your passport with you and make sure you have a photocopy of your documents (travel insurance etc) in case they get lost or damaged.

what is the food and drink like?

Food is basic but filling. In recent years, breakfast has become more Westernised, with eggs, tomato and cucumber, and cooked meats. Lunch will usually be a sandwich along with nuts, fried chicken, and an apple etc. Dinner will consist of Chinese dishes and of course rice or noodles. There will also be some vegetable dishes on offer but the meals tend to be very meat orientated. Vegetarian options can be provided but the choice will be limited (there is a stigma of poverty in China attached to not eating meat). It is important that you eat as much as possible during the biking phase in order to replace body salts lost due to increased perspiration. Those with personal eating restrictions should bring snacks to supplement their meals. The tap-water is not safe to drink. Bottled water will be provided during the cycling sections, and you can buy bottled water or soft drinks in hotels and lodges for meals. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

who will be leading the group?

There will be an English-speaking expedition leader who will be responsible for the logistics and co-ordination of your expedition. There will also be numerous local support staff to assist them. The expedition leader will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

what is a typical day?

You will wake at around 7am, have breakfast then pack your daypack for the next section of the cycle. You will be given enough water for the day and your packed lunch to carry. The rest of your luggage will be transported for you to the next destination. At around 8.30am we will begin the day's ride stopping for lunch on a scenic spot around midday. You will be cycling for 4-6 hours each day and arriving in the late afternoon at your next accommodation.

what are the bikes like?

The bikes are 21-speed with front suspension and V-Brakes. They all have a water bottle carrier and a luggage carrier at the back. **Please indicate your height on your booking form so that we can book the correct size bike well in advance.**

how fit do I need to be?

Training is definitely required. It is important that you work specifically on your stamina, leg and joint strength, and balance in order to get as much out of the challenge as possible. Don't forget that the temperature and climate is different to the UK and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days -the heat and distances will be your biggest challenge. Also see Fitness Training notes.

what if I can't keep up?

The event is not a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's cycling abilities. We allow for this. There will always be a staff member at the back of the group to ensure you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace. If we find somebody is unable to cycle at all, then we can transport them from one location to the next.

what happens if I fall ill, can't keep up or there is an emergency?

It is policy that participants must wear a helmet, please take your own for comfort reasons. Be aware that cycling can be dangerous and accidents can happen, you must be responsible for your own safety whilst riding. Throughout the expedition, back-up support will be close by, and we maintain mobile phone contact with the back up team. If for any reason any injury should occur, or continuation is not possible, a relief vehicle will be made available. The relief vehicle will be a private air-conditioned bus, minibus or jeep that will support the ride throughout the tour. The support bus is there for clients who need to rest, to carry the spare bike parts, and will often contain refreshments such as water, snacks and soft drinks to make riding more enjoyable. The support bus will follow at a discreet distance all the time. During transfer sections, the bikes will be carried in the bus where necessary. The guide will carry water and the first aid kit with him/her until the trail joins the main track where the bus will be waiting.

what is included in the cost of the expedition?

The following items are included: International flights from London to Beijing (return), overland transfers, all accommodation, bikes, all meals during the itinerary (any additional food and drink at your own expense), drinking water whilst cycling, support team (guides, drivers), back up facilities, provision of first aid supplies, airport departure tax, a Charity Challenge T-Shirt, US\$20 to the local community project, and discount from Nomad Travellers Stores for personal equipment. We also make a contribution through Climate Care to offset the equivalent CO2 emissions of your international flight.

what is not included in the cost of the expedition?

Vaccinations, visa, tips for the support team & tour leader, personal spending money, additional activities and travel to and from UK Airport of departure are not included.

what shall I do about spending money?

Essentially you do not need to spend very much money since all accommodation and meals are included in the trip. A minimum amount of about £15 a day should suffice just for the occasional beer and snack however there will also be souvenir buying occasions along the way. Along on some parts of the route there are vendors selling books, postcards, t-shirts etc, plus some opportunity for buying souvenirs so please take extra for this. You may also visit jade, silk or tea factories for example and want more money for souvenirs. Beijing will be more expensive than the rural areas you may visit & you may want to shop and visit extra sights here. You should also remember to budget for a tip for the support team. Please see the Fact File for China for more info on obtaining currency.

how much would you recommend for tips?

Tipping is 100% discretionary. You should not feel obliged to tip if you do not feel it is appropriate. All staff are paid a fair wage. However, if you choose to and need to budget for the trip, we would suggest allowing between £20 and £25.

should I take gifts or clothes for the locals?

Charity Challenge strongly discourages the giving of money, however small, or sweets as we do not want to encourage begging. For every participant on a Charity Challenge event, we will donate US\$20 to a local community project in the vicinity of the Wall that you are trekking on, to benefit the local community. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and so on from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income.

what do you do to protect the environment?

We are keeping to a relatively small group size so that we limit the impact we have on the surrounding environment. We follow the local guidelines on cultural respect and environmental protection. We will also be donating US\$20 per participant towards a local community project managed by Plan International (educational, health, environmental, or preservation of the Great Wall).

can you recommend any literature about the region?

- Jung Chang's mega-seller Wild Swans is a fascinating family saga spanning three generations against the backdrop of China's turbulent 20th century history.
- Colin Thubron's "Behind the Wall" and Paul Theroux's "Riding the Iron Rooster" remain the two best recent travel books written about China, while older travelogues include Isabella Bird's "The Yangtse and Beyond" and Peter Fleming's "One's Company".
- Lonely Planet Guide to China

english

Hello / Goodbye
Thank you
How are you?
Pleased to meet you
Excuse me
I'm sorry!
My name is...
I don't understand
Yes / No
How much is it?
What is the time?
Zero
One
Two
Three
Four
Five
Six
Seven
Eight
Nine
Ten

chinese

Ni hao / Zaijian
Xiexie
ni hao ma?
hen gao xing renshi nin
ma fan ni
Duibuqi
Wo xing...
Wo tingbudong
shi / bu
Duoshao qian?
Ji dian?
ling
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sh

NB: The information provided above was correct at the time of going to print