

Yúnnán 云南



Yúnnán has some of the most magical and diverse scenery in all of China. There are endless trekking opportunities in the south's tropical rainforests, and in the north, snow-capped Tibetan peaks hide dozens of tiny villages and temples rarely visited by tourists.

Yúnnán is also home to a third of all China's ethnic minorities (nearly 50% of the province is non-Han) and despite the best government efforts, numerous pockets of the province have successfully resisted Han influence and exhibit strong local identities.

Even Kūnmíng, the provincial capital, has a flavour that seems more than half a world away from Běijīng. Despite the rapid economic growth, Kūnmíng, 'Spring City,' retains an individuality that has earned it a reputation for being one of the more cosmopolitan and relaxed cities in the southwest.

Yúnnán is the sight of important archaeological discoveries, including sophisticated Bronze Age cultures around Diān Chí (Lake Dian) and the oldest human remains yet found in China (human teeth fragments dating from 1.75 million to 2.5 million years ago).

The province is also home to the nation's highest number of species of flora and fauna – including 2500 varieties of wild flower and plant – and is known for its mild climate year-round.

It's hard to comprehend all that Yúnnán has to offer until you get here. If you're a traveller planning to start your China journey in Yúnnán you should be warned, once you've come see it for yourself, you may never get further east than Kūnmíng.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch the sun rise and set on the magnificent **Yuányáng rice terraces** (p728)
- Escape the crowds and while away the days exploring low-key **Lǔgǔ Hú** (p722)
- Soak up the Southeast Asian atmosphere in tropical **Xishuāngbǎnà** (p730)
- Get lost among the canals and cobbled lanes of **Lǐjiāng's old town** (p711)
- Trek **Tiger Leaping Gorge** (p718), a breathtaking hike amid dramatic cliffs and waterfalls



■ POPULATION: 42.1 MILLION

■ www.yunnantourism.net

History

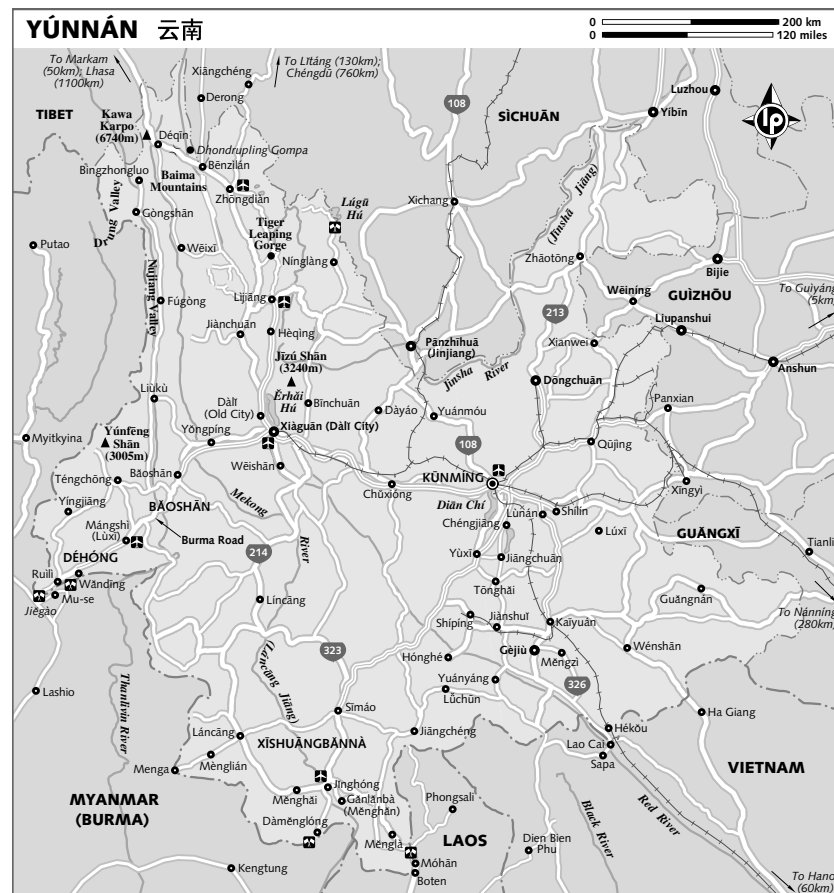
Yúnnán, China's sixth-largest province, has always been a bit of a renegade. Its remote location, harsh terrain and diverse ethnic make-up have made it a difficult province to govern, and for centuries it was considered a backward place inhabited by barbarians.

Qín Shi Huang and the Han emperors held tentative imperial power over the southwest and forged southern Silk Road trade routes to Burma, but by the 7th century the Bai people had established their own powerful kingdom, Nanzhao, south of Dàli. Initially allied with the Chinese against the Tibetans, this kingdom extended its power until, in the middle of the 8th century, it was able to challenge and defeat the Tang armies. It took control of a large slice

of the southwest and established itself as a fully independent entity, dominating the trade routes from China to India and Burma.

The Nanzhao kingdom fell in the 10th century and was replaced by the kingdom of Dàli, an independent state that lasted until it was overrun by the Mongols in the mid-13th century. After 15 centuries of resistance to northern rule, this part of the southwest was finally integrated into the empire as the province of Yúnnán.

Even so, it remained an isolated frontier region, with scattered Chinese garrisons and settlements in the valleys and basins, a mixed aboriginal population in the highlands, and various Dai (Thai) and other minorities along the Mekong River (Láncāng Jiāng).



During the Republican period, Yúnnán continued to exercise a rebellious streak. When Yuan Shikai tried to abandon the republican government and install himself as emperor, military leaders in Yúnnán rebelled. One local military commander even renamed his troops the National Protection Army and marched them into Sichuān, a stronghold for forces loyal to Yuan. Military forces elsewhere in China turned out in support and Yuan was forced to retreat.

Yúnnán, like the rest of the southwest, has a history of breaking ties with the northern government. During China's countless political purges, fallen officials often found themselves here, adding to the province's character.

Climate

Yúnnán has a climate as diverse as its terrain, with temperate, tropical and frigid zones; from the frozen northwestern region around Déqīn and Shangri-la (Zhōngdiàn) where winters (late November to February) reach chilling lows of -12°C and summer (June to August) temperatures peak at highs of 19°C, to the subtropical climate of Jīnghóng where the summer months soar to 33°C. Dǎlǐ has an ideal temperature year-round, with temperatures never dipping below 4°C in the winter months or above 25°C in summer.

Language

In addition to Mandarin, the other major languages spoken in Yúnnán province belong to the Tibeto-Burman family (eg the Naxi language), and the Sino-Tibetan family (eg the Lisu language).

Getting There & Around

AIR

Kūnmíng is served by all Chinese airlines and has daily flights to most cities. International destinations include Hong Kong, Hanoi, Bangkok, Rangoon and Seoul.

With domestic airports in almost all corners of Yúnnán province being served by daily flights from Kūnmíng and other major Chinese cities, travelling within Yúnnán has never been easier. The northwest is linked by Shangri-la, Dǎlǐ and Lǐjiāng. Mángshì provides Dēhóng prefecture in the southwest with an air link and Jīnghóng is Xīshuāngbǎnnà's air link.

Dǎlǐ airport has flights to Kūnmíng and Guǎngzhōu. From Lǐjiāng there are daily flights to Chéngdū, Shànghǎi, Shēnzhèn and

Guǎngzhōu. From Shangri-la, Yunnan Airlines flies to Kūnmíng, Chéngdū, Lhasa, Guǎngzhōu, Shēnzhèn and Guíyáng.

Destinations from Jīnghóng include Lǐjiāng, Shànghǎi and Guǎngzhōu, as well as direct flights to Bangkok and Chiang Mai in Thailand. Mángshì currently only has flights to Kūnmíng.

BUS

A well-developed bus system covers the whole province and Yúnnán has seen a huge rise in the number of express highways in recent years. Expressways link Kūnmíng with Dǎlǐ and Lǐjiāng, and south to Bǎoshān and Jīnghóng.

Road networks link Kūnmíng with Sichuān, Guǐzhōu and Guǎngxī and on to Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand.

TRAIN

Most travellers arrive in Yúnnán by train to Kūnmíng. However within the province trains are less convenient, other than the popular overnight train from the capital to Dǎlǐ. Development of the railways has been slower in Yúnnán than elsewhere; it was only in 1990 that the train line was extended out west to Dǎlǐ. Railways link Yúnnán to Guǐzhōu, Guǎngxī and Sichuān.

CENTRAL YÚNNÁN

KŪNMÍNG 昆明

☎ 0871/pop 1,044,356

Kūnmíng has become a thoroughly modern Chinese city with wide, palm-lined roads and sky-scraping modern buildings. What was left of the quaint back alleyways and wooden buildings have been replaced by shopping malls and modern apartment blocks. However, as far as Chinese cities go, Kūnmíng is very laid-back and an enjoyable place to spend a few days.

At an elevation of 1890m, Kūnmíng has a milder climate than most other Chinese cities, and can be visited at any time of the year. Light clothes will usually be adequate, but it's wise to bring some woollies during the winter months when temperatures can suddenly drop. However, snow is still rare and afternoon daytime temperatures from December to January are often downright springlike. Winters are short, sunny and dry. In summer (June to August) Kūnmíng offers cool respite, though rain is more prevalent.

History

The region of Kūnmíng has been inhabited for 2000 years. Until the 8th century, the town was a remote Chinese outpost, but the kingdom of Nanzhao captured it and made it a secondary capital. In 1274 the Mongols came through, sweeping all and sundry before them.

In the 14th century the Ming set up shop in Yúnnánfǔ, as Kūnmíng was then known, building a walled town on the present site. From the 17th century onwards, the history of this city becomes rather grisly. The last Ming resistance to the invading Manchu took place in Yúnnán in the 1650s and was crushed by General Wu Sangui. Wu in turn rebelled against the king and held out until his death in 1678. His successor was overthrown by the Manchu emperor Kangxi and subsequently killed himself in Kūnmíng in 1681.

In the 19th century the city suffered several bloodbaths. The rebel Muslim leader Du Wenxiu, the sultan of Dǎlǐ, attacked and besieged the city several times between 1858 and 1868; it was not until 1873 that the rebellion was finally and bloodily crushed.

The intrusion of the West into Kūnmíng began in the mid 19th century from British Burma and French Indochina. By 1900 Kūnmíng, Hékǒu, Simáo and Měngzǐ had been opened to foreign trade. The French were keen to exploit the region's copper, tin and timber resources, and in 1910 their Indochina train, started in 1898 at Hanoi, reached the city.

Kūnmíng's expansion began with WWII, when factories were established and refugees fleeing the Japanese poured in from eastern China. In a bid to keep China from falling to Japan, Anglo-American forces sent supplies to nationalist troops entrenched in Sichuān and Yúnnán. Supplies came overland on a dirt road carved out of the mountains from 1937 to 1938 by 160,000 Chinese with virtually no equipment. This was the famous Burma Road, a 1000km haul from Lashio to Kūnmíng. Today, Renmin Xilu marks the tail end of the road.

In early 1942 the Japanese captured Lashio, cutting the supply line. Kūnmíng continued to handle most of the incoming aid from 1942 to 1945, when US planes flew the mission of crossing the 'Hump', the towering 5000m mountain ranges between India and Yúnnán. A black market sprang up and a fair proportion of the medicines, canned food, petrol and other goods intended for the military and relief agencies were siphoned off into other hands.

The face of Kūnmíng has been radically altered since then, with streets widened and office buildings and housing projects flung up. With the coming of the railway, industry has expanded rapidly, and a surprising range of goods and machinery available in China now bears the 'Made in Yúnnán' stamp. The city's produce includes steel, foodstuffs, trucks, machine tools, electrical equipment, textiles, chemicals, building materials and plastics.

