

An aerial photograph of a mountainous region in Southeast China, featuring several large, circular, earthen fortresses with dark tiled roofs. The fortresses are situated in a valley, surrounded by lush green forests and terraced fields. The landscape is hilly, with a mix of green vegetation and exposed brown soil on some slopes. The fortresses have a central courtyard and are built into the hillside. The overall scene is a blend of natural beauty and ancient architecture.

TanSuo Cultural Travel

# Explore the Ancient Fortresses of Southeast China





## Our unforgettable tour will allow you to engage with the unique Hakka and Hoklo culture and explore a whole new side of China

Nestled deep within the mountainous countryside of **Guangdong province** and **Fujian province** are two distinct yet equally special types of fortresses, where ancient people would seek refuge during wartime and hide from roving bandits.

Why are these fortresses unique to these places? And why have we chosen these two types of buildings as the focus of our trip?

Apart from these fantastic works of architecture, the culture of Fujian and Guangdong is also incredibly distinct compared with other provinces in China. If you have a Chinese friend whose family has been living overseas for more than two generations, it is highly likely that their family will originally be from one of these two provinces. With their location on China's balmy southeastern coast, these two provinces represented the perfect place for **the first Chinese emigrants to make their way to different countries throughout the world**. During the middle of the 19th century, emigration reached its peak and many young people from these provinces went to work in North America as laborers.



## During this tour, we will

1. Experience local life in the Tulou of southern Fujian province;
2. Witness the influence that Western culture has had on the ancient towns of Guangdong province;
3. Marvel at the breathtakingly beautiful scenery of the rolling mountains and verdant forests in southern China;
4. Sample authentic Cantonese food, Fujian-style cuisine, and subtropical fruits;
5. Try a variety of local teas as part of a traditional Fujian tea ceremony;
6. Discover the history of the Hakka and Hoklo people;
7. Feel intoxicated by the modern city of Guangzhou.

Fujian and Guangdong are known throughout China as the homeland of the **Hakka** and **Hoklo** people. They are not officially categorised as ethnic minorities, since they are both considered sub-groups of the Han ethnic majority. They do have, however, their own unique cultures and dialects, which are considered by many to be languages in their own right, since they're largely unintelligible to most Mandarin Chinese speakers!

On this incredible tour, we'll be exploring the homeland of the local Hakka and Hoklo people in order to discover how they've preserved their venerable traditions and how Western culture has been influencing these areas since the 19th century.



**Participants Max: 8**

**Duration: 14 days and 13 nights**

**Tours in 2021:** 15th Nov - 28th Nov

**Tours in 2022:** 11th Mar - 24th Mar / 20th Nov - 3rd Dec

## Highlights

### The Unique Earthen Fortresses of Fujian Province -- Tulou

You may never have heard of the Tulou of Fujian province, but there is a famous story about them that you may find hard to believe! In 1986, during the Cold War period, US satellites found many strange circular and square shaped structures resembling a group of nuclear bases hidden in the valleys of southern China, near Taiwan. Fearing an impending nuclear attack from Communist China, the US sent a unit of CIA spies to China to investigate, and eventually they were embarrassed to find that the “nuclear bases” were just simple Tulou.

The Fujian Tulou or Fujian Earthen Structure is a type of dwelling built by the Hakka and Hoklo people in the mountainous regions of southern Fujian. A Tulou is a large, enclosed structure that is typically circular or rectangular in shape and is used to house multiple families. They are usually between 2 to 5 storeys high and the largest Tulou can hold up to a hundred families! Every family in the Tulou community enjoys perfect equality because every room in a Tulou is the same size and has exactly the same design.



The history of the Tulou is intimately connected to the Hakka people, who were once newcomers to the region and needed a way to protect themselves. The design for the Tulou was developed from the 14th century right through to the 16th century, and reached its peak between the late Ming Dynasty and the late Qing Dynasty (17th – 18th centuries), because robbers and thieves were running rampant throughout the southern Chinese countryside. The Hakka and Hoklo people improved their homes gradually so that they eventually became a perfect defense against attackers and trespassers. Read more about [Fujian Tulou](#)



## Highlights

### The Clock Tower Style Fortresses of Guangdong province -- Diaolou

The Diaolou or “Clock Towers” of Guangdong province are stunning multi-storey watchtowers that are predominantly concentrated in the county of Kaiping. Although they are virtually unknown outside of China, their historical importance to the region meant they were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.

