Discover CHINA
The Less Visited Treasures

Delve into China’s more hidden cultural, historic and scenic wonders

20 Day Escorted Exploration - Departs 11 April 2010
China is not just an incredible travel destination. It’s home to one of the world’s longest continuous civilisations, with a hugely impressive heritage of art, architecture, language and cuisine. It’s a country of great contrasts: colourful and dynamic lifestyles, picturesque rural landscapes, atmospheric temple complexes, modern cityscapes; and natural beauty that ranges from the untamed to the simply idyllic.

The Great Wall, Beijing’s Imperial City, and the Terracotta Warriors, are among the most visited tourist attractions in the world. But to get the very best out of China, you need to peek under the surface to find the more intimate, the less well known, and the more private existence of this truly diverse and unique country. Chengde, just north of Beijing, has some stunning imperial buildings, constructed by emperors when this was their favoured summer retreat. The Yungang grottos at Datong are magnificent, containing the worlds best Buddhist cave statues and art. Nearby up to 40 million people live in the loess cave villages of Shanxi. In southern Shanxi, the UNESCO Heritage listed ancient walled city of Pingyao, once the financial heart of the Qing Empire, remains today like a colourful real-life medieval film set.

South of Shanghai, in Zhejiang Province, Hangzhou is China’s most scenic city, and nearby picturesque and historic canal town of Shaoxing has always played a disproportionately important role in Chinese culture, legend and arts. In the south-west of the country, Sichuan’s Chengdu remains one of China’s most interesting easy-going provincial capitals. In Sichuan, pilgrims flock to see the colossal Big Buddha at Leshan, sip tea in China’s best traditional teahouses – and of course, visit the home of the giant Panda, a real living fossil and world icon.

Southern China is home to the vast majority of the country’s colourful ethnic minority peoples. In the south east, the distinctive fortress-like earthen roundhouses of the Hakka people, mostly three stories high and housing up to 70 people, are totally unique in the world. The beautiful south west province of Guizhou remains off the radar for most tourists, an authentic slice of Chinese countryside populated by an intriguing patchwork of ethnic minorities. This is the best place in China to meet the colourful ethnic people on their own terms. The oldest and biggest event of the year in Guizhou province is the amazing spring time Sisters Meal Festival, traditional time for ethnic Miao young ladies to choose their partners.

China offers a dynamic feast of sights and sensations. Willowed landscapes, tranquil gardens, majestic rivers, fabled monuments and imperial pavilions of red and gold that stand as poignant symbols of an enduring and rich historical legacy. China’s countryside villages and bustling cities deftly combine time-honoured traditions with the ever-quickening pace of modern China in the 21st Century.

This ancient country is one of the most fascinating and exciting holiday destinations on the planet.
Join us on an exclusive small group exploration full of culturally interesting experiences in a wonderful country of intrigue, full of friendly people.
VISITING THE NEW GENERATION OF OUTSTANDING DESTINATIONS
Xiamen, Yongding, Hangzhou, Shaoxing, Beijing, Chengde, Datong, Pingyao, Leshan, Chengdu, Guiyang and Kaili

AND AMAZING ATTRACTIONS
Including: Earthen roundhouses of the Hakka people, historic cultural water-town of Shaoxing, the most spectacular Imperial Summer Mountain Palace, the Great Wall at Jingshanling, atmospheric old walled town of Pingyao, famous 1600 year old cave art of the Yungang Grottos, gravity-defying Hanging Temples, world’s largest Buddhist sculpture, the home of China’s giant pandas, colourful Sichuan Opera, ethnic minority villages of Guizhou province, and the outstanding Sisters Meal Festival of the Miao people, and much much more!

PLUS GREAT ENTERTAINMENT, DELUXE ACCOMMODATION, GREAT CUISINE
Highlights

20 Fantastic Days - Departs 11 April 2010

Delve into China’s more hidden cultural, historic and scenic wonders

**XIAME**
Tour beautiful Gulangyu Island including the world’s best Piano Museum, Yongding and the famous rammed earth Hakka Villages

**SHAOXING**
Private Sampan Cruise to the Island of Small Seas, Wupeng cruising of the old city canals, Lu Xun’s historic Home, famous Shaoxing Rice Wines, Rickshaw tour of the ancient centre of the old town

**BEIJING/CHENGDE**
Free day to visit your choice of Beijing’s unique attractions, day visit to the ancient village of Chaundixia, plus visit Chengde Imperial Summer Villas and hunting grounds, Temple of Universal Tranquility, Putuozongcheng Zhi Miao (mini Potala Palace) and Hammer Mountain by chairlift, The spectacular Great Wall section at Jingshanling

**DATONG**
Daytime first class train journey from Beijing, Hanging Monastery, UNESCO Heritage Listed Wooden pagoda at Yingxian, visit to the loess cave houses, and the amazing Yungang Buddhist Grottos

**PINGYAO**
Pingyao ancient City Walls, Laquerware workshops, Rishengchang World’s first Bank, Shuanglin Temple by rickshaw, Shanxi cuisine dinner, Qiao Family Mansion, Grace Winery

**CHENGDU**
Sichuan Opera at Shu Feng Yun, Panda Breeding Research Base, Silk Brocade Institute, traditional Chinese lakeside Teahouse experience, the Great Buddha of Leshan

**KAISI**
Visits to the traditional mountain Miao ethnic villages of Xijiang and Datang, and a day at the amazing Sisters Meal Festival of Shidong
Sunday 11 April – Brisbane to Xiamen
International flight from Brisbane to Xiamen on China’s south east coast.

