

Highlights include:

- * the imperial gardens in Beijing's Forbidden City and the nearby Summer Palace, the home of China's last empress*
- * the famous scholar gardens of Suzhou, the "Venice of China"*
- * Sichuan Province's unique gardens and beautiful natural landscapes*
- * archaeological sites of a recently-discovered ancient culture centered near Jinsha, Sichuan Province*
- * a tea reception and private visit with Ye Yushan, one of China's most eminent sculptors and a benefactor of the Seattle Chinese Garden*
- * Chengdu's Panda Experiment Station*
- * temple gardens on a mountain sacred to Buddhism*
- * a spectacular gallery of Buddhist sculptures carved into cliffs overlooking a lush tropical forest*
- * a UNESCO World Heritage site – Lijiang, an ancient small city set among snow-topped mountains in wild Yunnan Province*

Note: A national guide accompanies us during the entire trip.

----- Itinerary -----

April 1 Depart Seattle on a non-stop flight to Beijing (Meals aloft)

April 2 Arrival in **Beijing**. We are met by our national guide, who escorts us to the **Prime Hotel**, located near Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the luxury shopping district. After a short rest, we are escorted to dinner. (D)

April 3 Beijing. A guided tour of the 600- year- old **Forbidden City** – China's foremost icon of its imperial past - including the newly renovated garden courtyards and the fabulous Clock Museum. Lunch is at a venue near **Beihei Park**, once an imperial garden of the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan. After a leisurely stroll in Beihei, we visit the **Guan Fu Museum**, a privately-owned, recently-opened display of the unique architecture and decorations of old Beijing and its rapidly disappearing *hutong* districts. Dinner is at the **Dazhaimen Restaurant**, owned by the family who were chefs to the last emperor, where we taste imperial cuisine in a setting of

authentic Qing-era furniture and décor. After dinner, we view the former **Olympic Games site**, where building lights sparkle in the night sky. (BLD)

April 4 Beijing/Chengdu. In the morning, we visit the **Summer Palace** on the outskirts of Beijing, the favorite retreat of the last empress, Xici. We enjoy hillside pavilions with sweeping views, take a **boat ride on the famous central lake**. After lunch, we take a 2 hour, 40 minute flight from Beijing to Chengdu, the ancient, cultural heart of Sichuan Province. We are escorted to the **Buddha Zen Hotel**, an intimate hotel built around a unique, Zen-themed courtyard; dinner is in the **Kuanxiangzi Alley**, one of Chengdu's most authentic and atmospheric districts, filled with courtyards, shops and teahouses. (BLD)

April 5 Chengdu. We visit the **Panda Experiment Station** early, when the pandas and red pandas usually are most active. The grounds of the Station have recently been renovated into naturalistic landscapes; if the timing is right, we may see cubs in the panda nursery! Late in the morning, we visit the **Yi Garden**, an exquisite, private enclave that houses a restaurant well-known for its traditional Sichuan cuisine. After lunch there, we view the **Jinsha Site Museum**, where artifacts from a mysterious culture of ancient Sichuan are displayed among stunning ground laid out to evoke an imperial garden. Then it is on to visit sculptor **Ye Yushan** and his private exhibition hall; Mr. Ye also has a private garden with egrets in a natural setting. (BLD)

April 6 Chengdu/Leshan/Emeishan. We leave Chengdu in the morning for a 1 hour, 30 minute trip by motor coach through the lush Sichuan landscape; at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Leshan, we **board a river boat** to view the **230-foot high Buddha** carved into a red sandstone cliff towering over the confluence of three mighty rivers. Then we stroll atop the cliff to visit temple gardens. After lunch, we take a 1 hour, 30 minute journey to visit **Mount Emei**, a mountain sacred to Buddhism that has stunning landscapes and a palette of plants more diverse than does the entire British Isles. We visit the **Baoguo Temple** and its gardens and then arrive at the spacious **Emeishan Hot Springs Hotel**, site of several famous hot springs. (BLD)

April 7 Emeishan/ Chengdu. Visit temples and natural areas on **Mount Emei** during the day, then travel back to Chengdu and the Zen Buddha Hotel to enjoy dinner at a hot pot restaurant. (BLD)

April 8 Chengdu. In the morning we visit a charming garden dedicated to China's most revered poet, **Du Fu's Thatched Hut**; there we take a private tour led by the garden's director of horticulture. In the afternoon we visit a **Landowner's Mansion** outside Chengdu; we seem to step back in time to 1949, when the landowning family abandoned the mansion, leaving everything as it was on the day they fled. We visit with the landowner's brother, who had been a war lord in the years before the Revolution. We return to Chengdu for dinner and a performance of the **Sichuan Opera**; afterwards we are taken back stage to see the **opera stars** and their amazing costumes. (BLD)

April 9 Chengdu/Dazu/Chongqing. We take a 1 hour, 30 minute motor coach trip through lovely countryside to Dazu, arriving for lunch at the atmospheric and traditional **China Tea Mansion**. **Dazu** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a twelfth century outdoors temple, featuring Buddhist religious figures carved into cliffs above a beautiful valley filled with many varieties of

subtropical trees. After visiting **Dazu**, we continue on a 1 hour, 30 minute journey to **Chongqing**, Seattle's sister-city, and the vibrant, modern heart of Sichuan Province. Our accommodations are at the **Hongyadong Hotel**, a small complex built into the cliffs above the Yangzi River that includes lovely new-style garden courtyards and a shopping district. (BLD)

