



China - Majestic Mountains and Autumn Tones

Autumn - the golden season for our China adventure...

October - November 2022

Trip Length: 30 days / 29 nights

Maximum 8 guests

China's hotels don't usually release their prices for the following years until the end of the previous one

(ie. 2022 prices would be available in Dec 2021).

Included meals marked each day. B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

All hotels are 3 star, unless noted.



Day 1. Arrive at Beijing (D)

Transfer from Beijing airport to our hotel. We will meet our guide and driver in the hotel lobby at 6 pm and be taken to a welcoming banquet in a nearby restaurant.

Day 2. Tuesday. Beijing Great Wall Hike 1: Gubeikou-Jinshanling (10 km, 4-5 hours) (B, L, D)

Our guide will meet us at the hotel between 8.30 - 9 am. We transfer by private bus to the Great Wall at Gubeikou, a strategically important, difficult to access location between Shanhaiguan Pass and Juyongguan Pass. At about 100 km from Beijing, it is the bastion protecting the northern gateway to the capital. After walking on Gubeikou we cross over to Jinshanling. Hiking on Jinshanling is relatively easy, as part of the wall has been restored and the surface is smooth. We then head down the mountain to a local farmer's house for a traditional Chinese country-style dinner. After dinner, before dark, we'll go back up the Great Wall, watch the sun set, and set up our tents and other equipment in a watchtower where we will spend the night.

Day 3. Wednesday. Beijing Great Wall Hike 2: Simatai West - Jinshanling (6 km, 2.5-3 hours) (B, L, D)

We wake early to watch the sun rise from the Great Wall, then carry our gear back to the farmer's house, have breakfast and drive to resume our walk on Jinshanling. While Jinshanling in the west is mostly restored with grand watchtowers, as we head east the wall will gradually deteriorate, making the walk more challenging, but also interesting to observe and compare. Then we walk to the Second Valley of Simatai West. Second Valley (Coiling Dragon Mountain of Simatai West) involves some challenging climbing. The architecture is interesting, the defense security features are unique, and scenery is excellent. The Second Valley Great Wall is also in a serious state of ruins and is a perfect example of the true Great Wall, while also beautiful and rustic. We'll overnight in a 'farm hotel' at the foot of the mountain in Jiankou and prepare for the next day's hike. This 'farm hotel' has new rooms with ensembles and hot water! You need to bring your own toiletries.

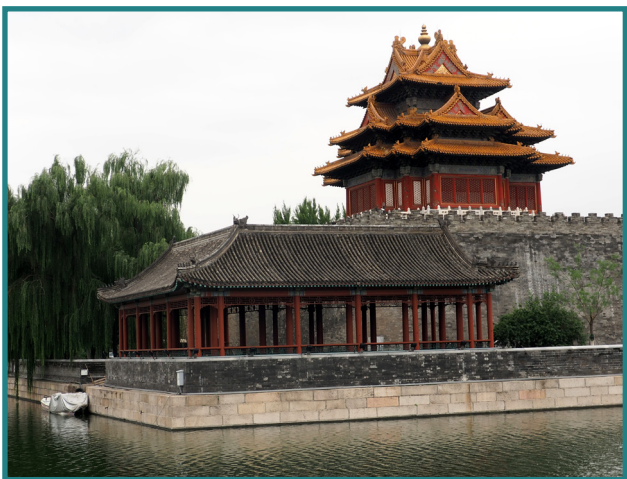




Jinshanling section of the Great Wall

Day 4. Thursday. Beijing Great Wall Hike 3: Jiankou - Mutianyu - Beijing (10 km, 3-4 hours) (B, L)

We begin the day at 8.30 am. The Jiankou section of the wall is known for its ruggedness and wild beauty and excellent views. The watchtower, known as 'Eagle on the Peak', is the highest point on the Jiankou section. It is the pinnacle of exotic Great Wall scenery. From Jiankou we'll cross over the restored Mutianyu section, away from the touristy crowds for breathtaking views of the valley and wall below. If you look to your right you'll see a large sign engraved in the side of the mountain encouraging you to "Cherish the teaching of Chairman Mao". We'll either walk to the carpark, or take a toboggan or chairlift to meet our driver. Transfer back to our hotel in Beijing and arrive about 4-5 pm. Tonight is free for you to explore and make your own dinner choice.