Construction of these unusual fortresses began during the Ming Dynasty and continued right through until the early 20th century. Their construction reached a peak during the 1920s and 1930s, when wealthy overseas Chinese emigrants began sending financial aid back to their hometowns in Guangdong province. During this time, it is estimated that there were over 3,000 Diaolou in the region! Many of them, however, have since been tragically abandoned and now only around 1,800 remain standing. During the late 19th and early 20th century, due to poverty and instability, Kaiping became a centre for major emigration abroad. The construction of the local Diaolou thus rose out of the emigrants desire to protect their families, villages, or clan lineages, as the region was frequently terrorized by bandits. These fortified watchtowers were predominantly built for protective purposes, although they occasionally also served as living quarters. Some of them were funded by a single family, while others were the result of several families or even entire village communities banding together.



What makes the Diaolou so distinct, even from the Tulou of Fujian province, is their unusual architectural style. As overseas Chinese emigrants came back to Kaiping, they brought with them ideas and trends from the West. This is why so many of the Diaolou incorporate features from Western architectural styles, which are seamlessly blended with more traditional Chinese characteristics. Read more about [Diaolou](#)



## Highlights

### Foreign Trade and Cultural Influence in the 19th Century -- Qilou

As we move further through history, we see the advent of the Qilou and colonial-style buildings in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian.

Qilou appeared sometime around the late 19th century and can be found in many regions throughout southern China, such as Guangdong province, Macau, and Hong Kong. The style originated from the bustling city of Guangzhou, which was a commercial port used frequently for foreign trade. The foreign influence on this style of architecture is palpable, as it resembles a perfect intermingling of traditional Chinese and Western styles of architecture.

The earliest Qilou were masterminded by wealthy businessmen to serve as stylish shops, so you'll find many of them in the old business sector of Guangzhou, Chaoshan, and Zhangzhou. While the Qilou in Guangzhou and Chaoshan exhibit more Western features, the ones found in the city of Zhangzhou in Fujian province were built in a far more traditionally Chinese style, since Zhangzhou was not subjected to as much Western influence. Read more about [Qilou](#)





## Highlights

### The Ancient Towns Where Time Stands Still -- Chikan

The last authentic old town Chikan represents the historic heart of Kaiping. The town was originally founded in 1649 and immediately rose to become one of the most important maritime trading hubs in the region due to its proximity to the Tan River, which is part of the well-known Pearl River Delta. This convenient transport link resulted in Chikan simultaneously becoming a centre for emigration during the 19th century, as many locals were prompted to head overseas due to population pressure and poverty.

Thanks to the combined effort of wealthy local merchants and emigrants who made their fortune overseas, Chikan benefited from an influx of investment during the early 20th century and rapidly rose to become one of the largest and most prosperous market towns in southern China. While the Tan River has since become impassable, the town is now famed for its beautifully preserved Qilou and Diaolou. There are currently over 600 Qilou and around 200 Diaolou in Chikan, including Yinglong Lou or “Greeting the Dragon Tower”, the oldest surviving Diaolou in China.

This small town, however, is not without its controversy! It was historically under the sway of two large clans, the Situ and the Guan, who resided on the upper and lower reaches of the Tan River respectively. These two clans were



notorious for their vicious rivalry and were in constant competition with one another. One of the greatest examples of this rivalry took place in 1923, when the Situ clan spent over 30,000 silver dollars building a public library known as “Situ’s Library”. Not to be outdone, the Guan clan matched this feat by constructing a library of their own, known as “Guan’s Library”, which was opened to the public in 1931.

Now may be your last chance to see Chikan in its original condition since it is currently undergoing renovation as part of a government initiative. It will be another beautiful tourist attraction, not the last original old town. Read more about [Chikan](#)



## Highlights

### Breathtaking Natural Scenery



Thanks to its mountainous terrain, subtropical climate, and fertile soil, Fujian province is blanketed in tea fields and is one of the most prominent regions for tea production in China. Alongside the lush tea bushes that wind their way up the various mountains, Fujian province is also renowned for its beautiful rice terraces, which have been carved directly into the hills and mountains of the countryside.

The province of Guangdong, on the other hand, is characterized by its plethora of rivers, shimmering lakes, and smooth low hills. In particular, the Pearl River Delta represents both the natural and cultural heart of the province. It is also one of the few provinces where you can find the rare Danxia landforms, which are unique to China.

### Stay in a Tulou Hotel



If you want to gain an authentic insight into the culture of Fujian province, just visiting the local attractions and villages simply isn't enough! Our tour offers you the opportunity to get an up-close and personal look at the lifestyle of the Hoklo and Hakka people and their unique culture; an experience that we guarantee you'll never forget. During our tour, we will be staying in a Tulou that has been partly converted into a hotel and another Tulou that accepts visitors but is still predominantly residential. Together, we can discover what daily life is like for the local people.



## Highlights

### Sample Authentic Cantonese Food and Indulge in the Flavours of Fujian - Two of the Eight Great Culinary Traditions of Chinese Cuisine

If you're a big fan of delicious Cantonese Dim Sum in Chinatown, imagine how exciting it will be to try the real thing in Guangdong province! While the dim sum in the UK is not necessarily bad, nothing beats the authentic taste of dim sum in its home province.

