



Wendy Wu Tours®

# Chinese Whispers

JULY 2016

**48 hours in Lhasa**  
'The roof of the world'

**Explore Gardens by the Bay**  
A must-see attraction in Singapore

**Head to Head**  
Cambodia vs Laos

**The World's Greatest Monument  
to Love, the Taj Mahal**

**OUR TOP 10 PLACES TO JOURNEY TO NEXT...**

**Classic Tours • Discovery Tours • Deluxe Tours • River Cruising • Private Tours • Tailor-Made Itineraries**  
China • Vietnam • India • Cambodia • Laos • Japan • Thailand • Sri Lanka • Myanmar • Tibet • Mongolia • Bhutan  
Nepal • Sikkim • Hong Kong • Singapore • Borneo • Taiwan • South Korea • Maldives • South Africa • South America

# Wendy's Message



**“Travelling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.”** – Ibn Battuta

This is one of my favourite travel quotes because it represents you, our valued customers, so well. We are sent your stories on a daily basis. You have written them whilst on holiday or when you return, so that you can share your adventures with your family and friends. But, best of all, you like to share them with us, and we love to read them.

In this edition of Chinese Whispers, we have compiled some of the best stories yet. We have a poem about the joy of travelling on a group tour, and a story of adventure in Zhangjiajie, both from travellers who have recently returned from their journeys through Asia. We also have plenty of stories from the Wendy Wu team. As the experts, and with so many trips to Asia under our belts, it's not hard to get the creative juices flowing and put pen to paper.

Need more inspiration? Check out pages 4-5 for our recommendation for the top 10 places to journey to next. Or turn to pages 12-13 and read all about how to maximize your time in Lhasa, 'the roof of the world'.

For those of you who are looking to next year, and where your next adventure will be, we have fantastic savings on over 40 tours and over 330 departures in the Early Bird specials. Get in quick, as places are limited.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Chinese Whispers, as much as we enjoyed writing the stories, and if you want to contribute to our next edition, get in touch:

**chinesewhispers@wendywutours.com.au**

Lots of cheers,

吴玲 Wendy

# It's all about **you...**

## LOYALTY DISCOUNTS

We know that many of you like to travel with us year after year and with so many experiences across Asia to be enjoyed, why wouldn't you. On your next Fully Inclusive Group Tour or Deluxe holiday you will enjoy a loyalty discount.

Note: Our loyalty discount does not apply to tailor-made itineraries, independent travel, special groups, or to our *Simply* range of tours.

## LOYALTY DISCOUNTS

2nd group tour	SAVE \$100 pp
3rd, 4th and 5th group tour	SAVE \$200 pp
6th or more group tour	SAVE \$300 pp

## EARN YOURSELF A HAMPER (& your friends get a great holiday)

*"The tour gave me a real thirst for more Asian adventure and Wendy Wu Tours is the way to go."* A very happy Aussie couple – Michael and Lyndelle Rees

Find yourself returning from your trip with similar comments to Mr and Mrs Rees?

We value all of our Wu ambassadors, and we would like to reward you for referring your friends to Wendy Wu Tours. As a token of appreciation, if your friend mentions your name and reference number at the time of booking, we will send you a hamper filled with delicious treats, delivered to your door! Refer as many friends as you like – there's no limit!

# COMPETITION

## WIN \$7,000 TOWARDS A WENDY WU TOUR of your choice for two people!

To celebrate our Early Bird Specials, and this magical edition of Chinese Whispers we are giving you the chance to take off on a Wendy Wu tour of your choice, by winning \$7,000 towards the cost of your holiday.

But what does **\$7,000** buy for you? Two seats on selected departures of our introductory tours: Vietnam Impressions, A China Experience or Golden Triangle, or put \$7,000 towards a tour that will take you off the beaten track, travel on our Silk Road Explorer, or venture on the Road to Samarkand. The choice is yours!

To enter, visit:

**wendywutours.com.au/competition**

and answer a simple question:

Name one UNESCO World Heritage site in Asia?

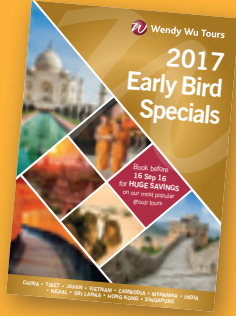
Here is a clue, but there are hundreds to choose from...



# WHAT'S NEW?

## Early Bird Specials On sale NOW!

This year we have our biggest ever Early Bird Specials on sale now, offering savings up to \$1,400pp on our most popular tours. With over 40 tours and over 330 departures to 8 countries to choose from, there is sure to be something for you! Hurry must book by 16 Sept 16.



## NEW Sapporo & Snow Monkeys Tour

Join the largest and grandest Ice and Snow Festival in the world at Sapporo, the largest city on the northern island of Hokkaido. Come face to face with the Snow Monkeys who reside in the Japanese Alps and discover Japan's many treasures – old and new - in the spectacular cities of Tokyo and Kyoto.



