
Come with us for a Wonderful Travel Adventure...

CHINA: Descendants of the Dragon

An Ancient Cultures, Timeless Faiths Tour
with MennoJerusalem Programs
October 5-24, 2012



1 Travel Day from North America

2 BEIJING

The majority of our group will arrive in Beijing by late afternoon. Upon arrival we will travel to our hotel and take some time to freshen up from the long flight. We will have our first meal together and have a brief orientation to each



other and our hosts. For those who want to stretch their legs we will venture out of the hotel for an orientation walk in the hotel area.

3 BEIJING

Attending a worship service in China is a special experience and on Sunday morning we will worship with Christians who meet at the Tongxian Church, outside of the city center (a Catholic worship option also will be planned). After the service we will have the opportunity to talk with Pastor Lu, who shepherds this congregation of thousands. During lunch we will meet with Pastor Wu Wei, who helps oversee all of the churches in Beijing. Pastor Wu is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary (Virginia). This is a great time to ask questions and receive first-hand information on the church in China today. Following lunch we will leave for the outskirts of Beijing

and spend some time at the Summer Palace, another large complex of buildings, temples, lakes, painted corridors, and ancient trees. On our way back into the city we will make a stop at the site where the 2008 Olympics were held; those who wish can enter the Olympic Stadium (The Bird's Nest).



After a bite to eat we will attend a colorful performance of Beijing opera specifically designed for foreign tourist tastes—i.e., not the usual 4-hour version!

4 BEIJING

After breakfast (almost all our hotel breakfasts will be buffet-style) our bus will take us into the Beijing traffic in the direction of Tiananmen Square, the center of the city and the site of many of China's most significant political events of the past 600 years. We will take a few minutes each morning in the bus to learn a few Chinese words or phrases that we will find helpful in shopping or engaging people. At the square we join the lines filing

through Chairman Mao Zedong's Mausoleum and then get a first-hand account of some of the dramatic events



that played themselves out here during May and June of 1989. Next we move into the emperor's

palace, commonly known in English as the Forbidden City. This enormous complex tends to be overwhelming, but there are also out-of-the-way spots, to reflect and take great photos.

When we exit the Forbidden City we will move on into a park (made famous by the last Ming Dynasty emperor who hanged himself there). The ambitious among us can climb a man-made hill for a great view of the Forbidden City (smog permitting)! After lunch we will take a short drive to the architecturally stunning Temple of Heaven,



one the oldest sites in the city. This is one of China's most sacred places with reference to religion and culture.

For those who are interested, we will make a stop at the Pearl Market, a place frequented by most Western tourists who come to Beijing.

5 BEIJING

An early morning two-hour drive will take us into the mountains outside of Beijing where we will make our ascent to the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall. There will be ample time for hiking, taking pictures, and enjoying the sights of one the world's oldest and most remarkable achievements. A cable car makes the ascent

and descent enjoyable and manageable. Following lunch at a nice countryside restaurant, we return to Beijing and spend some time wandering the narrow alleyways



(*hutongs*) in the area around Hou Lake. This is a great place to see what remains of the old city of Beijing. *If we haven't had a Beijing duck meal yet, we will definitely have it tonight!*

6 XI'AN

A morning flight of nearly two hours will bring us to China's ancient capital and the starting point of the Silk Road. For many centuries this was the greatest city in the world, all that remains are the many hills where emperors are buried, and significant archaeological digs. We will stay in the middle of the new city of Xi'an, a vibrant pulsing hub where the lights, energy, and noise never seem to end. After lunch you will have an opportunity to exercise your legs by riding a bike on top of the 19th century city wall that encircles the old city. This is a unique way to see the city as you bounce your way over the cobblestones.

After our bike ride (or walking is also an option) we will point out several neat shopping streets, and then head for the Muslim quarter to visit the grounds of one of China's oldest mosques. Muslim traders from the Middle East came to the area and we can see how they accommodated their religion and architecture to Chinese styles, in contrast to Catholic and Protestant churches. On our way out of the Muslim quarter we will wind our

way through a fascinating corridor of shops and markets to which you can return later and bargain for souvenirs.



An evening stroll through the colorful Tang Paradise Park, with temples, fountains, lights, and music, is a romantic experience and a photographer's heaven.

7 XI'AN

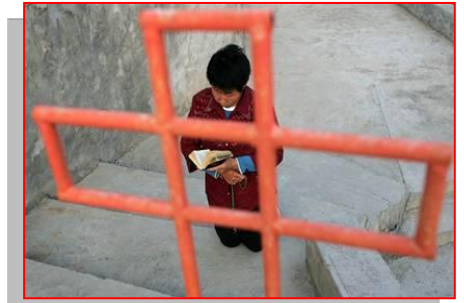
It takes about an hour to get out to the Terracotta Warriors Museum complex, one of the greatest historical sites in the world. Discovered in the 1970s,



the army of clay warriors that Emperor Qin buried with him in 220 BCE looks ready to march into battle.