April 10 Chongqing/Lijiang. This morning we visit the new **Three Gorges Museum**, a modern, strikingly-designed repository of artworks and historical artifacts associated with cultures that have flourished in Sichuan Province for over three thousand years. We lunch at a famous vegetarian restaurant housed in the thousand-year-old **Arhat Temple**, then visit the **Stillwell Museum** – dedicated to General Joseph W. Stillwell, who used the building as his headquarters in the China Theater during World War II. After dinner, we take a 1 hour, 10 minute flight to the mountain city of Lijiang; accommodations are at the **Wang Fu Mansion** – a small hotel located downtown that combines full modern conveniences with charming traditional Yunnan décor. (BLD)

April 11 Lijiang. Local guides take us through mountain landscapes to **Baisha Village**, where we meet **Dr. Ho Shi Xiu**, an internationally recognized expert on traditional Chinese medicine. Dr Ho speaks excellent English and will greet us as we tour his new **Traditional Medicine Museum**. We also visit the remote village **Yuhu**, former **home of Joseph Rock**, the famed plant hunter, explorer and photographer who lived in this botanical paradise during the 1920s and 30s. We return to Lijiang for lunch, then tour **Black Dragon Pool Park** and a **museum that honors the customs and folk art of the Naxi, the local minority people**. For dinner, we enjoy a traditional Naxi dinner and then enjoy **Naxi Old Band Show**. (BLD)

April 12 Lijiang. Free day to discover wonderful **Lijiang Old Town**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that features 350 marble foot-bridges crossing the three streams that flow through the town. A photographer's paradise, Old Town is full of shops, history and the traditions of the Naxi people. Discover your own fabulous restaurants for lunch and dinner – or the local guides can make recommendations. (B)

April 13 Lijiang/Suzhou This morning we take a four-hour flight to Shanghai Airport. At the airport we board a motor coach for a one hour, 30 minute journey to **Suzhou**, a beautiful city featuring canals and picturesque temples and bridges. Our Suzhou accommodations are in the traditionally-decorated **Garden View Hotel**, situated next to a canal; after dinner, we attend an evening of **music and entertainment at Suzhou's famed Master of Nets Garden**. (BLD)

April 14 Suzhou. Suzhou is China's most renowned garden city; today we sample the best gardens and sights that Suzhou has to offer. We start at the **Humble Administrator's Garden** and then take a peek at a silk factory to see how silk is processed and shop in a showroom that displays samples from all 27 local silk factories. After lunch, we visit the superb **Lingering Garden** and the little-known **Ou Garden**. (BLD)

April 15 Suzhou. We visit the **Embroidery Institute**, set in a rockery-filled garden, to see how its fabulous double-side embroidery is produced. The **Blue Pavilion**, one of Suzhou's most ancient gardens, is next. In the afternoon, we visit **Tiger Hill**, Suzhou's unique public park with its famous 15th century **Leaning Pagoda**, large *penjing* (Chinese bonsai) collection and tea garden. The day concludes with a restful **boat ride on the canals of Suzhou**. (BLD).

April 16 Suzhou/Shanghai. Today we take a two hour motor coach journey to Shanghai. On the way we stop by a small "water town," **Qibao**, to see the traditional lifestyle of rural people. After lunch we continue to Shanghai and arrive at the **Nan Xin Ya Hotel**, located near People's Park and the Nanjing shopping mall. There is free time this afternoon for strolling through **Shanghai's bustling streets and shops**. After dinner, we attend the **world-famous Shanghai Acrobats Show**. (BLD)

April 17 Shanghai. This morning we visit the 400 year old **Yu Garden** in the heart of Shanghai, with its fantastic "dragon" walls; just outside the garden lie a 15th century tea house and a traditional-looking mall for last-minute shopping. After lunch, we tour the famed **Shanghai Museum**, home to the Shang bronzes and some of China's most treasured works of art. Dinner is at **Yi Old Station Restaurant**, where converted railroad cars that once belonged to Sun Yat-Sen sit among landscaped grounds and serve as dining rooms.(BLD)

April 18 Shanghai. We travel back to Seattle; due to the time changes, we arrive home in Seattle on the same day, April 18, at 11:40 a.m. **Welcome Home!**

HOTELS: each hotel is 4 stars plus and has been chosen for its comfort and amenities; each serves western-style breakfast buffets, as well as Chinese dishes. Our emphasis has been on selecting attractive accommodations with all the modern conveniences that also feature traditional regional décor.

B = Breakfast L = Lunch D = Dinner

---- Tour Costs ----

Prices are based on a group of 10-20 participants. (Tour size is limited to 20 individuals for a more enjoyable experience.)

\$ 3995 Land-only, per person, double occupancy. This includes accommodations (4 plus star hotels), all meals except one lunch and one dinner; air and ground transportation within China; and all entertainment, cultural and sightseeing events listed above. Gratuities and tips are not included.

Roundtrip international airfare

\$ 995 Economy Class (Estimated - fuel surcharges and new security measures may alter the price. Actual price confirmed by 11/1/2010)

Registration closes October 1, 2010

Terms: A non-refundable deposit of \$250 is collected at registration

Our tour operator, Interlake China Tours, does not accept credit cards

A visa is required to travel to China; current cost is \$187. 50; tour operator will send visa forms to tour participants

All payments are due by December 1, 2010

To register, please contact

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For more information on the itinerary, please contact

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