Orientation

The jurisdiction of Kūnmíng covers 6200 sq km, encompassing four city districts and four rural counties. The centre of the city is the roundabout at the intersection of Zhengyi Lu and Dongfeng Xilu. East of the intersection is Kūnmíng's major north-south road, Beijing Lu. At the southern end is the main train station and the long-distance bus station.

MAPS

Several maps are available, some with a smattering of English names. The *Yunnan Communications and Tourist Map* (Y10) has good English labels on the provincial map, and on the Kunming city map on the flip side.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Mandarin Books & CDs (West Gate, Yúnnán University) has guidebooks, novels, magazines and a selection of travel writing in English and other languages.

Xinhua Bookshop (Xīnhuá Shūdiàn; Nanping Jie) Dozens of regional and city maps are stuffed in a rack facing the cash register.

INTERNET ACCESS 网吧

Pretty well every hotel and café frequented by travellers offers email for Y5-10 per hour; try the Camellia Hotel (p693) and the Hump (p693).

MEDICAL SERVICES

Shuanghe Pharmacy (Shuānghè Dàoyàofáng; Tuodong Lu; ☎ 24hr) Opposite Yúnnán Airlines.

Yanan Hospital (Yán'án Yīyuàn; ☎ 317 7499, ext 311; 1st fl, block 6, Renmin Donglu) Has a foreigners' clinic.

MONEY

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; 448 Renmin Donglu; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm) Changes travellers cheques and foreign currency and offers cash advances on credit cards. There is an ATM here. There are branches at Dongfeng Xilu and Huancheng Nanlu.

POST & TELEPHONE

China Telecom (Zhōngguó Diànxìn; cnr Beijing Lu & Dongfeng Donglu) You can make international calls here. International Post Office (Guójí Yóujú; 231 Beijing Lu); branch office (Dongfeng Donglu) The main office has a very efficient poste restante and parcel service (per letter Y3, ID required). It is also the city's Express Mail Service (EMS) and Western Union agent.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

PSB (☎ 571 7001; Jinxing Huayuan, Jinxing Lu; ☎ 9-5pm Mon-Fri) The Foreign Affairs Branch will issue visa extensions. The main entrance is off Erhuan Beilu. Take bus 3, 25 or 57.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Many of the popular backpacker hotels and some of the cafés can assist with travel queries.

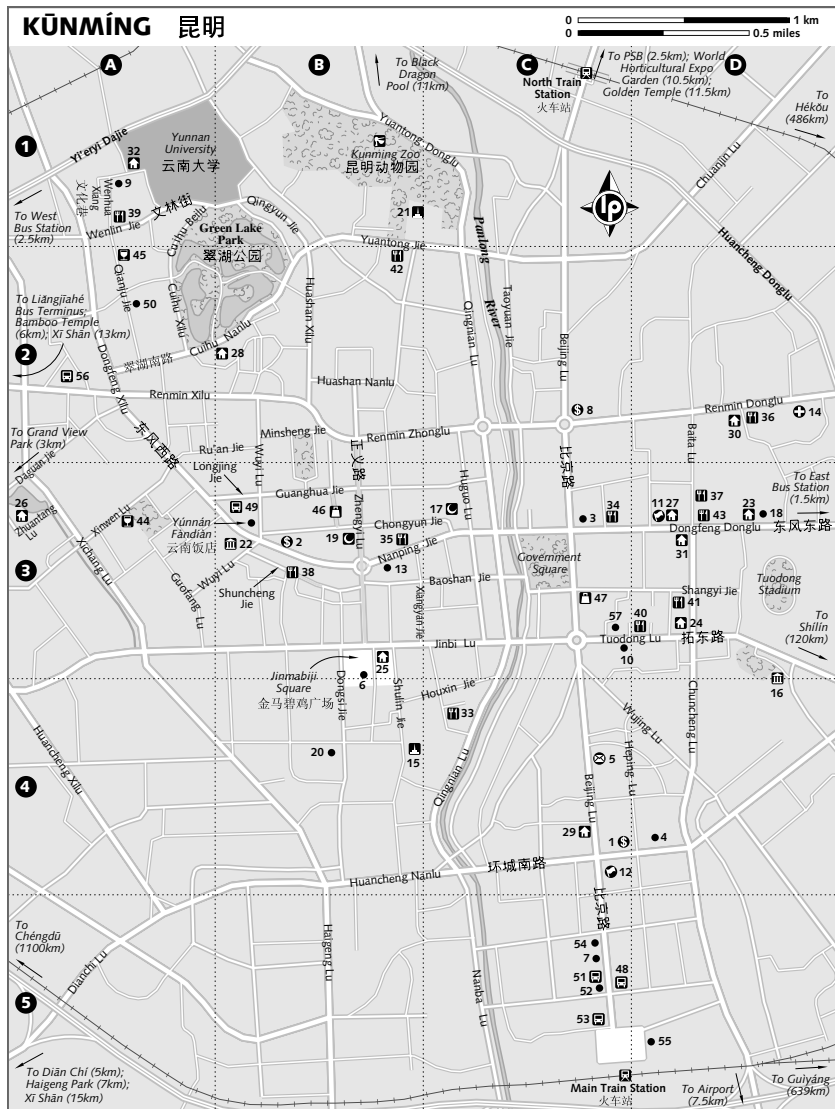
China International Travel Service (CITS; Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshì; ☎ 356 6730; 285 Huancheng Nanlu; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) organizes tours. Also gives information to independent travellers, albeit reluctantly. English and French spoken.

Tourist Complaint & Consultative Telephone (☎ 316 4961) Where you can complain about or report dodgy tourist operations.

East Pagoda (Dōngsī Tǎ; Shulin Jie) was, according to Chinese sources, destroyed by an earthquake; Western sources say it was destroyed by the Muslim revolt. It was rebuilt in the 19th century, but there's little to see.

YUANTONG TEMPLE 圆通寺 This temple (Yuántōng Sì; Yuantong Jie; admission Y4; ☎ 8am-5pm) is the largest Buddhist complex in Kūnmíng and a draw for pilgrims. It's over 1000 years old, and has seen many renovations. To the rear a hall has been added, with a statue of Sakyamuni, a gift from Thailand's king. There's a great vegetarian restaurant (p694) across the main road from the temple entrance.

YÜNNÁN PROVINCIAL MUSEUM 云南省博物馆 Closed for renovations during research, this museum (Yünnán Shèng Bówúguǎn; Wuyi Lu) covers the province's ancient bronze drums, Buddhist art and ethnic minorities. It's generally worth a visit and should be open again by the time you read this. Bus 5 goes here from the Camellia Hotel.



Dangers & Annoyances Kūnmíng is one of the safest cities in China but take special precaution near the train and long-distance bus stations. The area can get seedy at night and there have been reports of travellers having their bags razored.

Sights & Activities TANG DYNASTY PAGODAS To the south of Jinbi Lu are two Tang pagodas. West Pagoda (Xīsī Tǎ; Dōngsī Jie; admission Y2; ☎ 9am-6pm) is the more interesting. Attached is a compound that is a popular spot for older people to get together, drink tea and play cards and mah jong.

Table with 4 columns: INFORMATION, SLEEPING, EATING, SHOPPING, TRANSPORT. Lists various services and locations with codes.

KUNMING CITY MUSEUM 昆明市博物馆
The left-hand hall of this **museum** (Kūnmíngshì Bówùguǎn; Tuodong Lu; admission ¥5; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) is packed with swords, spears and surprises like mini bronze ox heads excavated in the Kunming area. The right-hand hall has an impressive 6.6m-pillar engraved with Buddhist scriptures from the Dali kingdom (937-1253). It's said Prime Minister Yuan Douguang of the Dali kingdom had it constructed for Kūnmíng's Military Administrator Gao Míngsheng. A middling dinosaur exhibit inhabits the second floor.

GREEN LAKE PARK 翠湖公园

Get to this **park** (Cuihú Gōngyuán; Cuihu Nanlu; ☎ 6am-10pm) early in the morning to watch taichi, browse the nearby shops or relax in one of the trendy or not-so-hip lakeside cafés.

MOSQUES 清真寺

The oldest of the lot, the 400-year-old **Nancheng Mosque** (Nánchéng Qīngzhēn Gūsi; 51 Zhengyi Lu), was ripped down in 1997 in order to build a larger version. The new mosque looks vaguely like a bad Las Vegas casino. Not too far away is a lively strip of Muslim restaurants and shops selling skullcaps, Arabic calligraphy and pictures of Mecca. To get to the Mus-

lim area from the Zhengyi Lu roundabout, walk west past Chūnchéng Jiùlǒu (Spring City Hotel) and then bear left a half-block to a small alley.

There's another **mosque** nearby, wedged between Huguo Lu and Chongyun Jie.

Tours

Several tour outfits cover Kūnmíng and its surrounding sights faster than public minibuses would, but be prepared to pay for them. They generally feature lots of sights most travellers find rather boring. Some tour operators refuse to take foreigners on their tours, claiming the language barrier causes too much trouble. More central sights like Yuantong Temple are just a short bicycle ride away – it hardly makes sense to join a tour to see them.

Mr Chen's Tour (☎ 318 8114; Room 3116, No 3 Bldg, Camellia Hotel, 154 Dongfeng Lu) can organise trips to almost anywhere you want to go, including flights and overland trips to Lhasa (see p696 for more details).

Sleeping

BUDGET

Kunming Cloudland Youth Hostel (昆明大脚氏青年旅舍; Kūnmíng Dǎjiǎoshì Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎ 410 3777; 23 Zhuantang Lu; 篆塘路23号; 4/6-bed dm ¥30/20; ☑)

YÜNNÁN'S MUSLIMS

Yünnán's sizeable Muslim population dates back to the 13th century, when Mongol forces swooped into the province to outflank the Song dynasty troops. Sayyid Ajall was named governor in 1274 and Yünnán became the only part of China under a Muslim leader after Kublai Khan's forces arrived. Muslim traders, builders and craftsmen followed in the army's wake.

All over China mosques were simultaneously raised with the new Yuan dynasty banner. A Muslim was entrusted to build the first Mongol palace in Běijīng, where an observatory based on Persian models was also constructed. Dozens of Arabic texts were translated and consulted by Chinese scientists, influencing Chinese mathematics more than any other source. The most famous Yünnán Muslim was Cheng Ho (Zheng He), a eunuch admiral who pushed Chinese seafaring as far away as the Middle East.

Ethnically indistinguishable from the Han Chinese, the Hui, as ethnic Chinese Muslims are known, have had an unfortunate history of repression and persecution, a recent low point being the years of the Cultural Revolution. Heavy land taxes and disputes between Muslims and Han Chinese over local gold and silver mines triggered a Muslim uprising in 1855, which lasted until 1873.

The Muslims chose Dàli (Xiàguān) as their base and laid siege to Kūnmíng, overrunning the city briefly in 1863. Du Wenxiu, the Muslim leader, proclaimed his newly established kingdom of the Pacified South (Nánping Guó) and took the name Sultan Suleyman. But success was short-lived and in 1873 Dàli was taken by Qing forces and Du Wenxiu was captured and executed. Up to a million people died in Yünnán alone, the death toll rising to 18 million nationwide. The uprisings were quelled, but they also had the lasting effect of eliciting sympathy from Burma and fomenting a passion for indigenous culture among many of southwestern China's ethnic minorities, most of whom had supported the Hui.

This recently opened hostel is absolutely charming, with staff that makes a tremendous effort for guests. Dorms are bright, spotless and modern. To get here from the train or long-distance bus station, take city bus 64 and get off at the Yünnán Daily News stop (云南日报社站).

