TOUR CODE

CN4

ADVENTURESABROAD

CLASSIC CHINA

with Hong Kong, Guilin & Li River Extension

15 days

Updated 11/12/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Hong Kong*

Welcome to Hong Kong!

Hong Kong is a place with multiple personalities, as a result of being both Cantonese Chinese and under a long-time British influence. It is a unique destination that has absorbed people and cultural influences from places as diverse as Vietnam and Vancouver and proudly proclaims itself to be Asia's "World City."

Overnight in Hong Kong. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Hong Kong: City Touring*

Hong Kong Island is what gives the territory its name; although it is not the largest part of the territory, it is the place that many visitors regard as the main focus.

As such, we begin our day at Victoria Peak for a panoramic view of the city and its spectacular harbour. We continue to Repulse Bay and the colourful fishermen's village at Aberdeen, named after Lord Aberdeen, Secretary of State for the Colonies in the mid 19th century. Aberdeen is situated at the southwestern corner of Hong Kong Island and is one of the earliest settlements on the island. Once said to have been a hideout for pirates dealing in "Heung Kong" (perfumed water), it is now the largest fishing "village" in the former colony. We will enjoy a short sampan tour around the Aberdeen typhoon shelter before continuing to Stanley.

This afternoon your Tour Leader will take you on a stroll through Kowloon. A short trip on the Star Ferry takes us to Kowloon Peninsula; the promenade here is a great place for a stroll and provides wonderful views of Victoria Harbour.

Overnight in Hong Kong. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Hong Kong - Guilin - Yangshuo*

Today we fly from Hong Kong to Guilin, a city of around half a million people situated in the Guangxi Province of southern China. The name Guilin means 'the cassia tree forest,' and in autumn the sweet fragrance of the cassia flowers wafts through the town. The well known highlight of the city is its surreal landscape of limestone pinnacles that rise hundreds of feet into the air like fingers pointing skywards.

The city of Guilin was founded in the Qin Dynasty in 314 BC as a small settlement on the Lijiang River. It became increasingly important following the construction of a canal joining the river with another further north, providing a transport link with the Yangtze. The town became the provincial capital in the Ming Dynasty and remained so until 1914 when the capital was moved to Nanning. According to a popular Chinese saying, "Guilin's scenery bests all others in the world." Its shapely-rising limestone towers and crystal-clear waters are often portrayed in Chinese artworks.

We will drive to the pleasant town of Yangshuo, located about 65 km (40 miles) and set dramatically amidst the limestone mountains for which the area is famous.

Overnight in Yangshuo. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Li River Cruise*

Today we enjoy a spectacular cruise down the meandering Li River in Yangshuo. The scenery is breathtaking as mist-covered jagged mountains loom before you and quaint villages dot the riverbanks. We pass humped limestone peaks, fishermen astride bamboo rafts, and grazing water buffaloes. The boat passes through the Luogu Rapids where the sound of the rushing water is said to resemble gongs and drums.

Legend tells us that every sailor drowned in the Li is transformed into a demon, clutching at the boats which navigate the rapids. As the launch floats past valleys, bamboo groves, and mist-shrouded crags, one has the sensation of being carried backward in time through a traditional Chinese painting. Local river craft are still physically towed upstream in convoys; a few are still towed by men and women in harness.

Yangshuo, located about 65 km (40 miles) from Guilin is a town of about 30,000 inhabitants, set dramatically amidst the limestone mountains for which the area is famous. It is a small town with a small town feel. Time permitting this afternoon we will visit the town and its lively market.

Tonight we will attend the "Yin Xiang Liu San Jie," an exciting local minority show performed on the banks of the Li River. The Ying Xiang Liu San Jie is a spectacular light and dance performance directed by Zhang Yimou, a famous Chinese filmmaker. This is a breathtaking show, using the beautiful mountains and river as the backdrop for the performance.

Overnight in Yangshuo. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Yangshuo - Guilin - Shanghai*

This morning we return to Guilin and fly to Shanghai.

Shanghai is China's most populous as well as its most "urban" city. Despite the profound changes in social and economic structure brought on since 1949, Shanghai retains the look and feel of a great Western metropolis, with a population that seems quite at home amidst the press of crowds and the throbbing energy and diversity of city life. In many ways, Shanghai's ambiance is more like that of New York or Rome than that of Beijing or Guangzhou.

The easiest and quickest way into central Shanghai is aboard the world's fastest train, which, at 430 km / hour, whisks us to the city centre in just 8 minutes. From the train a private vehicle will take us the remainder of the way to our hotel.

We visit the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center, housed in a striking modern five-story building made of microlite glass. This is one of the world's largest showcases of urban development and is much more interesting than its dry name suggests. The highlight is on the third floor: an awesome vast scale model of urban Shanghai as it will look in 2020, a master plan full of endless skyscrapers punctuated occasionally by patches of green. Virtual Shanghai, a computer-generated flyover of the city projected onto a 360-degree movie screen, is a highlight. The camera swoops along highways, over the Huangpu and around the Pudong skyscrapers of an idealized city that may or may not exist. In the basement, old Shanghai is rebuilt with house entrances, cobbled stone-ways and operating shops and tea-houses.

