



WORLD AIRLINES CLUBS ASSOCIATION

WACA WORLD NEWS



... Season Greetings to all Interliners and Friends!



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President's Message At the Opening Cerimony of the 39th AGA in Shanghai



WACA is proud to hold its 39th Annual General Assembly in this part of the globe and for the very first time in its history that an AGA is being held in China though we do not have a club here in Shanghai, but the Hong Kong Interline Club took the challenge to make it possible. I would like to express my sincere congratulations to the dedicated team who are working day and night in handling this important number of participants and above all on a voluntary basis.

WACA is becoming the flagship of Airline Companies throughout the world in bringing airline employees who are members of various airline and interline clubs from the different continents together in the true spirit of friendship, mutual understanding and good fellowship.

WACA is bringing us all in Shanghai this time which is now well known in the world not only for its prosperous cosmopolitan feature but also for its rich humanistic resources.

It is very encouraging for us at WACA to see so many participants joining us for the coming one week package. I understand that many among you have already been on the pre packages. This is a very good sign for us and we know that we are cruising towards the right destinations.

As a coalition partner of the International Institute of Peace Through Tourism, WACA is doing its best to vehicle the peace credo wherever we travel. It is our duty as responsible and peaceful travelers to respect our hosts and elevate the importance of cultural heritage to share with colleagues, relatives and friends at home and this is our way of promoting the travel and tourist industry where we as airline employees generate our take home pay.

It is being recognized that the Airline Industry after all the recent past events mainly the last 5 years, is picking up and we are proud to form part of this industry which is the centre of all social and economic development. But it is believed that the industry, ever since, is called to operate

under Top Organizational Performance taking on board the social and environmental aspects. We, at WACA, are not speared at all and being an association of Airline Employees and as representatives of the industry we are very sensible to this concept and are doing our best to bring our contribution to the initiative of being responsible stakeholders of the industry.

For the past decades, our Association is endlessly bringing people irrespective of rank, creed and race together and develop the sense of belongings to the aviation and tourism industry and set the very good examples to the outside world.

Our Association is committed and is following the UN Millennium Development Goals, among which to eradicate extreme poverty and support children in need as far as education are concerned. WACA is dedicated to fostering and facilitating tourism initiatives which contribute to international understanding and cooperation and improved quality of environment, the preservation of heritage and through these initiatives, helping to bring about a peaceful and sustainable world.

At this stage , its worth mentioning that WACA shares the concerns of the World Community, about the situation in Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories, as we have clubs in that region and commiserates with the grieving families and hopes for a speedy stabilization of the situation.

On the other hand we would like to join the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) in condemning and denouncing acts of terrorism in various places of the world.

Our Assembly obviously is not the forum to address in details this particular issue, but are just matters of concerns being peaceful travelers.

Ladies and gentlemen,
During the working sessions of the assembly delegates will have the opportunity to discuss on various current issues and will come up with resolutions whilst observers will have enough time to join us to experience the scenic sights available in Shanghai to mark this memorable event and to be told for the years to come.

I can only wish you an enjoyable stay in Shanghai and enjoy your 39th Annual General Assembly.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Maga Ramasamy

Editorial

Dear Interliners,



A very busy and successful year is reaching its end. After many long years of difficulties in the airline industry, our Association is fortunate enough to be able to register an excellent year in 2006. It has been a long time since we had such an interesting and vast calendar of events. I'm convinced that everybody was able to find something interesting, according to suit their own tastes. Sport Events with ski, tennis, golf and football; cultural tours; charity events; beaches, islands and mountains; parties, friends and fun – from short weekends to tours of 2 weeks! The excellent attendance at nearly all events showed us that we are on the right path and we are hopeful that this will continue into the future.

The highlight, without any doubt, was our Annual General Assembly held in Shanghai, carefully organized by the Hong Kong Interline Club. For many of us it was the first time that we visited this big country with its ancient culture. We were very proud to be able to welcome 430 interliners to this event. Thanks to the efforts of the Hong Kong Interline Club and the Airline Club of Thailand, who prepared wonderful pre- and post-AGA-Tours, many aspects and places of this big country could be visited. The reports and photos in this issue of your WWN will

show you their great success!

Now, we are looking into the future. A very important event for our Association is approaching: the 40th Anniversary of WACA, to be commemorated together with our 40th AGA in Capetown, South Africa. During the next weeks and months we will keep you updated about programs, events and tours. You will also continue receiving details how you can contribute to making this event a very special and unforgettable one! If you have any suggestions or any material, such as photos or other objects, that you have collected during these 40 years and that can support us in showing the "History of WACA", we will be very happy to consider it's inclusion!