Section of the moat surrounding the Forbidden City

Day 5. Friday. Tian'anmen Square - Forbidden City - Lama Temple - Acrobatic Show (B, L, D)

Our guide will meet us at 9 am and we'll **Take a Walk** through famous Tian'anmen Square to the Forbidden City, the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty. After lunch, we visit the Lama Temple, the largest lamasery in China. It was built in 1694 as the residence of Prince Yong, who later became Emperor Yongzheng. In 1744 the Lama Temple was changed into a lamasery and became a centre of Lama Administration. At 5:15 pm we'll take in an amazing acrobatic show at the Chaoyang Theatre and return to our hotel at around 7.30 pm.

Day 6. Saturday. Temple of Heaven - Hutong Area - Summer Palace - Overnight train to Xi'an (B, L, D)

An early morning visit to the Temple of Heaven, where the emperor annually asked for the blessings of the gods. Today it is a park where local people practice taichi and fan-dancing, sing opera and play chess and mahjong. Great for people-watching. We'll take a pedicab ride through the old hutong areas and visit a local family's house and have lunch. In the afternoon we'll visit Summer Palace, the largest and best-preserved imperial garden in China. In the early evening we transfer to Beijing West Train Station to catch the overnight train to Xi'an, travelling 'soft sleeper class' (4 people in an air-conditioned compartment with bunk beds).

Day 7. Sunday. Xi'an City Wall - Eight Immortal Taoist Temple - Provincial History Museum - Tang Dynasty Show and Dumpling Banquet (L, D)

Arrive in Xi'an North Train Station around 8.30 am, meet our new guide and transfer to the hotel to store our luggage. Then we'll visit the Xi'an City Wall, the most complete city wall to survive in China. It's 13.7 km long and surrounded by a deep moat. It's also one of the largest ancient military defensive systems in the world. There is an option to bike along the city wall. After lunch, we visit the Shaanxi Provincial History Museum for a brief overview of the thousands of years of Chinese history and ancient culture. Back to the hotel and then it's time to be met and taken for a dumpling banquet and the Tang Dynasty Show, a performance of the ancient music and dance of the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 AD).



Tang Dynasty Show

Day 8. Monday. Xi'an - Huashan Mountain (B, D)

Today we leave our luggage at the hotel and take our gear for overnight on Huashan Mountain. We drive 120 km east to Huashan Mountain, one of China's five sacred mountains. This high mountain range is famous for steep and narrow paths and precipitous crags. It's also home to several influential Taoist temples where many emperors of past dynasties took part in Taoist activities and sacrificed to the god of the mountain, making it a holy land of Taoism. We take a cable car to the top of the West Peak and stop at White Sparrow Temple on the way. Then we'll walk to the East Peak, check into our mountaintop accommodation and explore the Central and South peaks. Tonight's accommodation is simple ten-person dorm rooms and a Chinese-style bathroom.

(**Note:** The food provided on the mountain is not so good and is expensive. We will visit a supermarket to purchase picnic foods for lunch and the following breakfast. Dinner will be eaten at the guesthouse restaurant.)

Day 9. Tuesday. Huashan Mountain, Terracotta Warriors (L, D)

After watching the sun rise from East Peak (roughly 5:00 - 5:20 am), and breakfast we set out on a 2.5 hour hike to North Peak, past the Heavenly South Gate, Plank Road, Heaven Watching Pool, Black Dragon Ridge and Macaque Sorrow. We then get the cable car back down the mountain. On the way back to Xi'an we'll visit the Terracotta Warriors, a world famous collection of terracotta sculptures depicting the armies of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China.



