

A Chinese traveler takes afternoon tea in an English castle.

Mr. Wang lets himself sink into his luxurious armchair, occasionally reaching for his porcelain cup of earl grey tea; a taste of genuine British culture.

The log fire blazes as I feel myself drifting into a stupor; Mr. Wang on the other hand, who is six days into his trip to the UK, is still brimming with energy. "This is exactly how I pictured England to be," he pauses and corrects himself, "in fact this is even more perfect than I imagined!"

Mr. Wang has the pleasure of coming to England on the *Classic British Culture Experience* designed by company X. Over the last six days he has visited St. Andrew's and spent a night in the birthplace of golf. He has visited the castle of Harry Potter fame and even stayed the night in a remote cottage in the heart of the English countryside. On his final day, he has come to this beautiful castle near London, to enjoy a quintessentially English cup of afternoon tea.

In company X's Chinese language brochure, Mr. Wang learned that the very castle where he sips his afternoon tea has a history of several hundred years and was once home to the nobility of ancient Britain. "History and culture have always fascinated me. The architecture and interior design are exquisite. What is fantastic, is that I can actually sit here and experience it for myself while enjoying afternoon tea – just as the British nobility once did", he says excitedly.

Mr. Wang is 35 years old and works in a bank. There are now seventy thousand Chinese tourists like him visiting the UK every year. "It is common knowledge that China is becoming the UK's most important tourism market", says Mr. Huang, an international leisure consultant of company X. "However, there are still so many travel companies that just don't know how to cater to the travel needs of Chinese tourists".

Currently, Chinese tourists can only visit the UK as part of an organised tour – with their itineraries arranged entirely by the travel company. According to Mr. Huang's evaluation, "the problem is that the industry has changed - the photograph taken below Big Ben that may have excited the tourist of ten years ago, does not live up to the expectations of the more experienced Chinese traveler of today. There are very few new ideas in the industry and travel companies still arrange tours that try to pack in as many destinations as possible, with very little meaningful insight into British culture."

The majority of travel packages offered to Chinese tourists are still 'sight seeing tours', with the occasional shopping trip included. Mr. Huang concludes that, "we need to provide a product that allows Chinese tourists to experience the essence of British culture for themselves, giving them a much richer experience."