

# Guìzhōu 贵州



Compared with its provincial neighbours, Guizhōu is like the shy younger sibling everyone knows is there but who no-one pays much attention to. But travellers would still do well to give this mysterious province a chance. The rugged karst landscape, numerous waterfalls and intricate cave networks are all worth exploring, but it's Guizhōu's lively mix of people that makes the province such a standout destination.

Eighteen different ethnic minorities are spread out over the entire province making up 35% of the entire population. The main groups include the Miao and the Dong in the southeast, the Hui and the Yi in the west and the Bouyi in the southwest. Other major groups include the Shui (Sui), Zhuang and Gejia.

Everything from the clothes and food to the architecture helps give this province a unique flavour. Highlights include the wooden houses of the Miao, the stone houses of the Bouyi and the elaborate wind and rain bridges and towers of the Dong. The diversity of people means Guizhōu's social calendar is packed and it enjoys more frequent and varied folk festivals than any other province in China. Journeying through remote rural areas and hanging out with locals at these events can end up being the highlight of a trip through China's Southwest.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Hit market day at one of southeast Guizhōu's **minority villages** (p129) for colours, sights and sounds you'll never forget
- Search out the Jurassic-era dinosaur plants at one of **Chishui's** (p149) nature reserves
- Get drenched under the ribbon-like waterfalls of **Maling Gorge** (p124) and decide for yourself whether or not you like it more than the mighty **Huangguoshu Falls** (p115), Guizhōu's star attraction
- Visit the wintering fowl at **Caohai Lake** (p118) for a glimpse of the endangered black-necked crane
- Travel to the centre of the earth at spooky **Zhijin Cave** (p114), the largest cave in China

■ POPULATION: ###



## HISTORY

Historically no-one has really wanted much to do with Guizhōu. Chinese rulers set up an administration in the area as far back as the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), but merely in an attempt to maintain some measure of control over Guizhōu's non-Chinese tribes. Chinese settlement was confined to the northern and eastern parts of the province and the western areas were not settled until the 16th century, when rapid immigration forced the native minorities out of the most fertile areas.

Another wave of Chinese immigration in the late 19th century brought many settlers from the overpopulated provinces of Húnán and Sichuán. However, with poor communication systems and transport, development in Guizhōu was sluggish and the province remained impoverished.

It wasn't until the Sino-Japanese war when the Kuomintang made Chóngqing their wartime capital that the development of Guizhōu began: roads to neighbouring provinces were constructed, a rail link was built to Guǎngxī and industries were established in Guiyáng and Zūnyì. Most activity ceased at the end of the Sino-Japanese war and it wasn't until the communists began construction of the railways that industrialisation of the area was revived.

Nevertheless, Chinese statistics continue to paint a grim picture of underdevelopment and poverty for Guizhōu. Depending on which survey you look at, GDP per capita in Shànghǎi is 10 times higher or more than in Guizhōu and the province has a reputation as being one of the worst run in China's Southwest.

Still, the government is attempting to change Guizhōu's fortunes with a big emphasis on tourism. Highways and small regional airports are being built in every possible place to enable fast travel to tourist sights, and minority cultures are aggressively promoted as a local attraction.

Guizhōu does have one claim to fame: it's the producer of China's beloved Maotai liquor, named for the village of its origin in Rénhuái County. This fiery white spirit is sold in distinctive white bottles with a diagonal red label. Like Yúnnán, Guizhōu is also a major tobacco-producing area.

## CLIMATE

Guizhōu has a temperate climate with an annual average temperature of 15°C. It's often overcast and rainy and there is little difference

between the seasons. Winter lasts from December to February with average temperatures of around 1°C. Autumn lasts from September to November, spring from March to May and summer from June to August, when temperatures average 22°C to 25°C.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Exploring minority festivals and markets is one of the main reasons people come to Guizhōu. Taking place throughout the lunar calendar at various sites, these vibrant celebrations can feature bullfighting, horse racing, pipe playing, comic opera, singing contests and gigantic courting parties. Oh yes, and basketball matches.

The majority of festivals are held on auspicious lunar dates such as the 3rd day of the 3rd lunar month, the 6th of the 6th, the 5th of the 5th and the 9th of the 9th. Most are annual events, though some are held every few years, and others just once a decade.

Kǎilì is the springboard for festivals in the Miao and Dong regions of Guizhōu's southeast. It has the most sophisticated tourist setup and information on festival and market dates is easy to get; the local tourist officials speak a variety of foreign languages and are extremely helpful. However, in other areas, such as the Southwest's Bouyi region, there is little tourist infrastructure and getting information on these events is like pulling teeth. Intrepid travellers may enjoy giving this region a shot anyway, as it provides endless opportunities for off-the-beaten-track discovery.

See the boxed text, p104, for information about some of the more popular events, individual sections in this chapter for information on specific festivals, and the table, p101, for approximate dates in the Gregorian calendar.

## LANGUAGE

Mandarin Chinese is spoken by the Han majority. Every minority, whether Miao, Dong or another group, have their own language or dialects. In some minority villages locals speak only limited Mandarin Chinese.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

You can fly to more than 40 destinations within China from Guiyáng's airport, including all major Chinese cities. International destinations include Hong Kong and Bangkok.

A handful of small regional airports have also opened recently; Xingyi's has flights to

Guiyáng and Shēnzhèn, Huángguòshù's has flights to and from Guǎngzhōu and Lípíng's has four flights weekly to Guiyáng.

Guiyáng and Chóngqíng are linked by an expressway. Yúnnán is accessible by bus via Wěining or on the brand new highway from Xíngyì in the south of the province. From Xíngyì you can also cross into Guǎngxī, which can also be accessed through Cóngjiāng in the southeastern part of the province.

There are daily trains to all major cities in China; sleepers to Chéngdū in Sìchuān or Kùnmíng in Yúnnán are popular options. Trains to Guǐlín leave at awkward times and are painfully slow. If you're heading down this way your best bet is to take a train to Liúzhōu in Guǎngxī and change for a bus to Guǐlín there.

## CENTRAL GUÌZHŌU

Central Guizhōu can look a little forlorn, pocked as the countryside is with endless limestone formations. But despite the appearance of Central Guizhōu's landscape, this area is the most travelled region of the province and it is also where the province's star sights, such as Huangguoshu Falls, Longgong Caves and Zhijin Cave, as well as its capital city, Guiyáng, are located. The road between Ānshùn and Huángguòshù is roughly where Bouyi country starts to get interesting, so you could take a break between the must-see destinations to walk the countryside and do a little exploring.



### GUÌZHŌU'S FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Use the dates below as a guide to when things really get going in these parts. Always double-check dates with the Kǎilí (p126) or the Guiyáng China International Travel Service (p102) before striking off on your own; dates for exactly the same festivals can vary greatly from village to village and the timing of some events is decided by local shamans just a short time before they're to take place.

Dates for some upcoming festivals:

Festival	2008	2009
Hill Leaping Festival	16 Feb	4 Feb
Lusheng Festival	7-22 Feb	26 Jan-10 Feb
Maojie Festival	8 Apr	29 Mar
Sisters' Meal Festival	21-22 Apr	11-12 Apr
Eighth of April	12 May	2 May
Dragon Boat Festival	28 Jun	28 May or 17 Jun
Sixth of June	8 Jul	27 Jul
Giving Worship to the Heavens	16-18 Jul	4-6 Aug
Miao New Year	11 Nov	30 Nov

### GUÌYÁNG 贵州

☎ 0851 / pop 1.2 million / elev 1070m

Guiyáng is the provincial capital and a major transport hub for the province, though it's still fairly drab compared with its cousins elsewhere in China's Southwest. It doesn't have the flash of Chéngdū or Chóngqíng, nor the charm of Kùnmíng, but if you plan to spend any amount of time exploring Guizhōu you'll get to know this place well as you crisscross the province. It's not the worst of fates. There's some interesting sights around town, fantastic street food and lively shopping areas.

Guiyáng means 'precious sun' and may be a reference to the fact that the sun rarely seems to shine through the clouds and drizzle. Otherwise, it has a mild climate year-round, though in recent years it has had some light snowfall and freezing days as late in the year as March.

### Orientation

While Guiyáng is a somewhat sprawling kind of place, it remains a manageable size and is easy enough to get around on bus or even by foot. The main commercial district is found along Zhonghua Zhonglu and Zhonghua Nanlu, spreading out along the main roads they intersect. In the south of this area, you'll find the main Bank of China, China Telecom and China Post. If you continue south, you'll reach Zunyi Lu and People's Sq. To the east of here is Jiaxiu Pavilion, a symbol of the city that hovers over Nánmíng Hé.

### MAPS

There are no English city maps available but the Chinese-language tourist maps at Xinhua Bookshop are helpful for navigating bus routes.

### Information

#### BOOKSHOPS

**Foreign Languages Bookshop** (Wàiwén Shūdiàn; Yan'an Donglu) Has a selection of city maps and it's grooming its English collection quite nicely with up-to-date titles: everything from *Sex in the City* to Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink*. **Xinhua Bookshop** (Xīnhuá Shūdiàn; Yan'an Xilu) Marginally better in the map department than the Foreign Languages Bookshop.

### EMERGENCY

**Ensure Chain Pharmacy** (Yìshù Yàoyè Liánsuǒ; ☎ 577 3759; cnr Zunyi Lu & Jiefang Lu; ☎ 8.20am-10pm) Near the train station.

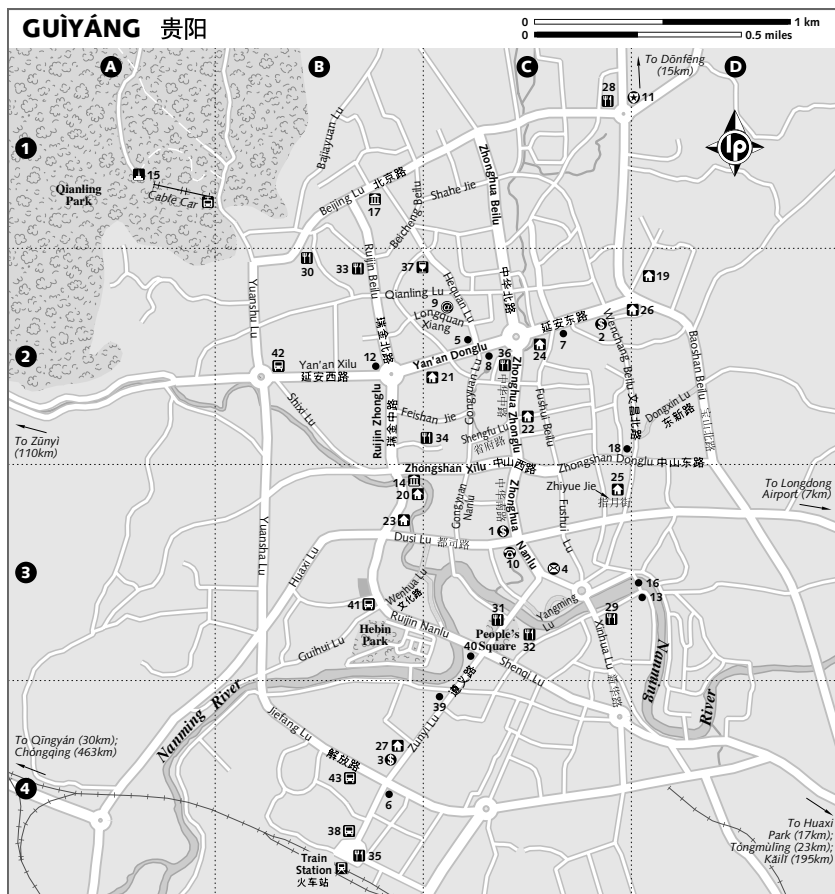
**Public Security Bureau** (PSB; Gōngānjū; ☎ 590 4509; Daying Lu; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri) The place to go to report lost or stolen items and for visa extensions.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Internet cafés** (Wǎngbà; Longquan Xiang; per hr Y2) Literally dozens of internet cafés line this lane off Hequan Lu.

### MONEY

**Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; cnr Dusi Lu & Zhonghua Nanlu) Has an ATM, will exchange money and travellers cheques and offers cash advances on credit cards. Another branch can be found on Zunyi Lu near the train station and another sits on the corner of Wenchang Beilu and Yan'an Donglu.



## POST & TELEPHONE

**China Post** (Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; 46 Zhonghua Nanlu) Full service, though if you're sending objects overseas the staff can be a real pain.

**Long-Distance Calls** (Dusi Lu) Cheap overseas calls can be made from a small booth here.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**China International Travel Service** (CITS; Zhōngguó Guóji Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 690 1660; www.guizhoutour.net; 7th fl, Longquan Bldg, 1 Hequan Lu; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) The friendly English-speaking staff is helpful and can provide information on festivals.

**Guizhou Overseas Travel Company** (GOTC; Guizhōu Hāiwài Lǚyóu Zōnggōngsī; ☎ 586 4898; 28 Yan'an Donglu; ☎ 9am-6pm) Offers similar services to CITS, but is more interested in selling tours. Chinese-language tours

to Qīngyán cost Y148. A tour to Huangguoshu Falls and the Longgong Caves is Y240.

**Tourist complaint line** (☎ 681 8436) Will a call here change things? Unlikely. Will it make you feel better? If you've got one of the English speakers, perhaps.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Guiyang has a reputation among Chinese as one of China's worst cities for theft. Be particularly careful in crowded areas such as the train station, night markets and on local buses – the favoured haunts of pickpockets.

## Sights

**PARKS** 公园  
**Qianling Park** (黔灵公园; admission Y5; ☎ 6.30am-9pm) in the northwest of the city is more forest

## INFORMATION

Bank of China 中国银行	1 C3
Bank of China 中国银行	2 C2
Bank of China 中国银行	3 B4
China Post 中国邮政	4 C3
CITS 中国国际旅行社	5 C2
Ensure Chain Pharmacy 一树药业连锁	6 B4
Foreign Languages Bookshop 外文书店	7 C2
GOTC 贵州海外旅游总公司	8 C2
Internet Cafés 网吧	9 C2
Long-Distance Calls 中国电信	10 C3
PSB 公安局	11 D1
Xinhua Bookshop 新华书店	12 B2

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Cuiwēi Gōngyuán 翠微公园	13 D3
Guiyang Art Museum 贵阳美术馆	14 B3
Hongfu Temple 弘福寺	15 A1
Jiaxiu Pavilion 甲秀楼	16 D3

Provincial Museum 省博物馆	17 B1
Wenchang Pavilion 文昌阁	18 C2

## SLEEPING

Dàxué Dǎlǚguǎn 大学旅馆	19 D2
Jinqiáo Jiùdiàn 金桥酒店	20 B3
Jīnlóng Dǎjiùdiàn 金龙大酒店	21 C2
Motel 168 莫泰168	22 C2
Nénghuī Jiùdiàn 能辉酒店	23 B3
Trade-Point Hotel 柏顿酒店	24 C2
Yidu Youth Hostel 逸都酒店	25 C3
Yóudiàn Bīnguǎn 邮电宾馆	26 D2
Yǔjūnyuán Bīnguǎn 玉君苑宾馆	27 B4

## EATING

Aroma Bakery & Café	28 C1
Chishuiqíng Jiǔjiā 赤水情酒家	29 C3
Dongjia Family Restaurant 董家食府	30 B2
Downtown Food Stalls 小吃	31 C3

Guizhou Long Seafood 贵州龙海洋	32 C3
New Zealand Western Restaurant 新西兰西餐厅	33 B2
Night Market 夜市	34 C2
Night Market 夜市	35 B4
Yawen Restaurant 雅温酒楼	36 C2

## DRINKING

Bars, Lounges & Clubs 酒吧	37 B2
UBC Coffee 上岛咖啡	(see 33)

## TRANSPORT

Bus Stand 汽车站	38 B4
CAAC 中国民航	39 C4
China Southern Airlines Booking Office 中国南方航空公司售票处	40 C3
Hebin Bus Depot 河滨汽车站	41 B3
Main Long-Distance Bus Station 贵阳长途汽车站	42 B2
Tiyuguan Long-Distance Bus Station 体育馆长途车站	43 B4

than park. It's a great escape from the crowds and city noise and has some lovely paths up to the **Hongfu Temple** (Hóngfú Sì), a 17th-century Qing dynasty temple perched near the top of 1300m Qiánlíng Shān. You can save your legs and take a **cable car** (Y20) up if it's running. The monastery has a vegetarian restaurant (open noon to 3pm) in the rear courtyard. Locals say the park is full of hungry monkeys so keep your eyes peeled. From the train station area take bus 2.

Elsewhere in the city, **Hebin Park** (河滨公园; ☎ dawn-dusk) is nowhere near as impressive, but it's a nice downtown respite, not too far from People's Sq.

## PROVINCIAL MUSEUM 省博物馆

The **Provincial Museum** (Shèng Bówùguǎn; Beijing Lu; 北京路; admission Y10; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) has a going-out-of-business vibe and criminally lethargic ticket sellers but it's still worth a stop, especially for travellers pushing off to explore Guizhōu's Miao and Dong villages. Exhibits showcase minority dress and customs from the Yelang kingdom, believed to have originated in the Warring States Period (475–221 BC). Keep an eye out for displays concerning the 18th- and 19th-century Miao uprisings against rapid immigration of Han Chinese into Guizhōu.

## GUIYANG ART MUSEUM 贵阳美术馆

This **museum** (Guiyáng Měishùguǎn; Ruijin Zhonglu; 瑞金中路; admission Y15; ☎ 10am-5pm) opened quickly but seems to have closed just as fast. Its doors

were shut when we dropped by and the lobby was filled with construction materials, though it's not clear if they were for renovations or a change in line of work. Drop by when you're in town to see what happened. Enter on Zhongshan Xilu.

## Walking Tour

Guiyang is a pleasant enough place to stroll around and there are a few pavilions and temples scattered about to give some visual relief from all the tall grey buildings. Try to take the more interesting backstreets – not only will you escape the hair-raising intersections and roundabouts, you'll also avoid the retired old guards who maniacally wave red flags at you every time you attempt to inch off the pavement (they really do seem more aggressive in Guiyang than in almost any other city in the Southwest).

Beginning at **People's Square** (人民广场; Rénmín Guǎngchǎng), north of the train station, you'll find one of China's largest, glistening-white statues of Mao Zedong, as well as two new Louvre-like glass pyramids, which mark a massive subterranean Wal-Mart (a major outing for locals). It's a mad-house here on Friday or Saturday nights when crowds are so thick it can take a whopping 45 minutes to get from one side of the store to the other. Outside on the square itself, things are more pleasant, with lots of families and people flying kites or visiting in the small gazebos. Weekday mornings the square is often flooded with people practising taichi.

Just north of here, wander along Yangming Lu, cross a large roundabout, and follow a set of stairs down to the riverside. This walkway is filled with older people playing cards and mah jong. At the end, another set of stairs leads you up to the bridge on which rests **Jiaxiu Pavilion** (甲秀楼; Jiǎxiù Lóu).

On the other side of the river is **Cuiwei Yuan** (翠微园; admission ¥3), a collection of several small pavilions set in a charming garden of bonsai trees, Chinese stones and miniature plum blossoms. The garden was originally a Buddhist abbey built during the Ming dynasty (1425–35), however nowadays it's essentially home to a group of shops selling traditional Miao embroidery; they're interesting to browse through but extremely pricey.

Backtracking across the bridge and heading north up Wenchang Beilu brings you to the Ming dynasty **Wenchang Pavilion** (文昌阁; Wénchāng Gé). It and the old city walls

around it have been beautifully refurbished and the pavilion now houses a very popular local teahouse.

### Tours

There are organised tours to Huangguoshu Falls and Longgong Caves that leave daily from People's Sq or the long-distance bus station. Many of the hotels also organise day tours, as do the Guiyáng CITS and GOTC tourist agencies (p102), although they are infrequent off-season. Tours cost from ¥240 per person and include transport and admission fees and sometimes lunch.

### Festivals & Events

If you're in town during a Bouyi festival, **Huaxi Park** (花溪公园; Huāxī Gōngyuán), 17km south of town, is a good place to head. There's a Bouyi gathering here on the 6th of the sixth lunar month, and on the 15th of the first lunar month (around February) there

are performances of Bouyi opera at Dàzhài (大寨), near Huāxī (花溪).

There are also minor festivals at Tóngmùlǐng (桐木岭), 23km south of Guiyáng, on the 9th of the first lunar month and at Dōngfēng (东风), 15km northeast of Guiyáng, on the 15th of the second lunar month. For details on these and other minor festivals in the region, visit the CITS office in Guiyáng (p102).

### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

**Yidu Youth Hostel** (Yídù Jiùdiàn; ☎ 864 9777; fax 863 1799; 9 Zhuyue Jie; 指月街9号; 6-/4-/3-bed dm ¥50/60/70, s & d from ¥398) Though the six-bed rooms are a real tight squeeze, the rest of the dorms here are great; each one comes with its own shower and toilet and the furniture is all new. Community life is missing though – there's no common room, activities or anything else to tell you this is anything but cheap beds in a nice midrange hotel. Single and double rooms are bright and spacious with pastel green accents and bright orange throw pillows. A complimentary breakfast is included with some room rates.

**Jinlóng Dàjiùdiàn** (☎ 528 2321; 61 Yan'an Zhonglu; 延安中路61号; South Bldg s/d ¥109/139, East Bldg r ¥238-268) Smack in the thick of things, including near the city's tourist offices, this hotel offers a wide choice of rooms in two different wings. Rooms in the eastern ('dōng') building have western toilets, neat showers and sometimes even little loveseats. Things are a little more run down in the south ('nán') building, with squat toilets and lone shower nozzles suspended from the ceilings. All's kept humming by an energetic, unilingual staff.

**Yóudiàn Bīnguān** (Post Office Hotel; ☎ 558 5082; fax 558 5086; cnr 166 Yan'an Donglu; 延安东路166号; d ¥168) This place has a great downtown location and some of the city's best food vendors right outside. Once renovations are done this could be one of the better budget options in town.

**Dàxué Lǚguān** (☎ 670 2348; 180 Baoshan Beilu; 宝山北路180号; d ¥198) This is a bad choice if you want one of the nicest rooms in town. But, with its location on the university campus, it's a good place to consider if you want a 'get-away-from-it-all' feeling at the end of your day, while still being close to the city. It's fun just to wander around and see what campus life is like in Guiyáng. There are so few foreigners here, it's fairly easy to strike

up a conversation with curious local students. The staff at the hotel are also lovely and very helpful. Take your time to check out the rooms though – some are pretty grim.

**Motel 168** (Mòtài 168; ☎ 816 8168; 2 Shengfu Lu; 省府路2号; r from ¥198) Don't let the name put you off: this place is not only cheap (especially with a discount) but it has boutique-hotel aspirations and is an absolute breath of fresh air in stodgy old Guiyáng. The lobby and halls are full of odd angles, lots of mirrors and the occasional disco ball. Not quite as much effort has gone into the surprisingly simple rooms, but there's an interesting flourish in each one, whether it's rounded edges on the furniture, or illuminated white pebbles under the basins. It's all quite enjoyable once you've got past the snobby staff and their dragon-embazoned black uniforms. This is one of several Motel 168s opened around China by a Shanghai management group.