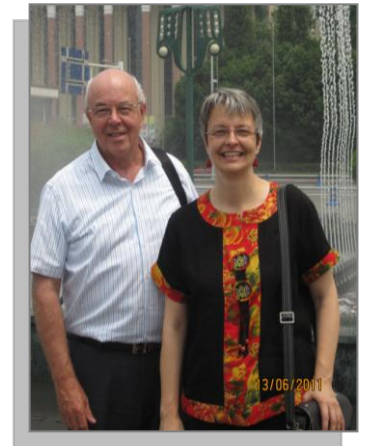
In the afternoon you will have an opportunity to choose from several different options. These include: visiting a Buddhist Temple complex (Big Goose Pagoda), or a museum of stone steles that contains the monument detailing the history of the first Christian missionaries to come to China. You can opt for more shopping and wandering the streets and markets.

After dinner you may join in a presentation and discussion on “*The Emergence of China and What It May Mean for North Americans.*”



8 CHENGDU

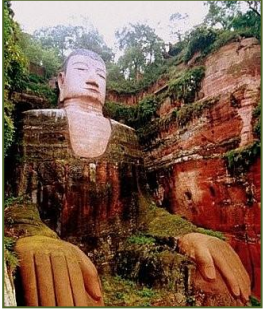
A morning flight of nearly two hours will take us further south and west to Chengdu, a city of about eight million and the capital of Sichuan Province. After checking into our hotel and having our first lunch of typical spicy Sichuan food (non-spicy also available), we will divide into small groups to explore the city. You will be given several options from which to choose and your guides will be local university students who are studying English and tourism. This will be a great opportunity for you to spend time with Chinese young people and hear about their lives and families. The students will take you to their favorite restaurant for dinner, after which you will return to the hotel. For those who would like to have a wonderfully relaxing massage, you will have the opportunity to do so during one of the evenings of our stay in Chengdu.



Glenn Edward Witmer with Jeanette Hanson, one of our co-leaders in Chengdu

9 CHENGDU / LESHAN

Today you will see some of the amazing Sichuan countryside as we take a nearly two-hour bus ride to the small city of Leshan (OK, so it has nearly a million people—but that's still small in China). Here you will



get up close and personal with the largest outdoor seated Buddha in the world, 71 meters tall!

We will also stop at Leshan Teachers College where you will have an opportunity to entertain university students

with stories of your family, jobs, and life experience, then return to Chengdu for dinner and a special performance of traditional song and dance presented by students from the Fine Arts College of Sichuan Normal University.

10 CHENGDU

Sichuan is home to the loveable pandas; since they are most active in the morning, we will begin our day with a



visit to the panda reserve where you will get to see these delightful and rare animals

happily eating bamboo and hopefully frolicking about. We will have lunch in town with Pastor Peter Yuan, the general secretary of the Sichuan Christian Council and the Dean of the Sichuan Theological Seminary. Peter is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary. He will introduce you to the seminary and some of the students who attend there.

From here we will join the millions of Chinese who travel by train each day as we journey for several hours through the Sichuan countryside to the city of Nanchong. You will get a first-hand feel for the sleek and smooth high-speed trains that China is building across their vast country. We will have dinner with a group of English teachers who have been to North America—with conversations about such topics as: education in China,

what it means to only have one child, family pressures in today’s economy and lifestyle, and how life has changed for Chinese people in the past decade, especially due to extensive modernization.

11 NANCHONG

Nanchong is another small city of about a million people where things (especially cars) seem to be going in many different and inexplicable directions. Your morning will begin the same as that of many Chinese, particularly the elderly, with a demonstration and then practice of Chinese *tai-qi* (*tai-chi*, stretching exercise).



We will then take a bus and do some walking to reach the rural area that is near Nanchong. There we follow the narrow paths between rice paddies, visit a farmer’s home, and learn how hundreds of millions of Chinese people live



and find a way to make a living. There are always surprises on these visits and unexpected things come along—this is definitely a part of China that typical commercial tours never reach. We will have lunch at Farmer Duan’s home... no, not at a “tourist farm”—this private rural visit has been arranged especially for us!

We then return to Nanchong to spend the afternoon with Chinese friends who will give us brief introductions to several topics that include: Chinese calligraphy (we get to practice); traditional Chinese medicine; Chinese painting,

Chinese tea culture. We will have dinner with a young Chinese couple—she spent time in Oregon and now runs a private English school, and her husband works with MCC on various projects, including rebuilding efforts following the devastating Sichuan earthquake in 2008.

12 GUANGAN / CHONGQING

Today we move from Nanchong to Chongqing, a sister city to Toronto, Canada. There, at 9:00 in the evening, we board our river boat for the Yangtze River cruise. On our way to Chongqing, we will stop in Guangan, the hometown of Deng Xiaoping. Deng is the man most



responsible for the China of today, *and for the cheap things that you buy at Wal-Mart*. Deng followed Chairman Mao and immediately set China on the economic course that has transformed the country.

