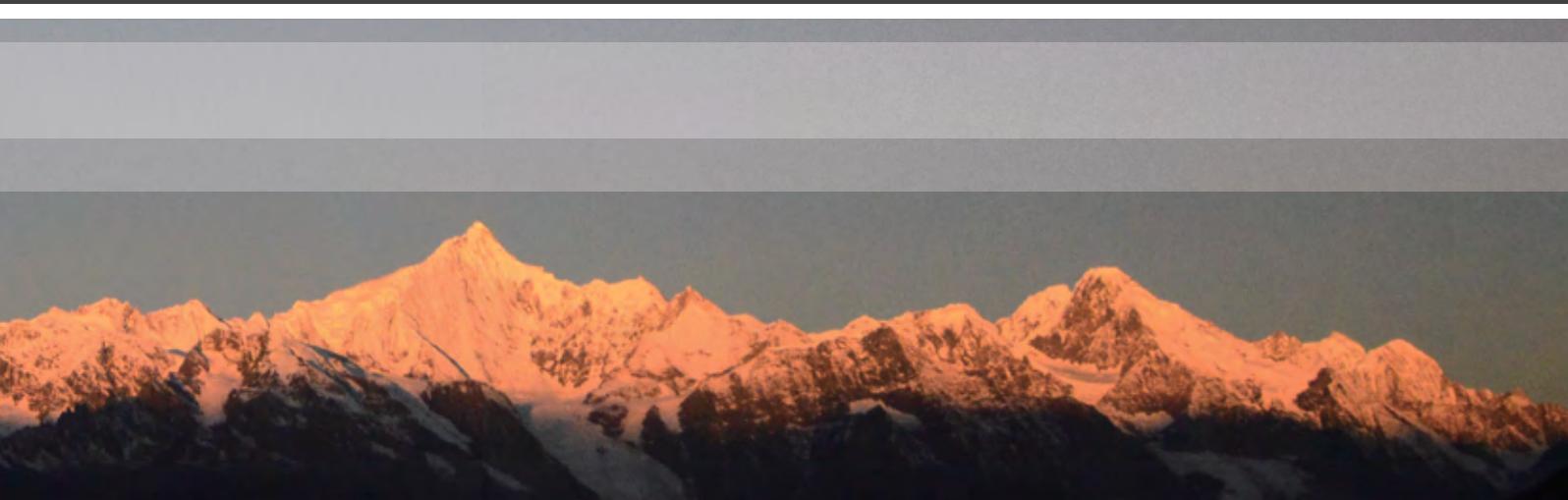


MOMENTS

on the road

Searching for Shangri-La
(9 Days)





ON THE ROAD EXPERIENCES

BACK ROADS | HIDDEN GEMS

We love road journeys. They are by far our favourite way of traveling. We think the world of western China and the countries that border on this region – think Vietnam, Lao, Thailand, Myanmar, for example.

On the Road Experiences is all about sharing with like-minded travelers just how beautiful a road journey in these varied lands can be. Now turn the page to find out what we've come to love so much...



An aerial photograph of a mountain valley. A winding road, partially covered in snow, curves through a dense forest of evergreen trees. Patches of snow are scattered across the forest floor and on the slopes of the mountains. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

