



Suzhou Essentials

Discover the charms of Suzhou, a major city on the lower Yangtze known for its gardens, canals, bridges, and pagodas. Tour three of the most classical Gardens of Suzhou, listed as a World Heritage Site in 1997. Praised as the "Venice of the Orient", this ancient city boasts over 2,500 years of history and numerous points of interest. Experience Kunqu Opera; one of the oldest forms of opera still existing in China, with its origins dating back to the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Explore the historic water town of Tongli wandering on the old lanes and walk on ancient stone bridges (over 45) which connect the city.

ACCOMMODATIONS

- 3 Nights Suzhou

INCLUSIONS

- Private Arrival and Departure Transfers
- Kungqu Opera Evening Tour
- Private Classic Suzhou Tour
- Private Tongli Town Tour
- Private Silk Market Tour Enroute
- Daily Breakfast



DAY 1

ARRIVE IN SUZHOU:

After arriving at the North Rail Station, meet your English speaking driver for a transfer to your hotel. After checking in, the remainder of the day is at your leisure.

In the evening, you'll be treated to the **Kunqu Opera**, one of the oldest existing forms of Chinese opera. It dominated Chinese theater from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The style originated in the Wu cultural area and is listed as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO since 2001.

(Accommodations, Suzhou)



DAY 2

SUZHOU:

After breakfast, meet your guide for a private tour of Suzhou. You'll visit the **Humble Administrator's Garden**, the largest and most renowned of Suzhou's famous gardens, covering nearly 13 acres of land. Its unique design, ethereal beauty, and enduring cultural significance has made it a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was built as the residence and garden of a Tang dynasty scholar, and has retained the sense of serenity and refinement envisaged by its original owner.

You'll have time allotted for lunch at a recommended local restaurant before continuing your tour. Afterwards, you'll stop at the **Suzhou Institute of Embroidery**, which is dedicated to the production, research and training of Suzhou embroidery. It has among its collection some of the most valuable pieces of embroidery ever made. On display are several imperial robes from Emperor Qianlong, and other priceless court gowns once worn by members of the royal family. The institute also houses a training facility and workshop where you will see the artists creating exquisitely detailed embroidered works, often using silk threads much finer than human hair. Some of these handmade works of art take years to complete, and consequently a genuine handmade embroidered work can command very high prices indeed!

Our tour ends at the **Suzhou Museum**, the last design of I. M. Pei, the famous Chinese-American architect best known for his glass and steel pyramid outside the Louvre Museum in Paris. Unsurprisingly, the Suzhou Museum bears all the hallmarks of an architectural master. Completed in 2006, it contains over 15,000 pieces in its collection, including paintings, ceramics, calligraphy, and more, and dating back to the Song dynasty (960-1276 AD).

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Suzhou)



DAY 3

SUZHOU:

Today, you'll enjoy a private tour to **Tongli Water Town**, a delicate water village near Suzhou. Tongli is one of the many ancient water towns in the Yangtze River Delta, and are famous for their rivers, ancient bridges and house complexes. Tongli occupies an area of 51 square miles that is separated by 15 rivers into seven islets, which are connected through 49 ancient stone bridges in variety of styles.

Established in the Song Dynasty, it has a history of over 1,000 years, and very rich in cultural heritage. For its long history and special beauty, Tongli, together with Zhouzhuang and Luzhi were listed in the tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. With the rapid modernization of China, a number of historical towns have disappeared under the bulldozers, with only a handful of well-preserved historical towns like Tongli remaining today.

You'll visit the Retreat & Reflection Garden, Gengle Hall, the Three Bridges, and the Pearl Tower, all featured sights of this historic town. Afterwards, you can wander on the old lanes and crossing ancient stone bridges, providing excellent photo opportunities. Returning to your hotel, the remainder of your day is at your leisure.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Suzhou)



DAY 4

DEPART SUZHOU:

After breakfast, meet your driver for a private transfer to the North Rail Station and on to your next Avanti Destination!

(Breakfast, Suzhou)