

# ASK THE operator

Clients curious about China, but need some guidance? Three experts share their favourite escorted tours with **Alice Barnes-Brown**



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# 1 CULTURAL DISCOVERY

**WHAT'S THE BRIEF?**

A young couple are looking to experience China for the first time. They have just over two weeks and want to visit the headline sights, see some wildlife and eat authentic food, while also seeing a side of China that's well off the beaten path.



**Gary King**  
head of trade sales,  
Wendy Wu Tours

I recommend our 16-day China & Tibet Discovery, as it's a colossal trip. Clients will see historic cities, as well as futuristic sites in Shanghai and Beijing. In Tibet, they'll visit Lhasa – the home of Tibetan Buddhism – plus the impressive Potala Palace and the former summer residence of the Dalai Lama. Clients will then fly to Chengdu to encounter pandas at a conservation centre, before joining a Yangtze river cruise.

This tour is perfect for a first-time visitor to China, because it covers so much. When you've got only two weeks, you want to ensure that you see everything, and on this guided tour, clients can tick off all those bucket-list experiences.

At Wendy Wu, we want clients to live like a local, so we take them to the most authentic places to eat. It's an opportunity to see China and Tibet in an up-close-and-personal way.

China is well and truly back. We've already sold out several departures for 2024 and are adding extra capacity. If agents want more information or training, or want to arrange for a business development manager to go to China, we're doing more fam trips next year.

**Book it:** The China & Tibet Discovery leads in at £4,340, based on a May 10 departure, including all meals, flights, tour guide, transport and visa fee. [wendywutours.co.uk](http://wendywutours.co.uk)

# 2 ACTIVE IN ASIA

**WHAT'S THE BRIEF?**

An active group of friends want to soak up the mystique of rural China with a walking tour through the countryside and villages. As well as experiencing homestays, they'd like to spend some time in cities, so that they can delve into China's urban culture.



**Tom Manchester**  
product manager,  
Exodus Adventure Travels

Our eight-night Walking the Great Wall trip fits the brief pretty well. It's six full days of walking, along a mix of restored parts and more dilapidated sections. For example, it visits Jiankou, which is known as the 'wild wall'.

The trip includes stays in guest houses. This basic mountain accommodation often doesn't have central heating, but lots of blankets are provided, and they're a good opportunity to sample authentic Chinese food.

At the start and end of the trip, clients will enjoy a crispy duck dinner in Beijing and a visit to Tiananmen Square. Optional evening entertainment includes a kung fu show. Alternatively, guests can enjoy a reflexology treatment to soothe their aching feet.

For people wanting more time to explore the cities on their own, we can add extra nights at the start or end in Beijing. There is also the option of an extension to Xi'an to see the Terracotta Army and the night markets.

**Book it:** Walking the Great Wall starts at £2,279, based on a May 24 departure. The price includes flights from London, eight nights' B&B, six lunches and six dinners, transport, portage and the services of a tour leader. [exodus.co.uk](http://exodus.co.uk)

# 3 RAIL AND SAIL

**WHAT'S THE BRIEF?**

A retired couple are looking for a deep dive into China over a month or so, visiting major cities including Hong Kong, plus slowing down in the countryside. They're keen to travel mostly by train, but would also like to incorporate a river cruise into their holiday.



**Michael Priest**  
head of product,  
Mercury Holidays

I'd recommend our Grand Tour of China with a Hong Kong Extension. This 29-day journey is a once-in-a-lifetime adventure for anyone who expects to visit China only once and wants to better understand one of the world's most fascinating cultures and destinations. With so many amazing sights and experiences across vast distances, to arrange a trip like this independently would be almost impossible.

This immersive tour will allow clients to see the full range of Chinese life, from bustling Beijing and Shanghai to the mountains of Yunnan and the rivers of Guilin. They'll travel like a local on a bullet train from Chongqing to Chengdu, and on an overnight train between Xi'an and Beijing.

Clients will also experience a slower pace of life with a four-night cruise along the Yangtze, during which they will travel through the immense locks of the Three Gorges Dam and visit tributaries such as Shennong Stream. They will also see life along the water's edge with a series of shore excursions, including to the White Emperor City and Fengdu Ghost City.

**Book it:** Mercury's Grand Tour of China with a Hong Kong Extension leads in at £4,510 per person, departing February 4, 2025, including accommodation, flights, transfers and most meals. [mercuryholidays.co.uk](http://mercuryholidays.co.uk)