

# SEAN GAO & FRIENDS CHINA TRIP



2024 China trip (October, 2024)

**SHANGHAI SONATAS FOUNDATION (USA)** has announced the 2025 “Sean Gao & Friends” VIP Trip to China. The trip is led by University of Delaware’s Trustees Distinguished Professor of Music [Sean Gao](#) who is the creator and composer of *Shanghai Sonatas*, a new American musical in development that the foundation supports.

**A RARE OPPORTUNITY** to experience five thousand years of music, history, culture, and cuisines of China with an experienced bilingual and bicultural trip director and concert tour producer originally from China promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

**THE 13-DAY TOUR** visits China’s most important historical cities:

- **BEIJING**
- **XI’AN**
- **SHANGHAI**
- **SUZHOU**

Departing on Monday, October 13, 2025 (tentative).

**Early reservations are highly recommended as space is limited.**

A deposit of \$1,000 with each reservation must be received by **May 15, 2025**.

For reservation and visa forms, visit our website <https://www.shanghaisonatasfoundation.org/Events>.

For other questions email **Professor Gao** at [xiangg@udel.edu](mailto:xiangg@udel.edu)

## TOUR FEATURES

- Many special excursions and programs of this VIP trip are not accommodated by standard touring companies
- International and domestic (within China) travel
- First class air conditioned ground transportation
- Twelve nights of 5-star hotel accommodations
- Top quality, English-speaking, local tour guides under the daily direction of the tour director
- 29 meals (vegetarian and vegan options available): 12 breakfast buffets, 9 lunches and 8 dinners including a dumpling banquet in Xi’an, Beijing Roast Duck dinner and farewell dinner party in Shanghai. All menus personally selected by Professor Gao
- Cultural events including but not limited to Tang Dynasty Dance, Chinese traditional music performance, Chinese traditional acrobatic performance, boat ride on the Huangpu River in Shanghai
- Special cultural presentations including Musical and Cultural Traits of China and Survival Chinese with Professor Gao.
- Special musical activities of Professor Gao’s creative work including his new musical [Shanghai Sonatas](#) (tentative)



# ITINERARY

(Tentative as of 03/03/25)

## • DAY 1: (MON, OCT 13) USA/BEIJING

Take an international flight from Northeast U.S. to Beijing, China. Meals and snacks will be served on the plane.

## • DAY 2: (TUE, OCT 14) BEIJING (dinner)

Upon arrival in Beijing, you will be greeted by the tour director and transferred to your hotel. A welcome dinner will be waiting for you. (Pending the final flight schedule, this dinner might be replaced by a light supper in case of late-night arrival.)

## • DAY 3: (WED, OCT 15) BEIJING (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

The highlight today is a trip to the magnificent Great Wall of China, one of the most visited sites in the world. Dinner is a dumpling feast in northern Chinese style, followed by a traditional Chinese acrobatic performance. The day ends with an evening bus tour of the city of Beijing.

## • DAY 4: (THURS, OCT 16) BEIJING (breakfast, lunch, special dinner)

The excursion today includes a visit to Tiananmen Square. We will then visit the Forbidden City, the largest and most intact conglomeration of ancient structures in the world. The Forbidden City was the imperial palace for 24 Ming and Qing Dynasty emperors who ruled China for over 600 years. Lunch is followed by a visit to the Summer Palace, the famous summer resort of the Empress Dowager Ci Xi. Feast your eyes on the Long Corridor, Longevity Hill, and Kunming Lake. Tonight's dinner will be hosted at a BBQ restaurant, featuring Korean-Chinese cuisine and entertainment.

## • DAY 5: (FRI, OCT 17) BEIJING (breakfast, lunch, special dinner)

Today starts with a tour of the Beijing Hutong (Chinese alleyways) area, where the narrow lanes of the old residential quarters are. You will have the opportunity to take a glimpse of the local residents' daily life. Next, you will attend a traditional Chinese tea ceremony at an elegant teahouse. In the afternoon you will tour the delicately crafted Temple of Heaven, where the Chinese emperors used to pray for a good harvest. A Beijing Roast Duck dinner party (with Vegetarian options) will follow the afternoon excursion.

## • DAY 6: (SAT, OCT 18) BEIJING (breakfast, lunch)

Special UD cultural presentations will be offered before lunch. After a Beijing style special lunch near the hotel, you will have free time to explore this wonderful city on your own and to finish your last-minute shopping in Beijing.

## • DAY 7: (SUN, OCT 19) BEIJING/XI'AN (breakfast, special dinner)

After breakfast, you will take a flight or high-speed train to Xi'an, the ancient capital city for 11 dynasties in Chinese history. You will also take a tour of the well-preserved city wall upon arrival in Xi'an. After a local style barbeque dinner, we will visit the Sleepless City of Tang, a renowned Xi'an city attraction.

## • DAY 8: (MON, OCT 20) XI'AN (breakfast, lunch)

Today you will take an excursion to the Tomb of China's first emperor Shi Huang of the Qin Dynasty and see the awesome Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses, widely regarded as the Eighth Wonder of the World. After lunch inside the museum, enjoy the rest of the afternoon and evening for your leisure. The acclaimed Xi'an Muslim Quarter and the Drum Tower are the suggested evening excursions on your own.

