

Study Tours

Study groups are a great way to travel in the region, broadening your experience while improving your cross-cultural skills. When in tidy little Singapore do you get to pee squatting behind a parked bus or eat fresh-baked bread while strolling down main street? How else would you learn how to pack clothes for nine days into one small wheelie bag, or discover that those little bottles of hotel shampoo are perfect for hand laundry, or that the local word for 'hairdryer' is 'blow-wind-machine'. We visit temples and mosques, hill stations and dazzling fields of blue poppies, Zen monasteries and orangutan reserves, learning about history, religion, flora/fauna, architecture, geology, map-reading, indigenous foods, animal husbandry with just enough free time to bargain for those local arts and crafts that often follow us home.

When we asked recent Study Tour participants to name some of their favourite memories, here's what we heard:

- "The onomatopoeic sound of Chinese turnstiles with the passing of every paying guest: 'Keqing! Keqing!' [Yes, it does sound like a coin dropping, but what was really being said was 'Ke qing' or [Dear] guest, please [enter]."
- "Dinner at Gangtey Palace [Bhutan] with everyone dressed in our hosts' best *kiras* and *ghos*, while members Virginia and Gaylord regaled us with their Ditzzy Ditties on Bhutan."
- "Sunrise and breakfast on the rooftop of the Dunhuang hotel."
- "Discovering an abandoned bar counter in our hotel corridor, which prompted a spontaneous 'FOM cocktail party' provisioned from everyone's suitcases."
- "Drinking butter tea with our guide's family in a small village, and having his mom surprise us with a birthday cake (*not* a tradition in Ladakh) made of barley flour, for one of our group members."
- "Passing through a heavily armed control area outside of Termez near Afghanistan and being able to explore a 2000-year-old, rarely-seen Buddhist site."
- "Near dusk, arriving at the Duke of Qin's Royal Tomb. Rows upon rows of coffins, deep inside the earth, interred some 2500 years ago, around the time of Buddha and Confucius. The site, the artefacts, and the guide brought to life how the burial was arranged and carried out. It was eerie and awe-inspiring to imagine what happened so long ago."
- "Learning how to make a research report podcast to share on the bus, and discovering what hams some of us were!"
- "At Dunhuang, someone wondering out loud why a statue of Maitreya Buddha had its nipples exposed when it was supposed to be the reincarnation of the Tang Empress Wu Zetian."
- "Soaking in a traditional wooden, spring-fed bath heated by hot stones and scented by herbs at the gorgeous Gangtey Palace Hotel in Paro, Bhutan – the perfect remedy for muscles tested on a winding hike up to Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery."



- 1 FOM Study Tour Rule #1: Try to remain inconspicuous when in new environments. Sock-Yan Sim, Margaret White, Janey Hoff, Susan Hunter, Izabella Kosla-Sluzek, Roxanne Filaseta, Sue Ellen Kelso, Calista Herbert, Jutta Schutte in Kashgar, China, 2009
- 2 FOM Study Rule #2: Try not to draw attention to yourself in religious sites, demonstrated by Trudi Schwerdtner at Famensi Temple, China, 2010
- 3 FOM Study Tour Rule #3: When in doubt, call home. Margaret White doing just that from Kashgar, China

Photos by Patricia Welch

Statistics from a recent Study Tour:

1000s of photographs
 5 rounds of bus snacks
 4 ancient cities (Gaochang, Jiaohe, Hanoi, Subashi)
 3 leg injuries (a scrape, a nasty insect bite, and a sprained ankle)
 3 bottles of wine at dinner
 2 comfort stops "au naturel!" per day
 1.5 boiled eggs consumed each day
 1 bus that seats 36 people
 .5 kg average weight gain per participant
 and 0 unhappy participants! ☺

For the latest FOM Study Tours please watch the Study Tours page at www.fom.sg/activity_studytour.html
 New tours are posted on a regular basis. First come, first served!