Hump (Tuófēng Kèzhàn; ☎ 364 0359; Jinmabiji Square, Jinbi Lu; 金碧路, 金马碧鸡广场; 8-bed dm ¥25) A magnificent budget option; dorms are enormous and come with individual lockers. There's a basketball court-sized common room and pool, and Ping-Pong tables on the terrace. Umpteen bars and discos are at your doorstep. What more do you need?

Kunming Youth Hostel (Kūnmíng Guóji Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎ 517 5395; youthhostel.km@sohu.com; 94 Cuihu Nanlu; 翠湖路94号; dm ¥25, d from ¥80) Tucked along a lane beside the Zhengxie Hotel, this hostel is basic but clean and quiet. Dorms are stark white and joltingly lit. However, the hostel is right by Green Lake Park and staff are laid-back and friendly.

Kūnhú Fàndiàn (☎ 314 3699; 202 Beijing Lu; 北京路202号; dm ¥25, s & d with bathroom ¥128) Near the train and bus stations, a good number of backpackers end up here. There's a travel service onsite, and clean, beaten up old dorms. Singles are big but furnished with doll-sized beds anyone over 160cm tall will have a struggle getting comfortable in. The hotel is two stops from the main train station on bus 2, 23 or 47, though it's easy enough to walk it.

Camellia Hotel (Cháhuā Bīnguǎn; ☎ 316 3000; fax 314 7033; 96 Dongfeng Donglu; 东风东96路; dm ¥30, d ¥188-288) In truth, this budget legend is getting a little rough around the edges with some downright grubby rooms on offer. But with travel services, bicycle hire, foreign-exchange, reasonably priced laundry services and a colossal breakfast buffet, the response of most backpackers is a resounding 'so what?' To get here from the main train station, take buses 2 or 23 to Dongfeng Donglu, then change to bus 5 heading east and get off at the second stop.

MIDRANGE

Yúnda Bīnguǎn (Yünnán University Hotel; ☎ 503 3624; fax 5148513; Wenhua Xiang; 文化巷; d from ¥160) If you want to stay in the university area then the standard doubles here are a good choice. It's next to the university's west gate. Incredibly friendly.

Míngdǔ Dàjiùdiàn (☎ 624 0666; fax 624 0898; 206 Baita Lu; 白塔路206号; s/d ¥388, ste 688) Breaking the beige conspiracy of most midrange Chinese

hotels, rooms here are done up in a refreshing red-gold colour combo. Bathrooms are spacious and tidy.

TOP END

Kunming Hotel (Kūnmíng Fàndiàn; ☎ 316 2063; www.kunminghotel.com.cn; 52 Dongfeng Donglu; 东风东路52号; s & d ¥780, ste ¥1419; ☎) With a bar, disco, karaoke hall, tennis court and even a bowling alley on-site you may never want to leave this place. There are also high-end restaurants, including Cháozhōu (featuring dishes from eastern Guǎngdōng: light, tasty cuisine with a liberal use of vegetables). Travellers who've made the splurge here give this hotel unreserved raves.

Sakura Kunming (Kūnmíng Yīnghuā Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 316 5888; 25 Dongfeng Donglu; 东风东路25号; d from ¥800; ☎) This super-luxury monster is opposite the Kunming Hotel. It has some excellent restaurants (Thai and southwestern American/Mexican, along with a popular breakfast/lunch buffet), a Western-style pub, a small health club, pool, and a disco.

Greenland Hotel (Lǚzhōu Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 318 9999; www.greenlandhotel.com.cn; 80 Tuodong Lu; 拓东路80号; s & d incl breakfast from ¥945; ste from ¥1527; ☎) It's probably got the slickest service in the city. Rooms are nice and have a generous assortment of wine glasses, but lack the 'va-va vroom' you'd expect after walking past the fish-filled fountain on the way to the lobby.

Eating

Kūnmíng has some great food, especially in the snack line. Regional specialties are *qīguōjī* (器锅鸡; herb-infused chicken cooked in an earthenware steam pot), *guòqiáo mǐxiàn* (过桥米线; across-the-bridge noodles), *rǔbǐng* (乳饼; goats' cheese) and various Muslim beef and mutton dishes.

Roadside noodle shops will give you a bowl of rice noodles for around ¥5 and a bewildering array of sauces with which to flavour the broth – most of them are hot and spicy. Go hunting for these near the long-distance bus station and the lanes running off Beijing Lu.

Another place to go snack hunting is Shuncheng Jie, an east-west street running south of Dongfeng Xilu. Here you'll find literally dozens of Muslim restaurants, kebab stalls and noodle stands. Try *bānmiàn* (扳面; a kind of spaghetti) or Uighur *suoman* (fried noodle squares with peppers, tomato and cumin).

Western-style cafés can be found near the Camellia Hotel and Kūnhú Fāndiàn, and the area surrounding Yúnnán University, in particular Wenlin Jie. These are also good areas to search out vegetarian fare.

Zhenxing Fāndiàn (Yúnnán Typical Local Food Restaurant; cnr Baita Lu & Dongfeng Donglu; ☎ 24hr; dishes from ¥5) You'll find a good range of dishes and snacks at this restaurant. The food gets decent reviews from both locals and foreigners, just don't come for the service.

Brothers Jiang (Jiāngshì Xiōngdì; Dongfeng Donglu; noodles ¥10-60) This place has good across-the-bridge noodles that come with instructions on how to eat them. There are several branches situated throughout the city and they are easy to find: line-ups snake into the street during mealtimes. Pay upfront first at the cash register.

White Pagoda Dai Restaurant (Báitǎ Dài Wéiting; ☎ 317 2932; 127 Shangyi Jie; dishes from ¥10) All of Dai cuisine's greatest hits like pineapple sticky rice and spicy fish wrapped in bamboo shoots are found in this modest restaurant. It has also had a stab at creating some atmosphere, with a couple of thatched roofs over the tables and murals of 'Bǎnnà' on the walls.

Yuquanzhai Vegetarian Restaurant (Yúquánzhāi Cānting; Yuantong Jie; dishes from ¥10) This outstanding vegetarian restaurant takes the practice of 'copying' meat-based dishes to a new level, with an encyclopaedic menu. The *tiěbǎn* (sizzling iron-pot) comes recommended. It's across the road from Yuantong Temple.

Salvador's (☎ 536-3525; Wenhua Xiang; dishes from ¥15) Heaving with Chinese and foreign students from the nearby university, this café has superior coffee and hits like waffles and quesadillas. Though modern and on the slick side, Salvador's has the buzz of a student lounge and people here are generally relaxed and approachable.

Ma Ma Fu's 2 (Māmāfū Cānting; Baita Lu; dishes from ¥15) This branch of the legendary Lijiāng café is right around the corner west of the Camellia Hotel. Chinese dishes like the tongue-searing but outstanding spicy beef and rice (¥15) are by far the best, but most people order Western fare like pizza and apple pie.

1910 La Gare du Sud (Huòchē Nánzhàn; ☎ 316 9486; dishes from ¥20) This classy restaurant serving Yúnnán specialities in a pleasant neocolonial-style atmosphere gets terrific feedback from travellers. There's an English menu if you ask for it. It's hidden down an alley south of Jinbi Lu.

Wei's Pizzeria (☎ 316 6189; Tuodong Lu; pizzas from ¥25, Chinese dishes from ¥6) Most come here for wood-fired pizzas, others for cold beer served in frosted steins. But the menu is also loaded with regional specialities like the *taozá rùbing* (fried goats' cheese and Yúnnán ham) that are definitely worth a try. The restaurant is down an alley off Tuodong Lu.

Hotpot Restaurant (Huòguō; Renmin Donglu cnr Baita Lu; per stick from ¥1) An absolute madhouse at peak mealtimes, this restaurant will take the very aggressive or the very brave to muscle their way through the throngs and eventually get fed. Nonetheless, with all the slick restaurant and eateries all over Kūnmíng these days, this is a breath of fresh air.

For self-catering try **Carrefour** (Jiālǎfú; Nanping Jie), a branch of the popular French supermarket chain.

Drinking

You'll find plenty of places to drink in Kūnmíng no matter what your mood. For laid-back atmosphere, cold beers and music low enough you can still talk to your friends, prowl the cafés and bars around the university area. Wenhua Xiang is a good place to start. If you need strobe lights and dancing more

than conversation, there are dozens of super loud bars at **Jinmabiji Square**. And for hard-core techno, outrageous prices and all around silliness, the **Kundu Night Market** has dozens of discos frequented by the young, the rich and the (sometimes) weirdly dressed. Even more discos line Xinwen Jie nearby.

Other places to try include:

Speakeasy (Shuóbǎ; Dongfeng Xilu; ☎ 8pm-late) Part of the weekend pub crawl for most people between 20 and 40 years old. It doesn't get slagged like other places do for being either 'too foreign' or 'too Chinese' and there's always a great mix of expats and locals. It's down the stairs under the blue sign.

Café de Camel (Tuodong Lu; ☎ 9am-late) A popular place with locals and foreigners, this restaurant/coffee shop doubles as a drinking den on weekends when tables are moved to one side and a DJ plays tunes until dawn.

Shopping

You have to do a fair bit of digging to come up with inspiring purchases in Kūnmíng. Yúnnán specialities are marble and batik from Dǎli, jade from Ruili, minority embroidery, musical instruments and spotted-brass utensils.

Some functional items that make good souvenirs include large bamboo water pipes for smoking angel-haired Yúnnán tobacco; and local herbal medicines, such as Yúnnán Báiyào (Yúnnán White Medicine), which is a blend of over 100 herbs and is highly prized by Chinese throughout the world.

Yunnanese tea is an excellent buy and comes in several varieties, from bowl-shaped bricks of smoked green tea called *tuóchá*, which have been around since at least Marco Polo's time, to leafy black tea that rivals some of India's best.

One teashop worth checking out is **Tian Fu Famous Teas** (Tiānfù Míngchá; cnr Shangyi Jie & Beijing Lu).

The **Flower & Bird Market** (Huāniǎo Shìchǎng; Tongdao Jie) seems to sell everything except flowers and birds, instead you'll find old coins and wooden elephants, tacky wall murals and so-called 'antiques'.

For rare antiques it's better to look among the privately run shops on Beijing Lu and Dongfeng Donglu.

Getting There & Away

AIR
Yunnan Airlines/CAAC (Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 316 4270, 313 8562; Tuodong Lu; ☎ 24hr) issues tickets for any Chinese airline but the office only offers dis-

counts on Yunnan Airlines flights. From 8pm to 8am buy your tickets from the small ticket window on the left side of the building.

A good one-stop shop for booking flights is the **Sanye International Air Service** (Sānyè Guójī Hángkōng Fúwù Yóuxiàn Gōngsī; ☎ 353 0773; fax 354 3370; 66-68 Beijing Lu), next door to the long-distance bus station. The office deals with more than 20 international carriers and all the national ones.

Flights are scheduled to depart daily from Kūnmíng for Běijīng (Y1940), Chéngdū (Y830), Chóngqīng (Y840), Guǎngzhōu (Y1290), Guìyáng (Y570), Nánjīng (Y1680), Nánning (Y710), Shànghǎi (Y2030), Shēnzhèn (Y1370), Qīngdǎo (Y1730) and Xī'ān (Y1100).

There is now a weekly flight to Lhasa (Y1670).

Within Yúnnán province you can fly to Bǎoshān (Y640), Jīnghóng (Y780), Lijiāng (Y660), Mángshì/Déhóng (Y790), Xiāguān/Dàli (Y520) and Shangri-la (Y770).

There are international flights to most major Asian cities including Hong Kong (Y2108, daily), Vientiane (Y985, Wed & Sun) and Kuala Lumpur (Y2256).