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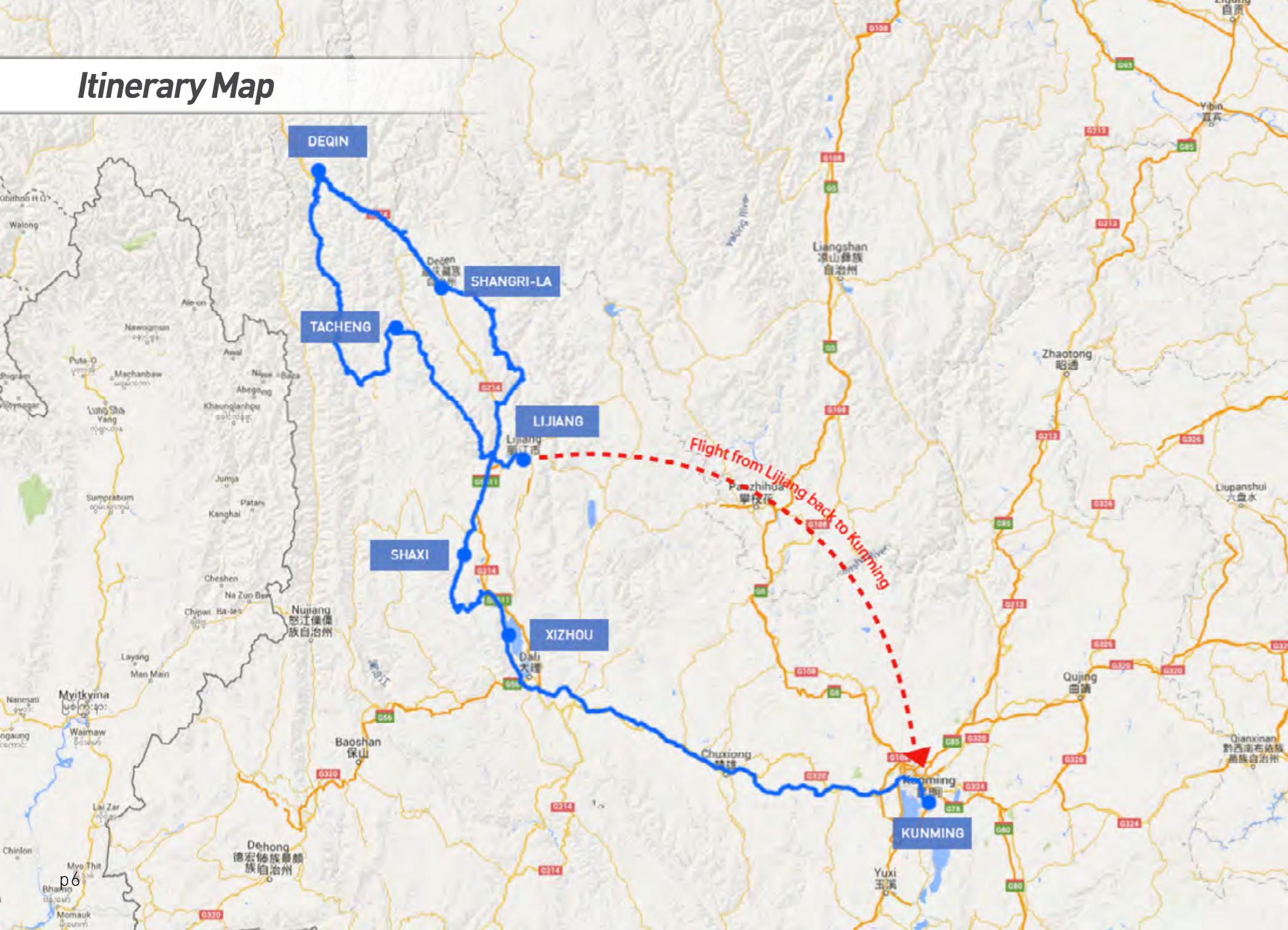
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Itinerary Map



Day-by-Day

Day1
Arrival in Kunming –
Preparing for Your journey

Day2
Dali and Xizhou –
To the heart of the Nanzhao Kingdom

Day3
Xizhou to Shaxi –
Drive to Shaxi...a journey back in time

Day4
Shaxi to Tacheng –
*Along the Yangtze into the Three
Parallel Rivers region*

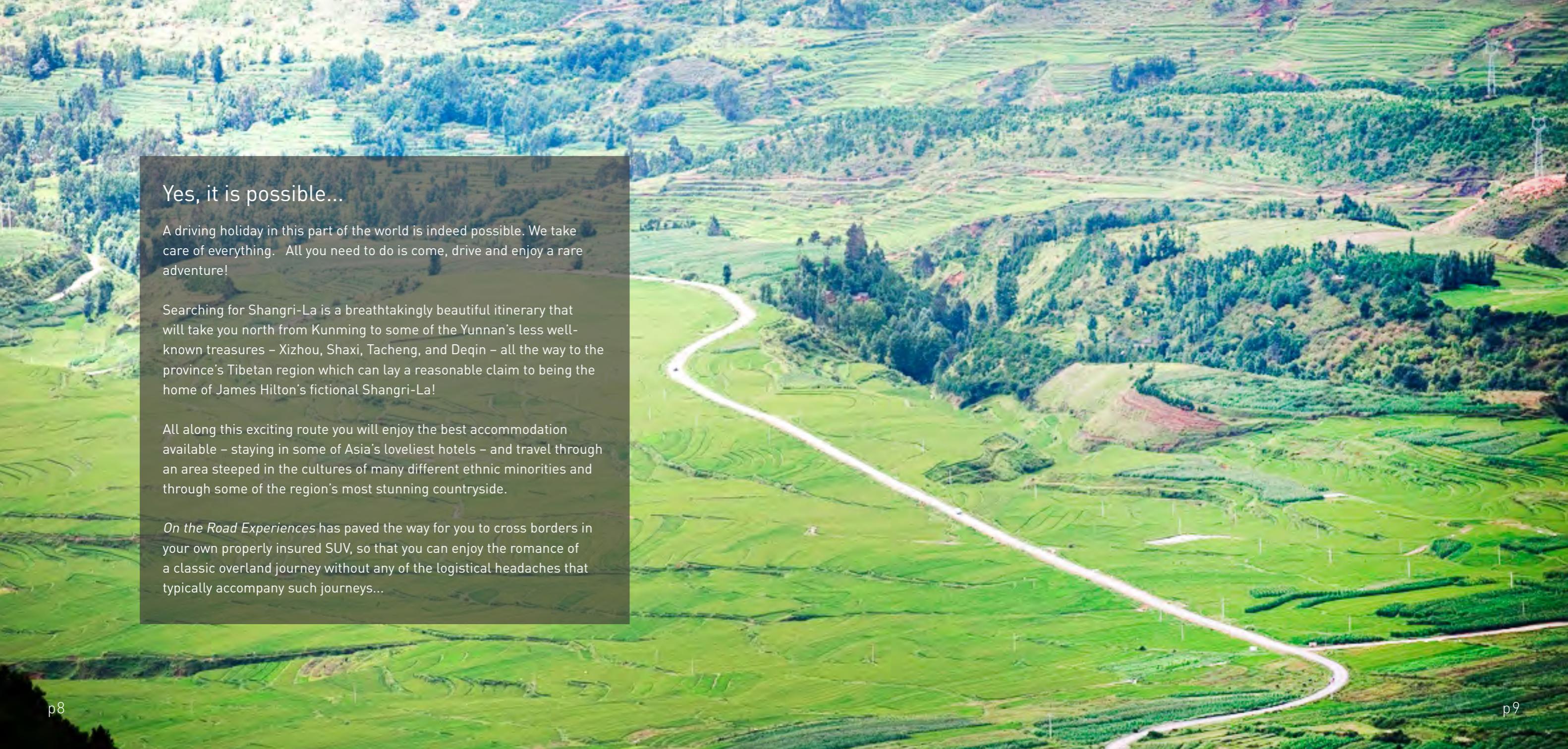
Day5
Tacheng to Deqin –
Up and up to the edge of Tibet