#### MIDRANGE

**Yùjūnyuàn Bīnguān** (☎ 597 0701; 71 Zunyi Lu; 遵义路71号; s & d from ¥198) This is a welcoming enough place where even security guards give shy smiles and nods once they've gotten used to you. Staff does an admirable job of tending the rooms, despite the obvious wear and tear. Closet-like bathrooms are made entirely of plastic and have tiny little tubs. Conveniently located near the train and some of the major bus stations.

**Jinqiao Jiùdiàn** (Golden Bridge Hotel; ☎ 582 9958; 2 Ruijin Zhonglu; 瑞金中路2号; d from ¥328) Tour groups and frazzled staff trample over ketchup-and-mustard-coloured carpets here, while red-nosed businessmen swarm in and out of 'superior' karaoke facilities 24 hours a day. It's all a bit over the top, but the weathered rooms are tidy and come with tiny balconies.

#### TOP END

When it comes to top-end accommodation in Guiyáng, nobody's perfect. Two stand out from the crowd, but you'll have to decide which is more important: service or room condition.

**Nénghuī Jiùdiàn** (☎ 589 8888; fax 589 8622; 38 Ruijin Nanlu; 瑞金南路38号; d incl breakfast ¥520-696; ☎ ☎ ☎) The breakfast buffet here is the best in the city and the rooms are lovely with embroidered pillows and the odd splash of colour. It's also just gotten satellite TV with a good choice of English channels. The room

### MINORITY FESTIVALS

Courtship is the drive behind most of Guizhōu's minority festivals. There are many elaborate ploys to get boys and girls together, ranging from handing out rice packets with secret messages inside to less subtle games of catch, where crowds of adolescents line up and 'inadvertently' throw the ball at their favourite potential partner until the object of this affection gets the point. Festivals are therefore a time to look your best and flaunt your wealth, which in Guizhōu means wearing silver jewellery and exquisite embroidery. Girls spend hours preparing for a festival and will often attend accompanied by their mothers, who continually fuss over their daughters and offer advice.

Festivals also serve as a time to meet other clans, pick up news from other villages and generally relax and enjoy life while there is little work to be done in the fields. Glutinous rice cakes, pounded in wooden troughs and dyed with bright colours, are an important festival food. Guests are toasted continually with rice wine, either out of buffalo horns or through straws from a large jug. Important groups are denied entry to some villages until they have downed several shots of rice wine and sung a song.

One of the most common events is the Lusheng Festival, usually held during the first lunar month. Traditional Miao Lusheng celebrations coincide with Chinese New Year, though there's a big official seven-day-long Lusheng Festival that's held yearly on 1 October.

The *lúshēng* (芦笙) is a reed instrument that ranges in length from 1m to 7m. *Lúshēng* competitions are common and various acrobatic styles are performed to the music, such as 'Earthworm Crossing the Mountain'. Activities include playing the *lúshēng* (of course), traditional dancing, beating bronze drums, bullfighting and horse racing. Most dances are little more than slow monotonous shuffles, which people join one by one over the course of an hour or more. Antiphonal singing (echoing duets) is also popular.

Some festivals are held at traditional sites or hills, often called dancing or flower grounds, though many are now held in the less glamorous surroundings of the municipal basketball courts.

Two other common events are the Flower Dance (Tiàohuā), centred around a special flower tree decorated in red silks, and Eating New Rice (Chixin Jié) festivals, held to celebrate the harvest by hanging ears of rice and corn in doorways and brewing buckets of rice wine. Dates for these last two festivals change constantly.

and restaurant service here is fine, but the desk staff and even assistant managers can be awkward with foreigners. Some floors are nonsmoking but rooms there are more expensive.

**Trade-Point Hotel** (Bǎidūn Jiùdiàn; ☎ 582 7888; www.trade-pointhotel.com; 18 Yan'an Donglu; 延安东路18号; s/d ¥800/900 plus 15% service charge; 酒店) Nowhere in town is service better than it is here. Trade-Point's business centre is also the only one in downtown Guiyang where the computers and other facilities consistently work. The rooms are fine and the breakfast buffet extensive, but for the prices it's asking both should be even better. The 13th and 14th floors are nonsmoking.

## Eating

Some of the best food in Guiyang can be found at the night markets. At dusk countless stalls spring up near the train station, all stacked with a huge choice of veggies, tofu and meat. Point at what you like, grab a beer and watch the food be cooked. If you're feeling really adventurous tuck into some steamed pig snout and trotters, a popular local choice. If not, try the local varieties of *shāguō fěn* (砂锅粉), a noodle and seafood, meat or vegetable combination put in a casserole pot and fired over a flame of rocket-launch proportions. The deep-fried skewered potatoes dusted in chilli powder are the best in the province. The position of all the downtown food stalls seems to change from week to week, but there's usually a concentration of snack stalls just after the bridge on the way to People's Sq. A small night market also sets up every evening in a lane just off Ruijin Zhonglu.

**Dongjia Family Restaurant** (Dòngjiā Shìfù; ☎ 650 7186; 42 Beijing Lu; 北京路42号; dishes from ¥10; ☎ 9.30am-9pm) Waiters here wear either full-silver Miao regalia or indigo tunics and slacks. Every local knows this place, which specialises in minority cooking from all over Guizhou. There's no English menu but its book-sized menu is filled with big luscious pictures from the chillies of Miao cuisine to the pickled vegetables of the Dong. The dining room is cosy but undistinguished, except for the giant tree trunk in the middle.

**Chishuiqing Jiujia** (☎ 552 7525; Xinhua Lu; 新华路; dishes ¥12-68; ☎ 9.30am-10pm) This place is casual but beautifully decorated and specialises in dozens and dozens of types of bamboo dishes. So much care has gone into

the menu and décor that the unpleasant wait staff comes as both a shock and a huge disappointment. However, the rest works so well, foodies looking for something a little different may still decide this place is worth taking a risk on.

**Yawen Restaurant** (Yǎwēn Jiùlǒu; ☎ 528 8811; Gongyuan Beilu; 公园北路; dishes ¥18-68; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-10pm) This is popular with locals for its Sichuan, Guizhou and Cantonese dishes. The food can get expensive but it's first rate. The only downsides are a stark white dining room and overly giggly waiters.

**Guizhou Long Seafood** (Guìzhōu Lóng Hǎiyáng; ☎ 586 3333; 23 Jiandao Jie; 箭道街23号; dishes ¥22-58; ☎ 8.30am-late) This place is positively palatial (seriously, there's a huge staircase just inside the entrance like something out of *Gone with the Wind*) and has a huge array of seafood dishes to choose from. There's no English menu, but the bible-sized Chinese one is loaded with pictures to guide your choices.

**New Zealand Western Restaurant** (Niūxīlán Xīcǎntīng; ☎ 651 2086; 157 Ruijin Beilu; 瑞金北路157号; lunch/dinner buffet ¥48/58; ☎ 6-9am, noon-2.30pm & 6-9.30pm) What this restaurant has to do with New Zealand is anyone's guess, but the lunch and dinner buffets are enormous, though travellers have given mixed reviews concerning the food quality. The buffets at Aroma Bakery & Café (Beijing Lu; 北京路; open noon to 2pm and 6pm to 9pm) get much better reviews but are far more expensive.

## Drinking

**UBC Coffee** (Shàngdǎo; 185 Ruijin Beilu; 瑞金北路185号; ☎ 9am-2am) There's an extensive coffee and tea menu here, along with the ever popular *zhēnzhū nǎichá* (珍珠奶茶; pearl milk tea). It's a relaxed, friendly place with slightly tacky décor and a grand piano.

At the time of research, about a dozen bars, lounges and clubs had just opened on Hequan Lu north of Qianling Lu. The area hasn't quite taken off yet but it's worth checking out when you're in town to see if things have picked up.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Airline offices in Guiyang include the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 597 7777; 264 Zūnyi Lu; ☎ 8.30am-9pm), which has helpful English-speaking staff, and **China Southern Airlines** (Zhōngguó Nánfāng Hángkōng Gōngsī;

☎ 582 8429; cnr Zūnyi Lù & Ruijin Nanlu), which also has a booking office.

Destinations include Běijīng (Y1730), Shànghǎi (Y1600), Guǎngzhōu (Y860), Guìlín (Y630), Chéngdū (Y630), Kūnmíng (Y440) and Chóngqīng (Y490). International destinations include Hong Kong and Bangkok.

### BUS

Long-distance buses leave from three different stations in Guiyang, but all have similar destinations at similar times and prices. The main long-distance bus station is on Yan'an Xilu, quite a trek from the train station.

At the time of research, road work between Guiyang and Zūnyi meant travel times were averaging from five to 8½ hours. If the work is still going on when you arrive, you're far better off taking the train.

### GUIYANG BUS TIMETABLES

Buses from Guiyang's Yan'an Xilu bus station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Ānshùn	Y25	1½hr	every 20min	7am-7pm
Chóngqīng	Y124	8hr	6 daily	8am, 9.30am, 11am, 12.30pm, 2pm & 3.30pm
Guǎngzhōu	Y240	17hr	1 daily	6.30pm
Guìlín	Y158	10hr	2 daily	8pm & 9.30pm
Kūnmíng	Y128	12hr	1 daily	9am
Shuǐchéng	Y60-70	4hr	every 30min	7am-7pm
Weīníng	Y80	7hr	1 daily	9am
Zūnyì	Y25-45	2½hr	every 30-40min	7.30am-7.20pm

Buses from the Tiyuguan long-distance bus station on Jiefang Lu:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Chóngqīng	Y80	9hr	1 daily	1.30pm
Kǎilǐ	Y50	2½hr	every 20-30min	7.30am-7.30pm
Léishān	Y40	3hr	1 daily	3pm
Xīngyì	Y70-80	6½hr	hourly	9am-6pm
Zūnyì	Y25-45	2½hr	half-hourly	7am-7pm

Buses from the bus stand:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency*	Departs
Ānshùn	Y25	1½hr	every 20min	7am-7pm
Huangguoshu Falls	Y30-40	2½hr	every 40min	7.10am-noon
Kǎilǐ	Y45-50	2½hr	every 40min	7am-6pm

\*Average times; buses leave only when full.

## GUIYÁNG TRAIN TIMETABLE

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Běijīng	Y490	29hr	2 daily	7.50am & 8.33am
Chéngdū	Y222	18hr	4 daily	4.01am, 11.51am, 1.30pm & 1.59pm
Chóngqīng	Y135	10-13hr	13 daily	1am-midnight
Guǎngzhōu	Y317	24hr	6 daily	2.27am-12.30pm
Guīlín	Y200	17hr	2 daily	2.13am & 9.31am
Kǎifēi	Y83	3hr	several daily	24hr departures
Kūnmíng	Y131-155	11-15hr	9 daily	12.30am-midnight
Shànghǎi	Y387	28hr	1 daily	1.56am
Shuǐchéng	Y56-95	4hr	11 daily	24hr departures
Zūnyì	Y62-100	2½-4hr	several daily	24hr departures

## TRAIN

Guiyáng's gleaming train station has a modern, computerised ticket office, making it one of the more pleasant places in China to buy a train ticket. However, you'll probably find that it's easier (and quicker) to travel within Guizhōu by bus.

You can buy tickets four days in advance. Prices listed in the table above are for hard sleepers.

## Getting Around

## TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Buses to the airport (Y10; 9am to 11pm) depart from the CAAC office usually two hours before flight departures. They also meet incoming flights during this period and will drop you at any of eight stops downtown. The train station is the terminus. The ride to Guiyáng takes about 20 minutes.

## BUS

For city-tour loops take bus 1 and 2 from the train station (they also pass close to the main long-distance bus station). Bus 1 and 2 travel up Zhonghua Beilu and head west along Beijing Lu. Buses cost Y1 and recorded announcements boom out stops in Chinese and (sometimes) English.

## TAXI

There is a flat Y10 charge to travel by taxi to anywhere in the city.

## AROUND GUIYÁNG

## Qingyán 青岩

This former military outpost is filled with cobbled streets, old wooden houses and more interesting sights than its small size would

suggest. It makes an excellent daytrip from Guiyáng. A Ming-era settlement, Qingyán was once a traffic hub between the southwestern provinces. The crisscross of cultures and religions over the centuries has left the town packed with Taoist temples, Buddhist monasteries, Christian churches and menacing watchtowers. There's a Y40 admission fee that includes entrance to the major sites. There's no English-language maps here yet, but an excellent Chinese-language tourist map of Qingyán has just been put out and is sold at a few stores inside the village.

Enter in the south of town at **Dingguǎng Mén** (定广门). Near here, you can go up on a portion of the town's old wall where there are some displays of Ming- and Qing-era military costumes.

Just inside the walls is **Bǎisui Fāng** (百岁坊), an elaborately carved stone gate. Built only recently, the gate was set up in recognition of the abnormally high number of centenarians living in Qingyán. Continue under the gate and along the main lane. Chinese-English signs point the way to the various sights, including two well-preserved temples, **Ciyún Sì** (慈云寺) and the nearby **Yíngxiáng Sì** (迎祥寺).

Also keep an eye out for the **No 1 Scholar Cave** (赵状元府; Zhào Zhuàngyuán Fǔ), the pavilion set up in honour of Zhao Yijiong, Qingyán's first scholar of national renown. He topped his imperial examination and went on to become an important official in the Qing administration. His brother was also a notable scholar.

Two wells outside the entrance are said to have been dug by the brothers. Nobody knows who dug which, and the subject is often a lively source of discussion among Chinese

tourists. Once you're confident you know which is Yijiong's (most people seem to go with whichever one has more water in it), place your hands in the well for good luck.

Qingyán's most impressive **Catholic church** (教堂; Jiàotáng) is in the back of town. Sadly, this eerily atmospheric building has been boarded up and the congregation is moving to the nondescript modern white building next door.

There's plenty to eat in Qingyán and some of the most popular items are pigs' feet and tofu in every conceivable form: from baseball-sized spheres to oblong packages wrapped in leaves. Sweets are also popular including roasted candy (sold everywhere) and sweet potato snacks, either dried or done up as crispy chips.

Be wary of groups of children pushing drawings or paper cranes into your hands. They're often trolling for money and have been known to stomp on visitors' feet or snatch money out of open wallets if they don't think you've been generous enough.

## GETTING THERE &amp; AWAY

Only about 30km outside of town, it takes about an hour to get here by bus from Guiyáng. Buses leave regularly from Guiyáng's Hebin Bus Depot (河滨汽车站) for Huāxī (花溪; Y3 to Y5). A minibus will take you the rest of the way to Qingyán (Y3). If you're dropped off in the new-town area (grey, concrete buildings), just walk towards the walls with the large stone gate.

## Nánjiāng Xiáǔ 南江峡谷

This valley located about 90 minutes outside of Guiyáng is beautiful. Waterfalls plunge over its edges and clusters of Bouyi villages nestle among the lush greenery and rice terraces. One long, winding road goes through it all and the scenery seems to go on forever.

This area hasn't been developed for tourism at all and no English is spoken anywhere. However, there are some subtle signs that may slowly change. A couple of viewing pavilions have been built near some of the more attractive and enduring waterfalls and at least one village is opening up a guesthouse.

With its setting right on the river, tiny little **Shuītóuzhài** (水头寨) may be the area's most picturesque settlement. It has a handful of beautiful traditional houses, some narrow paths and a pretty little waterwheel. There's one family here that offers room and meals (☎ 745 8059, 1359-503 6521), so you could

base yourself in this village and do some walks in the area. At the time of research, construction workers were putting up a modest guesthouse here, which should be open by the time you read this.

About 750m away is **Mǎtóuzhài** (马头寨), a traditional Bouyi village. While it doesn't have as nice a setting as Shuītóuzhài, it has traditional homes, a small Buddhist temple and some examples of old tools and farming technology set up along the paths for you to inspect. Foreigners here can make the kids pretty excitable, so brace yourself, especially if you're travelling solo.

Just down the hill from here is **Mùfēng** (木丰), a sprawling modernising town that is the place to go for anything you might want to buy. If you're hungry, go to its **Héxiānxiāng Cānguǎn** (Hexianxiang Restaurant; 海鲜香餐馆; ☎ 754 2210), where the fish hotpot is done with tiny little fish a pinky-length long fresh from the river that crunch like potato chips when you bite into them. Absolutely delicious.

## GETTING THERE &amp; AWAY

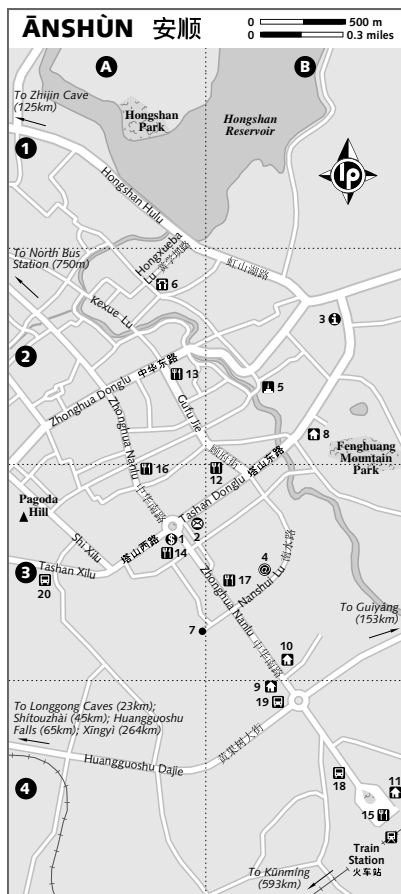
To get to the places listed above, take a bus from Guiyáng's Hebin bus depot to Mùfēng from where you can walk the kilometre to nearby Mǎtóuzhài and then the 750m or so to Shuītóuzhài. However, that's only one small corner of the valley and you may not see some of the waterfalls and more dramatic scenery.

Alternatively, you could hire a car from Guiyáng for half a day to explore the valley and then have the driver drop you off in Shuītóuzhài where you could stay the night. From there, you could head down to Mùfēng when you're done and then take the bus back to Guiyáng.

## ĀNSHÙN 安顺

☎ 0853 / pop 391,500

Ānshùn is the ideal place to base yourself if you're planning some in-depth exploration of Guizhōu's major natural sights. Huangguoshu Falls, Longgong Caves and Zhijin Cave are now easy day-trips away thanks to improved roads and bus connections. Ānshùn itself isn't very exciting. The rambling sprawl of buildings here seems to go on forever. However, it can be interesting just to walk around and check out the informal markets that seem to be set up on every other side street, where there's heated bargaining for mundane items such as socks and plastic dishes along with other bric-a-brac.

**INFORMATION**

Bank of China 中国银行	1	A3
China Post 中国邮政	2	A3
CTS 中国旅行社	3	B2
Internet Café 网吧	4	B3
Long-Distance Calls 长途电话	(see 9)	

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Donglin Temple 东林寺	5	B2
Wén Miào 文庙	6	A2
Wholesale Market of Small Goods in Ānshùn 安顺蜡染市场	7	A3

**SLEEPING**

Fènghuángshān Dàjiùdiàn 凤凰山大酒店	8	B2
Gōngdiànjú Zhàodàisuǒ 供电局招待所	9	B4
Xìxiùshān Bīnguǎn 西秀山宾馆	10	B3
Ānjū Bīnguǎn 安居宾馆	11	B4

**EATING**

Bakeries 面包房	12	B3
Bakery 面包房	13	A2
Food Market 食品市场	14	A3
Noodle Stalls 面条摊	15	B4
Restaurants 饭店	16	A3
Supermarket 超级市场	17	B3

**TRANSPORT**

Long-Distance Bus Station to the Southeast 往中国东南地区的长途客运站	18	B4
Long-Distance Bus Station 长途客运站	19	B4
West Bus Station 客运西站	20	A3

areas are found on Zhonghua Donglu, Gufu Jie and Zhonghua Nanlu.

**Information**

**Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; cnr Tashan Xilu & Zhonghua Nanlu) Changes cash and travellers cheques and offers cash advances on credit cards. Also an ATM.

**China Post** (Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; cnr Tashan Donglu & Zhonghua Nanlu) Tucked next to the China Telecom building.

**China Travel Service** (CTS; Zhōngguó Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 323 4662, 323 4661; Tashan Donglu; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) No English signs outside. Look for a blue sign with yellow Chinese characters.

**Internet café** (Nanshu Lu; per hr Y2) East off Zhonghua Nanlu.

**Long-distance calls** You can make cheap long-distance calls from a row of phones in the lobby of the Gōngdiànjú Zhàodàisuǒ (opposite), conveniently located near the long-distance bus station.

**Sights & Activities**

There's a couple of temples in town worth visiting. **Wén Miào** (Hongxueba Lu; 黄学坝路; admission Y5; ☎ 8am-5pm) is a small but atmospheric Confucian temple in the north of town. The building itself is slightly crumbly and dilapidated and the grounds overgrown, but that just adds to its charm. Keep an eye out for

**LOCAL VOICES**

Some of the countryside around Guiyang was very isolated, but you can see all the nice roads in the countryside now and visitors probably wonder what they're all doing there. Our government made them to help the villagers. Before, transport was very hard for them; now they like it very much. But other villagers lived very far away in the hills. They had to walk all day down from their village just to get fresh water. Roads couldn't be made in such places. The government had new apartments built close to the new roads instead and moved the villagers there. But the buildings weren't well constructed. The roofs leaked. Nothing worked. The villagers didn't like it so they went back up into the hills to their old homes. In the end, the villagers didn't mind walking all day to get water. At least in the villages, their roofs don't leak.

*As told by a Guiyang resident*

the stunningly intricate carvings winding their way up the various columns. Locals love this place and on weekends the grounds are sprinkled with people drinking tea, reading or sitting on the ground chatting.

Near here is the **Hongshan Reservoir** (虹山水库; Hóngshān Shuikù), popular with locals for paddle boating in summer and polar bear swims in winter.

Southeast of Wén Miào, Buddhist **Donglin Temple** (Dōnglín Sì; Zhonghua Donglu; 中华东路) was built in AD 1405 (during the Ming dynasty) and restored in 1668. It's down a lane off Zhonghua Donglu.

For a peek at the more contemporary side of Ānshùn, **Gufu Jie** is a street of trendy clothing stores and bakeries, and snack stalls that get so packed on weekends it's hard to move. A little further west, the stretch of Zhonghua Nanlu near Zhonghua Donglu is where the city's big commercial stores and shopping centres are located.

The **Wholesale Market of Small Goods in Ānshùn** (Ānshùn Lǎrǎn Shìchǎng; Zhonghua Nanlu; 中华南路; ☎ dawn-dusk) is the city's main market and probably the most interesting place to stroll.

