HIDDEN CHINA

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A Jack Wheeler Hidden Adventure
Saturday Sept 14 to Friday Sept 27, 2013
$7750

Many travelers have been to the Great Wall and the Forbidden City. They've been to Shanghai, Guilin, and the Terracotta Statues at Xian. Everyone knows about them. This adventure is about going to truly extraordinary places in China that almost no one knows about outside of China, and very few Westerners have been to.

The pictures you are about to see, you won't believe your eyes. These places exist, and if you are ready to experience them, I am ready to take you there - to the China that is unbelievable and unknown, to what I call *Hidden China*. Here we go. We start with the *Precipice Long Corridor*. It will take a couple of days to get there.

Day 1, Saturday Sept. 14

Note: We begin in Beijing. All participants are responsible for arriving in Beijing by Saturday, September 14. We chose the last two weeks in September as the weather is beautiful, neither too hot nor cold with the fall colors starting, plus it is an ideal travel window: after the school holidays and before the national holidays in early October.

Arrive at Beijing International Airport. You will be met at the airport and transferred to Beijing Peninsula Hotel, a 5-Star facility just a few short blocks from Tiananmen Square. Day at leisure. Welcome reception and Peking Roast Duck dinner at the Jingson Quanjude Restaurant.

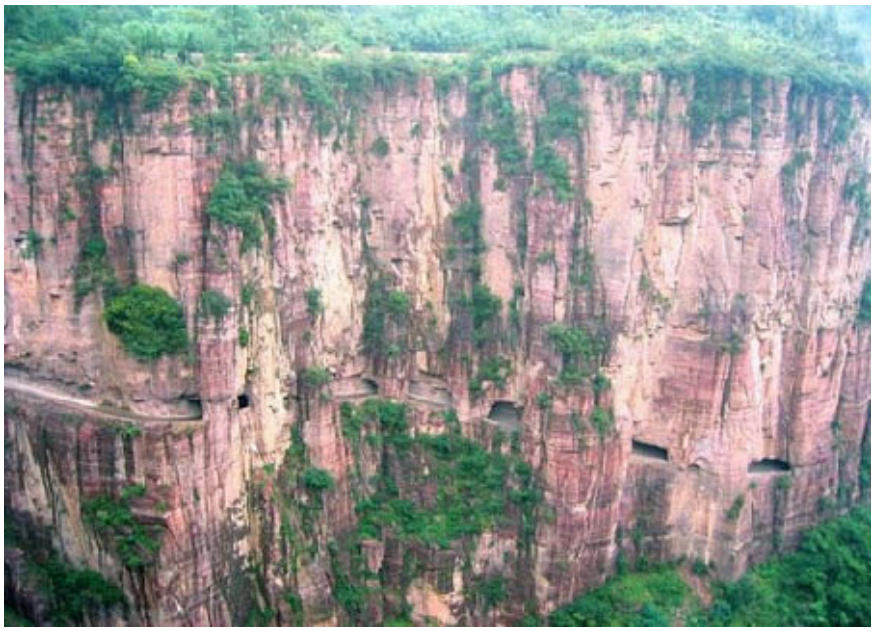
Day 2, Sunday Sept. 15

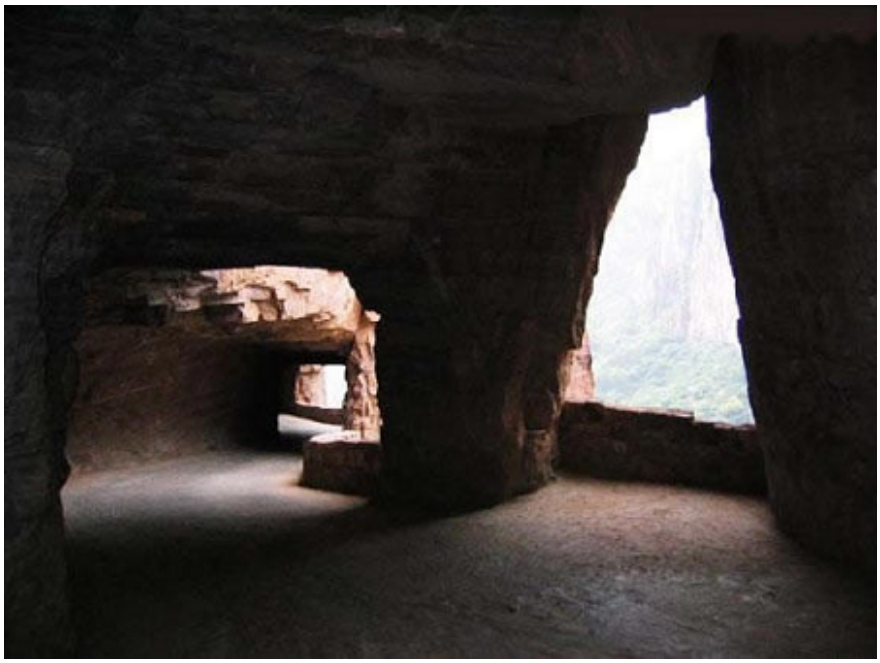