Terracotta Warriors

Day 10. Wednesday. Bell and Drum Towers - Muslim Quarter - Fly to Chengdu (B, L, D)

There are choices today. We can either have breakfast in the hotel, or at the Muslim Quarter if you want to sample excellent traditional fare (own cost). Then we visit the icons of Xi'an city: the Bell and Drum towers before walking around the Muslim Quarter and visiting the Great Mosque. After sampling some delicious local snacks we'll transfer to Xi'an airport, for the flight to Chengdu, arriving around 5 pm. We'll meet our new guide and drive 2 hours to Ya'an city.



Day 11. Thursday. Bifengxia Panda Reserve and Nature Reserve - Chengdu (B, L, D)

It's an early start today so we can be at the Bifengxia Panda Reserve when the gates open at 8am! We spend the whole morning exploring the panda reserve, photographing them and watching them at play. Pandas need to eat about 25 kg bamboo each day. After lunch we head to the Nature Reserve for a 3 hour walk where there are dramatic gorges, towering waterfalls and mysterious hanging coffins on the clifftops, a remnant of the Qiang minority group that lived in the area many hundreds of years ago. Then it's up the elevator, and onto our bus for the drive back to Chengdu.

Day 12. Friday. Chengdu - Gu'ergou (B, L, D)

It's a 3.5 hour drive to Lixian County. On the way we stop at the Ganbao Tibetan Stockade, one of the largest and best-preserved Tibetan villages in Sichuan province. Ganbao is 'village on the hills' in Tibetan. The entire village is built on the mountainside in a simple and natural architectural style. It was partly destroyed by the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 but rebuilt with the help of local and central government funds. In the afternoon we visit some Tibetan villages in the Miyaluo area, a place famous for its stunning red maple leaves at this time of year. That evening we drive to our hotel where we can relax and enjoy the hot springs.

Day 13. Saturday. Bipeng Valley - Chengdu (B, L, D)

We'll spend today in the Bipeng Valley. Located at over 3600 m, this nature reserve is far less visited than neighbouring Jiuzhaigou National Park. It has a combination of virgin forest, wetland meadows, highland lakes, waterfalls, a permanent glacier and snow-capped mountains. We drive back to Chengdu and arrive early evening.

Day 14. Sunday. Chengdu - fly to Lijiang (B, L, D)

This morning we transfer to the airport for a morning flight to Lijiang. Our new guide and driver will meet us and take us to our inn in Shuhe Ancient Town. Depending on our arrival time we should be able to visit the Baisha embroidery institute (next village), and frescos or just enjoy a free afternoon, maybe sipping tea in a local teahouse, before heading back to the inn.

Day 15. Monday. Lijiang Ancient Town - Black Dragon Pond - Mufu Palace (B, L)

Our first stop in Lijiang Old Town is Black Dragon Pond, where we'll see great reflections of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. We'll spend some time exploring the Dongba Museum of Naxi Culture and *take a walk* up to the top of Xiangshan Mountain for views over Lijiang rooftops. Later we go to Mu's Palace, once the centre of politics, power and wealth in ancient Naxi culture. It reflects the architectural style of the central plains of China during the Ming and Qing Dynasties and is often referred to as a mini "Forbidden City". Tonight there is the option of going to see the Naxi Ancient Music performance.

Day 16. Tuesday. Wenhai to Longpan Hike - Liming Scenic Area (B, L, D)

In the morning we set out early and drive for one hour to reach Wenhai Naxi Village, a picturesque village (elevation 3000 m) on a plateau above Lijiang. We'll then set out on foot to Lashi Lake (approximately 4 hours walking, 10.5 km), stopping for a picnic lunch along the way. We then drive for 2.5 hrs to arrive in Liming, a red sandstone landscape dotted with Lisu minority villages. We'll settle into our guesthouse and then *take a walk* around the village. At night there is often spirited dancing in the town square and you can join in if you wish.



Lunch along the way



Day 17. Wednesday. Liming - Via Ferrata Course - Qiaotou (B, L, D)

Today there is the option of taking the adventurous Via Ferrata course, built into the slopes of the mountain. In the afternoon we take a 3-4 hour return hike to the top of Thousand Turtle Mountain, for amazing views over the surrounding karst landscape. Then it's back on the bus to drive approximately 2.5 hours to Qiaotou and overnight in a small guesthouse, ready for the Tiger Leaping Gorge hike the next day.