Finally, I would like to extend to you and your families, on behalf of all the Executive Committee of WACA, our very best wishes for Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Yours in Interlining,
Rosemarie Mamede
V. P. Public Relations



The WACA Relief Fund: Support to Sri Lankan School devastated by the Tsunami

At the last Annual General Assembly in Agra, WACA's Executive Committee approved the proposal presented by the Sri Lankan Interline Club to reopen the library of the Duwa Junior School in Negombo, Sri Lanka, which was affected by the Tsunami Tidal waves on 26th December 2004. This charity proposal became a reality on the 10th September 2006.



The Tidal waves devastated many cities in the North, East and South of Sri Lanka and a considerable damage in the West coast as well. It took away 39,000 lives and over million homeless. According to the data available, over 55 schools have been completely and over 100 schools have been partly damaged. Over 160 schools were affected for academic activity. Over 300 teachers and 80,000 students were affected.

Sri Lanka Interline Club selected the Duwa Junior School in Negombo after analyzing the details received from the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka. SLIC members visited the school in October 2005, and gathered information that the school was over 5ft under water for a long period after the Tidal waves and all books & equipments of the Library was destroyed. This school accommodated over 400 students



We donated 16 chairs, 4 Book cabinets, 2 Reading tables, 2 News Paper Reading tables, a Table and an Arm Chair for the Librarian, Books trolley, Index card cabinet and over 600 books including the books donated by Australian clubs were handed over to the school. All equipments supplied were manufactured according to the library standards approved in Sri Lanka.



On the 10th September 2006, Ziard Sinnen President of SLIC reopened the library of the Duwa Junior School. The school authority had organized a ceremony, which was graced by teachers, parents and students. It was a touching moment for us when a student representative of the school in her speech whilst thanking SLIC and WACA requested the school children to take advantage of this generosity which the children of the school has been awaiting for, and she mentioned that it would not only benefit the children of today but also the future generation of children.

Onalee Perera, SLIC representative for WACA mentioned in her speech that just after the Tsunami, whilst doing several charity projects SLIC gathered information that several schools and the students were affected by the tsunami tidal waves. She thanked WACA for unanimously agreeing to sponsor this charity project. She also briefed about WACA, requested the children to make use of this library, and mentioned that this initiative would assist the future generation too. It was also mentioned that SLIC is willing to assist with the educational requirements for the needy children in the future.

WACA 
World Airlines Clubs Association

This book was donated by Members of the
World Airlines Association (W.A.C.A.)

Remembering those affected by The Tsunami

26 December 2004

Regional Meeting Far East and Australasia – March 19, 2006 and Commemoration of 10th Anniversay of Down Syndrome Association

As delegate for Sydney Interline Club at the Regional Meeting in Singapore, my husband and I were privileged to be invited to the 10th Anniversary Celebrations of Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) and to the launch of the Inaugural World Down Syndrome Day. Our association dates back to 1996 when we were invited to attend a Musical play by the children with Down syndrome.

The challenges that faced this group in 1996 looked insurmountable, however, with the dedication, patience, love and overwhelming support of family, friends this Association has become an example to the world. To-day it is professionally run by leading facilitators, influencing general attitudes of Singaporeans to accept and support all individuals with down syndrome within the wider community. At this juncture I am proud to mention that the Airline Club of Singapore has always been a strong supporter and friend to Down Syndrome Association (Singapore).

19th March. 7am.

Our first day was a cultural and stimulating introduction to the lifestyle of the many cultures and religions of Singapore, we were picked up at our hotel in an Ambulance, yes they were on duty, but we had no incidents on the journey to the Sikh Community Fund Raiser & Awareness Event, This service was held in the Sikh Temple, what at first looked like a very uncomfortable couple of hours for the 'Aussies' turned into a very rewarding experience, the service was conducted in English, and the soft cushioning on the floor was quite comfortable.



20th March. 10.30am Charity Bowl.

This was the long awaited event, and each team consisted of three bowlers and the other bowler must be a person with Down Syndrome. We volunteered as participating learners (as we hadn't used our bowling skills for years) and Neil and I had three bowlers with Down Syndrome. We started with three, but as they kept wandering off we sometimes had five or more at times, this was so much fun, and although our scores were not the highest, our team members were so enthusiastic and keen to learn we all bonded so presentation of prizes and yes, more food. well, it was really sad when the day came to an end with official speeches.

Tuesday 21st March

Amazing Race- Buddy Walk. We saw Singapore above and under the ground, this is the walk everyone should do. We walked into MRT stations, through parks, crossed streets where we had to find sections of a large puzzle, these pieces were handed out by volunteers. This was a very exciting walk for the children as they were handed out ice cream & goodies most held hands, and those that could not walk were pushed in wheelchairs and strollers by family members, friends and the members from Airline Club of Singapore were always there to guide and assist. After the walk it was time to get dressed for the concert and the inaugural opening.



The concert was brilliant with the story revolving around Down Syndrome families, the joy, the tears and frustration, from babies to adults each participant performed like a professional their costumes and makeup beautifully done, mothers, fathers and siblings each have a part to play and are fully involved in the story and the concert, the girls from (CHIJ) acted as MC's together with persons with Down syndrome.



