



INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL NEWS

SEPTEMBER 1999 *TOURS IN REVIEW*

Candid appraisals of group tours:

CHINA For anyone planning a trip to China, we highly recommend you travel with **China Plus, Inc.** (6360 LBJ Freeway, Ste. 100, Dallas, TX 75240; phone 888/868-8811 or 972/386-0188, or fax 972/386-0166, or e-mail chinaplus@netzero.net).

We returned May 10, '99, from a wonderful 19-day tour led by the owner of the firm, Chris Lee, and we were exceptionally pleased with the entire trip. Chris is an American citizen, but he was born in China and worked there for numerous years with CITS, the official Chinese tourist organization. He has been involved in travel in China for 20 years.

China Plus limits the size of each tour to a maximum of 16 people; there were only nine in our group. All of us felt extremely fortunate that we had chosen to go with this company.

Chris is a charming person with a great sense of humor. We felt very secure with him, and he demonstrated that he was satisfied with nothing but the best for us. Because of his previous connections with CITS, he is well acquainted with the local guides and has handpicked them for their English skills and knowledge of Chinese culture.

We stayed in superb 4- and 5-star hotels and cruised the Yangtze River for five nights on the *Victoria III* ship. All meals were included, with the exception of lunch and dinner the last two days in Hong Kong. All breakfasts were buffet style with wide choices of both Chinese and American food. Lunches and dinners were in fine restaurants that provided us a variety of delicious Chinese food.

Our itinerary included Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai, Suzhou, the Yangtze River, Guilin, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. We had been somewhat apprehensive about flights within China, but we were pleased to find relatively new planes on all our five flights within China and felt very safe.

The tour included a round-trip train ride between Shanghai and Suzhou, where we had a boat ride on the Grand Canal. We also took a large ferry down the Pearl River from Guangzhou to Hong Kong.

We were in Hong Kong when the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade occurred and were not affected by the protests. Throughout the entire trip, we encountered only friendliness from the Chinese people. Many approached us eager to try out their English. We felt very safe walking the streets, even at night.

All of China Plus' tours are accompanied by Chris or his wife, Ping. It was the personal attention that we received from Chris Lee that made this trip so special.

The cost of the entire trip, including round-trip airfare from the U.S., was about \$3,500.

We would be very happy to talk with anyone who would like more information about our tour with this fine company. We can be reached at 805/483-5763. Our son, Wayne, also went with us and, if we are not available, he would be glad to talk with you; his phone number is 805/986-1832.

— WARREN & MARIAN SHAW,
Oxnard, CA

CHINA After looking at 10 different tour companies and comparing itineraries, prices, meal plans and maximum numbers of tour members, I realized that **China Plus** (Dallas, TX), who offer tours with no more than 16 travelers per group, offered everything that I was looking for.

The company is run by Chris Lee and his wife, Ping. Chris leads approximately 10 tours each year and Ping leads two. Ping earned a B.A. in English in China and was then invited, in 1988, by Langston University in Oklahoma to be a visiting scholar. Chris was president of one of China's key tour companies and

in 1990 moved to the United States to be with his wife. After two years as a university financial aid counselor in Oklahoma, he started China Plus.

Chris led our group of nine. I departed on April 22, '99, to fly to Beijing. I live near San Francisco so had decided to fly Air China from SFO to Beijing; China Plus offered me a special business-class fare of \$1,200 (over the tour base price), an amazingly low price to fly that distance in business class. Business-class service was outstanding.

China Plus offers a 19-day tour ending in Hong Kong, with an option for a 17-day tour without Hong Kong. I had chosen the 17-day plan, as I had recently been to Hong Kong.

The nine of us had three nights in Beijing. We visited the Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Great Wall and Ming Tombs. We then flew to Xi'an for two nights, where visits included an interesting city wall and moat that completely encloses the old city, plus the History Museum and the amazing terra-cotta warriors.

Flying on to Shanghai for a 2-night stay, we visited the Children's Palace. This is an after-school institution for 3,000 high-ability elementary and high school students who take lessons in all forms of art, music and computers. Other sightseeing included the Bund (waterfront) area, the Yu Gardens in the Old City and the Jade Buddha Temple.

During one day in Shanghai we took a one-hour, first-class train ride to Suzhou. This small town reminds one of Venice. There are many beautiful canals and old homes with gardens and flowers throughout the boat ride.

From Shanghai we flew to Wuhan, where our Yangtze riverboat, the *Victoria III*, was waiting for us. This