

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY ADVENTURE
PRE-TRIP DOSSIER 2009

SILK ROAD

Photo adventures designed by photographers, for photographers. Advance your photographic skills while travelling along The Silk Road in China on a 14 day journey. We have designed an incredible tour into the remote and remarkable west of China - open to beginners and advanced photographers alike.



GRASSHOPPER
ADVENTURES

PHOTOGRAPHY
by Ewen Bell





ITINERARY

14 day journey into the far west of China
accompanied by professional photographer
Ewen Bell - All accommodation, local
transports and most meals are included.



Days 1-3 | Xi'an

Start of the Silk Route and home of the famous Terracotta Warriors, there is also a whole lot more to Xi'an. We visit the bustling Muslim markets and have the chance to capture the unique blend of old and new presented by this vibrant city.

Days 4-5 | Jiayuguan

Jiayuguan was traditionally seen as the western boundary of Han China, and it is here that the last grand fortress along the Great Wall is to be found, surrounded by desert which stretches away to colossal mountains on the horizon.

Days 6-7 | Dunhuang

The Silk Road was more than just a trade route, it was also a conduit for ideas and religions. This is in evidence along the length of the Silk Route, but nowhere more spectacularly than at the oasis town of Dunhuang, famous as the site of China's finest Buddhist cave art. We explore the caves (sans camera) and venture into the sea of huge dunes which surround the town.

Days 8-9 | Turpan

Turpan sits in a vast depression and is surrounded by a maze of grape-trellis-lined dusty lanes which lead to the desert and its fiery Flaming Mountains, ancient cities, hidden ravines and even vineyards.

Days 10-14 | Kashgar

Kashgar was a crucial trading post along the Silk Road and its bustling Sunday Bazaar still attracts traders from around the region. The proximity to Central Asia gives Kashgar a unique blend of cultures and the old city is alive with Uighurs, Tajiks, Kazaks and Kyrgyz, each distinguishable by their traditional headgear. To really take the Silk Route to the limits of China we travel along the Karakoram Highway to stunning and remote Lake Karakul, nestled among 7000m plus peaks where we spend a night in a yurt.



THIS ADVENTURE

The Silk Road is one of the world's greatest trade routes, starting in Xi'an and extending across the vast desert and mountain expanses of western China all of the way to Europe. This tour takes you on an incredible journey from the heart of the Han empire to the very limits of China, where deserts and mountains meet as incongruously as the people who inhabit the region; Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Uyghurs and Uzbeks share this arid land, coming together to trade at the quintessential Silk Road market, Kashgar.

Silk is the most famous of the exports to travel along the trade route, but it was also a conduit for a host of goods from the west, borne by traders who also brought new ideas and religions along with them. Buddhism and Islam both traveled the Silk Road, leaving behind exquisite Buddhist cave art and mosques which remain to this day. Today the Silk Road sees scant trade, but the glory of yesteryear is in evidence all around; from the last great outpost of the Ming dynasty wall at Jiayuguan to the incredible Buddhist grottoes at Dunhuang and the ancient ruins at Turpan.

The incredible diversity of landscapes, cultures and people along the Silk Road offers endless photographic potential, and an unparalleled opportunity to develop your style and techniques as a photographer.



WHO TRAVELS WITH US

Our photographic journeys appeal to both the young and old, the experienced and novice. Most tours are made up of people aged 25-65, and occasionally older or younger still. It doesn't matter what your skills and interest in photography are, you will enjoy sharing a creative and immersive experience with like minded people. You can read feedback from our past travellers by visiting www.ewenbell.com



A large crowd of people, many wearing traditional Central Asian hats, gathered around a market stall with animals. The scene is bustling, with people of various ages and ethnicities. In the foreground, several men are looking towards the camera or the market. One man in the center has a long white beard and is holding a rope. The background shows more people and animals, creating a sense of a busy market.

TAKE BETTER PHOTOS

The photographic themes designed into this trip are aimed at people with a fundamental knowledge of their camera, but who want to learn more. A basic knowledge of aperture, focal length, depth of field and exposure is useful, but not essential. We will even help you learn the technical use of your camera, if that's what you need. For more experienced photographers the itinerary alone will be an inspiration for your artistic output, plus the chance to share stories with an award winning travel journalist.