Foreign airline offices in Kūnmíng include the following:

Dragonair (☎ 356 1208, 356 1209; 2/F Kaihuá Guǎngchǎng, 157 Beijing Lu)

Malaysia Airlines (☎ 316 5888; Sakura Kūnmíng, 25 Dongfeng Donglu) Office is outside, on your right-hand side approaching the hotel entrance.

Lao Aviation (☎ 312 5748; Camellia Hotel, 154 Dongfeng Donglu)

Thai Airways (☎ 351 1515; 68 Beijing Lu) Next to the King World Hotel.

BUS

There seem to be buses leaving from everywhere in Kūnmíng and bus transport can be a little confusing at first. However, the long-distance bus station on Beijing Lu is the best place to organise bus tickets to almost anywhere in Yúnnán or further afield. Exceptions to this are more local destinations like Diān Chí; see Around Kūnmíng p696 for more details on transport to individual attractions close to the city.

From the sleeper bus stand close to the main train station you can get sleeper buses to most of the same destinations. Buses here tend to be a bit older and so ticket prices are generally a bit cheaper.

For information on Shílín, see p700.

ACROSS-THE-BRIDGE NOODLES

Yúnnán's best-known dish is across-the-bridge noodles (过桥米线; *guòqiáo mìxiàn*). You are provided with a bowl of very hot soup (stewed with chicken, duck and spare ribs) on which a thin layer of oil is floating, along with a side dish of raw pork sliders (in classier places this might be chicken or fish) and vegetables, and a bowl of rice noodles. Diners place all of the ingredients quickly into the soup bowl, where they are cooked by the steamy broth. They say the dish was created by a woman married to an imperial scholar. He decamped to an isolated island to study and she got creative with the hot meals she brought to him every day after crossing the bridge. This noodle dish was by far the most popular and christened 'Across-the-Bridge Noodles' in honour of her daily commute.

TRAIN

You can buy train tickets up to 10 days in advance, which is good news because at peak times, especially public holidays, tickets get sold out days ahead of departure.

At the time of writing, the train to Hekou in Vietnam had been suspended indefinitely, so you'll have to get the bus instead.

Rail options from Kūnmíng (all prices listed are for hard sleepers) include trains to Běijīng (Y578), Shànghái (Y519), Guíyáng (Y162), Guǎngzhōu (Y353), Xī'ān (Y258), Emei Town (Y209), Chéngdū (Y252) and Liùpánshuǐ (Y96). Several overnight trains run daily to Dǎlì (Y95). Check at the train ticket office for times.

TO TIBET

It's now possible to fly to Lhasa from Kūnmíng. However, the situation is the same as in Chéngdū and you must have the requisite permit and travel as part of a group. Mr Chen's Tour (p692) can sort you out with the necessary permits and sign you onto a 'tour' with a bunch of people you'll never see again once you've landed in Lhasa. At the time of writing these packages cost around Y2750.

There are also flights from Shangri-la to Lhasa and it has recently become possible to travel overland from Shangri-la into Tibet (see p726). From Chéngdū Mr Chen can also organise overland travel to Tibet, although some travellers have reported his sales pitch to be better than his trips.

KŪNMÍNG BUS TIMETABLES

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Dǎlì	Y116	5hr	frequent	7.30am-7.30pm
Dǎlì (sleeper)	Y95	10hr	2 daily	9pm, 9.30pm
Lǐjiāng	Y171	9hr	hourly	7.30-11.30am
Lǐjiāng (sleeper)	Y139	10-12hr	2 daily	8pm, 8.30pm
Jǐnghóng	Y223	10hr	4 daily	9.30am, 6pm, 7.45pm, 8.30pm
Jǐnghóng (sleeper)	Y155	10hr	half-hourly	4-8pm
Shangri-la	Y142-161	13-15hr	1-3 daily	8am, 4.30pm, 6pm
Shangri-la (sleeper)	Y167	13-15hr	every 30min	4pm-8.30pm
Bǎoshān	Y171	7hr	4 daily	
Bǎoshān (sleeper)	Y142	12hr	2 daily	7.30pm, 8.30pm
Ruìlì	Y222	13hr	2 daily	10am, 6pm
Ruìlì (sleeper)	Y209	15hr	daily	8pm
Hékǒu	Y119	12hr	2 daily	9.45am, 1.30pm
Yuányáng	Y73-82	6-7hrs	3 daily	10.40am, 7.30pm, 8pm

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

Bus 52 and 67 run between the centre of town and the airport. A taxi will cost between Y15 and Y20.

BICYCLE

Many backpackers hotels and hostels also rent bikes for around Y15 per day.

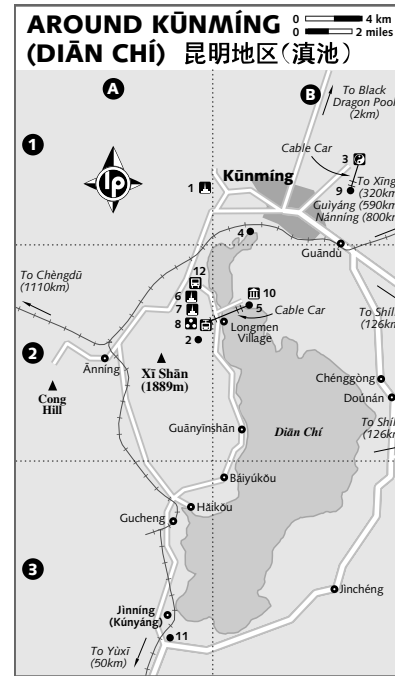
Fat Tyres Bike Shop (☎ 530 1755; 61 Qianju Jie; per day Y20) has a large stock of bicycles including some very good mountain bikes. It also organises Sunday morning bike rides – you need to make reservations ahead of time.

BUS

Bus 63 runs from the east bus station to the Camellia Hotel and on to the main train station. Bus 23 runs from the north train station south down Beijing Lu to the main train station. Fares range from Y1 to Y4. The main city buses have no conductors and require exact change.

AROUND KŪNMÍNG

There are some fabulous sights within a 15km radius of Kūnmíng, but local transport hasn't quite caught up with people's interest in visiting them. What is available is time-consuming, awkward and very, very crowded. There are few crossovers for combined touring, so it would take something like five return trips, over three days or more, to see everything.

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Bamboo Temple 筇竹寺	1	A1
Dragon Gate 龙门	2	A2
Golden Temple 金殿	3	B1
Grand View Park 大观公园	4	B1
Haigeng Park 海埂公园	5	B2
Huating Temple 华亭寺	6	A2
Sānqīng Gé 三清阁	7	(see 8)
Taihua Temple 太华寺	7	A2
Tomb of Nie Er 聂耳墓	8	A2
World Horticultural Expo Garden 世界园艺博览园	9	B1
Yunnan Nationalities Museum 云南民族博物馆	10	B2
Zhenghe Park 郑和公园	11	A3
TRANSPORT		
Gāoyào Bus Station 高要汽车	12	A2

prentices to fashion 500 *luòhàn* (arhats or noble ones). The figures are a sculptural *tour de force* – either very realistic or very surrealistic. Down one huge wall come some 70-odd incredible surfing Buddhas, riding the waves on a variety of mounts – blue dogs, giant crabs, shrimp, turtles and unicorns.

The statues have been constructed with the precision of a split-second photograph – a monk about to chomp into a large peach (the face contorted almost into a scream), a figure caught turning around to emphasise a discussion point, another about to clap two cymbals together, yet another cursing a pet monster. So lifelike are the sculptures that they were considered in bad taste by Li Guangxiu's contemporaries (some of whom no doubt appeared in caricature), and upon the project's completion he disappeared into thin air.

Unfortunately you have to make do with peering round the door as the hall has been closed to visitors to stop local tourists throwing coins at the statues – an act that is thought to bring them good luck (it obviously didn't work). If the temple is quiet when you visit, the friendly monks might be persuaded to let you in for a peek inside.

The temple is about 12km northwest of Kūnmíng. Minibuses (Y10, 30 minutes) leave when full from opposite Yúnnán Fāndiàn from 7am. Minibuses return regularly to Kūnmíng. A taxi to the temple will cost around Y45.

Golden Temple 金殿

Hidden amid a pine forest on Phoenix Song Mountain is **Golden Temple** (Jīn Diàn; admission Y20; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) a Taoist temple, and actually

Arranging a car and driver through your accommodation or seeing what tours CITS (p691) is offering are probably your best bets if you want to see everything fast.

If you don't have that much time, the Bamboo Temple (Qióngzhú Sì) and Xī Shān (Western Hills) are probably the most interesting. Both have decent transport connections. Diān Chí (Lake Dian) has terrific circular-tour possibilities of its own. If you have more time, get your hands on a good map, hire a good bicycle and tour the area on two wheels (although there are some steep hills lurking out there...).

Bamboo Temple 筇竹寺

Named for the bamboo groves that once surrounded it, this **temple** (Qióngzhú Sì; ☎ 8am-6pm; admission Y10) dates back to the Tang dynasty and is worth a visit for its tremendous life-sized clay sculptures.

The temple was burned down and rebuilt in the 15th century, then restored from 1883 to 1890 when the abbot employed master Sichuanese sculptor Li Guangxiu and his ap-

made of bronze, that was the brainchild of General Wu Sangui. Wu was dispatched by the Manchus in 1659 to quell uprisings in the region but instead turned on the Manchus and set himself up as a rebel warlord, with the Golden Temple as his summer residence. The current structure dates back to 1671; the original Ming temple stood in the same spot but was carted off to Dǎli. Out back, there's a 5m-high, 14-tonne bell.

Buses 10 or 71 run here from Kūnmíng's north train station or you can cycle. A cable car one-way/return Y15/25 runs from the temple to the World Horticultural Expo Garden.

World Horticultural Expo Garden

世界园艺博览园

This 218-hectare **garden complex** (Shìjiè Yuányi Bólänyuán; ☎ 501 2367; adult/student Y100/50; 🕒 8am-5pm, last entry at 4pm), about 10km northeast of Kūnmíng near the Golden Temple, was built in April 1999 for the World Horticultural Exposition. The gardens are a mix of pleasant Disney-style topiary work and strangely pointless exhibits left over from the expo; the place is worth a visit if you are interested in gardens and plants, otherwise give it a miss.

From Kunming's north train station take bus 10 to the terminal. A cable car (Y15) at the back of the gardens can take you to the Golden Temple.

Black Dragon Pool 黑龙潭

This is a rather mediocre **garden** (Hēilóng Tán; admission Y1; 🕒 9am-6pm), 11km north of Kūnmíng, with old cypresses, dull Taoist pavilions and no bubble in the springs. But the view of the surrounding mountains from the garden is inspiring. Within walking distance is the **Kunming Botanical Institute** (🕒 9am-5pm), where the flora collection might be of interest to specialists.

Take bus 9 from Kūnmíng's north train station.

DIĀN CHÍ 滇池

The shoreline of **Diān Chí** (Lake Dian), to the south of Kūnmíng, is dotted with settlements, farms and fishing enterprises; the western side is hilly, while the eastern side is flat country. The southern end of the lake, particularly the southeast, is industrial.

The lake is elongated – about 40km from north to south – and covers an area of 300 sq km. Plying the waters are *fānchuan* (pirate-

sized junks with bamboo-battened canvas sails). It's mainly for scenic touring and hiking, and there are some fabulous aerial views from the ridges at Dragon Gate in Xī Shān, below).

