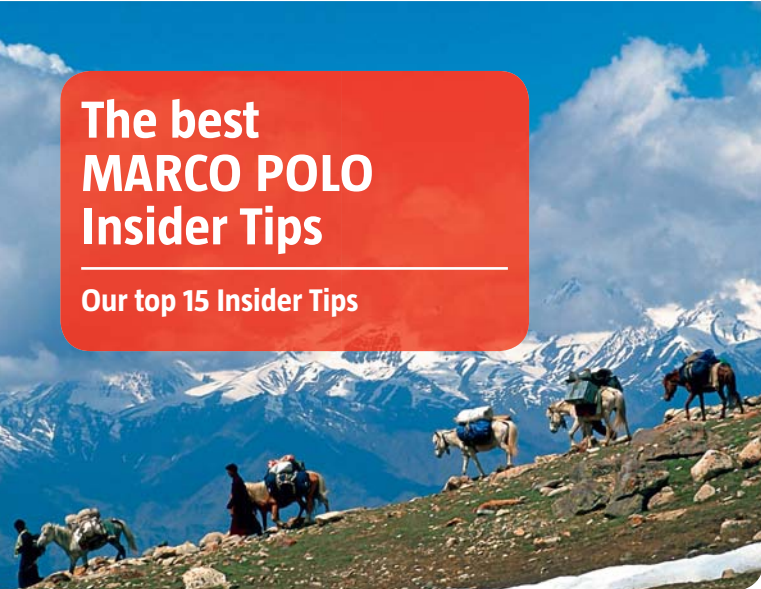


# The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

## Our top 15 Insider Tips



### INSIDER TIP Learn about China's roots

China's civilization is rooted in the 'yellow soil', in loess. A *train journey along the valley of the Fen River* provides insights into its unique, ancient cultivated landscape → p. 36

### INSIDER TIP Imperial tombs without the crowds

The two large Ming mausoleums near Beijing that are open to the public tend to get very busy. The *Eastern Qing Tombs* are a lot less crowded and are also better preserved → p. 52

### INSIDER TIP The Naxi Orchestra

China's oldest musical traditions, now performed on a regular basis, have survived among the Naxi people, thanks to the old men who nurtured them during the Mao era. Concerts are held in the *Dayan Naxi Concert Hall* in Lijiang (photo right) → p. 115

### INSIDER TIP Magical water worlds

Water is the source of the enchanting scenery high up in the mountains in northern Sichuan: the col-

ourful calcite terraces of Huanglong and the multifaceted charm in *Jiu-zhaigou Valley* → p. 138, 139

### INSIDER TIP Say thanks with palaces

The Yongle Emperor could afford it, as is demonstrated by the huge temple complex in the Wudang Mountains with which he honoured the heavenly emperor of the north → p. 97

### INSIDER TIP Between willows and bridges

Explore Hangzhou's most beautiful side during a *boat trip on the West Lake* – relaxation for both body and soul → p. 80

### INSIDER TIP Delicious Peking duck

And that's not all: the *Beijing Da Dong Roast Duck Restaurant* does more than just serve the best duck in the capital. It stands out in other areas too → p. 51

### INSIDER TIP When salt merchants build

... then why not something for show! That's how Yangzhou got its grace-

ful *Five-Pavilion Bridge*, the city's hallmark → p. 83

### INSIDER TIP Goddess Mother and the Never Aging Spring

Women, water, and vitality: these are the closely connected themes in the *Jin Ci temple* complex outside of Taiyuan → p. 59

### INSIDER TIP The spice of life

Xi'an is famous for the large variety of dumplings that come in all shapes, sizes, colours and fillings. The best-known restaurant serving these is *Defachang* → p. 72

### INSIDER TIP Confucius in the midst of things

The entire lively old quarter in Nanjing is named after the temple built in honour of the great ancient philosopher: *Fuzi Miao* is also a great starting point for boat trips → p. 82

### INSIDER TIP Archaeological highlights

Impressive examples of a proto-Chinese bronze culture are on dis-

play in the *Sanxingdui Museum* near Chengdu → p. 104

### INSIDER TIP Tibet on horseback

Riding has a long-standing tradition, especially among the Mongols and the people of Tibet. What better way to experience the mountain landscape than on horseback? Longer trips are possible too (photo left) → p. 145

### INSIDER TIP Flute music by the garden pond

Evening entertainment in a stunning garden with music and theatre, that's on offer in the *Wangshi Yuan* in Suzhou – an atmosphere redolent of ancient China → p. 88

