



## RCOG Fellows and Members participate in a medical tour to China

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China is in my blood. I was born in Peking and as a child lived in a traditional courtyard house in the *hutongs*, one of the oldest districts in central Peking – not far from the Forbidden City. My mother's family has an even longer connection, arriving in China as Presbyterian missionaries in the mid-19th century. My family left Beijing in 1948, but I have continued to maintain a strong connection with the country, visiting regularly since 1989. Since then, I have received four Honorary or Visiting Professorships, including one from The Peking Union Medical College, in which I was born!

After meeting Jon Baines in 2010, we quickly realised that, with our combined contacts and my professional, personal and family connections, we had the makings of a really interesting China tour for professional colleagues. One year later, I'm en route to Shanghai, leader of an obstetrics and gynaecology tour with mostly Fellows and Members of our Royal College and their partners.

First impressions were impressive as we arrived at the

superb new airport to meet up with Jackie, our national guide, organiser and entertainer for the next two weeks. One thing modern China does well is dramatic modern architecture and there was much neck craning as we drove through the Pudong district, which 20 years ago was just farmland. Crossing the Huang Po River, we drove along the embankment, the famous Bund and the city's beautiful Art Deco heart. We checked into our hotel on the Bund – a classic Deco building, The Shanghai Broadway Mansions – and met up with ten other participants, Fellows and Members of RANZCOG.

After orientating ourselves by taking a boat trip along the river and a walk along the Bund, we met up with Patrick Cranley, an American who has lived and worked in Shanghai since 1997. His passion for the history and architecture of Shanghai soon became apparent as he took us on a walking tour through the traditional Shanghai-style lane neighborhood, the International and French Concessions, and into People's Square, all the time regaling us with fascinating tales of the city. Later in the afternoon we also explored the excellent Shanghai Museum and the Jade Buddha Temple.

Next stop was Hangzhou, known for its gardens, lakes and silk; a serene contrast to frenetic Shanghai. At our lakeside hotel I gave a talk: 'My Family in China 1856–2010'. Hangzhou proved to be a very relaxing stay with a cruise past weeping willow trees, rockeries, ancient stone bridges and hills dotted with multi-tiered temple pagodas on the world-famous West Lake. That evening we visited the night market and the ever-popular tea house, where large amounts of green tea were consumed and purchased. At the Museum of Traditional Chinese Medicine we heard a background talk on Chinese medicine and that evening had dinner with local obstetrician colleagues.

From Hangzhou we flew into Beijing and transferred to the Marco Polo Hotel. We visited Peking University Third Hospital where we were welcomed with a formal presentation on their work and a tour of their facilities. Their modern IVF clinic, the busiest in China, was where China's first IVF baby was conceived.