**Festivals & Events**

A few minor festivals are held in the Ānshùn area, though they're generally not as spectacular as those held around Kǎilǐ. None of them are worth the trip to Ānshùn alone, but if you happen to be in town already, they are a pleasant diversion and certainly a nice excuse to get out and explore the countryside. Always double-check dates with local tourism officials or the CITS in Guiyang (p102) before heading off into the wilds to attend any of the following festivities. Dates are known to change from year to year, as well as the location.

**Tiàohuā Flower Dance Festival** Held in Miao villages during the first lunar month. The main location in Ānshùn is Flower Dance Hill, a few kilometres northwest of town; festivities occur from the 4th to the 6th of the first lunar month. Other gatherings are held at Mǎchǎng and Gǎofēng villages (Pingbà County), halfway between Ānshùn and Guiyang, and in Qīngzhèn town.

**Sānyuēsàn** At Pògōng (Guǎnlǐng County), 80km southwest of Ānshùn, and at Huòhuà (Ziyún County), 100km south of Ānshùn, on the 3rd day of the third lunar month. The festival has different significance depending on what minority group is celebrating it, however, all groups mark it with singing and dancing.

**Siyuèbā 'Ox King' Festival** Held at Jiùzhōu and Shuāngbǎo villages, both about 25km east of Ānshùn, on the 8th day of the fourth lunar month.

**Liùyuèliú** A Bouyi festival at Luohé (Ziyún County), 67km southeast of Ānshùn, and Lazhai (near Huánglǎng town), 56km east, on the 6th of the sixth lunar month. Activities include ground opera and singing competitions.

**Eating New Rice Festival** Held at Huloung and Dagouchang villages, 55km east of Ānshùn, south of the main highway, some time during the seventh or eighth lunar months.

**Guizhōu Batik Festival** A state-sponsored festival set up to display (and flog) batik to the tourists. Ānshùn, 28-29 September.

**Sleeping**

There's a lot of midrange accommodation in Ānshùn geared to Chinese tour groups. Hotels here are generally comfortable but fairly drab and undistinguished.

**Gōngdiànjú Zhàodàisuǒ** (☎ 332 9124; Zhonghua Nanlu; 中华南路; s & d with bathroom Y78-88, tr Y120) Right across from the Xìxiùshān Bīnguǎn, this place has basic little budget rooms with Chinese toilets and cubby-hole-like showers with no doors. The desk staff is frazzled but kind. Once you've got your key, the journey to your floor begins. Walk through the restaurant

## THE BOUYI

The Bouyi, the 'aborigines' of Guizhōu, are of Thai origin and closely related to the Zhuang of Guǎngxī. Most travellers will come upon them in the Huángguōshù and Ānshùn areas.

They are generally very poor, in sharp contrast with the postcard images of starched and ironed costumes or ring-of-confidence sparkling teeth. Bouyi dress is dark and sombre, with colourful trimmings. Both men and women wear white- or blue-checked head scarves.

Batik cloth dyeing is one of the many skills of the Bouyi. Batik is made by drawing designs with molten beeswax on a strip of cloth. A variety of instruments is used to produce different shapes with the wax. The fabric is dyed, normally in indigo, and then boiled to remove the beeswax. After it has been rinsed, the pattern of the beeswax remains as the original colour of the fabric. The beeswax is collected and re-used.

The Bouyi are also fine stonemasons. The masonry at Huángguōshù is intriguing – houses are composed of stone blocks but no plaster is used, and roofs are finished in slate. Bouyi villages often have archaic stone bridges and elaborate house entrances. One good place to see stonework is Shítóuzhài (石头寨; Stone Stockade village; p117), on the road to the Longgong Caves, near Ānshùn.

Bouyi festivals are usually held on the 'double third' (3rd day of the third lunar month) and 'double sixth'. The Siyueba or Ox King Festival is held on the 8th day of the fourth month, when glutinous rice cakes are offered to ancestors and cattle. The Big Year Festival is held from the 3rd to the 5th of the 12th month. Festivities include lion and dragon dances on top of seven upturned tables, plus courtship games and singing of love songs. Bouyi open-air opera is especially popular during the Big Year and Spring festivals.

dining room to the left of the reception desk. You'll eventually pass a kitchen and then the industrial-sized laundry facilities. The stairs up to the rooms are just after that.

**Ānjū Bīnguǎn** (☎ 220 1359; train station; 火车站出口对面; d/Y100) Painted a daring powder pink, you'll notice this hotel as soon as you leave the station. Rooms are extremely simple – bathrooms are so small that the sinks are installed over the Chinese toilets and the showerheads are installed over the sinks. Still, this is a fairly popular budget choice and the front desk is fairly friendly.

**Fènghuángshān Dǎjiùdiàn** (Golden Phoenix Mountain Hotel; ☎ 322 5663; 58 Tashan Donglu; 塔山东路58号; d/Y220) Rooms here are memorable for their lively red linen and consistently good-natured staff. Bathrooms can be quite grotty and there are a few wall stains that make you wonder 'what is that and how did that get there', but despite this, the hotel is certainly one of the more pleasant in town. No English sign outside; enter through the building done up like a Greek bank.

**Xìxiūshān Bīnguǎn** (☎ 221 1888; fax 221 1801; 63 Nanhua Lu; 南华路63号; s/d incl breakfast Y288/328) Standard doubles here are outfitted with everything you could possibly want (big TV, comfortable bed, desk, sitting chairs by the windows), but it's all crammed into such a small space that some of the rooms are ridiculously cramped.

Bathrooms are exactly the opposite – sparsely outfitted and often the same size or bigger than the actual sleeping area. The buffet breakfast is pretty disappointing outside of the high season – noodles are mushy and there's more sauce and condiments than there are things to put them on.

## Eating

There are plenty of places to eat in Ānshùn, just little to recommend. Some buildings along Zhonghua Nanlu north of Tashan Lu house restaurants on their 2nd floors, but they seem all but deserted even at peak meal times.

Otherwise, there's a food market (*shìchāng*) down an alley off Zhonghua Nanlu, just south of the Bank of China. It's quite fun to wander here and there's usually loud music to go along with the interesting assortment of snacks. There are some great bakeries (*miànbāofāng*; the one near the corner of Zhonghua Donglu is especially good) and several hole-in-the-wall places on Gufu Jie. A row of forgettable noodle stalls (*miàntiáotān*) are located near the train station. There's also a huge supermarket (*chāojiàn*) on Zhonghua Nanlu, perfect for picking up snacks for day trips.

Be forewarned: dog is eaten in these parts... lots of dog. You'll see the skinned animals propped up outside restaurants as an entice-

ment to come in for lunch. If you haven't got a taste for canine meat or a desire to try it, learn how to say 'I don't eat dog' (我不吃狗肉; 'Wǒ bù chī gǒuròu') and practise it well.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

There are several bus stations in Ānshùn that are useful to travellers. The north bus station has buses to Zhijin town (for Zhijin Cave; Y24, 2½ hours, hourly from 7.45am to 5pm) and the west bus station is useful for travelling to Longgong Caves (Y5, 40 minutes, every 20 to 30 minutes from 7am to 5pm).

The long-distance station on the corner of Zhonghua Nanlu and Huangguoshu Dajie has a handful of handy destinations, and the bus stand in front of the train station has buses for numerous provinces in the southeastern part of China.

Buses to Ānshùn leave from every one of Guiyang's stations (Y25, two hours, every 20 minutes from 7am to 7pm). Any Guiyang-bound bus out of Xingyi or Weining will also let you off in Ānshùn if you tell the driver.

### TRAIN

From Ānshùn, trains leave daily for Kūnmíng (Y114, 10 hours, 8.50pm), but it's virtually impossible to get sleeper reservations and you might decide to head back to Guiyang. To

Chóngqíng, there's one train daily (Y120, 12 hours, 9.41pm). To Liupánshuǐ (for Weining) there are two trains daily at 10.52am and 11.34am (Y22, four hours). Trains leave for Guiyang all day, though departures are more frequent in the afternoons (Y12, two hours). There are hard seats only so the bus is usually much more comfortable and convenient.

## Getting Around

Minibus 1 is the most useful – it zips around town from the train station, up Tashan Donglu and on past the Hóngshān Bīnguǎn. Bus 2 travels between the train station and the north bus station. A seat on a bus costs Y1.

## AROUND ĀNSHÙN

### Longgong Caves 龙宫洞

The **Longgong Caves** (Lónggōng Dòng; Dragon Palace; admission Y120; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) are a vast network of caves that snake through the hills about 23km away from Ānshùn. Despite the elaborateness of the Longgong park site, it represents only a small portion of the cave network. However, like the Huangguoshu Falls area nearby, this region continues to be aggressively developed for tourism – and signs regularly appear pointing the way to modest new 'scenic sights' within the Longgong area.

The **Dragon Palace Cave**, where an underground river winds its way through a huge

## BUS TIMETABLES

Buses from Ānshùn's long-distance bus station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Guiyang	Y25	2hr	every 20min	5.30am-9.40pm
Huángguōshù	Y10	1hr	every 20min	7.30am-5pm
Kūnmíng (sleeper)	Y100-130	17hr	daily	7am & 1pm
Shuǐchéng	Y35	3½hr	hourly	7am-5.30pm
Xīngyì	Y55	5-6hr	hourly	7am-3.30pm
Zūnyì	Y60	7-8hr	hourly	7am-3pm

Buses to the southeast from the stand outside Ānshùn's train station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Fóshān	Y260	19hr	daily	noon
Fúzhōu	Y360	32hr	daily	noon
Guǎngzhōu	Y240	20hr	daily	noon
Shēnzhèn	Y280	22hr	daily	noon
Xiàmén	Y320	28hr	daily	noon



### ĀNSHÙN'S OPERATIC CLAIM TO FAME: DÌXÌ

Everyone's heard of Peking opera, and if you've been travelling round the Southwest for a while, you've probably heard or seen Sichuan opera as well. What few people know is that Ānshùn, too, has its very own version of the art: ground opera.

Called *dìxi* in Chinese, ground, or 'open-air' opera, as it's sometimes also known, dates back to the Ming dynasty. As part of the performance, actors wrap black see-through cloth over their foreheads and don traditional masks made from bamboo shoots. Up to 50 masks may be used in one opera. The colours of the masks are very symbolic: black denotes righteousness, red symbolises loyalty and bravery, while white indicates evil. Blue and green masks are reserved for monsters or particularly nasty bandits. Banners are also worn on the actors' backs to denote rank, as in the Běijīng Opera.

The operas originally served to drive out evil spirits but have merged with local religious dramas and Han classics such as the Romance of Three Kingdoms and History of the Sui and Tang Dynasties. The plots are livened up by gongs, drums, stilts, flags and displays of martial arts to keep the audience's mind from wandering during the slow bits.

The best time to catch ground opera is during festivals, especially the Spring Festival in January or February. Inquire at Guiyáng's CITS (p102) for more information. (Unless you're a Chinese speaker, Ānshùn's CTS, p110, probably won't be very helpful.) Another form of local opera, *núo*, is practised by the Tujia people of northeastern Guizhōu. There's a Nuo Opera Museum in Tóngren.

labyrinth of caves, is Longgong's star attraction. To visit, you have to take a guided (Chinese-only) tour on one of the small boats, which lasts about 40 minutes (though in summer the flood of Chinese tour groups causes a watery gridlock that can draw this out substantially). The guides give a little geological background on the caves, but mostly they just point out the various karst formations with their flashlights and let everyone play 'What does it look like?'. The recorded music and coloured spotlights here can feel a bit over the top at times, but most travellers enjoy drifting through the caves anyway.

Most other sights here will be anticlimactic after the Dragon's Cave and many people continue on to Huangguoshu Falls after finishing their boat tour. But if you want to linger, you can follow footpaths to some of the more modest caves or continue on to **Guanyin Cave** (观音洞; Guānyīn Dòng), the second biggest attraction in the park, about 3km away.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Local buses depart every hour from Ānshùn's west bus station (Y5 to Y10, 30 to 40 minutes, every 20 to 30 minutes from 7am to 5pm). The last bus returns to Anshun at 5pm.

From March to October, minivans to microvans run all day between Lónggōng and Huángguōshù (Y15 to Y30, 30 minutes), leaving when full. They run infrequently, if at

all, the rest of the year, but there are always plenty of taxis at the Huangguoshu parking lot that you can take. Not as many hover at Longgong, however, so you may need to wait a while or head back to the main road and flag down a bus.

### Zhijin Cave 织金洞

The stunning, *Lord of the Rings*-like stalagmite terrain here is otherworldly, making this **cave** (Zhijin Dōng; admission Y120; 8.30am-5.30pm) one of the most interesting sights in Central Guizhōu.

Located some 15km outside Zhijin village, the cave is around 10km long and up to 150m high in some places. Calcium deposits have created an abstract landscape of spectacular shapes and spirals, often reaching from floor to ceiling. Moving from tiny passageways to cathedral-like main halls, it's hard not to be impressed.

Tour guides here are compulsory and start with a minimum of 10 people. Solo travellers visiting outside of peak summer months or on Chinese holidays should be prepared for what can be a very, very long wait. While the tour itself is in Chinese only, you'll be glad to have someone around who knows the way back out of the maze of trails. Tours last about three hours on average. Comfortable shoes with a good grip would be a help here as some of the terrain is very steep and can be slick with water.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

A visit to the cave is an easy day trip from Ānshùn as long as you leave first thing in the morning. Buses depart regularly from Ānshùn for Zhijin (Y24, 2¼ hours, every 45 minutes from 7.45am to 6pm). Once in Zhijin, buses or minivans will be clamouring to take you the rest of the way to the cave. The trip will take about 20 minutes and cost between Y8 and Y30 depending on your mode of transport and bargaining skills. Between November and February there are few visitors here so a taxi may be your only option. The last bus leaves Zhijin for Ānshùn at 6pm, though it's best to show up earlier than that to ensure you get a seat.

### Huangguoshu Falls 黄果树大瀑布

Perched in a gorge near Huángguōshù village, the **Huangguoshu Falls** (Huángguōshù Dà Pùbù; admission Mar-Oct Y90, Nov-Feb Y70; 7.30am-6pm) are the biggest in Asia and the most frequently visited sight in Guizhōu. The Chinese first explored this area in the 1980s, as a preliminary to harnessing the region's hydroelectric potential. They discovered about 18 falls, four subterranean rivers and 100 caves. Many of these features are being turned into scenic sights so it's likely the region around Huángguōshù will continue to be developed for tourism for years to come.

Reaching a width of 81m and a height of 74m, the rush of water here in the rainy season (May to October) can be monstrously loud and thrilling to see. The cascade is most spectacular about four days after a heavy downpour. The dry season lasts from November to April and during March and April the flow of water can become a less impressive trickle.

The ticket office and entrance to the falls is off a big new parking lot a couple of kilometres outside of Huángguōshù village. From here a winding footpath leads down into the ravine. It's a lovely descent among leafy green trees, through some modest pavilions and past lots of hawkers in minority dress who will try to get you to pose for pictures at viewpoints along the way.

The path ends at the **Rhinoceros Pool**, a large pond of water at the foot of the falls. Clouds of spray hover here whatever the season, and when the sunlight hits the mist, the resulting rainbows look as though they are shooting out of the water.

Across the bridge and up the footpath you'll reach **Water Curtain Cave**, where you can walk

through a tunnel behind the falls and view the water streaming past. During the rainy season this is almost like walking through a shower and can prove treacherous. Good footwear and waterproofs are recommended at any time of year.

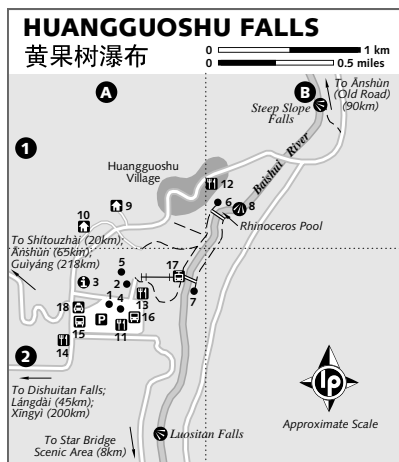
Descending the trail at the other side you'll reach Rhinoceros Pool again. From here you can go back the same way you came or follow the trails on either side of the river to the cable car and take that up to the exit. The lane from here is packed with souvenir stands and leads back to the parking lot.

You can do the whole circuit at a fairly relaxed pace and be done within two to three hours on average. The falls are easiest to reach from Ānshùn but can certainly be done as a day trip from Guiyáng, as long as you leave early in the morning.

The **Star Bridge Scenic Area** (天星桥风景区; Tiānxīng Qiáo Fēngjǐngqū; admission Y30; 8.30am-6pm) is about 8km away from Huangguoshu. A visit here involves following a path through a pretty swathe of landscape. It's full of caves, waterfalls, ponds, banyan trees and some tight squeezes between the small karst formations along the trail. There's also a footpath of 365 individual stones laid across the land and bodies of water, each with a day of the year carved into it. When you reach the stone with the same date as your birthday, you're supposed to stand on it and make a wish. You can get here by taxi or minivan from the Huangguoshu Falls parking lot.

If Huangguoshu Falls aren't enough, you could also take a taxi or minivan to some of the other waterfalls in the area. The **Steepest Slope Falls** (陡坡瀑布; Dǒupō Pùbù) are 105m wide and 23m high and get their name from the crisscross patterning of sloping waters. They are a couple of kilometres north of Huángguōshù village. One kilometre downstream of the main falls is the **Luositán Falls** (螺蛳滩瀑布; Luósītān Pùbù), which can be reached on foot from the carpark by following the main road south. The **Dishuitān Falls** (滴水滩瀑布; Dīshuītān Pùbù) are a cluster of smaller cascades about 45km west of Huángguōshù that have gotten good reviews from travellers. They are near the village of Lángdài (郎岱).

In addition to its impressive falls, the area around Huángguōshù provides an excellent chance to ramble through nearby rural minority areas on foot.



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## SLEEPING &amp; EATING

The area around the falls is becoming more and more resort-like each year, with big boxy hotels lining the road to the ticket office and plans for even more accommodation are underway. Though appearing quite grand from the outside, much accommodation here is a disappointment once you get a peek in the rooms – mustiness can be a problem and prices are outrageously inflated even in the low season. Hotels are all open during the

off-peak period (November to February), but there are so few overnight visitors at this time that the places are virtually empty and the experience can be a little creepy.

**Gōngshāng Bīnguǎn** (☎ 359 2315; r from Y288) Not far from the ticket office, rooms here are ultra plain but this is the cheapest place on the road to the falls. Bathrooms have Chinese toilets and water heaters, which, if they've been turned on, ensure a hot shower. The staff here are a plus: young and bubbly, they can be very helpful with local info.

**Huángguōshù Bīnguǎn** (☎ 359 2110; d from Y488; 🚻) The closest hotel to the ticket office, this is a big rambling building, with a slickly dressed and well-trained staff, though, unfortunately, not the facilities to match. Some floors have tippy-toe views of the falls and the grounds are lovely, but some rooms are damp and nowhere near worth the price they're asking. Be patient if you decide to bargain here – the discounts don't come easy.

There are lots of restaurants and quick eats around the edge of the parking lot, but the better choices (and cheaper prices) are at one of the hole-in-the-wall eateries on the road veering downhill and westward from here.

There are also plenty of restaurants in Huángguōshù village near the Catholic church if you feel like a walk.

## GETTING THERE &amp; AWAY

Buses to the falls run every 20 minutes from Ānshùn's long-distance bus station (Y10, one hour, from 7.30am to 5pm). The route takes you past the turnout for Longgong Caves, through the messy town of Zhènníng (镇宁) and around the winding streets of Huángguōshù village, before letting you off at the parking lot in front of the falls' ticket office.

From Guiyáng, buses to Huángguōshù leave every 40 minutes from the long-distance bus station (Y30 to Y40, 2½ hours, 7.10am to noon). Guiyáng-bound buses from Xīngyì will also drop you off at the falls.

Leaving the falls, buses for Ānshùn leave when full from the parking lot (Y10, one hour, 7am to 6pm). Guiyáng-bound buses also leave from the parking lot when full between 7am and 6pm (Y35, three hours).

The falls' parking lot is also packed with taxis and microvans for hire. In the peak season, you'll often find minivans shuttling back and forth all day between Huángguōshù and Longgong Caves.

Huangguoshu Airport only handles flights from Guángzhōu (Y890, four weekly) so it won't be of interest to most travelling the Southwest, though flights to and from Kūnmíng and other destinations are likely to be added.

## Shítouzhài 石头寨

This **Bouyi village** (admission Y15) isn't far from Huangguoshu Falls and the friendliness of the inhabitants is as much a reason to visit as its lovely setting.

Over 600 years old, this little hamlet is packed with small stone houses, cobbled lanes and friendly locals. Everyone here who isn't farming seems to somehow be involved in batik production, and you may be invited into a villager's home to watch the process. Thankfully, the selling hasn't gotten too aggressive and for the most part you can browse in peace until you see something you like.

This is becoming a popular stop for Chinese tourists and you can see efforts are being made to spruce the place up for travellers; some of the village equipment has bilingual signs explaining its use and the ponds across the street from the village have been landscaped and are dotted with a couple of small waterwheels.

An hour or two would be more than enough to see it all, and a stop here is a pleasant diversion either on your way to or back from Huangguoshu Falls. However, the karst-studded landscape surrounding Shítouzhài is lovely and some travellers may consider hanging around to explore some of the villages spotting the nearby hills or to do some of the lovely walks that would be possible in the area.

## SLEEPING &amp; EATING

There's only one guesthouse here open year-round, but others are under construction and should be accepting guests by the time you read this.

**Shítouzhài Jìngqū Zhāodàisuǒ** (石头寨景区招待所; ☎ 1376-536 4841; d/tr with shared bathroom Y60/90) Just a few metres inside the village gates and run by a lovely family, this place has simple beds in dark wood rooms. The wooden floors are disturbingly creaky but the shared bathrooms and showers are clean and modern. A single room with a Ming-style 'antique' bed costs Y150.

There's a couple of small restaurants here too, but they are only open in high season months (roughly April to September).

## GETTING THERE &amp; AWAY

To get here, take a Huángguōshù-bound bus from Ānshùn and tell the driver you're going to Shítouzhài (Y5 to Y8, 30 to 40 minutes). You'll be let off at a road forking away from the main highway. Follow the road for about 2km until you reach Shítouzhài. You'll know when you have arrived by the landscaping: there will be a pond with a waterwheel on the right, and, just afterwards, a clutch of stone houses on your left where you'll find the village entrance.

To leave, walk back to the fork in the road. If you're continuing on to Huángguōshù, most buses heading west will pass the falls; if you're going to Ānshùn, flag down any bus heading eastward.