Monday 12 April - Xiamen
Xiamen is known as the 'Island of Music and Art of Living'. A truly beautiful island connected to the main land by bridge - if you walk 20 minutes in any direction, you'll find a park with shady banyan trees and intoxicatingly sweet flowers. Xiamen was one of the first five treaty ports to be opened to foreign residence and trade after the first Opium War. An ancient island gateway to China, the city was part of the Maritime Silk Road at the heart of Chinese maritime trade. It was founded in the 14th Century as a Ming dynasty trading port and outpost to defend against Japanese pirates. We will tour neighbouring Gulangyu Island, also known as 'Piano Island' by locals because piano music drifts from the villas and lingers throughout the island’s narrow streets. Many a famous Chinese musician hails from here. It is only a 10-minute ferry ride from Xiamen. Tranquil Gulangyu was formally set aside for foreign residence in 1852 and allocated to the British. It became a high quality diplomatic centre, separate from the Chinese port of Xiamen. From the baroque buildings and Gothic cathedrals, to Shanghai-style alleyways and Fujian-style courtyards, Gulangyu is filled with different architectural styles. It is often described as a showcase island of architecture, attracting architecture students from across the the world. Included in our tour today is one attraction not to be missed - the world’s best piano museum located inside the pretty Shuzhuang Garden. Divided into two exhibition halls, the museum guides visitors through a history of the instrument with displays and illustrations. Different types of pianos, including miniatures, automatic pianos, accordion pianos and even round-shaped pianos, are on display. These are parts of cherished collections from overseas Chinese, who hope to allow more people to see and be inspired by these historic and unique exhibits.

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza Harbour View, Xiamen
Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Tuesday 13 April – Xiamen
A long, but special day today. Early breakfast before departure from the hotel at 7am for a full day through the countryside to Yongding (about 300km inland of Xiamen), the heartland of the Hakka people. Famous for their earth buildings and round houses, the Hakka people in Yongding will give us a unique and special look at rural China. The Hakka (Kejia, or "Guest Families") originally came from North China, and migrated to the south during the 4th and 5th centuries AD. They have maintained a separate identity, their own language, customs and culture. They adopted magnificent multi-story fortress-like rammed earth buildings, capable of holding several hundred people. The best known building is the marvellous circular Zhencheng Lou, built in 1912 – but others date back to 1550. Lunch today is in the home of a Hakka family.

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza Harbour View, Xiamen
Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Wednesday 14 April – Xiamen / Hangzhou / Shaoxing
This morning we'll have a special briefing on the Silk Routes, both land and maritime, then drive along the magnificent coastline of beaches which includes viewing the islands of Taiwan, before flying to Hangzhou known as ‘the City of the Lake’. One of the most important tourism cities in China, Hangzhou is famous for its natural beauty, historical and cultural heritages. It is the capital, the political, economic and cultural centre of Zhejiang Province, and one of the key cities in the Yangzi Delta. When Marco Polo passed through the city in 13C, he described it as one of the most splendid in the world. We drive by coach the relatively short distance to Shaoxing, and travel through productive farmland with a dense network of waterways, canals, and irrigation channels. Thousands of mulberry trees are a reminder that this province produces a third of China’s raw silk, brocade and satin.

Accommodation: New Century Grand Hotel, Shaoxing
Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Thursday 15 April - Shaoxing
Shaoxing is a very historic town. Set in the well-known water landscape, this is a town 2400 years old, former capital of the Yue Kingdom from as early as 770 BC. Shaoxing, is home to many of China’s most renowned scholars, writers and poets. This city draws learned tourists seeking a glimpse of China’s rich cultural past. No city in China can claim to be the hometown of as many nationally known personalities as Shaoxing, celebrities whose houses and mansions have been preserved and opened to the public. Yu the Great, was one of China’s mythical early chiefs, whose reputation is on par with England’s King Arthur, founding the first Chinese dynasty in 22nd century BC. We will explore this “Venice of China", and its canals by sampans called wupeng, which are unique to Shaoxing. Built low, these boats give passengers a feeling of precariously sitting in the water. The rowers wear traditional Shaoxing wuzhan hats, row using the feet and
steer with their free hands. Being a water city it’s natural that Shaoxing would have many bridges and waterways, and this city certainly will not disappoint you, with over 4,000 stone bridges crisscrossing the waterways to connect the roads. One peculiar bridge that connects the streets is called the Bazi Bridge, because it looks like the number eight in Chinese. This exceptional bridge is 800 years old and connects three streets over three waterways filled with tiny sampans. We will also visit Lu Xuns Home, considered to be China’s greatest and most influential 20th century writer. A leader of the New Culture Movement, his most famous short story is The True Story of Ah Q. It is set in Shaoxing and is a morality tale about the shallowness of society. The Lu Xun Memorial Hall is across the street from his former home and is a great place to learn about Shaoxing’s most famous son. Shaoxing sweet yellow rice wine is famed throughout China, and today you will get to experience its taste. Made from glutinous rice and distilled to a low alcohol content, this wine is claimed to have therapeutic effects like aiding digestion. The most famous brands today are Guyuelong Shan and Kuaiji Shan. The wine became famous during the Qing dynasty and one small restaurant has been immortalised because of it. The Xianheng Restaurant retains some of its atmosphere, from the décor to the recipes. We will take rickshaws to see the most interesting parts of town, and walk the cobbled streets of the old historic quarter.

Accommodation: New Century Grand Hotel, Shaoxing
Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Friday 16 April – Shaoxing / Hangzhou / Beijing
This morning we return to Hangzhou by coach. This is China’s premier leisure city, the city of tea and silk. The West Lake Scenic Area of Hangzhou covers an area of 60 square kilometres with a landscaped circumference of 15 kilometres, surrounded by hills on three sides. There are two brocade-ribbon-like causeways crossing the lake, the Bai and Su causeways. Three man-made islands stand elegantly in the lake. The Bai Causeway is a beautiful scenic embankment with plum trees and weeping willows planted on both sides. Today we take an informal private sampan cruise out to the Island of Small Seas in West Lake, and enjoy some of China’s famous Longjing tea on board. Later today we board our flight to the stunning national capital of Beijing.