DSA is a self funding non profit voluntary welfare organisation, with the help public & corporate donations. The Airline Club of Singapore always volunteers to participate and assist in the activities of the Association.

Wednesday 22nd March

To-day was our final day in Singapore as we had to catch our flight home, but not before we grabbed a taxi back to the school to join the round table discussion on globalisation. This was an amazing four days for us we were totally absorbed into the celebrations, the families embraced us, and the Airline Club of Singapore members with their busy schedule found time to organise transport and brief us on the following days activities.

Thank you 'Uncle Sieva' as all the kids calls him, it was a great honour to celebrate the 10th anniversary with you all, we had a wonderful time, busy, busy but very enjoyable and stimulating. Airline Club of Singapore Congratulations on your contribution and dedication for being part of this wonderful achievement, you have shown the world what can be achieved in a short time with hard work and lots of love and care. Keep up this great work.

Margaret Lee V.P.
Sydney Interline Club.

Grande Festa I. C. Portugal, 04. – 07. October 2006

Every year the I. C. Portugal promotes the “Grande Festa” to commemorate its anniversary. This year, on the 28th occasion, the visit was to the region of Évora. The trip began in the ancient village of Alvito with its well-preserved Roman ruins. It is also an important site marking the beginning of the Portuguese Kingdom. Before reaching our Hotel Dom Fernando, in the World Heritage Site of Évora, we had the opportunity to take a boat trip to the dam of Alqueva, the biggest artificial lake in Europe.



Next morning the group proceeded to Vila Viçosa and visited the palace of the last king of Portugal, which is today a museum containing lots of the Royal Family's possessions



A visit to a factory of traditional ceramics in this region of the Alentejo and the participation in a Vine Festival during the grape harvest in Vila Redondo completed the day. The vines of the Alentejo are not only the preferred in Portugal, but also appreciated worldwide.

The highlight was the Gala Dinner on this second evening – time for meeting interliners from Portugal and from abroad. Many of them meet only once a year, at this event, which makes our “Grande Festa” a very special event.



Our last day gave us the opportunity to visit the historical city of Évora with all its monuments and beautiful buildings, transforming us back to the era lived in by our ancestors

Back to Lisbon was time to say “Good Bye” to all friends, promising to meet again next year, at the latest, for the next Grande Festa of the **Interline Club of Portugal**.

An Historical Venue



During the 39th AGA in Shanghai, six Presidents of WACA met to an historical photo:

Left to right, standing:
Maga Ramasamy (2000-present)
Marjorie Homenick (1990-1994)
David Larkin (1984-1986)
Wally Gibbs (1988-1990)
 Sitting:
Keith Miller (1994-1996)
Gerry Philbrook (1976-1978;1980-1984)

39th AGA of WACA Shanghai, 02.-07.October 2006

Over 400 delegates and observers, representing Airline Clubs worldwide, met from 02 – 07 October in Shanghai, China, at the JingJiang Hotel, for the 39th Annual General Assembly of the WORLD AIRLINES CLUBS ASSOCIATION (WACA), organized by the Hong Kong Interline Club.

It was a great honour to have the Assembly opened by the Honourable Mr. Dao Shu Ming, Chairman of the Shanghai Municipality Tourism Administrative Commission. During his speech at the Opening Ceremony, WACA's President Mr. Maga Ramasamy (Mauritius) focused on how proud he was to have WACA's main event held in China for the first time in the Association's history. Given that there is not yet an Airline Club in Shanghai, the dedication of the Hong Kong Interline Club under chairlady Iris Lim and her organizing committee headed by WACA's Secretary General Julian Chau, made this challenge possible. Once again Mr. Ramasamy focused on the social responsibilities of WACA and its members, as partners in the Tourism Industry with the accent on social cultural awareness and support of philanthropic projects.



At the start of the working sessions, President Maga Ramasamy nominated Mr. Erich Imlig, a former Member of Interairline Club Zurich and Interline Club of Leon as a Member of Honour of the Association posthumously.

Awards of recognition were bestowed upon:

- **Sports/International Event of the Year:** Paille-en-Queue Social Club of Air Mauritius
- **Member Club of the Year for Media/Communication:** Florida Interline Club
- **Regional Member Club of the Year, Europe:** Interairline Club Zurich
- **Regional Member Club of the Year, Far East and Australasia:** Hong Kong Interline Club
- **Regional Member Club of the Year, Latin America and Caribbean:** Jamaica Interline Club
- **Regional Member Club of the Year, Africa, Indian Ocean Islands and Middle East:** Indian Ocean Islands Interline Club
- **Regional Member Club of the Year, North America:** Calgary Interline Club
- **Member Club of the Year:** Calgary Interline Club



A new Executive Committee was elected for the next term of 2007-2008:

