

Tours play an important role in assisting with the Society's aim to promote friendship and understanding between the people of Australia and China. For some years, the bulk of the profit earned from tours was used to support Project Hope and other welfare projects in China. The income from these tours is used to support the Society's activities.

During the first thirty years of the People's Republic of China commercial tourism was discouraged but cultural exchanges and friendship tours were welcome and consequently the Australia China Society introduced and for some years monopolised group tours and delegations to China.

The Society assisted the China Travel Service in Beijing with tourism ideas to promote China to the world. In 1963, ACFS commenced organising tour groups to China, providing virtually the only avenue open to ordinary Australians to visit to China at that time. The work included arranging for delegations to visit China. An outcome of the early tours was members bringing back requests from China regarding sister state and sister school exchanges.

In 1976 the National Council agreed that ACFSWA could organise its own tours to China. In 1983 it was agreed that these tours were better organised on a National basis.

There was much discussion on how the tours should be titled. Initially they were described as "Workers Groups", however, in 1977 China International Travel Service advised that tour titles should be changed to 'Labouring People's Tours'. From 1983 onwards it was agreed that tours of China should be known as 'Australia-China Study Tours'.

Early visitors were advised that *"A visit to China is not a normal sightseeing experience. It requires some homework, some knowledge of the political, economic and social situation since the formation of the Chinese Communist Party and since liberation. It was expected that any tourist will have made a study of China before the trip. Special reference should be made not only to a simple understanding of China's geography and history to the early part of the 19th century with slightly more detail up to including the middle of the 20th century, but particularly to a study of the early years of People's Republic of China. It is necessary to have some understanding, although not necessarily a full comprehension and belief, with regard to the cultural revolution."*

The early tours to China were not easy. Roz Hanley's account of her first visit to China on an ACFS tour in 1985:

"All participants had to fly to Hong Kong and have an overnight stay. At the airport, we had to complete British departure formalities and pay a costly departure tax before boarding the flight for Beijing. There were 30 in our group and we were about to start on an exciting tour to get to see some of China's highlights and meet the local people.

A memorable observation was the Foreign Exchange certificates (F.E.C.) we used as tourists. These F.E.C. notes could only be changed in China. The standard currency is Renminbi or People's money. In Beijing, there were few cars using the wide roads and bicycles had priority.

FRIENDSHIP TOURS

After Beijing, we travelled to Xian and were very proud to be told about the Australian designed hangar that housed the awe-inspiring Terracotta Warriors. During a train journey, we saw the vast countryside and many fields that had healthy looking crops. We travelled on a Yangtze ferry and observed the transport of goods and live fowl by passengers. We visited villages that were to be submerged when the Yangtze Dam was constructed.

The last city we visited in China was Guangzhou and we noted the influence of Hong Kong in the citizen's colourful dress and taste in music. We departed China on a train journey to the British colony of Hong Kong. "

In 2005 Les Greive wrote in his final president's report: *"The Society's strong financial position for some years was strongly influenced by travel related activities. It is now a much different and competitive environment. We can still play a part and reap some financial reward"* This is still true today.

Today, Tours are organised by two national tour officers and assisted by a tour sub-committee. The management of the tours is contracted out to a travel agency.



Fran Kininmonth, Mr Yu XiHua of ZPPAFFC , and Roz Hanley

The Society continues to develop tours. For instance in May 2009, Vice President Fran Kininmonth and Roz Hanley visited China to investigate some sites for a proposed tour that would run in conjunction with the International Expo to be held in Shanghai from May to October 2010.

They explored a covered site of excavated miniature warriors in Xuzhou. These are similar to the Xian warriors in that these soldiers have more than a dozen varied facial expressions reflecting sorrow and respect, differing top knots, clothing styles and various postures. The delightful and most surprising part was their height – only 40 centimetres. Nevertheless, these warriors and horses are “masterpieces of sculptural art with their variety of details clearly recognisable”.



Visiting a Community Arts centre in Beijing



Han Dynasty miniature Terracotta Warriors Museum of Xuzhou

Tours organised by the ACFS tend to focus on either specific professional interests or culture or industry. Indicative of the range of tours arranged over the years are:

- 1972 and 1973 National Day tours.
- 1973 A tour for Teachers and Students
- 1974 ACS First Workers Group
- 1975 ACS Teachers and Students No2 Study Tour
- 1997 Silk Road Tour
- 1999 International Horticultural Exposition in Kunming -Man and nature – Marching towards the 21st Century
- 2000 Paradise Island Tour
- 2000 Prominent Persons Tour
- 2001 Super Shanghai
- 2001 Inner Mongolia and Vladivostok
- 2001 Chinese Painting and Language tour to Shanghai
- 2008 Nature Lover’s Tour
- 2009 World Heritage Tour
- 2011 Commemorative tour - 30th Anniversary of Sister State relations between Fujian and Tasmania
- 2012 ACFS Orient Express Silk Road
- 2015 Environmental Study Tour. Sponsored by Beijing and Shanghai Friendship Associations
- 2016 Special tour designed for WA U3A members as first time visitors to China



ACFS tour in Datong



Welcome at Langde Miao Village



A special tour to commemorate the 30th anniversary of sister state relations between Fujian and Tasmania in 2011. ACFS tour group with Hakka houses in the background.

In April 2018, the Society will be conducting a Minorities Crafts and Festival Tour. This tour will be led by Professor Colin Mackerras - an expert in China’s ethnic minorities.

In September 2018, a member of ACFSWA, Susan Moss will be leading a specialist photography tour to South China. Susan has had important input in the design of this tour.

In his Annual Report of 2016, President Gian Wong JP said that ACFS would not be what it is without the very hard work put in by Roz Hanley, our National Director responsible for tours to China and a very important conduit of information between ACFS in all the states. Roz is not only instrumental in organising the Society’s tours but also in coordinating Friendship delegations and Australian youth delegates for the Shanghai International Youth Interactive Friendship Camp.