Grand View Park 大观公园

This **park** (Dàguān Gōngyuán; admission Y10) is at the northernmost tip of Diān Chí, 3km southwest of the city centre. It covers 60 hectares and includes a nursery, a children's playground, rowboats and pavilions. A Buddhist temple was originally constructed here in 1862. The **Grand View Tower** (Dàguān Lóu) provides good views. Its facades are inscribed with a 180-character poem by Qing poet Sun Ranweng, rapturously extolling the beauty of the lake.

Bus 4 runs to the park from Yuantong Temple via the city centre; bus 52 departs from near the Kunming Hotel. At the northeastern end of the park is a dock where you may be able to get a boat (Y5, 40 minutes) to **Longmen Village** (Lóngmén Cūn) and **Haigeng Park** (Hǎigēng Gōngyuán). From Longmen Village you can hike up the trail to Dragon Gate and Xī Shān, and catch a minibus back into town from near the summit at the Tomb of Nie Er. From Haigeng Park, take bus 44 to Kūnmíng's main train station.

Xī Shān 西山

Spread out across a long wedge of parkland on the western side of Diān Chí, **Xī Shān** (Western Hills) is full of walking trails (some very steep), and dotted with temples and other cultural relics, all just waiting to be explored. Its hills are also called the Sleeping Beauty Hills, a reference to the undulating contours, which are thought to resemble a reclining woman with tresses of hair flowing into the sea. The path up to the summit passes a series of famous temples – it's a steep approach from the north side. The hike from Gāoyāo bus station, at the foot of the hills, to Dragon Gate takes 2½ hours, though most people take a connecting bus from Gāoyāo to the top section, or take a minibus direct to the Tomb of Nie Er. Alternatively, it is also possible to cycle to the hills from the city centre in about an hour – to vary the trip, try doing the return route across the dikes of upper Diān Chí.

At the foot of the climb, about 15km from Kūnmíng, is **Huating Temple** (Huátíng Sì; admission Y4; 🕒 8am-6pm), a country temple of the Nanzhao kingdom believed to have been constructed

in the 11th century, rebuilt in the 14th century, and extended in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The road from Huating Temple winds 2km from here up to the Ming dynasty **Taihua Temple** (Tāihuà Sì; admission Y3; 🕒 8am-6pm). The temple courtyard houses a fine collection of flowering trees, including magnolias and camellias.

Further along the road, near the minibus and cable car terminus, is the **Tomb of Nie Er** (Niè'ěr Zhīmù; admission Y1; 🕒 8am-6pm). Nie Er (1912–36) was a talented Yunnan musician who composed the national anthem of the People's Republic of China (PRC) before drowning in Japan en route for further training in the Soviet Union.

Sānqīng Gé, near the top of the mountain, was a country villa of a Yuan dynasty prince, and was later turned into a temple dedicated to the three main Taoist deities.

From the tomb you can catch a **chairlift** (one way/return Y15/30; 🕒 8am-7pm) if you want to skip the fairly steep ascent to the summit. Alternatively a tourist tram takes passengers up to the Dragon Gate for Y2.

Further up, near the top of the mountain, is **Dragon Gate** (Lóng Mēn; admission Y30; 🕒 8am-6pm). This is a group of grottoes, sculptures, corridors and pavilions that were hacked from the cliff between 1781 and 1835 by a Taoist monk and co-workers, who must have been hanging up there by their fingertips. At least that's what the locals do when they visit, seeking out the most precarious perches for views of Diān Chí. The tunnel along the outer cliff edge is so narrow that only one or two people can squeeze by at a time, so avoid public holidays and weekends! Entrance to the Dragon Gate area includes Sānqīng Gé. It's possible to walk up to the Dragon Gate along the cliff path and return via the back routes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses (one way/return Y10/20, one hour, 7.30am to 2pm) leave when full from opposite Yúnnán Fāndiàn. The only trouble is you could be waiting for ages for the bus to fill up.

It's more reliable to use local buses: take bus 5 from the Kunming Hotel to the terminus at Liàngjiāhé, and then change to bus 6, which will take you to Gāoyāo bus station at the foot of the hills. Minibuses (Y5) also leave from Liàngjiāhé and drop passengers off at the Tomb of Nie Er.

To return to Kūnmíng take the bus or scramble down from the Dragon Gate area to the lakeside. Steps lead downhill a couple of hundred metres before Dragon Gate and the Sānqīng Gé area ticket office and end up in Longmen Village (Lóngmén Cūn), also known as Sānyì Cūn. When you reach the road, turn right and walk about 100m to a narrow spit of land leading across the lake. Continuing across the spit, you arrive at a narrow stretch of water and a small bridge. (You could also take the cable car across to Haigeng Park for Y30.)

Walk through Haigeng Park's far entrance and catch bus 44 to Kūnmíng's main train station. If you don't want to pay Y6 to cut through Haigeng Park, you'll have to walk 3km or so from the cable car to the entrance of the Yúnnán Nationalities Village or take a taxi (Y10).

Alternatively, bus 33 runs along the western lake shore through Longmen Village, or you can take a boat from Grand View Park.

Yúnnán Nationalities Museum

云南民族博物馆

On the northeast corner of the lake, the **Yúnnán Nationalities Museum** (Yúnnán Mínzú Bówùguǎn) is worth a visit if you have an interest in China's minority nationalities. Its halls display costumes, folk art, jewellery, handicrafts and musical instruments, as well as information concerning social structure and popular festivals on each of Yúnnán's 25 minority groups. Closed for renovations at the time of research, it will be reopened by the time you read this.

Chénggòng County 呈贡县

This county (Chénggòng Xiàn) is an orchard region on the eastern side of Diān Chí. Flowers bloom year-round, with the 'flower tide' in January, February and March. This is the best time to visit, especially the diminutive Dòunán village nearby. Once one of Yúnnán's poorest villages, it now sells more than 400,000 sprays of flowers each day. The village's per capita income went from US\$13 to US\$415 in four years.

Many Western varieties of camellia, azalea, orchid and magnolia derive from southwestern Chinese varieties. They were introduced to the West by adventuring botanists who carted off samples in the 19th and 20th centuries. Azaleas are native to China – of the 800 varieties in the world, 650 are found in Yúnnán.

During the **Spring Festival** (January/February) a profusion of blooms can be found at temple sites in and around Kūnmíng – notably the temples of Tàihuá, Huátíng, Yuántóng and the Golden Temple, as well as at Black Dragon Pool.

Take bus 5 heading east to the terminus at Jíhuáucūn, and change there for bus 12 to Chénggōng.

Zhenghe Park 郑和公园

At the southwest corner of Diān Chí, this park (Zhènghé Gōngyuán) commemorates the Ming dynasty navigator Zheng He (known as Admiral Cheng Ho outside China). A mausoleum here holds tablets with descriptions of his life and works. Zheng He, a Muslim, made seven voyages to more than 30 Asian and African countries in the 15th century in command of a huge imperial fleet (see the boxed text on p692).

From Xiǎoxímén bus station take the bus to Jínníng; the park is on a hill overlooking the town.

SHÍLÍN 石林

☎ 0871

This is one of those weird attractions that is equally the most visited and most derided (especially since the price hike) attractions in the Kūnmíng area. **Shílín** (Stone Forest; ☎ 771 0316; admission Y140) is a massive collection of grey limestone pillars located about 120km southeast of Kūnmíng. Split and eroded by wind and rain, the tallest reaches 30m high. Legend has it that the immortals smashed a mountain into a labyrinth for lovers seeking privacy.

Despite guides rather suddenly jumping out from behind pillars in minority dress (disturbing to say the least) and tour groups clogging the paths, there are ways to enjoy Shílín and make it worth the visit. Idyllic, secluded walks are within 2km of the centre and by sunset or moonlight the place becomes otherworldly.

Shílín can easily be done as a day trip from Kūnmíng. However if you decide to stay longer, then it's worth heading over to Lùnán, a small town that is about 10km north of Shílín. If you manage to time your visit with market day (Wednesday or Saturday), then you'll see Lùnán transform into a colossal jam of donkeys, horse carts and bikes. The streets are packed with produce, poultry

and wares, and the Sani women are dressed in their finest.

Sleeping & Eating

Shílín doesn't have much in the way of accommodation and what it does offer is overpriced.

Stone Forest International Youth Hostel (Shílín Guóji Qīngnián Lǚguǎn; ☎ 771 0768; 4-bed dm Y50, small s/d Y120, big s/d Y140) Directly opposite where the buses drop you off, this hostel offers the cleanest, best-value accommodation you will find in Shílín.

Shílín Bìshùyuán Bīnguǎn (☎ 771 1088; d/tr Y300/360, discounted Y240/288) If you're looking to splash out then the rooms here are quiet and have some good views over Shílín, but you still don't get a lot for your money.

Several restaurants next to the bus stop specialise in duck, roasted in extremely hot clay ovens with pine needles. A whole duck costs Y40 to Y50 and takes about 20 minutes to cook – have the restaurant staff put a beer in the freezer and it'll be just right when the duck comes out.

Near the main entrance is a cluster of restaurants and snack bars that are open from dawn to dusk. Check all prices before you order, as overcharging is not uncommon.

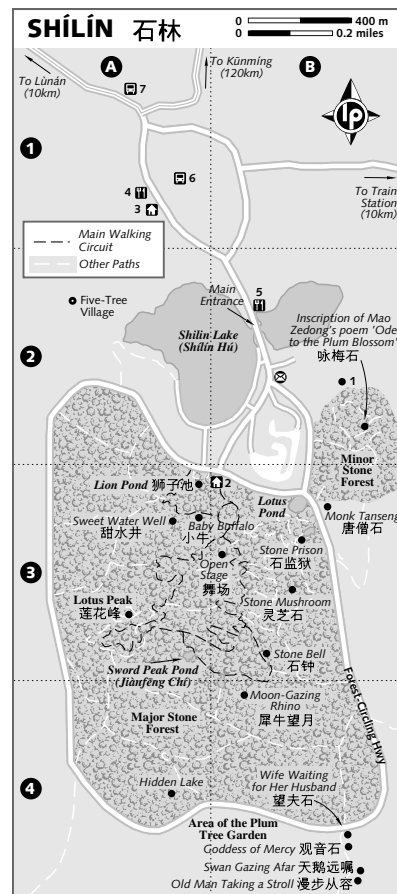
Entertainment

Sani song-and-dance evenings are organised when there are enough tourists. Shows normally start at around 8pm at a stage next to the minor stone forest but there are sometimes extra performances, so ask at the hotels; performances are free.

There are also Sani performances during the day between 2pm and 3pm. During the **Torch Festival** (July/August), wrestling, bullfighting, singing and dancing are held at a natural outdoor amphitheatre by Hidden Lake south of Shílín.

Getting There & Away BUS

Buses to Shílín (Y30 to Y40, two hours, every 30 minutes, 8am to noon) leave from the **bus station** (Beijing Lu, Kūnmíng) that is opposite the long-distance bus station. Make sure you don't get dragged onto one of the tourist buses, unless of course you want to spend the entire morning stopping off at various temples (a national obsession) and market stalls en route.



In the afternoon there are minibuses waiting at Shílín's car park, which leave when full (Y20).

Minibuses run between Lùnán and Shílín regularly (Y1, 10 minutes). At Shílín, they leave from a stand on the main road. Horse carts cost Y15. In Lùnán, flag down anything heading north of the main traffic circle. Minibuses to Kūnmíng (Y30, two hours) depart regularly from the western side of Lùnán's main roundabout until around 7pm.

