

The Best Reasons to Stay Off the Beaten Track in Asia

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Asia is without doubt a continent which has a plentiful amount to offer tourists - with a variety of beautiful nations each showcasing their own individual smorgasbord of adventures and cultural experiences to sink your teeth into.

But is sticking to the most commonly walked path always the right approach? Today we're going to challenge that theory, taking a look at five of the best reasons to stay off the beaten track when travelling in Asia.

1. Overpopulation

When five of the seven most populated countries in the world are Asian (including the top two in [China](#) and [India](#), which harbour just under two-and-a-half billion between them), it's hardly a shock the continent has something of a problem when it comes to population control.

It's great to feel like part of an affluent and bustling system, but there's only so much of a crowd you can put up with before barely being able to breath starts to become something of a burden.

Sticking to hotspots - in major cities and at commonly-visited tourist locales - will only serve to highlight this problem, and will no doubt lead to excess levels of stress as you try to manoeuvre through waves of people.

Stick to lesser-known areas and you'll definitely avoid the problems which come associated with an overpopulated region.



2. Tourist traps

Some popular tourist attractions are worth every penny you spend, but there are also plenty which have become iconic for no particular reason other than to try and lure unsuspecting visitors in.

There are lots of places which fall under this remit, but one which stands out in particular is [Vang Vieng in Laos](#), which draws thousands of young partyers in every year with the mass appeal of a tube ride down a local river.

You'll probably end up forking out a fair bob on drinks and other services - and while you might have a good time in the moment, you'll regret it instantly when the hangover kicks in.

Places like the [Great Wall of China](#) aren't much better, or the Forbidden City in [Beijing](#) where an experience will involve you "waiting to see something amazing" before "all of a sudden you're out the other side and it's all over."



3. Other tourists

If overpopulation from the people of the city itself wasn't bad enough, you'll also have to deal with the age-old problem of your fellow tourists.

While they're not necessarily doing anything wrong (after all, they're just an extension of the greater movement you yourself are a part of) it certainly wouldn't be a stretch to suggest they're ruining the ambience of a spot somewhat.

If you're looking to immerse yourself in the natural culture of a country, you aren't likely to be able to do that when visiting somewhere which is flooded with non-locals. Take the Forbidden City in Beijing as an example - forced to walk shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of other tourists - with nothing of real value to show for your efforts. It's no surprise it features on a list of the world's most disappointing tourist attractions.

As well as that, popularly visited locations are only going to give you a manufactured or commercial taste of a nation - not a realistic interpretation of how things actually are there.



4. Amazing hidden destinations

Half the charm of visiting spots which are off the beaten track is you'll find a plethora of amazing locations which won't appear in your guidebooks.

There are plenty of amazing destinations you can check out which won't be swarmed with tourists - and that'll also give you a genuine feel for the region you're visiting. Some include:

- **Yungang Grottoes (China)** - this series of 53 caves contains over 51,000 stone statues which were manmade in roughly 450AD. The statues vary from small to giant, and are sometimes carved into the wall of the caves themselves.
- **Samarkand (Uzbekistan)** - an ancient city which sees sandstone buildings combined with beautiful and luxurious turquoise domes.
- **Sipadan (Malaysia)** - clear waters which are a hotspot for divers - showcasing some of the most beautiful and best preserved fish in the world.
- **Similan Island (Thailand)** - "the island chain's rocky islands are littered with white-sand beaches and tropical rainforest" and present fantastic

swimming opportunities for anyone looking to take a dip its crisp aquamarine waters.

Sometimes (in fact, often) it's the unknown and out-of-the-way spots which will give you the most honest taste of a foreign culture. Try out some of these locales and see how much of a difference it can make when compared to more commercial areas.



5. Discovery

Half the joy of checking out areas which aren't regularly frequented by a lot of people is you'll discover a lot - both physically and mentally speaking.

While you'll stumble across areas which might have been seen just a handful of times before by other intrepid explorers, you'll also find yourself with plenty of thinking time.

The noise and verve of big cities is all well and good, but a quiet and serene atmosphere is a godsend when it comes to finding some thinking time for yourself.

Meditation is championed in Asia - and you can certainly understand why given the vast amount of open space where you'll be able to sit in a quiet spot and just think.

Tourist spots have become popular for a reason - but it isn't always the right one. It's definitely worth trying to find somewhere a little more off the beaten track when you're next in Asia.