



Great Wall Trekking Open Challenge

Pre-Trip dossier current for 2009 departures

Welcome to RAW Charity Challenges..... we hope that you enjoy exploring the world as much as we do. have you ever wanted to see the Great wall of China? This trip will take you along some of it's most magnificent sections, fare from the crowded tourist spots. Explore both rural and urban China, ancient and modern. You'll visit Beijing, the majestic Forbidden City and the expansive Tiananman Square. Walk through time on remote sections of the Great Wall following the contours, take an overnight train to Xian, wander the Muslim quarter, climb sacred Mt Huashan & see the Terracotta warriors.

All in one action packed and exciting trip!

Welcome to RAW Charity Challenges... we hope that you enjoy exploring the world as much as we do. The journey starts in Beijing, where our challenge is to walk along some of the best sections of the Great Wall, as it passes through rugged mountainous scenery. Along the way we get the chance to stay in traditional Chinese style accommodation and walk areas of rural China seen by few other tourists. From Beijing we take a train to the sacred Taoist mountain of Huashan and from there onto the city of Xi'an. Our next challenge is to hike up the steep and spectacular flanks of Huashan and stay overnight in time to see sunrise from the summit. One of the big highlights of this trip will be visiting the Terracotta Army in Xi'an, and Forbidden City In Beijing once the challenge is completed.

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Beijing

Arrive in Beijing. Transfer to hotel. We will have a briefing before dinner to talk through the challenge which lies ahead.

Accommodation: Harmony hotel (TBC)

Meals: Dinner

Day 2 Gubeikou

We have included a morning tour of two of the city's most famous sights: the magical Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. In the afternoon we transfer to the famous Gubeikou section of Great Wall, where we overnight at the foot of the wall.

Accommodation: Longevity guesthouse

Meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 3 Tiger Mountain

This part of the wall is a spectacular one that has not been touched by modern tourist. We start the walk right from the hotel after breakfast through a small village and then cross a small cargo train station to a trail in the valley that ascends to the highest tower of today's walk. After mounting the watchtower on the peak, you will have paramount view of the wild wall in both directions. After lunch, we will walk down all the way on and by the side of the wall that leads to where we stay. The wall has many crumbling staircases and ruined watchtowers along the way and it ends by a river. On other side the river is the wall leading to Jinshanling that we will walk tomorrow.

Accommodation: Longevity guesthouse

Meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 4 Jinshanling

Today we walk out from our accommodation through some interesting local villages which have been built next to the wall. Our walk today is a very long and adventurous one, more demanding than the previous day as we need to leave the wall at times and scramble our way up and down adjoining hillsides. The wall is unrestored and in some places has crumbled away completely where in the past local villages have raided the stones and bricks as building materials.

Accommodation: Jinshanling guest house

Meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 5 Simatai

Today we pick up our walk from our hotel get back onto the wall where we left off yesterday. Along the walk from Jinshanling to Simatai, you go across a lot of high ridges with both ruined and restored watchtowers; some of the wall is overgrown with vegetation and in its natural un-repaired state. Approx. 5 - 6 hours walking.

Accommodation: Simatai Guesthouse

Meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 6 Wangjinglou

Today's walk starts and ends where we stay. The Simatai Wall is the most spectacular one and highest of than any bit that we have previously done. The Watchtower, Wangjinglou, literally means the tower to see Beijing (150 km away). We walk all the way as far as it is allowed by the local authority and then back to the hotel to have a shower and lunch and then we drive 3 hours to the Beijing West Railway Station. Approx. 3 - 4 hours walking.

Accommodation on overnight train (4 berth sleeper). Approx. 12 hours.

Meals: breakfast and lunch

Day 7 Xi'an

Arrive early morning into Xian. A chance to relax and explore the old city.

The modern city of Xi'an was once the site of the mighty city of Chang'an, the capital of 11 Chinese Dynasties, and was also the starting point for the great trade caravans of the Silk Road. We spend the morning walking along the 40 ft high old city walls that tower above the city centre and then the rest of the day is spent at leisure in Xi'an, a chance to look around the many museums including the Shaanxi History Museum and the Forest of Stone Relics Museum. Other attractions are the Bell and Drum Towers, Wild Goose Pagoda, and the Muslim Quarter.

Accommodation: Xian International Youth Hostel

Meals included: breakfast only

Day 8 Huashan climb

Drive 2 hours to the foot of Huashan, one of China's five sacred Taoist mountains. With an elevation of 2160 metres, its five peaks resemble five petals of a flower. Huashan is famed as the most precipitous of the five Taoist mountains with impressive scenes of temples, pavilions, carvings, shrines and statues interspersed between stark granite peaks, paths and twisted pines.