## Other Traditional Villages

If you're interested in visiting still more traditional villages and have plenty of time to endure local transport, you can head out to **Lóujiāzhuāng** (娄家庄), a Miao village 23km northeast of Ānshùn, **Lángdài** (郎岱), 45km west of Huángguōshù, or **Bawan**, about 50km west of Ānshùn (just south of the Ānshùn-Liùzhī road). Both Lángdài and Bawan are Bouyi villages.

## WESTERN GUIZHOU

Guizhōu's west is a mystery to most foreigners, but it has some lovely natural sights that are enticing increasing numbers of travellers to discover the region.

If you're jonesing for a glimpse of the endangered black-necked crane, Wèining's Cao-hai Lake is a hallowed sight for bird-watchers. Further south, some travellers rate a trip to the silvery, thread-thin waterfalls at Xīngyì's Maling Gorge as preferable to the commercialism of Ānshùn's thundering Huangguoshu Falls.

Roads and infrastructure here have improved enormously in recent years, speeding up travel times immensely; there's a small but sleek modern airport in Xīngyì and the road up to Wèining is flawlessly smooth.

However, elements of Guizhōu's 'wild west' reputation remain and there's still a lot here to attract intrepid travellers: English is not

spoken at all, foreigners in rural areas will stop traffic and there are real opportunities for off-the-beaten-track exploration of the minority villages.

Many sub-branches of the Miao (Hmong) live here, including the Long-Horned Miao around Liùzhī, named after their enormous protruding hairstyles; the Flowery Miao in the northwest around Wěining; and the Black Miao and Bouyi in the southwest around Xingrén and Xingyi.

This swath of Guizhōu is also worth considering as an alternative, little-travelled route to Yúnnán. There are connections to Kǔnmíng from Xingyi and via Xuānwēi from Wěining.

## WĒINÍNG 威宁

☎ 0857 / pop 57,000

Wěining is a rugged little town a couple of kilometres away from Caohai Lake (Cǎohǎi Hú), one of China's premier bird-watching sites.

Though there's not much to see in the town itself, the population is a mix of Han, Miao, Hui and Yi minorities, so there's plenty of atmosphere. A large market is held here every three or four days, which is attended by the Flowery Miao. Evidence of the Hui includes a modern mosque in the north of town and several Muslim restaurants nearby.

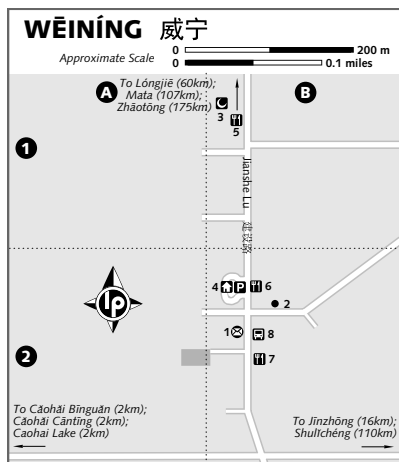
There are also remote minority villages in the region, most interesting if you can hunt down a market or festival that may be going on. While not worth the trip to Wěining on their own, intrepid travellers may enjoy getting out and exploring some of them and getting to know a bit of the countryside.

Though the centre of town is usually full of life and has a unique energy you just don't feel elsewhere in Guizhōu, this is still one of the most backward areas in the province. The social problems that go along with that kind of poverty are never far from the surface in Wěining.

## Caohai Lake 草海湖

Even if it weren't the premier sight for bird-watching in China, Caohai Lake (Grass Sea Lake; Cǎohǎi Hú) would be pretty spectacular. This 20-sq-km freshwater wetland glimmers about 2km away from Wěining's central core and when the sun hits the water just so, the effect is gorgeous.

The lake became a national nature reserve in 1992 and is an important wintering site



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for many migratory birds, the most famous of which is the black-necked crane. The lake is considered a wetland because its average depth is only 2m. Grasses cover 60% of the lake, giving rise to the name Cǎohǎi or Grass Sea.

The lake has a fragile history. It once fed into the Yangzi River (Cháng Jiāng) and has even disappeared several times in the last 3000 years. It was drained during the Great Leap Forward and then again during the Cultural Revolution in order to provide farmland. The experiment was a miserable failure and the land was unusable. The lake was refilled in 1980, but government tinkering with water levels in ensuing years continued to impact both the local environment and villagers' livelihoods.

The government has poured millions of yuán into lake conservation ever since, but

some pressing problems remain. Almost a third of Wěining's sewage runs into the lake and more than 20,000 people live in the reserve. To encourage local interest in park conservation, some villagers have been hired as park workers, a conservation education programme has been set up and grants have been made available to farmers who wish to set up alternative businesses. One plan for sustainable development involves ecotourism or, more to the point, you.

Boaters and touts will mob you as soon as you arrive at the path down to the lake, offering you a punt around to show you the birds. The official price is Y60 per hour per boat, though you'll have to bargain hard to get them down from starting prices of Y100 or more per person.

Though it's still not possible to walk the entire lake circumference without eventually ending up in patches of swampland, there are extensive trails a good part of the way around. As the cranes often roost quite close to the shore, this is another pleasant way to see the birds and the cacophony of their calls can be fantastic.

Be aware that if you turn down the touts and boaters and decide to walk round the lake instead, they may not leave you alone for the rest of your visit. They have a James Bond-like ability to show up wherever you are in Wěining to continue the haggle: your hotel in the morning, the kebab stand in the evening, the bus station as you're trying to leave town.

The lake is particularly beautiful at dusk when the jagged Wumeng Mountain Range frames the silvery sunset. The elevation here is higher though, so bring warm clothes for the cold nights.

The best time to visit the lake is December to March, when the birds are wintering. During this time the northwest enjoys much better weather than the rest of Guizhōu and there are often clear blue skies in Wěining when visibility in nearby Shuǐchéng is down to 200m. However, snow and ice frequently close the road winding up through the hills from Shuǐchéng to Wěining, so if you're on a tight schedule it's best to build a couple of extra days into your itinerary just in case the weather doesn't cooperate.

Once you get there, you don't need more than one full day in Wěining to explore the lake, but many hard-core bird-watchers or nature-lovers may certainly choose to stay longer.

To get here, you can either walk the 2km from the town centre or take a taxi. Wěining's taxis are unmetered so ask how much it will cost first; usually Y3, the fare is sometimes rounded up to Y5 for foreigners. Be careful when you're in the taxis: they're usually dilapidated nightmares and the doors often fly open when the driver takes a corner.

## Sleeping

Accommodation in Wěining is extremely basic and a lot of times, startlingly unclean. If you're looking for dorm accommodation there's a lot of zhāodàisuǒ (basic lodgings) near the main intersection by the bus station, but conditions can get pretty dirty.

**Cǎohǎi Bīnguǎn** (草海宾馆; ☎ 622 1511; s/d/tr Y85/50/60) Right on the road, near the path to the lake, the location here is ideal. Rooms are big, have incredibly high ceilings and are furnished with heavy, dark-brown beds, tables and chairs. There's toilets and sinks in each room but showers are communal. The staff here aren't particularly friendly (and often extremely hard to find) but are a pretty good source of local information once you've pinned them down. If you've never been to the hotel before you are likely to walk right by it without even noticing; a taxi from the bus station is your best bet (Y3 to Y5).

**Hēijīnghè Bīnguǎn** (☎ 622 9306; 18 Jianshe Lu; 建设路18号; s Y88-128, d Y168) Despite damp, cold rooms and wall stains, this big rambling hotel is the best accommodation in town. Central heating sputters to life with varying degrees of success between 9pm and 10pm. To get here, turn right out of the bus station and cross the intersection. Walk for about half a block and you'll see the hotel on your left.

## Eating

There's not a lot of restaurants in town though it's heaving with little four- or five-table hole-in-the-wall eateries. There's a significant Hui population here, so the beef noodles are a consistently tasty dish – try the Muslim restaurants near the mosque.

**Cǎohǎi Cǎntīng** (草海餐厅; dishes from Y5) About 200m east of Cǎohǎi Bīnguǎn, this is a cheap and friendly restaurant, convenient if you are on your way to or from the lake where there are not a lot of places to chow down.

The intersection near Xinhua Bookshop and the long-distance bus station has several hole-in-the-wall stir-fry places as well.

### BIRD-WATCHING ON THE GRASS SEA

Caohai Lake is one of the best places to bird-watch in China; in fact, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has listed it as one of the top 10 bird-watching destinations in the world.

Up to 100,000 birds winter at the lake between December and March, with 179 different species having been recorded. These include a number of protected species, such as black-necked and hooded cranes, black and white storks, golden and imperial eagles, white-tailed sea eagles, Eurasian cranes and white spoonbills. More common birds easily spotted at the lake include the bar-headed goose, Eurasian widgeon, common pochard, Eurasian coot and black-headed gull.

The lake's star attraction is the black-necked crane. The least known of the 15 types of crane, it is listed by the IUCN (World Conservation Union) as vulnerable, with a global population of around 6000. The birds breed at high altitudes in Tibet, Qinghǎi and western Sichuān, and then spend the winter basking in the relative warmth of southern Tibet and the Yúnnán-Guizhōu plateau. It is thought one important local migration route takes birds from Caohai Lake to Zōigē in northern Sichuān. Four hundred black-necked cranes currently winter at the lake – the highest number ever recorded and a great improvement on the mid-1970s, when numbers plummeted to only 35.

The cranes have little fear of people and you can often approach to within 10m without disturbing them. Perhaps part of the reason for this is that cranes have long enjoyed an exalted place in Chinese culture as a symbol of happiness and good fortune. You may see statues of cranes in many of China's imperial palaces, such as the Forbidden City in Běijīng.

China's Southwest has several other important crane wintering sites at Dashanbao, Bitahai, Nàpà Hǎi and Huizé in neighbouring Yúnnán, but Caohai Lake remains by far the easiest and best place to spot them.

The Tuoda Forest, 60km northwest of Caohai Lake, has been set aside as a nature reserve for the protection of the endangered Reeves' pheasant. This bird is unique to China, but owing to widespread deforestation its numbers have declined in recent years and its total population is probably no more than 5000. The male has striking plumage in autumnal golds and browns boldly crisscrossed with black and white; its tail can be up to three times its body length.

Tuoda is a plantation of deciduous and evergreen trees that provides safe feeding and nesting for the pheasants. However, despite its protected status, Tuoda continues to suffer from illegal clearing; recent visitors reported only saplings of oak and pine where once a mature forest supported a good diversity of birds. Reeves' pheasant appears to hang on in Tuoda, but parts of the forest are being converted to agriculture, which almost certainly means local extinction of the bird.

### Getting There & Away

Wěining's bus station is a broken-down mess and it's hard to believe a place this small can get so chaotic.

From Guiyáng, there's one bus daily to Wěining (Y80, seven hours, 9am). If that bus is cancelled (which occurs frequently during winter), you can go to the surprisingly large, modernising city of Shuǐchéng (水城; Y55, 3½ to four hours, every 30 minutes from 7am to 5pm), and from there get a bus the rest of the way to Wěining (Y30 to Y40, three to four hours, 9am and noon).

Coming back from Wěining, the Guiyáng-bound bus leaves daily at 8.30am. There's no direct bus from Wěining to southern Guizhōu, but if you don't want to backtrack through Guiyáng, take the bus to Shuǐchéng, from

where buses leave daily for Xīngyì (Y82, six hours, 8.30am and noon), though by all accounts this may not be the most comfortable ride you've ever been on.

If you want to head to Yúnnán from Wěining, a bus goes south to Xuānwēi (Y25, eight hours, 7.30am and 9am). If you catch the 7.30am bus to Xuānwēi, you'll arrive just in time to catch the last bus to Kūnmíng (Y40, eight hours) at 3.30pm, although it's a lot of travelling to do in one day. From Wěining, there is also a sleeper bus to Kūnmíng (Y90, 16 hours, 5.30pm).

Alternatively, take the morning bus to Zhāotōng (Y20, three hours, 7.20am and 8am), from where you can hop over to Xīchāng in southern Sichuān and connect with the Kūnmíng-Chéngdū train line.

### AROUND WĒINÍNG

Wěining is useful as a base to visit remote Yi and Miao villages in the region, though you'll really have to rough it as facilities are very limited in this area.

If you want to explore, locals recommend Lóngjiē (龙街), 60km northwest of Wěining. The town of Jīnzhōng (金钟), 16km east on the road to Shuǐchéng (水城), is also said to have a great market every three or four days.

On the 5th of the fifth lunar month there is **horse racing** in some Yi villages around Wěining and a **Flower Dance Festival** at Mata, featuring crossbow shooting and antiphonal singing. Mata is 107km northwest of Wěining and buses to Yúngui and Lóngjiē pass nearby.

You can reach any of these villages by minibus from the long-distance bus station. Prices depend on the number of travellers they've got and bargaining skills.

These areas are rarely visited by even domestic travellers, let alone foreigners, so it can be extremely difficult to get information and dates on these festivals except from locals once you arrive. (Dates are often also decided locally from year to year.) If you're keen, however, you can contact the Guiyáng CITS (p102), tell the staff what you are interested in and they may be able to ferret out the info for you.

### XĪNGYÌ 兴义

☎ 0859 / pop 120,400

Xīngyì doesn't seem like much at first glance. However, the area has become an important gold mining centre (it's the 10th largest gold producer in all of China) and new finds have multiplied the amount of drilling and mineral exploitation in the region. Xīngyì now has one of the more affluent populations in Guizhōu and that, coupled with the new airport and improved roads, is giving the city a pleasant mini-boom. Unfortunately, despite the development, the city itself is still a bit of a bore, (everything more or less shuts down completely by dark), but the surrounding scenery is definitely worth a visit and the weather here is some of the mildest in Guizhōu.

Xīngyì is mainly populated by Han Chinese and Hui Muslims, though the surrounding villages are largely made up of Black Miao and Bouyi. Foreign travellers are more or less unheard of here. It's not so easy to suss out local markets and festivals; even the few Xīngyì locals involved in the tourism industry

may give you blank looks when you ask (see p123 for more info).

### Information

#### INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is available from any one of the internet cafés along the upper floor of the ring of buildings surrounding the town's Central Plaza.

#### MONEY

The **Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Yunnan Donglu; ☎ 8am-6pm) near Chuanyundong Park will change travellers cheques Monday to Friday in the early morning and in the late afternoon. However, it is not used to foreigners so the transaction may be a long and painful one. Luckily, there's an ATM outside.

#### POST

You can post your letters from the main China Post office, a five-minute walk northwest of the Pánjiāng Bīnguān.

#### TOURIST INFORMATION

Everything in Xīngyì is geared towards Chinese group tours and there is zilch here to help independent travellers. Even the few local guides have a hard time nailing down festival dates unless they have a long, loooooong lead time. Your best source of travel information for Xīngyì is Guiyáng's CITS (p102); make contact well in advance of your travel dates so the staff has some time to research festivals and the like for you.

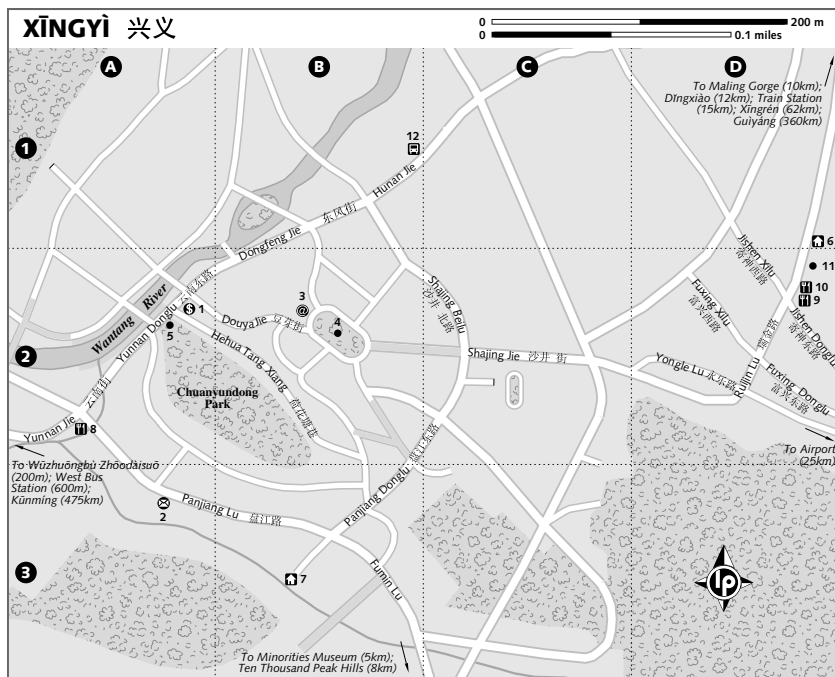
#### Sights & Activities

The most interesting area of town lies in the pedestrian alleys and side streets northeast of **Chuanyundong Park** (Chuányúndōng Gōngyuán; admission Y1.50; ☎ dawn-dusk) and leading to the **central plaza** (jiēxīn huāyuán). The central plaza and the small riverside square across from the park are popular meeting places for locals, especially in the evenings.

Chuanyundong Park itself is on the drab side and not really worth your time. The most worthwhile sights in this area are outside Xīngyì city (see p123).

#### Sleeping

Plenty of budget hotels line the streets around the various bus stations. Service is generally quite friendly but the facilities aren't always the cleanest. Xīngyì's top-end hotel market



## INFORMATION

Bank of China 中国银行	1	A2
China Post & Telecom 中国邮政&中国电信	2	A3
Internet Cafés 网吧	3	B2

## SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES

Central Plaza 街心花园	4	B2
Entrance to Chuan'yundong Park 公园入口	5	A2

## SLEEPING

Aviation Hotel 航空酒店	6	D1
Pánjiāng Bīnguǎn 盘江宾馆	7	B3

## EATING

Bakery 面包坊	8	A2
Laogang Zi Noodle Shop 老杠子面坊	9	D2
Zōu Jīròu Tāngyuán 邹记鸡肉汤圆	10	D2

## TRANSPORT

Dàilǐ Guónèi Jīpiào 代理国内机票	11	D2
East Bus Station 客运东站	12	B1

is booming thanks to the new airport; these are all centred just outside the city core. The midrange category is the only segment not so well served here.

**Wúzhuāngbù Zhāodàisùo** (武装部招待所; ☎ 322 4243; 92 Yunnan Jie; 云南街92号; 4-/3-bed dm Y10/15, r Y60, r with shared bathroom Y25-40) The family that runs this hotel is so cheery and kind that they make

staying here worth considering, even if at first glance the facilities might put you off. Rooms will likely be among the most spartan you'll encounter on your trip (they can get damp and drafty in cold weather, too), but it's about the only place along this drag that was enthusiastically accepting foreigners at the time of research. It's also useful if your bus is arriving late or leaving early from the west bus station. There's no name on the sign; look for the bright blue awning with yellow characters.

**Pánjiāng Bīnguǎn** (☎ 322 3456, ext 8118; 4 Panjiang Xilu; 盘江西路4号; dm/s/d/tr Y50/280/380/380) This hotel is still the most frequent destination in the city for tour groups, meaning its rooms can be booked solid, even in nonpeak periods. Rooms are the generic but comfortable variety you find at such high-volume Chinese hotels, but, at the moment, this is still probably the best midrange option in the city.

**Aviation Hotel** (Hángkōng Jiùdiàn; ☎ 312 6666; fax 312 6668; Ruijin Lu; 瑞金路; d incl breakfast Y680; ☎) Still the best top-end choice in town, this hotel is popular with people visiting for business. It's reliably run, although somewhat inconveniently located on the edge of town.

## Eating

Xīngyì residents are the first to admit it: though the town's scenery is terrific, the restaurant scene has a way to go. (As one local resident told us, 'Restaurants? There are many. Are they good? Hmm...not so much.') However, there are some snack foods Xīngyì is well known for that are worth tasting, including *gàngzi miàn* (杠子面), a tasty egg-noodle dish, and *jīròu tāng yuán* (鸡肉汤圆), a soup of small rice dumplings filled with spicy chicken and served in a peppery broth. *Yáng ròu fěn* (羊肉粉; lamb noodles) and *jīdàn gāo* (鸡蛋糕; simple egg cake) are also popular dishes here.

Two of the best places to try some of these dishes are right next door to each other.

**Zōu Jīròu Tāngyuán** (Ruijin Lu; 瑞金路; dumpling soup Y2-5, noodles small Y3-5, large Y5-7; ☎ 8am-late afternoon) Workers from the nearby shopping centres and businesses flock to this hole-in-the-wall restaurant to fill up on *jīròu tāng yuán* at lunchtime. In addition to serving the hordes, the staff always seems to be busy preparing pickled radishes, huge jars of which sit around the restaurant. Do like the locals do and dump them in the broth to eat with the little rice dumplings.

**Laogang Zi Noodle Shop** (Lǎogàngzi Miànfāng; ☎ 323 2001; Ruijin Lu; 瑞金路; noodles small Y3-5, large Y5-7; ☎ 8am-4pm or 5pm) Besides the ever popular *gàngzi miàn* there's a list of nine other tasty chicken and beef noodle dishes to try. This simple restaurant has an English sign outside.

There are bakeries (*miànbāo fāng*) all over downtown; one of the best is on the corner of Yunnan Jie and Panjiang Lu.

## Getting There &amp; Around

## AIR

Xīngyì's new airport is tiny but gleaming. It's a 15- to 20-minute drive from town and the only way to get to or from it is by taxi. The rate will depend on your driver so establish the price before you get in. Many drivers ask for Y15, though don't be surprised if you are hit for as much as Y50.

There are daily services between Guiyang and Xīngyì (Y1200, 40 minutes), usually two afternoon flights going in both directions. There's also two night flights (again going both ways) between Xīngyì and Shēnzhèn, in Guǎngdōng province, every Thursday and Sunday (Y1050, 35 minutes). New roads between here and Yúnnán have made bus

travel so quick and comfortable, the Xīngyì-Kūnmíng flights have been discontinued.

You can buy tickets from **Dàilǐ Guónèi Jīpiào** (☎ 312 0888; 55 Ruijin Lu; ☎ 8am-6pm), right outside the Aviation Hotel.

## BUS

There are several bus stations in town, and you may be dropped at any one of them upon your arrival. The **east bus station** (kèyùn dōngzhàn; Hunan Jie) has daily services to Guiyang (Y92.50, six hours, every 40 to 50 minutes from 8am to 6pm). The same bus will drop you off at Ànshùn (Y65.50, four hours), Huángguōshù (Y53.50, five hours) or Xīngrén (Y16.50, 45 to 60 minutes). Outside the east bus station are minibuses for Zhēnfēng and Ànlóng.

The west bus station has services to Kūnmíng (Y91.50 to Y109.50, three to five hours, 8am and 8pm). If you're going to the Stone Forest at Shílín in Yúnnán, you can get off the bus a couple of hours before Kūnmíng and save yourself doubling back.

There are also buses to Shuichéng (Y82, six hours, 10am, noon and 4pm), where you can spend the night before heading on to Wéining for Caohai Lake.

