



Infected trio's tour of old Suzhou becomes unexpected travel guide

Ke Jiayun and Xu Qing

An epidemiological investigation into a Shanghai trio infected with COVID-19 has become an unexpected online travel guide sensation.

Authorities found three Shanghai residents had traveled together to Suzhou City in neighboring Jiangsu Province from November 19 to 21 before being confirmed COVID-positive on November 25.

When Suzhou authorities released their itinerary, people became interested in their sightseeing of Suzhou's rich historical and cultural heritage.

Netizens said it was an in-depth "journey of culture" in only three days — from traditional classic gardens to historical buildings, museums and local cuisine.

"The Shanghai epidemiological investigation has underscored the Suzhou code of Jiangnan culture (regions south of the Yangtze River)," said one comment.

Some said they were moved by love for Suzhou's history and culture, and the places the trio visited deserve a mark for tourism.

The Baosheng Temple in Luzhi ancient water town boasts nine famous clay arhats — beings who have attained enlightenment in Buddhism — which were sculpted in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) and are still well preserved.



Suzhou Museum West

The Zijin Temple on Dongshan Mountain is known for its lifelike colored arhat sculptures created in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). They also went to two gardens: Canglang Pavilion, the oldest Suzhou garden that can be traced back to the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) and Wangshi Garden built during the Southern Song Dynasty.

Rather than complaining about the trio, people in Suzhou showed an optimistic and understanding attitude.

Under a WeChat posting of Suzhou's Gusu Evening News, a reader from Suzhou called "Yanyujiangnan" said his beloved hometown is a city of gentleness with an atmosphere of ancient

culture, exquisite artworks and crafts.

"The Suzhounese welcome people from everywhere to come to visit the gardens as well as historical sites and enjoy the delicious food here after the pandemic," he said.

A Weibo user added: "Where they went are all places of Suzhou's charm, and the travelers are longing for.

"Hope this round of pandemic can come to an end soon and the three friends can recover as soon as possible."

Another Weibo user said: "When discussing this issue, there's no abuse and that's good.

"We're now in the period of pandemic and nobody is willing to be



Baosheng Temple



Canglang Pavilion

infected or spread the epidemic maliciously.

"We are all victims (of the pandemic) and need to support each other."

The newspaper also welcomed people to visit Suzhou and explore Jiangnan culture when the pandemic ends.

In response, Shanghai and

Hangzhou media said people from the respective cities would definitely go to Suzhou again, and wished there were more connections among the three most developed cities in the Yangtze River Delta.

Epidemiological investigation plays an important role in China's "zero-tolerance" policy in fighting the pandemic.

From the start, authorities were criticized for releasing too much personal information such as names, addresses and phone numbers, which could lead to cyber abuse.

But now the authorities have paid more attention to strictly protecting people's privacy, which has helped to win praise from the public.

As well as travel guides, some epidemiological reports have become gourmet guides.

Some restaurants the cases frequently visited have become popular because of the delicious food, and some regional specialty foods have become known to the public.

After the report of an elderly man in Shenyang, northeast China's Liaoning Province, who ate *jijia* (chicken ribs) at different restaurants three times in several days, people in other provinces came to know about this food and it sold well all over the country.