XIÀGUĀN 下关

☎ 0872

Xiàguān lies at the southern tip of Ērhǎi Hú, about 400km west of Kūnmíng. It was once an important staging post on the Burma

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Stage 舞台1 B2

SLEEPING

Shílín Bìshùyuán Bīnguǎn 石林避暑园宾馆2 B3
Stone Forest International Youth Hostel 石林国际青年旅馆3 A1

EATING

Restaurants 餐厅饭店4 A1
Restaurants 餐厅饭店5 B2

TRANSPORT

Bus Stop 汽车出发处6 A1
Horse Carts 马车(see 7)
Minibuses to Lùnán 到路南的中巴车7 A1

Road and is still a key centre for transport in northwest Yünnán. Xiàguān is the capital of Dàli prefecture and is also referred to as Dàli City (Dàli Shì). This confuses some travellers, who think they are already in Dàli, book into a hotel and head off in pursuit of a banana pancake only to discover they haven't arrived yet. There is no reason to stay in Xiàguān and you only need to come here in order to catch a bus or train.

To go straight to Dàli, upon arriving in Xiàguān, turn left out of the long-distance bus station, and left again at the first intersection. Just up from the corner is the station for local bus 4, which runs to the real Dàli (Y1.50, 30 minutes) until around 8pm. Bus 8 also runs from the centre of Xiàguān to Dàli's west gate. If you want to be sure, ask for Dàli Gǔchéng (Dali Old City).

Alternatively, minibuses run from a block east of the bus station (turn right out of the entrance) but you'll spend a lot of time waiting around for other passengers.

Information

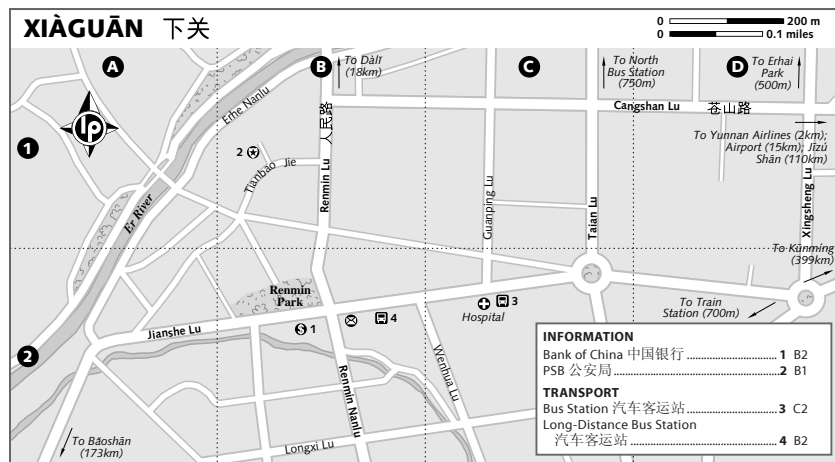
Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Jiānshe Donglu) changes money and travellers cheques and has an ATM that accepts all major credit cards.

PSB (Gōngānjú; 21 Tianbao Jie; ☎ 8-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) handles all visa extensions for Xiàguān and Dàli.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Xiàguān's airport is located 15km from the town centre. The Yunnan Airlines ticket office is inconveniently situated near the train station. There are no public buses to the airport; taxis will cost Y50 from Xiàguān or Y80 from Dàli. There are three flights daily to Kūnmíng (Y430) and one to Guǎngzhōu (Y1540).



BUS

Xiaguān has several bus stations, which throws some travellers. Luckily, the two main ones are both on the same side of the street, approximately two blocks apart. You might get dropped off at either one. Both have departures throughout the province, so if the long-distance bus station doesn't have a good departure time for you, wander over to the other one.

For Shangri-la (Y50-60, eight to nine hours, every 20 minutes from 6.20am to 8pm) and local destinations you need to catch your bus from the north bus station, a Y10 taxi ride away. Minibuses to Lijiang also run regularly from outside the long-distance bus station and will cost Y20 to Y30 depending on the bus and your bargaining skills.

Tickets for nearly all destinations can be booked in Dàlǐ.

TRAIN

Overnight sleeper trains leave Kūnmíng's main train station at between 10pm and 11.30pm, arriving in Xiaguān between 6am and 8.05am. Hard sleepers are Y95. Returning to Kūnmíng, trains leave Xiaguān at 2.34pm, 9pm, 9.40pm, 10.02pm and 10.20pm.

Bus 1 goes to the train station from the centre of town.

JÍZÚ SHĀN 鸡足山

Packed with temples and pagodas, this **mountain** (Chicken-Foot Mountain; admission Y60), is a major attraction for Buddhist pilgrims – both Chinese and Tibetan.

XIAGUĀN BUS TIMETABLES

Buses from Xiaguān's long-distance bus station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Kūnmíng	Y90-126	7hr	every 40 min	7.50am-7pm
Lǐjiāng	Y41-58	3hr	5 daily	8.30am, 10am, 2pm, 4pm, 7pm
Bāoshān	Y48-58	2½hr	daily	10.30am
Jīnghóng	Y170	17hr	3 daily	noon, 2pm, 7.30pm
Mángshì (Lǔxī)	Y98	6-8hr	1 daily	6pm
Ruǐlǐ	Y117-131	10-12hr	2 daily	8.30am, 8.20pm
Téngchōng	Y85	6hr	2 daily	10am, 1pm
Nínglàng	Y48	8hr	daily	8pm

At the time of the Qing dynasty there were approximately 100 temples on the mountain and somewhere in the vicinity of 5000 resident monks. The Cultural Revolution's anarchic assault on the traditional past did away with much that was of interest on the mountain, although renovation work on the temples has been going on since 1979.

Today, it's estimated more than 150,000 tourists and pilgrims clamber up the mountain every year to watch the sun rise. Jinding, the Golden Summit, is at a cool 3240m so make sure to bring warm clothing.

Sights & Activities

Sights along the way include **Zhusheng Temple** (Zhùshèng Sì), the most important temple on the mountain, about an hour's walk up from the bus stop at Shāzhǐ.

Just before the last ascent is the **Magnificent Head Gate** (Huáshǒu Mén). At the summit is **Lengyan Pagoda** (Lèngyán Tǎ), a 13-tier Tang dynasty pagoda that was restored in 1927. There is basic accommodation at **Golden Summit Temple** (Jīndìng Sì) next to the pagoda – a sleeping bag would be a good idea at this altitude.

A popular option for making the ascent is to hire a pony. Travellers who have done the trip claim it's a lot of fun. A cable car (Y30) to the summit is a good way to cheat, though the ride starts halfway up.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation is available at the base of the mountain, about halfway up and on the summit. Prices average Y20 to Y30 per bed. Food gets fairly expensive once you reach the summit so you may want to consider bringing some of your own.

Getting There & Away

From Xiaguān's north bus station take a bus to Binchuān (Y11, two hours), from where you'll have to change for a bus or minibus to Shāzhǐ at the foot of the mountain (Y10, one hour).

WĒISHĀN

Wēishān is famous for the Taoist temples on nearby **Wēibǎo Shān** (Weibao Mountain), about 7km south of town. There are reportedly some fine Taoist murals here. It's 61km due south of Xiaguān, so it could be done as a day trip. Buses leave regularly for Weishan

from the long-distance bus station (Y22, 1½ hours). At the Weishan main bus station, hop into a minibus for the 20- to 30-minute ride the rest of the way to the mountain (around Y8 to Y10).

DÀLǐ 大理

☎ 0872 / pop 110, 000

Dàlǐ or Lǐjiāng? Travellers doing the northern Yünnán backpacker circuit will find themselves having this conversation at least once as they bump into each other on buses, cobble streets and guesthouses. In the balance, Dàlǐ's the one getting knocked these days. The beauty and character of Lǐjiāng's old town seems to be able to win people over for the most part regardless of the suffocating crowds. Dàlǐ's historic area just doesn't muster up the same enthusiasm despite pizza and banana pancakes on (literally) every corner. Where Dàlǐ does come out ahead, however, is with its stunning location sandwiched between mountains and Erhai Lake (Ērhǎi Hú). There's fascinating possibilities for exploring and getting to know the region's Bai culture. Just get your hands on a bike and get out of town.

History

Dàlǐ lies on the western edge of Ērhǎi Hú at an altitude of 1900m, with a backdrop of the imposing 4000m-tall Cāng Shān (Jade Green Mountains). For much of the five centuries in which Yünnán governed its own affairs, Dàlǐ was the centre of operations, and the old city retains a historical atmosphere that is hard to come by in other parts of China.

The main inhabitants of the region are the Bai, who number about 1.5 million. The Bai people have long-established roots in the Ērhǎi Hú region, and are thought to have settled the area some 3000 years ago. In the early 8th century they grouped together and succeeded in defeating the Tang imperial army before establishing the Nanzhao kingdom.

The kingdom exerted considerable influence throughout southwest China and even, to a lesser degree, Southeast Asia, since it controlled upper Burma for much of the 9th century. This later established Dàlǐ as an end node on the famed Burma Road. In the mid-13th century it fell before the invincible Mongol hordes of Kublai Khan.

The influx of Chinese tour groups is changing Dàlǐ's character. The southern part of town has been radically renovated to create a new

'old Dàlǐ', complete with original gates and renovated city walls. Fuxing Lu is now lined with shops catering to Chinese tourists led around by guides dressed up in Bai costumes. The gentrification has been less successful than Lijiang's, and some of the city's historical charm and authenticity has sadly been lost.

Orientation

Dàlǐ is a miniature city that has some preserved cobbled streets and traditional stone architecture within its old walls and its easy enough to get your bearings by just taking a walk for an hour or so. It takes about half an hour to walk from the South Gate (Nán Mén) across town to the North Gate (Běi Mén). You can also get a good overview of the town and its surroundings by walking around the town walls (renovated in 1998).

Huguo Lu is the main strip for cafés – locals call it Yangren Jie (Foreigner's St) – and this is where to turn to for your café latte, burritos, ice-cold beer and other treats.

MAPS

Tourist maps of Dàlǐ and the Ērhǎi Hú area are available at street stalls near the corner of Huguo Lu and Fuxing Lu. More useful ones can be picked up at **Mandarin Books & CDs** (Wúhuá Shūyuán; Fuxing Lu), along with a great selection of guidebooks and novels in Chinese, English and Dutch.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS 网吧

China Telecom (cnr Fuxing Lu & Huguo Lu; per hr ¥2; ☎ 8am–10pm) Most hotels also offer free internet access for guests.

MONEY

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Fuxing Lu) Changes cash and travellers cheques. There is also an ATM here that accepts all major credit cards.

POST

China Post (Yóujú; cnr Fuxing Lu & Huguo Lu; ☎ 8am–8pm) The best place to make international calls as it has direct dial and doesn't levy a service charge.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

PSB (Gōngānjú; 21 Tianbao Jie, Xiàguān; ☎ 8am–11am & 2–5pm Mon–Fri) Visas cannot be renewed in Dàlǐ, so you'll have to journey to the office in Xiàguān. To get there, take bus 4 until just after it crosses the river in Xiàguān. The PSB office is a short walk south from here.

TOURIST INFORMATION & TRAVEL AGENCIES

All the hotels offer travel advice, and can arrange tours and book tickets for onward travel. There are also numerous travel agencies and cafés on Huguo Lu that offer all manner of tours, from half-day market trips to full-day trips to Ērhǎi Hú. They can be expensive unless you can get a group together.

Jim's Tibetan Guesthouse & Peace Café (☎ 267 1822; www.china-travel.nl; 63 Boai Lu) Offers a long list of trips, including tours to Muslim markets and Yi minority markets, that come very highly rated by travellers. Jim and his wife Henriette also offer some more unusual trips including trekking in remote areas of Yünnán and overland travel to Lhasa from Shangri-la (per person from ¥5000).

Dangers & Annoyances

The hike up to Zhonghe Temple (Zhōnghé Sì) and along the mountain ridges is super, but there have been several reports of robbery of solo walkers. Try to find a partner.

