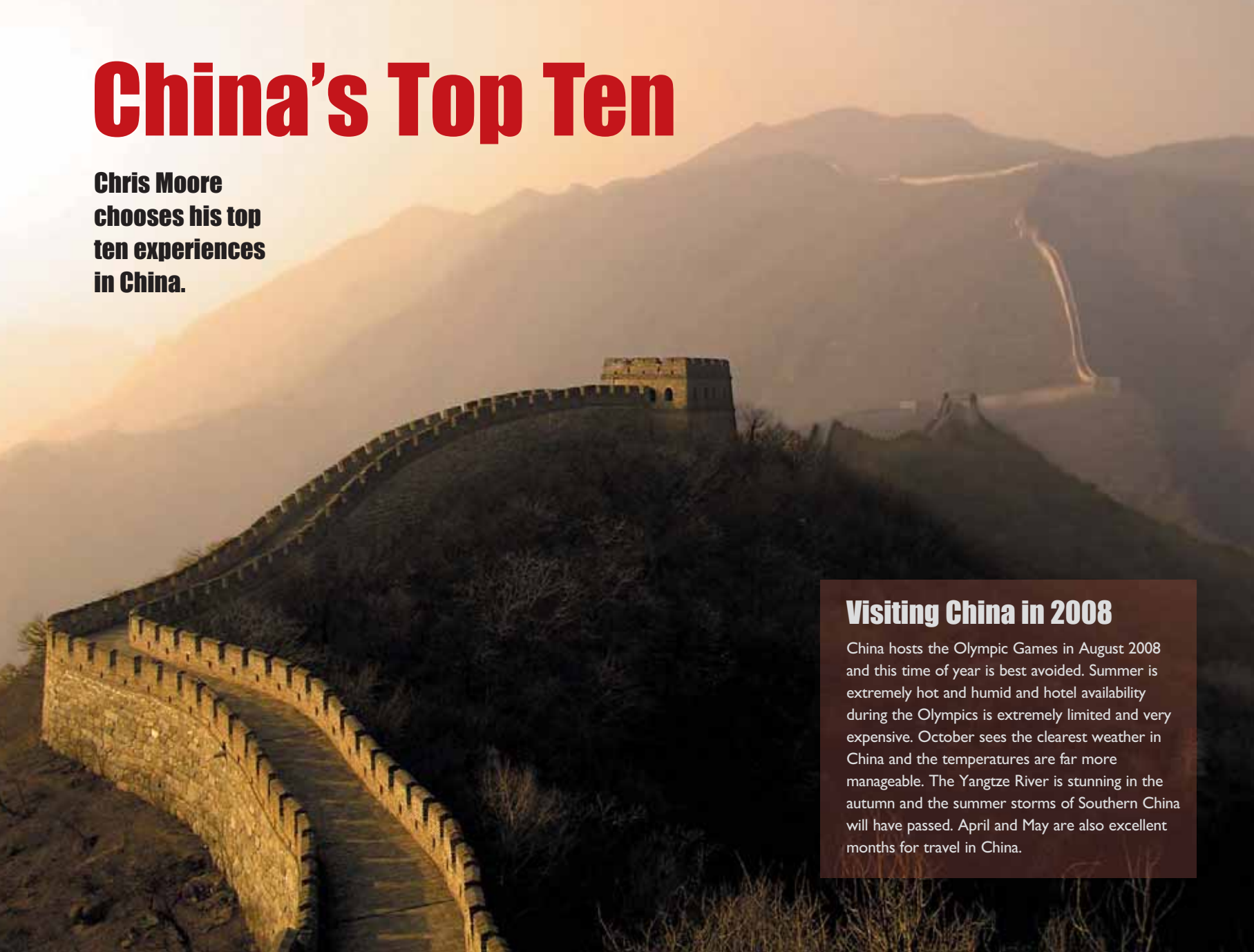


China's Top Ten

Chris Moore
chooses his top
ten experiences
in China.



Visiting China in 2008

China hosts the Olympic Games in August 2008 and this time of year is best avoided. Summer is extremely hot and humid and hotel availability during the Olympics is extremely limited and very expensive. October sees the clearest weather in China and the temperatures are far more manageable. The Yangtze River is stunning in the autumn and the summer storms of Southern China will have passed. April and May are also excellent months for travel in China.