Day 18. Thursday. Tiger Leaping Gorge Hike 1 (B, L, D)

We set out early for a 2 hour hike uphill to a Naxi family guesthouse where we'll stop for a cup of fresh mint tea and snack. We'll then hike 3 hours, first braving the 900 m ascent through the '28 Bends' (or taking a mule if you'd prefer), then enjoying the panorama of Yulong Snow Mountains from the summit along a flatter path to the Teahorse Trade Guesthouse. Relax in what is left of the afternoon and enjoy the magic views of Haba and Yulong Snow Mountains.

Day 19. Friday. Tiger Leaping Gorge Hike 2 (B, L)

In the morning we walk for about 4 hours onto Tina's Guesthouse passing by some beautiful cascades. After lunch at Tina's, there is an optional 2 hour return hike to the Tiger Leaping Stone where you can stand just metres above the rushing waters of the Jinsha River. Then we drive back to Lijang for the night.

Day 20. Saturday. Fly from Lijiang - Guiyang - Tongren - Fenghuang Ancient Town (B, D)

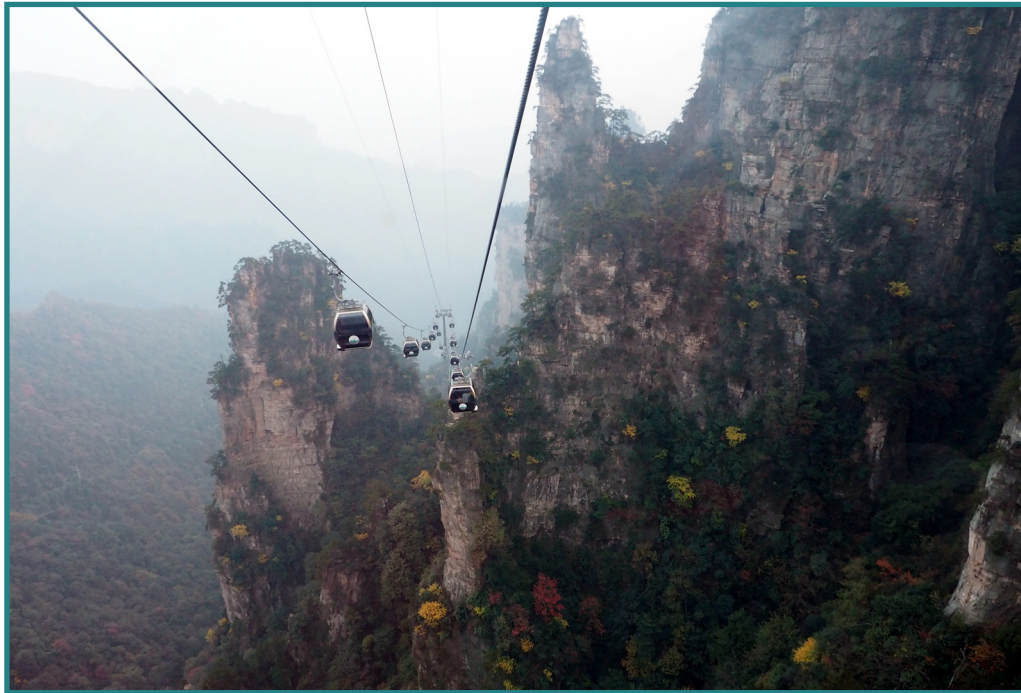
Another early start and a full travelling day. We fly from Lijiang to Guiyang, then take the fast train to Tongren. We'll be met by a driver and transferred to our inn at Fenghuang Ancient Town. Tonight we will enjoy dinner in a stilt restaurant overlooking the illuminated Tuo River.

Day 21. Sunday. Day trip to Zuolong Gorge (B, L, D)

It's a 2 hour drive to Zuolong Gorge where we'll take a 2 - 3 hour adventurous hike through the gorge. The trail is a combination of wooden walkways and metal spikes hammered into the gorge walls with handchains to hold. We have a traditional home-cooked meal in a farmer's house at the end of the hike, before driving another 2 hours to our accommodation in Zhangjiajie.



