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Wendy Wu major new tour operator for China market

by Travel Smart

By ARTHUR FROMMER

A major new tour operator to China

Because so many travelers are currently making their bookings for trips to China in the spring and summer months, I feel an obligation — based on rather skimpy information for the time being — to tell you about a new Chinese tour operator, Wendy Wu Tours, that has just entered the U.S. market and is rapidly establishing itself as a major source for air-and-land packages to China.

Since around 1993, Wendy Wu Tours, headed by Wendy Wu (whom I met at the Philadelphia Inquirer Travel Show), has been a leading source of China tours in Australia. From that base, which made the company into a major, well-financed firm, Wendy Wu is now offering a wide range of packaged tours to China (and other destinations along the Asian rim) for sale to Americans.

To compare Wendy Wu's prices with those of such established China-bound operators as China Spree, China Focus, Ritz Tours, Champion Holidays and Pacific Delight is extremely difficult, as each company follows different policies as to what its tours cover and include. While Wendy Wu includes the substantial cost of your Chinese visa (as much as \$170) in her overall prices, the other companies usually bill it separately. Some of the other companies assess an extra charge for using a credit card to make payment, and Wendy Wu doesn't. Different companies charge different amounts for the gratuities set aside for bus driver and guides. So, to do the mathematical computations will take a bit longer than usual.

But the following can be said with certainty: Although Wendy Wu does not match the prices of China Focus and China Spree for short tours of 10 days' or a week's duration, she is extremely competitive when it comes to tours of three or four weeks' duration. I plan to do a careful analysis in a future column, but for the time being: If you are planning a fairly lengthy tour of China (and many Americans will want to stay for more than just two weeks), it will be a valuable exercise to study carefully the three-week and four-week tours offered by Wendy Wu.

You find that information at Wendy's website (www.wendywuschina.com). And I think you'll be impressed by the careful description of each tour, and the effort to state a truly all-inclusive price that will not require supplemental cash expenditures by the passenger en route.

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Arthur Frommer is the pioneering founder of the Frommer's Travel Guide book series. He co-hosts the radio program, The Travel Show, with his travel correspondent daughter Pauline Frommer. Find more destinations online and read Arthur Frommer's blog at frommers.com.

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