

in the south. It is also midway between Chongqing in the west and Shanghai in the east.

In Wuhan I toured the Hubei Provincial Museum. Most of the museum's contents were unearthed in a single tomb in 1978. The tomb, dating to 433 B. C., contained the world's heaviest musical instrument, which is on display in the museum. Weighing 5,525 pounds (2,506 kilograms), that set of 65 bells covers 5 1/2 octaves.

Inevitably some aspects of a Yangtze River cruise experience have been altered by the Three Gorges Dam. But the gorges themselves with their impressive landscapes remain natural wonders which will continue to draw cruise visitors long after the dam's completion in 2009.



The absolute best time for a Yangtze River cruise is in the early spring. Heat, humidity and rainfall conspire to make travel less pleasant during the period from May through October. And fog can sometimes frustrate photographers from October through March.

Flying time from Cairo to Beijing is upwards of 19 hours. Singapore Airlines, for instance, provides an excellent and comfortable air service via Dubai and Singapore. Round trip basic airfares begin from US\$4,264 plus taxes. Since the cheapest air seats are always limited, it is advisable to reserve early. Here in Egypt air reservations on most airlines may be booked up to 11 months in advance. Also, a tourist visa is required in order to visit China, and China tourist visa issuance in Cairo normally requires a minimum of one week.

The Three Gorges Dam is China's largest construction project since the building of the Great Wall. Upon its completion in 2009, the dam is slated to supply nearly 10% of China's energy needs. (Above)

Two coal barges share a ship lock. The Three Gorges Dam's double five-stage locks are the largest in the world. (Left)



First-time visitors to China should give consideration to combining a Yangtze River cruise with a visit to Beijing, Xian and/or Shanghai. Beijing offers world-class sightseeing in the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven and Tian'anmen Square. Xian's incredible 7,000 terra cotta warriors are now world famous. Shanghai, China's largest city and the world's third largest container port, has long been open to Western influences. In particular, it is interesting to view the various architectural styles - Renaissance, Gothic and art nouveau - along the Bund, Shanghai's elegant cornice.

If you've enjoyed cruises on the Nile and on Lake Nasser in the past, why not try a Yangtze River cruise next?



**A travel agent in
Cairo since 1986,
Ted manages**

ABOUT TED COOKSON:

Egypt's most widely-traveled travel agent, Ted has visited every country in the world. He has also visited 307 of the 317 destinations on the list of the Travelers' Century Club (visit www.eptours.com and refer to World TravelClub).

EGYPT

PANORAMA TOURS

a full-service travel agency, at 4 Road 79 (between Roads 9 and 10, near the "El Maadi" metro station) in Maadi. Contact Egypt Panorama Tours (open 7 days a week 9 AM-5 PM)
Tel. 359-0200, 358-5880, 359-1301.
Fax: 359-1199. E-mail: ept@link.net.
Web site: www.eptours.com.
(Password for residents: eptcool)