Morning transfer to the Beijing railway station for the train (1st Class or "Soft Seat") to *Xinxiang* in *Henan* Province. Transfer to the 5-star New Century Grand Xinxiang Hotel. After lunch, we visit the nearby World Heritage Tentative List Site of the Mausoleum of King Lujian, built in the early 1600s and China's most intact Ming Dynasty tomb.

Day 3, Monday Sept. 16

This morning we drive up into the Taihang Mountains to a village perched on a mountaintop called *Guoliang*. Until the 1970s, it was so isolated the only way to reach it was by climbing over a thousand slippery stone steps carved into the vertical cliffs below. The villagers - illiterate farmers with no training - decided to carve a tunnel almost a mile long through the edge of the cliffs with dynamite and manual labor. Several of them died in the effort.

Completed in the late 70's, only recently has it become known to the outside world as *The Precipice Long Corridor*.





We won't race through it like the guys in the Cadillac ATS commercial did last year - but it will be an experience we'll never ever forget.

We'll have lunch at Guoliang village on the cliff top, and meet some of the villagers who hand-built the tunnel. We return to Xinxiang by day's end.

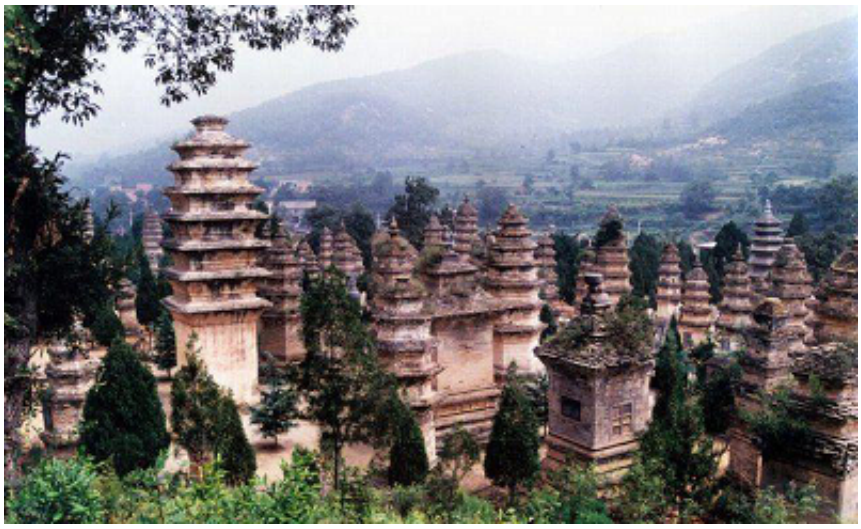
Day 4, Tuesday Sept. 17

We journey by private coach this morning to the World Heritage Site of the Longmen Grottoes, carved out of the cliffs along the Yi River well over 1,000 years ago.. There are over 100,000 Buddhist statues within 1,400 caves carved into the cliffside of Longmen - "Dragon's Gate."