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza, Beijing
Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Saturday 17 April – Beijing / Chaundixia / Beijing
A great day today as we travel approximately 60kms from Beijing into the surrounding countryside to visit a lovely little village called Chaundixia. This charming little village has approximately 600 well preserved Ming and Qing dynasty style houses currently occupied by just 20 families. This ancient 19th century village, strategically located on a rocky outcrop, used to be an important stop on the trade route into Inner Mongolia. In a special section of the village about 70 houses exhibit the perfect courtyard style development from the Qing dynasty, with 4 houses sharing the one protected courtyard. Centuries old pathways through the friendly village are framed by little stone walls, and locals use the amazingly clear and fresh water from two deep springs. The paved courtyards have square shaped tiles that hide cellars for the village vegetables, grains and fruit. The village is particularly photogenic and today we meet the locals and enjoy lunch in a local home at the village.

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza, Beijing
Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Sunday 18 April – Beijing
This morning we make a visit to catch the locals in the gardens and grounds of the famous Temple of Heaven, engaging in community activities of all sorts – singing, dancing, playing traditional Chinese musical instruments, playing cards and board games, practising Tai-Chi, and generally socialising in their thousands. It’s a colourful and quite unique experience. By coach we’ll pay a visit to the 2008 Olympic games site to see in particular the famous Bird’s Nest Stadium, and visit a very ancient Chinese astrological observatory. The remainder of the day is at leisure in Beijing, the cultural soul of China. You will be pleasantly surprised at this modern city. For a period of almost 500 years, this city was home to 24 Emperors. Its attractions are among the worlds most outstanding. There are some major highlights you could visit during our stay here. Foremost among these is Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. But Beijing has many smaller less-well-known attractions to explore – Visit Bei Hai Park, enjoy traditional theatre in the Lao She Teahouse, visit Mao’s Mausoleum, stroll around the historic specialty shops of old Chinatown, visit the beautiful Lama Buddhist Temple and adjacent Confucian Temple, Mao’s Underground City, spend an evening around the restaurants and bars of the Back Lakes, visit the Red Gate Art Gallery and old Ming City Wall Watchtower, the national Art Museum, do a walking tour of Beijing’s best hutongs – or perhaps go shopping for bargains at the up-market department stores of Waugufjing Dajie, or the famous Hong Chiao Market. Our National Guide is a native of Beijing and will provide advice and directions to the places of interest to you.

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza, Beijing
Included Meals: Breakfast
Monday 19 April – Beijing / Chengde
Today **travel to Chengde by train**, known as the Emperor’s Summer Getaway. Lush forests, **bleak rock formations** and **unique temples** make a **trip by train** to Chengde an outdoor adventure and cultural tour in itself. This town boasts the largest imperial summer retreat complex in China. Known as the **Imperial Summer Villa**, it has been the main attraction in town since 1703. Surrounded by an ancient wall, the parkland includes its own lake, pine forests, hunting ground and pavilions. People of all ages come to hang out in the Town Square, flying kites and playing badminton well past dusk. **The square on Nanyingzi Da Jie is the heart of the town** and a fine place to sit and people watch. In the shops you may see their wood carvings from mountain walnut, or their lovely hanging brocades from the Chengde Silk Factory. We will also visit the best of the famed **Eight Outer Temples** built during the reigns of Emperor Kangxi and his grandson Qianlong. There were once 12 temples, but today only eight remain open to visitors. In its heyday, the temples had imperial patronage, and supported a large and vibrant spiritual community. The mountain scenery alone makes it worth the trip, not to mention the amazing Buddhist art. One of the great highlights of the eight temples is the enchanting **golden statue of Guanyin**, the Bodhisattva of Mercy, at the Temple of Universal Tranquillity – 22 metres tall and with 42 arms. You can climb a ladder to get a closer look at the Bodhisattva, one of the most stunning statues of its kind, which will not be easily forgotten. The temple mixes Han Chinese and Tibetan ethnic styles to commemorate victory over Mongolian tribes. Another stunning temple is **Putuzongcheng Zhi Miao**, a replica of Lhasa’s Potala Palace. The temple was built for visiting heads of various Tibetan and Mongolian tribes who came to celebrate Emperor Qianlong’s 60th birthday, and is one of the finest architectural gems around. Beyond the temples the scenery alone makes it worth the trip, not to mention the amazing Buddhist art. One of the great highlights of the eight temples is the enchanting **golden statue of Guanyin**, the Bodhisattva of Mercy, at the Temple of Universal Tranquillity – 22 metres tall and with 42 arms. You can climb a ladder to get a closer look at the Bodhisattva, one of the most stunning statues of its kind, which will not be easily forgotten. The temple mixes Han Chinese and Tibetan ethnic styles to commemorate victory over Mongolian tribes. Another stunning temple is **Putuzongcheng Zhi Miao**, a replica of Lhasa’s Potala Palace. The temple was built for visiting heads of various Tibetan and Mongolian tribes who came to celebrate Emperor Qianlong’s 60th birthday, and is one of the finest architectural gems around. Beyond the temples the surrounding dry mountains of northern Hebei Province recede into the haze. The sandstone formations here are truly spectacular, and vaguely reminiscent of the American southwest. A few of the more fantastic rock forms have been given names, the most notable being Hammer Mountain, which looks like a giant hammer with its handle up, and Frog Rock. They are both just uphill from the **Temple of Universal Happiness**, and a convenient chairlift makes it relatively easy for us to visit. **Accommodation: Crowne Plaza, Beijing**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Tuesday 20 April – Chengde / Beijing
We will return to Beijing by coach after we visit the one historic sight China is renowned for the world over, **The Great Wall, at Jingshanling**. Initially built from 1368 to 1389 in the Ming Dynasty, the Wall was rebuilt in 1567. This is probably the best accessible part of the whole Great Wall to visit, but very few people get the chance. Poems and tablet writings can be found on the Jingshanling Great Wall left from the building of this section of the Great Wall. The total length of this section is about eleven kilometres. The Wall is about seven to eight meters high and five to six metres wide, and is made of brick and stone. There are more than 100 enemy towers along the whole Jingshanling Great Wall. Built stably and elegantly, different towers have different structures and appearances, and is second only to the Badaling Great Wall in its completeness. **Accommodation: Tianbao Holiday Hotel, Chengde**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Wednesday 21 April – Beijing / Datong
This morning we take the **train to Datong** and will arrive in the late afternoon. The latter part of our train journey introduces us to the dramatic desert landscapes of the Gobi and Mongolia. The city is near the southern flank of Inner Mongolia. It is the most important city in China for energy generation, essentially an industrial city these days with coal mines and huge power stations. It was twice a dynastic capital. This evening we will have time to relax in our hotel and enjoy a leisurely dinner. **Accommodation: Howard Johnson Hotel, Datong**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

