

# GANSU

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SILK ROAD EXPLORERS

*with William Lindesay OBE*



October 18<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2021

# ABOUT THIS TRIP

Magical, mystical, overwhelming. However you want to describe it, there is something inherently epic about Gansu, with its sweeping sand dunes, forbidding Gobi plains and snow-capped Qilian Mountains; barriers that continue to cradle some of China's greatest and remotest treasures. It is these dramatic landscapes that lure you to feel Silk Road history more keenly, in the footsteps of the monks that first brought Buddhism to China from India, merchants who rested at the oasis of Dunhuang, and explorers who came to be transfixed by its wealth of treasures and crumbling ruins...

From Monday 18<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, Beijing-based Great Wall explorer, historian and conservationist William Lindesay – accompanied by his son Jimmy, will lead an exclusive small group tour of the Great Walls and Silk Road history of Northwest China's Gansu Province. This is your chance to see the province with the man who made history when he set off from Gansu's Jiayuguan Fortress in 1987 to become the first foreigner to walk the Wall's entire length.

You'll traverse Gansu's epic desert terrain to see the Ming Great Wall, the Han Great Wall and the inspiring Mogao Caves, as Lindesay presents the story of these 3 great sights from the perspective of their rediscovery by foreign explorers in the early 20th century.

Expect hikes, Gobi-desert picnics, lashings of noodles and more history, archaeology and stories than you can shake a stick at. If you don't leave this province in awe of the civilisations that went before us, we'll eat our (Indiana Jones-style) hats.

**TRIP LENGTH:** 6 days, 5 nights (Monday October 18–Saturday October 23, 2021)

**COST:** Early Bird: 15,900RMB per person until September 6; 16,900RMB per person thereafter (based on min 13 guests; max 17 sharing double rooms). Single supplement: 1,080RMB

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL:** Low-Medium

**INCLUDED:** Hotels, meals, transportation, guiding and all entrance tickets

**NOT INCLUDED:** Beverages (e.g. coffees, alcohol), flights, insurance.

# ABOUT YOUR GUIDE

## WILLIAM LINDESAY O.B.E

William Lindesay is a British author and TV personality with an O.B.E, and is regarded as the world's leading educator in Great Wall Studies. He has authored five books on the Wall, been presenter and producer of NatGeo, Discovery Channel and BBC documentaries, and curated eight exhibitions on the subject. In total he has spent 2,800 days on the Great Wall – and a total of four months in Gansu Province. 'With its deserts and mountains, Great Walls and Silk Road, Gansu is my favourite province in China', he says.

# SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

## **DAY 1: October 18**

Arrival in Jiayuguan. Check in to the Nanhu hotel before a screening of *The Great Wall: The Greatest Views* and then to dinner.

## **DAY 2: October 19**

Morning visit to the Weijin tombs followed by a 3-hour hike along the rammed earth wall and a picnic. Afternoon coffee at the Baroque Café and presentation about William Geil.

## **DAY 3: October 20**

Dawn visit to the Qilian Gorge and the very western end of the Great Wall to watch the sunrise, followed by the Jiayuguan Fortress. We'll have lunch back in Jiayuguan, then drive the 400km to Dunhuang. Packed dinner.

## **DAY 4: October 21**

This morning we will visit eight of Mogao's 400 stunning caves and enjoy lunch on site before heading to the studio of Mr Niu, a master who reproduces the cave murals for preservation purposes. Evening pre dinner talk with the world's top foreign Mogao Caves expert, Dr Neil Schmid.

## **DAY 5: October 22**

At dawn we'll drive across the Gobi to the ancient Han Great Wall, including the famous Jade Gate and Hecang Granary. In the afternoon, there will be an optional visit to the Dunhuang Museum. Evening presentation of Aurel Stein's exploration of the Han Great Wall

## **DAY 6: October 23**

Tour ends after breakfast. Transfer to airport for your flight home or ask Bespoke for tour extension options to the Rainbow Mountains and Buddhist temples in Zhangye.



### Arrive in Jiayuguan

Members of the group should make their own way to Jiayuguan in Gansu Province. From Beijing, we recommend taking flight MU2412 via Lanzhou which arrives at 4.15pm on October 18<sup>th</sup> so as not to miss the first night film screening and dinner (see below). From Shanghai, travellers will need to fly either via Xi'an (MU2154), with the whole journey, including stopover time, taking from 6-7 hours and not arriving in Jiayuguan until 6.30pm, or you may want to consider arriving one day early.

Accommodation will be the Nanhu Hotel – nothing fancy, but comfortable!