- **President:** Maga Ramasamy (MK), Indian Ocean Islands Interline Club
- **Secretary General:** Julian Chau (CX), Hong Kong Interline Club
- **V.P. Finance and Treasurer:** Valerie Welling (AC retired), Vancouver Interline Club
- **V.P. Public Relations:** Rosemarie Mamede (LH), Interline Club Hannover
- **V.P. International Events and Special Projects:** John Aarons (AN retired), Sydney Interline Club
- **Regional V.P. Europe:** Peter Gilardoni (SR retired), Interairline Club Zurich
- **Regional V.P. Far East and Australasia:** Orathai Bhuddhamanupap (CI), Airline Club of Thailand
- **Regional V.P. Latin America and Caribbean:** Jacquie Lyseight (JM), Jamaica Interline Club
- **Regional V.P. Africa, Indian Ocean Islands and Middle East:** Yousef Yousef (ME retired), Jordan Interline Club
- **Regional V.P. North America:** Ann K. Gritis (UA retired), Washington Interline Club

The Africa, Indian Ocean Islands and Near East Region presented their program and the planned highlights of the next AGA to take place in Capetown, South Africa. During this AGA WACA will commemorate its 40th Jubilee and no efforts are being spared by the organizers in preparing a very special event for all interliners.

The Interline Club of Bahamas had their bid approved to hold the 2008 Assembly in Nassau, Bahamas.

During their stay in Shanghai, all interliners were provided with a small insight in the vast historical and economical life of this big nation. Visits to a Silk factory, Pearl Handicraft Centre and Tea Ceremonies let them have an idea of Chinese culture and customs.

Four very well organized tours before and after the main event have shown smaller groups of airliners the Magical Mountains of Sichuan, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, a 5-day cruise on the Yangtze River and an exploration of the most scenic places of the Southwest in the province of Yunnan.

Rosemarie Mamede
Vice President Public Relations

“Riding the Back of the Dragon” Pre-AGA-Tour

Shanghai: September 2006. A nice sunny day but an early 4 am wakeup call saw a bunch of sleepy people in the lobby of the Bailemen hotel, ready to be transferred to Pudong airport for our flight to Chungking where we were to board the 5 star Regal Star and cruise the Yangtze for the next 5 days.



Panda's

Jennifer, our tour guide picked us up at the airport in Chungking and took us on a tour of the city, which after a hearty Chinese lunch, included the lovely Panda's, the Flying Tiger wartime museum more city touring, dinner and finally to our ship where we arrived at 8 pm. All in all a very busy day and for some of us a little too long.

The weather was very misty and it would take days before we noticed a glimmer of the sun.

Early the next morning after safety drills and other informative talks, we set sail towards to three gorges and after lunch we moored at Fengdu for a stroll through the “Ghost City”, with its 70 temples and old Chinese Architecture.



Welcome aboard

In the evening we all attended the Captains Welcome Party which included Chinese folk dances and music. It needs to be said that all dances and music was performed by the cruise staff and the result was fabulous.

The MC was an American university student on work experience whose subject is Mandarin and Chinese culture, he was a one man show and taught us many Chinese words and customs.

As we sailed through the three gorges, (the Qutang gorge, the Wu gorge and the Xiling gorge), we came face to face with the most exiting scenery one can imagine, misty, subdued timeless mountains.

As we cruised through each gorge, a commentary was available on all decks and although there was a continuous drizzle, this did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm felt by all.

During the cruise we were shown how the area which we were traversing was being inundated by another 15 meters of water as the next stage of the filling of the 3 Gorges Dam, which is in the final stage of completion.

We could see how houses, threatened with submersion had been moved higher up the mountain sites. Whole communities had been repositioned that way. In fact 1.13 million people had to move.

Although people generally have been financially compensated, one can only imagine the heartbreak of people, having to leave their plot of land, were generations had lived over hundred, sometimes thousands of years.

We embarked on an excursion to the Shennon stream where small boats would transport up to 10 people up the river, each boat being rowed by up to 4 local people, very strong men, who used to do this without any clothes. To the disappointment of some, this is no longer the case as these guys can now afford to buy their pants and t-shirts. As the water level reduced, the boats were pulled by the same rowers who walked on sometimes plank tracks alongside the river. Altogether very very hard work.



Rowing the Yangsze

When we finally arrived at the dam, a short drive by bus took us to the construction site, which in another year's time will provide up to 10% of the total Chinese electrical power requirement.

The dam itself consists of a total of 5 locks to let ships through to Wuhan. The most amazing part of this is a ship lift which can lift or lower a ship up to 3000 ton, complete with the water in which it floats, 113 meters in 30 minutes.

The total project is just breathtaking and will be completed next year, well ahead of schedule.

Due to the additional filling of the dam, the fifth lock was not yet ready and we could not pass through the locks, hence the last day was spent in a bus for a 7 hour drive to Wuhan.

The drive gave us a good idea about the Chinese country side, the first class highways and the total disregard of traffic rules.