## • DAY 9: (TUE, OCT 21) XI'AN (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

After breakfast, you will visit the DaMing Palace museum to experience the "Forbidden City" of Tang Dynasty. Professor Gao will give a special presentation of Musical and Cultural Traits of China before you enjoy a world-famous dumpling dinner banquet, followed by a spectacular show of Tang Dynasty court dance and music.

## • DAY 10: (WED, OCT 22) XI'AN/SHANGHAI (breakfast, dinner)

After breakfast, you will fly or take the high-speed train to Shanghai, the "New York City of China." Often regarded as "the Paris of the East," Shanghai has retained the flavor of its past European influences. After we arrive in Shanghai, you will have the option to ride the fastest train in the world— Shanghai Maglev train into the city in 7 minutes on your own to meet the group bus. Then, a bus tour of the city and its Bund area will show you the long Western influence of this trading city. Dinner will be served in Shanghai style, which is famous for its special seafood and fresh vegetable dishes. There's an optional short walk after dinner to the bustling Nanjing Road, the "5th Avenue of Shanghai".

## • DAY 11: (THURS, OCT 23) SHANGHAI (breakfast, lunch)

Today's excursion takes you to XinTianDi, or the "French Quarter" of Shanghai and the birthplace of the Chinese Communist Party. Lunch will bring you to the popular shopping heaven of the city: the Old Shanghai Street. Free afternoon and evening for you to explore the city on your own.

## • DAY 12: (FRI, OCT 24) SHANGHAI/SUZHOU (breakfast, lunch)

Today, you will visit Su Zhou, the world's capital for silk. It is also famous for her most beautiful historical gardens. After visiting the world-famous Humble Administrator's Garden, the extraordinary Suzhou Museum designed by the renowned Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei and the Suzhou Silk Factory, a Su Zhou style lunch will conclude your Su Zhou trip. Free evening in Shanghai will allow you to explore the "Paris of the East" on your own.

## • DAY 13: (SAT, OCT 25) SHANGHAI (breakfast, lunch, special dinner)

After breakfast, you will visit Professor Gao's favorite Chinese museum, the Shanghai Museum of Art and History (brand new location as of February of 2024), which ranks among the greatest museums of the world. After lunch, you will have a relaxing afternoon with a final exploring opportunity before attending a cruise on the Huangpu River to enjoy the spectacular night view of Shanghai. A farewell dinner celebration with Shanghai cuisine in the evening will conclude your trip to the Middle Kingdom.

## • DAY 14: (SUN, OCT 26) SHANGHAI/USA (breakfast)

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back home.

## DEPARTURE DATE (TENTATIVE) & TOUR FARES

### OCT 13, 2025 DEPARTING FROM JFK/ IAD(DC)/EWR (NJ), TBA

**TOUR COST** (including Chinese visa, all air and ground transportation, double occupancy hotel, 29 meals, local English tour guides and all excursions): \$7,999

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** \$1,500 (Optional)  
Double occupancy hotel rooms are included, and optional single rooms are available with a supplement payment of \$1,500 per person/room.

### RESERVATION DEPOSIT:

Your reservation will be confirmed upon receipt of your deposit of \$1,000.00 by May 15, 2025

### FINAL PAYMENT: due June 8, 2025

Final trip cost is subject to change based on the USD-RMB exchange rate on October 10, 2025. (Exchange rate on March 3, 2025: \$1USD = ¥7.28 RMB.)

**TRIP INSURANCE:** (including evacuation cost): You are required to purchase international travel protection insurance from other sources to cover trip cancellation and all other related costs. Emergency transportation and evacuation are also required for the policy. Cost of coverage varies based on age and medical conditions. (Please contact Allianz Travel or similar travel insurance companies.)

**INTERNATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE:** Travelers must provide proof of international health coverage.

**USA IN-COUNTRY TRANSPORTATION:** Not covered by tour fare. Participants should arrange their own transportation to catch the non-stop flight to and back from China. To avoid parking and driving, round trip or one way group airport transportation (from and back to Newark, Delaware) will be available upon request for an additional fee.

### CANCELLATION PENALTY:

Prior to May 15, 2025: No penalty/deposit refunded in full

- May 15 - June 18: \$1000
- June 19 - August 15: 80% of tour cost
- After August 15: 100% of tour cost

### PROOF OF US CITIZENSHIP AND

**VISA APPLICATION:** This tour requires a current passport and a visa to enter China. Your current passport must be valid through **April 30, 2026**. Two current 2x2 passport color photos for visa application are required. Photos must be taken professionally by Walgreens photo service or other passport photo services. No personal cell phone photos accepted. Your visa-processing fee is included in the tour fare and the original passport will be returned with a Chinese visa by **June 30, 2025**. **Non U. S. Citizens** are responsible to fulfill appropriate entry requirements of China and back to the USA. Contact your consulate office for requirements.

### HEALTH CONDITION:

In case of a major health issue during the trip, the trip participant's travel insurance must cover the cost of evacuation of the participant back home without interrupting the trip schedule.

### RESPONSIBILITY:

**Shanghai Sonatas Foundation** and its volunteer touring directors cannot be held responsible, in the absence of their own gross neglect, for events over which they have no control, nor for acts and omissions by persons, companies or agencies, including hotels, airlines, restaurants, sea and land transportation companies, which are not directly controlled by **Shanghai Sonatas Foundation** and touring directors.