Bridges, chains and spikes - beautiful Zuolong Gorge



Day 22. Monday. Zhangjiajie National Park (B, L, D)

After breakfast we head for Zhangjiajie National Park where we will spend the next two days. We will ride the Bailong Elevator to the top of the mountain. The Bailong Elevator boasts three world firsts: tallest transparent all-round sightseeing lift, fastest double-storey sightseeing lift, as well as the lift with the largest carrying capacity and fastest speed. We will visit the scenic area around Yuanjiajie that was made famous by the movie Avatar, including the Enchanting Stage (Mihun Tai), and the No. 1 Bridge on Earth (natural bridge formed by two mountains). We will transfer by eco-bus to the Yangjiajie Scenic Area, a quiet and beautiful site, with lush foliage and many streams, waterfalls and gullies lined with sheer cliffs. We go down the mountain in a cable car and overnight in a hotel.

Day 23. Tuesday. Zhangjiajie National Park - Golden Whip Stream and Yellow Dragon Cave (B, L, D)

This morning we return to the Zhangjiajie National Park and take a comfortable (flat) 2.5-3 hour (7.5km) walk along the Golden Whip Stream from Laomu Bay to Shuiraosimen (Water-Covered Gates). Along the way we can enjoy the pristine water surrounded by grotesque peaks and a tranquil, flora and fauna-rich environment. In the afternoon we will visit Yellow Dragon Cave, a large underground complex of subterranean chambers, passageways, waterfalls, rivers and hundreds of thousands of stalagmites and stalactites (2 hour walk through the cave). Tonight we go to see the world-famous "Charming Xiangxi" performance, showcasing the local minorities' singing and dancing.

Day 24. Wednesday. Tianmen Mountain- overnight train to Sanjiang (B, L, D)

There's a 7.4 km long cableway up or back to Tianmen Mountain (1520 m), the highest mountain in Zhangjiajie. We'll see old forests, the Tianmen Temple and Tianmen Cave, made famous by Russian stunt pilots who flew through the 30 m wide natural archway. Then we get to walk on the 'Glass Skyway', an amazing transparent walkway built against the mountain, for lots of truly panoramic views. In the late afternoon (5.30 pm) we'll travel by train to Sanjiang, and be met in the early hours of the morning (1.10 am) for the 1/2 hour transfer to Chengyang Dong Village.

Day 25. Thursday. Rest day in Chengyang Dong Village (B, L, D)

There's no hurry today, so most elect to have a late breakfast. Chengyang Dong Village is surrounded by lush paddy fields, traditional wooden houses, drum-towers and ancient wind-and-rain villages. From the hotel balcony you can see the workers in the fields. Each afternoon there is singing and dancing in the village square. Overnight in a Dong village hotel.

Day 26. Friday. Dong village hiking (B, L, D)

We drive in minivans for 2 hours from Chengyang to Linlue, home to spectacular rice terrace scenery. After lunch in Dudong, we set out on the 2.5 hour walk from Gaoya to Guida. Our driver will meet us for the transfer back to the Dong village hotel.



The amazing karst landscape from Moon Hill

Day 27 Saturday. Chengyang Dong Village - Moon Hill - Yangshuo (B, L)

This morning we drive for 3 hours to Yangshuo. After lunch we visit Moon Hill for an invigorating climb up 700 steps to stand underneath a huge natural archway. From here there are amazing views over the surrounding karst peak countryside. The rest of the day is at your leisure. Overnight at a resort.

Day 28. Sunday. Kayaking from Fuli to Puyi - Liu San Jie performance (B, L, D)

Just for something different we'll go kayaking today, down the Li River. The afternoon is once again at your leisure, then we'll head out for dinner before experiencing the Liu San Jie performance, a spectacular sound, music and lighting show, set against the backdrop of the illuminated karst peaks. This is one you will never forget! Back to the resort for overnight.