From Guiyang, there are buses to Xīngyì (Y70 to Y80, 6½ hours, hourly from 9am to 6pm) departing from the Tìyùguǎn bus station. From Ànshùn there are also hourly buses to Xīngyì (Y55, five to six hours, from 7am to 3.30pm).

## TAXI

Xīngyì is a sprawling town and taxis are much quicker and more efficient for getting around than the city buses. The flag fall is Y5.

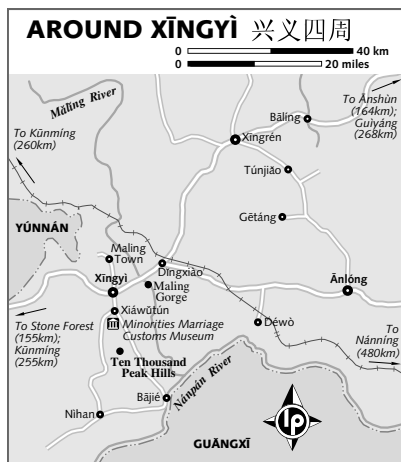
## TRAIN

Xīngyì's nearest train station is 15km north-east of town at Dǐngxiào (顶效). Buses will take you there for Y10 from outside Xīngyì's east bus station.

Five trains leave daily for Kūnmíng departing at 6.10am, 8.13am, 8.40am, 2.15pm and 3.41pm. They take six to seven hours and cost Y100. Trains also stop here en route to Nánning at 5.01am, 8.20am, 9.16am, 9.33am and 11.42pm (Y120, seven hours).

## AROUND XINGYI

If you want to visit all the following places in one day, a taxi or car hired through your accommodation will likely cost around Y300.



### Minorities Marriage Customs Museum 民族婚俗博物馆

Set up in a lovely courtyard-style building that was once home to a local Qing officer, the exhibits at this **museum** (Mínzú Hūnsú Bówùguǎn; admission Y15; ☎ 8am-6pm) focus on the clothing and courting rituals of Guizhòu's minorities.

Some of the displays have English captions but are too bizarrely translated to make much sense; some sound downright naughty (eg 'Girls control their pleasure sowing seeds of love on the village road').

Because of this, a little Chinese language skill here would definitely help. However, as many of the rituals are depicted through photographs, anyone with a keen interest in the province's minorities will still enjoy the objects and outfits.

An intriguing ritual to keep an eye out for involves parents drilling holes in their daughter's room so suitors can come and sing to her at night. Once the girl has chosen her man, the holes are sealed up to show the village that the girl is no longer available. Another more disturbing ritual involves a young couple pulling apart a chicken. The direction of the chicken's eyes at the end will tell the families whether the match is a good one (if the eyes go in the same direction) or a bad one (if the eyes are looking in different directions).

The museum is about a 10-minute ride from the centre of Xingyi and makes a nice diversion on your way to or from Ten Thousand Peak Hills.

You can get to the museum with a taxi or on city bus 1. It's sometimes closed during the day for lunch, so early morning or late afternoon is the best time to catch it open.

### Ten Thousand Peak Hills 万峰陵

The karst landscape to the south of Xingyi is called **Ten Thousand Peak Hills** (Wànfēnglíng; ☎ 334 2299; admission Y61; ☎ 8am-6pm) and the short rolling karst formations of this area seemingly go on forever.

The scenic spot (often called 'the Stone Forest' by locals) is actually just a section where a fancy road has been built around the hills, the various views and karst formations have been given spiffy names, and a ticket booth has been set up. If you arrive by taxi or bus, you'll be ferried around the sight in a golf-cart like touring vehicle while a guide points out the various formations to you, explaining how they change depending on where you are located. (If visiting in cool weather, bring lots of warm clothing: the carts have roofs but no walls so it can get very, very cold.) You can easily make your way around in 30 to 40 minutes.

If you've hired a car for the day and want to see the area in your own vehicle, you can do that, too, although if you have that chance, you'd probably be best to save the admission fee and just ask your driver to spend the day driving you into the hills and stopping at whatever village piques your interest. The Bouyi villages in this area are particularly interesting so you could do some great walks.

You can get to Ten Thousand Peaks either by taxi or on city bus 1.

### Maling Gorge 马岭河峡谷

The precarious plunge of **Maling Gorge** (Mǎlínghé Xiágǔ; admission Y60; ☎ 8am-6pm) contains some of the loveliest scenery in Guizhòu province. Narrow streams of silver water plunge over its sides, and the clouds of spray bouncing on the rocks below look like shattered crystal glass from certain angles. The area is lush with foliage and the walls of the gorge are pocked with exotic calcium formations.

Though becoming more and more popular during the summer, outside of this period the gorge is still a peaceful and quiet place. Many travellers prefer it to Huangguoshu Falls.

From the ticket gate, follow the newly laid stone trail down into the gorge. The trails are well marked and you can spend the bet-

ter part of a day exploring the waterfalls and caves, crisscrossing the bridges in a loose loop, eventually returning to a steep staircase back up to the parking lot.

A cable car was under construction here at the time of research and should be open by summer 2008.

With the copious amounts of water and mist in the gorge, the trails can become extremely slippery and treacherous, especially during the rainy season. Sturdy shoes and waterproofs are essential. You may also want to bring a torch for the tunnels.

Rafting is becoming a bigger and bigger drawcard here and the activity is offered from roughly March to September, though it completely depends on the water levels and how cold it may be. Don't expect epic whitewater rafting here, as it's a slow descent. The longest route lasts about two hours. All equipment is provided and trips cost roughly Y160 per person. Just follow the signs on the trails to the rafting points.

You can get here either by taxi or on city bus 5. You can also come back on city bus 5, though it is often just as easy to get out on the main road and flag down whatever long-distance bus may be heading into town.

### Minority Villages, Festivals & Markets

The region around Xingyi has plenty of festivals and markets, though at the moment the lack of tourism development in this area means that finding out about them beforehand is challenging, even for locals. The upside is that intrepid travellers will have a ball jumping on and off minibuses to explore.

The **Chabai Singing Festival** takes place on the 21st of the sixth lunar month in a vacant field a few kilometres north of Dingxiào, just off the main road to Xingren. The thwarted ardour of the lovers Cha and Bai is marked by an antiphonal singing contest and an improvised love song competition. The celebration draws not just the locals, but also Bouyi people from nearby Yunnan and Guangxi.

As for markets, you can check out the villages around the little town of **Xingren** (兴仁), 45 minutes from Xingyi (buses leave from Xingyi's east bus station every 40 to 50 minutes).

Again, though, it's best if you can get a local to find out whether a market is actually going on, because otherwise the villages will be pretty deserted and of not much interest to

travellers. **Baling** (巴铃), a village 21km east of Xingren on the road to Anshun, has a reputation for hosting an interesting market every six days that's frequented mainly by Black Miao and Bouyi people.

Other villages with markets every six to eight days include **Tunjiao** (屯脚), 18km towards Anlong from Xingren, and **Gétang** (戈塘), 41km towards Anlong, then 9km west of the main road.

You can get to any of these villages by minivan from Xingren.

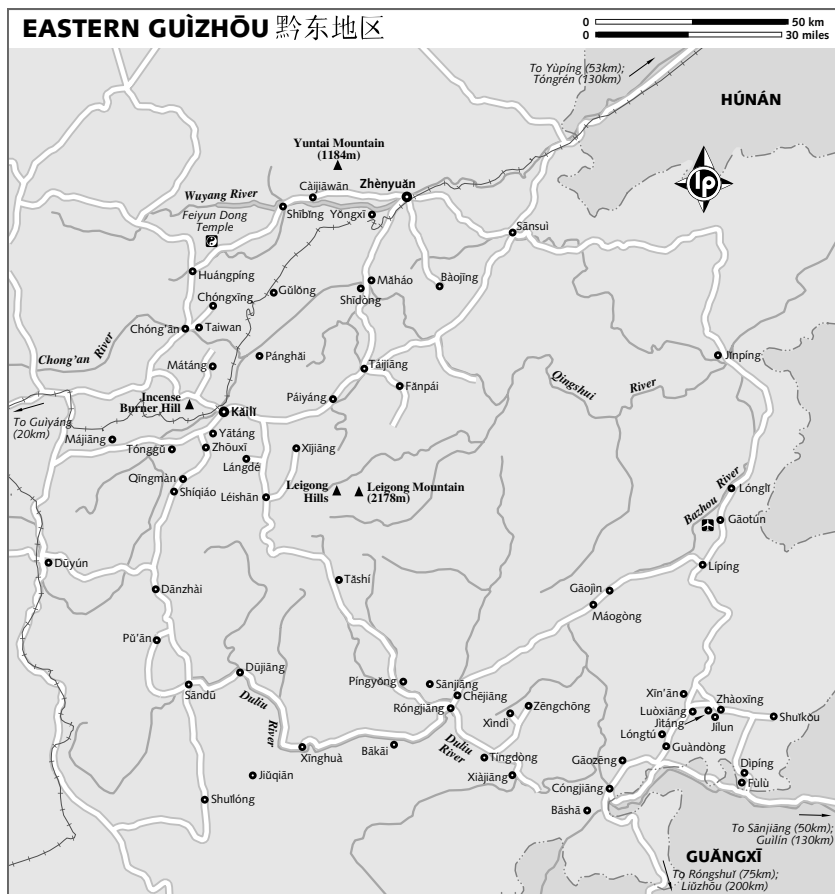
## EASTERN GUIZHÒU

The rough terrain of eastern Guizhòu is minority territory and doing a circuit through the area's villages can be one of the most thrilling parts of visiting China's Southwest. No matter what time you come, something, somewhere will be going on, whether it's a colourful market or loud and boisterous festival.

Formerly the stomping ground of intrepid travellers, increasing numbers of people have discovered the region, and much of it can't really be considered off-the-beaten track any more – several of the villages, now wealthy from tourist dollars, are getting pretty slick.

Over 13 different minorities live in the region, technically known as the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. Their diversity is fascinating and everything from their languages to their architecture to their food to their dress is different from what you'd see in 'Han' China. The main groups you'll encounter are the Dong, Shui, Miao and Gejia. The landscape, too, is striking, with its lush forests, undulating hills and rice terraces.

If your time is limited, then there are many interesting villages that can be reached as a day trip from Kaili. If you have more time, it's possible to explore a number of Miao villages in a loop northeast of Kaili, limiting the amount of backtracking you'll have to do. A journey southeast into Dong territory can also take you in a loop from Róngjiāng, eventually bringing you back to Kaili or across the border into Guangxi province. Zhènyuǎn, Xijiang and Zhàoxīng are all villages and towns that are definitely worth a visit, and it's worthwhile planning your trip around at least one of the local festivals. In summer, you might also visit Fanjing Shan Nature Reserve, near Guizhòu's eastern border.



## Festivals & Events

Kaili and surrounding villages host a large number of minority festivals – over 130 annually. February in particular is dominated by more than two weeks of *lusheng* festivals, held successively in villages in the Zhoi area. The Miao New Year is celebrated around the region, especially in Langde and Xijiang, in the 10th lunar month. Approximate Western dates for the main festivals are given on p101.

## KAILI 凯里

☎ 0855 / pop 153,000

Kaili is the gateway to the fantastic minority territory of eastern Guizhou, one of Southwest China's travel highlights. Not much goes on in

the city itself but it serves as an excellent base from which to explore the area's Miao and Dong villages. You can either set up in Kaili and do some day trips, or use it as a launching point for village-hopping your way southeast into Guāngxī.

Kaili is about 195km almost directly east of Guiyang.

## Information

**Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Shaoshan Nanlu) Changes cash, travellers cheques and offers cash advances on credit cards. There is also an ATM here. A second branch on Beijing Donglu will also change cash.

**China International Travel Service** (CITS; Zhōngguó Guójī Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 822 2506; 53 Yingpan Donglu; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) If only every CITS in China was like this

one! Staff here are universally helpful and have fluent English, French and Japanese speakers. The place for information on minority villages, festivals, markets and organised tours.

**China Post** (Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; nr Shaoshan Beilu & Beijing Donglu) Make international phone calls on 2nd floor.

**Internet Café** (Wǎngbā; Shaoshan Nanlu; per hr ¥2, deposit ¥10; ☎ 24hr) Near the Kailai Hotel, there's over 100 computers here. If video game-playing locals are camped out at all of them, there's another internet café on Beijing Lu. The Beijing Lu café has a 7-Up sign outside and computers downstairs.

**Public Security Bureau** (PSB; Gōngānjū; ☎ 853 6113; 26 Yongle Lu; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Deals with all passport and visa inquiries.

## Sights & Activities

The only formal sight in Kaili is its **Minorities Museum** (Guizhōu Mínzú Bówùguǎn; 宁波路; Ningbo Lu), set up on the 3rd and 4th floors of a large renovated building in the south of town. You'll find maps, examples of minority costumes and other artefacts relating to Guizhou's people. Though officially open from 8am to 5pm, the doors are often locked whatever time you turn up. Even so, you can still get a distant look at some of the exhibits from the landing on top of the staircase.

Go back down to the 1st floor of the same building and you can stroll the five dozen or so souvenir stalls set up to hawk minority goods.

Elsewhere, Kaili has two parks: **Dage Park** (Dàgè Gōngyuán; Big Pagoda Park) is in the north of town, while further southeast, **Jinquanhu Park** (Jīnquánhú Gōngyuán) has a Dong minority drum tower built in 1985.

There's also a **market** on Shaoshan Beilu that, when busy, can be quite interesting.

## Festivals & Events

Festivals are one of Guizhou's major drawcards and the profusion of them around Kaili makes this sleepy town the best place to base yourself for exploring them. There is also a huge number of markets held in the villages surrounding Kaili. Xinhua has a huge market every six to seven days. Zhōuxī, Léishān and Tǎijiāng hold markets every six days. Dates and suggestions are available from the fabulous Kaili CITS.

## Sleeping

**Shiyóu Bīnguǎn** (☎ 823 4331; 44 Yingpan Donglu; 营盘东路44号; dm/s/d/tr ¥26/¥80/120/120) The town's

long-time budget favourite, the staff at this hotel are young and friendly. It also has a good location close to both the main bus station and the CITS office. This place is probably a better choice for late-spring to early-autumn stays, as the rooms can get really cold and drafty when the weather cools outside. During major festivals, the dorms and singles fill up very quickly so it's a good idea to reserve ahead.

**Guótài Dàjiùdiàn** (☎ 826 9888; fax 826 9818; 6 Beijing Donglu; 北京东路6号; s ¥238, d ¥258-288) Decorated in blues and greens, the rooms here are quite attractive. This hotel is a popular choice for foreign midrange travellers, despite lethargic, world-weary service.

**Kaili Jiùdiàn** (☎ 827 7888; fax 827 7666; 21 Shaoshan Nanlu; 韶山南路21号; s/d incl breakfast ¥388/328) A favourite with business people and Chinese travellers, this hotel is always pretty crowded and hectic. Rooms are blandly decorated but quite comfortable despite a mould problem beginning in several of the rooms' bathrooms. The buffet breakfast is OK but runs out pretty quickly, so best get down as early as possible for the full selection.

## Eating

Snack food is all over Kaili including crepes, potato patties, barbecues, tofu grills, noodles, hotpot, *shuijiao* (水饺; Chinese ravioli) and wonton soup. The collection of stalls and eateries on the corner of Yingpan Donglu and Wenhua Beilu are some of the most popular with travellers. Further south, there's a lane heading east off Zhaoshan Nanlu where all kinds of grill and snack stalls set up in the evening; it's worth checking out.

Also check out the alcove off Beijing Donglu, where cafés and restaurants with names such as Bobo and Happy serve up Chinese- and Western-style food with varying degrees of success.

**Wǎngjiào Cāntīng** (Beijing Xilu; 北京西路; dishes from ¥3; ☎ 9am-8pm) Hidden way up on the 3rd floor of a humungous department store, this cafeteria-style eatery is a fun place to eat. Clean and modern, its speciality is all kinds of little snacks, and best of all for those who don't speak Chinese, a lot of the dishes are on display. All you need to do is point to what looks interesting and pretty soon you'll have your own personal feast. There's also a similar place diagonally across from here on the 4th floor of the New Century Plaza shopping



centre that locals recommend for the food, though the atmosphere is dismal.

**Lixiāng Miànshídiàn** (Wenhua Nanlu; 文化南路; dishes from ¥5; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm) Long a popular place with locals, the English menu and friendly family running this place have also made it a popular spot with backpackers. It's a small place with a handful of plastic chairs and tables. The wonton soup and noodles are tasty but the servings are modest, so if you're really hungry, plan to order a lot.

### Getting There & Away BUS

Kǎilǐ is served by two bus stations: the long-distance bus station on Wenhua Beilu has departures to most destinations, but if you

#### INFORMATION

Bank of China 中国银行	1	A3
Bank of China 中国银行	2	B3
China Post 中国邮政	3	B3
CITS 中国国际旅行社	4	B3
Internet Café 网吧	5	B4
Internet Café 网吧	6	A3
PSB 公安局	7	A3

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Market 市场	8	B3
Minorities Museum 贵州民族博物馆	9	B4

#### SLEEPING

Guótài Dàjiǔdiàn 国泰大酒店	10	B3
Kǎilǐ Jiǔdiàn 凯来酒店	11	B4
Shíyóu Bīnguǎn 石油招待所	12	B3

#### EATING

Cafés & Restaurants 咖啡馆	13	B3
Food Stalls 小吃	14	B3
Lixiāng Miànshídiàn 理想面食店	15	B3
New Century Plaza 新世界广场	16	B3
Noodle & Dumpling Stalls 面条店	17	B3
Wǎngjiǎo Cāntīng 旺角餐厅	18	A3

#### TRANSPORT

Local Bus Station 客运站	19	A3
Long-Distance Bus Station 长途客运站	20	B3

can't find what you're looking for try the local bus station on Yingpan Xilu.

Destinations you can travel to from the local bus station include most of the surrounding villages, such as Lángdé (Y9 to Y10, 45 minutes to one hour), Chóng'ān (Y11, one hour), Mǎjiāng (Y8 to Y10, one hour), Huángqīng (Y13, 30 minutes), Chējiāng, Mátāng and Léishān (Y11, one hour, every 30 minutes from 7am to 7.30pm). Check the bus times when you arrive.

#### TRAIN

Kǎilǐ's train station is a couple of kilometres north of town but departures are infrequent and the train service slow; you're better off getting the bus. Trains leave round the clock for Guiyang (Y55), the majority between noon and midnight. These take three to five hours.

For longer distances, it's worth stopping in Guiyang to secure a reservation. Six trains a day pass through Kǎilǐ on their way to Chóngqīng, and three a day on their way to Kūnmíng (1.51pm, 8.37pm and 8.50pm). You can't get a sleeper reservation in Kǎilǐ so you'll have to pray for intervention from a higher power (the conductor guard). The same advice is valid for east-bound services to Běijīng and Shànghǎi.

#### BUS TIMETABLES

Buses from the Kǎilǐ long-distance bus station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Cóngjiāng	¥61	6-7hr	6 daily	7am, 8.20am, 9.40am, 11.40am, 1.30pm & 2.30pm
Guiyáng	¥45-51	2½hr	every 20-30min	7.45am-7.15pm
Jīnpíng (for Lónglǐ)	¥45-70	5hr	every 30-45min	6.10am-4pm
Lángdé	¥8	40min	every 25min	7am-6pm
Lípíng	¥72	7hr	3 daily	7am, 7.40am & 8.40am
Róngjiāng	¥37-47	5hr	every 40min	6.40am-4.40pm
Xījiāng	¥16-18	2½hr	4 daily	9am, noon, 2pm & 4pm
Zhènyuǎn	¥25	3hr	5 daily	7.30am, 9.30am, 11am, 1pm & 2.30pm

#### Getting Around

Bus fares cost ¥0.50 in Kǎilǐ and almost all of the buses departing from the train station follow the same route up Qingjiang Lu, past the long-distance bus station, along Beijing Donglu and down Shaoshan Nanlu to the museum. To the train station take bus 2.

Taxis charge a flat ¥5 for anywhere in the city and ¥10 to the train station.

#### AROUND Kǎilǐ

The architecture or sights of the villages mentioned following make them worth visiting at any time of year. But there are dozens and dozens of other villages that, though deserted most of the time, are completely transformed during market days (every five to eight days) and are absolutely worth making the effort to get to. (Check with the Kǎilǐ CITS for dates when you arrive.)

However, if you don't have a lot of time for grand overnight trips, there are also dozens of Miao villages within an hour's bus ride of Kǎilǐ that can be visited as day trips. The main attraction is wandering around the countryside, exploring traditional wooden villages and seeing the colourful Miao.

**Zhōuxī** (舟溪), on the road southwest to Dānzhài (丹寨) and Dūyún (都匀), is a picturesque wooden village with a large Lusheng Festival in the first lunar month shared with nearby **Qīngmàn** (青曼), which provides many musicians for the gathering. Qīngmàn is quiet

the rest of the time, but the dark wood architecture is impressive and there's a hill in the back to climb, passing a small graveyard.

A number of small *lúshēng* festivals are held throughout this region in the first lunar month (usually February). The festivities switch every couple of days between the surrounding villages of Shìqīng, Dàzhōng, Xīngguāng, Sǎnjiāng and Yātāng.

The village of **Tónggǔ** (铜鼓), 30km west of Kǎilǐ on the road to Mǎjiāng (麻江), specialises in a form of colourful painting, partly an extension of traditional embroidery designs.

**Léishān** (雷山) is another village that may be worth checking out and using as a base to explore nearby Leigong Mountain (雷公山; Léigōng Shān; 2178m), which offers some interesting hiking. However, getting there could be a problem; ask at the CITS office in Kǎilǐ.

While the modernisation of some of the villages may disappoint some travellers, many locals say the tourism boom may help preserve some customs. In recent years, as in other poor regions of China, young Miao and Dong have moved in droves to work in boom cities such as Shēnzhèn, Běijīng and Shànghǎi, becoming assimilated into the Han majority. However, some in the Kǎilǐ area villages say that the amount of money tourism is bringing into the region has turned things around in recent years, encouraging young people to maintain their music, dance and customs after seeing how lucrative it can be.



## TRADITIONAL GARMENTS

The variety of clothing among the minorities of Guìzhōu provides travellers with a daily visual feast. Clothes are as much a social and ethnic denominator as they are pure decoration. They also show whether or not a woman is married and are a pointer to a woman's wealth and skills at weaving and embroidery.

Many women in remote areas still weave their own hemp and cotton cloth. Some families, especially in Dong areas, still ferment their own indigo paste as well, and you will see this for sale in traditional markets. Many women will not attend festivals in the rain for fear that the dyes in their fabrics will run. Methods of producing indigo are greatly treasured and kept secret, but are increasingly threatened by the introduction of artificial chemical dyes.

Embroidery is central to minority costume and is a tradition passed down from mother to daughter. Designs include many important symbols and references to myths and history. Birds, fish and a variety of dragon motifs are popular. The highest-quality work is often reserved for baby carriers, and many young girls work on these as they approach marrying age. Older women will often spend hundreds of hours embroidering their own funeral clothes.

