

Ancient Villages & Mountains of Anhui



Journey into Eastern China's most remote and least-developed province, Anhui, to discover ancient Huīzhōu villages and stunning mountains. Starting in Beijing and ending in Shanghai, this 10-day part-guided tour can be booked as a standalone holiday or as an extension to a longer tour of China's Eastern seaboard, with Anhui's dramatic scenery and slower pace of life providing a welcome antidote to the hustle and bustle of China's megalopolises.

Day 1: Beijing

On arrival in Beijing, you will be collected by your guide and transferred to the Orchid, a charming boutique hotel situated in Beijing's central Gulou district. The rest of the day is at leisure to explore the capital.

The Orchid

Tucked away in a ramshackle alleyway, or "hutong", this tiny boutique sanctuary enjoys a marvellous location in Gulou district, Beijing's historic centre. The Orchid offers just ten individually furnished rooms, contained within two Qing-era buildings that open onto a shared courtyard. Steps lead up to a secluded rooftop terrace, where you can enjoy a wonderful view of the grey rooftops of old Beijing and, looming over them, the iconic Bell and Drum Towers.

The Orchid is within walking distance of Nanluoguxiang lane, with its many trendy shops and cafes. It's a lovely area to have a stroll or to dine out. Wangfujing, Beijing's upmarket shopping district and lively night market, is a few minutes away by taxi.



Your Financial Protection

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

Day 2: Beijing to Huangshan City (Tunxi) (B, L)

After breakfast at your hotel, enjoy a full day of sightseeing in and around Beijing. Start with Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the traditional landmarks that form the cultural and geographic heart of Beijing. The Forbidden City is a vast complex, housing nearly 1,000 buildings. Allow 2-3 hours to explore the site.



Great Wall of China

Depart Beijing after lunch and drive to the Great Wall of China at Mutianyu. This is one of several sections of the wall that is open to visitors, and it is generally quieter than the more accessible Badaling section. Access is via a short cable car ride (or steep climb) to the top of the wall. Once on top, you'll be presented with spectacular views of the wall as it coils around the mountains and into the distant horizon.

In the afternoon, return to Beijing in time to catch the late afternoon flight to Huangshan City, Anhui province. On arrival, you'll be met by your guide and transferred to Hui Boutique Hotel, a charming guesthouse in Tunxi old town, the historic heart of Huangshan.

Hui Boutique Hotel

Situated just off Tunxi Old St, Hui Boutique Hotel is a beautifully-preserved Qing-era residence turned upmarket guesthouse. It offers just 8 rooms and suites, each of them furnished with hardwood Chinese beds and divans. Hui Boutique Hotel's traditional aesthetic and great location – the shops and restaurants of Tunxi old town are right on your doorstep – make this is our favourite place to stay in Huangshan.

The rest of the day is at leisure to explore Tunxi.

Day 3: Tunxi and Shexian

Start the day with a tour of Huangshan's colourful old town, Tunxi. Over 600 years old, Tunxi is one of the region's oldest settlements. Its narrow, flag-stoned streets and alleyways hide carefully-restored Qing and Ming-era buildings, complete with decorative carved wooden screens, double eaves and horse-head gables, the architectural hallmarks of the Anhui region. Old St,



or “Lao Jie”, the main thoroughfare that cuts through the old quarter in parallel with the Xinan River, is flanked with shopfronts and workshops selling an assortment of teas, herbs and dubious antiques, while narrow alleyways hide small cafes and stylish bars.

After a leisurely morning in Tunxi, depart for nearby Shexian County, where your first stop is Tangyue Village.

Though today it appears a quiet, sleepy village, Tangyue was once one of the most important settlements in the region, as the ancestral home of the pre-eminent Bao clan, a leading merchant family. Like many of China’s family clans, the Bao family dominated their region, and left behind them a very visible legacy in the form of a beautiful family mansion complete with gardens and two ancestral temples. The most famous monuments to the Bao family, however, are the seven decorative stone archways that stand at the entrance to Tangyue. Arranged in neat line formation against a backdrop of green fields, the Tangyue archways present a stunning spectacle.



Take the time to explore Tangyue and the nearby Bao family gardens. Later this afternoon, you can pay a visit to Yuliang, a charming riverside settlement built around an ancient dam, and Tangmo, a Tang-era village famed for its exquisite architecture and intricate water features. End the day with a local cuisine dinner in Shexian before returning to Tunxi in the evening.