Day6
In and around Deqin –
*Exploring the foot hills of Meili Snow
Mountain...*

Day7
Deqin to Shangri-La –
*Across the Baima National Reserve
to Shangri-La...*

Day8
Shangri-La to Lijiang –
*On the back roads to Tiger Leaping
Gorge...*

Day9
Lijiang to Kunming –
Life goes on...



Yes, it is possible...

A driving holiday in this part of the world is indeed possible. We take care of everything. All you need to do is come, drive and enjoy a rare adventure!

Searching for Shangri-La is a breathtakingly beautiful itinerary that will take you north from Kunming to some of the Yunnan's less well-known treasures – Xizhou, Shaxi, Tacheng, and Deqin – all the way to the province's Tibetan region which can lay a reasonable claim to being the home of James Hilton's fictional Shangri-La!

All along this exciting route you will enjoy the best accommodation available – staying in some of Asia's loveliest hotels – and travel through an area steeped in the cultures of many different ethnic minorities and through some of the region's most stunning countryside.

On the Road Experiences has paved the way for you to cross borders in your own properly insured SUV, so that you can enjoy the romance of a classic overland journey without any of the logistical headaches that typically accompany such journeys...

Journey of discovery





“Awaking in
China’s RURAL
COUNTRYSIDE...”



“ Take a lake shore
DRIVE and enjoy the
BEAUTIFUL sunset
reflections...”

“Stepping
BACK in
TIME...”

A Bai minority village near Shaxi



“Explore SHAXI’s beautiful old town - much of which dates from the MING Dynasty...”

Beautiful old town of Shaxi

“A small section
of the ANCIENT
TEA HORSE TRAIL...”





古镇鞋店

电话 15887389115

財源永茂

利

財如晚日

“ CHINA 德滨雅居
as in
TIMES GONE BY...”

Cobbler and artist in Shaxi...



“Your JOURNEY
in the THREE
PARALLEL
RIVERS region...”

“Lunch
in THE
MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE...”

In the Tacheng lodge



“ SLEEPING
WELL while
FAR AWAY from
anywhere...”

“Visiting the
CUTEST
MONKEYS in
the world...”



Yunnan Snub-Nosed monkeys

“A colourful
WELCOME as
you APPROACH
TIBET...”



Tibetan prayer flags

“ What a
SUNRISE at the
EDGE of TIBET ...”

Kawagebo peak in the Meili Snow Mountain range

A scenic view of a mountain trail with hikers and vibrant autumn foliage. The trail is a narrow dirt path winding through a forest of trees with colorful leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow. Several hikers are visible on the trail, moving away from the camera. The background shows a steep, rocky mountain slope. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

“ Wonderful
HIKING, if you
like, as a WAY TO
RELAX...”

In the foot hills of Meili Snow Mountain



“ Along the way,
one of the **LARGEST**
MONASTERIES in
SOUTH-WEST China...”