Since our aim is to introduce you to the best food that the region has to offer, we'll be heading to a foodie haven known as Chaoshan. This region is regarded as the traditional heartland for Cantonese cuisine. It has become so famous that there was even a documentary made by Netflix about the food in this region called "Flavorful Origins".

The term "Chaoshan" is actually used to refer to two traditional towns in Guangdong with long and venerable histories: Chaozhou and Shantou. They are both located in the northwest of Guangdong province, meaning they are also conveniently close to the border with Fujian province. The natives of Chaoshan have their own dialect, which is distinct from Cantonese, and are known throughout China as the Teochew people. While they are not recognized as a separate ethnic minority, the Teochew people are regarded as a subgroup of the Han ethnic majority, much like the Hakka and Hoklo people of Fujian province. Read more about the [Teochew people](#)



The cuisine of Fujian province, meanwhile, may not be as internationally famous as that of Guangdong province, but it is renowned for its delicious seafood dishes and bears a noticeable similarity to the cuisine of Taiwan. The sumptuous signature dishes of Min Cuisine are beautifully complemented by the locally grown types of Chinese tea.



## Highlights

### The Various Local Teas and Tropical Fruits

If you love Chinese tea, then Fujian and Guangzhou are the provinces for you. In fact, Fujian province is so renowned for its tea that it is even home to its own “Tea Museum”!

A wide array of top quality Chinese teas are grown and refined in Fujian province by the Hakka and Hoklo people. In the remote villages, they make tea not only from traditional tea leaves, but also from different fruits and wild flowers. These unique types of tea have a light fragrance but a strong, sweet, and robust flavour that is sure to tantalise your taste-buds. According to traditional Chinese medicine, each type of tea is believed to have different medicinal properties depending on its ingredients, but you won’t need a spoonful of sugar to make this delightful medicine go down!

While the art of Gongfu Tea or “Kung-Fu Tea” is popular throughout China, it is widely believed to have originated from the city of Chaozhou. To this day, most families in Chaozhou will have a special tea table in their home and a traditional tea set that is specifically designed for serving Gongfu Tea. Read more about [Gongfu Tea](#)

The bountiful countryside of southeast China is brimming with many exotic types of fruit that you may have never even heard of before! Take your taste-buds on an adventure and try a few of the locally grown fruits during your trip.





## Highlights

### The History of the Hakka and Hoklo people

You may not realise it, but many famous people throughout Chinese history were actually from the Hakka ethnic subgroup! Some notably famous Hakka people include Sun Yat-sen, one of the most influential figures in contemporary Chinese history, and his father-in-law, the rich business man Charlie Soong, who was also the father-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek.

The term Hakka or “Kejia” (客家) means “guest families” and was initially coined during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) in reference to people or “guests” who had left their homelands and settled in other parts of China. The Hakka earned this unusual title because, over a period of more than a thousand years, they were subject to a series of approximately five forced migrations.

Although they are distinguished from Han people by their language, their unusual architecture, and a few other quirky cultural traits, it is important to note that the Hakka are not among China’s 55 resident ethnic minorities, but are in fact a subgroup of the Han ethnic majority. Read more about the [\*Hakka People\*](#)

Similarly, the Hoklo people are also considered to be a subgroup of the Han group, in spite of their cultural distinctiveness. Their language is a branch of Min-nan or



“Southern Min” Chinese, which is a dialect that is mutually unintelligible to Standard Chinese and Cantonese. It is also the main dialect spoken in Taiwan.

Hoklo people are believed to have originated from lands bordering the Yellow River in northern and central China, much like the Hakka, and settled primarily in southern Fujian province, although communities of Hoklo people can be found in Guangdong and Hainan. Read more about the [\*Hoklo People\*](#)



## Itinerary

### Day 1 Meet in Guangzhou

#### Meeting Point: Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport

We will arrange one airport pick-up in the afternoon and another airport pick-up in the evening, depending on the flight times of all of the participants.

#### Please Note:

A late pick up (after 19:00) service is also available, but there will be a fee depending on the time.

If you decide to take the train from another city in China to Guangzhou, please let us know in advance and we can meet you either at the hotel or the railway station. If you need any help making travel arrangements, please don't hesitate to ask us. The pick-up service fee will depend on the railway station and the arrival time.

