



# Time to trek in

If you were bitten by the Beijing bug during the Olympics, Natalie Bollu reveals how to enjoy your own Chinese adventure, and help a Chelmsford hospice

VISITING different cultures of the world is, for many, a highlight of their life experience. And when it comes to picking a favourite destination, China is top of many people's list, particularly after the thrills of the Beijing Olympics.

One Chelmsford-based charity has been helping travellers make the wonderful opportunity of visiting China a reality. Farleigh Hospice has been putting together teams to trek the Great Wall of China to help raise funds for the hospice and offer intrepid adventurers the chance to enjoy a truly unforgettable experience.

When Ivan Woolgrove took up the challenge to trek the Great Wall of China in May 2005, he raised a total of £5,500 for Farleigh Hospice. 'I had a fantastic time in China. It was physically and mentally challenging, but very rewarding. The biggest reward for me was to raise money for people in such need. I tried to explain my experience to my family when I got home, but it is

impossible to explain the sort of feeling you get from it. My whole journey was just an immense experience, one that I would not swap for anything in the world.'

Since 1982, Farleigh Hospice has provided vital support to around 250 people from the mid Essex region every week, many of them cancer patients or those suffering from life-limiting illnesses. The care is provided completely free of charge, but the cost of

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running this specialist service increases every year and can reach as much as £2.9 million. About a third of this cost is provided by the NHS, but the rest is entirely dependant upon the goodwill and generosity of the Essex community.

For Ivan, the experience of walking the

Great Wall of China has had an amazing impact on his life. 'I got an incredible sense of wellbeing from doing it. It enabled me to give something back. The money we raised enabled one of the rooms in the hospice to be fitted out. Our efforts helped the hospice and all the people that will be there through the coming years. It was a great feeling to have.'

In April 2009 a group from the Farleigh Hospice will be returning to China for

another expedition. The trek will reveal what surrounds The Great Wall, as it snakes through the mountains from the scattered remains in the Liaoning Province to Jiayuguan in the Gobi desert.

The Great Wall of China offers breathtaking views of the Yashan Mountains



## EXPEDITION ITINERARY

**April 19 to 28**

- Day 1** Flight from London Heathrow to Beijing
- Day 2** Arrive in Beijing and transfer to overnight accommodation
- Day 3** The Great Wall at Mutianyu
- Day 4** Black Dragon Paw Park
- Day 5** The Great Wall at Gubeikou
- Day 6** The Great Wall at Jinshanling
- Day 7** The Great Wall at Simatai
- Day 8** Free day
- Day 9** Transfer to the airport



and the chance to watch some of the most stunning sunrises as a new day dawns over the wall. Building work on The Great Wall of China began more than 2,000 years ago and took thousands of workers ten years of hard labour to complete. Today it is acknowledged as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Farleigh Hospice trekkers will explore places other tourists may have never seen. Exploring ancient monuments such as the highest restored water tower on the wall and Gebeikou, one of the least-visited parts of the wall in the Beijing area. Visits to local villages and a small primary school will also give an insight into the local community and the varied culture of China.

For Ivan, meeting local people and trying to communicate with them was one of the highlights. ‘The wallcatchers, who held some of our bags, would walk with us the whole day and would try to talk to us. We were all trying to communicate with them as much as

possible by pointing and drawing pictures with our fingers. It was very interesting to try to relate and see the local people.’

It all adds to an incredible experience that Ivan cannot recommend highly enough. ‘If anyone is thinking about signing up I’d say, “Do it, don’t hesitate”. Chances like this are so rare in life, you just have to grab them.’

## JOIN THE TREKKERS

For more information or to sign up for this trek, call the Farleigh Hospice events team on **01245 457408**.

To sign up for the trek you do not have to be extremely fit but may have to train. However, the trek is not suitable for those who suffer from vertigo.

## NEXT MONTH

Essex Life begins its new charities news page