Be careful on the overnight sleeper bus from Kūnmíng as someone often finds a bag pinched or razored. Chain them securely and try to cram them under the lower bunk as far back as possible.

Sights

THREE PAGODAS 三塔寺

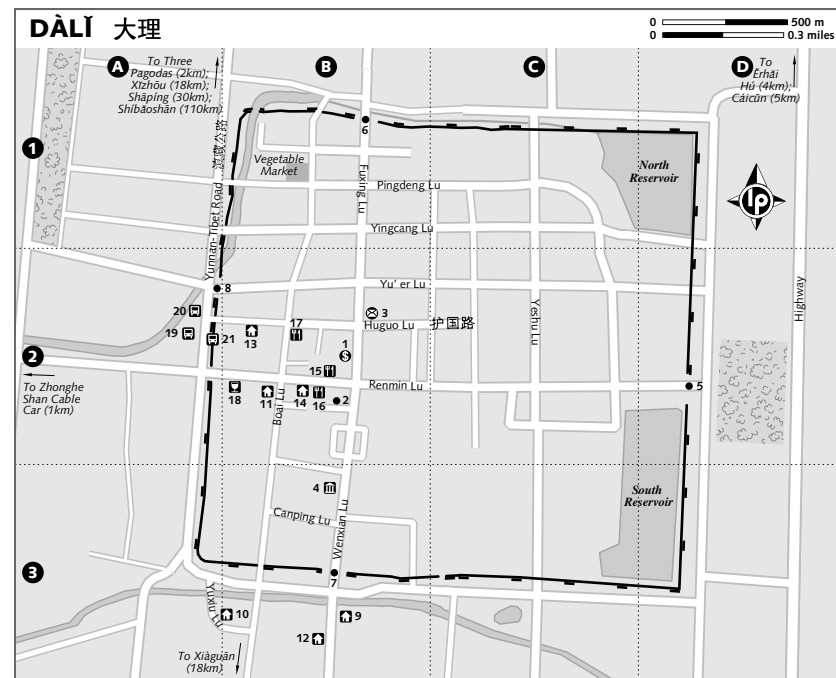
Reproduced on thousands of postcards and calendars, these **three pagodas** (Sān Tǎ Sì; admission ¥121, incl Chongsheng Temple; ☎ 8am–7pm) are among the oldest standing structures in southwestern China and a sort of symbol of Dàlǐ.

The tallest of the three, **Qianxun Pagoda**, has 16 tiers that reach a height of 70m. It was originally erected in the mid-9th century by engineers from Xi'ān. It is flanked by two smaller 10-tiered pagodas, each of which are 42m high.

Some travellers find the price steep given that you can't go inside the pagodas. However, the temple behind the pagodas, **Chongsheng Temple** (Chóngshèng Sì) almost makes up for it.

Laid out in the traditional Yunnanese style there are three layers of buildings lined up with a sacred peak in the background. The temple has been restored and converted into a museum chronicling the history, construction and renovation of the pagodas.

To get there, walk north along the Yünnán–Tibet road. It's about 2km outside the old town walls.



INFORMATION

Bank of China
中国银行 1 B2
Mandarin Books & CDs
五华书苑 2 B2
Post & Telephone Office
邮电 3 B2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Dali Museum
大理博物馆 4 B3
East Gate 东门 5 D2
North Gate 北门 6 B1
South Gate 南门 7 B3
West Gate 西门 8 A2

SLEEPING

Friends Guesthouse
大理古城三友客栈 9 B3
Jim's Peace Hotel 吉姆和平酒店 10 B3
Jim's Tibetan Guesthouse
吉姆和平餐厅和饭店 11 B2
MCA Guesthouse 12 B3
No 3 Guesthouse 第三招待所 13 B2
Tibetan Lodge
大理古城青年旅馆 14 B2

EATING

Bamboo Café 紫竹屋 15 B2
Jim's Peace Café
吉姆和平餐厅 (see 11)

Tibet Café
西藏咖啡馆 16 B2
Yunnan Café & Bar
云南咖啡馆&酒吧 17 B2

DRINKING

Birdbar 鸟吧 18 B2

TRANSPORT

Bus Station
往沙坪的公共汽车 19 A2
Buses to Train Station
往下关火车站的八路车站 20 A2
Local Bus Station
汽车站 21 A2

DÀLǐ MUSEUM 大理市博物馆

The **Dali Museum** (Dàlǐ Shì Bówùguǎn; Wexian Lu; admission ¥5; ☎ 8.30am–6pm) houses a small collection of archaeological pieces relating to Bai history and has some moderately interesting exhibits on marble handicrafts. A number of marble stelae grace one wing.

Festivals & Events

If you don't mind crowds, the best time to be in Dàlǐ is probably during the **Third Moon Fair** (Sānyuè Jiē), which begins on the 15th day

of the third lunar month (usually April) and ends on the 21st day. The origins of the fair lie in its commemoration of a fabled visit by Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, to the Nanzhao kingdom. Today it's more like an extra-festive market, with people from all over Yünnán arriving to buy, sell and make merry.

The **Three Temples Festival** (Ràosān Líng) is held between the 23rd and 25th days of the fourth lunar month (usually May). The first day involves a trip from Dàlǐ's South Gate to

Sacred Fountainhead Temple (Shèngyúan Sì) in Xìzhōu. Here travellers stay up until dawn, dancing and singing, before moving on to Jingui Temple (Jingui Sì) on the shore of Erhái Hú. The final day involves walking back to Dàlì by way of Majiuyi Temple.

The **Torch Festival** (Huǒbǎ Jié) is held on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month (normally July). Flaming torches are paraded at night through homes and fields. Other events include fireworks displays and dragon-boat racing.

Sleeping

There's heaps of accommodation in Dàlì, but places fill up quickly. During peak summer months, brace yourself for a long slog about town in search of a bed. Most hotels offer laundry service, bicycle hire and free internet access for guests.

Friends Guesthouse (Dàlì Gúchéng Sānyóu Kèzhàn; ☎ 266 2888; friendsinn@hotmail.com; 1 Wenxian Lu; 文獻路1号; dm Y10, s & d Y50-80) Fun, friendly and the cheapest of the cheap, hard-core budget travellers love this place. Others should suss out a few rooms before checking in. Several house bathrooms of advanced grittiness and wall-stains of distracting proportions.

No 3 Guesthouse (Disān Zhāodàisù; ☎ 266 4941; Hugu Lu; 护国路号; 6-bed dm Y20) A hugely kind staff helm some of the nicest budget accommodation in town. New wooden furniture fills the rooms with a pleasant pine-like smell and each bunk has individual lights and a bamboo curtain for privacy. Showers and Western-style toilets are immaculate.

MCA Guesthouse (☎ 267 3666; mcahouse@hotmail.com; Wenxian Lu; 文獻路; dm Y20, s/d with bathroom Y100/120) Phenomenal value accommodation set around a garden filled with ponds and lush plants. Third floor singles are cute as a button with eccentric, slope-roofed bathrooms and stunning lake views. Dorms and doubles turn up surprises like wall art, hardwood floors or antique-style furniture. You can also book overland trips to Tibet leaving from Shangri-la here (see p726).

Tibetan Lodge (Dàlì Gúchéng Qīngnián Lǚguǎn; ☎ 266 4177; tibetan_lodge@yahoo.com; 58 Renmin Lu; 人民路58号; s/family ste, Y60/160) Set up on two floors around a courtyard, the lodge has cosy, comfy rooms, but the family suites are what sets it apart. Each one has ground floor twins for the kids and big comfy (very) private overhead lofts for the grownups.

Jim's Peace Hotel (Jímǔ Zàngshí Jiùdiàn; www.china-travel.nl; ☎ 267 7824; 13 Yuxiu Lu; 玉秀路中段13号; d Y200) Newly opened outside the city walls by this Dàlì longtimer, rooms here are heaped with antique Chinese-style furniture and manage to be both sleek and cosy. There's a garden, a roof-top terrace and restaurant and bar below. If you want the original, **Jim's Tibetan Guesthouse** (☎ 267 1822; 63 Boai Lu; 博爱路63号; s/d with breakfast Y140-200) is still going strong nearby. Travel services and tours can be booked at both.

Eating

Dàlì is overrun with restaurants. Eat your way through the streets to find something you like; new eateries seem to open almost weekly.

Bamboo Café (Zìhúwú; ☎ 267 1898; 71 Renmin Lu; dishes from Y8) If the Dàlì street throngs are getting to you, there's no better place for a break than this dark, cosy restaurant. Meals like bai fish (Y25) are a great introduction to the local cuisine and the English menu will give you a window to other local specialities.

Tibet Café (Xìzàng Kǎfēi; ☎ 266 2391; 42 Hugu Lu; dishes from Y10) Richly decorated and set up with imposing wooden tables, this café has terrific atmosphere and a great choice of Tibetan, Western and Chinese dishes. It also consistently attracts some of the more experienced travellers in town, so is a good place to eavesdrop or just ask around about what's new.

Yünnán Café and Bar (Yünnán Kǎfēiguǎn Jiùbā; Hugu Lu; mains Y18-30) Run by a friendly couple, this not too big, not too small space is a great place to wind things down at night or start things up in the morning. The Western and Chinese stick-to-your ribs breakfasts are terrific. The Tibetan breakfasts (Y18) will have you set for the long bus rides to Künmíng and beyond.

Jim's Peace Café (☎ 267 1822; jimsguesthouse@hotmail.com; 63 Boai Lu; mains Y18-32) The Tibetan banquet (Y30, minimum 4 people) in this café is not to be missed. Jim's parade of dishes gets raves from travellers especially when washed down with his 'No 1 special'.

Drinking

The Western-style restaurants mentioned above double as bars. Also worth trying is the **Birdbar** (Niǎobā; ☎ 266 1843; 22 Renmin Lu), an off-the-main-drag watering hole with a pool table. There are no regular opening hours – you can come here pretty much anytime of the day or night and have a good chance of finding it open.

Shopping

Dàlì is famous for its marble, and while a slab of the stuff in your backpack might slow you down a bit, local entrepreneurs produce everything from ashtrays to model pagodas in small enough chunks to make it feasible to stow one or two away.

The city is also famous for its blue-and-white batik printed on cotton and silk. A lot of the batik is still made in Dàlì and hidden behind many of the shopfronts sit vast vats of blue dye – it's worth asking around at some of the shops to see if you can have a look at how the batik is made.

Hugu Lu has become a smaller version of Bangkok's Khao San Rd in its profusion of clothes shops. Most shopkeepers can also make clothes to your specifications – which will come as a relief when you see some of the items of ready-made clothing on offer.

Most of the 'silver' jewellery sold in Dàlì is really brass. Occasionally it is silver, although this will be reflected in the starting price. The only advice worth giving is to bargain hard. For those roving sales ladies badgering you incessantly, don't feel bad to pay one-fifth of their asking price – that's what locals advise. For marble from street sellers, 40% to 50% is fair. In shops, two-thirds of the price is average. And don't fall for any 'expert' opinions; go back later on your own and deal.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Xiàguān's new airport has brought Dàlì to within 45 minutes' flying time from Künmíng (see p714). A taxi from Dàlì to the airport will cost Y60 to Y80. Alternatively, you can take a bus to Xiàguān and pick up a taxi from there (Y50).

BUS

The golden rule about getting to Dàlì by bus is to find out in advance whether your bus is for Dàlì or Xiàguān. Many buses advertised to Dàlì actually only go as far as Xiàguān (p701). Coming from Lijiāng, Xiàguān-bound buses stop at the eastern end of Dàlì to let passengers off before continuing on to their final destination. From here it's a 20-minute walk to the main guesthouses.