“RED-ROBED
MONKS in
Shangri-La...”



At the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery

“ A chance to
PURIFY
YOUR MIND?”



Prayer Session at Ganden Sumtseing Monastery



“STUNNING
LANDSCAPES
on the way to
LIJIANG...”

From a back road near Baishuitai



“The TIGER
LEAPING GORGE...
where the YANGTZE
makes you TREMBLE!”

“LIJIANG
is touristy, but
there ARE
HIDDEN GEMS to
DISCOVER...”



Jade Lake not far from Lijiang...

Jade Dragon Snow Mountain seen from the Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang...

“The lovely winding alleys of Lijiang’s old town are a UNESCO World Heritage site...”



“ Where
DR. Joseph Rock
lived and worked to
INTRODUCE northwest
YUNNAN to the
outside world...”

Naxi minority lady in Yuhu, near Lijiang

Day-by-day



Day 1 Preparing for your journey

Arrive in Kunming according to your own arrangements.

We will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. If you require a temporary Chinese driving license, we will take you to the hotel via the Vehicle Licensing Bureau. All the documents for your temporary license will be prepared; you will just need to take a simple eye test and sign the forms.

After settling into the hotel, you may want to go for a stroll along the city-center Green Lake where many locals enjoy relaxing hours. The vicinity of the lake bustles with people young and old and throughout much of the year is lush green. Depending on the season, energetic migratory birds make the lake their temporary home.

In the evening, enjoy a group dinner together in a lovely,

local restaurant near your hotel and attend our staff's safety briefing.

Dinner will be an opportunity to begin to acquaint yourself with the many flavours of Yunnan's cuisine and to meet your fellow travellers.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: NA

Duration: NA

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1850m

Overnight: 1850m

Hotel

Green Lake Hotel (*****)

Day 2 To the heart of the Nanzhao Kingdom

On your first day, you will drive to Dali and on to Xizhou, home of the Linden Centre – a lovingly converted Bai minority mansion, where you will stay for the night.

Today's route is designed to ease you into driving in mainland China...mostly on a wonderful highway that allows us to gain distance from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province.

Yunnan has one of the best road networks in China, as today's drive will demonstrate. After a relaxed start to the day you will set out from Kunming and drive along a world-class highway until you reach Dali – formerly capital of Yunnan's Nanzhao Kingdom.

The population of the region around Dali is predominantly Bai minority and you will see ladies wearing the traditional Bai headdress all over Dali.

Tourism is now the mainstay of Dali's economy, but in years gone by the city was the capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom, which ruled a swathe of what is today Yunnan Province and northern Burma between the 8th and 9th centuries AD.

From Dali it is only a short drive north to the Bai minority village of Xizhou...a hidden gem in the countryside.

Slowly, we're sure, you will feel your workday stresses ebb as you ease into the rhythm of travelling.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 360 km

Duration: 4.5-5.5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 2000m

Overnight: 2000m

Hotel

Linden Centre (****)