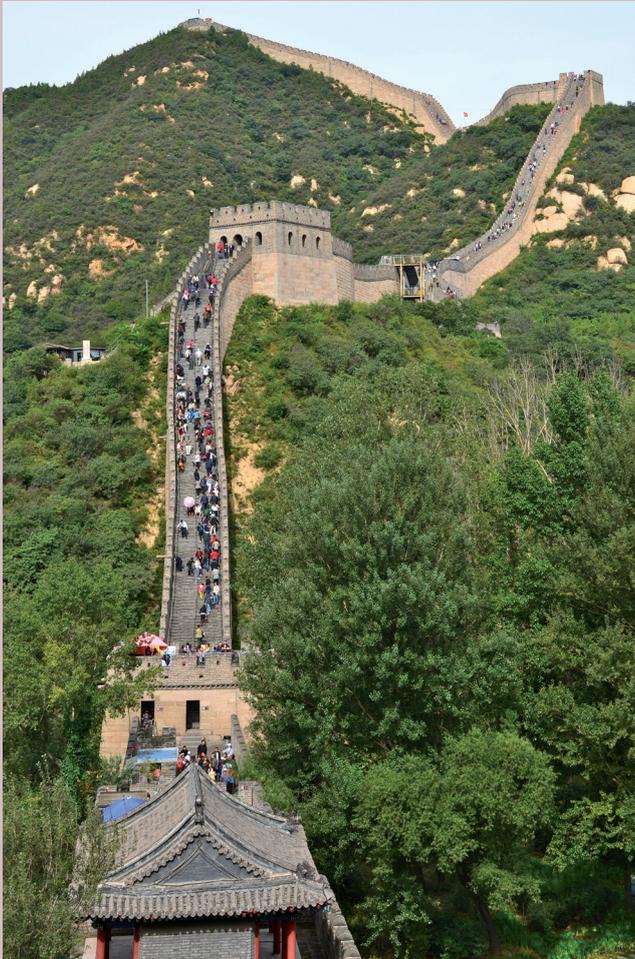


The group visited the Forbidden Kingdom



Li River, Guanyang Province

Beijing is home to the biggest Chinese medicine hospital in the world, the Xi Yuan Hospital of Chinese Medicine. We toured this behemoth the next day, visiting the departments of Acupuncture and Tui Na Massage and their Fertility Unit. We were especially impressed with the herbal pharmacy, where pharmacists receive their prescriptions



Great Wall of China

and quickly weigh powders, bark and herbs from myriad sacks, drawers and containers, pour them into paper bags and hand them to the patients in minutes. We returned to the hotel via a tour of the very impressive Olympic Bird's Nest Stadium.

The next day we visited the vast expanse of Tiananmen Square and entered the Forbidden City. Once barred to all but the Imperial Family and their court, the Forbidden City is today crowded with Chinese tourists interested to learn of their imperial history. Following an excellent lunch in the traditional *hutong* district of old Beijing, we took part in a walking tour guided by Matthew Hu, head of a restoration project of the *hutongs*. We learnt a lot about the history of the area and current plans for its protection and restoration.

Of course, we also visited the iconic Great Wall and the beautiful Summer Palace, which duly impressed everyone. We also experienced a traditional Peking opera, which made a different impression on some members of the group – it's possibly an acquired taste. We also enjoyed an interesting presentation from Care for Children, a charity set up by Briton Robert Glover over ten years ago to establish foster care in China.

Onwards to Xian, an ancient Silk Road city which still contains many echoes of its long history. Here we visited the amazing Terracotta Warriors, returning via the fascinating wholesale herbal medicine market – including the most amazing array of aphrodisiacs! The city is a wonderful place to wander through and we explored Muslim Street, the Antiques Market, a cloisonné workshop and Calligraphy Street. We also climbed the Ming Dynasty city walls, which are mostly still intact, on top of which some walked and others cycled.

Our final stop before returning to Shanghai was stunning Guangxi Province – a favourite of Chinese artists throughout the ages because of its spectacularly beautiful landscapes. The cruise along the Li River was a highlight for many and took us to the lovely town of Yangshou, where we stayed for a couple of nights. We met up with Dr Shou – a wonderful name for a traditional 'barefoot doctor' – and cycled (or took buggies) through the countryside to villages and farms. I managed to fall off my bike – much to the amusement of all! An extraordinary *son et lumiere* show was a fitting end to our stay here.

We flew back to Shanghai for a final evening and marvelled at a performance by the famous Shanghai Acrobats. Afterwards some of us went on for farewell drinks on the hotel roof, where we enjoyed a panoramic night view of the magnificent lights of amazing Shanghai.

A wonderful, memorable tour was over. It was at about this stage that I started to have second thoughts about this being a 'one off' tour for me. Suffice to say, I am returning to China to lead a second tour for Jon Baines Tours later this year.

Peter Brinsden will be leading the Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Fertility Tour to China on 10–25 November 2012. The tour is run in association with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. For further information on the tour, please call 020 7223 9485, email [info@jonbainestours.co.uk](mailto:info@jonbainestours.co.uk) or visit [www.jonbainestours.co.uk/oandg](http://www.jonbainestours.co.uk/oandg)