At the end of the day, we transfer to our hotel in the nearby city of Luoyang, the Lee Royal Mudu.

Day 5, Wednesday Sept. 18

This morning we venture into the Songshan Mountains to the World Heritage Site of the Shaolin Monastery, birthplace of the martial art of *kung-fu*, and its Pagoda Forest. Our visit will be highlighted by the Shaolin monks giving us a dramatic kung-fu demonstration.



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We then continue to Zhengzhou airport for our flight to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province. After our transfer to the Sofitel Wanda Chengdu 5-star hotel, we get to explore the Old City and stroll down Jinli Ancient Street, where the folk customs and culture of Sichuan's tribal people are still practiced. Dinner in the Old City.

Sichuan Province

Day 6, Thursday Sept. 19

We're up early and off to the Chengdu Giant Panda Research Base, the largest panda facility in the world, where pandas are being bred and raised in their natural habitat. There is no better place on the planet than here to be close to and study Giant Pandas. We're here early when they are feeding and most active.

You can actually cuddle with an entire sleuth (the collective noun for a group of pandas) of baby and young pandas. There's nowhere else in the world you can do this:

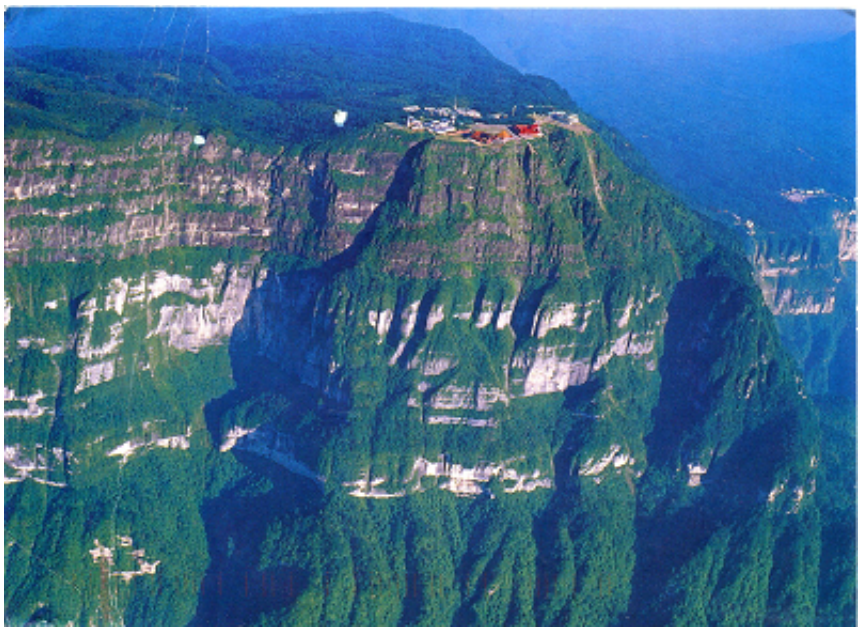
We then drive this morning across Sichuan for about 1½ hours, then a boat on a river for another 40 minutes to reach the World Heritage Site of the Leshan Giant Buddha, the largest Buddha sculpture in the world at 233 feet high, carved into the side of Mount Emei in the 8th century. It is only from the river that we can see the entire sculpture.

We'll climb up to view it from above:

Yet the Leshan Buddha is only the start of Mount Emei. We transfer to the 5-star Hongzhu Shan Hotel (no website in English), then visit the Baoguo Temple at the foot of the mountain. Afterwards, we'll most likely want to scamper back to the Hongzhu Shan as it's set in a beautiful forest with hot springs and pools:

Day 7, Friday Sept. 20

Early this morning, we take the cable car to the Golden Summit of Mount Emei, one of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains of China. The Jinding Temple is built on the edge of Emei:



The sunrise is spectacular, especially as it lights up the massive 140-foot high statue of the

Samantabhadra Buddha on the crest.