### INSIDER TIP 1000 years of seafaring

China's maritime traditions and the cultural exchanges they produced are presented in all their glory in the *Quanzhou Maritime Museum* (part of the Quanzhou Overseas Relations Museum) → p. 128



# BEST OF ...

## GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

FOR FREE

### ● **Sword fights with panoramic views**

Fitness for free: go to The Bund in Shanghai at least once when the locals get their circulation going in the morning by performing various exercises such as shadow boxing, sword fighting and qigong, all against the backdrop of the Pudong skyline → p. 85

### ● **Delving into China's early history**

Fancy seeing the oldest paper in the world or bricks from the first emperor's palace? Do it for free in the country's most significant archaeological museum, the Shaanxi *History Museum* in Xi'an → p. 71

### ● **Panoramic views of little Germany**

One great place to take in the old town of Qingdao, still shaped by the style of its German builders from 100 years ago, is a viewing tower on *Government Hill*. Unlike other viewpoints, this one is free → p. 53

### ● **Enjoy the jade green lake**

Cui Hu Park in Kunming is a popular spot for a bit of relaxation with its *Green Lake*, islands and parks. Chinese people come here to exercise, make music and meet people. It used to cost money to enter the park, but not anymore → p. 112

### ● **Walk under an LED sky**

*The Place* is probably the most spectacular venue in Beijing in the evenings, when fantasy images and film scenes are screened on Asia's biggest LED display. And this viewing pleasure doesn't cost a penny (photo) → p. 52

### ● **Admire cultural treasures**

In many places you have to pay an entrance fee to take in classical Chinese art, but the *Shanghai Museum* with its exceptionally well presented treasures from more than 3000 years of Chinese culture can be enjoyed for free → p. 86

● ● ● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of ...' tips

## ONLY IN CHINA

Unique experiences

### ● **Flying the flag!**

It's almost a patriotic duty for Chinese visitors to Beijing to be there when *the flag is hoisted* on Tiananmen Square at sunrise. Foreigners are also allowed to watch and ponder the combination of national pride and communism → p. 50

### ● **Climb mountains in imperial footsteps**

There is no other place where ancient China's mountain cult is more impressive than around and on the sacred Mount Tai Shan with its imposing Dai Miao temple → p. 57

### ● **Be awed by kung fu**

The Chinese have developed unarmed martial arts to an amazing degree; the most famous schools can be found at Shaolin Monastery. The performers at *demonstrations* exhibit an incredible control of their bodies → p. 46

### ● **Keep a look out for attackers on horseback**

The *Great Wall* is the embodiment of ancient China. Look northwards through the battlements towards Mongolia. These days the onslaughts arrive from the south in the form of tourists. That too is typical of modern China (photo) → p. 52

### ● **Modern China**

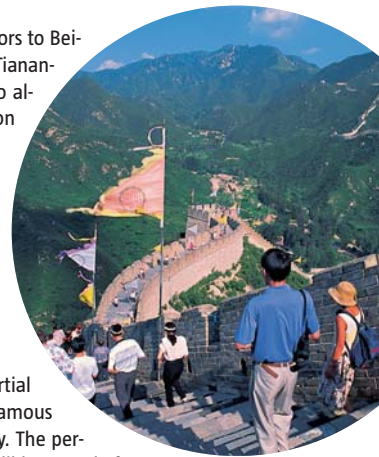
Guangzhou has confidently presented its traditional cosmopolitan nature in the spectacular new buildings of *Zhujiang New Town* – larger and smarter than in Shanghai and typical of China's claim to be the global leader of the avant-garde → p. 124

### ● **Respect for writing**

This is something that shaped Confucianism, which saw its holy scriptures being immortalized in stone from early on. The *Beilin (Stele Forest)* in Xi'an documents the exclusivity writing gave to Chinese tradition → p. 70

### ● **Tea and rice and West Lake fish**

Food and drink keep the body and soul going in China too. The lower Yangtze region has had a formative impact for centuries. Its culinary traditions are nurtured in the *Louwailou* restaurant in Hangzhou → p. 80



ONLY IN

# THE PERFECT ROUTE

## 1ST/2ND DAY: SHANGHAI

In ❶ *Shanghai* → p. 84 the trip from Pudong Airport in the Transrapid will catapult you into 21st-century China, which can also be experienced on the viewing platform of the World Finance Center in Pudong (photo left). Other items on the agenda are the People's Square and the Shanghai Museum. The experience is rounded off by a trip to the old town with Yu Yuan Garden and Huxinting tea house as well as an evening stroll along The Bund. Given the size of this city, this is just a small selection of what it has to offer.