As we get higher up the mountain the path steepens into a series of stone steps cut into the bare granite slopes with chains to pull yourself up. After reaching the middle peak we check into a hotel for the evening with stunning views over the surrounding mountain ranges.

Accommodation: Wuyun hotel

Meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 9 Terracotta Warriors

The following morning we will climb the East Peak for sunrise, with spectacular views of awe-inspiring precipices emerging from a sea of clouds. After enjoying the view from the top we return to the north peak and catch a cable car down to the bottom. In the afternoon, we will be driven out

to see the amazing Terracotta Army. Although there is no historical record of the thousands of life sized armoured soldiers and horses, it is believed that they were intended to serve as bodyguards for the ghost of Qin Shi Huangdi, the famous Yellow Emperor who first united China and reigned from 221-210 BC. They are located in three large hangars with adjacent museums. Board the over-night train back to Beijing

Approx. 2 hours walking.

Meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 10 Beijing

After arriving early into Beijing, we will be transferred to hotel for breakfast. The rest of the day is at leisure to explore this incredible city. There are great shopping opportunities, so hunt for a bargain in the famous markets! In the evening, we celebrate our achievements with a succulent Beijing Duck Dinner at one of Beijing's top restaurants for this speciality.

Accommodation: Harmony Hotel

Meals: breakfast and dinner

Day 11 Leave Beijing

We depart Beijing late morning for a flight to Australia.

Meals: breakfast

Day 12 Arrive home

Arrive back in Australia early morning

Arrival Complications

We don't expect any problems (and nor should you!) but if for any reason you are unable to commence your group trip as scheduled, please contact your starting point hotel, requesting that you speak to or leave a message for your trip leader. Any additional cost incurred in order to meet up with your group is at your own expense.

Joining Point

Harmony Hotel
Youtong St (no. 59 Suzhou Hutong)
Dong Cheng District
Beijing
China
Phone: +86 10 6528 5566
Fax: +86 10 6559 8993

Joining Point Instructions

You will need to get a taxi or airport bus to the joining point.
Metered taxis are available outside the terminal building. The taxi ride from the airport to our

starting point hotels takes about 45 minutes and should cost around 80-100 Yuan (plus 10 yuan for the airport expressway toll). Please AVOID taxi touts who tell you that they have a metered taxi parked outside the airport. The airport bus costs 16 Yuan and drops you off at the International Hotel which is about a 5-10 minute walk to our hotel.

Our Joining Point Hotel

The Harmony Hotel is situated in the heart of Beijing close to shopping, good restaurants and is walking distance from the Tiananmen Square. The hotel offers comfortable rooms, a business centre with fax and e-mail service and a nice restaurant. The hotel staff are friendly and the receptionists have a good command of the English language. These are the basics for a comfortable stay in Beijing! Check-in time is 12 midday.

Finishing Point

Harmony Hotel
Youtong St (no. 59 Suzhou Hutong)
Dong Cheng District
Beijing
China
Phone: +86 10 6528 5566
Fax: +86 10 6559 8993

Group Size

Maximum of 20 travellers per group

Accommodation

Hotels, traditional guesthouses. The accommodation used during this trip ranges from traditional Chinese guesthouses with courtyards to comfortable 3 star hotels. The standard will vary according to where we are and we ask for your patience, as at times

Meal Inclusions

Most meals included - see itinerary.

Transport

We will be travelling between sections of the wall by bus and using the overnight express train between Beijing & Xian.

Physical Rating

Activities include treks of 3 to 4 hours per day in hilly terrain, flat water kayaking or a long day's bike ride, in conditions which are likely to be hot and muggy. You will raise your heart rate on these trips, so a basic level of aerobic fitness is required.

Culture Shock Rating

Expect to rough it every now and again, whether it's very simple group-share accommodation at a homestay, a packed public bus where you are forced to stand, the odd cold shower or an encounter with a squat toilet.

Important Notes

To find out more about the country, food or weather for the time of year please click on: [Pre Departure Information](#)

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number. Please go to www.RAWtravel.com/insurance.php for links to various travel insurance providers.

Visas

You will need a single entry tourist Visa, it is your responsibility to arrange your China visa before you travel.

For Victorian residents: Download an application form and instructions from the website or apply in person at:

75 -77 Irving Road Toorak, Melbourne VIC Tel: 9822 0604

Cost is \$30 for Aus / \$50 for NZ or overseas passport. A copy of the itinerary is required (print this from our website). It takes approx. 5 working days to process.

