

THE SAND BURIED RUINS OF
MAJESTIC INNER
MONGOLIA & NINGXIA

October 30 – November 3, 2021

With William Lindesay OBE

ABOUT THIS TRIP

This is a trip for adventurers. For people who don't mind getting up before dawn to watch sunrise over a spectacular ancient fortress semi-submerged by sand dunes. It's for those who savour a slow overnight desert train crossing and a rocky ride through the mountains to see archaeological wonders. In a sentence, it's for travellers who thought they'd seen everything China has to offer, but are prepared to be proven wrong by these unknown gems on the remote periphery of this enormous land.

In the space of five, truly action-packed days, historian William Lindesay – with assistance from filmmaker and photographer James Lindesay – will once more return to his favourite sights in the region and bring you along for the ride.

It's a trip that will leave you feeling as though you really did reach China's remote northern frontier, tasting its ancient history and sensing the drama of its storied past. With such a wealth of archaeology, and wild wonders like the Euphrates poplar forest and foreboding Gobi Desert, it's also spectacularly photogenic. The itinerary even includes an exclusive tour and wine tasting at Ningxia's Legacy Peak vineyard.

In conjunction with our trip to Gansu, this tour continues a series of special tours that Bespoke is running this year with William Lindesay showcasing the parts of the Great Wall most never get to see.

TRIP LENGTH: 4 nights, 5 days (Saturday, October 30 – Wednesday, November 3)

COST: Early bird: 14,950 RMB/person until Sept 6; 15,950 RMB/person thereafter (based on shared double or twin rooms**). Single supplement (hotels): 880 RMB/person

INCLUDED: Train tickets, hotels, most meals, vehicle transfers, guiding and all entrance tickets

NOT INCLUDED: Beverages (e.g. coffees, alcohol), return flight from Yinchuan, insurance.

*** If you are traveling solo and would like a roommate of the same gender please let us know and if available we will assign one. If not, we'll ask you to pay the single supplement.*

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. On this trip he will be accompanied by his son, fellow historian James Lindesay, whose aerial drone footage of the Great Wall was made into a BBC documentary *A Slow Odyssey: The Great Wall of China.*

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

***B, L, D denotes which meals are included in the trip price.*

DAY 1: Saturday, October 30 (D)

Catch the afternoon bullet train from Beijing to Baotou then check-in at the Shangri-la hotel as we prepare for the following day's adventure.

DAY 2: Sunday, October 31 (B, L, D)

Morning drive to the border region for a fabulous hike to see a finely-preserved hilltop section of the very first part of the first Great Wall of China. In the evening, we'll board the sleeper train to Ejina.

DAY 3: Monday, November 1 (B, L, D)

After arrival in Ejina we drive out into the Gobi to inspect the scattered ruins of several Xixia settlements, followed by an evening presentation by William.

DAY 4: Tuesday, November 2 (B, L)

Today we'll set off before dawn to witness sunrise over the sand-buried ruins of the ancient city of Khara Khoto. This afternoon we'll visit a wild wonder: the Euphrates poplar forest in the Gobi, followed by the local Ejina museum, then catch the overnight sleeper train from Ejina to Ningxia.

DAY 5: Wednesday November 3 (B, L)

After a very early arrival in Ningxia, enjoy breakfast in the capital Yinchuan, then explore the excellent Provincial Museum. We'll enjoy a delicious lamb lunch and wine tasting at Legacy Peak Winery before visiting the Xixia Tombs. Catch the evening flight back home.



DAY 1

Afternoon

This afternoon meet the group at Beijing North Station in time for our high-speed to departure to Baotou, Inner Mongolia's largest city (15:39-19:40).

Evening

Upon arrival in Baotou we'll transfer to the comfortable Shangri-la hotel in the city center, where we'll enjoy a simple dinner before settling in for the evening.

***If you prefer to make your own way to Baotou from another part of China, you can meet us at the hotel. The price of the train ticket (263 RMB) will be deducted from your tour payment. Please let us know upon booking.*



DAY 2

Morning

After breakfast we'll set off on the 2-hour drive through back country Inner Mongolia. The roads in this area aren't always easy going, but they do offer glimpses of local life in this remote part of China. We'll make use of a fleet of Land Cruisers for maximum comfort. Here we'll get the chance to hike around 5km across dry and rocky hills to a gem of the tour – a finely-preserved hilltop section of the very first part of the first Great Wall of China, almost 2,300 years old and guaranteed to be entirely free of other visitors.

We'll enjoy a simple picnic lunch in this spectacular location, during which William will give a talk outlining the history of this section of Wall, as well as how he 'rediscovered' it whilst exploring the area many years ago.

Afternoon & Evening

We'll head back to Baotou for the remainder of the afternoon before a relaxed dinner in the city. Our overnight sleeper train departs this evening at 9.30pm and will whisk us west across the Tennger Desert towards Ejina. Time to settle into your bunk with a good book!



Morning

Our train arrives at 10am in the tiny town of Ejina, an area incorporated into the Mongol empire under Genghis Khan in 1226. On arrival we'll check into the Ejina Euphrates Poplar Hotel, surprisingly grand and sumptuous for this part of China, to relax after our journey.