Snow Monkey

**12 days from \$9,980pp, twin share**  
**Departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**

## NEW South American Journey

Experience the very best that South America has to offer on an incredible adventure that encompasses Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Bolivia.

**28 days from \$16,980pp, twin share**  
**Departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per on 26 Feb 17**

## South African Trails

Set at the tip of the epic African continent, South Africa is a combination of incredible landscapes and cultures. Travel from the wilds of Kruger National Park, through the lands of the Zulu, along the Garden Route to the spectacular 'Mother City', Cape Town.

**17 days from \$8,490pp, twin share**  
**Departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per on 25 Nov 16**

# WHAT'S INSIDE

PAGES 4 - 5



## Top 10 Places to Journey to Next....

Our pick of off the beaten path experiences

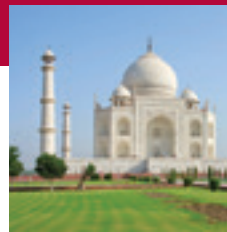
PAGES 6 - 7



## Gardens by the Bay

Explore "Avatar in real life: Singapore's Gardens by the Bay"

PAGES 8 - 9



## Explore the Taj Mahal

The World's Greatest Monument to Love

PAGES 12 - 13



## 48 hours in Lhasa

Discover how best to spend your time in Lhasa, "the roof of the world".

PAGES 16 - 17



## Customer Corner

Cheryl and Narelle went on an adventure through the Floating Mountains of Zhangjiajie

PAGE 18



## Head to Head

Cambodia vs Laos  
These two fascinating countries go head to head, which will you choose?

# OUR TOP 10 PLACES TO JOURNEY TO NEXT...

IS YOUR SUITCASE AS WORN OUT AS OURS? LOOKING FOR SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT TO JOURNEY NEXT?

We know that travellers are always looking for that hidden gem, that ultimate experience, those special moments that make a holiday an adventure. As Asia travel experts, we are continuously looking for those less-travelled destinations also. Here you'll find our pick of the best, where we have found that concealed noodle shop, or walked those hilly mountain tops to share with you our ultimate experiences that'll take you off the beaten path in 2017.

## #1 WALK THROUGH JIUZHAIGOU NATIONAL PARK, CHINA

Jiuzhaigou National Park, also known as the Nine Villages Valley, is one of China's greatest natural assets (along with Wendy's favourite place to visit). A walk through this stunning national park will take you through traditional Tibetan villages and past crystal clear pools reflecting the snow-capped mountains that surround the valley.

**Take me there: Yunnan & Sichuan, 17 days from \$5,780pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**  
**Early Bird Special on sale now**, save \$400pp on this tour and enjoy this experience



## #2 STAY WITH THE LOCALS IN KARAKOL, KYRGYZSTAN

On the Road to Samarkand, stop off in Karakol and spend the night at a local homestay. Soak up the surroundings, play football with the kids in the street, wander through the market, or simply sit with the locals and sip on a hot tea whilst watching the world go by. Here the locals are still unaccustomed to seeing westerners, so expect a curious yet charming welcome.

**Take me there: Road to Samarkand, 26 days from \$10,180pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne & Per**

## #3 WITNESS THE MONGOLIAN NAADAM FESTIVAL

Locally, the festival is known as "eriin gurban naadam", meaning "the three games of men", which accurately describes the annual festival where the men of Mongolia take part in Mongolian wrestling, horse racing and archery.

**Take me there: Mongolia & the Naadam Festival, 24 days from \$10,320pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**



## #4 SPEND AN EVENING AMONG MONKS, JAPAN

Stay overnight in a shukubo (Buddhist temple lodge) in Koyasan, Japan. Spend the evening relaxing and reflecting in a traditional onsen (hot spring bath), then awake in the morning to the sounds of chanting monks. You will enjoy the peacefulness and serenity that comes with stepping off the beaten path.

**Take me there: Discover Japan, 14 days from \$9,520pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**

**Early Bird Special on sale now**, save \$900pp on this tour and enjoy this experience

## #5 EXPLORE THE BIZARRE PLAIN OF JARS, LAOS

Giant stone jars are scattered across the plains surrounding Phonsavan, Laos. With an unknown origin and mysterious history, many ask the question, how did they get there? Were they made to brew large quantities of rice wine, or use as kilns, no one knows, but they are well worth a visit.

**Take me there: Highlights of Laos, 14 days from \$5,045pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, & Adl**  
**Take me there: Highlights of Laos, 14 days from \$4,725pp twin share, departing Per**



### #6 TAKE A BULLOCK CART IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA

A bullock cart is one of rural India's most popular means of transportation. Climb aboard the cart which is pulled by oxen, and travel just as the Rajasthani people do. You might be hard pushed to find another tourist taking a bullock cart around Rajasthan its certainly a different way to get around.