**Food:** Not included. Since some participants may arrive late or may not have an appetite after the long flight, we've left this evening's dinner arrangements up to you. Our guide, however, will be on hand to recommend restaurants and help you translate if necessary.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Guangzhou city centre





## Itinerary

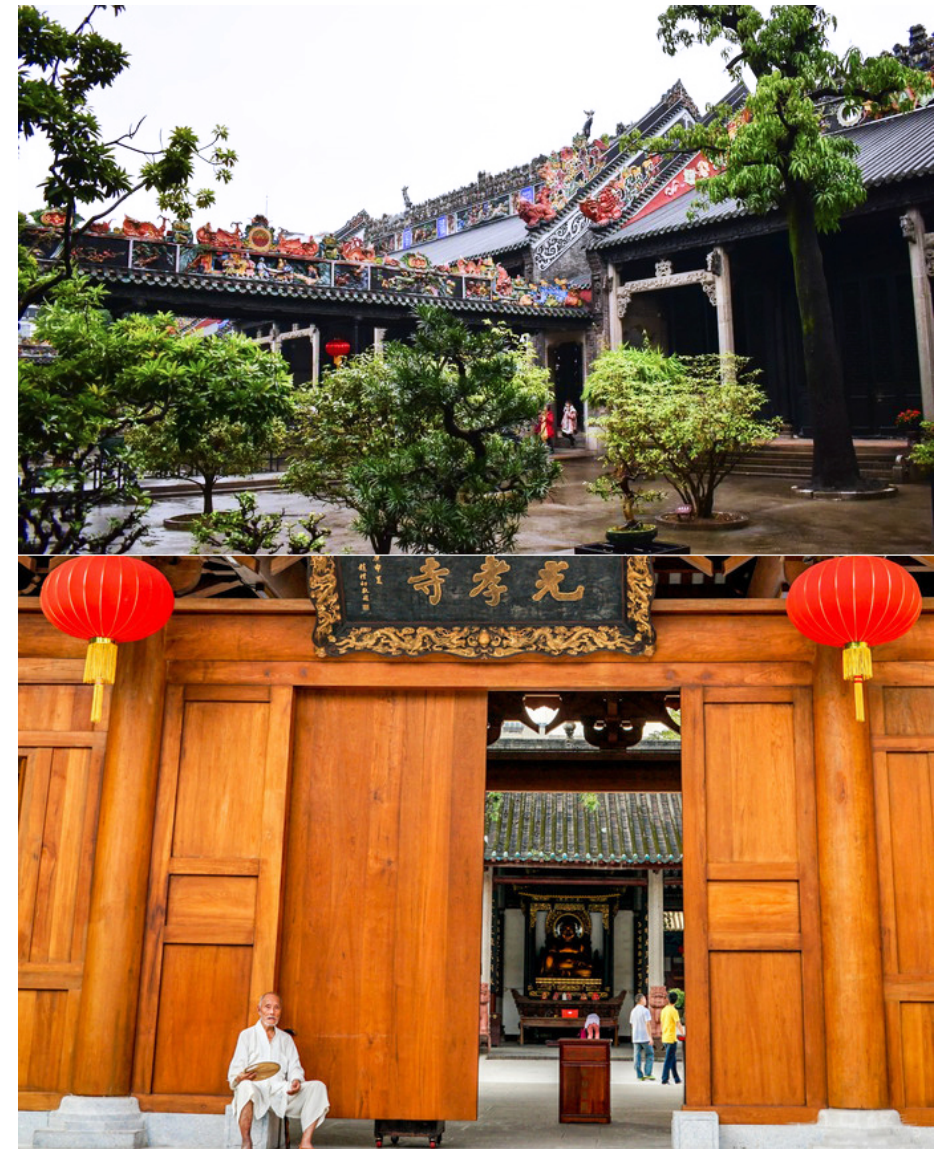
### Day 2 Exploring the Old Parts of Guangzhou [Part I]

We will begin our first day of the tour by visiting an old temple with a history that stretches back over 1,700 years!

The **Guangxiao Temple** ranks as one of the four main temples in the city of Guangzhou. It was originally built in 233 AD on the site of a pre-existing palace belonging to King Zhao Jiande of Nanyue (204 BC-111BC), which was a kingdom that historically covered large parts of southern China and northern Vietnam.

During the tumultuous Three Kingdoms Period (220-280 AD) of Chinese history, a scholar and official named Yu Fan from the Kingdom of Wu was banished from his home and forced to live in this abandoned palace, which he set up as a school so that he could educate the local people. After his death, his family converted the palace into a temple in order to honor his memory. During the Tang (618-907 AD) and Song (960-1279 AD) dynasties, the temple was expanded, meaning several of its buildings, pagodas, and halls were built during this time. Just like all old buildings, Guangxiao Temple could not escape the ravages of time and has had to be rebuilt or restored several times throughout its long history.