This afternoon the adventure really begins with a 'Ruins of Desert Cathay' safari. In a fleet of Land Cruisers, we drive through varied and surprising desert scenery including Gobi plains, salt pans, sand dunes and glades of extraordinary Euphrates Poplar forest towards our scattered destinations – ruins of Buddhist stupas, remains of frontier settlements and canals of an irrigation system that brought water to the people living here during the Western Han, Xixia and Yuan dynasties (from the 2nd Century BC to the 14th Century AD).

Evening

As we prepare for tomorrow's expedition, we'll enjoy an illustrated presentation from William introducing the history of the abandoned city of Khara Khoto, including its excavation in 1909 by Russian explorer Pytor Kozlov, who unearthed hundreds of relics from the area that would eventually be displayed in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.



DAY 4

Morning

Today we'll set off before dawn to witness sunrise over the sand-buried ruins of the ancient fortress city of Khara Khoto. Built by the Western Xia in the 10th century, the site became a flash point in 1372 when a major battle raged and a siege ensued between the advancing Ming and retreating Mongols. This is a truly magnificent sight, and a real feast for photographers in particular. There will be plenty of time to explore the site on foot – those that wish to can complete a circuit of the fortress walls before we enjoy a homebrewed coffee inside the site, on what would have been one of the main streets running through it.

Afternoon

After returning to the hotel for a short break and lunch, in the afternoon, William will lead the group further out into the Gobi to visit a Han Dynasty watchtower where a trove of hundreds of inscribed wooden slips were discovered, the most important archaeological find in this area. We'll also make a quick stop at another section of the ancient Euphrates Poplar Forest, where, remarkably some of the trees have stood for 2,000 years – longer than the area's Han Dynasty settlements! Before we depart, we'll take in the small but intriguing Ejina Museum.

Evening

In the late afternoon, we'll catch a 5pm sleeper train from Ejina station that will whisk us back across the desert toward the province of Ningxia. We suggest guests bring some snacks on the train for a light dinner this evening (or make use of the old-school dining car!)



DAY 5

Morning

Our train pulls into Linhe, close to the border with Ningxia, in the very early hours of the morning (around 4am) and we'll transfer to a team of small vehicles to complete the journey to Yinchuan by road (approx. 4 hours). On arrival in this relaxed city we'll head to one of its central hotels for a hearty breakfast to fuel us for the long day ahead. We'll start with a visit to the Ningxia Provincial Museum. The well-curated exhibits here give us the lowdown on the area's history, including some excellent info on the Xixia period as well as the local Helanshan Rock Paintings, most of which are thousands of years old.

Afternoon

This afternoon we'll get the chance to relax and enjoy a hearty roast lamb lunch followed by an exclusive vineyard tour and wine tasting with the team from Legacy Peak. Founded in 1997, Legacy Peak has been at the forefront of China's rise as a wine producer, and is one of the country's most respected wineries, winning several Decanter medals for both its Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Even better, this vineyard here enjoys a truly unique location amongst Yinchuan's Xixia Tombs, and after lunch we'll stroll through the fields and explore this marvellous historic site without other tourists around.

Evening

This evening we'll transfer to Yinchuan airport for your flight home. We recommend taking flight CA1228, 19:00 departure (or later).

Want to extend your tour by a couple of days? Ask us about possible private tours for more sightseeing and wine tasting in Ningxia.

NOTES ON THIS TRIP

How to Book

To reserve a place on this tour, or if you have any questions, please email us at info@bespoketravelcompany.com and we will send you a reservation form and payment instructions. To confirm your place, we'll request a 1,000 CNY deposit, with the final payment due four weeks before the tour begins. Please note that the final itinerary may change before departure, but we will update you with any significant adjustments that take place.

What's Included

- All guidance and entrance tickets
 - Accommodation
- All train tickets and ground transport between sights.
 - Most meals

What's Not Included

- Return flight from Yinchuan
- Alcoholic, soft drinks, tea and coffee should be paid separately
 - Personal expenses incurred at your hotel

Trains

- We plan to take second class seats for the short journey from Beijing to Baotou. For the overnight journeys, soft sleeper (the highest class) tickets will be booked, subject to availability. Cabins are clean and comfortable (but not luxurious) with four beds/guests per cabin. We'll provide general train tips prior to departure.

Flight

- We ask you book your own flight back to Beijing, Shanghai or elsewhere at the end of the tour, based on the flight recommendations given. If you are not familiar with how to do this, then we're happy to offer advice. We recommend guests consider booking refundable tickets, should the tour need to be postponed or cancelled.

Reminders

- This trip includes several train rides and access to areas normally closed to foreigners. To apply for the necessary travel permits and tickets, passport details must be provided as far in advance as possible.
- As you can see from the detailed itinerary, this itinerary is fairly 'full on' and includes more than one very early morning as well as two overnight train rides, so please keep this in mind when booking!

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

Days prior to service date
From booking to tour date

Percentage payable to Bespoke
0%

Standard Group Tour Cancellation Policy

From booking to 28 days before
27-14 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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