



Wendy Wu Tours

MAY 2015

CHINESE WHISPERS

THE LATEST TRAVEL NEWS AND INSPIRATION FROM WENDY WU TOURS

PANDAW RIVER CRUISES

Discover Southeast Asia in luxury

THE BIG INTERVIEW

Valerie Singleton
shares her travel
experiences

TRAVEL TALES

Find out why Japan
surpasses expectations

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

An insight into ancient China

HEAD TO HEAD

The Yangtze VS the Mekong



A MESSAGE FROM WENDY

Welcome to our latest issue of Chinese Whispers, where we not only aim to provide you with inspiration for your next holiday to Asia, but also keep you up to date with our latest travel news.

In this issue, you'll find a mini guide of some incredible journeys with Pandaw River Cruises – luxury expeditions through Southeast Asia. Many of our Burma and Vietnam tours feature these incredible journeys, so turn to page 22 or take a look at our booklet for further information.

As many of you will know, we celebrated our 10th anniversary in the UK earlier this year and were lucky enough to be joined by over 200 of you to celebrate. I was thrilled with how many of you attended our special evening and so have showcased a number of our favourite photos, plus an overview of the evening's celebrations on page 6.

Thank you to everyone who entered our Big Picture photo competition which we launched in our last issue – we received hundreds of fantastic entries, which really created a debate in the office when it came down to judging! But we got there eventually – and page 16 shows you the winners, runners up and our highly commended entries. Visit our blog at wendywutours.co.uk/blog and let us know what you think.

Don't forget, it's not too late to plan a trip to Asia for 2015. Take a look at our 'It's a Deal' feature on page 26 for our latest offers. I do hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to welcoming you on a Wendy Wu holiday very soon.



Wendy Wu,
Owner, Wendy Wu Tours

Cover image: Angkor Wat, Cambodia



IN THIS ISSUE...



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The Yangtze vs the Mekong. We showcase these two iconic symbols of Asia.



Customer Corner: **Pages 10-11**

Wendy Wu customer, Ruth Tillyard shares with us her experiences from her recent trip to Burma.



The Big Interview: **Pages 12-13**

TV Presenter and Broadcaster, Valerie Singleton OBE shares her favourite destinations and travel tips.



Off the Beaten Track: Ancient China **Pages 14-15**

Wendy Wu Tours' Marketing Manager, Ben Briggs shares his insights on China's Shanxi Province.



Pandaw River Cruises: **Pages 22-23**

Learn about these luxury expeditions through Southeast Asia.

WHAT'S NEW?

Our experts bring you the latest news from Wendy Wu Tours

RHS Garden Holidays

Clematis specialist Raymond Evison and RHS curator Christopher Bailes are the new hosts of our RHS Plant Seekers tour this September. Join the experts and discover China's most diverse flora on this exclusive 15 day tour, departing on 15th Sep for £4,990pp. There are only a few places remaining, so book today!

Learn more about our RHS garden holidays at china.rhsgardenholidays.com

Discover Japan with The Telegraph

We're excited to bring to you our new 11 day Telegraph Tour to Japan. You'll be joined by The Telegraph's expert correspondent, Julian Ryall, who will take you through the heart of the country, revealing its compelling history, culture, politics and modern day life.

11 days from £3,990pp, departing 25 October 2015.

Learn more at wendywutours.co.uk/explorejapan

Bangkok to Singapore by Rail

Experience Southeast Asia in style, with a visit to bustling Bangkok before boarding your luxury train journey on the Eastern & Oriental Express. Here, you'll experience service like no other whilst soaking up the beautiful sights and sounds of Thailand and Malaysia on your 3 day journey to cosmopolitan Singapore.

9 days from £3,890pp departing throughout 2015.

Learn more at wendywutours.co.uk



WHAT'S ON?

May 2015

Lunar Moon Festival, Hoi An, Vietnam

During the full moon, the streets of Hoi An are lit by traditional, hand-made lanterns in various colours. Visitors will see local people dressed in traditional costume and on the banks of the Haoi River, young men and women exchange folk songs.



VIETNAM AT A GLANCE

Join our Vietnam at a Glance tour and experience this enchanting festival.

Departs 17 May 2016.

PRICES FROM
£2,190^{pp}
FOR 12 DAYS

July 2015

Gion Festival, Japan

In July, Japan's biggest festival happens in Kyoto's Gion district. Streets are lined with night stalls selling barbecued chicken skewers, traditional Japanese sweets and many other culinary delights. Some nights, the locals open up the hallways of their homes to display their valuable family heirlooms.



TAILORMADE JAPAN

Experience this lively festival with a tailor-made itinerary. Call our expert Travel Consultants at ASIA Inspirations on **0844 856 6811** for further information.

Departures available throughout July 2015.

September 2015

Inle Lake Pagoda Festival, Burma

During this festival with traditional music, dancing and boat races, four Buddha statues are transported from village to village to bless the monasteries. This holy festival attracts visitors from all over the Shan State in Burma.



BURMA EXPLORER

See this tradition for yourself, visiting Inle Lake as well as Mandalay, Bagan and Rangoon on this fully inclusive group tour.

Departs 24 Sep 2015.

PRICES FROM
£3,290^{pp}
FOR 12 DAYS

HAVE YOUR SAY

We always enjoy hearing about your adventures from your trips with us, plus any tips you may have picked up along the way – and there are so many ways in which you can tell us about your experiences, so get in touch via Facebook, Tweet us, email us, write a review on feefo or even send us a traditional letter!

★ Star Letter

I recently returned to the UK from your Glories of China tour and it was exceptional. We were a small group and had different guides in each location, all of whom were very well organised and knowledgeable, providing a really good grounding in Chinese history and culture. We were taken to excellent restaurants and enjoyed some lovely food. Throughout our travels we felt very safe and looked after. People have asked me what the highlights were and it is difficult to pick out one thing - the whole experience was a highlight. Thank you.