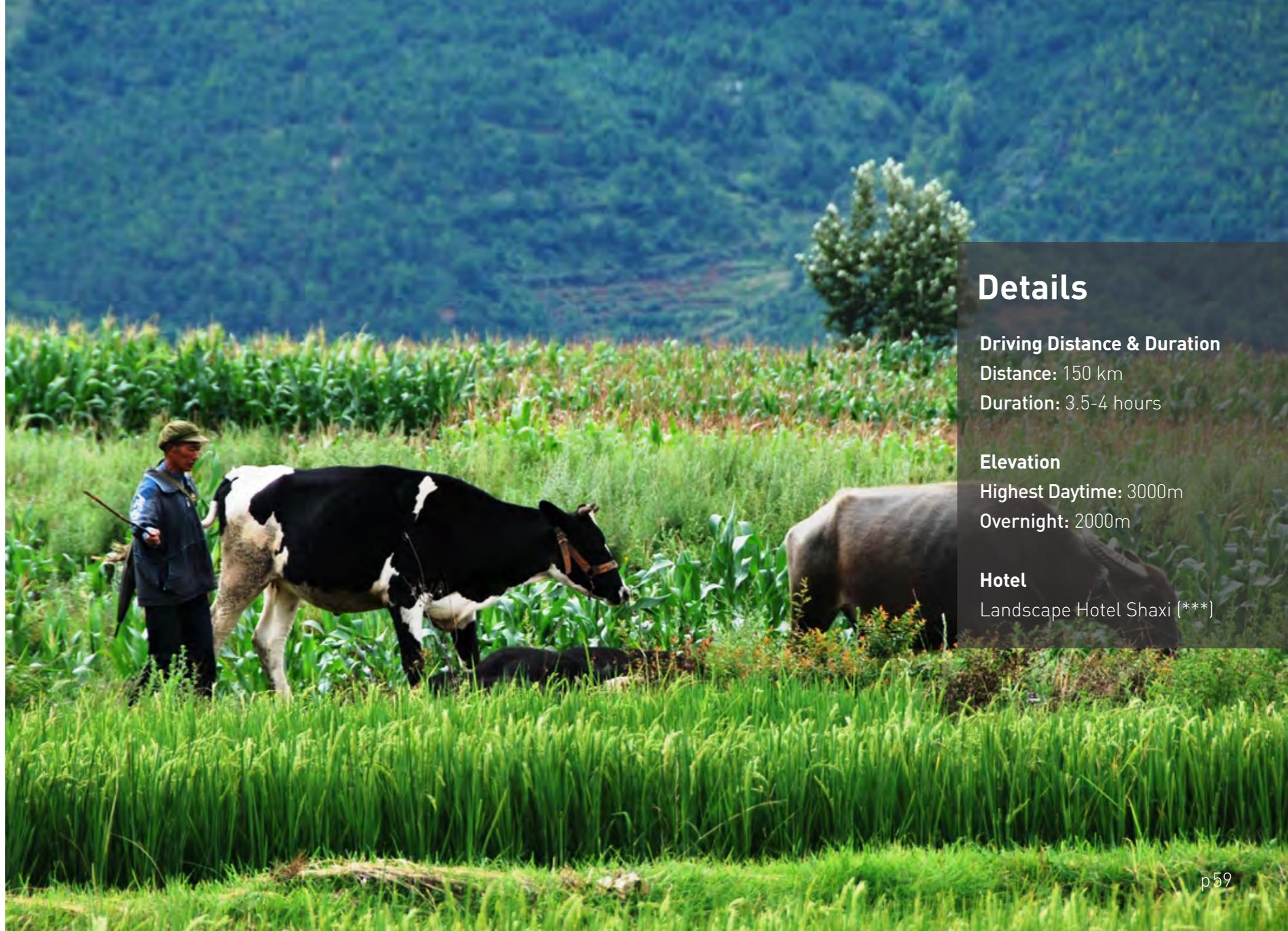
Day 3 Drive to Shaxi... a journey back in time

Today's destination is Shaxi, which lies just a short drive from Xizhou, in a pretty valley on the other side of the Cangshan Mountains that lie to the west of Dali and Lake Erhai.

Soon after departing from the Linden Center you will turn onto a small country road and into another world, one that is characterised by farming, sleepy villages and people who live a way of life that seems to be changing only very, very slowly...

After driving up through the densely forested slopes of the Cangshan mountain range and then crossing a 3,000m mountain pass, you will descend into a picturesque valley where times seems to have stopped and you find yourself centuries back when the Tea Horse Road was in its heyday as you drop down into a pretty valley.

Shaxi itself is an incredibly well preserved caravan town – spend the afternoon wandering its cobbled streets and visiting local craftsmen, drive out to see a small cave complex nearby or simply relax at the hotel, a converted Ming dynasty coaching inn, and imagine that you are about to set out on the long road to Lhasa...



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 150 km

Duration: 3.5-4 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3000m

Overnight: 2000m

Hotel

Landscape Hotel Shaxi (***)

Day 4 Along the Yangtse into the Three Parallel Rivers region...

After about an hour and a half of driving on the main road that leads from Yunnan to Tibet (the G214), you will turn left onto a small, but wonderful provincial road that follows the course of the Yangtse – called Golden Sand River in this region – northwest toward Tibet. After only a few minutes you will

come to what the Chinese hold in high regard, the “first bend of the Yangtse” where, at a town called Shigu, this mighty river does, indeed, make a 150-degree turn and seemingly begins to flow uphill.

You will continue along the Yangtse in a broad, but gradually narrowing valley, more or less level with the river. In a tiny village called Qi Zhong, you will turn west, leaving the Yangtse behind, and drive a little distance

further until you come to the idyllic hamlet of Hada where, to your great surprise, you will find a beautiful lodge set in one of Yunnan’s loveliest regions. This lodge, in Tacheng county, is located between the Yangtse and the Mekong, where some of the best old-growth forests in the world can be found. This region also harbors one of the most fertile valleys in Yunnan with two crops of rice annually

and many fruit trees. The semi-wild boars of the area, which feed on wild nuts before winter, make the best ham in the world. Tacheng is also famous for its rich Tibetan culture and Naxi and Lisu villages with charming distinctive black-roofed farmhouses. The rare species of the Yunnan Golden Snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus biteti*) is one of the world’s most endangered primates: less than

2000 can now be found in the wild. They live at the highest altitude (3,000-4,500m) of any primate, except for humans.