The second last night on our ship, was spent with a variety show when all interline clubs present were encouraged to participate.

Sydney, in true style, performed a theatre version of "Waltzing Matilda", choreographed by Margaret Lee and narrated by Neil. Result: Great Success with a few (imaginary) curtain calls.

Another highlight of our cruise was a visit to Ming Shan Hill, to the temple home of the King of Jades, on top of a mountain. This excursion was available to all as there was a ski lift to take those less mobile to the top. We all passed through a multitude of temples and with each passage were promised an additional 10 years lifespan. Eventually we arrived in the heavenly temple and were promised eternal life.



The Yangtze

I dare say, that this was an afternoon well spent.



Praying for an extra 10 years

On arrival in Wuhan, we convinced the tour company that we preferred to check into our hotel before dinner, after we did the customary sightseeing of temples and museums.

After 5 nights on the ship, with its fairly small cabins, (the size of a small caravan), it was sheer luxury to roll around in a super king-size bed.

The last day saw us back in Shanghai for the start of the AGA, seeing long term friends and prepare for the regional night.

In conclusion: the pre tour was a great success, the crew fantastic, the food had something for everyone and was varied every day.

On board lectures on acupuncture, acupressure, Chinese language, herbal facials and others were very well attended and the on-board Chinese medicine doctor would have made a financial killing.

The daily Taiji morning exercises would have given anyone who participated a good start to the day.

Joe Naajen
Sydney Interline Club

A Journey through the Magical Mountains of Sichuan Pos-AGA- Tour

The Shanghai AGA had barely wound down when a group of 76 Interliners took an early morning flight to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, to participate in the post AGA tour. The flight took 3 hours and we arrived just before noon and were met by our local guides John, Myles, Cissy, Iris and Jennifer. The weather was sunny and warm and before long we had a good introduction to the famous Sichuanese cuisine by having a lunch of tasty and spicy snacks at a local restaurant. After lunch, it was a 1.5-hour bus ride to the famous Sanxindui Museum. The Museum housed relics that were excavated locally and the site was the center of the ancient Shu civilization, which flourished here 4000 years ago, and the bronze collection was fascinating, with "science fiction" like bronze sculptures that defies the imagination.



After the museum, we spent the night at the Changhong Hotel in Mianyang, Sichuan's second largest city. After breakfast, we passed through Jiangyou, the hometown of Li Bai, China's most famous poet who lived during the Tang dynasty. Before long, we could see the foothills of the Hengduan Mountains. After snaking through the valleys bounded by steep and verdant hillsides, we could see the snow capped peaks of the main range emerging more frequently. Finally, our bus took a series of steep turns where we finally arrived at the Huanglong National Park (Sertso in Tibetan). Huanglong, which means Yellow Dragon in Chinese, got its name from the descending cascades of yellow and calcified pools that run down from the mountains.



It was near dusk when we arrived and only a few of us made it to the top of the mountain. Nonetheless the scenery was beautiful and at this altitude (over 3000 meters), many felt short of breath for the first time. After Huanglong, our bus continued the journey to Jiuzhaigou, where we climbed a high pass at 4000 meters high and some of the group was getting symptoms of altitude sickness with the trademark headaches. At around 8:30 p.m., we finally arrived at the Jiuzhai Paradise Hotel, dubbed the most luxurious hotel on the Tibetan Plateau. The "Vegas scale" Tibetan theme resort certainly seemed out of place in the mountains but we did not complain! Most of the hotel is covered in a huge glass canopy and it even enclosed a replica Qiang village and luxurious Spas within its confines. The downside is that it can get chilly in the hotel lobby at night due to the poor insulation of the glass walls. The Qiang is a local ethnic group closely related to the Tibetans and share this region with the latter. Their houses and towers are finely built with stones.



After a nice buffet breakfast, our bus dropped us at the entrance of the Jiuzhaigou National Park. After getting through the formalities, we finally entered the Park and we were bussed around the Park in environmentally friendly buses. The scenery is breathtaking, especially the many ponds and lakes. The stunning colors of the lakes appear unreal and defy any attempts to describe them. Jiuzhaigou or Dzitsa Degu in Tibetan, which means "Nine Stockades Valley", is shaped like an Y and we managed to see the major attractions on the left fork of the Y during the first day. It was in Jiuzhai that we first got a taste of Tibetan culture when we visited the Tibetan villages in the park. Prayer wheels were turned, prayer flags fluttered and many now realized they are in the Tibetan cultural area. After a full day at the park, we headed back to the hotel to freshen up for a Tibetan show at a theater owned by the resort. The theater was more like an opera house with probably the biggest indoor stage I have ever seen. Most of us immensely enjoyed the extravagant "Vegas" type musical, which focused on the local Tibetan and Qiang cultures. There were even Tibetan cowboys riding their horses through the stage! The finale saw the background of the stage opening up and the audience exited the stage to the cool mountain air.