We will visit his home and also an excellent museum dedicated to him. Lunch will be with a retired government official who has many stories of life before and



after Deng Xiaoping. We will arrive in Chongqing by mid-afternoon and have several

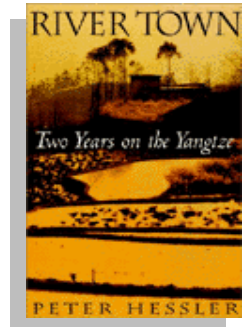
hours to see the downtown area of this mountainous and massive city located on the Yangtze River.

(Photo: Wal-Mart Chongqing)

Just by driving into Chongqing you will get a sense for the huge population and the energy that drives this industrial municipality. Sightseeing options include an excellent urban planning museum or a museum devoted to the Three Gorges.

13 YANGTZE RIVER

Our boat will leave Chongqing in the early morning and wind its way along the Yangtze and past a number of river towns. One of those is the city of Fuling, the location of Peace Corps volunteer Peter Hessler's excellent book entitled, *River Town* (on our resource list of advance reading ideas). There is a shore excursion into Fengdu known as the city of ghosts. If nothing else it is a chance to see what a river town looks like.



14 YANGTZE RIVER

Today is the highlight of the Yangtze River tour, when we pass through the renowned and beautiful Three Gorges. We will disembark and board smaller boats to navigate up the lesser gorges, a unique and picturesque adventure. While on board the cruise boat we will enjoy great meals, various cultural and craft demonstrations, and have an opportunity to purchase crafts.

15 YANGTZE RIVER / YICHANG / WUHAN

The river cruise ends near the city of Yichang, which is also where the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest, is located. We will have an opportunity to see parts of the dam before we start the six-hour bus ride to Wuhan, arriving there early evening. Wuhan is another of China's megacities, but there will only be time to spend the night near the airport.

16 HANGZHOU

A mid-morning flight will bring us to the eastern city of Hangzhou, often considered to be China's most



picturesque. There is much to see in Hangzhou, but our time will center around West Lake, perhaps the most famous body of water in China. West Lake has been memorialized in poetry and paintings. It has also served as an imperial retreat for centuries of Chinese royalty. In addition to the lake itself, there are scenic hills, temples, and monasteries to explore. There are pedestrian streets displaying crafts and goods, a great place to pick up good quality souvenirs. Our evening will end with a special artistic performance and light show on the lake.

17 HANGZHOU

We spend most of today in the old city area of Hangzhou, in and around West Lake. What we didn't have time for on the previous day can be explored in the morning and early afternoon, including a stroll among the willows along the lakeshore. Late afternoon we will board a bus for the two-hour ride to the city of Suzhou.

18 SUZHOU

Popularly known as the Venice of the East, Suzhou is a center of Chinese culture and traditions. It is particularly famous for its quaint canals and gardens. Today we will have a canal tour and then spend time wandering through a few of the many classical gardens that used to be owned by imperial and wealthy families.

There are also shops and markets to wander into where you can purchase famous Suzhou silk or other handicrafts. Our bus driver may even invite us to spend



some time (\$\$) browsing through one of the many silk factories built especially for Western tourists.

19 SHANGHAI

In the morning we will pack up for the short ride to Shanghai, China's largest city and our point of departure. We will first explore the Pudong area, the new part of Shanghai that sits on the eastern side of the river—everything you see was built in the past 15 years. The skyscrapers include the impressive and colorful Oriental Pearl Tower, and the Jinmao Tower, which has the world's highest hotel lobby (on the 54th floor). We will then cross the river into old Shanghai, walking through the charming Yuyuan Gardens with quaint temples reflected in the water (photo below).



Along the famous promenade of the Bund we can admire the Western-looking buildings with beautiful colonial architecture that line the avenues along the

waterfront. These were the center of Shanghai life in the 1800s and early 1900s when Western countries divided up the city.



A *must* after dinner is a night-time stroll along the Bund, Shanghai's most famous Huangpu riverbank area, to see the sparkle and grandeur of the impressive Shanghai skyline by night, with its stunning photographic jewel, the Oriental Pearl Tower.

20 SHANGHAI

How much we are able to see this closing day depends on final flight schedules and transfer to the airport, but those with time may want to visit the Shanghai Museum, perhaps China's best and most modern historical museum. The museum is located in People's Park, right in downtown Shanghai, so there are more fascinating areas to explore, and great places for photos or some last-minute shopping.

An optional tour extension will allow you to fly now to Guilin and Hong Kong for four more days. Others will head back to North America on this afternoon's flight.

This tour plan and itinerary represents the intent and scope of our program of activities. Certain adjustments to this outline may be necessary as a result of circumstances not foreseeable a year in advance of our visit.

Group flights are confirmed for these dates with a direct flight choice from Toronto to Beijing, or from Vancouver to Beijing. Group members will return from Shanghai to their originating airport, on a non-stop flight either to Vancouver or Toronto.



Program outline complete and correct as of November 15, 2011