Once we've finished exploring Guangxiao Temple, we'll pay a visit to a traditional Han style complex known as the **Chen Clan Academy**. This academy was originally built in 1894 and was designed to be a private school for the children of the local Chen clan, although it also served as the Ancestral Hall for the clan. This luxurious complex consists of 19 buildings and 6 courtyards that are connected by corridors. The wealth of the Chen clan is evidenced by the many elaborate woodcuttings, stone carvings, artworks, and pottery that can be found throughout the complex.





## Itinerary

### Day 2 Exploring the Old Parts of Guangzhou [Part II]

After admiring the beautiful academy of the Chen clan, we'll stop off at the **Guangdong Folk Art Museum**, where we can admire exhibitions of traditional folk art from the region.

Once our foray into the art world is finished, we will take a walk through a lovely local park called **Lychee Bay**. Unfortunately we won't be able to walk through the lychee fields, but we will still be able to admire the stunning views by the four lakes and the old buildings in the park. It's the ideal place to witness what local life is like in the city. Local people in Guangzhou often gather in the park to give folk opera performances, so we may catch one if we're lucky!

In the afternoon, we'll head to **the old city centre of Guangzhou**, where you'll see elegant Qilou on either sides of the road. It will be hard to believe that we're still in Guangzhou, one of the most modern cities in China!

**What's Included:** Entrance ticket to the Guangxiao Temple and the Chen Clan Academy

**Dinner:** We will enjoy a welcome dinner together, where we will sample traditional Cantonese cuisine.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Guangzhou city centre





## Itinerary

### Day 3 Travel Back in Time

We will take the public coach to Kaiping, and then change to a local bus to Chikan.

We guarantee you'll be amazed as we arrive into this small town, because you will struggle to find the signs of modernity that are so characteristic of Guangzhou. The sight of this quaint ancient town is sure to be something you will never forget! We will also get to experience how rapidly China is developing.

After checking in to our hotel, we'll head out to explore this picturesque town.

Firstly, let's go to the historically affluent part of the town, which is named **European Street**. All of the buildings along this street follow European styles of architecture and are located on the bank of the river, meaning they benefited from the most beautiful view and were thus more expensive than other residences throughout the town. In the past, there were various traditional local snacks for sale along this street; now if we are lucky, we may still be able to find one or two simple food stalls where we can try them. Try not to be too sad about the renovation of this old town. At least you will still get to see its original face before it disappears completely!

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel or local guest house in Chikan





## Itinerary

### Day 4 Welcome to the Diaolou!

In the morning, we will take a taxi to the **Li Garden**, where we'll find some of the most luxurious Diaolou, alongside six villas, two gardens, several waterways, and a number of bridges.

The Li Garden was built in 1936 by a wealthy businessman called Xie Weili. He deftly combined Western architecture with the traditional Chinese style of garden. Within the complex, you will also be able to admire delicate wood-carvings and stunning ceramic statues.

After exploring this colossal and beautiful complex, we will take the shuttle bus to **the village of Zili**.

There are 15 Diaolou in the village of Zili, most of which were built during the 1920s and 1930s. Much like other Diaolou throughout Guangdong, the construction of these Diaolou were funded by Chinese people living overseas, who wanted to protect their families. These 15 Diaolou are widely considered to be the most beautiful among all the Diaolou in Guangdong province. They are all around 4 to 5 storeys high, but each one has its own unique features. We will concentrate on two of the Diaolou in the town, which are believed to be the most magnificent. While we are admiring the Diaolou, you'll be able to explore the picturesque village of Zili, which is emblematic of typical villages in the southern Chinese countryside.

In the afternoon, we will take the shuttle bus back to the Li Garden and then take a taxi back to Chikan.



**What's Included:** Entrance ticket to the Li Garden and the village of Zili

**Dinner:** Included. We will sample some of the signature dishes from the local cuisine together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel or local guest house in Chikan



## Itinerary

### Day 5 Exploring More Diaolou and Hiking in a Bamboo Forest

Today will be quite relaxing. In the morning, we'll take a taxi to explore another Diaolou complex. **The village of Majianglong** is much smaller than Zili, but you'll soon discover that it is a paradise nestled with the forests of bamboo. As we get closer to the village, you'll see the Diaolou peering out from behind the bamboo leaves. Lying on the bank of Tan River, the village of Majianglong is embedded in the beauty of nature. Unfortunately, during the 1960s, the area was plagued by three devastating floods, but luckily the villagers were able to retreat into the tall Diaolou, which saved many lives.

Much like the village of Zili, every family in Majianglong has relatives overseas and they are each responsible for building one of the 13 Diaolou to be found in the village. The largest Diaolou in Majianglong was constructed using contributions from every family in the village and is a staggering 7 storeys (21 metres) in height. Every family has a room in this colossal Diaolou, which they historically used as a safe haven during bandit attacks. We won't rush through the village. Instead, let's take it slowly, and really enjoy the delicate combination between architecture and nature. After our guided tour, you're free to explore this "bamboo village" at your leisure.