The next morning saw us going into the park again and this time, myself, Keith Miller (WACA headquarters Manager), Barbara Prinz from Vienna, Greg Clark from Vancouver, Carmen Thoumy from Lebanon and others decided to hike down the right fork of the Y shaped valley. The interesting trek through a wooden plank walkway was pleasant. The beautiful alpine scenery coupled with snowcapped mountains, rushing streams and stunningly colored ponds, made this one of the most wonderful walks ever undertaken by myself. We even passed through the lake where the Hollywood blockbuster "Hero" was shot! Afterwards, some of us rewarded ourselves by soaking in the various hot spas in the hotel and some even went for a massage.

After spending 3 nights of luxury in Jiuzhaigou, it was back on the road for a long bus journey to Maoxian. On the way, we passed through high pastures with grazing Yaks and we even stopped by when local village folks corralled a herd of Yaks into trucks for slaughter elsewhere. It seemed the Yak is the center of attraction for the Interliners, as this animal garnered more attention than others, with the exception of one animal, which I will go into detail later on. After the Yak gazing, we had lunch at Songpan (Zungchu in Tibetan), an old walled town and gateway to Western Sichuan. Most of the local inhabitants are Muslim and one could see Arabic writings on the door entrances to their restaurants. The mixture of white capped Muslims and swaggering Tibetan monks in maroon robes certainly lent a feel of the exotic to the atmosphere in the town. From Songpan, the bus descended the mountains through a series of twisting roads, sometimes thousands of feet above the rushing Minjiang River below. We finally arrived in Maoxian in the evening under a torrential downpour. I have to say we were extremely lucky for the duration of this trip, where we encountered good weather and blue skies, the exception being the rainy day on this day of driving. After a hearty dinner of pork knuckles and other local specialties, we settled down for a well-deserved rest in a low elevation hotel. Maoxian is the major center for the Qiang ethnic minority, whose distinct stone architecture was noticeable throughout the long drive today.

After the previous night's downpour, the skies were clear and the air fresh. Being rejuvenated, we looked forward to continuing our drive to Wolong. An hour and a half after leaving Maoxian, we turned off into the road heading for the Panda reserve. Unfortunately, the road was under reconstruction and we had a bumpy ride for about 2 hours. We passed the time on the bus by listening to a CD of a famous Tibetan Singer over and over again till we got tired of it. Even Caterina Francescutto of Vancouver, who owns the CD, asked that it be stopped! However the scenery was spectacular, steep and verdantly forested slopes gave way to snow mountain vistas at every turn of the road. It was hard to describe in writing but one has to be there to savor the scenery.



After a quick lunch at Wolong, we headed for a park situated right next door to the restaurant. This was no ordinary park but the world famous Wolong Panda Reserve, which has the most successful Panda breeding program in the world and supplied pandas to the San Diego and Washington zoos. Set in a pleasant environment and natural enclosures, various Pandas of different ages were on display. The biggest draw was the enclosure of the juveniles. There were probably around 6 young pandas in this enclosure and it was not hard to imagine why they are the star attractions in any zoo. Their adorable cute looks and clumsiness, almost clownish, make them a delight to look at. Then there was the nursery, where baby pandas were carefully and delicately looked after by the staff in their incubators. With all these excitement in the breeding center, it was hard work to get people back on the buses.

When we finally managed to "convince" people to get on the buses, we were on our way to Rilong, which we hoped to arrive by 8 p.m. at night. After leaving Wolong, it was back on the bumpy road through verdant mountain valleys until our buses made an abrupt ascent up the hillsides. Sometimes, we would have to wait for the road crews to clear away the road after a bout of dynamiting. Although at times the drive was precarious, we were in good hands as our drivers, including Mr. Li took good care of us and drove superbly. As we climbed higher, the verdant vegetation gave way to pastures and the temperature plummeted. Finally, we arrived at the top of the snow-covered Balang Pass at 4500 meters altitude. Very few Interliners have been at this altitude before and the sight of the Siguniang Mountains in the distance, glowing in the dusk, made for spectacular surroundings. One well-versed in Chinese history could only have imagined the wonderment of Emperor Qianlong's army, who crossed this pass on their way back to China after a successful military expedition against the Gorkhas of Nepal.

Siguniang (Mt. Bumhozi in Tibetan), which means "4 Sisters", is not even one of the highest peaks in Sichuan (that honor belongs to Minya Konka at 7556 meters high), nonetheless its height of 6250 meters is quite impressive. The massif is so named because it consists of 4 peaks, with Yaomeifeng or the youngest sister as the tallest. These snow-capped peaks, along with the beautiful alpine scenery, are increasingly attracting mountain climbers and trekkers from around the

world. After spending the night in the Jinkun hotel in Rilong Town, we set off for the Changping gully. Although most hiked some distance into the park on a wooden plank walkway, which gave way to a muddy trail made worse by horse tracks, deterred many from continuing. However, Iris and I decided to continue and make the 18-kilometer journey to the Muluozhi pastures.