Costumes move with the times. In larger towns, Miao women often substitute their embroidered smocks with a good woolly sweater and their headdresses look suspiciously like mass-produced pink and yellow Chinese towels.

## Xìjiāng 西江

Xìjiāng is thought to be the largest Miao village and is well known for its embroidery and silver ornaments (the Miao believe that silver can dispel evil spirits). Set in a natural basin, it's bordered by paddy fields, with wooden houses rising up the hillside.

Dawn hikes through the paddies are spectacular and for those looking for more than an afternoon stroll, there's a three-day trek from here to Páiyáng (排羊), a Miao village north of Xìjiāng. This trail winds its way through some remote minority villages and lush scenery. You will probably find accommodation with locals en route, but you shouldn't expect it so come prepared with sleeping bags, food and camping equipment.

Many families offer rooms with dinner for around ¥40. This can turn into a festive affair once the neighbours are invited over and the singing performances begin. You can get recommendations from the Kǎilǐ CITS office, but otherwise just go up the main street and ask around. Many of the people running the souvenir stands also offer room and board.

If everyone's full, try the **Yóudiàn Zhāodàisùǒ** (邮电招待所; ☎ 334 8688; dm ¥15) near the bus drop-off. Guests say the kindness of the *fúwúyuán* (floor attendants) more than makes up for the grubby facilities.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Kǎilǐ's long-distance bus station regular buses go to Xìjiāng (Y16 to Y18, 2½ hours,

9am, noon, 2pm and 4pm). Three to four morning buses a day return to Kǎilǐ, or catch a bus to Léishān (Y8, 1½ hours, last bus 5pm) and from there head to Kǎilǐ.

## Lángdé 郎德

Nestled among lush green trees, the water-wheels, terrific Miao architecture and cobbled pathways of Lángdé made this village one of the first to become popular with tour groups. It's now a well-oiled machine: the tour buses roll up and the villagers run to their houses to change into festival costumes, and everyone descends on the village square for elaborate singing, dancing and reed flute performances. It may not feel as 'authentic' as some would like, but don't write it off completely. If there aren't any festivals going on when you're in Kǎilǐ, you can at least come here and get a taste of what they're like – seeing all the elaborate silver headdresses alone is pretty impressive. After the performances, the hard sell begins, with locals flogging all kinds of clothes and jewellery. Wandering around the village is also pleasant and there's a terrific 15km trail along the Bala River that will take you through several Miao villages.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

About 20km outside Kǎilǐ, buses pass by here on the way to Léishān (Y7 to Y8). The village is 2km from the main road. To leave the village, get back down to the main road and flag down a bus back to Kǎilǐ.

## THE MIAO

The Miao, or Hmong as they prefer to be called, are thought to have migrated 2000 years ago from an area north of the Yellow River. During the course of their migrations, the Miao diversified into subgroups known as Black, Red, White, Blue, Long-Horned and Flowery Miao, after their style of dress. This is, however, largely a Han classification and few Miao use these names among themselves. Many Miao continued their migration beyond China into Laos, Thailand and Vietnam where they are known as the Hmong (or Mong).

The Miao have a reputation as independent-minded and rebellious highlanders. Many Miao joined the armed uprising against the Qing government from 1840 to 1870, which became known as the Miao Rebellion. Numerous Lao Hmong worked covertly for the US government during the American (Vietnam) War and settled in the USA after the fall of Saigon.

A significant number of Miao were converted to Christianity by 19th-century missionaries, who created the first Miao script. Most Miao remain animist, however, with strong elements of ancestor worship. Miao creation stories tell of an ancient flood and also of a mythical bird that hatched the first humans. Tradition also states that the sky is propped up by 12 silver pillars. Miao oral history is full of warrior heroes, many of whom died in uprisings against the Chinese.

Miao women are famous for their embroidery and silver jewellery, with each subgroup employing unique styles. Black Miao, for example, wear 10m-long black turbans, black and purple clothes, and silver 'sideburns', while the Flowery Miao dress predominantly in red, white and yellow. All wear long skirts pleated like an accordion. These skirts, up to 6m long, are starched with rice water and then folded, rolled and stored in a bamboo tube to set the desired number of pleats.

At festival time, Miao women wear stunning silver jewellery, often piling on five or six neck rings, as well as chains, coins, chest locks and multiple headdresses. Girls wear huge horned, silver headdresses and silver crowns resplendent with delicate silver birds, flowers and coins. Silver was originally obtained from melting coins, though the Miao later received an annual silver stipend from the government. Today most of the silver is alloy and, outside festival time, wooden combs and plastic flowers and hairpins are worn as a substitute.

Long hair is particularly sought after, and old or fake hair is sometimes woven into a large headdress. You can even see Miao women buying and selling big bunches of hair in some traditional markets.

## Shíqiáo 石桥

This village's name means 'stone bridge' and there are a couple of remarkable ones spanning the nearby river. This is a truly picturesque Miao town, with a main street lined with livestock pens and wooden houses climbing the modest slopes. The village was long famous in the region for its exquisite handmade paper. Though no longer making it for commercial purposes, there is still a small paper-making centre on the edge of town. Villagers there will take you through the traditional paper-making process and may even let you have a go of it yourself. This place is usually only opened if visitors have made prior arrangements or if a tour group has just come through. If you definitely want to see it, get Kǎilǐ's CITS to call ahead for you and check whether it will be open or not when you arrive. It takes about 90 minutes to get here from Kǎilǐ. Buses (Y15) leave every 45 minutes from 7am to 4pm from the local west bus station.

## Mátáng 麻塘

This village, 30km from Kǎilǐ, is home to the Gejia, a group that has been identified by the government as belonging to the Miao minority. The Gejia, who have different customs, dress and language, aren't particularly happy about this classification and nor, for that matter, are the Miao. The Gejia are renowned batik artisans and their traditional dress often features batik and embroidery. Their hats (which look a bit like heavily starched napkins) are also made out of batik. The village is incredibly friendly and if you decide to visit, be prepared for the army of women selling handicrafts who will pounce on you as soon as you arrive.

Nearby **Incense Burner Hill** (Xiānglǔ Shān) hosts a Hill Climbing Festival (on the 19th of the sixth lunar month) to commemorate those who used the hill as a base for the mid-19th-century Miao Rebellion. The one-time temples on the hill either fell into disrepair or were razed during the Cultural Revolution.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

The village is 2km from the main road and buses regularly run past the drop-off point in the direction of Chóng'ān (Y5) and Kaili (Y7). Just stand on the side of the road and flag down anything that comes your way.

**Táijiāng 台江**

☎ 0855

The built-up town of Táijiāng is worth a day-trip when its huge **market** gets going every five days, taking over the main street, but also spilling into the interesting backstreets. Contact the Kaili CITS for exact dates.

Táijiāng is a centre for Miao handicrafts. You can also visit the Wénchāng Gōng (文昌宫), a small temple in the east of town dating from 1892 that now houses a small **Embroidery Museum** (admission Y10). On display are traditional clothing, hats and shoes, all hand-stitched with intricate, beautiful patterns and pictures, though it's likely one of the Miao women will offer to show you their work at their workshop or house.

To get to the museum, turn right at the bus station and head into the centre of town, bearing right at the T-junction. Continue on for a couple of hundred metres to find the museum on your right.

You can also use Táijiāng as a base to visit the nearby villages of Fǎnpái or Shìdòng. The Kaili CITS is excellent for making hotel suggestions, or even better, they may actually be able to fix you up with a homestay in one of the villages. Finally, Táijiāng hosts an interesting lantern festival halfway through the first lunar month.

There are a few hotpot and noodle places along the main street and at the central T-junction. A few restaurants specialise in a kind of communal stir-fry that's worth trying if there's more than one of you.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

The main bus station is in the southwest of town, from where buses run to and from Kaili every hour or so from 7am until 6pm (Y15, 1½ hours).

To reach Shìdòng, head up to the main T-junction and bear left. Minibuses run this route from 7am to 6pm (Y8 to Y10, two hours) and leave when full.

If you're heading to Fǎnpái, you'll find transport along the right-hand branch of Táijiāng's T-junction.

**Fǎnpái 反排**

This traditional Miao village, hidden high in the hills around Táijiāng, is often shrouded in a fog that makes it seem even more isolated from the rest of the region. The village consists of several hundred **traditional wooden dwellings**, which cloak the steep valley like green moss. In spring, villagers are busy tending the surrounding terraced fields. In the winter chill the kids head off to school carrying mini-braziers full of glowing coals.

The town is noted for its wooden drum dances and has a **festival** on the 2nd day of the second lunar month.

Explore the village and hike in the surrounding hills, following farmers' trails. It's a peaceful, harmonious place where time seems to have stood still – an increasingly rare find in 21st-century China.

To get to Fǎnpái, take a minibus heading from Táijiāng and ask the driver to let you off at Fǎnpái (not Fǎnzài – that's another village on the same road). The journey costs around Y10 to Y15 and takes 75 minutes.

**Shìdòng 施洞**

Shìdòng is a small Miao village on the banks of the Qingshui River, and is famous for its festivals. The two biggest are the **Dragon Boat Festival**, held from the 24th to the 27th of the fifth lunar month, and the **Sisters' Meal Festival** on the 15th of the third lunar month. For approximate Western dates of these festivals, see the boxed text, p101.

At other times this village is quiet except for the **local market**, held every six days, when the backstreets of the old town, east of the main road, and even the banks of the river are filled with stalls and traders.

Women sell inexpensive embroidery and silver all year, and Shìdòng is a pretty good place to buy them. There's also a handicraft shop in Lǎotún (老屯), a few kilometres out of town, along the road to Táijiāng.

Minibuses ply the route between Táijiāng and Shìdòng all day until dark. The trip takes about 70 minutes and costs around Y15.

**Chóng'ān 重安**

☎ 0855

Chóng'ān is best known for its bustling **market**, one of the most popular in the region and held every five days. Though this riverside city used to be well known for its nice old town, much of that has disappeared in recent years.

However, there are a few remaining wooden homes and buildings. Among these are **Longevity Hall** (长寿殿; Chángshòu Diàn), recently reincarnated as a pool hall, and the nearby **Cultural Pavilion** (文化堂; Wénhuà Táng), which still holds a 1st-floor library.

Chóng'ān has a **Lusheng Festival** on the 26th of the ninth lunar month and celebrates the **Dragon Boat Festival** on the 26th of the fifth month, although these celebrations aren't as major as Shìdòng's.

**WALKS**

What hasn't changed are the enjoyable short walks around Chóng'ān. Head east from town, towards the bridge to Kaili; in the high season, you may find some boaters willing to take you to the other side of the river where there are a few remaining **traditional houses**, some of which still have faded red political slogans from the Cultural Revolution emblazoned across their fronts. One by the dockside reads: 'In our hearts Chairman Mao is the reddest of the reddest red suns'. No-one seems to be in any particular hurry to get rid of it.

Longer walks around Chóng'ān will take you to minority villages. From the traditional houses on the south bank of the river, paths lead up the hillside to several Miao villages. If you continue right along the river bank for a couple of minutes and then uphill to the left, you'll eventually come to **Xinzái** (新宅), an interesting Gejia village.

A second walk begins once you head east over the bridge and out of town, following the main river downstream. You will pass several waterwheels grinding grain in the middle of the river and a workshop of stone carvers by the road. The road sweeps to the left heading north to the Gejia village of **Chóngxīng** (重兴). If you continue straight, you'll pass a carpenters' village. On a hilltop to the left is the village of **Táiwān** (台湾), a blacksmiths' village recognisable by the rhythmic hammering of iron. Chóngxīng is 9km further along this road – your best bet is to hitch with the occasional tractor or truck.

Another hike from Chóng'ān takes you west and upstream. If you continue west along the river bank, you will come to a modern road bridge and a chain suspension bridge, built in 1873 with 16 iron chains. From here you can follow paths along the river bank for about 5km to the **Shenggu Pool** (深谷幽溪; Shēnggǔ Yōuxī) scenic spot.

**SLEEPING**

**Xiǎojiāngnán Zhāodàisuǒ** (小江南招待所; ☎ 235 1208; dm Y30) This hotel gets so-so reviews from travellers concerning its rooms, but fairly good reviews for the travel info it does out. Staff can help organise anything from boat trips to full-day guided treks to remote Mulao minority villages. The hotel reception displays plenty of photos of the surrounding area to whet your appetite and (sometimes) has English-language maps on hand to give guests.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Buses between Shibing, Huángpíng and Kaili all pass through Chóng'ān, which means there's a bus almost every half-hour in either direction. Buses to Kaili run until around 6.30pm.

**Huángpíng 黄平**

☎ 0855

Huángpíng is home to a huge **market** that transforms the town every five days and attracts both Miao and Gejia people from the surrounding villages.

Also worth a visit is the Taoist temple complex of **Fēiyún Dòng** (飞云洞; admission Y10), built in 1443 and only 12km northeast of town. **Siyueba**, a large festival, is held here on the 8th day of the fourth lunar month. To reach the temple, take any Shibing-bound minibus.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

The central bus station has departures to Kaili from 7.20am until 4.30pm (Y16, 2½ hours) and to Zhènyuǎn from 7am until 4.30pm (Y22). From Kaili, buses run to Huángpíng from the western bus station from 6.50am until 5pm. For Shibing, catch a Zhènyuǎn-bound bus, which run until about 5.30pm.

**EASTERN REGION**

This area of southeastern Guizhou borders Húnán province, and is where Dong villages start to thin out and Han Chinese settlements take their place.

**Lónglǐ 隆里**

Set in the midst of some isolated fields, this ancient Han village is over 600 years old and is located close to Guizhou's border with Húnán province.

Lónglǐ has a fascinating history. It started out as a military outpost when hundreds of Han soldiers were stationed here during the

Ming dynasty to protect the kingdom's border from the nearby Miao. Though farming is the primary economic activity these days, most of the village population is directly descended from the original Ming soldiers.

Part of what makes Lóngli so charming is that life here is still completely contained within its ancient walls. Though the village's hotel and a modest street of shops are being developed outside the East Gate, everything from the local schools to the police to the mayor's office are found in the village's ancient courtyards and cobbled lanes behind the old fortifications. Located in the middle of endless fields, arriving here really does make you feel like you've landed in the middle of nowhere.

The Y15 entrance fee will be collected from you as you pass the East Gate. The only formal sight within the walls is a museum being set up in the middle of town, though it didn't have much in it at the time of research. However, the village's architecture is exciting enough on its own. Besides atmospheric wooden houses, there are stone pavilions, gates and elaborate decorations painted on many of the traditional buildings.

It takes about an hour to explore it all, though there are lovely walks you could do in the surrounding fields.

**Lóngli Gúchéng Jiǔdiàn** (隆里古城酒店; ☎ 718 0018; r Y70, r with shared bathroom Y50-60) is the only hotel and restaurant in the village. It's a low-lying modern building completely devoid of character. The employees are fantastic but the rooms are sparse and simple and it gets very cold if you're here during the colder months (the heating doesn't work). The restaurant menu has dishes priced from Y5 to Y13. Located right off the main road, the hotel's Chinese-English sign is the first thing you'll see when you arrive.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

##### Air

A new airport has been opened about 20km away from Lóngli, the government's effort to develop this remote village region for tourism. Though called Liping Airport, it's actually next to a village called Gāotún (高屯) and is closer to Lóngli than Liping (黎平). For the moment, service is only between here and Guiyang. There are four flights a week (Y400, 40 minutes). From here you can take a taxi or bus to Lóngli; this trip also takes about 40 minutes.

#### Bus

There's no direct bus from Kǎili to Lóngli. First take a bus from Kǎili's long-distance bus station to the town of Jinping (锦屏; Y45 to Y70, five hours, every 30 to 45 minutes from 6.10am to 4pm), then get the bus to Lóngli from there (Y10, 90 minutes to two hours, every 30 to 40 minutes from 7.40am to 4pm).

#### Around Lóngli

If you decide to base yourself in Lóngli, you could also do a day trip to **Lípíng** (黎平), about 50km south of here. While this place has modernised much in recent years, making it of less and less interest to travellers, there is still an **ancient street** in town that is fun to spend a couple of hours exploring.

Other than that, the town isn't known for much besides a Long March meeting that took place on 18 December 1934, when Zhou Enlai, Mao and other Communist Party luminaries sat here and discussed their next move – to storm Zūnyì.

Around Lípíng, there's a wind-and-rain bridge at **Máogōng** (茅贡) and a Dong village at **Gāojìn** (高近), both on the road to Róngjiāng.

On the road to Lípíng near **Gāotún** (高屯), you can explore a number of **limestone caves** (石灰岩山洞; Shíhuīyán Shāndòng) in a scenic area along the Bazhou River (八舟河; Bāzhōu Hé); they're about 10km northeast of Lípíng. To get there, just get out on the road and flag down a bus. The hotel will tell you what time the buses pass. The trip takes roughly 60 to 90 minutes.

#### DONG REGION

This is the land of drum towers and wind-and-rain bridges, the epicentre of Dong culture southeast of Kǎili. Village roads here climb into the hills before finally descending into the subtropical Róngjiāng Basin.

Most travellers who make it all the way out here from Kǎili are en route to or from Guǎngxī province. If this isn't in your plans, you can do an interesting loop from Róngjiāng, visiting Lípíng, Zhàoxīng and Cóngjiāng. The most interesting area is between Cóngjiāng and Zhàoxīng (see p137).

This region has some of the most vivid and exciting **markets** in the whole southeast. The two places listed following are normally practically deserted, but are transformed during market times.

**Xiàjiāng** (下江) has a fantastic market that attracts hundreds of people from the neighbouring mountain villages. Travelling here on market day is almost as thrilling as the actual market itself. Long before you've reached the village, you'll see Miao and Dong people from riverside villages scrambling into boats and floating all the way down to Xiàjiāng.

The market at **Píngyǒng** (平永), a village located about halfway between Tǎshí (塔石) and Róngjiāng, is great not only because it's an absolute madhouse (so crowded it's sometimes hard to move), but also because it attracts such a diverse mix of people, including many different clans of Miao, Shui and Dong people, all wearing spectacular clothes and jewellery.

It's worth travelling as lightly as possible in these areas, so you can jump off the bus when a particularly interesting village catches your eye. Roads around here are still pretty rough but are slowly being improved. Doing any kind of banking in these parts is not possible so bring your Renminbi with you.

#### Róngjiāng 榕江

☎ 0855

Róngjiāng is a little, messy concrete city, mainly of interest as a base to visit nearby villages. You are likely to see a number of traditionally dressed villagers here who have come to town to buy or sell goods. The highlight of Róngjiāng is often said to be its Sunday market, though some people say it's not as impressive as it once was. The market takes over a couple of streets just east and parallel to the main road.

The town is clustered around a north-south road; a roundabout and the long-distance bus station are at the northern end, and a local minibus stop is in the south.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

Róngjiāng has a lot of hotels, but most are pretty battered up.

**Míngzhèng Bīnguǎn** (民政宾馆; ☎ 662 9108; r Y120-158) This is a worn hotel but is a good back-up address to keep on hand. It usually has rooms available even when the Róngjiāng Bīnguǎn is full. Give the sheets a good look before choosing your room, as sometimes the linen isn't altogether clean.

**Róngjiāng Bīnguǎn** (榕江宾馆; ☎ 662 4223; r Y220) With a reputation as the best hotel in town, this is the first choice for everyone from business people to Chinese tour groups to

foreign travellers. Rooms are still pretty drab, but because of the hotel's popularity, they're usually full anyway. It's best to call ahead and reserve if you're keen to stay here.

There are a number of small restaurants around the bus station and roundabout.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Róngjiāng's main bus station is in the north of town near the main roundabout. From here, there are three buses daily to Guiyang (Y98, eight hours).

A range of buses, minibuses and sleepers leave for Kǎili (Y37 to Y47, every 40 minutes from 7am to 4pm). From Kǎili's long-distance bus station, there's a daily service to Róngjiāng (Y37 to Y47, every 40 minutes from 6.40am to 4.40pm). There's frequent service between Róngjiāng and Cóngjiāng from dawn until dusk (Y25 to Y35, two to three hours). Minibuses between Lípíng, Sāndū and Róngjiāng run all day.

Minibuses leave from the main bus station for many of the surrounding villages, including Xinghuà and Bākāi. There are numerous connections from there to Sāndū.

#### Around Róngjiāng

On the road to Sāndū, 25km west of Róngjiāng, **Bākāi** (八开) is a small Dong village with a traditional Sunday market. The one-hour ride also passes the villages of **Dūjiāng** (都江), set at a strategically important bend in the river, and **Layou**, a picturesque village on the southern side of the river recognisable by its old humpbacked bridge. You could stop off in these towns and go for a wander if you're interested in exploring some Dong villages.

A more demanding excursion takes you to the villages of **Xīndì** (信地) and **Zēngchōng** (增冲). Xīndì is said to have the largest drum tower in the region, and Zēngchōng the oldest, at 300 years old. There's little, if any, public transport here, so you'll have to hitch or hire a taxi to get there and back. Follow the Cóngjiāng road 23km south to Tíngdòng (停洞), from where a side road leads 23km north towards Tíngdòng and Zēngchōng.

#### Chejiāng 车江

Built up on one side of a river not far from Róngjiāng, this Dong village's claim to fame is its **drum tower**, supposedly the highest in the region. An entrance fee of Y10 will be collected from you at the village gate.

## THE SHUI

This small ethnic group, originally from the Pearl River region in Guǎngxī, now lives mainly along the Duliu River. They are most easily recognised by their white turbans. While the majority speak and write Chinese, there is an ancient Shui script of about 100 pictographs that is used during shaman practices. Elaborate death taboos and funeral rites ensure a Shui's 12 souls return to their correct place at death.

The Shui Duan New Year Festival is held at the end of the year according to the Shui calendar, around the 10th lunar month. Festivities are held in Shuipan, Dūjiāng (都江) and other villages, and feature fish banquets, drumming and horse racing. The Shui are famous for their bronze drums, many of which were melted down for scrap during the Great Leap Forward.

Jiemaos is a singing and courting festival held in the ninth and 10th months of the Shui calendar. It is held in several villages south of Sāndū, including Shuipu and Jiūqiān (九阡).

Chickens, cows and goats roam freely through the narrow cobbled lanes, as well as some of the most monstrously huge hogs you're ever likely to see.

This village is fun to explore given its rambling set up – no matter how much you walk it, there always seems to be another lane or corner to explore. There's a nice stone path along the riverside, with centuries-old banyan trees leaning over the water. Women are out on the piers washing clothes most afternoons. If you're here in summer, villagers may offer to take you on the river in their boats for a fee.

It's a fascinating village in a lovely setting, but someone needs to get moving on the atrocious garbage problem it appears to be having. There's heaps of the stuff dumped everywhere, including in the middle of some of the loveliest paths and green areas.

