

The Schoolhouse at Mutianyu

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[Stefanie Eschenbacher](#)

The Great Wall at Mutianyu has some competition. A small group of old China hands and locals from different walks of life have transformed an old abandoned elementary school in the village of Mutianyu into The Schoolhouse – a tourist destination for families offering a restaurant, an art glass studio and an art room.



Sunlight enters the renovated classrooms that house the restaurant through yellow, green and violet windows and each table is topped with a bunch of wild flowers. Hungry, antsy kids can be distracted with crayons and blank placemats or sated with a handful of the complimentary – and highly addictive – roasted nuts, which are harvested locally.

The small menu, which emphasizes fresh and local ingredients, is scrawled across a blackboard. Every bite of the pan-fried wild mushroom ravioli (RMB 59) and the accompanying salad dressed up with blue cheese, walnuts and apples offers a surprising blend of flavors. The tuna melt (RMB 43) with fries is generous enough to satisfy the hungriest wall-hiker. Kids are well catered to, thanks to a children's menu offering spaghetti, chicken pieces and fish and chips. Vegetarians aren't left out either. Dessert options include homemade ice creams, sorbets and chocolates. We tried the chocolate ice cream and were knocked out by its refined taste.



If the food's not enough of a reason for a visit, The Schoolhouse's courtyard houses a glass studio and parents and kids are invited to come learn about the art of glass making and watch glassblowers in action. An adjacent gift shop offers one-of-a-kind glass pieces – kids will like the tiny pumpkins and colorful dragonflies.

Julie Upton-Wang, chairwoman of The Schoolhouse Board of Directors, told us about plans to use a sustainable tourism model to develop tours of the village, along with chances to hang out with local kids, lessons in noodle making and fruit picking, and other fun programs for kids.

If you're already heading out to Mutianyu for a Great Wall adventure, The Schoolhouse is a great place to visit for a pre-hike lunch or a post-hike refueling. And if you've already filled your wall quota for the year, don't write it off – there's enough on offer to make The Schoolhouse worth a family visit all on its own.

[The Schoolhouse at Mutianyu](#)

(Some English spoken.) Thu-Tue 10am-6pm. (6162 6506)

www.theschoolhouseatmutianyu.com