## 3RD DAY: TRIP TO HANGZHOU

Departing from Hongqiao Station, the high-speed trains manage the 200km/125-mile trip to ❷ *Hangzhou* → p. 76 in under an hour. Start early to have enough time to enjoy Hangzhou's beauties. West Lake, a World Heritage Site, influenced China's ideal of an urban landscape.

## 4TH DAY: TRIP TO SUZHOU

❸ *Suzhou* → p. 88, the city which is home to the Classical Gardens and silk, is a must for all visitors to China! It's just half an hour from Shanghai by express train from Shanghai's main station. That leaves enough time for two or three gardens as well as a stroll along the canals.

## 5TH/6TH DAY: SHANGHAI – MOUNT TAI SHAN

Take some time to do some early morning exercise on The Bund to kick-start your day. Thanks to the new super-express from Hongqiao Station, you will still get to Tai'an early enough to visit the mountain temple of Dai Miao. 'Conquering' China's sacred eastern mountain, ❹ *Tai Shan* → p. 57, will take up the entire next day.

## 7TH–9TH DAY: BEIJING

It takes the super-express 110 minutes from Tai Shan to ❺ *Beijing* → p. 47. To get the visit going, start with Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. On the second day, explore the Temple of Heaven and the Lama Yonghe Gong Temple, and maybe also the nearby Temple of Confucius. After that, there'll be time to stroll around. Why not go shopping on Wangfujing or explore the bars on Houhai lake. The third day in Beijing has a real highlight in store, namely a trip to the Great Wall. Set off early and you can also visit one of the Ming Tombs (photo right) and explore the Summer Palace.

## 10TH/11TH DAY: XI'AN

Take a plane early in the morning, leaving China's modern capital behind and head-

Experience China's many different facets from east to south with a trip to the Great Wall and a cruise on the Li Jiang River

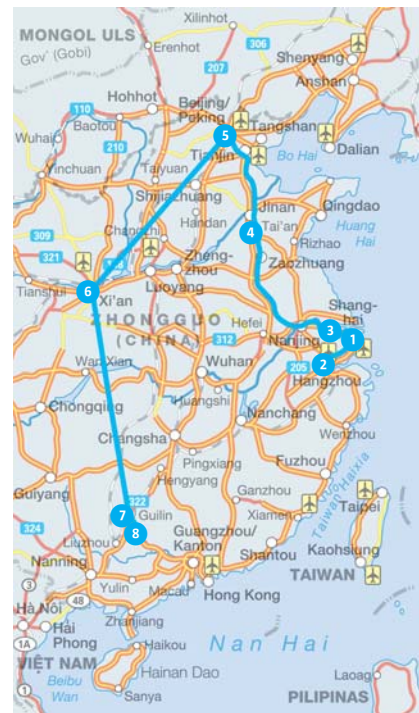
ing to its oldest one, ❻ *Xi'an* → p. 69. First, you will have time to explore the sites in the city centre: the history museum, stele forest and city wall. The destination for the following day is the First Emperor's Terracotta Army. On your way back, pop into the imperial Huaqing Hot Springs, before visiting the Shaanxi Opera House in the evening.

## 12TH/13TH DAY: GUILIN

Today is another early start. It's time for the 90-minute flight to the last highlight of this route: ❼ *Guilin* → p. 119. The karst peaks that characterize the landscape have also created attractions in the city. The atmosphere around the city lakes of Shan Hu and Rong Hu is almost Mediterranean.

## 13TH/14TH DAY: LI JIANG RIVER AND YANG SHUO

This is the main reason Guilin is so popular with tourists from around the world: to experience the karst landscape on a river cruise down the Li Jiang River. After arriving in ❼ *Yangshuo* → p. 121 in the early afternoon, it's time to relax, especially if you've arranged accommodation outside of the city. Come the next day, it's time to go on a bike ride or a relaxing rafting trip on the Yulong River. The icing on the cake is the outdoor folk musical on the river *Impression Liu Sanjie*.



4120km/2575 miles.

Driving time: approx. 22 hours.

Detailed map of the route on the back cover, in the road atlas and the pull-out map.