

The South African Archaeological Society

Trans-Vaal Branch

20 November 2014

Dear ArchSoc members and friends

ARCHSOC TOUR TO CHINA: WESTERN HIGHLANDS AND THE GOBI DESERT, APRIL 2015

Following our highly successful tours to Peru and Bolivia last year and to West Africa's Benin and Togo this year, it is time to give you details of the society's international tour in 2015.

In 1998, ArchSoc members visited eastern and central China with Lilith Wynne. This time we will not touch on Beijing, Shanghai, etc., but go to south-west and north-west China only, the Sichuan and Gansu provinces that lie up against Tibet. Our itinerary will only make one deviation and that is to the ancient city of Xi'an with its stupendous archaeological heritage, the Terracotta Warriors, amongst others.

The dates of this 17-day archaeological, geological, historical and cultural tour are from 24 April to 10 May 2015. It will be operated by ArchFox Tours in conjunction with the Trans-Vaal Branch of ArchSoc. The tour will be led by myself, while Professor Morris Viljoen, the well-known geologist formerly with the University of the Witwatersrand, will accompany us as the geological expert. Morris was instrumental in proposing the routing for the tour.

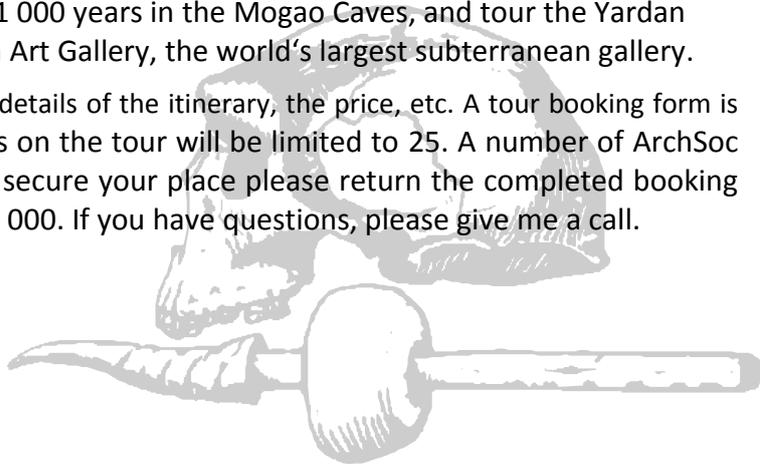
Highlights in Sichuan will include Chengdu, one of China's richest cities in terms of archaeological and cultural interest, the Panda Research Centre, the holy mountain of Emei Shan, the world's tallest Buddha statue in Leshan, the amazing 3rd century BC Dujiangyan Irrigation Project, Long March history, and scenic Tibetan highlands including the stunning geology of Nine Tibetan Village Valley (Jiuzhaigou) and Yellow Dragon Valley (Huanglong).

In Gansu Province, starting on the Yellow River, we will travel along the Gobi Desert and the ancient Silk Route, visit the Labrang Buddhist Monastery, which houses the largest number of monks outside Tibet, travel by overnight train to Dunhuang to see some of the finest examples of Buddhist art of the last 1 000 years in the Mogao Caves, and tour the Yarden National Geological Park and Wei-Jin Art Gallery, the world's largest subterranean gallery.

The enclosed programme provides full details of the itinerary, the price, etc. A tour booking form is also attached. The number of persons on the tour will be limited to 25. A number of ArchSoc members have already booked – to secure your place please return the completed booking form and transfer your deposit of R5 000. If you have questions, please give me a call.

With best wishes

REINOUW BOERS
Tel: 011 803 2681



SA Archaeological Society
PO Box 41050, Craighall, 2024

Phone: 072-669-3972
Email: secretary@archaeology.org.za

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