After arriving at the lodge in mid-afternoon, you will have time to enjoy the lodge’s surroundings and at least get a glimpse of this wonderful region.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 210 km

Duration: 5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 2000m

Overnight: 2000m

Hotel

Songtsam Lodge [****]



Day 5 Up and up to the edge of Tibet...

Tacheng lies in between the valley carved by the Yangtze and that carved by the Mekong. Today's drive begins by continuing in a westerly direction to the Mekong valley. Once you arrive at the Mekong, you turn north-west and travel for the rest of the day along the spectacular Mekong valley.

Within only 250kilometers the road winds through hugely differing landscapes: ascending from low to high altitude and from warmer to colder climes, taking in Lisu and Tibetan cultures, rice fields and buckwheat crops, and different styles of architecture, and with no industry, the area's natural beauty remains untouched.

En route, you will come to the small village of Cizhong which

is home to a special Catholic church. A hundred years ago, French missionaries traveled over land to Sichuan into the capital city of Chengdu. Further ahead, was a gateway to the vast heartland of Tibetan Buddhism. Undaunted by the challenges ahead and eager to spread the gospel, they ventured into the landlocked valleys of western Sichuan and Yunnan province, spreading their religion. A century hence, the churches in these regions are still thriving. Cizhong catholic church is probably the most beautiful of these, even after many years of disrepair. The architecture is a mixture of East and West and some of the wall paintings and façades have survived the Cultural Revolution. More surprisingly, services in Tibetan language are still held every Sunday!

By mid-afternoon you will arrive in Deqin, Yunnan's border town with the Tibet Autonomous Region. While

Deqin is far from Lhasa, this region is nonetheless strongly imbued with Tibetan "flavours", from the red-robed monks to the golden-roofed temples, from the weather-beaten faces of the Tibetan people to the colourful prayer flags, from the white stupas that protect the region to robust houses that dot the landscape.

Your hotel for the next two nights, the High Mountain Resort, is conveniently located near the Feilai Temple. The views from here over the Meili Snow mountain range are breathtaking. It is the perfect place for a range of activities the next day.

Note: This is the highest stop on your journey with us. Please be prepared to take everything more slowly to help your body adjust to the altitude – and ask us for details of what else you can do to prevent altitude sickness from impacting your holiday.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 265 km

Duration: 5-6 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3600m

Overnight: 3600m

Hotel

High Mountain Resort, Deqin
(****)



Day 6 Exploring the foot hills of Meili Snow Mountain...

Deqin is situated at the foot of the Meili Snow Mountain Range which is remarkable for its impressive chain of glaciated peaks more than 6,000 meters high. At sunrise and sunset, the soft sunlight illuminates all twenty peaks.

The Meili Snow Mountain Range is a sub-range of the Hengduan Mountains which run north to south, marking the boundary between Tibet and Yunnan. The main peak is Kawagebo, standing at

6,740 meters. Kawagebo is the first of the six most sacred mountains in Tibetan Buddhism.

Over 10,000 pilgrims make the 240 kilometer trek around the mountain each year. As of today, none of the major peaks have been scaled. Tibetan Buddhists believe that Great Spirits dwell in the mountains.

You will have a whole day to explore the area around Deqin. What might you be in the mood for? A gentle hike along lovely mountain trails? A short driving excursion to Feilaisi, a small, but charming Tibetan Buddhist temple? A visit to a Tibetan house for a simple

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 0-50 km

Duration: 0-2 hours

Depends on your chosen activity

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3600m

Overnight: 3600m

Hotel

High Mountain Resort Deqin
(****)

lunch as the Tibetans eat it? A stroll through the border town of Deqin? We will be happy to arrange any of these to fill your day with wonderful memories.

Day 7 Across the Baima National Reserve to Shangri-la...

The scenic drive from Deqin to Shangri-La winds through lush temperate and alpine forests with breathtaking views over the Baima Pass at 4,292 meters. There is a chorten (white stupa) at the pass with many prayer flags placed by the faithful asking for blessings. The Yangtze drainage area lies on one side of the pass and the Mekong on the other.

Baima National Reserve, a UNESCO designated world heritage site, is one of the few truly wild places left in China. Nearly all of the world's species of rhododendron originated from this area. There are even still a few spots where red pandas and snow leopards roam free. Surrounded by snow-capped mountains and forested valleys, it is indeed Shangri-La.

We aim to arrive in Zhongdian,

the main town of the Shangri-La region, in the early afternoon so as best to enjoy a visit to one of the largest Tibetan monasteries outside of Tibet (the Ganden Sumtseling) in the lovely afternoon light, bright and sharp as it is at this altitude.