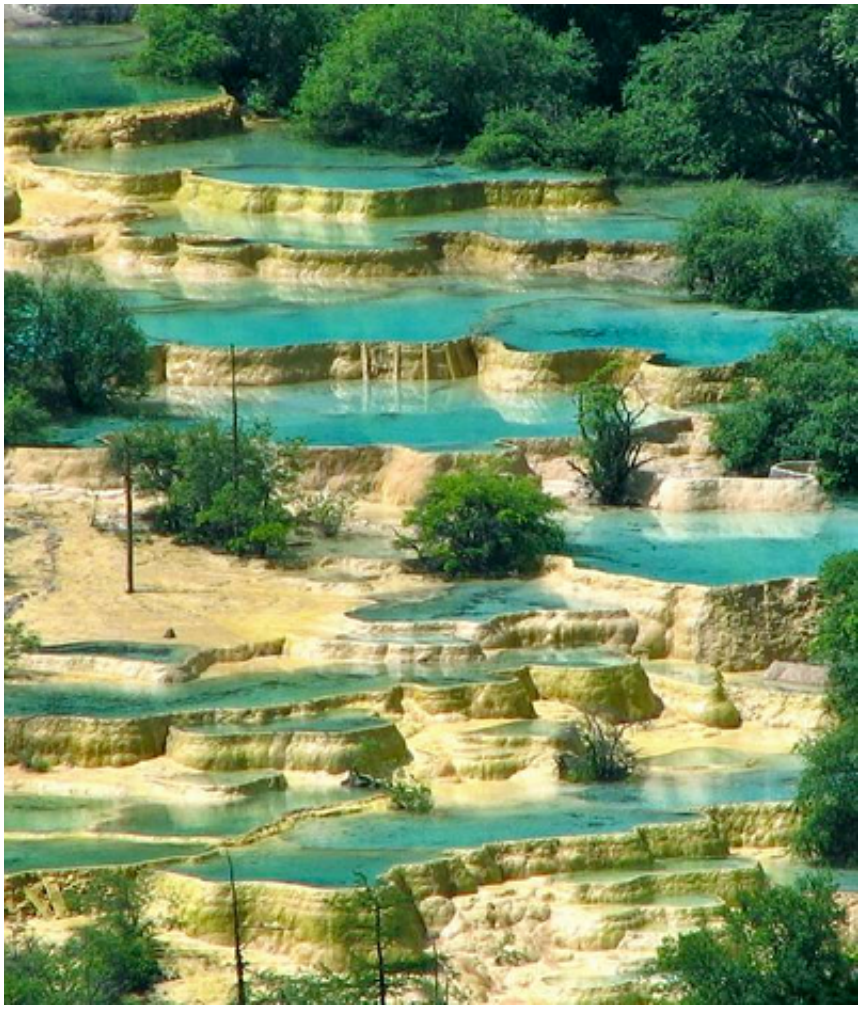
With luck, we may be able to witness the famous Cloud Sea below,

and the mysterious Buddha Rays, with your own shadow in the multi-colored aura:

We'll visit more temples and waterfalls on Emei, then return to Chengdu and the Sofitel Wanda at day's end.

Day 8, Saturday Sept. 21

We have a 9am flight to Jiuzhaigou in northern Sichuan, then drive to the World Heritage Site of Yellow Dragon Gully or Huanglong Gou. No description of the surrealistic beauty of Huanglong does it justice. The Google images of Huanglong will give you an idea.