We then proceed to the French Concession to find out what Shanghai was like in 1930s. The tree-lined avenues and

their many Tudor mansions in the area still retain an air of the "Paris of the East".

Time permitting, this afternoon we take a leisurely stroll in the beautiful Yu Garden, established in 1559 and considered one of the most lavish and finest Chinese gardens in the region. At nearby Yuyuan Market, we discover a bustling bazaar selling traditional Chinese arts and crafts, as well as a mish-mash of items including chopsticks, Chinese medicine, walking sticks, fans, silk umbrellas, bamboo and rattan furniture, goldfish, pottery, plus much more. Food is also a great temptation in Yuyuan Market with local delicacies such as xiao long bao, pigeon egg dumplings, and spicy cold noodles from the street stalls or numerous restaurants.

This evening you may consider attending an optional acrobatic show (your Tour Leader will assist).

Overnight in Shanghai. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Shanghai - Suzhou - Shanghai*

Originally founded in 514 BC, Suzhou, located about 100 kms west of Shanghai, has over 2,500 years of rich history, and relics of the past are abundant to this day. The city's canals, stone bridges, pagodas, and meticulously designed gardens have contributed to its status as one of the top tourist attractions in China. Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), it has also been an important centre for China's silk industry.

The classical gardens in Suzhou were added to the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1997 and 2000. Suzhou is often dubbed the "Venice of the East" or "Venice of China. We visit the Humble Administrator's Garden and Liuyuan (Lingering Garden), both among the most famous classical gardens in China.

A highlight of our day is the Suzhou Museum, in which natural lighting, spaces and views make the interior seem semi-outdoors and the corridors like streets and lanes in an old Chinese town.

Return to Shanghai.

Overnight in Shanghai. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Shanghai - Chongqing - Yangtze Cruise*

This morning is free for you to visit the Shanghai Museum, an ultra-modern repository for 5,000 years of history and tradition; its striking design by Xing Tonghe invokes the shape of a bronze ding tripod. The museum's bronze, ceramic, painting and calligraphy collections are among the finest in the world, and the range of its collections displayed in 14 state-of-the-art galleries is unparalleled.

Alternatively, you could stroll along the famous Bund, one of the most recognizable architectural symbols of Shanghai. The word 'bund' derives from an Anglo-Indian word for an embankment along a muddy waterfront, and that is what it was in the beginning when the first British company opened an office there in 1846. It became the epitome of elegance during Shanghai's history as a city of trade.

This evening, we fly to Chongqing, the main starting point for downstream cruises along the Yangtze River gorges, a stunning riverine passage. The famous gorges of the Yangtze lie in a 189 km (118 mile) stretch between Chongqing and Yichang, with towering mountains that drop almost perpendicularly into the river as if hewn by an axe. The spectacular grandeur of these walls and the turgid river that roars through them have long been the subject of China's romantic poets and painters.

Yangtze cruise ships are generally about 300 ft long with an average capacity of about 150 passengers. A typical boat will have 4 decks and various amenities such as ballroom, beauty salon, business center, shopping boutique, game room, reading room, satellite phone/TV, restaurants and coffee shop. Cabins are outward-facing with lower twin berths, picture windows, ample closet space, en suite bath and toilet, and air-conditioning.

This itinerary reflects what typically happens on a downstream cruise. There may be some variation in content and order depending on weather, water level, and other logistical considerations.

Overnight Yangtze River Cruise. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Yangtze Cruise*

Today we have an excursion to the town of Fengdu, said to be the abode of devils and ghosts. The origin of the town's extraordinary reputation can be traced back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) when two officials, Yin and Wang, became Taoist recluses here and eventually immortals. Later in Tang Dynasty their names when combined mean "King of the Under World".

Today tourists come to visit temples and shrines dedicated to the gods of the underworld. Landmarks here bear horrific names: Last-Glance-at-Home Tower, Nothing-to-be-done Bridge and Ghost Torturing Pass.

Later we continue the cruise through the Qutang and Wu gorges. Our river guide will talk about the historic sites, including Ancient Plank Road, Bellows Gorge, Chalk Wall, and the 12 lofty and misty peaks and precipices in the Wu Gorge.

Overnight Yangtze River Cruise. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *Yangtze Cruise*

Today we make an excursion along the Shennong Stream, comprised of Parrot Gorge and Dragon Boot Gorge, both with breathtaking scenery. Moving through the treacherous gorges with lush pine and translucent water, visitors can see spectacular sights like ancient suspension coffins and aquatic caves.

Later today (or tomorrow morning) we have an excursion to the Three Gorges Dam, taking a bus across the Three Gorges Bridge which leads toward the top of the hill for a bird's-eye view of the construction from the observation deck. Visitors will observe the five-step ship lock, the diversion canal, and the power station. Our guide will provide detailed information on the history of the dam and facts on its construction. In addition, an exhibition room displays a model of the dam and surrounding buildings.