The village has a couple of convenience stores but no restaurants. You may be able to arrange a room with a local for around Y40 (whoever is collecting the village entrance fees at the ticket booth may be able to help you out). If not, you'll have to backtrack to Róngjiāng for the night.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are several buses daily from Kǎilǐ to Róngjiāng (Y37 to Y47, five hours, every 40 minutes from 6.40am to 4.40pm); from Róngjiāng you can take a minibus or cab to Chéjiāng. The ride takes 10 to 15 minutes.

## Sāndū 三都

☎ 0855

Sāndū is a medium-sized town about 100km west of Róngjiāng, which could be visited on the way back from Róngjiāng to Kǎilǐ. It's the capital of a Shui autonomous prefecture and

a major market town. Ninety-three per cent of the people in this county are of the Shui minority. Sāndū itself is fairly uninteresting, but is ideal as a base to visit surrounding Shui villages such as Pǔ'ān (普安), 26km north, or Shuǐlóng (水龙), 30km south.

Minibuses leave from Sāndū's bus station when full for Dānzhài and Dūyún. Buses run between Róngjiāng, Sāndū and Kǎilǐ all day.

## Cóngjiāng 从江

☎ 0855

Cóngjiāng is a fairly nondescript town set on the banks of the Duliu River (Dūliú Jiāng). You'll likely have to change buses here if you're heading south to more interesting Dong villages and may have to spend the night if you're aiming for Guǎngxī.

The town is divided by the river. The western side is built up while the eastern side, once a small Dong village, is at an interesting point of convergence between traditional wooden structures and tiled, modern giants.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Chūnchéng Lǚguǎn** (春城旅馆; ☎ 641 4395; Jiangdong Lu; 江东路; s/d Y60/80) This is about the best of the cheapies. Starkly furnished and slightly battered, bathrooms here have Chinese toilets.

**Ténglónggé Bīnguǎn** (腾龙阁宾馆; ☎ 641 7777; Jiangdong Qiaotou; 江东桥头; s & d with shared bathroom Y100, s & d with/without heat Y170/150) The town stalwart, this hotel is opposite the bridge on the eastern side of the river. Rooms here are beaten down but serviceable enough.

Jiangdong Lu (江东路) is packed with cheap eats and is the best place to head for food. If you're looking for a meal in Cóngjiāng, it's best not to leave it too late as the town shuts

around 7pm or 8pm. A small night market sets up with a few barbecue and hotpot stalls 15 minutes' walk north of the bridge on the western side of town.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Cóngjiāng has a new bus station about 150m south of the bridge on the eastern side of the river.

Buses running between here and Kǎilǐ have more or less the same schedule no matter which direction you travel (Y61, six to seven hours, six daily at 7am, 8.20am, 9.40am, 11.40am, 1.30pm and 2.30pm). There's frequent service between Róngjiāng and Cóngjiāng from dawn until dusk (Y25 to Y35, two to three hours).

Heading east, there are buses to and from Lípíng between 6.30am and 11.30am. There is no direct link with Zhàoxīng – use the Lípíng route and change at Luòxiāng.

To Guǎngxī, there are five departures for Sānjiāng between 5.40am and 8.20am and then again at 11.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm.

## Bāshā 芭沙

☎ 2140

Bāshā is one of the most unique villages you'll encounter in all of Guizhōu and is well worth making the effort to get to. Located up the hill from Cóngjiāng, this Miao village is famous for its men who still wear period clothes, carry swords, and wear their long hair rolled up into topknots. Even young boys wear the topknot and carry daggers. Though most say these traditions date from the Ming dynasty, others believe they may date back to the Tang or Song dynasties.

Neither Han culture nor modern technology has made serious inroads here (yet), and nobody, even the villagers themselves, seems sure about why their ancient customs stay so well preserved, though many believe it is simply because of the village's isolation.

The tricky part of a visit here is actually seeing the men, as during the day the majority of them are out hunting or farming. Try to time your visit with a festival for the chance to see the entire village.

It's worth putting aside an entire afternoon to explore Bāshā. It's relatively large with houses perched precariously on the downward sloping hills. As a testament to Bāshā's increasing popularity with tourists, Chinese-English signs now point the way to

various corners of this sprawling settlement and bilingual plaques explain the use of certain buildings. (Take heed though: be sure to knock on a door even if there is a plaque that says 'entrance'. Some residents don't seem to realise yet that their dwellings have been designated 'sights' and they don't take too kindly to visitors making sudden appearances in their living rooms.)

There's an irregularly collected Y15 entrance fee to Bāshā, but if no-one's tracked you down for it by the time you're ready to leave, don't worry about it – it just means the Miao here have decided to give you a *laissez passer*.

There are plenty of hotels and restaurants in Cóngjiāng if you want to spend the night.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bāshā is about 10km up the hill from Cóngjiāng. You can walk, take a taxi (around Y15) or take a motorcycle (Y3 to Y5). Arrange a pick-up for coming back or plan to walk back down to Cóngjiāng. Not much transportation hangs around the village. Buses leave Kǎilǐ for Cóngjiāng regularly (Y61, six to seven hours, 7am, 8.20am, 9.40am, 11.40am and 1.30pm).

## Cóngjiāng to Zhàoxīng

The beautiful three-hour bus journey east from Cóngjiāng towards Zhàoxīng includes rolling hills and lush terraced fields, groves of tangerine trees and riverboats gliding along the turquoise waters. This route also passes through some of the most interesting villages in southeastern Guizhōu and it's well worth breaking your trip in at least one.

As the road starts to climb into the hills, about 8km from Cóngjiāng, you'll see the three drum towers of Gāozēng (高增), a settlement of three small villages. Another 20km or so brings you to Guàndòng (贯洞), the largest village en route. Don't be put off by the ugly concrete blocks on the main street – behind this is an interesting village offering good walks in the surrounding countryside.

Lóngtú (龙图) is another Dong village with several drum towers. A festival, featuring mock battles, is held here over New Year in memory of the ancestral goddess Sasui. North of Lóngtú the road splits left to Xīn'ān (新安), a small village with a drum tower on the road to Lípíng, and right to Luòxiāng (洛香), on the road to Zhàoxīng and Sānjiāng.

The region holds a *lúshēng* festival and competition in successive villages from the middle of the seventh to the middle of the eighth lunar months.

Transport in this area shouldn't be a problem. Morning buses run from Cóngjiāng to Lípíng and Xīn'ān, and buses run between Cóngjiāng and Luòxiāng from 7.30am to 4.30pm.

### Zhàoxīng 肇兴

This gorgeous Dong village is packed with traditional wooden structures, several wind-and-rain bridges and remarkable drum towers. It's a lively place with 700 households, and most villagers continue to wear traditional clothing and speak only their native Dong language.

This is a perfect place to linger for a day or two. The surrounding countryside is lovely and there are a number of walks you could do (ask your accommodation for advice). Even just walking around town in the evening is fascinating. Dong girls and women wash their waist-length hair in the rivers and streams (a sometimes elaborate ritual), while the men always seem to be involved in some kind of new building construction along the main street.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The main attraction is the village itself, including the five **drum towers**, each built by a different clan, and a number of **wind-and-rain bridges** and **theatre stages**. The village is very active and you'll see people weaving baskets, building homes and embroidering.

There are also a number of pleasant walks around the village and into the countryside. One excellent hour-long walk takes you to the nearby village of Jítáng (纪堂), high in the hills. Follow the dirt road at the edge of town, heading west to Luòxiāng. The road climbs uphill and then branches right, snaking around the terraced valley. Jítáng has an old drum tower and good views over the valley floor.

From Jítáng, return by the same route or follow a road that bears right halfway down the hill. Cross into the next valley and then descend slippery paths into the hamlet of Jílun, up a side valley from Zhàoxīng. Jílun is a tiny but beautiful Dong village with a single drum tower. Plan half a day for the round trip.

There are also good views of Zhàoxīng from the eastern end of town as the road climbs

out of the valley. The hills here offer endless opportunities for exploration.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Zhàoxīng is drawing an increasing number of foreign visitors and the main street is developing quickly with several guesthouses, eateries (some with English menus) and bars, though many will not be open in winter.

**Wood Guesthouse** (侗家木楼旅馆; Dòngjiā Mùlóu Lúguǎn; r Y30; 回) With very basic wood rooms and hot showers down in the lobby, this place is family run and the sons are energetic and very helpful.

**Zhàoxīng Bīnguǎn** (肇兴宾馆; d from Y120; 回) The most modern digs in the city, staff here dress up in minority costumes and are extremely friendly. Rooms are spic-and-span with tiny gleaming bathrooms.

Be sure to check on the meat of the day, as rat meat (老鼠肉; *lǎoshǔ ròu*) is common in this area. If you plan to do some day walks, it might be a good idea to bring some snacks along.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Kǎilì you have to travel first to Cóngjiāng (Y61, six to seven hours, 7am, 8.20am, 9.40am, 11.40am and 1.30pm) and change there for a bus to Zhàoxīng (Y15). Direct buses from Cóngjiāng aren't frequent, however, so consider getting on a Lípíng-bound bus and changing halfway (the bus driver will tell you) for a Dípíng (地坪) bus.

Alternatively, if you're looking to stretch your legs, take a Luòxiāng-bound bus from Cóngjiāng (Y15, two hours) and from Luòxiāng it's a lovely 1½-hour walk along a dirt road to Zhàoxīng, passing through a number of smaller villages en route.

From Zhàoxīng, there is at least one Lípíng-Sānjiāng bus passing through each way. The trip to Sānjiāng, in Guǎngxī, takes about five hours. From there you can catch an onward bus to Guílín (see p186).

### Zhàoxīng to Guǎngxī

There are several buses daily south from Lípíng to Zhàoxīng and on to Dípíng (also known as Lóngé). The trip takes around four hours. Dípíng is a Dong village with the best **wind-and-rain bridge** in the region.

From Sānjiāng there are buses that go to Lóngshèng or Guílín. See p186 for more information.

## THE DONG

You will easily spot the Dong by their clothing, headgear and hairdos. Dong men commonly don a black turban, white headband or a black-and-white scarf. In a few traditional villages you may even see men with a shaved head and topknot. On the feet may be straw sandals, and trousers are generally short indigo pants reaching mid-shin. Men working in the fields often tie a wooden tool holder shaped like a boot behind their back.

Dong women typically wear a pleated skirt over skin-tight indigo trousers and embroidered gaiters (or puttees). This is then topped off with an embroidered jacket that is buttoned to the right, as well as a blue-and-black headscarf. The indigo often has a reddish tinge, due to the addition of egg white and blood, and a sheen that comes from beating the cloth with a mallet. The indigo is so dark that many women seem almost drenched in it. Most women wear their hair oiled, wound up in a figure of eight and then held in place with a comb. Many wear silver neck rings.

The Dong people are famed for their wooden architecture and in particular for their drum towers and wind-and-rain bridges, traditionally constructed without nails from the timber of at least 300 fir trees. Most villages have at least one drum tower and this is traditionally used for meetings and festivals.

Larger drum towers have a fireplace underneath the tower, to act as a social centre and meeting point for village elders. The 2m-long drum suspended from the roof rouses the village in case of attack or fire. Drum towers can be up to 15 storeys tall with four, six or eight sides. Multiple towers in a single village indicate that there were originally several settlements, or groupings of clans, which have merged into a larger village unit.

Wind-and-rain bridges, or 'flower bridges', are named after the pavilions that shelter people from the elements, and provide a place to meet, rest and hang out. The best bridges are at Dípíng in Guizhōu and Chéngyáng in Guǎngxī. Both drum towers and bridges are decorated with painted Buddhist carvings, often of guardians or symbolic protective animals such as dragons or phoenixes.

The Dong replenish the timber they fell; with each new baby that is born, the parents traditionally plant a tree to be used to build a house when the child reaches adulthood. Because most buildings are made from wood, villages have many fish ponds that double as a water source in case of fire.

Many Dong villages have festivals during the first lunar month. During the Tianguanren Festival, men from a neighbouring village, dressed as government officials and guards, visit local people who are dressed as bandits, goblins, spiders, beggars and fishermen. Gifts of money are eventually handed out to the actors and to the groups of women who come to sing songs. It's really just an excuse for a huge party.

Another festival, the Caigetang, is held on the 2nd day of the first lunar month and features singing and dancing competitions. Folk songs and oral histories are particularly important to the Dong, as they have no written language.

During the New Year, many Dong women who were married the previous year return with their husband's family to their parents' home, bearing gifts. The New Year in general is a time to remember ancestors, especially the ancient Dong heroine and ancestral goddess Sasui (Grandmother). There are many memorial services to her during this time, especially around Lípíng and Cóngjiāng.

Another activity organised by the Dong, especially in Guǎngxī, is *huapao*. During a game of *huapao* an iron ring wrapped in red floss is blasted out of a metal tube, and in the ensuing rugby-like chaos teams of 12 to 13 players try to wrench it from the opposition and hand it to a judge.

The Dong are especially renowned for their hospitality and fearsome drinking ability. Important guests are often toasted as they enter a village. One spectacular farewell ritual quoted by a local tourism brochure obliges the Dong to 'hang pig heads and tails over the guests, put intestines on everybody and chase after one another with severed pig heads'.



If you need snacks for your day trip or long bus rides, there's a **supermarket** (🛒 8am-11pm) just inside the old town gate and a good bakery just outside of it.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Bus

There's daily service from Zhènyǎn's long-distance bus station to Kǎilǐ (Y25, three hours, 7.30am, 9am, 11am, 1pm, 2.30pm and 3.30pm). If you want to go to Shìdòng, you can take any of these buses and the driver will let you off when he passes through the village. There are no direct buses to Tónggrén; you have to get a bus to Yùpíng (玉坪; Y10, one hour) and then onward transport from there.

### Train

Ten trains leave daily for Kǎilǐ (Y60 to Y100, 80 minutes to two hours), departing from between 10am and 11.30pm on their way to Guíyáng. There are no trains to Tónggrén, so you have to go to the railroad at Yùpíng (Y60 to Y100, one hour, 11 trains daily) and take a bus or minibus the rest of the way (Y30, one hour).

The respective schedules are pretty much the same going the other way, from Kǎilǐ to Zhènyuǎn or Yùpíng to Zhènyuǎn.

## Around Zhènyuǎn 镇远

### WÚYÁNG HÉ 舞阳河

The Wúyáng Hé (Wuyang River) runs through a scenic area packed with white limestone gorges and weirdly shaped rocks cut by waterfalls and topped with lush green vegetation. There are three mini-gorges along the river – **West Gorge**, **Dragon King Gorge** and **Zhuge Gorge** – plus plenty of spuriously named peaks, the most famous of which is Peacock-Tailed Peak. Boats tour the main river gorges and the side creeks of the Xiangjian and Baishui Rivers.

The docks are 17km west of Zhènyuǎn and 1km off the main road to Shìbǐng. Ask any of the tour operators (p140) for cruise information.

The Dong minority village of Bào jǐng, 41km southeast of Zhènyuǎn, celebrates **Sanyuesan** on the 3rd day of the third lunar month with a barbecue fish banquet. The Miao town of Yǒngxī (涌溪), 12km west, celebrates **Double Ninth** on the 9th day of the ninth lunar month.

## TÓNGRÉN 铜仁

☎ 5231 / pop 92,100

Think of Tónggrén as northeast Guizhōu's version of Kǎilǐ: not a destination in and of itself, but rather a small, pleasant city of manageable size that's a pleasant base from which to go further afield. With a pleasant spot on the Jin River (Jin Jiāng), Tónggrén is the largest town in Guizhōu's northeast and you will have to pass through here if you're on your way to visit Fanjing Mountain (see opposite).

## Information

**Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Huangcheng Xilu)

Changes money and sometimes travellers cheques.

**Internet Cafés** (per hr Y3) Internet access is available on the 2nd floor of a shopping arcade just off Minzhu Lu, as well as on Jiefang Lu.

**Zhōngguó Tiětōng** (Jinjiang Lu; 🚆 8am-8pm) You can make cheap international calls from here.

## Sights

The small **Nuo Museum** in the southeast of town is devoted to exhibits on *nuó*, a local form of religious opera with animist overtones, similar in many ways to the Bouyi ground opera (see the boxed text, p114). Though nobody was around to unlock the doors at the time of research, this place has, by all accounts, a startling collection of masks worn by *nuó* dancers when they perform.

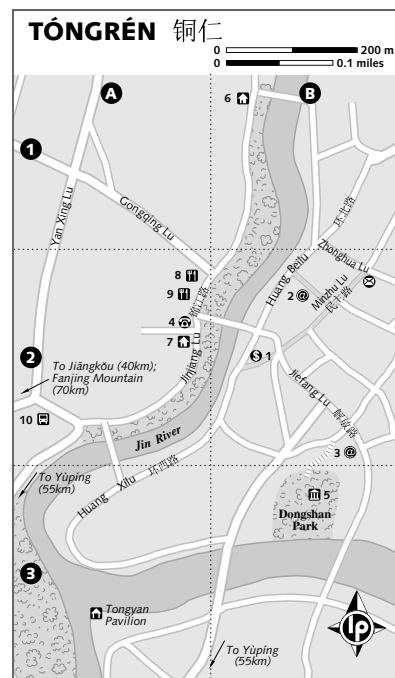
To get here, walk to Dongshān Sì (East Hill Monastery), take the second right off Jiefang Lu, after Minzhu Lu, and follow the staircase on the left up the hill. Turn left at a group of yellow buildings and continue up the stairs to the top.

Besides the museum, there's not a lot to see in town as most of Tónggrén's old wooden buildings have been demolished.

Minzhu Lu, on the east side of the river, is pedestrianised and filled with bright lights and clothing vendors yelling through megaphones.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Longfeng Bīnguǎn** (☎ 690 1888; Jinjiang Lu; 锦江路; s/d Y188/218; 🍽️) The setup here can be odd at times (eg room entrances are sometimes mid-staircase or in an unexpected hall corner), but once you get past that, the furniture and facilities (which include a computer with internet!) are in absolutely pristine condition, although rooms are a bit cramped. Room rates are the same whether your bathroom comes



with a squat toilet and shower nozzle or a western toilet and closed-in shower, so it's worth checking out your room before paying the deposit. Rooms are often discounted to around Y120.

**Jinjiang Bīnguǎn** (☎ 522 2341; 8 Jinjiang Lu; 锦江路 8号; s/d/tr Y368/238/228; 🍽️) This sprawling place is made up of several dispersed buildings, a relic of its glory days as *the* tourist hotel in Tónggrén. It's still grand-enough looking, but some of the essentials are going to pot – several of the showers' drains are completely plugged, flooding the bathroom floors, and the breakfast included in the room rate is a traumatic experience involving sullen wait staff flinging a bowl of cold, limp noodles with a frightening meat topping in front of you. But the *fúwùyuán* (服务员; floor attendants) here are out-of-this-world helpful. If there's a problem they'll fix it; if they can't answer your travel question, they'll find someone who can. Definitely worth the stay despite the hiccups elsewhere at this operation. Discounted rooms usually go for around Y150.

If you're stocking up for Fanjing Mountain, there is a large grocery store on Jinjiang

INFORMATION	
Bank of China 中国银行	1 B2
Internet Café 网吧	2 B2
Internet Café 网吧	3 B2
Zhōngguó Tiětōng 中国铁通	4 A2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Nuo Museum 侗文化博物馆	5 B3
SLEEPING 🏠	
Jinjiang Bīnguǎn 锦江宾馆	6 B1
Longfeng Bīnguǎn 龙丰宾馆	7 A2
EATING 🍽️	
Grocery Store 超级市场	8 A2
Restaurants 饭店	9 A2
TRANSPORT	
Main Bus Station 客运总站	10 A2

Lu, and for immediate sustenance, tackle the slew of fine but simple restaurants just south of the store.

## Getting There & Away

The easiest way to get to Tónggrén is to catch a train to the railroad at Yùpíng (玉坪) and take a bus (Y19 to Y22, one hour) the rest of the way. There's also sometimes minivans or taxis plying the route; they usually charge a minimum of Y30.

There are 11 trains daily in each direction between Yùpíng and Kǎilǐ (Y60 to Y100).

Leaving Tónggrén, buses head to Yùpíng (Y19 to Y22) all day starting at 7am. There are also buses to Kǎilǐ (Y60, six hours, hourly 8.30am to 5.30pm) and Guíyáng (Y110, eight hours, hourly 8am to 4pm).

## AROUND TÓNGRÉN

### Fanjing Shan Nature Reserve 梵净山自然保护区

This 2572m Buddhist **mountain** (Fàn jǐng Shān Zìrán Bǎohùqū; admission Y70) is home to the rare golden monkey (*jīnshíhóu*) and is one of the most important conservation areas in Guizhōu. Thousands of stairs weave their way through the pristine scenery to a monastery at the top. Not many foreign travellers come here, but it has become a popular trip for Chinese pilgrims and nature lovers.

Set among the Wuling Shan range, this reserve provides a home to over half the province's protected plants and two-thirds of its protected animals. The area was declared a nature reserve in 1978 and incorporated into Unesco's Man and the Biosphere programme in 1986.

Though the reserve is home to 300 species of animals, the golden monkey is the most endangered. It is being aggressively protected and a breeding centre at the base of the mountain has been trying to boost the animal's population since 1995. The mountain is home to about 170 of the 15,000 left in the wild. Famous in Chinese mythology as a symbol of longevity, the golden monkey is immediately distinguishable by its blue face. Other animals found on the mountain include protected giant salamanders, musk deer, pangolins (scaly anteater), rhesus monkeys and several varieties of pheasant.

The mountain's most famous flora is the dove tree (*Davidia involuocrata*), 'discovered' by the French missionary Père David. When the tree blossoms in April/May, the flowers look like huge handkerchiefs or doves ready to fly. The vertical 2km forest that blankets the mountain also features subtropical magnolias, Mao bamboo, oaks, myrtles, China fir trees, azaleas and rhododendrons.

Fanjing means 'state of enlightenment and freedom from earthly worries' and has its origins in the 16th century when the mountain was an important Buddhist pilgrimage site. Most of the Ming dynasty temples on the mountainside have since been ruined, though a few were restored in 1992 when access to the mountain was also improved and Chinese tourists gained a renewed interest in the area.

Spring and autumn are the best times to visit the mountain. Spring, in particular, enlivens the summit with azalea blossoms. Summers are generally wet and humid. Though it's technically possible to climb during winter if there hasn't been a heavy snowfall, besides being miserably freezing you'll have to be completely self sufficient. The trail up normally has accommodation and places where you can buy food and drink, but they are all closed from at least December to February.

From the park entrance at Hēiwān (黑湾), you will have to take a minivan or walk the 7km to the Copper Mine, then a further 2.7km to the beginning of the steps at Yu'ao. From here it's a four or more hour climb up 6800 steps past Huixiangping to Wānbào (Ten Thousand Treasures), where most people stay overnight. From Wānbào there are another 300 or so steps to the summit at Jīndīng (Golden Summit) and the weird, layered Mushroom Rocks beyond.