Barbara Smith, travelled on our Glories of China tour, via email

We wanted to let you know how much we enjoyed our tour. We packed so much into the 12 days but everything was well organised and ran like clockwork. It is hard to think of one single highlight as there were so many, but we loved the city of Xian with the Terracotta Warriors and the Ancient City Wall. Also, the people of Guilin were so friendly and welcoming – we bought a beer at a local convenience store and they gave up their table and chairs so we could sit! An unforgettable adventure.

Pam and Maurice Davis, travelled on our Discover China with the Telegraph tour, via email

We chose Wendy Wu Tours for the 2nd time because our China trip was good. We were looked after wonderfully in the best hotels, the best eating places and most knowledgeable guides. The tour took us to three totally different countries – Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, each with their own character and charm. What we saw and experienced was great – but would have loved to see more of Cambodia.

Rod Fitton, travelled on our Indochina Delights tour, via feefo

facebook



What was your favourite part of China and why? Or if you haven't been, what do you most want to see?

Dani Smith

6 February at 10:52

Visiting the Terracotta Warriors was amazing. Since being a little girl I wanted to see them and finally my husband and I were able to view them.

Like · Comment · Share

John Bennett

6 February at 12:50

The Summer Palace and the Great Wall – all of the history and incredible scenery from the wall was unforgettable.

Like · Comment · Share

Gordon Frankin

6 February at 15:58

Nine Villages Valley! The scenery is spectacular.

Like · Comment · Share

Keep a look out for more questions like this from us on Facebook – we love hearing your views!

GET IN TOUCH



customer@wendywutours.co.uk



**facebook.com/
wendywuofficial**



0844 288 4806



@WendyWuToursUK



**Wendy Wu Tours, Cottons Centre,
Cottons Lane, 47-49 Tooley Street,
London SE1 2QG**



wendywutours.co.uk/blog

feefo ^{99%}
Service rating:

What is feefo?

Feefo is working hard to be the world's most trusted supplier of ratings and reviews, generating genuine feedback that our customers can rely on. Once returning home from one of our tours or tailor made holidays, you will receive an email from feefo asking you to rate our service and our product. Any feedback at all from you will be most welcomed.

TRAVEL TALES



Japan is a country of captivating contrasts with futuristic cities, imperial heritage and magnificent nature – and our Online Marketing Executive, Daniela Albano was lucky enough to recently visit this fascinating country. Here, she shares her insider knowledge on how to get the most out of your visit.



Daniela

What was the highlight of your trip?

A highlight of my trip was visiting the Kiyomizu-dera temple in Kyoto. The temple buildings were stunning and the view was fantastic. After walking through the temple grounds, I entered the old Higashiyama district and found a secluded garden with a magnificent bamboo grove. It was so peaceful.

Was there an experience that stood out for you?

I cannot think of just one! I loved experiencing the speed of the bullet train, as well as walking through the bamboo groves in Kyoto but a day trip to Nara definitely stood out for me. The tame deer that roamed around the serene temples and shrines is something I will never see

anywhere else. You can walk right up to the deer and feed them too!

Did Japan live up to your expectations?

I would say it surpassed my expectations. It was a perfect mix of historical architecture and futuristic cities, with friendly, polite people and lots of beautiful places to visit. It's a must-see destination with a fantastic culture so very different from ours.

What was the cuisine like?

The cuisine was delicious and I made sure to try lots of different dishes, from Ramen to Tempura to Sushi on a revolving belt. Japanese cuisine is simply prepared but the flavours and freshness of the ingredients are a taste sensation. Rice or noodles are served with most meals, along with a steaming cup of green tea. There's lots of choice for non-fish eaters and vegetarians too!

DANIELA'S TOP JAPAN SIGHTS



Kinkaku-ji Temple, Kyoto



Mount Fuji



Fushimi Inari, Kyoto



Senso-ji Temple, Tokyo

TAKE ME THERE

DISCOVER JAPAN

Visit futuristic Tokyo, breathtaking Mount Fuji, charming Kyoto and vibrant Osaka on this perfect introductory tour.

To book call **0844 288 4806** or see our China brochure for full details.

PRICES FROM
£4,390^{pp}
FOR 13 DAYS

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS

Thanks to your loyalty and support, we reached our 10th birthday in the UK this year and in celebration, invited many of you – our valued customers to join us at the prestigious Institute of Directors in London on the 20th January for a fun-filled evening to show our appreciation.

We were lucky enough to be joined by TV Presenter and Panda Ambassador, John Craven who shared his experiences with the Giant Pandas as well as several customers who took to the stage to share their personal travel tales and anecdotes. Entertainment also included traditional Chinese music and a Lion Dance to finish up, which ended the evening with a bang!

We were thrilled with how many of you joined us – it was great to meet so many of you and hear about your trips with us.

In fact, we received so many complimentary letters and emails after the evening, including one

“I really enjoyed the whole evening... I shall have no hesitation in recommending Wendy Wu.”

from Jini D'Cruz who travelled all the way down from Huddersfield;

“Thank you for including me in your 10th birthday party celebrations. I really enjoyed the whole evening from the food and drink, entertainment, John Craven's presentation and people's own reflections on their holidays. I shall have no hesitation in recommending Wendy Wu to anyone who listens... And who knows, maybe I will still be around for the 20th birthday party!”

It was a difficult job whittling down the photos from the evening, but we didn't want to miss the opportunity of sharing some of them with you, so here are some of our favourites.

Once again, we would like to thank you for support over the last 10 years and we look forward to welcoming you on another Wendy Wu holiday soon.

Your little book of vouchers

As a further thank you for your loyalty we have a series of rewards for your valued custom with Wendy Wu Tours.