**Take me there: Vibrant India, 16 days from \$5,480pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**  
**Early Bird Special on sale now**, save \$800pp on this tour and enjoy this experience



### #7 WITNESS A SPIRITUAL PUJA CEREMONY, SRI LANKA

The Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil Temple in Jaffna, is one of the most significant Hindu religious complexes in Sri Lanka. Witness locals making offerings to its sacred deity, Murugan, in a spiritual Puja ceremony.

**Take me there: Add a Jaffna extension to any Sri Lanka tour, just speak to our reservations team for details**

### #8 TAKE A HIKE THROUGH THE RICE TERRACES OF SAPA, VIETNAM

Northern Vietnam conjures up images of lush green mountains, and traditional Vietnamese hill tribes. Take a hike through the spectacular valleys and make sure you have your camera ready!

**Take me there: Reflections of Vietnam, 17 days from \$3,940pp twin share, departing Syd & Mel**

**Take me there: Reflections of Vietnam, 17 days from \$4,170pp twin share, departing Per**  
**Early Bird Special on sale now**, save \$500pp on this tour and enjoy this experience



### #9 PLAY MAHJONG WITH LOCALS IN BEIJING, CHINA

Mahjong is a traditional Chinese game that you will find locals playing across Beijing, on street corners, in laneways or in parks. Have a chat, pull up a stool and have a go, we can't guarantee that you will beat them though.

**Take me there: Magnificent China, 22 days from \$5,480pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**

**Early Bird Special on sale now**, save \$800pp on this tour and enjoy this experience

### #10 STARE IN AWE AT THE TOWERING HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS, POKHARA, NEPAL

So this one might not be off too far from the usual tourist trail, but we think it's well worth the visit... Pokhara sits on the banks of Phewa Lake, surrounded by the stunning Annapurna and Manaslu ranges of the mighty Himalayas. The lake provides the perfect mirror, reflecting the surrounding towering mountains and spectacular scenery.

**Take me there: Himalayan Adventure, 20 days from \$8,780pp twin share, departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per**



**SO WHERE DO YOU WANT  
TO HEAD TO IN 2017?**





# EXPLORE GARDENS BY THE BAY IN SINGAPORE



Featuring more than one million plants from more than 5,000 species, Gardens by the Bay, Singapore showcases the best of horticulture, sustainability and architectural design. It is a must-see on any visit to Singapore, filled with wonders from around the world.

## **FLOWER DOME**

Awarded by Guinness World Record, the World's Largest Glass Greenhouse – Flower Dome houses unique plants from 5 continents – Asia, Europe, Africa, America and Australia. The wide array of plants are featured in replicated cool and dry Mediterranean climate and semi-arid subtropical regions of the world in 9 different gardens – Baobabs and Bottle Trees, Succulent Garden, Australian Garden, South African Garden, South American Garden, California Garden, Mediterranean Garden, Olive Grove and Changing Flower Field Display. The vivid floral displays on the Flower Field are refreshed periodically to bring ever-changing horticultural experiences to visitors.

## **CLOUD FOREST**

The Flower Dome sits alongside the 0.8-hectare Cloud Forest. A mysterious world veiled in mist, surrounded by over 60,000 plants and floral gems from the Tropical Montane regions. Be amazed as you come face-to-face with the world's tallest indoor waterfall at 35 metres! Go on a trek behind the waterfall and enjoy the refreshing cool air and majestic views of the waterfall below. Descend through the surreal mist-veiled Cloud Walk and explore the 7 discovery zones – Cloud Walk, Lost World, Waterfall View, Crystal Mountain, Earth Check, +5 Degrees and Secret Garden. Unlike most temperate greenhouses which have a

# “Top 10 Indoor Gardens of the World”

– FoxNews.com



**Take me there!**

**Add a Singapore stopover to many Wendy Wu Tours**

**3 days from \$420<sub>pp</sub>**  
twin share

Including 2 nights accommodation, breakfast daily and Gardens by the Bay entry.

Gardens by the Bay – illuminated at night

warm interior, the Flower Dome and Cloud Forest are climate-controlled in a sustainable, energy-efficient manner to provide a cool environment that brings forth the concept of perpetual spring in the tropics.

## **OCBC SKYWAY & SUPERTREES**

At a height of 22 metres and surrounded by panoramic vistas of the Gardens and Marina Bay skyline, this 128-metre long aerial walkway is an experience not to be missed. During the day, a stroll along the OCBC Skyway presents glorious photo-taking opportunities to capture the scenic beauty of the surrounding flora. As dusk falls, the captivating Marina Bay skyline emerges and the entire area comes alive nightly with the Garden Rhapsody – a free light and sound show at 7.45pm and 8.45pm.



Baobabs

## “Avatar in real life: Singapore’s Gardens by the Bay”

– The Sydney Morning Herald



Cloud Forest – Waterfall at night

# Exploring the World's Greatest Monuments

**The Taj Mahal is renowned as the eternal monument to love and is high on the list of must-see's for most visitors to India. Travel writer and TV presenter Adam Ford took a while to feel the love on arrival at the Taj, but went on to enjoy a magical morning...**

The Indian official stationed at the West Gate peers at me, my cameraman, our minder and our precious paperwork with equal measures of suspicion. In preparation for filming here in India with Wendy Wu Tours, we have carefully dotted our 'i's' and crossed our 't's' with the relevant government departments, but as is always the case in India, expect the unexpected!