For those who choose to book the 7-day core itinerary, you will then drive to Shangri-La airport where you will board the short flight back to Kunming.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 180 km

Duration: 3 hours

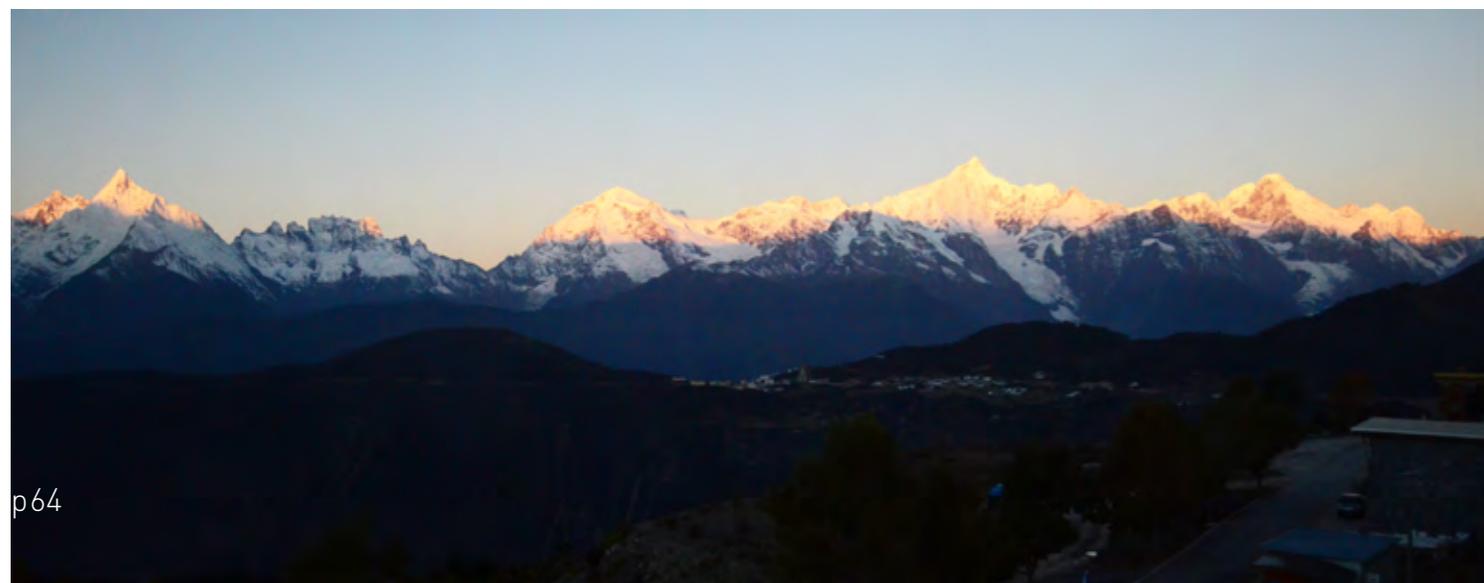
Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3900m

Overnight: 3300m

Hotel

Songtsam Retreat Shangri-La
(*****)



Day 8 On the back roads to Tiger Leaping Gorge...

Today's drive starts with crossing a 3,800 meter pass on perfectly paved roads that wind their way south toward Tiger Leaping Gorge. The morning's scenery is spectacular and among the most untouched along the entire journey.

When you reach the Yangtze the road narrows and hugs the river cliffs as you approach Tiger Leaping Gorge on a road inaccessible to anyone without their own transport.

After lunch and a visit to the Tiger Leaping Gorge, you will continue driving for another two hours to Lijiang, former capital of the 'Naxi Kingdom' introduced to the West by eccentric American botanist and explorer Joseph Rock in the 1930s and 40s. The cobbled streets of Lijiang's old town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, run alongside crystal clear streams and up the steep slopes of Lion Hill, from where you can enjoy a wonderful view over Lijiang's old town to 5,000 meter tall Mount Saseto, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain to the Chinese. You will stay tonight at the excellent InterContinental

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 260 km

Duration: 7 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3800m

Overnight: 2450m

Hotel

InterContinental Lijiang (*****)

Lijiang, right by Lijiang's Old Town. For dinner, we will, for sure, go to the old town with its thousands of orange-red-coloured lanterns.

Day 9 Life goes on...

Perhaps life must go on and you have to return to Kunming today.

On the other hand, if you have a bit more time...there are many things to do in and around Lijiang, and we can make arrangements for you to extend your stay. Wander the streets of the maze-like old town of Lijiang (a UNESCO world heritage site), or visit Black Dragon Pool Park to see Lijiang's most famous vista and learn about the enigmatic Naxi minority.

Play golf at the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain Course (one of the highest golf courses in the world, you will find that the ball flies 20% further here due to the altitude) or visit the mountain itself. You can also consider treating yourself to Zhang Yi Mou's Impressions Lijiang show that is set in an amphitheater with Jade Dragon Snow Mountain as the backdrop; on a sunny day, this is an unforgettable experience. (Zhang Yi Mou is the choreographer who arranged the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008.)