SAVE £100pp when you book your second tour with us. Just quote 'loyalty discount' at the time of booking.

SAVE £200pp If you book another tour with us within 4 weeks of returning home. Just quote 'welcome home' at the time of booking.

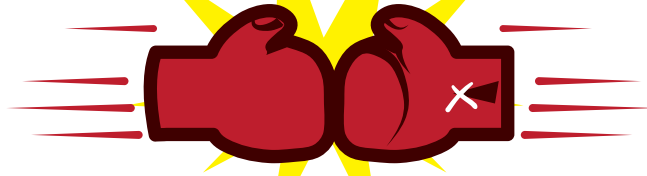
SAVE £250pp Become a Wendy Wu Tours VIP when you book three or more tours. Just quote 'VIP' at the time of booking.

Recommend us to your friends and family and they make a booking, we will send you a delicious hamper as a thank you.





HEAD TO HEAD



Two of Asia's great rivers go head to head in an attempt to blow each other out of the water...

YANGTZE

VS

MEKONG



RIVER FACTS

The Yangtze holds the title of Asia's longest river (and the third longest in the world) at 3915 miles, flowing right across China from its source amongst the cloud piercing mountains of the Tibetan plateau to its mouth in the East China Sea by Shanghai. The Yangtze has a momentous place in China's history and culture, providing some of the country's most fertile land, as well as some of its most artistically inspiring scenery.



THINGS TO SEE

Following the Yangtze from source to mouth would provide a fascinating chronicle of China's past, but who has the time for that? Instead try the section of the river surrounding the Three Gorges, which are an astonishing sight and so, more controversially, is the Three Gorges Dam. The river banks here are lined with historical treasures from ancient temples

to major cities, such as the old dynastic capital Nanjing.

CRUISING

It goes without saying that the best way to see a river is to travel along it and a Yangtze river cruise is a popular pastime in China. Pass through the Three Gorges, take fascinating shore excursions and enjoy the passing scenery – you can cruise as far as Shanghai over 8 days, though most people opt for the 3 or 4 day cruises between Chongqing and Yichang.

TAKE ME THERE

GRAND YANGTZE

Take an eight day cruise along the Yangtze and see some of China's most glorious sights on this grand adventure.

To book call
0844 288 4806
or visit wendywutours.co.uk

**PRICES FROM
£3,390pp
FOR 18 DAYS**



RIVER FACTS

The Mekong winds its way through China, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, chalking up 2703 miles. Where the river runs, the land is incredibly verdant shaping one of the richest areas of biodiversity on the planet with thousands of species calling its shores and waters home. Long an essential trade route, firstly between riverside communities and then between nations, the Mekong passes through, or close to, some of the region's most important cities – Vientiane, Phnom Penh and Saigon.



THINGS TO SEE

The Mekong passes through a patchwork of landscapes on its journey. Whilst several cities are set on the river banks the scenery as a whole is gorgeously rural – for miles there is nothing but farmland and fishermen. Two of the most beautiful spots on the river are Laos' Si Phan Don, where the river swirls around a series of tranquil islands and islets, and the agricultural abundance and peaceful waterways of the luscious Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

CRUISING

Whether you want a day floating amongst the orchards, paddy fields and water buffalos of the delta, or to embark on a voyage between the glorious temples of Angkor and the floating markets of the delta region there is no better place to catch a glimpse of authentic rural life in Southeast Asia than along the banks of the Mekong.

TAKE ME THERE

MEKONG DISCOVERY

Cruise from Saigon up to Angkor, visiting floating markets, rural villages and temples en route.

To book call
0844 288 4806
or visit wendywutours.co.uk

**PRICES FROM
£2,990pp
FOR 15 DAYS**

IN CONCLUSION

If you are after scenery on an epic scale take to the waters of the mighty Yangtze, whilst for lazy days and views of rural idyll, the Mekong has all you can ask for.

48 HOURS... IN CHENGDU

Remarkable and unique, Chengdu is the relaxed and cheery capital of Sichuan Province and the gateway to China's western hinterlands. Surrounded by dramatic mountains, bamboo forests and fertile valleys, the city is famous for incredible cuisine, the welcoming local people and China's most adorable citizens, the Giant Pandas.



Here's how to spend the perfect 48 hours...

DAY 1



Morning

You'll need an early start to catch Chengdu's best-loved residents at their hungriest and most active. Head out to the Panda Reserve where these charismatic animals live in surroundings designed to mirror their natural habitats. The Giant Panda's get breakfast at 9am and will munch through up to 20 kilos of bamboo a day. Visit in autumn or winter and you may see tiny newborns in the nursery. Next, head over to see their mischievous cousins, the Red Pandas, clambering amongst tree branches and bushes.

Pit stop

Stroll down Jinli Street, a pedestrianised road in the old city lined with antique shops, bars and

cafes. Stop at one of the snack stalls to sample skewers of spicy chicken, duck or vegetables.

Afternoon

Drinking tea is central to life in China and nowhere is this more evident than in Chengdu. The locals take it seriously and there is a well-established tea drinking etiquette. Stop in a tea house to sample Longjing Tea and then stroll through Du Fu Cottage grounds, home to the famous 8th century poet.

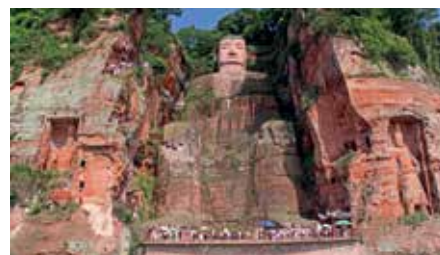


DAY 2

Morning

Travel to the Grand Buddha of Leshan, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the world's

largest stone-carved Buddhist monument. Constructed over 1200 years ago you'll get the best views from a boat on the river flowing past.