Since it was late in the afternoon, we decided to run up the hill and at 3500 meters altitude, this was not easy. We finally reached Muluozhi at 2:30 p.m. and were rewarded with spectacular scenery. On one side are the mighty peaks of Siguniang and the other the towering pinnacle of Camel peak. Since it was getting late, we decided to return to the park entrance by horseback, as retracing our steps through the muddy tracks did not seem appealing at the time. After barely getting back to the hotel, I decided to join some of our fellow Interliners in a local pub to down some cold Heinekens. It seemed some had passed the day by trekking back from the park entrance to town, passing through Tibetan villages, whilst others went shopping and catching up with their emails in the local internet cafes. The Tibetans here were very friendly and a little different from those at Jiuzhaigou, since they speak the Jyarong dialect of Tibetan, whilst those at Jiuzhaigou spoke the Amdo dialect. In Tibet proper, the U-Tsang dialect is spoken and those on the Shangri-La tour should have encountered Tibetans speaking the Khampha dialect, which is common in Western Sichuan and Northwest Yunnan.

The next morning, after 2 nights in Rilong, we packed up to return to Chengdu via the Balang pass again. The trip back to Wolong somehow seemed less arduous as we retraced our way back to Wolong on the same bumpy road. A few more hours on the road brought us to Dujiangyan, the site of a famous irrigation project but due to the fact that it was late afternoon, we decided to bypass the attraction and proceed to Chengdu. The journey to Chengdu was on a six-lane expressway, quite a far cry from the bumpy road from Siguniang and before long we were at the outskirts of Chengdu. As we approached the city center, we passed through manicured campuses of major high tech firms like Intel and Motorola. This was a stark contrast to Siguniang. In one day, we drove from a Tibetan area of snow-capped peaks, passed through a snow-covered pass, and now we are in the modern world of Chengdu and the temperatures were balmy and tropical like. After arriving at the Sunshine Hotel, it was time to say goodbye to our wonderful drivers who safely drove us through some formidable terrain. After a long day, it was time to settle down for a sumptuous buffet dinner in the hotel with free flowing beer! Next morning, Myles and John came to pick us in 2 buses to sent us off to Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Some people, like Steve Charlton from Montreal just didn't have enough of Sichuan and extended his stay to visit other scenic spots in the province. For many, this was a "Journey of a Lifetime" but for me, I am already dreaming of Lhasa and Everest. Keep posted!

Sydney Interline Club

Here you will find more photos from this trip: <http://farch.smugmug.com/gallery/2031141>

In Search of Shangri-la Pos-AGA- Tour

This was the third part of our adventure in China and it started with a flight to Kunming. After arrival in Kunming, our viewing of the city was a wet walk around the area's cultural centre. It was a new creation of the past and would have looked good in fine weather.

We flew to Dali early next morning. Only 370kms away, this flight took 30 minutes and we landed at a strip carved out of a mountain. Dali is approximately 1900 meters above sea level, so you can see we are starting to climb into the mountains. Immediately, it appeared visually beautiful – mountains, lake, green and seemed so clean. It is a lovely sunny morning in Dali, the camellia capital of the world. This is also the home of the Bai (bye), an ethnic group distinct from the ethnic Han Chinese. We visit the 3 pagodas in Chongsheng Temple, built in the 9th century at the foothills of the Cangshan Mountain and then drove around the beautiful Erhai Lake and passed some small fields of vegetables along the way. This seemed to be a very fertile part of China and the veggies all look delectable. We arrive at a local Bai House for a tea ceremony. Then we watched a Bai cultural show, which included a wedding ceremony, where it is Bai custom to "pinch" the bride. After visiting a fishing village via a lake cruise, we saw the three pagodas of the Chongsheng Temple, built in the 9th century during the height of the Nanzhao Empire, with Dali as its Capital.



After Dali, it was a drive to the town of Lijiang. We stayed at a good hotel in the old town, Jian Nan Chun Hotel. Because large vehicles are not allowed into the narrow lanes of the old city, vans were used to carry our luggage and we all had to walk for about 20 minutes to the hotel. Afterwards it was a visit to the Dayan old town of Lijiang, which was spared during an earthquake whilst the new town of Lijiang was devastated and rebuilt. The large Town Square had lots of eating-places and the patrons shouted, in song, from place to place. It was very songful and loud and there was a lot of dancing and visitors joined in. The steps were very repetitious and easy and the music was pleasant.