If you want to do a bit of dirt-road driving, you can visit a wonderful lake high up in the

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Depending on your plans

Elevation

Depending on your plans

Jade Dragon Snow Mountain range.

Or you can visit the Jade Lake (Yuhu) village where Dr. Joseph Rock, the explorer and botanist, had his residence, now a small museum. And if you do go to Yuhu, why not a bit of horseback riding?

The possibilities are practically endless...



Choice of Cars

We include in the package price an SUV we procure from Avis or Hertz or another reputable car rental company. Most of the SUVs are Toyotas, but on occasion Mitsubishi's or other brands may also make an appearance. For some itineraries, we are able to offer you an option to upgrade your car to the new models from Audi.

We wish the car rental markets of China would be more developed and we could give you more choice, but this is not so: since we want to provide well-maintained and well-insured cars, the choice is rather limited.

But SUVs are in fact the right choice for driving journeys in this part of the world because they are spacious enough to accommodate a lot of luggage, photography equipment, and

good-and-bad-weather gear. Also, they reinforce the feeling of adventure, exploration and discovery...which is, in the end, the mood of journeys in this region, no matter how comfortable or even luxurious the night's hotel may be.

What's more, they offer sufficient clearance when required and thus add a sense of safety and all-round ability. (4-wheel drive capability is hardly needed in China these days since all roads are either very well-paved or, with good gravel, offer solid support.)

And so SUVs from reputable brands are our car of choice!

**“ ANY car,
as long as
it is an SUV”**



Adventures and Discoveries in Local Cuisines

While this itinerary is *not* one of our 'Foodie'-themed journeys, we do believe that each one of our journeys should introduce you not only to hidden gems of cultural and scenic beauty, but that sampling local cuisines is also a must.

Wherever you travel with us, we will order, with very few exceptions, dishes fresh and on location with an emphasis on local produce. It is not uncommon for our guides to venture into the kitchen to pick this, that or the other vegetable and to ask the cook to prepare them in the finest possible way. (On occasion we do pre-order a meal: this will normally be the case only for special occasions!)

Wine and beer is always included in our meals for you to enjoy. (When we travel into high-altitude, we suggest moderation!)

Finally, if you have special dietary requirements are particularly interested in the culinary aspect of one of our journeys, please let us know.

For private journeys, we can, of course, tailor the meal experience to your taste (and budget).



What's Included / Best Months to Go...

Generally speaking, our journey packages and prices are all-inclusive. Once you've paid and you arrive at the starting point, you really won't have to take out your wallet again.

- **Cars** – a modern SUV is provided for all driving days, expertly maintained and serviced by Avis, Hertz, or other reputable car rental companies, and covered by the best insurance available, and hire car return from Lijiang back to Kunming is also included
- **International Journey Host, Guide and Support Vehicle** – you will be accompanied by a registered Chinese tour guide, an On the Road Experiences host and a fully equipped lead car with a local support driver
- **Routes** – we provide an extensively researched and carefully designed itinerary and state-of-the-art satellite navigation system with a pre-programmed route for the journey. You will also receive a detailed pre-departure pack and route book for the journey
- **Driving License** – You will need a temporary Chinese driving license for which all arrangements and fees are included.
- **Fuel & Tolls** – we provide petrol for the car throughout the journey and pay all tolls



- **Flight** – Your flight from Lijiang to Kunming
- **Airport Transfers** – all airport transfers are included
- **Hotels** – the best available or five-star accommodation is included in each overnight stop
- **Meals** – breakfast (a choice of Western and Local is provided), and lunch and dinner are included on all driving days, as are drinks.

Best months to go...

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC

- Meals on non-driving days as specified above. Prepare for a culinary adventure!
- **Goodies** – you will enjoy an On the Road Home-Away-from-Home Kit containing wet towels, anti-bacterial gel and basic toiletries, and a daily picnic basket containing fresh fruit, fruit juice, water, and a mixture of sweets and nibbles
 - **Other Essentials** – we provide each car with walky-talkies

- **Travel Insurance** – 24-hour medical assistance, evacuation and repatriation emergency service provided by International SOS is included, as is cancellation insurance
- **Tips & Entrance Fees** – basic tips and entrance fees for jointly attended activities are included
- **Activities, Meals, Transport** during 'free times' as indicated in this Journey Dossier
- **Top-up Collision Damage Waiver** insurance

What's Not Included

The only items not included are your flights to and from Kunming, your China visa, and personal purchases (e.g., gifts, souvenirs).



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“ A picture is worth a thousand words. True, but when it comes to a road journey, moving images are priceless. Please visit : <http://www.ontheroadexperiences.com/en/video-gallery> ”





ON THE ROAD EXPERIENCES

BACK ROADS | HIDDEN GEMS

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