Afternoon

Visit Huanglongxi on your way back to the city. The town has a history dating over 1,700 years and has retained the charms of the Qing dynasty, with cobbled streets, temples and wooden buildings along its curving alleys.

After dark

Go for dinner at Shujiu Xiang to sample Chengdu's most famous and delicious dish the Sichuan Hot Pot, accompanied with dumplings and mapo doufu (chili-tofu). Later venture to the Sichuan Opera and be amazed by the face-changing art of Bian Lian.

TOP CHENGDU EXPERIENCES



Pay a visit to the Giant Panda



Taste Chengdu's local delicacies in Jinli Street



Take a trip to the ancient Grand Buddha in Leshan



Try Chengdu's signature dish, the Sichuan Hot Pot

TAKE ME THERE

**2 NIGHT
CHENGDU
EXTENSION**

**PRICES FROM
£320^{pp}
FOR 3 DAYS**

Experience the local culture and traditions of fascinating Chengdu, as well as meet their famous residents, the Giant Panda. A stay in Chengdu is also included in many of our fully escorted tours of China.

To book call **0844 288 4806**

CUSTOMER CORNER

Tell us about your wendy wu holiday...

Here at Wendy Wu Tours, we can't wait to hear about your holiday experiences. We receive hundreds of complimentary letters and emails telling us about your favourite sights and sounds.

Ruth Tillyard recently returned from our 'Hidden Treasures of Burma' tour, her second Wendy Wu holiday and tells us all about her favourite experiences in this unique country that's yet to be discovered by many.

Ruth Tillyard



I have just returned from Burma and my main message is, if you have any inkling to go to this wonderful country, do it now! In my opinion the tourist experience cannot possibly get any better than at present.

The country is steeped in culture and the people are courteous, kind and gentle - strangers often helped us unasked. The Buddhist religion is fascinating and every temple has many local devotees who don't seem to be put off by tourists - you see monks and pink-clad nuns everywhere you go.

We started at possibly the best-known site in Burma - Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon. Despite having seen photos, this was my highlight and my breath was taken away on arrival at the top platform with its myriads of small gold pagodas, temples, tinkling and bonging bells, shrines, candles and offerings, all of which surround the great central gold dome that can be seen from around the city. I was totally entranced as I explored all corners and watched the locals and

“ The country is steeped in culture and the people are courteous, kind and gentle - strangers often helped us unasked. ”

finally saw it acquire an orange-gold glow as we watched the sunset. Just magic.

On another day we visited a village where the only technology was wood and bamboo and the only power was human, oxen and fire.

The village kids turned out to greet us who wanted nothing more than to hold our hands and some of the local women surreptitiously stroked the skin of our group members. I was moved and decided to forego the photo opportunities in the interests of human interaction of a sort that won't exist for much longer in this material world. Sometimes giving and participating is more rewarding and memorable than staring and photographing.

I lost count of the types of transport we used but it included horse carts, ox carts, river ferries small and large, cruise boats, sightseeing speed boats, elevators, small trucks, buses and planes; also opportunities to use our feet. Our very excellent guide, Nay Lin, maintained his charm throughout and managed all the logistics impeccably.

“ I was totally entranced as I explored all corners and watched the locals. ”

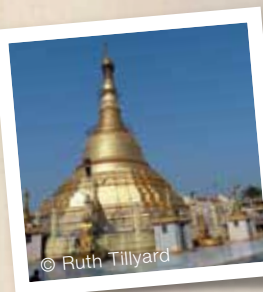


Food was typically a selection of tasty Burmese dishes brought to the table, occasionally spicy but generally not too much so, sometimes accompanied by dazzling puppetry and music.

There was a brilliant balance between discovering local people's present-day lives and visiting historical local sites. There were many gilded pagodas as well as white, cream or terracotta ones, stone ones and brick ones - the variety was endless and never boring. Teak buildings such as carved monasteries and the U Bein Bridge also didn't disappoint and here, I really enjoyed mingling with people of all kinds, whilst some members of the group angled for the perfect sunset silhouette picture.

I found moving around by boat on Inle Lake really entrancing; with houses on stilts, fishermen and floating vegetable beds all reflected in the water a blue sky were a never-changing visual show that I was sorry

to have to leave to return to Rangoon and then home, some folks choosing a Wendy Wu add-on enroute. This was truly an unforgettable trip for all of the right reasons!



“ There was a brilliant balance between discovering local people's present-day lives and visiting historical local sites. ”

TAKE ME THERE

HIDDEN TREASURES OF BURMA

Experience the unique culture and sheer magnificence of Southeast Asia's hidden gem on this 17 day tour.

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£3,790^{pp}
FOR 17 DAYS

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THE BIG INTERVIEW

WITH VALERIE SINGLETON

Valerie Singleton OBE, is probably best known as the presenter of the popular children's series, Blue Peter. Since then, she has been a regular face on TV as well as hosting a number of radio shows. Valerie travelled to China with Wendy Wu Tours several years ago and we recently caught up with her to discuss her travel history as well as her memories of China.

First holiday memory?

When I was growing up, people didn't go abroad then so we tended to go on caravanning holidays. One particularly happy holiday I remember was in Ladram Bay in Devon between Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton. I used to get up very early and sneak out of the caravan without my parents knowing and go out with the fishermen to help lay their nets. I then ran up to the local farm to buy fresh eggs and warm milk straight from the cows. It was idyllic and very different to holidays children enjoy nowadays.

My first holiday abroad was a ski holiday with some girl friends when I was about 19 or 20 to a very up market resort called Arosa in Switzerland. If we had known at the time how chic the resort was, we might have chosen something a little more down market. But we had a great time even so.

Tell us about your memories of visiting China.