We spent three nights in Lijiang with one spare day to do our own thing. One of our visits was to the Dongba Cultural Centre, attached to the Black Dragon Lake. This was part of the almost compulsory history session of the Dongba Culture and the center also contained a World Heritage collection of old manuscripts. Dongba is an indigenous Shamanistic religion of The Naxi, a local people descended from Tibetan nomads. During our time in Lijiang, we also traveled up the valley to visit a local Naxi village, and on the way there were pink and white cosmos along the roadsides. We saw many flowers that originate in China, like peony, chrysanthemum, azalea, camellia, lotus and narcissus and we also saw plenty of primula, magnolia, and dahlias. After visiting the pink Jade Temple to

view a 500-year old camellia tree at the Jade Temple, from which one has a beautiful view of Lijiang in the distance, we were off to the Jade Lake Village. Joseph Rock, a famous Austrian-American botanist and explorer in the employ of the National Geographic society in the 20s to 40s, spent many years here studying the Naxi pictograph language. We lunched at the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and then accessed the Ganhaizi Meadow via chair lift, where yaks graze. The beautiful meadow was surrounded by spruce and fir trees and looked very picturesque with dramatic mountains in the background. You could be anywhere! Europe maybe! As this was quite high in altitude so we had to slow down when walking.

After taking a break from Chinese food during our off day in Lijiang, we are up early to travel north through the Jade Dragon Snow Mountains. Fan Peak is rarely seen, however we were lucky today, even our coach driver was out taking photos and also stopped on the way to view the first bend of the Yangtze River. We drove through a beautiful and mountainous countryside and met our Tibetan local guide at the lunch stop in Qiaotou. From Qiaotou we visited the Tiger Leaping Gorge by driving along a cliff hanging mountain road (The gorge is reputed to be the deepest gorge in the world and home to China's most famous trek). Some of the group ventured down the 1000+ stairs for a closer view at the thunderous rapids of the onrushing Yangtze River. The local people, for a charge could carry those who did not want to face the walk back up on a gondola. So off to **Zhongdian** we went and the scenery was magnificent and the roads wound up, around and down the mountains and then up again and we now see Tibetans and yaks, goats and pigs.



First impressions of Zhongdian would suggest Lijiang deserve the title of Shangri-La more. However the surrounding scenery was like what you could imagine the fabled Shangri-La might be like (especially the area around Deqin). The highlight of Zhongdian (Gyalthang in Tibetan) is the Ganden Sumtseling Gumpa, a huge Tibetan monastery and now we could notice the effect of the altitude as we walked up the steps to the Lamastery! Due to a long day, we bypassed the Baishui Terraces but visited the high alpine lakes of Shudu and Bitahai.



From Zhongdian, our next destination is Deqin, the town located in the far northwest corner of Yunnan and home to the sacred 6740m peak Kawa Karpo. We have 187km to travel today and it will take over 7 hours. We stopped at the village of Benzilan for our lunch and the main street has some very large eucalyptus growing and Pat from Sydney suggested this place should be called Eucalyptus Valley. Afterwards, we visited the Dongzhulin Tibetan Monastery and then up through a pass at 4200 meters altitude high in the White Horse Mountain Nature Reserve. Later in the afternoon, we stopped at some Tibetan Stupas, which are unique religious forms to reflect Buddha's physical presence.

Deqin, set deep in a valley and only one mountain range away from Tibet, is popular with people coming here to trek around the Kawa Karpo massif or see the panorama of the mountain range, as the town is not significant in itself as a tourist destination. The next morning was an early start and the intent was to see all 13 peaks of the Mount Kawa Karpo at sunrise, weather permitting. After arriving

at the Feilai Monastery, which is the best vantage point to see the sunrise, we waited in anticipation. The morning light started to appear and we were one of the very fortunate groups to see a perfect sun rise over this pristine snow covered mountain range, with the highest peak reaching into the sky at 6740m. Viewing these peaks in perfect weather is rare! Afterwards many of us decided to forfeit the side trip to the Kawa Karpo Glacier as it could be a long day but some decided to visit anyway. From Deqin, we retraced our route back to Zhongdian, where we took a flight back to Kunming the following day. At arrival in Kunming, we all said our goodbye, as some would fly out to Bangkok, Shanghai, Beijing and 12 of us to Hong Kong.

Compile from accounts by **Michael Ryan** and **Gay Robinson** of Sydney Interline Club

These and many other photos from our tours in China you will find at the website from Helena Afonso (Interline Club of Portugal) www.pbase.com/ha3349/galleries under

CHINA - THE GREAT CAPITAL BEIJING, INTERNAL XIAN, GLAMOROUS SHANGHAI, GARDENS OF HEAVEN, YANGTZE - THE DRAGON LONG RIVER and BEAUTIFUL BLUE DALI

A Visit to the Capital Beijing

Jordan Interline Club participated with 41 Members at the AGA in Shanghai. Before beginning of the Events, 30 of them went to Beijing to visit the Great Wall and Forbidden City, Summer City and many historical places around Beijing



Do you remember?

During the AGA in Jamaica in 1990, WACA and its members continued with the tradition to collect school material for local schools for needed children. On the photo you will see AGA Coordinator Damian YAP, V.P. Special Projects, Marjorie Homenick, Major Errol Alliman and Secretary General, Ann Lenehan in front of some of the school supplies.



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