Thursday 22 April – Datong
This morning we visit one of the most spectacular holy sites in China, the **Yungang Grottos**. From thumb-sized figurines to a 17metre colossus, the Buddhist carvings at Yungang are simply the best of their kind in the world.. The carvings took almost half a century and 40,000 labourers to complete, and the few hours we have exploring these majestic caves will be time well-spent. Of the numerous artistic masterpieces that Buddhism has generated in China in the past 2,000 years, the caves at Yungang are among the most profound. They extend 1km from east to west and are divided into three major clusters. Persian, Indian, even Greek and Byzantine influences can be seen in the rock carvings, from the weapons, musical instruments and clothing displayed. We will begin touring at caves 5 to 13, centrally located and built from AD 462 to 495. They contain some of the best artistic works at Yungang. Cave 5 is an awe-inspiring 17m high seated Buddha, with the walls of the cave festooned with a tightly knit honeycomb of smaller Buddhist figures. Large or small, most Yungang statues have square faces, thick lips, high noses, wide shoulders and broad chests. Cave 8 features multi-headed
statues of Indian origins. Cave 12 is known as the musical cave— as we enter we are greeted by a carved bank of celestial musicians holding different musical instruments demonstrating the vibrant cultural exchange of the time. Royal stories are behind Caves 16 to 20, the oldest caves in Yungang. The face of the cliff into which it was carved is about 24m high. On the upper central part are 12 rectangular holes that were used to hold beams that used to support a monastery. The afternoon is free for a rest or local exploration. For those who wish, we’ll also pay a visit to Hongqi Square and the atmospheric Huayan Temple complex.

**Accommodation:** Howard Johnson Hotel, Datong

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Friday 23 April – Datong / Pingyao**

One of the most interesting sights we visit today, about 80 km from Datong, is the gravity defying **Hanging Monastery** which is built on the extremely sheer cliffs of Mt. Hengshan above Jinlong Canyon. Construction of the monastery dates back 1400 years to the Northern Wei Dynasty. Bridges and corridors connect these pavilions and caves in which dozens of bronze, iron, stone and clay statues are enshrined. This type of structure is rarely seen in Chinese architecture and is the only wooden building built on a cliff in China. The Hanging Temple is an amazing sight, and you will truly be awed by its magnificence. Located in Yingxian County, and about 70 kilometres south of Datong, we will visit the **Wooden Pagoda**, the oldest and highest wooden structure in China, containing an 11 metre high gilded statue of Sakamuni. It is regarded as the "First Pagoda in the World" and a gem in the architectural field. It has now also been placed under the Cultural Relics Protection Unit. Built in 1056, at a height of 67 metres, the pagoda is a 9 story octagonal building, constructed without using any nails.

Today we also visit **cave dwellings dug into the loess plains**, and meet some of the locals who live there. Once we have finished exploring these treasures of China, we will take our coach onto Pingyao, the Walled City of Antiquity. It’s a fairly long journey by coach today, right through the heart of Shanxi Province from north to south on a high quality express-way. On the way we’ll be fully briefed on the significance of Pingyao, and its famous historic attractions.

**Accommodation:** International Financial Club, Pingyao

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Saturday 24 April – Pingyao**

The past is alive in Pingyao. As the morning sun bathes its grey **city walls** in warm tones, you will find yourself flung back in time, as your eyes behold a Ming dynasty fortress in all its imposing glory. Watchtowers, cast iron cannons, intimidating wooden gates and sturdy walls render an impenetrable feel. Narrow alleys that coil around time-honored courtyard homes fill up with its 480,000 local citizens. Shops reveal modern cashier equipment perched on antique tabletops. Locals are bustling about on bicycles, rickshaws and scooters. Here in Pingyao, some modernity lives with centuries old relics. The old walled city is an architectural treasure trove. Civic buildings, private homes and streets are well preserved in Ming and Qing styles. Few buildings rise above two stories, and several are adorned with splendid eave roofs, intricately latticed windows, hand-painted glass lanterns and ornate wood. The walls of the city were first erected in the Zhou dynasty. Fortifications are sophisticated – the square perimeter is 12m high and 5m thick, with 72 watchtowers, and surrounded by moats 3m wide and deep. Six suspension bridges once fronted the city gates, taking 2 hours to walk around this impressive structure. In 1986, Pingyao was declared a national historical city, which protects it from ever being demolished. Slipping into the city, you feel as if you’re entering the movie set of an elaborate Chinese period drama production. Elegant Ming and Qing architecture lines the quaint streets, and like in the good old days, there are no cars in Pingyao’s winding alleys. Pedestrians and bicycles crowd the lanes, and rickshaw riders will scurry past. Most of the compounds are arranged in quadrangles, where the houses are built around a square courtyard. There are 3,797 such residences, with over 400 in immaculate condition. There are also many mansions, temples, museums, inns and shops, hotels offering traditional brick-oven beds, restaurants selling Pingyao’s famous beef, and shops hawking an astonishing array of art wares such as antiques, furniture, ancient coins, Chinese paintings, jadeware, laquerware and traditional folk clothing. Pingyao was also China’s premier banking centre during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Merchants and businessmen set about constructing sprawling mansions as expertly as they built up their business and trade. **Rishengchang Exchange Shop** is the most famous. Originally established in 1643, it still has records of its earliest days in business. Rishengchang, meaning ‘sunrise prosperity’, was China’s first bank. What started out as a single businessman’s efforts to safely manage the accounts of his widely spread company, became a private banking enterprise that caught on like wildfire. We’ll visit the top of the ancient wall and the Rishengchang Bank, with the rest of the day at leisure in this beautiful historic environment. We’ll have a personal pass to visit the important attractions in our own time.
Tonight we get to experience a traditional Shanxi cuisine dinner.