Obviously the Great Wall was hugely impressive and I got to walk along a section with very few people on it. What I loved most about China was watching local people go about their everyday life. In many of the parks, I witnessed the older generation doing their exercises, swinging on bars and running on outdoor treadmills and I couldn't help thinking how much fitter we would all be if we did something similar in the UK!

One of the most memorable things we saw was a spectacular outdoor sound and light show on a lake in a place called Yangshuo in southern China. It was directed by the same man who put together the opening ceremony at the Beijing Olympics. The cast were all from the local minority villages. I



could have happily sat through the show for a second time. It was superb.

I also loved the Terracotta Warriors of course and walking around the ancient wall of Xian and shopping in the local markets where I picked up some fabulous jackets. Much to the envy of my friends.

China is such a diverse country, there are simply too many highlights to mention. I'd love to go back.

Favourite destinations?

I just love Italy, everything about it. The art, architecture and scenery, I don't think there's anywhere in Italy that isn't absolutely stunning. I've also had many happy trips to Greece.

When I started to travel with my work I was fortunate to visit destinations that I would never have thought to go to and probably

couldn't have afforded to go to. Alaska was one of my first trips, as Americans say, it was awesome.

Egypt will always have a special place in my heart. Staying out near the Pyramids I woke very early, went out to explore them and arrived to find them completely deserted. There was just a group of local horsemen riding across the desert, like something out of a film. They were as surprised to see me as I was to see them. It was a mesmeric moment. I'm a great believer that it is possible to avoid the tourist crowds. You just have to make a bit of extra effort.

I enjoy visiting countries that are a bit unusual, like Albania, Haiti and Syria. I still haven't managed to go to South America, Argentina holds huge appeal. When I was little, my parents gave me a map of the

world which I proudly hung on my wall. I used to dream about exploring such exotic places like Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Hopefully one day I will make it there.

What have you learnt from your travels?

When I arrive somewhere, I always give myself 24 hours before I make any judgement. I don't make a rash decision as soon as I arrive. Places can grow on you. Also I make sure I respect the local culture and dress appropriately and I try and learn a little of the language. A few words go a long way.

Where are you off to next?

I am heading to the Norwegian Fjords soon on a writing assignment, so I am looking forward to that immensely.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: ANCIENT CHINA



With thousands of years of fascinatingly diverse history, China is one of the world's oldest civilisations. Much of this ancient history can be found in the Shanxi Province, a region in north eastern China that shares a border with Inner Mongolia. Wendy Wu Tours' Marketing Manager, Ben Briggs, recently spent some time there and shares some of his insights.

Go back in time

A trip to China's Shanxi Province will take you back in time about 5000 years with its ancient history and rich culture. Not to be confused with its neighbour, the Shaanxi Province, famous for the Terracotta Warriors, this northern region contains some of the most significant ancient relics in China. After several previous trips to China, I was looking forward to seeing another side to this incredible country.

One of our first stops was the ancient walled town of Pingyao. It is probably the most famous city in Shanxi and considered the best preserved in the whole of China. The wall surrounding the city stretches about 6 kms, enveloping the 50,000 people still living inside. Spending the night in a restored guesthouse, within a traditional courtyard setting was a great experience. Walking along the cobbled streets, dating back to the Zhou Dynasty (827-728BC), gave you a real flavour of what life may have been like centuries ago.

The real highlight of the trip for me was a visit to the Yungang Caves. This series of grottoes carved from the sandstone cliffs in the 5th century, were filled with intricate Buddhist imagery and statues. Close by was the 1400 year old, gravity defying Hanging Monastery, which seemed to float 50 metres up the cliff face. Amazingly we were able to climb up to the temple which tested anyone's fear of heights to the limit.

Noodle heaven

The noodle is king in Shanxi. There are almost 1000 types of noodle and we must have sampled a fair few of them! Datong in particular is famous for its knife cut noodles. But as well as noodles there are lots of delicious dishes including well flavoured broths, flatbreads, sweet potatoes, spicy aubergine stews and several pork combinations. You certainly won't go hungry in Shanxi. Plus being only an hour from Mongolia, there are lots of food influences using lamb as the main ingredient.

Travelling around the north of the province, you will pass by ancient sections of the Great Wall. We discovered that these sections are even older than the parts you can see in Beijing. They are made of mud instead of brick and were built to defend the region from marauding the hordes from Mongolia and beyond. There are still almost 40 million people still living in caves all over China, many of them in Shanxi. An extraordinary fact in this day and age.

In conclusion...

So if you have already visited the main sights of China and want to return to see a completely different side to this intoxicating nation, then a trip to the Shanxi Province will tick all the boxes.

MY TOP 5 ANCIENT SIGHTS



**THE WALLED
TOWN OF
PINGYAO**



**5TH
CENTURY
YUNGANG
GROTTOES**



**1400 YEAR
OLD
HANGING
MONASTERY**



**11TH
CENTURY
WOODEN
PAGODA**



**BUDDHIST
MOUNT
WUTAI**

TAKE ME THERE

ANCIENT CHINA

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£2,690^{pp}
FOR 18 DAYS**



▲ The Hanging Monastery

THE BIG PICTURE

PHOTO COMPETITION

THE RESULTS

We are delighted to showcase the winners from our recent photo competition from the last issue of Chinese Whispers.

We received hundreds of incredible entries across all three categories; culture, food and scenery. There are clearly some very talented photographers amongst you! Each category winner won a Fire HD Tablet and the overall winner won a Nikon D3300 SLR. Congratulations to you all!

Look out for any future competitions in the next issue or keep up to date via our Facebook page. Keep sending us your photos to whispers@wendywutours.co.uk, **tweet us or post on Facebook.**



**OVERALL
WINNER AND
FOOD CATEGORY
WINNER**



Liz Whittaker

"I took this photo in a Burmese village in November 2013. I thought the lady's smile was so beautiful."