In the late afternoon, we will return to Chikan, so that we can explore the residential part. This part is increasingly shrinking due to the ongoing renovation project, so it may seem like a ghost town now. It will be our last chance to experience the traditional way of life in this tranquil old town.



**What's Included:** Entrance ticket to the village of Majianglong

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel or local guest house in Chikan



## Itinerary

### Day 6 The Western Impact on Guangzhou

The whole morning will be spent traveling back to Guangzhou. First, we will take the bus to Kaiping, and then transfer to a larger coach back to Guangzhou.

After checking in at the hotel and having lunch, we'll head out to visit one of the most marvelous works of architecture in Guangzhou, **the Sacred Heart Cathedral**! Construction of the cathedral began in 1863, but this colossal project wasn't completed until 1888! It was sponsored by Napoleon III and thus it was designed after several famous cathedrals in France. Its façade was modelled after the Basilica of St. Clotilde in Paris, while the nave and apse were inspired by the Tours Cathedral in the French city of Tours. It is the largest Gothic cathedral both in China specifically and Southeast Asia generally. You may find it is quite a special experience to visit a Gothic cathedral in the Far East!

Our next stop will demonstrate the impact that the British Empire had on the city, in particular due to the British Concession that was granted to the UK during the 19th century. From 1942 to 1961, many British people lived in the district called **Shamian Island**, particularly trade merchants, but also scholars, priests, and even soldiers. Nowadays there are over 50 colonial buildings still standing in this part of the city.

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Guangzhou city centre





## Itinerary

### Day 7 From the Cantonese to the Hoklo People

On this day, we will have the opportunity to board a high-speed train, one of the most famous technological advances in China. It will take us about five hours in total to get from Guangzhou to the traditional Hoklo city of **Zhangzhou**, with a transfer in the bustling trade city of Shenzhen.

Zhangzhou was first established as a county sometime between 502 and 515 AD but was not instated as a prefecture until 686. From the 9th century right through to the 13th century, the city rapidly began to grow as one of the major trading ports on China's southeast coast. During the Song Dynasty (960-1279), lucrative trade between Zhangzhou, Indonesia, and other countries in Southeast Asia allowed it to expand exponentially.

Throughout the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it continued to prosper by trading its famous, locally produced sugar and silk textiles with the Philippines. With sugary treats in their mouths and silk on their skin, the Zhangzhou locals were enjoying the height of luxury! In 1604, the city was first visited by Dutch ships, heralding the much longed for European investment and prosperity that Xiamen and Quanzhou both enjoyed, but around about the same time the river began silting up. Tragically, this meant that the flourishing trade industry that Zhangzhou had once enjoyed gradually shifted further downstream towards other cities. Nowadays, in spite of its historic buildings and vibrant local culture, Zhangzhou is not popular with tourists, which means we'll get to enjoy a real local experience without the crowds! Read more about [Zhangzhou](#).

**Dinner:** Included. We will sample some of the signature dishes from the local cuisine together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Zhangzhou city centre





## Itinerary

### Day 8 Welcome to the Tulou!

We will take the high speed train and then take the local bus to **the village of Yunshuiyao**, which is widely considered to be the most beautiful Hakka village in Fujian province. This is predominantly due to the fact that Yunshuiyao is home to a staggering 53 Tulou! There are several banyan trees on the riverside, many of which are hundreds of years old and some of which are over one thousand years old. Amongst them lies the biggest banyan tree in Fujian province, which has branches that are over 30 meters (98 ft.) long. To put that into perspective, each branch is longer than the average Blue Whale!

You will have the opportunity to explore the village freely, but first we will make a point of visiting three magnificent Tulou that are located in Yunshuiyao. The first is **Heigui Lou**, which was miraculously built on marshland. Let's just hope it doesn't sink any time soon!

The second is **Huaiyuan Lou**, which was built in 1909 and is a typical example of a Tulou that follows the "connected rooms" design. Because of its short history, the whole building is well preserved and thus serves as a good example of what a circular Tulou should look like. It is four storeys high and has a diameter of 38 meters. Each of its floors has 34 rooms. Nowadays most of residents have moved out and only 60 people still live inside this Tulou.

The third and final Tulou we will visit together is **Cuimei Lou**, which was built in 1831 and is thus one of the older Tulou in the village. This Tulou is entirely residential, so tourists rarely come to visit it and we'll probably have the place to ourselves. Read more about [Yunshuiyao](#)



**What's Included:** Entrance ticket to the village of Yunshuiyao; entrance ticket to Hegui Lou; entrance ticket to Huaiyuan Lou; and entrance ticket to Cuimei Lou

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

**Accommodation:** Featured Tulou Hotel with private bathroom in Yunshuiyao



## Itinerary

### Day 9 Witness the Most Famous Tulou

Today we will take a private minivan to visit three villages and will stay overnight in the village of Tianluokeng, which is home to the famous “Four Dishes and One Soup” Tulou cluster.