**Accommodation: International Financial Club, Pingyao**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

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**Sunday 25 April – Pingyao / Taiyuan / Chengdu**

Today we will also travel by motor rickshaw to **Shuanglin Temple** - featuring attractive, colourful sculptures - located in Qiaotou Village, 6 kilometres from Pingyao Ancient Town. The exact age of the temple is unknown due to its extreme antiquity, but its name first appeared in historical records during its rebuilding in 571. Inside the temple there are over 2,000 Ming and Qing-era painted sculptures of great artistic and historical value. These represent the artistic style of those dynasties (1368-1644 and 1644-1911 respectively) and are revered as treasures of oriental painted sculpture. Shuanglin Temple was opened to the public in 1997, and together with Pingyao Ancient Town was listed as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. Next we visit the **Qiao Family Mansion**, home of a powerful merchant family at the height of Pingyao’s prominence. It was in this mansion that award-winning Chinese director Zhang Yimou set interior scenes for his famous film Raise the Red Lantern. Just 20km north of Pingyao, the compound is fortified behind a 10m high wall with battlements. A main entrance opens into a spacious compound that covers 8,724m square, with 313 rooms, six major courtyards and 20 smaller ones. This **evening we will fly to Chengdu**, from Taiyuan Airport.

**Accommodation: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chengdu**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

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**Monday 26 April – Chengdu / Leshan / Chengdu**

A giant statue of **Chairman Mao** marks the centre of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province. Endowed with fertile land, Chengdu’s nickname is ‘China’s breadbasket’. There are more than 40 ethnic minorities living in the province. The city is over 2,500 years old, and even though it has a laidback feel to it, Chengdu has rapidly developed into an important commercial centre in Western China. Here you can get comfortable in a bamboo chair and watch life go by in one of **Chengdu’s countless teahouses**, feast on the famously spicy **Sichuan cuisine**, and visit the beautiful pandas. There are few places in China where traditional **teahouses** can be found. In Chengdu the teahouse and local cuisine vie for the top spot as the defining characteristic. The Tibetan culture and handicraft shops are visible, as well as good shopping including the largest wholesale market in South West China. One of the most pleasant experiences is to stroll around Chengdu and see the old residential areas and the **food markets**. Today we spend most of the day visiting Leshan. The giant attraction of **Leshan (150 kms from Chengdu)** is the world’s **largest Buddha statue**. It is 71 metres high and construction took 90 years. The sight is simply breathtaking. His head is 15 metres high, the nose 6 metres long and the index fingers are 8 metres long. The best views of the Buddha are either from onboard a boat on the river or from the hills that flank its head. We do both of these today. For some local flavour back in Chengdu in the evening, we will experience a 200 year old **Sichuan Opera at Shufeng Yayun**. It is definitely not to be missed, as you listen to the singing, watch the acrobatics, fire-breathing slapstick, and unique ‘changing faces’, one of China’s most iconic art forms. The whole atmosphere, from the show with tea and snacks to the enthusiasm of the audience and performers make it very memorable.

**Accommodation: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chengdu**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

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**Tuesday 27 April – Chengdu / Guiyang / Kaili**

Today we experience one of the most unique and special moments on this trip - a visit to see the pandas. Sichuan Province is the home to China’s most celebrated creatures. Only an estimated 500 to 1000 pandas are left in the wild, with most of them living in north west Sichuan. Just 10km north of the city is the Giant Panda Breeding Research Base, where seeing these magnificent creatures is guaranteed. There are around a dozen pandas here, with the **best time being in the morning** when they are being fed and are at their liveliest. Also we will visit the **information centre** with exhibits explaining everything there is to know about pandas. If time permits we will visit the city park and find a spot in the shade at a teahouse, relax and watch the locals play Mahjong, and listen to the whistles from songbirds that the old men carry in bamboo cages. Later today we fly to Guiyang and travel to Kaili by coach.

**Accommodation: Crown Hotel, Kaili**

**Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

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**Wednesday 28 April - Kaili**

Today we are in the scenic beauty of little known Guizhou Province that rewards exploration. Hidden among jagged karst mountains, old growth forests that cast shadows over clear springs, misty mountain waterfalls, and undulating hills, Guizhou is a gem hidden under layers of gorgeous scenery. The mountainous terrain has diligently kept much of the local history a mystery. Over a third of the population is from 48 different ethnic groups represented in the Province. Kaili is gateway to the most fascinating minority
villages you are likely to encounter in China - an authentic slice of Chinese countryside populated by an intriguing patchwork of ethnic minorities. About 65% of the local population is Miao. This is the best place in China to meet ethnic people in their own natural habitat. They are friendly easy-going people with great pride in their cultural traditions and ethnic identity. Traditional wooden houses dot the forested valleys, often perched at precarious angles – buffalos plodding around rice terraces, women working in the fields with babies strapped to their backs and long braided hair coiled into buns secured by fluorescent combs. Miao communities exist in remote mountainous areas. Each village developed its own customs, and can be identified by their distinct ornamentation. Most eye-catching are the detailed embroideries. Dresses for festivals and weddings are so intricate that they often take years to complete, and become treasured heirlooms. Today we’ll take the opportunity to visit two local villages, to meet these charming local folk and see first hand their everyday unique lifestyle in this remote region. We’ll visit Datang and the largest Miao village in China at Xijiang.