Chengkan Village

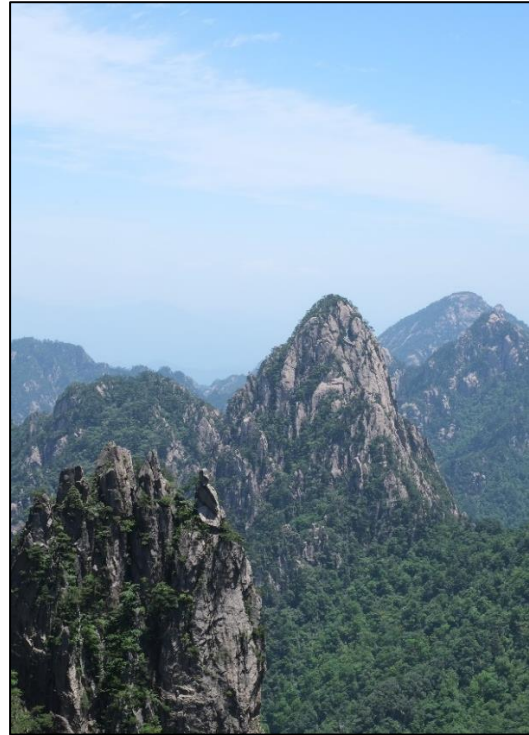
Day 4: Huangshan (Yellow Mountain) (B, L)

Say goodbye to Tunxi this morning as you depart for Huangshan, the famous Yellow Mountain. Along the way you can make a stop at some of the region’s prettiest settlements, including Qiankou Village – where you can explore the stunning Zixia Manor, a classic Huizhou-style estate – and the sleepy artists’ town of Chengkan, a pristine Ming-era settlement that receives comparatively few visitors.

From Chengkan, it's a short 40km drive to the Yellow Mountain. Expect to arrive at the base of Huangshan late this morning, with the rest of the day free to explore its myriad trails.

Eulogised for centuries by poets and artists, Huangshan is a classical Chinese painting brought to life, with all the characteristic features accounted for: winding pilgrimage trails, mysterious caves and misty mountain peaks topped with pine trees, bamboo and winter snow.

From the foot of the mountain, it's a half hour journey by shuttle bus and cable car to the landing point, from where you can explore a network of trails that take in several of the mountain's many peaks (with Lion Peak and Bright Peak among the most accessible). Take the time to explore at your own pace. The trails around the Yellow Mountain are many; your guide will be able to pick a route to suit your level of fitness. It's not necessary to climb the high peaks if you are unable. There are gentle trails that take in much of the best scenery.



One route will take you into a huge canyon via a narrow cliff trail that cuts through small caves and around staggering rock towers. The scenery is spectacular, but do note that the trail into and out of the canyon is quite precarious, so only take this route if you are comfortable with heights!

NB. It's possible to skip the cable car journey and climb all the way to the top of Huangshan on foot. The route is easy (there are stairs most of the way), but it's a long climb and generally requires a very early start or a night in one of the hotels on the mountain. During the summer the trail can become very crowded.



Huangshan in June

Descend the mountain late afternoon and transfer to Xidi Village, where you check into the Pig's Inn Xidi for two nights.



Pig's Inn Xidi

This charming guesthouse occupies a 400 year-old Ming-era residence in a quiet corner of Xidi village. A far cry from the "big-is-better" style of development that one tends to associate with modern Chinese hotels, Pig's Inn is a modest 3-storey building which at the time of its conversion was being used as a makeshift pig pen—but don't let that put you off! Artist Li Guoyu has transformed this particular pig pen into one of the most beautiful guesthouses in town, keeping its original white lime walls and black tiled roof (complete with traditional sky well), but filling the interior with an array of vintage furnishings, antique crockery and assorted Chinese memorabilia—everything from stone Buddhas and Lunar New Year couplets to scrolls of calligraphy. The result is a wonderfully homely guesthouse, with a distinctly rustic style and space for just twelve guests in its six cosy guest rooms.

The rest of the evening is at leisure for you to explore Xidi village.

Day 5: Xidi and Hongcun (B, L)

Set in a deep valley surrounded by forests of pine and fields of yellow rape, Xidi is among the oldest and best-preserved villages in all of Anhui. Its remoteness and relative poverty has allowed this 1,000 year old village to survive largely unscathed through six Chinese dynasties – beginning with the Liao in the 11th century, and reaching its heyday in the 14th century under Ming rule. Until recent decades, Xidi remained an isolated farming community – no one thought to replace its traditional Huizhou-style houses, with their characteristic white and pink washed walls and black-tile roofs, or turn its patchwork fields and small holdings over to more productive use. It remains a perfect example of a traditional clan-based village of a kind that was once common across much of China, but which is now so rare.



Xidi village is best explored in the early morning and late evening, when the tour groups have dissipated. There are very few hotels and guesthouses in the village (unlike nearby Hongcun), so it can be wonderfully peaceful outside of visiting hours (9am – 5pm). We recommend you wake early this morning to explore the village at the crack of dawn. There's a little pavilion on a high hill just outside Xidi, where you can watch the sun rise over the farmer's fields and the old ancestral homes. Afterwards, return to the inn for breakfast. The rest of the morning is free to explore the village and surrounding hills at your own pace. Take your time – there are no fixed sights to see or busy sightseeing schedules to follow.



Xidi in the early morning

In the afternoon, meet with your guide and drive to Hongcun, sister village to Xidi. Perhaps the most photographed village in all of Anhui province, Hongcun attracts a larger volume of tourists than Xidi. Whereas most of Xidi's buildings are still residential homes, Hongcun is filled with trinket shops, restaurants and guesthouses, making it a better place to visit on a day trip than an overnight stay. But it is also, like Xidi, a beautifully-preserved village that retains many of its original features. It houses centuries-old Ming and Qing-era residences, alongside old family halls, temples and schools, all built in the regional style. Hongcun's standout features, however, are its crystal clear moat and crescent-shaped pond, crossed by carved stone bridges on either side of the village.