For the section on the application form: 'Company or person to visit in China' please put:
CTS, 406 CTS Plaza, Beishanhuan E Rd, Beijing
Tel: 0086 10 64618959 Ex6406

Health

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

There are no specific health requirements for entry into China. However, you should consult your doctor or travel clinic for up-to-date information on prescriptions and vaccinations. We would suggest that you are up to date with immunisation protection against typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis. As some vaccinations require a course over weeks or months, contact your doctor as early as possible prior to departure. Generally, six to eight weeks' notice is adequate.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid Kit as well as any personal medical requirements (such as a spare pair of prescription glasses). Please be aware that for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets/antibiotics etc. Your first aid kit should include headache tablets, diarrhoea treatment, both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic, blister pads, an antiseptic for cuts & scrapes, lip balm, insect repellent and high factor sunscreen.

Given the physical nature of this challenge we strongly advise bringing some sachets of an oral rehydration solution (available at chemists) as this aids recovery following activity and dehydration and also helps replace lost body salts should you suffer from 'gastro'. Just add a sachet to your water bottle each day. Please scroll down to the Special Safety Notes below for information on dehydration.

For more detailed travel health advice please refer to health information on our departure information page.

For all challenge participants a completed Medical Certificate is required. RAW reserves the right to exclude any traveller from all or part of a trip without refund if, in the reasonable opinion of our group leader, they are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group.

Physical Preparation

On many feedbacks after an event we get comments such as: 'I wish I had done more training.' The best advice is to start early. This is a very active and demanding trip, requiring a good level of physical fitness. Getting yourself fit is all part of the Challenge and one that you'll benefit from long after your trip is over. It is really worth putting in the effort before you go as it means you'll enjoy the event rather than it being a struggle.

For training & advice go to our: Trekking guide - <http://RAWchallenges.com/guide-to-trekking>.

[php](#)

Walking may seem to be one of the most natural things to do and you may feel that you are already in good enough shape to take on the challenge, but remember you will be walking for successive days over steep and uneven terrain. Don't leave training until the last minute, regular exercise with a gentle build up will ensure that you are in peak condition for the challenge. Improve your fitness levels by taking other forms of regular exercise (biking and swimming are good for improving general fitness) but remember that you also need to get your feet used to your walking boots as they need to be well worn in before your trip.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: www.oanda.com.

Please check current exchange rates on our departure information page.

It is advisable to take most of your money in cash or traveller's cheques (US dollars). It is possible to change Aussie dollars in the bigger cities. Credit cards can be used for cash advances in banks in major towns but attract a 4% commission fee. There can be delays when changing travellers cheques. Major credit cards are accepted in Beijing and Xi'an and ATM machines are available. Please purchase approx. A\$100 of Chinese currency before departure. (in small note denominations).

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping. Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip.

Any tip that you wish to give your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional USD\$400, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (eg. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

keeping in touch - communication while on the road

If you need to be contacted while travelling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road, rather than relying on snail mail. Email has quickly become the preferred way for our leaders and travellers to stay in touch and email cafes are commonplace

throughout the regions we visit. If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency while you are on one of our trips we recommend that they contact your local booking agent, or refer to our emergency contact. We don't recommend that family and friends try to contact you through hotels, as they are subject to change and the reception staff may not speak English.

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, RAW's Melbourne Office can be reached on Tel: +61 3 9597 0210 or after hours on 0413 703 632

Your fellow travellers

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely a range of age groups too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Group Leader

All RAW group trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends.

While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting - we think it's the best of both worlds.

responsible travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. Please refer to our website at www.RAWtravel.com/responsibletravel for further details and suggestions on how you can be a responsible traveller.

a couple of rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the

laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for RAW travellers. RAW's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

What To Take

What you need to bring will vary according to the trip style you have chosen, the countries you are visiting and when you are travelling. Generally speaking though, you should pack as lightly as possible. On the vast majority of our trips you are expected to carry your own luggage (please see below for exceptions), and though you will not be required to walk long distances with your luggage (max 30 minutes) we recommend keeping the weight under 10kg/22lb.

Suitcases are not recommended for RAW travellers! Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags with wheels are acceptable, although we recommend your bag has carry straps as well, as you may be required to negotiate bus and railway station steps. You will also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day walks and day trips.

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia. On this journey we will experience extremes of weather conditions from cold and possibly wet whilst walking the various sections of the wall as well as windy conditions (wind chill factor) on some of the higher sections. This applies to trips in the October / November time frame. Other trips in the Spring April / May experience warmer daytime weather but higher likelihood of rain. It is essential that you are prepared for variations in weather and temperatures.

You will be on the move a good deal, so pack as lightly as possible (try to stay under 12 kg). It is in your own interest as you are expected to carry your own luggage when travelling from A to B. Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, which is the most suitable. Suitcases are definitely not recommended! So to get maximum comfort, pack as small and light as possible.