Our tour group has already been whisked inside the walled complex. Everyone is incredibly excited because today is the day we will see one of India's greatest treasures. Perhaps the greatest monument in history. Certainly the world's greatest monument to love. Today is the day we will finally see, the Taj Mahal.

As we hurry along the paved forecourt towards the Great Gate, there are already

hundreds of people milling about. We've arrived early to beat the crowds. So it seems has everyone else. Visitor numbers at the Taj Mahal can top 100,000 a day. But there's a sense of relaxed ease in the air, with many a shy smile in our direction. It's one of the greatest joys of travelling to India. Wherever you go the people are warm and welcoming.

When we left our hotel around 5.45am this morning a thick mist hung over Agra and there was much concern about whether our views of the monument would be impeded. We needn't have worried. The fog has lifted and we are bathed in soft morning light. It couldn't be more perfect.

It's difficult to describe your first sight of the Taj as you pass through the Great Gate and out onto a podium a metre or so high. The

mausoleum with its domed roof and four delicate minarets, sits perhaps two hundred metres away, but actually seems to float before you on the axis of the pure symmetry we've come to expect from the mighty Mughal emperors.

The Mughals ruled India for two centuries and left behind a legacy of grand monuments probably unsurpassed anywhere else in the world. On this nine-day tour of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur (known as the Golden Triangle) we will see many of them – beautiful Humayun's Tomb in Delhi (said to be the inspiration for the Taj Mahal itself), the solid strength of the Agra Fort and the





# It to Love, the Taj Mahal

majestic Tomb of Akbar the Great on the outskirts of Sikandra. But nothing compares with the shimmering splendor before us.

In the countless images you may have seen of the Taj Mahal, it looks like the building stands on its own. It doesn't. There are a number of other tombs and buildings, and a wall around the entire complex. The crowd flows down into the garden and along the path that follows a long, thin reflecting pool all the way to the square podium on which the mausoleum sits. Brightly coloured saris flap in the breeze, creating a kaleidoscope of vivid colour against the pristine white marble of the monument.

Our group spends the next couple of hours exploring the site at their own pace.

The Taj Mahal was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan around 1632 to 1653, to honour his beloved third wife Mumtaz Mahal who died giving birth to their 14th child. While she would have known that a monument would be built in her honour in the event of her death, it strikes me as incredibly sad that Mumtaz never saw the timeless tribute that would immortalise her name.

Shah Jahan was later imprisoned by his own son in the nearby Agra Fort until his death in 1666. His cell offered only a distant view of his prized creation.

Today the spirit of Shah Jahan's love for Mumtaz lives on. Young lovers stroll hand

in hand around the grounds, while families pose proudly for photos. Up on the main podium young girls laugh as young men leap in the air, curling their legs up behind them for that perfect selfie floating on air. It's absolutely charming.

As we head back out through the West Gate we pass the same official. He eyes our camera and gives me an inquisitive look. I nod. Yes, all good, thank you. To my surprise he gives me a wide smile before returning to his duties. Love is in the air at the Taj, even at the gate as it turns out.

*Adam Ford is a travel TV presenter, writer, blogger, commentator and editor of The Big Bus tour and travel guide.*

**Take me there!**

**Golden Triangle**

**9 days** from **\$3,580<sup>pp</sup>**  
twin share

**Save \$400pp Early Bird Special**

Fully inclusive departing  
Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per

Discover the contrasts of Old and New Delhi, watch the sunrise over the Taj Mahal then explore the beautiful palaces and architecture of Jaipur.

# CHINA! THE WENDY WU WAY

By Carle King



Carle & Betty King  
in Beijing



Carle King  
on the Great Wall of China

We've gathered together our little group  
From various parts of the world  
To visit China the Wendy Wu way  
As slowly the country unfurled

Now who's the one responsible  
For controlling this rag-tag team  
It's charming Ruby our mother duck  
She's the best! – if you know what I mean

For if ever there is a problem  
She's there to sort it all out  
If ever there is a question  
She'll answer it – or else she'll find out

We first visited the Great Wall of China  
And heard how it all came to be  
This was followed by the Summer Palace  
Now open for everyone to see

Next an overnight train to Xian  
For the Terracotta Warriors – naturally  
Thousands were smashed, some now repaired  
Put on a show for just you and me

For we sailed along part of the Yangtze  
Greatest river that China loves most  
We've visited the Hydro, gone up the locks  
It's a project this country can boast

We departed the boat – our next highlight to have  
In Chengdu for the Great Panda bears  
A national treasure of this fair land  
Fear of extinction raised great many hairs

The Stone Forrest area of Kunming  
Was our next unusual – right?  
Millennia ago it was good ol'e sea bed  
Now weathered it's a spectacular sight.