People of many different skill levels and ambition will be gathered for the journey, so expect to be in the company of diversity. This tour will appeal to anyone who wants to immerse themselves in the process of cultivating skills and exploring cultures. You will have a chance to discuss techniques and principles, then immediately go out and practise. This will not give you a qualification, but hopefully will give you confidence and direction to take better photos



ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

We recommend the use of Digital SLR cameras for this journey, but you are not restricted from using any type of camera you may have, including conventional film SLRs and compact cameras. Digital SLR cameras offer excellent manual controls and give us the ability to review our work at the end of each day - a valuable part of this experience. A minimum of 4Gig of memory cards should accompany your camera, plus an additional 20Gig or greater of external storage (hard drive or laptop).

We also recommend that you carry a wide angle lens for general use and occasional landscape opportunities. Tripods are not used by the instructing photographer and are not required for this tour.

A good quality day pack will be an essential part of the packing list. Crumpler and Lowe make excellent packs that are designed for camera equipment. Ideally your pack should be comfortable, spacious, and practical. The traditional type of 'over-the-shoulder' camera bag is not very suitable for travel photography, a day-pack is better.

Finally, full travel insurance and coverage for your 'additional items' is absolutely necessary. Standard travel insurance is generally inadequate to cover the value of your equipment unless you stipulate your equipment when buying insurance. It costs very little, so don't be caught short. Please check very carefully that you are fully covered and have completed all necessary details to qualify for suitable coverage.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

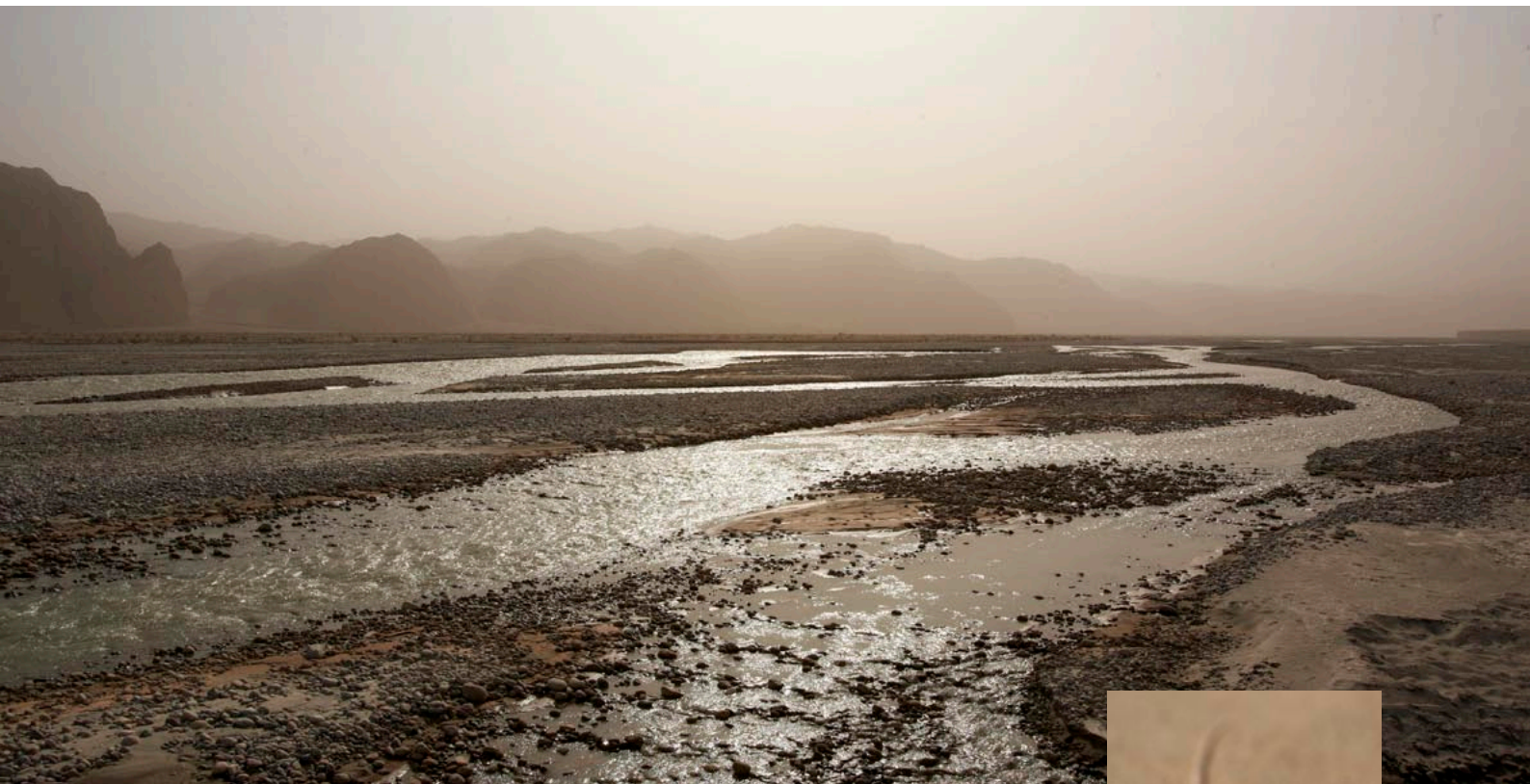
At all times during our journey we need to be mindful of how our presence can impact on the cultures we wish to observe. Travel photography carries an even greater burden to ensure that you respect cultural beliefs and personal privacy. We never take photos of people without their express consent; instead we will learn techniques to enable you to gain more intimate connections.