Return to Xidi early this evening. You can dine at the inn or at one of a small number of local restaurants that stay open into the evening (most of the restaurants are near the archway at the entrance to town – don't expect to find an English menu!) If you'd prefer to dine early in Hongcun, let your guide know and they'll arrange for a meal at a local restaurant before you return to Xidi.



Hongcun Village

Day 6: Bishan (B, L)

Depart Xidi this morning and travel to Bishan village, a short half hour drive through attractive countryside.



Hongcun Village

Bishan is a small, isolated village which, compared to the UNESCO heritage sites of Hongcun and Xidi, has remained firmly off the tourist map. While it doesn't offer Hongcun's exquisite prettiness, it has a quiet charm and authenticity that many will find appealing. There's no entrance fees to pay, and no noisy tour groups during the day, meaning you can wander undisturbed. And you'll want to. Exploring Bishan's meandering back roads, on foot or by bicycle, is a joy. Follow them to the perimeter of the village and you'll find yourself on quiet country lanes that carry you through flower fields and rows of mulberry trees to rural bliss.

On arrival in Bishan, check into the Pig's Inn 3. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure. Revel in the peace and tranquillity of Bishan and the homely comforts of your guest house.

Pig's Inn 3

The latest addition to the Pig's Inn collection, Pig's Inn 3 has a history as unlikely as that of the Xidi property that started the chain. An ongoing development, Pig's Inn 3 has been converted, not from a pig pen, but from an old rapeseed oil factory. It's a much more spacious property than Pig's Inn Xidi, set in its own private grounds with vegetable gardens and a large open courtyard. The original factory floors have been converted into spacious lounge areas, beautifully decked out in the lively style that has become the Pig's Inn trademark.



Pig's Inn 3

NB. Pig's Inn 3 is an ongoing development and parts of the lodge are still being developed, though not the rooms and the main public areas.



Pig's Inn 3

You might like to combine your stay here with a night at Pig's Inn 2, also in Bishan. Opened in 2008, this is an old merchant's home with lovely king-size suites and double villas!

Day 7: At leisure in Bishan (B)

Today is at leisure to explore Bishan and its surrounds. You can choose to explore independently – Pig's Inn provide bikes and there are easy walking trails to follow – or we can arrange for your guide to accompany you on any further sightseeing excursions you might want to make. Consider visiting the recently unearthed “stone forest”, close to Xidi and Bishan, a curious site that hasn't yet become a fixture on the popular tourist routes.

More popular is the Mukeng Bamboo Forest, a beautiful forest park within easy reach of Bishan. You can spend an afternoon exploring its trails, before stopping to rest at a cosy tea house on the shores of a lake.



Sunset in Bishan

Day 8: Wuyuan County (B, L, D)

Depart Bishan this morning and drive to Wuyuan County, in the neighbouring province of Jiangxi. Considered by some to be the most beautiful countryside in all of China, Wuyuan offers stunning hill country and pretty Ming and Qing-era villages. Much of the morning will be spent driving, with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery along the way. You should reach the town of Jiangwan around noon, in time for an early lunch.

From Jiangwan, it's a short drive to the villages of Xiaoqi, Wangkou and Likeng. These are small, secluded villages which receive fewer tourists than the UNESCO sites of Xidi and Hongcun. Like those UNESCO sites, Xiaoqi, Wangkou and Likeng are clan-based villages built around the family temples and manors of their founders.

Late afternoon, continue to Jingdezhen, a small city famous for its porcelain production (let your guide know if you want to do some last-minute souvenir shopping). Overnight in Zijing Hotel, a comfortable 4-star hotel in the centre of the city, or similar.



Day 9: Wuyuan County; evening flight to Shanghai (B, L)

Continue to explore Wuyuan County this morning. Start the day with a visit to Sixiyan Village, famous for its Qing-era merchants' homes and clear canal. Then, on to Qinghua Township, where you can cross the 800-year old Rainbow Bridge, an architectural marvel built under the Song Dynasty.

After lunch in Qinghua, drive to Mandarin Duck Lake, where you can spot a great variety of migratory birds and ducks. Following a walk around the lake, return to Jingdezhen, where you say goodbye to your guide and catch the evening flight to Shanghai.

On arrival in Shanghai, transfer to the Fairmont Peace Hotel, or similar, in the city centre. Evening at leisure in Shanghai.



Day 10: Departure (B)

Transfer to the airport and board your international flight home.

Price Guide: *The cost of this itinerary is from **£2,145 per person**, based on twin share and subject to availability at the time of booking. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).*

Includes:

- Internal flights
- Accommodation and meals as described
- Activities as per itinerary (entrance fees included to all sights mentioned in itinerary)
- Private guide and vehicle
- Return airport transfers

Excludes:

- International flights – ask us for a quote
- Travel insurance – ask us for a quote
- Items of a personal nature
- Additional activities
- Tips