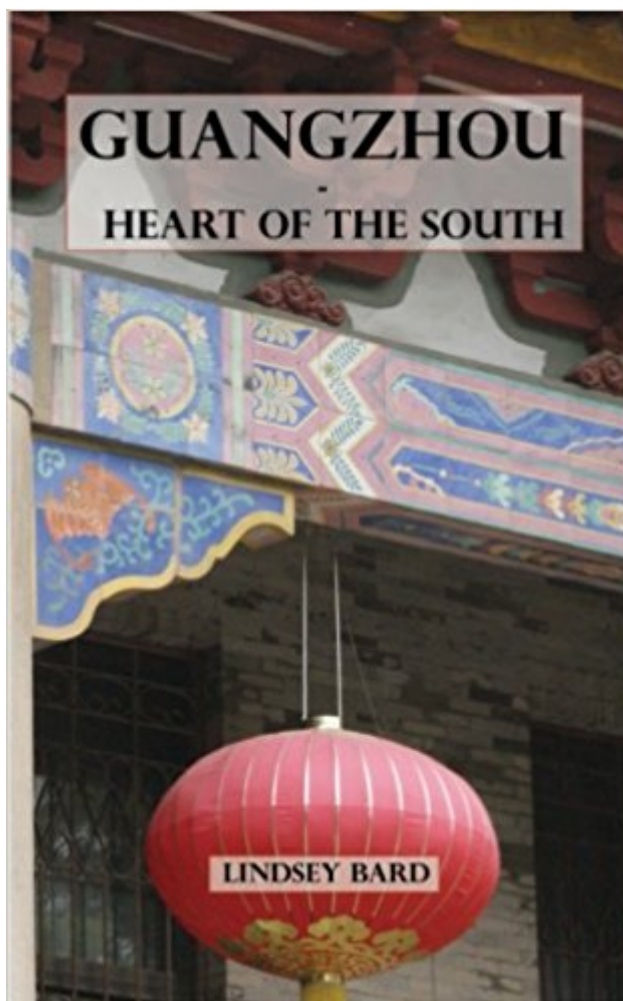


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Guangzhou - Heart Of The South: Tour Guide To The Southern Capital



Synopsis

Welcome to Guangzhou and Canton and Panyu. The city has changed its name at least three times over the centuries, and the people have changed with it. This tour guide for Guangzhou seeks to share with travelers the beauty of the southern capital. A place where each district in the older sections of town has a museum tucked around a corner, while the newer sections of town have modern, larger facilities for art and music presentations. This is the home of Cantonese Opera and the oldest Islamic mosque in China. Neither the city, nor the province it's the capital of brag a lot, but they have plenty to be proud of. This guide focuses on seven noteworthy sites chosen for their cultural value, interest, fun and insight into China and the Southern Chinese people. Some are old and show case the history of the region; some are modern and focus on the issues facing today's society. Their order is based on the amount of time it takes to see each site, starting with approximately two hours for Chen Clan Academy and ending with Chimelong Safari Park which takes all day. Readers will notice that in each chapter a different Chinese host is featured. To understand the importance of a place it is best to ask those who live there, because they have the best stories. Each of these men and women volunteered to visit a site and share their experiences as a cultural insider. The hosts are native Chinese speakers who have various levels of English mastery. They are funny and sincere and offer a view of their city as few other tour guides have ever attempted. Their stories join the historical research telling the story of Guangzhou, a city of +17 million people and a history of more than 10,000 years in the Zhujiang River (Pearl River) delta. It's been a heart of business and the West's entrance the Middle Kingdom for more than 1,500 years. Follow its story and walk its street with this guide.

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Customer Reviews

Lindsey Bard is a writer for a company magazine, a former English teacher, world traveler and postcard collector. She was born in Tennessee, but left quite earlier to begin her travels in the world. The travel bug has never left her. She spent two years living in Guangzhou in Haizhu District above the Shayuan metro station. She walked to work and toured the city on her days off. This book is the product of her wanderings and a need to complete her Masters degree in narrative nonfiction from Ball State University (which she has since done).