GO SLOW

The most unique aspect of this style of travel is the emphasis on taking the travel slowly, to have time in fewer places and see more of those places. We travel by private transport so we have the freedom to stop and take photos when the light is right.

This is not a package tour designed for the masses, it's a photographic journey designed for photographers, by photographers.





YOUR GUIDE

Ewen Bell is a travel junkie and recognises the unique charms that China and The Silk Road have to offer the photographer. Travel photography is his calling but Ewen has also been practising commercial photography since 1990 with experience in wildlife, travel, commercial and portraiture. Ewen's work is published in many travel brochures each year and appears in regular travel publications including the Escape Weekend editions across Australia, Melbourne's Herald Sun and national magazines including Vacations & Travel and Holidays for Couples.

Ewen was also chosen by the ASTW as their 2007 Australian Travel Photographer of the Year, and in 2008 won the award for Best Australian Image.

Ewen has spent many years travelling in China and has a thorough appreciation for the cultural and historical context for any journey. He is genuinely passionate about the country and makes several trips to China every year. Since 2006 ewen has led on average three photo tours per year, choosing to run a small number of trips so that he retains a keen passion for the experience.



WHY SHOOT DIGITAL

For the purpose of this journey a digital camera is the most suitable equipment to carry. We will save the debate about film vs digital for the journey, there will be plenty of time to discuss opinions! Our trip is a chance to develop new skills and the immediate feedback offered by digital cameras is invaluable. The quality, manual control and practicality of modern Digital SLRs make them perfect for travel photography.

Your instructor will also be carrying a laptop computer for the journey, so there will be ample opportunity to review your photographs and study your image in detail.





ETHNIC CHINA

There's more to China than just Kingdoms, Palaces and Mao ZeDong's cultural revolution. It's a country that contains within it many nations, many peoples and a surprising array of ethnic cultures that are far removed from the China we recognise in the West. On this tour we get a close look at people from the far western regions of Xinjiang province, the Uyghur. They are culturally distinct from the Han Chinese, with thousands of years of tradition, trade and religion.



PRE-TRIP ESSENTIALS



Additional Accommodation

Should you require extra accommodation in Xi'An or Kashgar we can offer you competitive rates at our hotel. Room costs will be advised upon request and may vary according to season and proximity to date of travel.

Money

The official currency of China is Renminbi or Yuan which should be used for all transactions. China has a modern banking systems with ATMs and money changers in most larger or tourist towns. In China it is possible to use Visa/Mastercard and Cirrus/Maestro cards, however, we do advise that you carry some cash currency from home as a backup. Travellers Cheques are not always as easy to change by comparison. Most international currencies can be exchanged in larger cities so it is not necessary to bring only US Dollars - AUD, EUR, CAD, NZD are all accepted at banks in major centres.

Costs

We recommend that you carry approximately \$400 in local or US currency in order to cover your shopping and souvenir expenses. All meals are included with travel days and most travel sundries will be included. Drinks and alcohol are not included, and you will have the opportunity to dine without the group on occasions if you prefer.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

Packing

You will be required to carry your own luggage when checking into or out of hotels and bags will need to be loaded on and off trains and up and down stairs at stations. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack or small wheelie bag - please keep maximum weight to around 15kg. This trip covers higher altitude areas where temperatures can plummet at night. Please remember to bring warm clothes for cold nights and chilly mornings.

Important

All information in this Profile is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures.



HOW TO BOOK



Simply visit the website for Grasshopper Adventures and fill out the online booking form to reserve a place. Once they have received payment of the deposit your place on the trip is confirmed. You can make payment with your credit card or direct bank transfer...

www.grasshopperadventures.com

You can also find out more about this trip, the photographer Ewen Bell or other photo tours by emailing Ewen at ewen@ewenbell.com or go online to his website...

www.ewenbell.com