Gavin Burnett

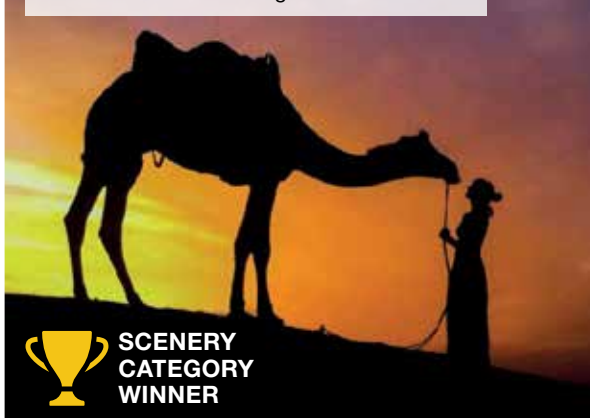
"Line of novice monks receiving alms, taken in the market place in Old Bagan, Burma."



**CULTURE
CATEGORY
WINNER**

Kate Lord

"I took this photo in Rajasthan, India whilst on a camel safari. I saw one of my friends with the camel and the amazing sunset behind."



**SCENERY
CATEGORY
WINNER**

HIGHLY COMMENDED



Rose Coltman

Traditional cormorant fishing, Lake Erhai, Yunnan Province.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Kay Fackrell

View of the Great Wall of China, from the Watch Tower.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Lynne Bickerdike

Street food in the Muslim market in Xian.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Andrew Eldred

Cards in the park, Yangshuo County, Guilin.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Gillian Dykes

A street seller outside the Humble Administrators Garden, Suzhou.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Michael Hennessy

"The Golden Temple, Amritsar, India. I had to run ahead and wait for the Sikh guard to walk into shot."

A LIFE IN THE DAY

Tom Du, one of our most popular National Escorts in China, recently left China for the very first time and visited our London office and whilst here, he shared with us his insider knowledge and top tips for visiting his homeland.



Zhangjiajie National Park



Erhai Lake



Lugu Lake

What's your favourite part of China?

I always enjoy visiting Guilin and Yangshuo, the countryside in the south of China. There's an abundance of activities on offer here,

including cycling through the beautiful paddy fields, exploring the local villages or taking a cruise on the Li River. It feels like a world apart from any of the major cities and often gives my clients the opportunity to unwind and really take in the beautiful scenery and local culture after experiencing the hustle and bustle of the cities.

What sights and experiences do you like to show your customers that only you know about?

Erhai Lake – in southwest Yunnan. Not only is there a beautiful lake, but also there are hiking trails and the whole region is full of interesting and beautiful sights that you

can camp in, take horse rides or even hike in the high mountains. Erhai Lake itself is one of the largest fresh water lakes in China and is shaped like a human's ear. What I enjoy is taking a boat ride on the lake with a local – who will let you row the boat whilst singing to you – and will also encourage you to join in!

Are there any undiscovered places in China that you would recommend?

If you're looking for beautiful scenery and a place to relax, I would recommend visiting Lugu Lake in Lijiang. Many Chinese people say this is another kingdom, not only because of the incredible scenery, but also because of the unique culture of the Musou people, who live along the lake within the small village. They live extremely traditional lives that many people find fascinating – and are mainly self-sufficient from growing crops and raising enough for their daily needs.



TOM'S FAVOURITE LOCAL DISH:

Braised beef with soy sauce

Ingredients:

500 grams of sliced beef steak
1 shredded leek
1 onion, roughly chopped
3 tsp sugar
½ pint of beef stock
3 tbsp soy sauce
2 grams of fresh ginger
3 tbsp shaoxing rice wine
2 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp salt

Method:

Heat the pan and stir-fry the onion and ginger for 3 minutes before adding the beef steak. Once cooked, add the shaoxing wine, soy sauce and sugar. After several minutes add the beef stock and simmer for one hour until the beef becomes soft. Sprinkle on the sesame oil, shredded leek and put into a dish to serve.

What are your favourite places for amazing landscapes and scenery?

Zhangjiajie National Park in the Hunan Province is absolutely incredible! Many people will remember this stunning and unique scenery from the Oscar winning film Avatar. I love taking my clients here and watching their faces as they come face to face with the unique and dramatic cliffs that nearly touch the clouds.

TAKE ME THERE

DREAMS OF NATURE

Experience the stunning and unique sights of Zhangjiajie National Park on this unforgettable group tour.

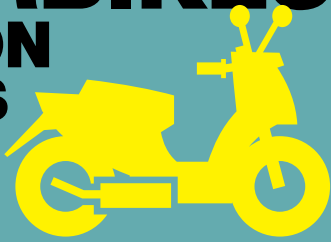
To book call
0844 288 4806

or see our China brochure for full details.

PRICES FROM
£3,790^{pp}
FOR 19 DAYS

DID YOU KNOW?

**10 MILLION
MOTORBIKES
TRAVEL ON
VIETNAM'S
ROADS
EVERY DAY**

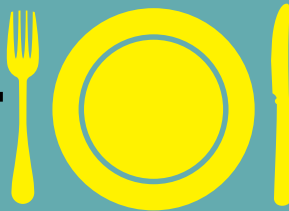


**261,970
SQUARE
MILES**

**IS THE SIZE OF BURMA,
THE LARGEST
COUNTRY ON MAINLAND
SOUTHEAST ASIA**



**THERE ARE 500
DIFFERENT
TRADITIONAL
VIETNAMESE
DISHES**



**55,746,300
IS THE POPULATION
OF BURMA**



**THE ANGKOR RUINS STRETCH OVER MORE THAN
248 SQUARE MILES
(400 SQUARE KILOMETERS)**

**CAMBODIA'S FLAG IS ONE
OF ONLY
TWO
TO FEATURE A BUILDING**



**AROUND
90%
OF THAI PEOPLE
ARE BUDDHIST**



**1,430 IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF
ISLANDS IN THAILAND**





TAKE ME THERE

GRAND TOUR OF INDOCHINA

Embark on this wide-ranging tour that immerses you in all tradition, scenery and astonishing sights of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, including a 2 day cruise amongst the tranquil green waters of Halong Bay.