**Thursday 29 April - Kaili**
There are over 100 annual festivals in the villages around Kaili – exuberant social occasions showcasing their historic and enduring cultural integrity. They are great celebrations when locals don their most colourful clothing, and gather for a big party. Many of these festivals are musical affairs featuring an intricate wind instrument (the Lusheng) made of many tubes of reed glued together. Dancing and singing are predominant, with many dances originating from ancient courtship rituals. Festivals can also include buffalo fights, wrestling, horse and boat racing, as well as stalls and markets featuring embroidery and silverwork etc. The biggest (and oldest) festival in this region is the springtime Sisters Meal Festival which equates with Valentines Day in the western world. The festival is held at Shidong approx 100 kms from Kaili, and we’ll be there for the final day of activity. Sisters Meal is actually a personal affair where young men give parcels of multi-coloured sticky rice to their perspective partners. A pair of chopsticks buried inside returned rice is an acceptance, a single chopstick (or even worse, a chilli) is a firm refusal. Young people from all over the region meet to choose a partner – young ladies with highly decorated jackets and silver jewellery – and there’s lots of energetic dancing and lusheng playing. This really is a very special privilege to have the opportunity to witness and experience such an important and colourful ethnic cultural highlight. Our visitation provides a rare glimpse of the China nobody else gets to see or hear about. It is very special.

**Accommodation: Crown Hotel, Kaili**
**Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Friday 30 April – Kaili / Guiyang / Guangzhou**
We return by coach to Guiyang, and this afternoon our flight is to Guangzhou and an opportunity to prepare for the return flight home.

**Accommodation: Donfang Hotel, Guangzhou**
**Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

**Saturday 1 May – Guangzhou / Brisbane**
We depart Guangzhou returning to Brisbane.

**Included Meals: Breakfast**
Your Tour Escort Bob Malcolm, Managing Director of Travel Masters, has travelled internationally for more than 30 years. He has organised and led group holiday tours to countries as diverse as India, South America, Middle East, Africa and Europe. He and his wife Beth have travelled throughout most of China in recent times and have a love of culturally different holiday destinations. Bob regularly takes tours to all corners of China. He would love you to join him on this marvellous holiday of discovery.

Tour Inclusions
International Airfares, all internal flights in China, all sightseeing specified in the itinerary, gratuities, Chinese Visa for Australian passport holders, Deluxe First Class Accommodation, American Buffet Breakfasts daily, Lunch and dinners as specified in itinerary, entrance fees, private coach with an English Speaking Guide at each destination and a National Guide with the group throughout the itinerary, as well as your very experienced Travel Masters Tour Escort.

Cost: $7,400 per person, twin share
Single Supplement $1,100

Optional Extensions
We invite you to stay on and enjoy one of these exciting extensions
Ask us about cost details

**Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong Valley**
One of China's most beautiful scenic regions.
Experience magnificent Spring Colours
Return flights from Chengdu to Jiuzhaigou
Visit Gaihua Pool and Long Lake, Multi Coloured Five Flower lake, Mirror lake, Nuorilang Fall and Shuzheng Falls (walking involved)

**Lhasa / Tibet**
Flight from Chengdu to Lhasa
Visit the Potala Palace, Sera Monastery to see the debating Lamas, Jokhang Monastery and incredible Barkhor Square, Norbinka the Summer Palace of the Dalai Lama.

**Yangtze Cruise**
Flight from Chengdu to Chongqing
2 nights Chongqing, with day visit to Dazu caves
City orientation tour including Three Gorges Museum/Market
4 day/3 night Cruise
Flight from Yichang to Shanghai, Overnight Shanghai
Depart Shanghai for home
FIRST PASSENGER
Title: ____________________  Surname (as shown on passport): ____________________
First Name(as shown on passport): ____________________  Preferred First Name: ____________________
Sex: MALE / FEMALE  If sharing what would be your room preference? TWIN / DOUBLE
Do you require single supplement?   YES / NO
Would you like us to keep an eye out for a possible twin-share on your behalf?   YES / NO
(Please note that Single Supplement will be payable if we are unable to assist with a suitable twin-share for you)
Do you require business class airfare?   YES / NO
Are you a Frequent Flyer Member? Member No: ____________________  Airline: ____________________
Do you have any dietary or seating requests: _______________________________________________________________________
Do you hold an Australian passport?   YES / NO  If No, please state the nationality: ____________________
Passport Number: ____________________  Date of Issue: ______/______/______  Date of Expiry: ______/______/______
Date of Birth: ______/______/______  Place of Issue: ____________________  Occupation: ____________________
(Passport details are required for all tours travelling outside Australia)

SECOND PASSENGER
Title: ____________________  Surname (as shown on passport): ____________________
First Name(as shown on passport): ____________________  Preferred First Name: ____________________
Sex: MALE / FEMALE  If sharing what would be your room preference? TWIN / DOUBLE
Do you require single supplement?   YES / NO
Do you require business class airfare?   YES / NO
Are you a Frequent Flyer Member? Member No: ____________________  Airline: ____________________
Do you have any dietary or seating requests: _______________________________________________________________________
Do you hold an Australian passport?   YES / NO  If No, please state the nationality: ____________________
Passport Number: ____________________  Date of Issue: ______/______/______  Date of Expiry: ______/______/______
Date of Birth: ______/______/______  Place of Issue: ____________________  Occupation: ____________________
(Passport details are required for all tours travelling outside Australia)