Hangzhou is the playground of Shanghainese  
Who love West Lake for its water and trees  
Suzhou is popular for its gardens supreme  
Have you seen them? They're just the bees' knees

We've seen Bell Towers, Drum Towers, Pagodas  
Temples and city lights as well  
Together with old parts of cities  
This trip of China's been swell

And now the last stop has finally arrived  
Shanghai – I'm afraid there's no more  
This bustling, flourishing former "Paris of the East"  
Has ended an eye opening tour

**Take me there!**

## Grand Tour of China

**26 days** from **\$6,080<sup>pp</sup>**  
twin share

**Save \$800pp Early Bird Special**

Fully inclusive departing  
Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per

This wide-ranging tour has China's top  
destinations covered, including all that  
Mr King discovered on his trip.

We hope you enjoy this lovely poem by Mr King, as much as we did. Do you want to get involved? Send your stories, poems, photos and videos through to:

[chinesewhispers@wendywutours.com.au](mailto:chinesewhispers@wendywutours.com.au)

You may just find yourself in our next edition.

West Lake, Hangzhou

# SIZZLING SICHUAN



Home to towering peaks, fertile plains and swathes of verdant forest, the Sichuan Province in China's southwest is known for its fiery cuisine and awe-inspiring beauty as well as being the natural home of the lackadaisical Giant Panda. Being China's second largest province, there is so much to see and do, so if you've been to China once before, Sichuan is the perfect choice for a second visit.

## THE BEAR NECESSITIES

The Giant Panda has taken its place in the hearts of both the Chinese and people around the world as everyone's favourite bear. Native to a few of the mountain ranges of central China, particularly Sichuan, due to development and deforestation, pandas have become a conservation reliant endangered species. There are now several panda conservation centres available to visit both in Chengdu and the surrounds, offering more in-depth interactions. You will also have the opportunity to see another of China's native species, the Red Panda. Whilst they do share a name the Giant Panda and the Red Panda aren't closely related but both are equally fun to watch.

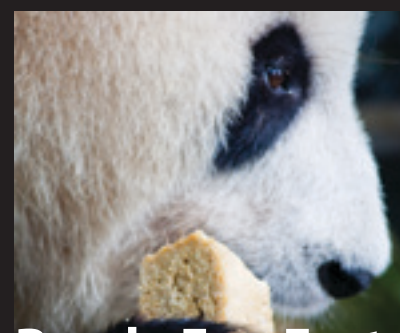
## NINE VILLAGES VALLEY

Any visit to Sichuan would not be the same without a few days spent exploring the incredible World Heritage listed Jiuzhaigou National Park (or sometimes known as the Nine Villages Valley).

The park is named for the nine Tibetan villages that call it home. Encircled by snow-capped peaks, this unique region of blue-toned lakes, rushing waterfalls and thick forest is not only visually spectacular but also filled with diverse flora and fauna.

## HOT POT

In a recent tourism survey, a staggering 70 per cent of respondents revealed that the main reason they travelled to the city was to taste Chengdu's renowned gourmet food. Sichuan cuisine is probably the most well known in China and is famous for its hot spicy taste and the flavour of the Sichuan pepper. The Hot Pot is its most famous dish. It consists of a simmering metal pot with broth at the centre of a table, and all raw ingredients placed beside the metal pot, so people can add and cook whatever they like in the broth. It's a great way to socialise as well as clearing the head with the mix of herbs and spices.



## Panda Fun Facts

### DID YOU KNOW?

A Giant Panda at birth is 900 times smaller than its mother weighing on average, just 100 grams.

A Giant Panda's diet is almost exclusively bamboo.

There are only about 1,600 pandas left in the wild, living in areas in Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

## OUR TOP 3 IN SICHUAN PROVINCE



Giant Pandas



Spicy cuisine



Jiuzhaigou National Park

Take me there!

## Sichuan Explorer

16 days from \$4,880<sub>pp</sub>  
twin share

Departing Syd, Mel, Bne & Per

See the Giant Pandas, explore Jiuzhaigou National Park and Mount Emei and stare in awe at the Leshan Grand Buddha.

# 48 hours in Lhasa

Lhasa is one of the highest cities in the world at 3,490m above sea level and is known as the 'rooftop of the world'. Lhasa is not only Tibet's capital, but its heart and soul. With century's long history, unique culture and isolated location surrounded by the world's highest mountains, it is no wonder that Lhasa has maintained an air of mystique.

Kirsty Small, Product Manager at Wendy Wu Tours shares how to best make the most of your time in Tibet's capital.

"The mystical land of Tibet has always been on my list of top five places I want to visit. Lhasa in particular held my interest, with the towering Potala Palace, the whitewashed Old Tibetan Quarter and the Buddhist monks in their saffron robes praying in the many temples located in the holy city. I recently had the opportunity to spend a couple of days exploring Lhasa and it lived up to every expectation!"