Firstly, we will visit **the village of Taxia**, which is split by a river that is lined by over 20 traditional Tulou. Taxia is a sleepy village that sees very little traffic and the locals, who have long become accustomed to rural life, while away the hours fishing, farming, and drinking tea. Sometimes it really is the simple things that make life worth living! The village was established in 1426 by the Zhang family but most of the remaining buildings were constructed during the 18th century, with the oldest, Fuxing Lou, having been built in 1631. Read more about [Taxia](#)

Our second stop will be the village named **Xiabianliao**, which is a tiny village with less than a hundred residents. You may be surprised to find that, in spite of its size, it is home to one of the most famous Tulou in Fujian province, known locally as **“the zigzag building”**. It got this name because the wooden post structure within the Tulou, which is meant to be vertical, appears to zigzag left and right on the 3rd and 4th floors. This bizarre phenomenon was not intentional but was in fact due to an error made in measuring the building materials. Don’t let the unsteady appearance fool you; this Tulou has survived more natural disasters, wars, and sieges than you can count! (Read more about [Xiabianliao](#))

The final stop will be **the “Four Dishes and One Soup” Tulou cluster** located in the village of Tianluokeng. In the evening, you will get to experience what a real room in a Tulou is like, without the modern amenities we enjoyed in Yunshuiyao! This Tulou is a residential Tulou, not a hotel, so you’ll get the opportunity to see what life is truly like for the locals who live in these phenomenal fortresses.



**What’s Included:** Entrance ticket to the village of Taxia; entrance ticket to the village of Xiabianliao; and entrance ticket to the village of Tianluokeng

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

**Accommodation:** Tulou Hotel without private bathroom in Tianluokeng



## Itinerary

### Day 10 Experience the Tranquility of Life in the Mountains

We will spend the whole morning exploring **the village of Tianluokeng**. You can either choose to hike every trail in this village, or simply have a cup of locally grown tea and enjoy the spectacular view of the mountains.

The famous “Four Dishes and One Soup” Tulou cluster in Tianluokeng earned its unusual nickname because it resembles the traditional layout for an average family dinner in China, as it is made up of one square-shaped Tulou in the centre with three round and one oval-shaped Tulou surrounding it.

The square Tulou in the centre is known as “Buyun Lou” or “Reaching for the Clouds Building” and is the oldest of the set, having been built in 1796. Hechang Lou was built not long thereafter and, in 1930, the circular Zhenyang Lou followed. In 1936, Ruiyun Lou was constructed and the last of the bunch, Wenchang Lou, was completed in 1966. The sheer size of these Tulou is a miracle in itself, as each one may have taken upwards of two years to build. The real question is: Which one will we be staying in overnight? We’ll leave that as a pleasant surprise! (Read more about [Tianluokeng](#))

In the late afternoon, we will take a local bus to Nanjing.

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Nanjing city centre





## Itinerary

### Day 11 Prepare to Try the Best Cantonese Food!

In the morning, we will take the high-speed train from Nanjing to **Chaozhou**. The most beautiful place in Chaozhou is widely considered to be **Paifang Street**, which is home to 22 elaborately decorated Memorial Archways and also several old Qilou. We will also pay a visit to the **Huang Jilue Ancestral Hall**, which is famed for its elegant wood-carvings that are supposedly unlike any other in the world!

After we've passed through **the Tower Gate** of the old part of town, you'll get a clear view of the stunning **Guangji Bridge**, which ranks as one of China's four most famous ancient bridges. Guangji Bridge is particularly unusual amongst the ancient bridges in China, as part of it was originally a pontoon bridge, meaning it literally floated on the river and could thus be moved to make way for incoming boats. In its long history, it has been renovated several times, so that now it is made up of an amalgam of bridge types, consisting of a beam bridge, an arch bridge, and a pontoon bridge. There are twelve pavilions located along the bridge that were all constructed in different styles.

That being said, the most important feature of Chaozhou is its excellent cuisine! In the afternoon, we will try several typical local snacks. For dinner, let's treat ourselves! We'll enjoy a feast together made up of delicious signature dishes of authentic Chaoshan cuisine. You may be surprised to find that we'll be eating in an open market, but this is the best place to find real Chaoshan cuisine!