Checklist

Suggested List:

Travel Documents:

- Passport (with photocopies) and Chinese visa
- Travel insurance (with photocopies)
- Airline tickets (given at the airport)
- USD cash and travellers cheques
- Credit card

** Tip: use a money belt for security (put documents inside a plastic bag)

Personal Items

- First Aid kit (see the health section)
- High factor sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent
- Sunglasses
- Toiletries (biodegradable)
- Watch or alarm clock
- Ear plugs (in case room mate snores!)
- Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing
- Wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel

Clothing

- 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying fabric) / long sleeved t-shirt
- pair of sport sandals or comfy shoes to relax in and on free days
- 1 pair of knee length shorts for walking (optional)
- Warm socks
- Fleece jacket
- Thermals
- Sweater
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Comfortable trousers for walking (not jeans)
- Warm gloves and warm hat
- Small towel
- Sun hat
- Clothes to relax in

Trekking Equipment

- 1 water bottle (min. 750 ml capacity recommended) or 'CamelBak' hydration pack
- Day pack for carrying items when walking
- Comfortable walking boots - with good grip and ankle support
- Walking pole (optional) - very useful on rougher sections especially on downhill

Optional:

- Favourite snacks for energy boost e.g. 'PowerBars', sports gel (a concentrated carbohydrate that delivers immediate energy when you feel tired or flat), dried fruit or nuts

***Please refer again to our Trekking guide on the Home page for more details on walking

Other Suggestions:

- Camera and plenty of film
- adapter for recharging digital camera (Aussie styled plugs with 3 angled flat pins)
- Spare batteries
- Reading / writing material
- Penknife (put in main luggage at airport)

- Torch
- Small calculator (when out bargaining!)
- Photos of family or postcards of home (great way to have fun with locals you meet)
- Chinese phrasebook, map and Lonely Planet guide
- Small padlock for securing your luggage during flights

Local Dress

We will be spending a lot of time in the more conservative rural regions of China. Please remember that as visitors to someone else's home it is our responsibility to fit with the local customs by wearing appropriate clothing (irrespective of what other travellers are wearing). Walking without a shirt or in a singlet is deemed offensive in the eyes of the locals. We recommend loose fitting, long sleeved shirts and long shorts, skirts or pants when visiting rural communities. Let's cover up and give a really good impression. RAW is very firm on this policy, so please ensure you bring suitable clothing. Your group leader can advise you on what is appropriate dress and behaviour for visiting these communities.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure. Please refer to our website's Safety page for links to major travel advisories and updates on safety issues affecting our trips: www.RAWtravel.com/safety. We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage. Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your group leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your RAW itinerary, and RAW makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time. Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Dehydration is the biggest risk when undertaking a physical challenge. It is so important to be aware of your fluid intake especially at altitude and to constantly drink water throughout the day (even when you do not feel thirsty). Symptoms of mild dehydration include: - flushed face - extreme thirst, more than normal or unable to drink - dry, warm skin - cannot pass urine or reduced amounts, dark, yellow - dizziness made worse when you are standing - weakness - cramping in the arms and legs - sleepy or irritable - headaches - dry mouth, dry tongue; with thick saliva. The simplest way of monitoring your fluid intake is by checking the colour of your urine. If it is clear or slightly yellow you are well hydrated but once it is a dark yellow you are in the danger zone

and need to increase your fluid intake immediately. Ensure that you bring some Gastrolyte sachets as these help your recovery both during and after cycling with the replacement of electrolytes. Gastrolyte is also the recommended treatment for dehydration caused by diarrhoea ('gastro').

All RAW travellers are required to sign a Participation Form on day 1 of the trip. Please note that signing the form is a prerequisite of travelling with RAW. The wording of this form follows:

"I understand that travelling with RAW may involve risks (and rewards) above and beyond those encountered on a more conventional holiday, and that I am undertaking an adventure trip with inherent dangers. I understand that I am travelling to geographical areas where, amongst other things, the standard of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, cleanliness, medical facilities, telecommunications and infrastructure development may not be of the standard I am used to at home or would find on a conventional holiday. I have read and understood the RAW trip notes for the trip I am undertaking and have provided details of any pre-existing medical conditions I have to RAW's office or representatives.

I accept these risks and obligations and I fully assume the risks of travel. I release RAW Travel from any liabilities connected to these risks to the maximum extent permitted by law."

RAW Travel newsletter

This is our free monthly email newsletter. News, reviews, special offers and updates. You'll receive a copy after you travel with us but may unsubscribe at any time.

The information in these trip notes has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and RAW Travel.