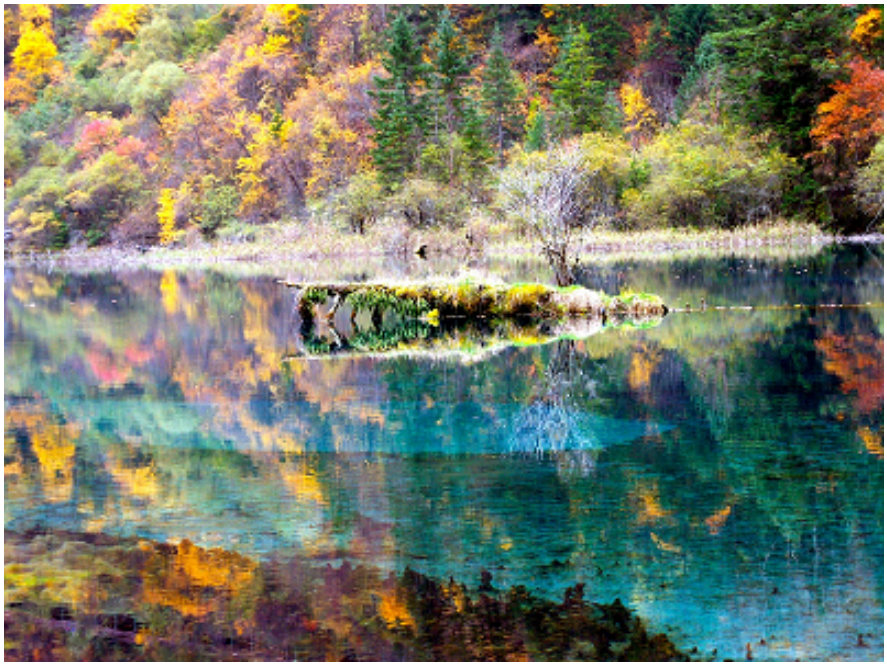


We'll leisurely explore the length of the valley from the Tibetan Buddhist temple on top to the Xishen Cave Waterfall at the end, and enjoy a picnic lunch by one of the pools enroute. We then enjoy the luxury of the 5-star Sheraton Jiuzhaigou hotel.

Day 9, Sunday Sept.22

Huanglong lies on the southern slopes of the Min Mountains. On the north side of the Minshan lies easternmost Tibet - and a valley that rivals Huanglong in surreal beauty, so much so that it too has been designated a World Heritage Site twinned with Huanglong, that of Jiuzhagou Nine Villages Valley. The nine villages are Tibetan, and we'll visit several.

But it is the fairyland, dreamlike beauty of this place that is utterly captivating. The Google images of Jiuzhagou only begin to capture it. These pictures were taken during fall colors, which should be when we're there:



We spend the entire day exploring this wonderland. We enjoy the Sheraton again tonight.

Day 10, Monday Sept. 23

We have a morning flight back to Chengdu. We'll have time for another visit to the Panda Research Center, then lunch and shopping in Chengdu's Old City. Then back to the airport for a flight to Zhangjiajie in Hunan Province. We drive 30 minutes to the Zhangjiajie National Forest and our hotel, the 5-star Pullman Zhangjiajie, where we have dinner.

Day 11, Tuesday Sept. 24

We spend the day exploring the World Heritage Site of Wulingyuan. If you've seen the James Cameron movie *Avatar*, one of Wulingyuan's 3,000 gigantic quarzite-sandstone pillars may look familiar, as it inspired Avatar's "Floating Peaks" -

To get to the clifftop Huangzhi village overlooking the forest of giant stone pillars -

We take a cable car *through* them:

The view is truly unearthly:

From viewing this magical landscape from above, after lunch we view it from below, walking along the serene beauty of the Golden Whip Stream -

as it meanders through the base of the giant pillars:

We end the day relaxing and having dinner at the Pullman.