Day 29. Monday. Chinese cooking class - Cycling along the Yulong River (B, L, D)



The cooking class is at the Cloud 9 cooking school. First, we go to a local market, then after a demonstration we get to cook three traditional Chinese dishes, and eat the results for lunch! In the afternoon we will cycle along the Yulong River visiting old towns like Jiuxian and Chaoyang that have several beautiful Qing Dynasty buildings including a temple and the formal residence of a Kuomintang colonel. Tonight we will have a final celebratory banquet at the Cloud 9 restaurant in Yangshuo - no, it's not our left-overs from the cooking school. Overnight back at our resort.

Day 30. Tuesday Free time-fly out (B)

Relax at the resort or shop in Yangshuo before transferring to Guilin airport for our flight home.



Cycling around the old towns



Fresh produce

Girls, you should be concentrating...

What's Included

Beijing

- **Experienced English speaking guides:** (Different guides for the trekking days and sightseeing days)
- **Accommodation:** 3 nights in 3 star hotels, 1 night in a 'farm hotel', 1 night camping
- **Transport:** Private air-conditioned vehicle.
- **Entrance fees:** Great Wall, Summer Palace, Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Lama Temple
- **Tickets:** Chaoyang Theatre Acrobatic show, Hutong pedicab ride
- **All camping equipment for the overnight stay on the Great Wall, except pillows.**
- **Meals:** 5 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners
- Soft sleeper train tickets, Beijing to Xi'an (4 people to private, air-conditioned compartment with bunk beds)

Xi'an

- **Experienced English speaking guide.**
- **Accommodation:** 2 nights in 3 star hotel, 1 night in dorm-rooms on the Mt Huashan mountaintop.
- **Transport:** Private air-conditioned vehicle.
- **Entrance fees:** City Wall and bike riding, Taoist Temple, History Museum, Terracotta Warriors, Huashan Mountain (including return cable car), Bell and Drum towers.
- **Tickets:** Tang Dynasty Show.
- **Meals:** 2 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners. **NB:** You will purchase your own picnic food for one breakfast and lunch on the mountaintop.
- **Flight:** Xi'an to Chengdu.

Chengdu

- **Experienced English-speaking guide.**
- **Accommodation:** 4 nights in 3 star hotels
- **Transport:** Private air-conditioned vehicle.
- **Entrance fees:** Bifengxia Nature Reserve, Ganbao Tibetan Stockades, Bipenggou Valley Nature Reserve (including the tourist bus)
- **Meals:** 4 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 4 dinners
- **Flight:** Chengdu to Lijiang

Lijiang and Tiger Leaping Gorge

- **Experienced English-speaking guide.**
- **Accommodation:** 6 nights in comfortable guesthouses.
- **Transport:** Private air-conditioned vehicle.
- **Entrance fees:** Lijiang Ancient Town, Baisha Frescoes, Mu Palace, Liming Scenic Area, Tiger Leaping Gorge, Tiger Leaping Stone.
- **Meals:** 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 4 dinners
- **Flight:** Lijiang to Guiyang. (Train to Tongren)

Western Hunan

- **Experienced English-speaking guide.**
- **Accommodation:** 4 nights in comfortable guesthouses
- **Transport:** Private air-conditioned vehicle.
- **Entrance fees:** Fenghuang Ancient Town, Zuolong Gorge and Furong Ancient Town, Zhangjiajie National Park, Tianmen Mountain, Yellow Dragon Cave.
- **Tickets:** Charming Xiangxi show, Bailong Elevator in the Zhangjiajie National Park
- **Meals:** 4 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners
- Soft sleeper train tickets from Zhangjiajie to Sanjiang (Guangxi Province)