I purchased the paperback version of this book. It is nicely laid out. The print is of good size and legible, although I found the practice of using subscripts rather than superscripts for endnote designation to be a bit distracting, simply because I'm not used to it. There are no illustrations or photos other than those on the covers. However, one can easily find photos of the attractions discussed on the internet, including the author's own website, where very nice supplemental information is provided. The introduction contains a minimal amount of general advice for travelers, including the necessity to carry toilet paper because of the lack thereof in public lavatories. Another thing mentioned was the importance of having one's passport with oneself at all times. Rather than use the BC/AD date system, which professes a belief in Christian theology and is therefore inappropriate for a general readership and especially for a book about a historically non-Christian people like the Chinese, the author correctly uses the BCE/CE date system throughout. She is to be commended for such a show of respect, which is almost never exhibited by the major travel book publishers. Rather than discuss as many of the myriad Guangzhou attractions as possible, the author chooses to concentrate on seven of them and discuss them in detail. She is an insider, someone who lived in the city for a while, as opposed to the usual travel writer, and that makes her comments more valuable. She includes observations about each attraction by the hosts, a native Chinese, a different one for each attraction, and they provide their own insights. I imagine this approach was used to add interest, and it's partially successful in that respect. It would have been more successful if the hosts had been more knowledgeable about the particular cultural attractions they were commenting on. Also included are extensive comments from correspondence written by Mrs. Henry Gray, published in 1880. These comments have historical interest although don't relate all that much to the attractions featured in this book. The attractions covered include the Chen Clan Academy, the Guangdong Museum, the Museum of the Nanyue King of the Western Han Dynasty, the Temples of Yuexiu district, Yuexiu Park, Baiyun Mountain Reserve, and the Chimelong Safari Park. Inclusion of

the latter, I think, was a waste, as it appears to be essentially just a zoo, although it does have an open-land area. In my view, most zoos, although claiming to have an educational role, are really for gawking at exploited animals. Another historical or cultural attraction would have been more suitable for inclusion. The great amount of detail rendered for each of the historical attractions will prepare one nicely for a personal visit. One's eyes will be opened and one will know what to look for when one is there. The book is very well written, and I recommend it.

I spent time in China and Taiwan. This book functions a little bit like a memoir and a lot like a guided tour. If you're planning on visiting China, you really should read THIS book instead of some website's guide to cramming stuff into your stay.

It just was not what I expected. It is more just the author's personal story.

It is not really a travel guide. It is novel made to look like a travel guide.

Rather a history book than a guide

On one hand this is a niche book, a travel guide to a small number of places within a specific region (Guangzhou). Having never been to China and unlikely to visit there in the near future, it is not that useful to me in that aspect. On the other hand, it is a window into a place outside my experiences, narrated by someone from my culture, with accompanying YouTube videos (channel: GZtraveler) describing and showing the locations as seen and understood by both locals and outsiders, past and present. It is fairly dry, but filled with little observational gems that are just casually tossed out, and which say a bit more than the actual words. "The Municipal Museum also oversees the management of three other museums: The Memorial of the March 29th Uprising Headquarters Museum, the Sanyuanli Anti-British Museum and the Guangzhou Art Gallery." The "Anti-British Museum" you say? Sounds like someone is still holding a grudge from the Opium Wars. Can you imagine a place in the United States being called the "Anti-Jap Museum"? Things like this jolt you into remembering that not everyone sees the world in the same way. I don't give it 5 stars because you almost need to have a tablet or computer handy to hear the narrators of the various sections as you are reading it, and since the book is not illustrated, you need the video to actually see the things being described. I may never go there, but if I ever get around to writing any fiction, it will be a handy reference for seeing and describing things from other points of view.

An unusual traveler's guide as it actually gives historical insight into the area rather than simple 'go here-see this'. The author uses her selected sites to tell the reader key things they need to know to make their trip to the sites more physically pleasurable. But in choosing her sites carefully she is able to add educational information about the history of the area from both current indigent people blended with a historical literary view. It's not your usual guide book. It is great if you really want to understand and appreciate the culture.

We used the book along with local guides to make sure we hit the high points. Excellent insights into the city and the people. LB pointed us to the optimum hotel location (Rose Hotel) and major attractions, the zoo is absolutely amazing!

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