The rocky summit has the remains of an old monastery and offers more hiking to nearby sites, such as Báyún (白云) and Zhenguo monasteries to the east and Nine Dragon Pool (九龙池; Jiǔlóng Chí) to the west.

Some sections of the staircase are narrow and in bad shape and all sections are a killer on your legs. Give yourself a day to haul yourself up the mountain, another to climb back down, and maybe a third to have a look around the summit.

There are now at least three alternative routes for descending the mountain on the other side, but you'll need to ask at your accommodation or the CITS to make sure you know what your transport options are at the end of the various descents.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

There are several places to stay at the park entrance in Hēiwān. Prices start at Y100. If you're planning to visit during the off season, it's a good idea to check with the Guiyáng CITS (p102) to make sure hotels are open for business (as they often aren't during the winter months). The CITS may even be able to book you a room.

There are also a number of options on the mountain. Most people stay at the guesthouse at Wānbào, though there are hotels lower down the mountain at Copper Mine, Huixiangping and Yu'ao. A sleeping bag would be useful from November until at least March.

You'll find a few basic noodle places and stalls along the trail, but it's a good idea to bring along some of your own food.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get to the park entrance, first take a shared taxi from Tónggrén to Jiànkǒu (剑口; Y15, 40 minutes), then a minibus or shared taxi 23km north to the park entrance at Hēiwān (黑湾; Y10, 40 minutes).

#### Nine Dragon Cave 九龙洞

This 1400m-long karst cave (Jiǔlóng Dòng) is said to be able to hold 10,000 people. It's really off the beaten track but if you're a cave fanatic, it's got to be worth it. To get there, take a bus from Tónggrén's local bus station to Yàngtóu (漾头) and get off a couple of kilometres past the town of Mǎyán (马岩), 15km east of Tónggrén. From here you can cross the Jin River by ferry and walk 15 minutes to the cave entrance. Guānyīn Shān lies behind the

cave and is also worth exploring. This sight is still in the process of being developed for tourism so it is worth checking with the Kǎilǐ CITS (p126) for detailed information, or to arrange a guide before you head off.

## NORTHERN GUIZHOU

The nature reserves around Chishuǐ are the most pleasant of northern Guizhōu's destinations. Communist history buffs will also enjoy a pit stop in Zūnyì, with its abundance of revolutionary sites. Taken together, the two cities make up an interesting backdoor route into southern Sichuān.

### ZŪNYÌ 遵义

☎ 0852 / pop 504,000

Mao geeks will love this city, home to a slew of exceedingly well-done sites commemorating a pivotal event in the 20th-century history of the Chinese communist party – the famous Zūnyì Conference. To everyone else, the city is likely to be a great big downer – it's a grim place and not particularly friendly. However, if you're on your way to or from Chishuǐ, you'll have to overnight here, whether you like it or not.

#### History

On 16 October 1934, hemmed into Jiāngxī by Kuomintang forces, the communists set out on a Herculean, one-year, 9500km Long March from one end of China to the other. By mid-December they had reached Guizhōu and marched on Zūnyì. Taking the town by surprise, the communists were able to stock up on supplies and take a breather.

From 15 to 18 January 1935, the top-level communist leaders took stock of their situation at the now-famous Zūnyì Conference. At the meeting, the leaders reviewed their soviet-influenced strategies, which had cost them their Jiāngxī base and caused them large military losses. Mao, who until this time had largely been overshadowed by his contemporaries, was highly critical of the communists' strategy thus far and the resolutions of the conference largely reflected his views. He was elected a full member of the ruling Standing Committee of the Politburo and Chief Assistant to Zhou Enlai in military planning. It would be another 10 years before Mao became the unrivalled leader of the Communist Party, but this event was pivotal in his rise to power.

#### Information

**Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Minzhu Lu) Has an ATM and can change cash, travellers cheques and offers cash advances on credit cards.

**China Post** (☎ 8am-8pm) Go to the end of Zhonghua Nanlu and cross the bridge. The post office is about 200m north on the west side of the street.

**Internet café** (wǎngbā; Zhongshan Lu; per hr Y2; ☎ 24hr) Look for a blue sign. The café is up a flight of dank stairs on the 2nd floor.

**Public Security Bureau** (PSB; Gōngānjú; Jinian Sq; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm) Offers visa extensions.

#### Sights

##### COMMUNIST HISTORY SITES

There are numerous sites throughout the Southwest consecrated to the history of 'Red' China, and a lot of them are pretty dull. If the 20th-century history of the Chinese Communist Party isn't your bag, you can skip this place altogether, but for everyone else, the **Zūnyì Conference Site** (Zūnyì Huìyì Huìzhì; Ziyin Lu; admission Y40; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) is extremely well set up and worth a visit.

Set in a colonial-style house, you'll see the meeting rooms and living quarters of the big-wigs, and rooms filled with CCP memorabilia. Outside, speakers blare revolutionary songs at raucous volumes for your listening pleasure.

Your ticket includes admission to ump-teen related sites located nearby. The **Red Army General Political Department** (Hóngjūn Zōng Zhèngzhì Bù Jiùzhì; lane behind Ziyin Lu) has some of the more interesting photos and maps relating to the Long March and Zūnyì Conference. Exhibition halls share the grounds with a **Catholic church** left behind by French missionaries.

Opposite is the **Residence of Bo Gu**, the general leader of the CCP Central Committee at the time of the Zūnyì Conference. Nearby, the **State Bank of the Red Army** (红军银行; Hóngjūn Yínháng) has some terrific money displays and decent English captions.

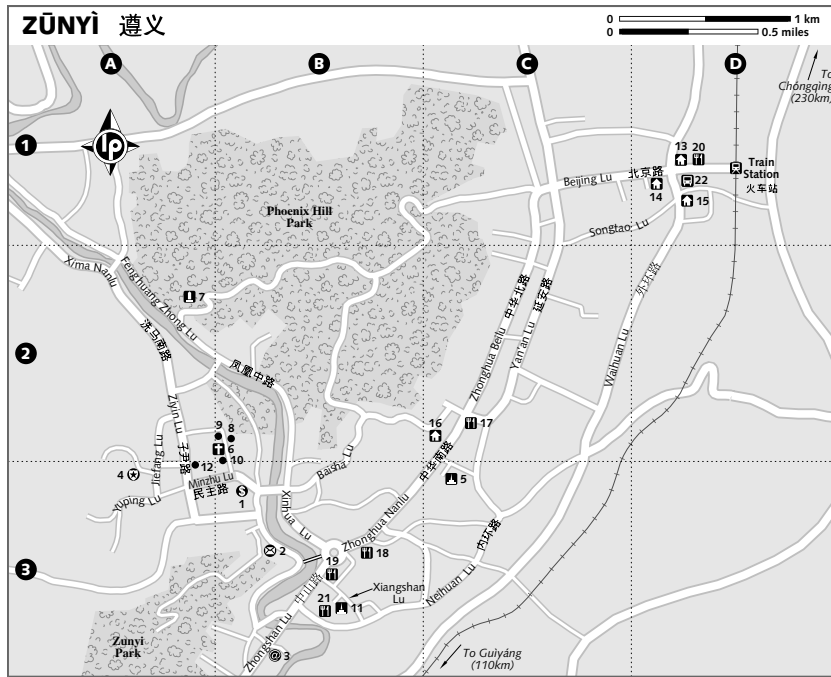
#### TEMPLES

Zūnyì has two active Buddhist temples. Built in the 1920s, **Xiangshan Temple** (Xiāngshān Sì) is situated on a small hill in a lively part of town. **Baiyun Temple** (Bǎiyún Sì) is more run-down but still an active place of worship despite its somewhat neglected appearance.

#### PARKS

Zūnyì is such an overcrowded industrial nightmare, its two parks provide a welcome





respire. **Zūnyì Park** (Zūnyì Gōngyuán) is in the west of town and is the smaller of the two, and **Phoenix Hill Park** (Fènghuáng Shān Gōngyuán) is the huge green area in the north. Here you can climb an endless number of stairs up the steep hill for a close look at the epic soviet-socialist style **Monument to the Martyrs of the Red Army**, such a soaring piece of Red Army iconography that it's hard not to be just a little bit impressed.

### Sleeping

There's something for every budget in Zūnyì.

**Záji Bīnguǎn** (☎ 822 3350; 89 Zhonghua Nanlu; 中华南路89号; d Y158-208) Arriving here is like going to a trendy club – the stairs are black and shiny, there's multicoloured disco lighting across from the elevators, and the staff is young and confident. Once you get to the rooms, they're pretty conservative – make sure you look at several before paying. Two rooms might be identically priced, with one sporting grubby bathrooms and potholed mattresses while another is gleaming and newly outfitted with extras such as comfy loveseats.

**Xībù Dàjiùdiàn** (☎ 319 1788; fax 319 1868; Waihuan Lu; 外环路; 汽车客运站旁; s Y158, d Y168-188, tr Y218) Rooms here are only basic affairs, with cramped bathrooms and Chinese toilets. But if you can get a good discount, the location alone makes this place worth considering. Always check the rooms before handing over your deposit. If you don't like what they show you, ask for something on the 9th floor – everything from rooms to halls are in better condition here.

**Shìshān Dàjiùdiàn** (☎ 882 2978; fax 882 5861; 108 Beijing Lu; 北京路108号; s Y196, d with/without bathroom Y336/256, tr Y396) This hotel with the retro-uniformed porters and weathered halls is one of the local standards. A lot of travellers end up here because of its proximity to the bus and train stations. However, its discounts are starting to seem pretty stingy, when you can get a far superior room for the same (discounted) price at the Beautiful Harbour Hotel. Consider the Shìshān Dàjiùdiàn as a 'back up' instead of a 'go to' option.

**Beautiful Harbour Hotel** (Jīngtèng Liwān Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 864 9898; fax 865 4188; Beijing Lu; 北京路; s/d Y368/468) Almost right across from the long-distance bus station and just a couple of minutes

### INFORMATION

Bank of China 中国银行	1	B3
China Post 中国邮政	2	B3
Internet Café 网吧	3	B3
PSB 公安局	4	A3

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Baiyun Temple 白云寺	5	C3
Catholic Church 天主教堂	6	B2
Monument to the Martyrs of the Red Army 红军烈士纪念碑	7	A2
Red Army General Political Department 红军总政治部旧址	8	B2
Residence of Bo Gu 博古旧居	9	B2
State Bank of the Red Army 红军银行	10	B2
Xiangshan Temple 湘山寺	11	B3
Zūnyì Conference Site 遵义会议会址	12	A3

### SLEEPING

Beautiful Harbour Hotel 京腾丽湾酒店	13	D1
Shìshān Dàjiùdiàn 狮山大酒店	14	D1
Xībù Dàjiùdiàn 西部大酒店	15	D1
Záji Bīnguǎn 遵义杂技宾馆	16	C2

### EATING

Cafés 咖啡馆	17	C2
Grill Stalls 烧烤摊	18	B3
Grill Stalls 烧烤摊	19	B3
Hotpot & Grill Stalls 火锅烧烤摊	20	D1
Hotpot Restaurants 火锅烧烤店	21	B3

### TRANSPORT

Long-Distance Bus Station 长途客运站	22	D1
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stalls to be found come dinner time. Some of the best places to look are the lively Xiangshan Lu or the alleys running southeast off Zhonghua Nanlu. For coffee, there's a handful of Western-style cafés at the corner of Zhonghua Beilu and Yan'an Lu. Also be sure to check out the hotpot restaurants south of Xiangshan Temple. The most manic and plentiful choice of hotpot and grill stalls is on Beijing Lu near the bus and train stations.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Useful local buses are 9 and 14, which run from the train station towards Minzhu Lu and the Bank of China. Normally, bus is the quickest and most convenient and comfortable way to reach Anshùn and Guiyáng. However, major roadworks along this route were causing serious delays at the time of research – the trip to Anshùn was taking up to 8½ hours, while the trip to Guiyáng took anywhere from five to 10 hours. If the construction is still going on when you arrive, you're better off taking the train. Zūnyì's long-distance bus station has good connections to many destinations in Guizhōu. For destinations beyond Guizhōu you will have to head to Guiyáng and transfer.

### TRAIN

There are regular trains to Guiyáng (Y34, 2½ to five hours, 16 daily), but you're better off catching the bus. Other destinations include Chóngqīng (Y40 to Y47, five to nine hours, 14 daily) and Chéngdū (Y190, 15 hours, 6am, 7.54am, 8.40am and 10.44pm).

## CHÌSHUǐ 赤水

☎ 0852 / pop 50,000

Chìshuǐ is fantastic, the locals are shockingly friendly, the surrounding countryside is stunning and it all still has an off-the-beaten-track feel. This isn't much of a place for culture or history tourists, but nature-lovers will have

away from the train station, this just-opened hotel is near perfection. Even better, when there are big discounts (sometimes 50%) it's accessible to travellers on most budgets. The rooms are beautiful, with big comfortable beds, and the breakfast buffets wonderful. While the desk staff still aren't too comfortable with foreigners and can be a little frustrating, the assistant managers are fantastic – more generous with discounts and willing to go above and beyond to solve any problems you may have while staying in Zūnyì.

### Eating

Street food is your best bet in this town and there are some great hotpot, noodle and grill

### ZŪNYÌ BUS TIMETABLES

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Anshùn	Y60	4-5hr	3 daily	9am, 11am & 3pm
Chìshuǐ	Y90	7-8hr	2 daily	9am & 12.30pm
Chóngqīng	Y30-40	3hr	every 40-50min	7am-7pm
Guiyáng	Y30	2½hr	half-hourly	7am-7pm

a ball exploring Chishuǐ's unique geography and scenery, which includes bamboo, a prehistoric plant and red earth. The area is especially famous for its spinulosa plants (*suólúó*), huge woody ferns that grow up to 10m with large umbrella-like leaves. The ferns date from the Jurassic period, 200 million years ago, and have been dubbed 'living fossils' or 'the food of dinosaurs'.

Much of the greenery is gorgeously offset by the red earth in the area, the runoff from which turns rivers and streams red after rain-fall, hence Chishuǐ's name – Red Water.

The only negative here for independent travellers is the hassle involved in getting to some of the scenic spots by public transport. A private car is worth considering, especially if you'd like to see a lot of the countryside and have limited time and Chinese language skills.

Chishuǐ sits on the east bank of the Chishuǐ River (Chishuǐ Hé); right across from it is Jiǔzhī (九支), a small crowded town on the Sichuān side of the border. Historically, the river was important for transporting salt from Zigōng in Sichuān to Guizhōu.

Chishuǐ has more links with the fertile red basin of Sichuān than the rocky limestone plateau of Guizhōu and is an attractive stop-over whether you are on the way to or from southern Sichuān.

Though the locals are extremely warm, there's nothing of particular interest in Chishuǐ itself, but it's a good base for the surrounding sights.

## Sleeping & Eating

Chishuǐ is a letdown when it comes to accommodation. Many of the rooms are forgettable, expensive and poor value.

**Chishuǐ Yuán Bīnguǎn** (赤水源宾馆; ☎ 288 7778; fax 288 7775; Renmin Beilu; 人民北路; s/d Y168/268) This place isn't much, but if you need budget accommodation it's probably the best you can do at the moment. Discounted rooms run from Y100 to Y160, the location is fairly central and the bus station is just down the street. Prepare yourself for lethargic staff, damp rooms, peeling wall-paper and missing shower curtains. On the plus side, it's usually filled with Chinese tour groups, so at least the atmosphere is fairly jovial. To get here, come out of the bus station, turn right, cross Renmin Lu, turn left and walk about 200m.

**Zhōngyuè Dàjiùdiàn** (中悦大酒店; ☎ 282 3888, 282 5999; fax 286 0289; 22 Nanzheng Jie; 南正街22号; s/d Y358/398; ☎) This is the best place in town, though rooms are still generic and forgettable. Plain dark wood furniture is set up on red carpets in rooms either too big or too small to easily accommodate it all. Everything is spotless and nicely kept up, however. The difference between the different classes of rooms is sometimes imperceptible, so there's no need to splurge. Staff here don't speak English at all, but they are mature, professional and helpful despite having almost no experience with foreign guests. Discounted rooms run about Y270.

The area around the Chishuǐ long-distance bus station has bakeries and a supermarket where you can pick up snacks for long bus rides. There's also a dozen or so food stalls around the corner from the station doing cheap stir-frys and dumplings.

## Getting There & Away

Generally, if you are arriving here from somewhere in Guizhōu, you'll likely be dropped at Chishuǐ's long-distance bus station (赤水长途客运站; Chishuǐ chángtú kèyùn zhàn) on Renmin Lu. If you are coming from somewhere in Sichuān, you will generally be sold a ticket to that province's Jiǔzhī (九支) town. From Jiǔzhī's long-distance bus station (九支长途客运站; Jiǔzhī chángtú kèyùn zhàn) it's a one-minute, Y2 cab ride over the bridge to Chishuǐ.

Leaving Chishuǐ for destinations in Guizhōu, head to Chishuǐ's long-distance bus station for daily service to Zūnyì (Y85, seven hours, 6.25am and noon), Guiyáng (Y120, ten hours, 6.55am and 8.50am), Chóngqīng (Y60 to Y70, 6.25am, 7.30am, 11am, 12.20pm and 2.35pm), Chéngdū (Y95, 7.50am, 9.55am and 2.45pm), Zhūhǎi (Y13.50, 9.30am and 3.55pm) and Jīnshāgōu (Y11).

At the time of research, delays caused by road construction on main routes from Chishuǐ were adding between two and four hours to Zūnyì's and Guiyáng's travel times.

Despite being computerised, staff at Chishuǐ's station still somehow manage to sell tickets for buses that don't exist. If buying tickets in advance, try to verify departure times with a couple of employees first. (Those who check the tickets as you leave the waiting area seem to be more up to date on things than the ticket sellers.)

If you are heading to Sichuān, your best bet is Jiǔzhī's long-distance bus station. From there, there's regular service to the dusty industrial town of Lúzhōu (泸州; Y19, two to three hours, every 20 minutes from 7am to 6pm), from where you can get a bus to Yíbin (Y27, three hours, every 30 to 40 minutes from 7am to 5pm) and then pick up connections to the rest of Sichuān.

## AROUND CHISHUǐ Sìdònggōu 四洞沟

This valley (admission Y30; ☎ 8am-6pm) is studded with waterfalls, caves and lush foliage and is the most popular of Chishuǐ's scenic spots. It's especially famous for the proliferation of spinulosa 'ferns' dotting its paths and is one of the best places to get up close to this prehistoric plant.

Known as 'Four Cave Valley', trails lead up both sides of the valley to the waterfalls, so you can walk up one side of the valley, walk behind the water curtain and return via the opposite trail. You can cover most of the valley in a couple of hours, though intrepid hikers can explore side valleys after the fourth waterfall.

Sìdònggōu is the easiest of Chishuǐ's scenic spots to get to and is only about 20km away from town. Minivans (Y4, 30 minutes) leave all day from the traffic circle by the long-distance bus station (usually lining up along Renmin Lu just around the right-hand corner from the station). They often have hand-written signs in the windows saying Dàtóng (大同), the village 2km to 3km from the scenic spot. Ask nicely, though, and the drivers will usually take you all the way up the hill to the Sìdònggōu ticket gate. Minibuses head back to Chishuǐ until dark, though if it's the low season you may have to make your way down the hill to Dàtóng to pick them up. Hours here can be irregular in December and January, so it's a good idea to ask at your accommodation if the site is open or not before heading up.

## Shizhangdong Waterfall 十丈洞瀑布

Despite its stature as one of China's largest waterfalls, many travellers (even Chinese ones) have never even heard of this place. At 72m high and 68m wide, **Shizhangdong Waterfall** (Shizhàngòng Pùbù; ☎ 288 1908; admission Y40; ☎ 8am-5pm) is surrounded by the unique scenery that's made Chishuǐ famous and is only a metre or so shorter than Huangguoshu

(see p115). Best of all, it's also much less commercial. The best time to visit is after heavy rain when the falls are at their most thunderous. Water levels are lowest from November to April; it's a good idea to call ahead during this period to confirm the ticket office will be open when you arrive.

Located about 40km from Chishuǐ, public transport here can be complicated so start your trip early. Minibuses leave from the traffic circle near the long-distance bus station. Ones going directly to Shizhàng (十丈) seem rare (just a handful a day), but may be more frequent during peak season (Y8 to Y11, one hour). Alternatively, you can take your chances with the drivers promising to get you 'very close'. Be aware that more often than not, you'll find yourself put out near some bridge in the middle of nowhere, having to flag another minibus down to take you the rest of the way. In these cases, you'll finally be let off on the main road at the turn off to Shizhàng. Motorbikes are usually gathered here and will take you to the waterfall ticket booth (about Y20 one way). Until recently, there had been a bus from the long-distance bus station (Y10.50); it may be worth asking if this service has been restarted.

Heading back, get back to the main road and flag down anything heading to Chishuǐ. Don't leave this too late.

## Jinshagou Nature Reserve 金沙沟自然保护区

This reserve (Jīnshāgōu Zìrán Bǎohùqū) was set up to protect a large area of pristine spinulosa forest, but the scenic spot open for tourism is its **bamboo forest** (竹海; zhúhǎi; admission Y25; ☎ 8am-5pm). It's a beautiful place, with stone paths crowned with frothy bamboo leaves bobbing in the wind. Best of all, you're very likely to be the only person around. Be careful if you're visiting after rain, as the mossy stone steps going up and down the various hills get very slippery.

Minibuses to Jīnshāgōu village (Y11, 1½ hours) leave when full from the traffic circle near Chishuǐ's long-distance bus station. You may have to transfer once or twice along the way depending on the driver's passenger load (the driver won't go all the way if there are not enough people, but instead farm you off to other drivers along the way). Once you reach the village (where every household seems involved in making bamboo chopsticks in one way or another), the bamboo forest is another

20- to 30-minute drive away. You will have to negotiate transport with a villager for the winding drive to the top of the hill. You are at their mercy – what you end up paying will depend on your bargaining skills. Chinese tourists seem to manage ¥70 for a round trip. In the low season the ticket office is often unstaffed, but don't worry, as you can enter the bamboo forest further up the road. Your driver will know where to drop you off. Enter only where there are stone paths and stick to them – this place is so out of the way that if you get lost you'll be stuck here forever.

### **Red Rock Gorge** 红石野谷

This **gorge** (Hóngshí Yěgǔ; admission ¥30; ☎ 8am-5pm) was opened in 2006 and is rapidly becoming one of the most popular sights in the area. It's dotted with small waterfalls and caves and is one of the best places to see the reddened earth that figures so prominently in Chishui photos and brochures.

Minibuses here leave from the traffic circle near the long-distance bus station (Y7, one hour) when full. Unless it's peak season, it's a good idea to start heading back to Chishui at around 4pm.