PASSENGER/S CONTACT DETAILS (Please attach details separately if Second Passengers Contact Details are different)
Street Address: __________________________________________________________________________________________________
Suburb: __________________________________________________ State: ___________________ Postcode: ____________________
Postal Address (If different from Street Address: _______________________________________________________________________
Suburb: __________________________________________________ State: ___________________ Postcode: ____________________
Home Tel: ____________________  Work Tel: ____________________  Fax: ____________________
Mobile No: ____________________  Email: _______________________________________

TRAVEL INSURANCE
It is compulsory and in your interest to carry travel insurance for health, loss of luggage/belongings and in case of cancellation. Would you
like us to send a travel insurance brochure to you?   YES / NO
If you are a traveller who is aged 80 years or over, or a traveller who is under 80 years of age and has a pre-existing medical condition/s,
you will need to complete a Travellers Medical Appraisal form to accompany your insurance application.
Do you require a Travellers Medical Appraisal Form?   YES /NO

I have read and understand the responsibility section detailed below on this form and the General Information and Booking Conditions
and accept them on behalf of myself and my party. I declare that I/they are not travelling against any medical advice.

Signature: __________________________________________________________________ Date: ______/______/______
Payment Options
1. Mail – Enclosed is a cheque / money order as a deposit
2. Credit Card – Please debit my:

Visa / Mastercard / American Express / Diners Club

Card No: ____________________________ Expiry: _____ / _____ / _______

Cardholder’s Name: ______________________________________________________
Cardholder’s Signature: ___________________________________________________
(Payments by American Express or Diners Club cards will be subject to a 2.5% Merchant Administration fee, Visa and Mastercard 1%)
3. Direct Deposit into Travel Masters bank account.
Please list your full name as the payment description, so we are able to locate your payment when we receive your completed booking form.

Account Name: Mistvale Pty Ltd
Bank Name: National Australia Bank
Account BSB: 084 852
Account Number: 517710443

DEPOSIT AND FINAL PAYMENT
The deposit is accepted as a first instalment of the tour cost and will be fully refunded if the arrangements cannot be confirmed or the tour is cancelled by Travel Masters. A detailed invoice is sent out to all passengers booked on the tour, approximately two weeks prior to due date of the final payment.

CANCELLATION FEES
If it is necessary for you to cancel your holiday, notification of cancellation must be received in writing. Cancellation charges will apply. The cancellation fee is 100% of the tour cost after final payment. Full Travel Insurance is essential. No refund is available for cancellations after the tour has commenced or in respect of any tour, accommodation, meals or any other service not utilised. The deposit of $500pp is non refundable/non transferable due to non refundable domestic airfares and prepayments.

PASSPORT AND VISAS
It is the traveller’s responsibility to ensure that they possess the necessary travel documentation for the tour, such as a valid passport and any required visas. In general, a passport should be valid at least 6 months beyond the end of your journey and have two clear pages to allow for entry and exit stamps en-route or for any visas applicable for countries in your journey. At the time of making your booking you will be given information about any visas that may be required for the tour. Our agency will assist you with the Visa process.

PRICES
Tour prices stated on the tour brochure has been calculated on the basis of exchange rates and tariffs valid at time of print and are subject to change up until final payment for the tour has been received. Once final payment is received, no surcharges will apply. Should you decide to cancel your tour on the basis of a change of price, then normal cancellation charges will apply.

TRAVEL MASTERS Group
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Beth & Bob Malcolm, Managing Directors
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Fax: (07) 5596 5663
Email: sales@travelmasters.com.au
Visit our website: www.travelmasters.com.au

RESPONSIBILITY
Mistvale Pty Ltd trading as Travel Masters and/or its associated Companies or Agents, act only in the capacity of agents for the passenger in all matters of transportation, tour operation and other services. All receipts, tickets, vouchers, coupons or exchange orders are issued subject to the terms and conditions under which transportation and other services are provided. Travel Masters and/or its associated companies or Agents assume no responsibility for loss, injury, accident, delay or damage or irregularity that may be caused to person or property, however caused arising before commencement and/or during any tour under its management, sponsorship, procurement or otherwise. It is the responsibility of the passenger to make sure he/she is in possession of the proper visas and other travel documents and that they are in compliance with current government and transportation companies’ regulations. The right is reserved to modify the itinerary in any way considered necessary or desirable, or to change any reservation, hotel feature and/or means of conveyance, without allowance or refund but the extra cost (if any) resulting therefrom must be paid by the passenger. The right is also reserved to cancel or withdraw any tour, to replace any tour leader with another, to cancel or withdraw any booking made for a passenger, or to decline to accept any person as a member of a tour. The transportation companies or firms shall be exempt from all liabilities in respect of any detention, delay, loss, damage, sickness or injury however and by whomsoever caused and of whatever kind occurring of or to the passenger at any time when the passenger is not on board a carrier or conveyance used or operated by the transportation companies or firms. The contract of passage in use by the transportation companies or firms concerned shall constitute the sole contract between transportation companies or firms, and the purchase of these tours and/or passenger. All tickets, deposit tickets, coupons or orders are furnished and issued subject in all respects to those terms and conditions under which the means of transportation or other services provided there by are offered or supplied by owners, public carriers, or managing agents. The issuance and acceptance of receipts, tickets, vouchers, coupons, or exchange orders shall be deemed consent to the above conditions. The tour is based on flights as detailed in the itinerary, however any other IATA or non-IATA carrier may be used for tour co-ordination.
CLOTHING AND LUGGAGE
Comfortable, casual clothes are the general rule. Clothes should be light and loose fitting. Good walking shoes are a must, and you will need a warm jacket and a light waterproof jacket for the cooler nights. It is a fact in culturally different countries that the less you look like a tourist, the more easily accepted you are by the locals. The Chinese are generally a modest people. It is suggested that you take clothes which allow you to dress modestly. The international luggage allowance is strictly 23 kilograms. Please restrict your luggage to one average size suitcase and one carry bag of no more than 5kg. These are international IATA regulations. Portage on the tour is included for one average sized suitcase. All hand luggage and overnight luggage is always your personal responsibility.