This evening, we will appreciate our location at the very western end of the Great Wall by watching a documentary that 'flies us' here along the route of the Ming Wall, starting at the other end on the Yellow Sea coast. The film *The Great Wall: The Greatest Views* was shot, edited and produced by your tour hosts William and Jimmy Lindesay, and has to date been broadcast in more than 40 countries. Those that arrive too late to catch the film will be sent a copy beforehand so they don't miss out!

After the screening we'll enjoy dinner together before retiring for the evening.



### Morning

This morning we'll depart the hotel at 8am for the short, 30-minute drive to visit two of the incredible Weijin brick tombs. Here, the colourful drawings and brick paintings discovered as a result of archaeological excavations along the Hexi Corridor on China's Silk Road tell the story of the area 1700 years ago, and the leisure activities undertaken by the people that lived in this frontier town – it's even been dubbed "the world's largest underground art gallery".

Next, William will lead a three-hour, 5km walk along the rammed earth Wall, with hot soup, scones, coffee and fruit – a Gobi desert picnic lunch – served beside the Wall, weather permitting.

### Afternoon

In the afternoon the group will head back downtown to the hip Baroque Cafe for a relaxed presentation by William about the first traverse of the Great Wall by William Geil, the American explorer who concluded his journey in Jiayuguan in August 1908. Then we'll head back to the hotel to freshen up before dinner.



### Morning

Rise and shine! You'll awake before dawn today in order to make it to the Qilian Gorge for sunrise. William will lead the group to the very western end of the Ming Wall, perched on a cliff above the Taolai River, and recount his departure from the same location in 1987, which led him to become the first foreigner to traverse the route of the Wall all the way to its seaside terminus at Shanhaiguan. Afterwards, we'll head to the spectacular Jiayuguan frontier fortress. Built in 1372, this is the most intact military pass of the entire Great Wall.

### Afternoon

Next we'll head back to town to fill up on the tastiest *yangrou tang* and fresh baked bread in Jiayuguan, before preparing to drive the 400km (5 hours) to Dunhuang. We'll stop half way for fresh coffee and a 'brown bag' dinner eaten on or nearby the coach before completing our journey. Once we arrive in Dunhuang we'll check into the Dunhuang Hotel and relax



DAY 4

### Morning

This morning the group will make a beeline for one of the highlights of the trip – the Mogao Caves. As described by writer Simon Winchester, wandering monks began incising caves into the soft sandstone cliffs of Mogao in the fourth century, “and by the time the last cave was dug in the fourteenth, more than a thousand of them had been created. Once I entered inside, I was quite unprepared: What spread before me was astonishing, overwhelming, the stuff of dreams.” For conservation purposes, the site only allows 6,000 visitors per day, and the morning will therefore be led by licensed tour guides associated with (and expert in) the caves. The visit will include the so-called ‘library cave’ from where Stein obtained hundreds of manuscripts that he would eventually take back to London.

### Afternoon

After grabbing lunch on site, the group will transfer back downtown to the studio of Mr Niu for an exclusive look at the Dunhuang mural restoration and reproduction work this master and his students undertake throughout the year.

We’ll then return to the Dunhuang Hotel for pre-dinner drinks in the lobby before enjoying a presentation and dinner with Dr Neil Schmid, one of the world’s foremost experts on the Mogao caves and the only Western scholar currently researching at the Dunhuang Academy.



**DAY 5**

### Morning

This morning the group will take an early drive out to the Han Great Wall, visiting the Jade Gate and Hecang Granary (built to sustain the army garrisoned along this section of Wall in the Gobi) as well as the most precious stretches of the Wall itself, made of reeds and earth. Along the way, William will recount, with reference to published books and collections held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the British Library, London, Stein's tenacious and milestone exploration of this Wall and region, which he excavated, photographed and surveyed.

### Afternoon

After a picnic lunch of Dunhuang's finest *roujiamo* at the site of the Wall, we'll return downtown for an (optional) visit to the well-curated Dunhuang Museum before returning to the hotel. After a short break, William will give his final presentation on the explorations of the Han Dynasty Great Wall carried out by Sir Aurel Stein in 1907 before we all enjoy one final dinner together.



### Departure

The tour ends after breakfast. Those heading back to Beijing are advised to take flight CA1288 at 10.40am; those heading back to Shanghai on the 4.40pm Spring Airlines flight will have some free time to spend in Dunhuang town before transferring to the airport.

### Post Trip Tour Extension

Want to extend your trip by a couple of days? Let us know and we'll pack you off to Zhangye to see the mind-blowing Horse Hoof Temple grottoes, spend time in a tiny village inhabited by the Yugu people (who speak a Turkic language but practice Tibetan Buddhism), the Big Buddha Temple and the incredible Rainbow Mountains.

# FINAL NOTES ON THIS TRIP

## What's Included

- All guidance
- Entrance tickets
- Accommodation
- Main meals
- Ground transport between sights.