PRICES FROM
£4,090^{pp}
FOR 28 DAYS

To book call **0844 288 4806**

PANDAW
RIVER EXPEDITIONS

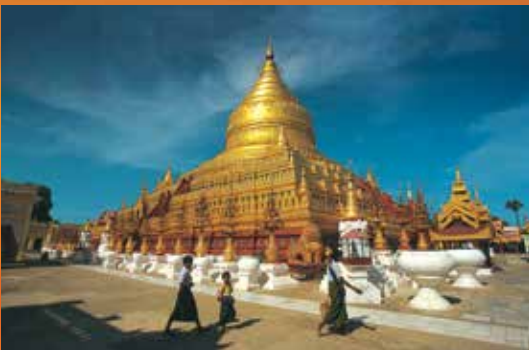


BURMA AND BEYOND...

We have teamed up with Pandaw River Expeditions for you to discover Asia's iconic rivers in style. Pandaw pioneered river cruising in Asia and today have a fleet of 13 stunning colonial-style ships offering the perfect combination of comfort, superb cuisine, attentive service, included drinks*, crew gratuities, authentic excursions and unique adventures off the beaten track.



* not on cruises in India



READER OFFER

For all bookings made with Pandaw by 31 July 2015, Wendy Wu Tours will include a **complimentary bottle of sparkling wine** in your cabin.

IN THIS ISSUE OF CHINESE WHISPERS...

We have enclosed a dedicated 24 page booklet showcasing some of Pandaw's incredible river journeys through Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and India. 12 day cruise tours start from **£2,990pp**.

For more information visit **wendywutours.co.uk/pandaw**



WHAT DO OUR CUSTOMERS SAY?



Lynne Borland, a Wendy Wu VIP, having travelled on 7 trips with us, is just one example of this and tells us about her positive experiences of travelling solo;

“ On the trips I’ve taken with Wendy Wu, I’ve found it easy to interact with people in the group and it’s always worked out well. I’ve kept in touch with many of the people I met and still visit some of them on a regular basis. ”



Terry Ottway, another Wendy Wu VIP, having travelled on 3 tours with us, also only has positive words to describe his trips – and how easy it was to integrate with the group;

GOING SOLO?

What’s great about group touring is that whether you’re travelling with a partner, a friend or by yourself, you’re sure to make new friends along the way with your fellow group members.

Many of our customers travel alone and we’ve received great feedback about many of their trips – many of whom have told us about the long-lasting friendships they’ve formed with their fellow tour members.

Travelling solo can be a great adventure, so what’s stopping you?

Did you know?

If you’re willing to share with a fellow single traveller of the same gender – just let us know at the time of booking and no single supplement will apply.

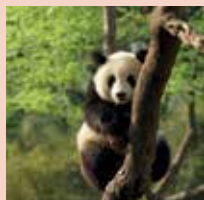
“ I most recently travelled to Burma with Wendy Wu Tours and found it easy to integrate with the group. As all meals were included, it was nice for everyone to sit together, reflect on the day and really get to know each other. ”

EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER

NO SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS ON THESE TOURS

Sometimes there’s nothing better than having your own space and somewhere you can retreat to at the end of a day’s touring. That’s why we’ve taken away our single supplement for these tours, meaning you will pay the standard price and enjoy the space and comfort of your own room.

IN PURSUIT OF PANDAS



**9 DAYS FROM
£2,190PP**

**SAVING
£260PP**

**Departing
23 Oct 2015**

A CHINA EXPERIENCE



**10 DAYS FROM
£2,490PP**

**SAVING
£260PP**

**Departing
15 Aug 2015**

GLORIES OF CHINA



**14 DAYS FROM
£2,790PP**

**SAVING
£360PP**

**Departing
26 Sep 2015**

VIETNAM IMPRESSIONS

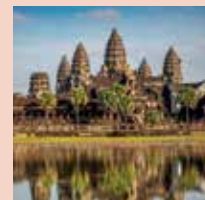


**10 DAYS FROM
£2,290PP**

**SAVING
£190PP**

**Departing
23 Oct 2015**

AROUND CAMBODIA



**15 DAYS FROM
£2,490PP**

**SAVING
£240PP**

**Departing
25 Oct 2015**

BEST OF THE BLOG

We recently started a travel blog to provide you with the latest travel news, tips and fun facts on all things Asia.

We know us Brits love a good traditional brew, but have you ever considered trying something from further afield? There's an abundance of Chinese teas to try, but our recent blog article gives you a great overview on what we believe to be the best out there.

Chinese Tea: A First Timer's Guide

Tea is one of the most important beverages to Chinese tradition and is considered one of the seven necessities of Chinese life. While we see a cuppa as a refreshing and warming drink to have throughout the day, Chinese tea is enjoyed for its many health benefits and is served in many different forms; over 700 varieties have been counted through history.

WHAT MAKES CHINESE TEA SO SPECIAL?

Chinese tea was discovered in 2737BC after a leaf from a nearby shrub fell into some water that the Chinese Emperor Shennong was boiling. Today its popularity has done little to falter, and its many varieties can be sorted mainly into five different categories: white, black, green, oolong and post-fermented.



White

Black

Green

Oolong

Post-fermented

WHERE CAN I GET IT?

With all this talk about tea, it's understandable that you will want to try it for yourself and while you may think you will have to embark on a luxury China tour in order to taste it at its best, there are plenty of vendors stocking Chinese tea in all its forms right here in the UK. Without further ado, here's our pick of the best.