Overnight Yangtze River Cruise. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 10 *Yangtze Cruise - Yichang - Xi'an*

This morning we arrive in Yichang and our Yangtze River cruise ends.

We drive to the airport for our flight to X’ian. Upon arrival in X’ian, we visit the Great Mosque, a five minute walk from the Drum Tower in the center of Xi'an. Inscriptions from the stone tablets indicate that the Great Mosque, located at Huajue Lane, was established in AD 742 during the Tang Dynasty. After restorations in the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the present complex proudly ranks among the largest mosques in China. Unlike Arabic mosques which

have splendid domes, minarets reaching into the clouds, and colourful engraved sketches with dazzling patterns, the mosque is built in a Chinese traditional style with the grounds taken up by platforms, pavilions and halls.

Overnight in Xi'an. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Xi'an: Terra Cotta Warriors*

Today we view the Terra Cotta Warriors, an impressive legion of thousands of life-size terra cotta warriors that has been guarding the emperor's burial site for over 2,000 years. In 1974, a group of peasants digging a well in Lintong County, about 30 km east of Xi'an, accidentally made one of the century's greatest archeological discoveries. What they stumbled upon were thousands of life-size terra cotta warriors; an estimated 8,000 figures have thus far been identified.

We also visit the Big Wild Goose Pagoda and the Bell Tower from where you have a spectacular view of all four of Xi'an's city gates.

While in Xi'an, we will aim to visit the museum dedicated to the tomb known as Han Yangling, located near the airport.* Built in 2005 and regarded as one of the best of its kind in the world, the museum showcases not only the resting place of the occupant, Jing Di, but also how he and others lived during his time, the second century BC. The displays are exquisitely and sensitively done; the piles of hundreds of artifacts, in situ, are like a modern work of "found" art.

*NOTE: depending on flight times, we may visit Han Yangling today, as above, or prior to our departure from Xi'an.

While in Xi'an, we will enjoy a "dumpling banquet" for which this area is famous.

Overnight in Xi'an. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Xi'an - Beijing*

Today we fly to Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China. While many of its elements are common to other Chinese cities, the sum of this city -- its scope and presence in history -- has no equivalent in China or anywhere else in the world.

Beijing is not only the political and administrative center of the People's Republic of China, it is also China's single greatest repository of monuments and treasures from the imperial era. It is also the second-largest and fastest growing municipality in today's China, the home and workplace of 9.3 million people.

Overnight in Beijing. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Beijing: Forbidden City & Temple of Heaven*

We begin today with a visit to Tian'anmen Square, the place where one million students rallied for democracy in 1989. This is the largest public square in the world. Originally built in 1651, the square was quadrupled in size in 1958 to its present 40.5 hectares (100 acres) during a massive city-wide reconstruction program. Each flagstone is numbered so that parade units can line up in their assigned places.

From here we walk to the Forbidden City, a huge complex of palaces, pavilions, courtyards and gardens, which was off-limits to commoners for 500 years. This is where the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties carried out their

administration and lived, now open as a Palace Museum.

This afternoon we visit the Temple of Heaven, completed in 1420, and expanded over the years by two Qing Dynasty Emperors. Qinian Hall, the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, with the three blue-tiled cone-shaped roofs, has become a worldwide symbol of Beijing. It was hit by lightning in 1889 and then completely restored. No nails or pegs were used in the original construction nor in the restoration.

Today we include lunch and free up your evening for optional activities, such as a Kung-fu show or Peking Opera performance. Your Tour Leader can assist with these arrangements.

Overnight in Beijing. Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 14 *Beijing: Great Wall & Summer Palace*

This morning we travel north of Beijing to the Great Wall of China. A walk along the enormous undulating towered and turreted wall is spectacular. Rising and falling in concert with the ridges of the northern hills and undulating far off into the distance, the Great Wall consistently exceeds visitors' expectations and remains one of humankind's most remarkable accomplishments.

The wall's construction began during the Warring States Period (403-221 BC), when separate sections were built in scattered strategic areas. Following China's unification under the first Qin Emperor, 300,000 men -- many of them political prisoners whose bodies are buried in the wall -- were put to work connecting the segments into one huge rampart of stone and earth.

We will have plenty of free time to explore the wall before returning to Beijing early this afternoon.

After lunch we will have a tour of the Summer Palace, located in the northwest area of the city. During the late Qing Dynasty this was the summer retreat from Beijing's heat for the imperial family and court. Originally created as an imperial garden by Emperor Qianlong, it was destroyed and plundered during the Second Opium War in 1860. In 1888 the notorious Empress Cixi used the money intended for the Chinese Navy to build this opulent summer retreat for herself. In 1900 the Summer Palace was damaged extensively once again during the Boxer Rebellion, but was rebuilt shortly thereafter. It is up to now the best preserved and the largest imperial gardens in China.

Overnight in Beijing. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Departure*

Departure from Beijing.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.