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Classic China and the Yangtze

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Abstract

Suggested readings for the Penn Alumni Travel event in China. See the Library Guide for this bibliography [here](#).

Keywords

china, yangtze, travel, alumni, penn, reading, recommendations

Disciplines

Chinese Studies

Comments

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Alumni Travel Bibliography
Classic China and the Yangtze

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Reading Recommendations

Peter Hessler, *Oracle Bones* (HarperCollins, 2007). An excellent introduction to the recent changes undergone by China combined with explorations of ancient Chinese history and the scholars who study it. Much of Hessler's reporting is set in Beijing, and his stories introduce people and sites throughout the city.

For much of the first millennium CE, Xi'an formed the eastern terminus of the Silk Road, which carried goods, travelers, and ideas between China and western Asia. Valerie Hansen's new survey, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford University Press, 2012), introduces the sites of the Silk Road and the rich network it formed across Inner Asia.

Sichuan province, which surrounds the city of Chongqing, was the home of Liao Yiwu, several of whose interviews with ordinary Chinese people are translated in *The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories, China from the Bottom Up* (Pantheon, 2008). Many of Liao's interlocutors also come from Sichuan, and their conversations reveal much of how life there has changed over the last several decades. *24 City* by the director Zhang Jiake, portrays contemporary Chengdu--another great Sichuanese city--through a combination of documentary interviews and fictional scenes acted in a documentary style.

Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Yangtze: Nature History and the River* (Addison-Wesley, 1988) surveys the topography and history of the Yangtze River and is a great introduction to accompany a cruise through southern China. In *The Old Man Who Does as He Pleases* (Columbia University Press, 1973), Burton Watson translates excerpts from the diary of the government official Lu You as he traveled by boat up the river and into Sichuan during 1170.

Eileen Chang, *Lust, Caution*, trans. Julia Lovell (Anchor, 2007). This short novella is set in Shanghai under Japanese occupation and conveys well the flavor of the historical city. Also, Ang Lee made a movie based on this book: *Lust, Caution* (Universal, 2008). And modern Shanghai provides the setting for Qiu Xiaolong's crime novel, *Death of a Red Heroine* (Soho, 2000).