PASSPORT AND VISAS
You must be in possession of a passport with 6 months validity beyond the end date of this tour. If you are not using an Australian Passport please let us know so that we can advise you of your visa requirements. Your Chinese Visa is included and will be organised for you.

HEALTH AND VACCINATIONS
Currently no vaccinations are required for travel in China. However this could change at any time and we suggest you contact your Doctor for the latest advice. Because of the ancient nature of most of China, walking up and down stairs is often a requirement! It is still very much a developing country. The crowded environment also means that walking short distances to many attractions is sometimes necessary. Reasonable mobility is necessary.

CURRENCY
We recommend that you take cash in Chinese Yuan (at least some of it in smaller denominations). Travel Masters is happy to organise your cash for you – ask for advice. Australian dollars, major traveller cheques and international credit cards are sometimes accepted in the cities of China, but not always. We recommend that you do not use credit cards for every day expenses except to pay hotel accounts. Torn, damaged or marked US dollars are not accepted in China.

ELECTRICITY
The voltage for China is 220 volts. International Plugs are available from Travel Masters.

TIPPING
Gratuities for guides, drivers, porters and waiters are a necessity in China. To avoid any embarrassment or problems, and help make your holiday “hassle free”, we have included all necessary tips for all activities and meals included in the itinerary. Your tour escort will manage the tipping funds for the group whilst on tour.

ITINERARY CHANGES
From time to time, changes may be required to the advertised itinerary. It is a fact of life in China. If this is required, it will be communicated to you by the Tour Escort who will make the decision in conjunction with our operators

TRAVEL INSURANCE
Travel Insurance with a Travel Masters recommended Insurance company is compulsory. This is a comprehensive insurance which covers cancellation charges in the event of illness preventing you from travelling, overseas medical and hospital expenses, personal baggage, accidental death, personal liability and much more. Credit card insurance is not advised, as it does not cover full cancellation charges in the event illness forces you to cancel.

DEPARTURE TAXES
International and local taxes as known at time of tour preparation are included in your tour cost. However, should new government taxes or tax and fuel increases be imposed these will be advised to you at time of final payment or at the time of these impositions.

MEDICAL INFORMATION
It is a good idea to travel with a small personal medical kit containing…. Headache pills, anti-septic cream, band aids, remedy for upset stomachs, laxatives and diarrhoea medication, non-liquid mosquito repellent and throat medication. You should take whatever is necessary with you. Just in case your reading glasses are lost or damaged, take a spare pair with you – you never know what you might need.

CANCELLATION FEES
If it is necessary to cancel your holiday, notification of cancellation must be received in writing. Cancellation Charges will apply: up to 8 weeks prior to departure - loss of deposit. 7-4 weeks prior - up to 50% of tour cost, and less than 4 weeks - up to full tour cost. No refund is available for cancellation of tour or any service not used after commencement of tour.

DEPOSITS AND FINAL PAYMENT
A deposit of $500 per person is required to secure your place. We will send an account approx 2 months before the tour departs, setting out full account details. Final payment is then required. We have striven to keep the tour costs as low as possible and the tour price quoted is a cash / cheque price. Should you choose to pay by credit card, a transaction fee applies.

CLIMATE
We have chosen one of the best times of the year for this tour. The most comfortable seasons for travelling in China are Spring and Autumn. Temperatures should roughly equate with those of Australia between Brisbane and Melbourne in similar seasons.

NATIONAL CHINESE TOUR ESCORT
Our tour group will be accompanied by our National Guide who accompanies the group throughout the duration of the tour, thus avoiding any language difficulties. Our national guide is a professional in tourism and will help make your tour all that more memorable. In addition, we have local guides who have specialised knowledge of their own areas in each of the places visited. This ensures a smooth and enjoyable tour.

SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENT
In the event that you are a sole traveller and would prefer to share, we will do our best to arrange a twin-share companion, but this cannot be guaranteed.

BUSINESS CLASS UPGRADE
Business Class upgrades on the International flights are available. Please ask for details.

ADVERTISED PRICE EXCLUDES
Meals other than specified, insurance, additional gratuities as required, items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, phone calls etc and any optional excursions are additional. All costs are subject to surcharges which may occur in connection with Governmental action, currency exchange fluctuations or increase in supplier's costs i.e. scheduled air fares, entrance fees etc. Cost based on minimum of 15 adults travelling together. Should the minimum number of persons not be attained, we reserve the right to cancel, amend or re cost the tour program. Conditions apply, subject to change.

PLEASE NOTE – DEGREE OF FITNESS
All Travel Masters itineraries are carefully planned and well paced to maximise the passenger experience, while at the same time ensuring a level of comfort is maintained at all times.
Given the nature of the journeys and cultural experiences etc, any person/s of a reasonable general fitness level will have no problems in gaining total satisfaction from the trip.
Should any person however, be likely to have difficulty with significant walking or find it necessary to require wheelchair assistance, it is unfortunately considered that participation on this tour would not be appropriate.
A Travel Masters Escorted Tour, Available Exclusively Through

Travel Masters
Cnr Cotton & Ferry Sts
Nerang - 555 42 777

The Travel Studio
Q Super Centre
Mermaid Waters – 55 72 72 72

Lifestyle Travel
16/122 Griffith St
Coolangatta – 5599 2929

www.travelmasters.com.au