## Day One

### MORNING

This morning begin your exploration of Lhasa at the spectacular **Potala Palace**, the largest monastery in the world. As well as being the political, educational and religious centre of Tibet, it was also the winter residence of the Tibetan Dalai Lama. Located at the top of the Red Mountain, the Palace was built in the 7th century and is composed of the White Palace and Red Palace. To reach the Palace, you must climb over 1,000 steps but it is truly remarkable once you get to the top! Since the Palace was abandoned in 1950, it is more of a museum but it's well worth wandering through the different rooms and admiring the views over the city.

### LUNCH

Sample a traditional family meal and enjoy the warm local hospitality at the **Tibetan Family Kitchen** near Barkhor Square.

### AFTERNOON

Continue your exploration of **Barkhor Square**, which leads to the **Jokhang Temple**, the most revered religious structure in Lhasa. Pilgrims from all over Tibet come to Barkhor Square to perform the kora (walking clockwise around a sacred spot as a type of pilgrimage) around the square. Spend some time following the pilgrims while they complete their kora. The traditionally dressed pilgrims will circle the temple at least three times, while holding their rosaries and prayer wheels and chanting a mantra. In contrast,

Barkhor Square is also a great shopping area, selling souvenirs such as prayer beads and wheels, carpets, cowboy hats and thangkas. The pilgrims then make their way to Jokhang Temple to pray. It is crowded with devoted pilgrims, but it is an experience not to be missed! The temple was constructed to house a sacred image of Buddha. Though the temple has been expanded over the years, the centre of the temple is still the original from the 7th century.

### EVENING

Take in the sights and sounds at a **Tibetan folk show**. The costumes are extraordinarily colourful and you will hear folk songs and see a traditional dance performance.



Jokhang Temple



Kirsty Small, Product Manager



Locals in Lhasa



Potala Palace

## Day Two

### MORNING

Begin your day at **Drepung Monastery**, located approximately 8km outside of Lhasa. Once one of the world's largest monasteries, it was once home to over 10,000 monks. Founded in 1416 by a monk called Jamyang Chöje, the monastery suffered some damage throughout the years but there is still so much to see. It resembles a small village, and you can wander the narrow lanes.

### LUNCH

Stop to taste some Yak butter tea at **Makye Ame**, a famous teahouse that serves traditional Tibetan food.

### AFTERNOON

Continue to **Sera Monastery**, located 5km outside of Lhasa. A renowned seat of

Buddhist learning, Sera is home to several hundred monks from different parts of Tibet. Time your arrival in the afternoon in order to view the unique debates held in the outside courtyards. As part of the monks training, the senior and junior monks are teamed together. Standing, the senior monks fire questions at the seated junior monks, usually followed by a dramatic hand slap. The hand slap indicates that it is time for the junior monk to respond. The debates usually last 1.5 hours and seeing this was one of the many highlights for me in Lhasa!

### EVENING

Dine at **Snowland Restaurant** where you can enjoy a range of Tibetan, Nepalese and western food. The Nepalese pizza is especially popular! Enjoy a drink at one of the

bars in town and toast to your adventures on "the roof of the world"!

### Top Tip

The air was noticeably thinner, but not uncomfortable. Some people can suffer from headaches and sleep poorly, so it is important to remember to drink lots of water and avoid caffeine and, if possible, allow some rest time to get used to the high altitude on your first day in the city.

### Take me there!

#### China & Tibet Discovery

**16 days from \$6,480<sub>pp</sub>**  
twin share

**Save \$400pp Early Bird Special**

Fully inclusive departing  
Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per

Journey to the "roof of the world" to uncover the mysteries of Tibet in the incredible city of Lhasa whilst enjoying the very best cultural, historical and natural treasures that China has to offer.

#### Tibetan Wonders

**24 days from \$7,540<sub>pp</sub>**  
twin share

**Save \$600pp Early Bird Special**

Departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per

Journey through the diverse landscapes of Yunnan province up to 'the roof of the world' where you will experience the many wonders of Tibet, including Lhasa.



# YOU'RE IN SAFE HANDS...

Are you a group travel organiser or a member of a local club or society?



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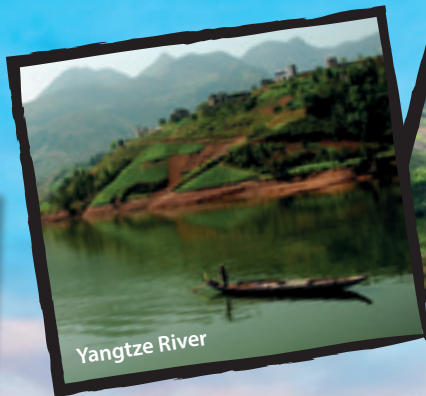
or email

[specialgroups@wendywutours.com.au](mailto:specialgroups@wendywutours.com.au)

# LET US GUIDE YOU

Tony Li...

We've been lucky enough to catch up with one of our favourite National Escorts in China, Tony Li, who has shared with us his favourite experiences, places to visit and some useful tips for those of you who haven't yet visited this vast and intriguing country.



