

Yangtse

Your questions answered.....

First of all, what's all the fuss about?

A journey down the Yangtse River in China is one of the, if not 'the', epic river journeys. Between the cities of Chongqing and Wuhan the river passes through three distinct gorges, with even more dramatic 'lesser gorges' up tributary rivers which are explored as side trips. It takes 3-4 days to cruise this section of the river, although it is possible to continue all the way downstream to Shanghai, where the Yangtse meets the East China Sea.

So, when are they going to flood the River?

The first flooding of the project is due to commence on 1st June 2003. The massive dam just west of Wuhan is nearing completion, and from 1st November 2002 there will be an impact on the cruises. Boats from Chongqing will probably (definite information is unforthcoming even at this late stage!) have to terminate just above the dam site as construction nears completion, but the three gorges will remain unaffected. The boats will still pass through the dramatic

scenery and the trip will be only slightly curtailed. The Yichang (dam site) to Wuhan section of the cruise, one of the less spectacular parts of the river, will be completed by road.

What effect will the damming have on the scenery?

The water level will rise by 65 metres between 1st June and 15th June 2003. This will obviously have a dramatic effect on the scenery, as well as on the lives of the millions of people living in the region. How the area will look and what it has to offer travellers after this flooding has yet to be discovered. The Three Gorges will be changed beyond recognition, but the boat operators are confident that Yangtse cruising will remain a worthwhile journey and will still be operating trips. We will be sending one of our China specialists on the first cruise to assess the changes.

When should I go?

If you want to see the Three Gorges as they are at present, you need to head to China before June 2003. We do have a few cabins left

for November and December this year, as well as cabins through to Spring 2003. Forgive us for saying this but 'book early', this is your last chance!

Which are the best boats on the river?

There are dozens of cruise boats operating on the river, but it is possible to reduce the choice to three companies who operate to the standards acceptable for Audley travellers. After extensive inspections, including several trips up and down river by our China specialists, our preferred cruises are those operated by Victoria. Western owned and managed, the boats have reasonable sized cabins and friendly service, added to this is the thoughtful itinerary and excursions which make them our choice as the best boats cruising on the Yangtse.