## What's Not Included

- Flights/trains to and from Gansu
- Alcoholic, soft drinks, tea and coffee should be paid separately
- Personal expenses incurred at your hotel



# TERMS & CONDITIONS

Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. does not own or operate any entity which is to provide goods or services. It purchases transportation, restaurant, ground handling and other services from various independent suppliers and individuals. All such persons and entities are independent contractors. As a result Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. is not liable for any negligent or willful act of any such person or entity or of any third person. Similarly, it is Bespoke Travel Company Ltd.'s policy that no fees for our services should be paid directly to third party suppliers by the customer. Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. is not liable for any cash misplaced or misappropriated by any third party. In the event of illness or other unforeseen circumstances on the part of the third party supplier resulting in non-provision of services, Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. will endeavour to find a similar replacement, or should a suitable replacement not be available, all monies paid for the service shall be refunded to the customer.

In addition and without limitation, Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. is not responsible for any injury, financial or physical loss, death, inconvenience, delay or damage to personal property in connection with the provision of any goods or services whether resulting from but not limited to acts of god or force majeure, illness, disease, acts of war, civil unrest, insurrection or revolt, animals, strikes or other labor activities, criminal or terrorist activities of any kind, overbooking or downgrading of services, food poisoning, mechanical or other failure of any means of transportation or for failure of any transportation mechanism to arrive or depart on time. Similarly, there are many inherent risks in tours such as great wall hikes, which can lead to illness, injury, or even death. These risks are increased by the fact that trips take place in remote locations, away from immediate medical facilities. Passenger assumes all such risks associated with participating in any such tour.

**Insurance and Safety:** Each guest of Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. should obtain full insurance coverage for accident, loss or injury during any tour undertaken. During the tour, the tourist assumes all risks related to participation of the tour. Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. is not liable to any guest for any direct, indirect or consequential damages.

**Amendments:** Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. will endeavour to assist if the customer requests any date/time changes more than 24 hours prior to the date of service. Changes are subject to availability of suppliers and are free of charge provided any additional fees or charges arising from the amendment are payable by the customer. Amendments to the itinerary, other than date/time changes, will be billed at Bespoke Travel Company Ltd.'s standard Trip Customisation rate of 800RMB/hour, except in the case of last minute bookings and changes (see above).

**Overdue Payments:** Payments that are more than 2 weeks overdue will incur an additional late payment fee amounting to 10% of the total invoiced amount each week until the invoice is paid in full.

**Covid-19 Group Tour Cancellation Policy:** Due to Covid-19, Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. recognises that plans may change unexpectedly. In the event of an outbreak in the region you are traveling from (e.g. Beijing/Shanghai), you may be required to provide a negative nucleic acid test at your own expense in order to travel / be accepted at the group's chosen hotel. In the event that the hotel refuses to accept foreign and/or Chinese guests even with a negative test, the tour will be cancelled and you will be refunded according to the Covid-19 Sudden Outbreak Cancellation Policy laid out below.

If the region (not province) we are traveling to is deemed medium or high risk by the Chinese government, and we are subsequently no longer able to visit the sights/hotels included in the itinerary, the trip will be cancelled and the Covid-19 Sudden Outbreak Cancellation Policy will also apply. However, in the event that the region we are traveling to is deemed low risk by the authorities, and the destination hotels included in the itinerary are still accepting both foreign and Chinese guests, the trip will go ahead and the standard Group Tour Cancellation Policy will apply. Please note that if you choose not to travel; are not vaccinated (if this suddenly becomes a requirement to travel); decline to take a Covid test; or are advised not to travel by your company/organization or school less than 28 days before the tour, we will not be able to issue a full refund.

The customer must give Bespoke Travel Company Ltd. notice of any cancellation in writing. The following charges are payable by the customer in accordance with the number of days prior to the service date notice is received by Bespoke Travel Company Ltd.

## Sudden Outbreak Cancellation Policy

From booking to tour date

Percentage payable to Bespoke  
0%

## Standard Group Tour Cancellation Policy

From booking to 28 days before  
27-15 days before the tour  
14 days or less before the tour

50%  
80%  
100%

**Governing Law & Dispute Resolution:** These terms and conditions shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of China. Any disputes arising out of or in connection with these terms and conditions shall be resolved through consultations. If the consultations do not lead to an agreement within thirty (30) days of the commencement of consultations, any party has the right to submit the dispute exclusively to the Arbitration Center. The arbitration shall be conducted in accordance with China's administered arbitration rules in force when the notice of arbitration is submitted in accordance with these rules. The seat or legal place of arbitration shall be in China. The arbitration award shall be final and binding. The parties agree to be bound thereby and to act accordingly. The parties hereby waive any right of appeal on the merits and/or any point of law.

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