MARIAGE FRÈRES

A French company which has been passionate about tea in its many varieties since 1854, Mariage Frères is renowned for its range of Chinese Tea from the classic Lapsang Souchong to Huang Shan Mao Feng, their range is sure to cater for all tastes.

CANTON TEA COMPANY

Also of great acclaim is the range of Chinese tea from Canton Tea, a company that specialises in offering teas from across China and other Asian



countries. A brand first launched in 2007, today Canton Tea has alliances with some of the most experienced artisans in tea making and today are one of the UK's top specialist tea companies. Sourcing their Chinese tea from small farms which are family run, we got in touch with them to find out which styles they recommend.

WHITTARD

Finally we have Whittard, a British institution that is synonymous for excellence in tea, coffee, hot chocolate and many other hot beverages. First established in 1886, their variety of Chinese tea is expansive and many have previously featured as their tea of the month.

For a true taste of Chinese tea, we recommend the Whittard Anji Bai Cha Loose Tea. Sourced from the Zhejiang province to offer a distinct taste of sweet orchid, it's a real treat whatever the time of day.

Visit our blog to read the full post.

ONLINE NOW

EXPLORING COOL SOUTH KOREA

17 Oct 2014



South Korea has some great natural and cultural draw cards, including its relaxed capital Seoul. I was looking forward to sampling it myself...

EASY AND AUTHENTIC CHINESE RECIPES TO ENJOY AT HOME

26 Jan 2015



People are always telling us the main reasons for travelling to China is to taste authentic Asian food. Having enjoyed a taste of China at home, the next step is to travel abroad and discover the roots of their tastes...

TOP THINGS TO DO IN SHANGHAI

9 Mar 2015



Shanghai is one of only a few cities that boasts an array of history, mystique, modernity and glamour. It's been difficult, but we've compiled a list of the top eight things you must do during a visit...

Keep up to date with our blog by visiting wendywutours.co.uk/blog

IT'S A DEAL

OFFERS EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOU

We've put together a series of savings for our readers across many of our group tours to China, Japan, Southeast Asia and India for travel this year – simply quote 'Chinese Whispers' to take advantage of these great deals.

1 WONDERS OF CHINA



16 DAYS FROM
£2,890PP

SAVING £300PP

A hugely popular tour which visits China's most iconic sights, including the Great Wall and the Yangtze River.

Departing 12 Jul 2015

2 MAGNIFICENT CHINA



21 DAYS FROM
£3,190PP

SAVING £300PP

Cruise along the Yangtze and Li Rivers, visit the pandas and admire the Great Wall and Terracotta Army on this in-depth tour.

Departing 13 Sep 2015



3 CLASSIC CHINA



20 DAYS FROM
£3,490PP

SAVING £300PP

You're sure to have an adventure on this diverse tour, visiting spectacular and diverse landscapes in Yunnan.

Departing 16 Sep 2015

4 CHINA SPLENDOUR



14 DAYS FROM
£3,190PP

SAVING £300PP

Combining China's magnificent and delightfully undiscovered beauty with the superb cities of Beijing, Xian and Shanghai.

Departing 19 Aug 2015

5 GRAND TOUR OF CHINA



26 DAYS FROM
£3,490PP

SAVING £300PP

Our most comprehensive tour of China which covers the country's top destinations.

Departing 20 Sep 2015

6 ESSENTIAL JAPAN



11 DAYS FROM
£3,890PP

SAVING £100PP

A concise tour that immerses into the unique and fascinating culture of Japan.

Departing 28 Sep 2015



7 VIETNAM PANORAMA



18 DAYS FROM
£2,490^{PP}
SAVING £100^{PP}

A comprehensive tour of Vietnam including Halong Bay and the Mekong.

Departing 12 Jul 2015



8 ANGKOR TO THE BAY



17 DAYS FROM
£2,790^{PP}
SAVING £300^{PP}

Take a voyage of discovery from the breath-taking majesty of the temples of Angkor through to the spectacular Halong Bay.

Departing 14 Aug 2015

9 GRAND TOUR OF INDOCHINA



28 DAYS FROM
£4,090^{PP}
SAVING £200^{PP}

A wide-ranging tour immersing you in the tradition, scenery and astonishing sights of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Departing 26 Sep 2015



10 AROUND CAMBODIA



15 DAYS FROM
£2,190^{PP}
SAVING £200^{PP}

Visit a destination bursting with breathtaking temples, gorgeous beaches and a fascinating heritage.

Departing 11 Oct 2015

11 HIDDEN TREASURES OF BURMA



17 DAYS FROM
£3,490^{PP}
SAVING £300^{PP}

Discover Southeast Asia's hidden gem - a destination bursting with magnificent monuments and glittering stupas.

Departing 24 Sep 2015

12 GOLDEN TRIANGLE



9 DAYS FROM
£2,090^{PP}
SAVING £100^{PP}

A classic tour of India visiting Delhi, the Taj Mahal and Jaipur.

Departing 21 Nov 2015

TOP REASONS TO CHOOSE WENDY WU TOURS

- Over 16 years' experience
- Unrivalled knowledge and expertise
- Comprehensive range of group, private and tailor-made holidays
- Depart from many regional UK airports
- Fully inclusive prices with no hidden extras
- Quality hotels and comfortable transport
- 99% independent customer rating
- Award winning guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced consultants
- Authentic dining and delicious local cuisine
- Hassle-free visa service included
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL & IATA



Wendy Wu Tours

To book and speak to our experts

Call: **0844 288 4806**

Email: **whispers@wendywutours.co.uk**

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Visit **wendywutours.co.uk**

Alternatively visit your preferred travel agent to discuss a Wendy Wu Tours holiday.