Yangtze River



Guilin

## What do you enjoy the most about being a National Escort?

There are many plus points to being a National Escort. Not only is it great to share my country with so many people and see them enjoy the trip of a lifetime, but I also love learning and understanding about my clients' and their way of life. It's often a lesson for us both – they learn about my homeland and I learn about theirs while I spend time with them on tour. I'm always meeting different people and it's taught me a lot about other cultures.

## Where do you like visiting in China the most?

The list could go on and on, but nothing beats the classic sights. In particular I love Xian, Guilin and relaxing on the Yangtze River – this is always enjoyable as it breaks up what can be a jam-packed tour and re-energises you for the next part of the adventure. I also find that many people in the group really bond whilst on the boat which is lovely to see.

## What's your favourite local Chinese dish?

Anything with eggplant. Many people don't realise that in China, we have a huge variety of tasty vegetable dishes – and they're so fresh! I'd recommend trying as many of these when in China. But my all-time favourite has to be my Mum's prawn dumplings!

## What tips would give to anyone who's thinking about visiting China?

Have a positive attitude and just go with it; China will be nothing like what you're used to, but just soak it all up and enjoy the madness, the culture, the interesting history and the beautiful scenery we have here – then you'll really enjoy it and appreciate what a wonderful thing it is to travel. Take everything as a different and new experience, smile and enjoy the company of your group.



Prawn dumplings

Take me there!

**Wonders of China**  
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This tour is the perfect introduction to China, showcasing the must-see sights including the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors.

# Customer Corner

## The Floating Mountains of Zhangjiajie

By Cheryl McEwin

**Heading off the beaten track, Cheryl and Narelle, wanted to experience a different side of China. They wanted to see first-hand, the natural beauty that is dotted across this magical country. They wanted to see the floating mountains and cascading waterfalls of Zhangjiajie National Forest Park... and so they did...**

Zhangjiajie National Forest Park covers 11,900 acres in northern Hunan Province and was the jewel in the crown of our 4 week independent journey through China. Due to the forest's size, and its often unpredictable weather, we were not sure if three days would be enough to explore all the mountains, waterfalls, forests, caves, and lakes, but we planned to try our best to see it all – rain, hail, snow or shine! And on day one, rain it did! Undaunted, and with raincoats pulled up over our heads, my friend Narelle, our ever smiling guide Amanda and I walked the short distance from our hotel to the park and what greeted us was absolutely stunning. Through the rain and mist the winding path led into lush forests filled with huge quartz sandstone pillars rising up into the clouds.

We rode the incredibly fast 1,000 foot tall glass Bailong Elevator which has been built clinging to the side of the cliff. The Elevator took us up Hallelujah Mountain, which is said to be the inspiration for the Floating

Mountains in the movie "Avatar". When we arrived at the top, we could see why the huge pillars were such an inspiration as they appeared in and out of the heavy mist, leaving us awe-struck each time.

Our second day included a two hour walk and boat ride through the truly massive Yellow Dragon Cave, which was stunningly beautiful. Inside the huge underground chambers we climbed the 3,000 steps, which wound their way past tall, ancient stalagmites and stalactites, 50 metre high waterfalls, crystal clear rock pools and lakes, all very colourfully lit. The path was at times wet, steep and narrow, but careful footwork, "ducking down" and "sucking in", ensured this was a truly memorable walk through an unbelievable cave.

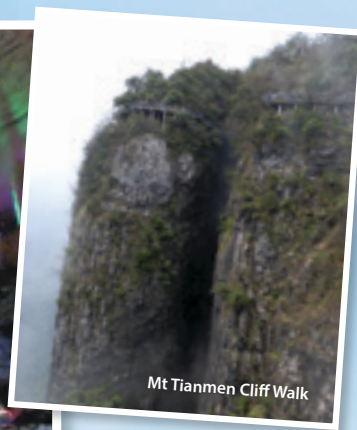
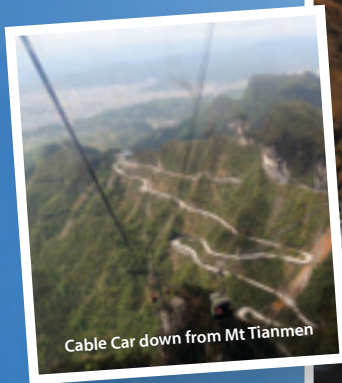
After leaving this magical place we were treated to a peaceful boat ride on Baofeng Lake and were serenaded by Tujia minority people, who sang love songs as we floated across the lake on traditional boats.

Day three finally arrived! It was the one we had been looking forward to the most and at last the weather cleared and we could not contain our joy. As there was a 3 hour wait for the cable car, we decided to board the bus and head up to Mt Tianmen via a winding, twisting road and when we first sighted Heaven's Gate through the bus window, we were like kids in a candy store. This breathtaking hole in the mountain with 999 steps leading up, was waiting there for us to climb. And climb it we did, laughing and joking with an elderly Chinese family we met on the steep stairway. It took us an hour or so to ascend the stairs and the view from the top down into the valley was simply jaw dropping.