Day 12, Wednesday Sept. 25

This is an adrenaline rush day. The highest peak in Zhangjiajie-Wulingyuan is Tianmen Shan - Heavenly Gate Mountain. The Gate is an enormous hole in the peak:

We reach it not by the road with 99 hairpin turns:

but via the world's longest high mountain cableway -

We're not going to fly through the Gate of Heaven as stuntman Jeb Corliss did in a wingsuit - the two-minute YouTube video of Corliss will blow your mind - but our experience of Tianmenshan will be amazing nonetheless. We are going to traverse the Sky Glass Path:

It's engineered *very* well, so there are no actual worries. That, however, did not assuage this young Chinese lady:

But we'll have no problem at all, right? Just one of the most thrilling walks of our lives.

When we get back off Tianmenshan, we'll visit the village of the Tujia ethnic minority:

And be introduced to their customs and traditions. We then return to the Pullman to have dinner -

but not to stay, for we're off on an evening flight to Shanghai, where we transfer to the 5-star Grand Hyatt Shanghai.

Day 13, Thursday Sept. 26

We've all been to Shanghai before so we're not going to linger. This morning we take a 50-minute train ride to the World Heritage Site of Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province.

This will be our 7th World Heritage Site (with an 8th on the WHS Tentative List). We've had an intense two weeks. What better place to unwind and chill out than at a temple renowned as The Heart of the Soul's Retreat?

Lingyin Temple is one of the oldest and most famous temples in China. There are hundreds of Buddhist stone statues carved into the "Peak Flying from Afar" cliffs in its grounds, one of which is the original Laughing Buddha:

The monks will lead us in a Meditation of Inner Peace:

After lunch, we go for a cruise on Hangzhou's West Lake, immortalized by countless Chinese poets and artists for over a thousand years. We'll glide by temples, pagodas, and small islands, plus the lake's famous Su Di Bridge:

and stopping by a lakeside teahouse for a cup of Chinese tea.

We'll end our visit to Hangzhou by having our Farewell Dinner at Lou Wai Lou, Hangzhou's most famous restaurant in existence for over 150 years.

We then take the high-speed train back to Shanghai and the Grand Hyatt.

Day 14, Friday Sept. 27

This is Departure Day. You're free to relax at the Grand Hyatt until we need to transfer you to the airport for your flight back home, arriving Saturday - or even Friday by crossing the Date Line depending on your flight. Of course, you're welcome to continue your stay in China or venture elsewhere in Asia.

One thing is certain - you'll *never* forget these last two weeks experiencing the wonders of Hidden China.

Cost: $7,750

Cost includes:

*All transportation within China as specified in the itinerary: 1st class soft seat train Beijing-Xinjiang and Shanghai-Hangzhou-Shanghai; air flights Zhengzhou-Chengdu, Chengdu-Jiuzhaigou-Chengdu-Zhangjiajie, Zhangjiajie-Shanghai

*All ground transportation, transfers, tours and activities as specified in the itinerary with local English-speaking guides in private air-conditioned vehicles

*Bottled water and cold towels on the vehicles

*All meals (breakfast/lunch/dinner including bottled water, juice, or a soft drink) with group from dinner Saturday Sept. 14 to breakfast Friday Sept. 27

*All accommodation from the night of Saturday Sept. 14 through the night of Thursday, Sept. 26 (deluxe room in Beijing, Chengdu, Leshan; grand room in Shanghai; superior room in Juzhaigou and Zhangjiajie; standard room in Xinxiang and Luoyang).

Cost does not include:

*International airfare to/from China

*Visa fees

*Single occupancy accommodation. Single supplement surcharge is $1,775.

*Meals, services, and activities not with group or in itinerary

*Personal expenditures, such as drinks, laundry, camera fees, communications, gratuities, etc.

*Beer, wine, or booze with meals

Deposits, Payments, Cancellations and Refunds

*Non-refundable deposit of $775 must be received by May 15, 2013

*Balance in full - $6,975 - must be received by July 15, 2013.

*Refund of balance in full on the condition of a fully-paid acceptable replacement for you. *Note: You may want to consider* trip cancellation insurance.

Please send all inquiries and make payments payable to:

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Bank wiring instructions on request