The Great Wall of China under a setting sun

With such a diverse and fascinating country as China, choosing a 'top ten' of must-see destinations from a list of so many is no easy task. Most, however, really pick themselves and are recognised around the world as symbols of China's history, breathtaking scenery and modern vibrancy. A 17 day journey around China is enough time to get a good look at the most well known attractions and indeed many first-time visitors are inspired to return to visit other regions of the country. In seventeen days you will be able to get off the beaten track and explore some less visited but equally rewarding villages and sights. 2008 is going to be an exciting year for China and the August Olympics will ensure that the eyes of the world are on the 'Middle Kingdom' as never before.

The Great Wall

The Great Wall is on every visitor's itinerary, and the quieter section at mountainous and beautiful Jinshanling offers some welcome peace and quiet just a day trip from the bustle of Beijing.

Three Gorges Cruise on the Yangtze

Once fully operational in 2009, the giant dam on the Yangtze River will raise water levels on a vast scale, changing the scenery of this beautiful region forever. 2008 will be the final opportunity to see the magnificent Three Gorges of this mighty river in all their glory.

Qingdao

With its continental flavour and laid-back atmosphere, Qingdao is a fascinating and attractive city best known for its beer (now exported all over the world). The sea air is clear and the attractive esplanade is a great place for eating and drinking.

Terracotta Warriors

An iconic image of China's ancient civilisations, the Terracotta Warrior complex just outside Xian astonishes visitors with its sheer size and scale, as well as the incredible detail on the face of each unique figure.

Shanghai

No other city symbolises this country's future like modern Shanghai, the essence of capitalism in Communist China. The riverfront Bund with its British architecture looks out at the bright lights of Pudong and the commercial heart of the city, with a nightscape worthy of a sci-fi film. This is the place to be for shopping, eating and nightlife.

Minorities of Guizhou and Guangxi

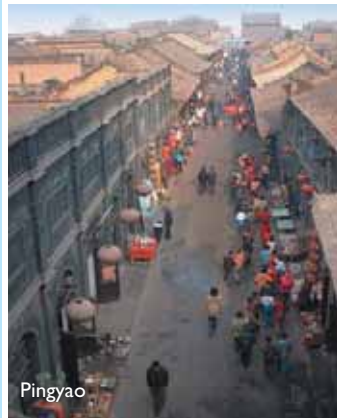
Areas of China's southern provinces remain largely bypassed by foreign visitors and are inhabited by various minority communities. The journey from Guiyang to Guilin will take you through Miao, Dong and Zhuang villages untouched by modernisation and progress. Travellers in April and May have a good chance of coming across one of the many local festivals before reaching the superbly photogenic rice terraces at Longji. Stay at the Lian Lodge for amazing views of the terraces.



Young Miao festival-goers, Guizhou



Shanghai



Pingyao



Zhong woman, Longji



The museum of terracotta warriors and horses, Xian



Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces, Longji



Pudong, Shanghai

Zhongdian

Known in China as 'Shangri-La', the region of Zhongdian and Deqen in Yunnan Province offers a landscape and culture unlike anywhere else in the country. The close ties with neighbouring Tibet are evident everywhere, from the yak-butter tea to the Tibetan prayer flags and incredible mountain views. A luxurious stay at the Banyan Tree resort means that comfort is not sacrificed on an adventurous journey to the foothills of the Himalayas.

Pingyao

This ancient UNESCO-protected city is as close to 'old China' as you are likely to see. Within the surviving city walls you are transported back to Imperial China as you wander through the hutongs and courtyards and stay in traditional Chinese guesthouses.

Chengdu and Pandas

Capital of Sichuan Province and home to the giant panda, Chengdu is a refreshingly relaxed city where you can people-watch while sipping tea at a traditional teahouse or experience Sichuan Opera. Chengdu's real draw, however, is the wonderful Panda Research Base, which gives visitors the chance to get close to these notoriously shy animals as they happily munch on bamboo in their natural environment.

Beijing

China's capital is a city of contrasts, from the austere officialdom of Tiananmen Square and the Great Hall of the People to the serenity of the Summer Palace. Beijing's jewel is the jaw-dropping Forbidden City, which looks barely changed from the days when Emperors strolled through its courtyard and buildings.

Chris Moore
China Specialist

FACT FILE

A 17-night trip to China including return flights costs from £2,800 per person. This would include the bustling cities of Beijing, Xian and Shanghai, as well as the scenic countryside of Guilin region. Please contact our China specialists on 01993 838 220 for details.