Once reaching Heaven's Gate, we realised that we were only part way to the top of Mt Tianmen and we had to continue our journey riding five, very long escalators, which have been built inside the mountain. An impressive feat on its own! Once at the very top we strolled along the amazing cliff top







path which weaved its way along the very edge of the mountain, across bridges, along glass walkways and provided breathtaking panoramas of the dense forests, waterfalls, and gorges.

After spending an entire day discovering one of the most magnificent National Parks in the world we descended down the incredibly long and steep cable car, which gave us breathtaking views of the mountains and surrounding valley.

We returned to the stunning township where we were staying, nestled amongst the mountains and streams and wished that we had more time to spend in this truly beautiful part of China. Words and photos do not truly capture the magnificence of this National Park. A return trip is definitely something we would love to do.

**Take me there!**

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Departing Syd, Mel, Bne, Adl & Per

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Zhangjiajie

# HEAD TO HEAD

## CAMBODIA VS LAOS

TWO OF SOUTHEAST ASIA'S LESS-TRAVELLED NATIONS COME TO BLOWS  
IN A CLASH OF TEMPLES VERSUS TRANQUILLITY...



### CULTURE

Cambodia's culture is built on the magnificent Khmer civilisation of old – their creations, the temples of Angkor, have become a symbol of national identity. Despite the horrors brought by the Khmer Rouge, the Cambodian people remain welcoming and optimistic, with an unsurpassed warmth and hospitality, whilst cities exude both colonial charisma and modern sophistication.

### ATTRACTIONS

You'd have had to have been asleep in a cave for the past decade to have missed the rise to fame of the temples of Angkor. Exuding a majesty and mystery that few places can match, the temples are unmissable but Cambodia has so much more to offer. In Phnom Penh admire the gleaming Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda and uncover tragic history at Tuol Sleng and the Killing Fields, whilst Sihanoukville (and its

islands) is Southeast Asia's up-and-coming beach destination.

### FOOD

Sandwiched between two great foodie nations, Thailand and Vietnam, it isn't a surprise that Khmer cuisine is similar to both. Less spicy and flavoured with lemongrass and coriander, popular dishes include amok, a fish mousse steamed in a banana leaf, and Cambodian crab with Kampot pepper. You may see some unusual snacks when you are out and about (fried tarantulas for example!) and baguettes and pâté, a legacy of the French. Dinner should be washed down with an Angkor beer.

### SHOPPING

Most shopping in Cambodia is done in the atmospheric markets, where stalls groan under the weight of cottons, silks, silver and trinkets. The Russian Market in Phnom Penh is particularly good. In recent years, thanks to the intervention of NGOs, local handicrafts are becoming better and more prominent, plus buying them contributes money to good causes.



### Conclusion

It is so hard to choose between these two beautiful countries – Cambodia has headlining temples, beaches and both a fascinating and haunting past, whilst Laos offers a glimpse of the Southeast Asia of times gone by, with a wonderful sense of peace and great diversity of people.

### CULTURE

A long isolation from the world has meant that Laos has retained the quaint, old-fashioned charm and slow pace of life lost in many of its neighbours. The culture here is very much ruled by Buddhism, with many beautiful and elaborate temples to explore, but up amongst the colourful tribes of the Laos' hill country, traditional beliefs and rituals reign supreme.



### ATTRACTIONS

Laos' laidback vibe makes it a pleasure to explore. Luang Prabang is one of Asia's most captivating destinations, with a rich heritage, beautiful temples and an enduring French legacy. Visiting the hilltribes of the beautiful north offers a glimpse into a different lifestyle or you can contemplate the mysteries of the Plain of Jars. For a thoroughly Laos experience head to Si Phan Don (10,000 Islands), sprawled across the Mekong where life doesn't get much faster than snail's pace.

### FOOD

Laos food is fiery, fragrant, spicy, bitter and relatively unknown to the rest of the world; some Laos foods are even wrongly credited

to Thailand. Most dishes feature sticky rice and this is eaten by hand – you use a lump of it to mop up the other dishes. Prominent flavours include lemongrass, chilli, galangal and padek (a fermented fish paste) which feature in the most popular dishes like laap, a salad of minced meat, and mok pa, fish steamed in banana leaf. Beer Laos is the perfect companion for any meal but for those looking for a stronger tipple, give lao-lao, a native rice whiskey, a taste.

### SHOPPING

Laos is a land full of handcraft goods, many made by the ethnic minority hill tribes. The best place to buy is directly from the maker in their village, but plenty find their way down to the markets of the more touristy destinations. Luang Prabang's night market is excellent (for food too!) – here you can pick up handmade baskets, utensils, and textiles.



Take me there!

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Unveiled

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[Wendywutours.com.au/blog](http://Wendywutours.com.au/blog)



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