**What's Included:** Entrance ticket to the Huang Jilue Ancestral Hall and to Guangji Bridge



**Dinner:** Included. We will sample some of the signature dishes from the local cuisine together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Chaozhou city centre



## Itinerary

### Day 12 Traditional Food in an Old Teochew Town

In the morning, we will take the train to **Shantou** for a day-trip. This town is even older than Chaozhou and boasts the largest number of Qilou in China! It is much smaller than Guangzhou and it is home to far more historic buildings, but you may be surprised to find that there are even Roman and Baroque-style mansions in this quaint old town.

First, we'll pay a visit to the **Mazu Temple**. Prepare to be dazzled by the gorgeous ceramic decorations on the exterior and interior of the temple itself!

Mazu is a sea goddess that is hugely popular and widely worshipped throughout Southeast Asia, particularly in the south part of Fujian province and in the Chaoshan region. The Mazu Temple in Shantou is a typical South Min-style temple and exhibits the characteristic ceramic figures on the roof, but its decorative features are far more detailed than other temples of the same style. Read more about [Shantou](#)  
In the afternoon, we will return to Chaozhou and continue sampling this city's culinary delights!

**What's Included:** Entrance ticket to the Mazu Temple

**Dinner:** Not included. Guests are free to explore the area and sample the local food themselves, or our guide can help arrange for you to have dinner together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Chaozhou city centre





## Itinerary

### Day 13 The Modern Metropolis of Guangzhou

In the morning, we will take the high speed train from Chaozhou back to Guangzhou. After we've had lunch, we'll have a short rest at the hotel and conserve our energy for the night tour of Guangzhou.

In the evening, we'll head out to experience the modern side of this grand metropolis. First, we will go to the river bank in order to admire the colourful lights of the skyscrapers and take a look at Guangzhou's most iconic landmark, the 604-metre (1,982 ft.) tall **Canton Tower**. Once we've taken a leisurely walk along the river and drank in the multi-coloured splendor of the surrounding buildings, we will end the tour on a high and enjoy a large dinner together made up of signature dishes from traditional Cantonese cuisine!

**Dinner:** Included. We will sample some of the signature dishes from the local cuisine together.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotel in Guangzhou city centre

### Day 14 Your Onward Journey

On your final day with us, you can either choose to embark on your return journey home or continue your travels. If you decide to continue traveling, we'll be on hand to help you book any travel tickets or hotels should you need us to. If you need any recommendations on where to travel, please do not hesitate to ask us.

In the morning, we will escort you to the train station or airport with plenty of time for you to catch your train or flight.

If your flight isn't until the afternoon, please let us know and we can arrange some extra sightseeing in Guangzhou for you.





## Prices and What's Included

**Unlike other tours in China, we do not ask you to tip your tour guides and drivers each day. Instead, we pay our tour guides and drivers a fair wage, so they do not need to ask for tips.**

**Cost pp:** £2,350/7-8 people in one group; £2,750/4-6 people in one group; £3,850/2-3 people in one group.

**Single supp:** £500 (Please be advised that, if you are the last person joining the tour or if there is no one in the group who you can share with, you may need to pay for the single supplement. We will advise you if this is the case when you enquire about the tour).

**What's Included:** 13 nights of shared accommodation (based on 2 people per room at hotels); all transportation costs during the designated tour time; breakfast every day; all entrances fees to the designated attractions within the tour; 5 dinners; and services of one of our tour guides for the entirety of the tour.

**What's Not Included:** Flights; visa; travel insurance; lunches and some dinners; the cost of taxi called personally.

If you like the look of this tour but would prefer to take it privately, we can tailor it to your specifications and design a bespoke tour for you or your group. Simply contact us on [info@asiaculturaltravel.co.uk](mailto:info@asiaculturaltravel.co.uk) for a free email consultation with one of our travel experts.





## How can I sign up to this tour?

**Step 1** ⇒ Contact us directly to talk about the tour in more detail.

**Step 2** ⇒ Book online and pay the £100 deposit. If you have an exclusive discount code, please enter it into the Enquiry box.

**Step 3** ⇒ We will send you the invoice confirming you have been booked on the tour. Once you receive the invoice, you have 30 days to pay an additional £500, which will secure your place on the tour.

**Step 4** ⇒ Please note that the final cost of the tour will be based on the number of participants and will be split into two payments. The first payment must be made within 3 months of the tour's start date and is based on the minimum price of the tour minus your £600 deposit. After that, you will need to pay the remaining balance one month before the tour is due to leave based on the tour subscription. In the meantime, we will advise you on how to apply for your visa and keep you updated on the subscription of the tour.

**Step 5** ⇒ Once you have made the final payment, we will send you our exclusive tour e-book, which contains a detailed itinerary of the tour and in-depth information on the areas we'll be visiting.

**Step 6** ⇒ Prepare yourself for an unforgettable adventure!

**We are happy to answer any questions you may have and we will always keep you up to date on the progress of the tour subscription.**







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