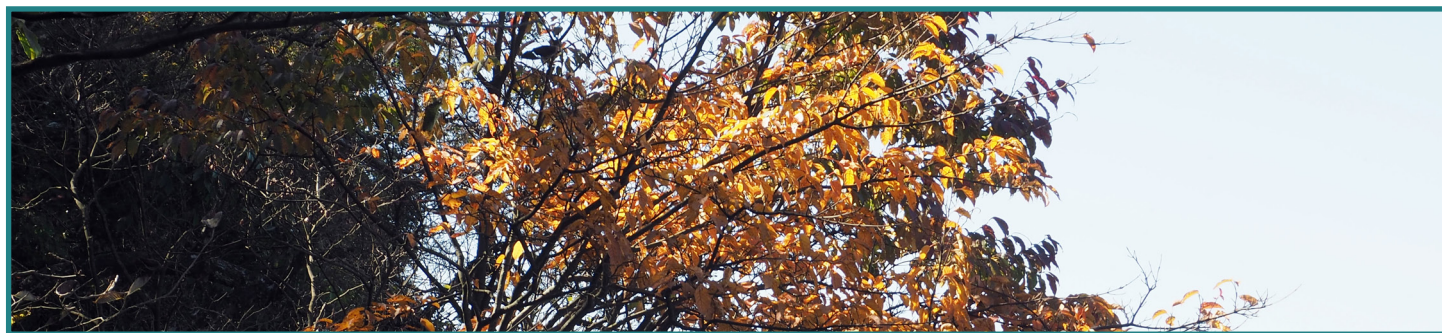


Guangxi

- **Experienced English-speaking guide.**
- **Accommodation:** 5 nights in comfortable guesthouses.
- **Transport:** Local minivans for transfers to / from villages on November 7 & 8. For November 9 onwards, private air-conditioned vehicle.
- **Entrance fees:** Chengyang Dong Village, Moon Hill
- **Tickets:** Liu San Jie performance
- **Meals:** 6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners
- **Activity fees:** Kayaking on Li River, bike hire in Yangshuo, Chinese cooking class

What's Not Included

- Airport transfer fees.
- Bottled water and alcoholic beverages
- Porters' fees for hiking days, if you elect to use a porter.
- Cost of any mule transport you may elect to take.
- Meals not included in the itinerary.
- One breakfast and one lunch on Mount Huashan. We'll buy food for the 2 meals.
- Charge for optional toboggan ride or chair lift, October 16.
- Tickets for Naxi Ancient Music performance, cost 150 RMB / person
- Aqini Mountain Via Ferrata - shorter climb -150 RMB, longer climb - 230 RMB.
- Tips for guides - see gear list for tipping guidelines.



Testimonials from our 2017 China - Majestic Mountains and Autumn Tones trip adventurers

Kerry - 'Thanks for another fabulous trip through China! It was a fabulous trip - we saw and experienced so much!! The accomm and food were excellent too.'

Nerrida - 'I have just started to type up and make sense of my diary trip notes on China, my goodness me we sure saw a lot and packed a lot in, a truly fantastic experience indeed. I have told many people about our trip and they are truly surprised to learn how much of China we saw.'

Betty - 'Yes it was a diverse group and I must admit that 20 is the most we've ever done a trip with, and it went better than I expected. All credit to you and John for smoothing out rough bits. I have sung your praises in numerous circles over the past week.'

Carol - 'OMG I have had to cook the last two nights. I know I was over Chinese food but where's my banquet! Thank you to Lyn, John, and the rest of the team. It has been a fantastic adventure that has really captured China in all its glory. I have had an amazing time with everyone on this trip and have felt a part of a family. The organisation has been amazing with all the internal flights and train trips and no one got lost. The accommodation was better than expected especially in some of the rural areas and this trip has exceeded my expectations. Thanks John and Lyn for the care you take in making sure everyone has a great trip.'

Lesley - 'A full and varied itinerary.....Road/Rail/Air and Foot with some culture shows thrown in to boot. What more could I possibly have wanted in so exotic a location? A well co-ordinated team in Lyn and John.... who efficiently stepped up to the challenge when some of us travellers needed them most. ...and added to the fun and laughter on the trip. So thank you both for your leadership.'

Alana - 'Just wanted to say thank you again to both you and Lyn for having me on the trip. It was an amazing experience which I will never forget.'

Sheila - 'Your reputation lives on. Another amazing trip. It was both nostalgic and a real eye opener for me to experience and see China as I have not previously encountered. Congratulations to you for putting together such an interesting itinerary and attending so efficiently to all the detail that it required especially with such a large group.'

Duncan - 'Ditto! Thanks to you all for a great trip.'



Alana '... an amazing experience...'

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