For information on getting to Dàlì from Künmíng, see p696. From the long-distance bus station near the west gate in Dàlì there are daily buses to Shangri-la (Y50, eight hours,

every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 11am & 7.20pm, 8pm, 8.30pm) and express buses to Künmíng (Y106, five hours, 9.30am, 10.30am and 4.30pm, 9pm). A slow bus for Künmíng also leaves daily at 8am (Y65). Buses to Lijiāng (Y30 to Y50, three hours, every 30 minutes, 7.30am to 7.20pm) also leave from here.

Buses run regularly to Shāping, Xìzhōu and other local destinations from opposite the long-distance bus station. A bus leaves for Shāping every Monday morning (Y5, one hour, 9.30am) for the market.

TRAIN

Probably the most popular means of getting to Dàlì is the overnight sleeper train from Künmíng (hard sleeper Y93). For more details see Train p696.

Getting Around

From Dàlì, a taxi to Xiàguān airport takes 45 minutes and cost around Y80; to Xiàguān's train station it costs Y30.

Bikes are the best way to get around (Y10 per day). Most of the guesthouses and several other places on Boai Lu rent bikes.

Bus 4 runs between Dàlì and central Xiàguān (Y1.50, 30 minutes) every 15 minutes from 6.30am, which means that unless your bus leaves Xiàguān earlier than 7.30am you won't have to stay the night there.

Bus 8 runs from Dàlì to Xiàguān's train station.

AROUND DÀLÌ Markets

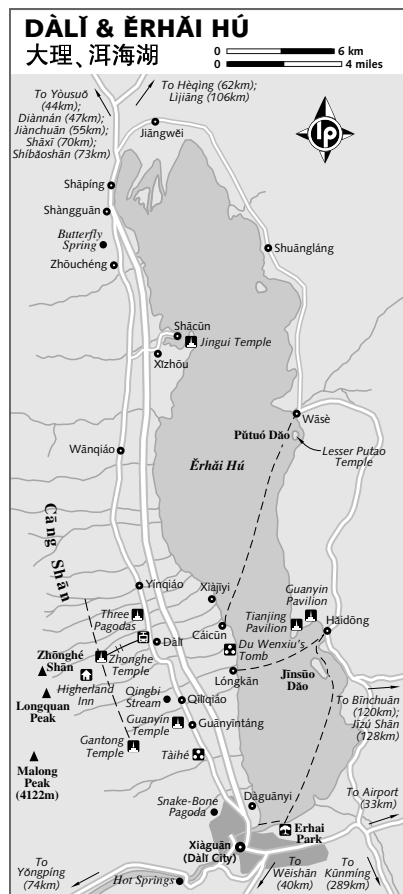
Usually markets follow the lunar calendar, but shrewd local operators have co-opted it into a regular scheme so that tourists have a market to go to nearly every day of the week. See p709 for information on the Monday Shāping market. Markets also take place in Shuāngláng (Tuesday), Shābā (Wednesday), Yòusuò (Friday), the largest in Yünnán) and Jiāngwěi (Saturday). Xìzhōu and Zhōuchéng have daily morning and afternoon markets, respectively.

Wàsè also has a popular market every five days with trading from 9am to 4.30pm.

Most cafés and hotels in Dàlì offer tours or can arrange transportation to markets for around Y150 for a half day.

Ērhǎi Hú 洱海湖

Exploring the areas around Ērhǎi Hú (Ear-Shaped Lake) is one of the most fascinating



parts of a Dàli visit. The seventh biggest freshwater lake in China, it sits at 1973m above sea level and covers 250 sq km. Ērhǎi Hú is dotted with trails perfect for bike rides and villages to visit. It's a 50-minute walk from town or a 10-minute downhill zip on a bike.

The best way to explore is by either renting a bike or zipping across the water on the many ferries that crisscross the lake. A great bike trip that can be done in a day is from Dàli to Shāpíng. Though the lakeside road may seem the most picturesque, it is too busy and congested to enjoy and you're better off on the secondary road, just to the west of the lakeside expressway. Travellers report stumbling across lovely temples and hill views just

by stopping in small villages along the way to buy food and water.

Ferries crisscross the lake at various points, so there could be some scope for extended touring. You could bus, walk or taxi to **Cáicūn**, a pleasant little village east of Dàli (Y2 on minibus 2), then dart around the lake on ferries. There are regular ferries to **Wāsè** (Y3-5) on the eastern shore and plenty of locals take their bikes over.

Close to Wāsè are **Pùtuó Dǎo** (Putuo Island; around Y1 on ferry) and **Lesser Putuo Temple** (Xiǎopùtuó Sì), set on an extremely photogenic rocky outcrop. Other ferries run between Lóngkān and Hǎidōng, and between Xiāguān and Jīnsūo Dǎo (Jinsuo Island). Ferries leave early in the morning (for the market) and return around 4pm; timetables are flexible and departures are somewhat unreliable.

Roads now encircle the lake so it is possible to do a loop (or partial loop) of the lake by mountain bike. A few intrepid travellers have leapfrogged these villages, made for Shāpíng's market, then continued all the way around the lake stopping at other markets on the way before boating themselves and their bicycles back to Dàli. From Dàli to Wāsè it's around 58km by road.

Plenty of cafés in Dàli can arrange a horse-and-carriage ride to the lake, then a boat ride to Tianjing Pavilion and Guanyin Pavilion, then Jīnsūo Dǎo or whatever else you dream up.

Zhōnghé Temple 中和寺

This temple (Zhōnghé Sì; admission Y2) is a long, steep hike up the mountainside behind Dàli. Some visitors find the temple itself underwhelming. So think of this trip more in terms of the journey and the views of Ērhǎi Hú rather than the destination. To reach the top take the **chairlift** (one way/return Y30/50) up **Zhōnghé Shān** (Zhonghe Mountain).

You can also hike up the hill, a sweaty two to three hours for those in moderately good shape (see Dangers & Annoyances p704). Walk about 200m north of the chairlift base to the riverbed, (often dry). Follow the left bank for about 50m and walk through the cemetery. Follow the path zigzagging under the chairlift. When you reach some stone steps you know you are near the top.

Branching out from either side of the temple is a trail that winds along the face of the mountains, taking you in and out of steep,

lush valleys and past streams and waterfalls. From Zhōnghé it's an amazing 11km up-and-down hike south to **Gantong Temple** (Gǎntōng Sì) or **Qingbi Stream**, from where you can continue to the road and pick up a Dàli-bound bus. There's also a new **cable car** (one way/return Y52/82) between the two temples.

Alternatively, you can spend more time here and stay the night at **Higherland Inn** (☎ 266 1599; www.higherland.com; dm Y25, s/d Y30/50), just above Zhonghe Temple at 2590m. If you want to get away from the crowds in Dàli then this is the place to do it. The hostel has fabulous views, regular barbecues and bonfire parties and only a handful of rooms (seven) which means it's an incredibly relaxing place to stay.

Xīzhōu 喜洲

Among the 101 things to do while you're in Dàli, try to fit in a trip to the old town of Xīzhōu for a look at its well-preserved Bai architecture. You can catch a local bus from the south gate in Dàli (Y3) or take a taxi (Y30-35) to make the 18km trip, but a bicycle trip with an overnight stop in Xīzhōu (there's accommodation in town) is also a good idea. From here, the interesting town of **Zhōuchéng** is 7km further north; it too has basic accommodation.

Shāpíng Market 沙坪赶集

Every Monday at Shāpíng, about 30km north of Dàli, there is a colourful Bai market (Shāpíng Gǎnji). The market starts to rattle and hum at 10am and ends around 2.30pm. You can buy everything from tobacco, melon seeds and noodles to meat, jewellery and wardrobes. In the ethnic clothing line, you can look at shirts, headdresses, embroidered shoes and money belts, as well as local batik. Expect to be quoted ridiculously high prices on anything you set your eyes on, so get into a bargaining frame of mind before you go.

Getting to Shāpíng Market from Dàli is fairly easy. Head out on the road to Lijiāng and flag down anything heading north. Some of the hotels and cafés in town also run minibuses. By bike it will take about 2 hours at a good clip.

Guānyīn Pavilion 观音堂

This temple (Guānyīn Tāng; admission Y10; ☎ around 8am-6pm) is built over a large boulder that locals believe was placed there by Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, disguised as an old woman in order to block the advance of

an invading enemy. It is 5km south of Dàli. If you follow the path uphill for 3km you will come across another temple, **Gantong Temple** (Gǎntōng Sì).

Shībǎoshān 石宝山

About 110km northwest of Dàli are the **Stone Treasure Mountain Grottoes** (Shībǎoshān Shíkū). There are three temple groups: Stone Bell (Shízhōng), Lion Pass (Shízī Guān) and Shadeng Village. They include some of the best Bai stone carvings in southern China and offer insights into life at the Nanzhao court of the 9th century.

To get to Shībǎoshān, take a bus to Jiànchuān, 55km north of Dàli on the old Dàli-Lijiāng road. Get off at the small village of Diànnán, about 8km south of Jiànchuān, where a narrow road branches southwest to the village of Shāxī, 23km away. You'll just have to wait for a bus for this leg. The grottoes are close to Shāxī.

NORTHWEST YUNNAN

LĪJIĀNG 丽江

new town ☎ 08891/old town ☎ 0888

Lijiāng's maze of cobbled streets, rickety old wooden buildings and gushing canals makes it one of the most visited sites in northern Yunnan. But its popularity has grown faster than its ability to absorb the microphone-toting tour groups. In peak visiting periods, frustrated locals share stories of 30-minute journeys just to move one kilometre through the shoulder-to-shoulder crowds.

While it's true many of the Naxi stalls have made way for the souvenir stands of Han entrepreneurs and that some of the old town's soul has gone with them, don't worry too much about the locals. Many are making a fortune leasing their highly coveted property in historic Lijiāng and have happily decamped to slick, modern apartments in the new town.

But don't let the crowds – or any grumpy travellers you may meet on your way here – discourage a trip. Get up early and it will be just you, Lijiāng and a handful of intrepid photographers. Just make sure you get the hell out of Dodge by 8.30am, when the tour group onslaught begins. There's a number of interesting sights around Lijiāng, some of which can be reached by bicycle, offering a week or more's worth of excursions.

Apart from the writings of botanist-explorer Joseph Rock (p718), another venerable work on Lijiāng that's worth reading if you can find it is the *Forgotten Kingdom* by Peter Goullart. Goullart was a White Russian who studied Naxi culture and lived in Lijiāng from 1940 to 1949.

Beyond the Clouds is an excellent nine-hour documentary about Lijiāng, made in 1994 by Britain's Channel 4, that is well worth seeking out.

Orientation

Lijiāng is separated into old and new towns that are starkly different. The approximate line of division is Shīzi Shān (Lion Hill), the green hump in the middle of town that's topped by a radio mast and Looking at the Past Pavilion, a new pagoda. Everything west of the hill is the new town, and everything east is the old town. The whole of the old town is pedestrianised.

The easiest way into the old town is from the north, along Dong Dajie. This area was largely reconstructed following an earthquake in 1996. From the long-distance bus station head east one block and follow an alley lined with snack bars heading north. The old town is a maze of lanes that twist and turn so just accept you'll be lost for the most part.

Information

Lijiāng's cafés and backpacker inns are your best source of information on the area. Most have noticeboards and travellers' books full of useful tips and advice from other travellers on surrounding sights, especially the Tiger Leaping Gorge trek.

BOOKSHOPS

Mandarin Book & CDs (Lijiāng Wúhuà Shūyuán; Xin Dajie) Has a fantastic selection of English books and maps on Lijiāng and the region.

CD BURNING

Kodak (Fuhui Lu) Y20 per CD.

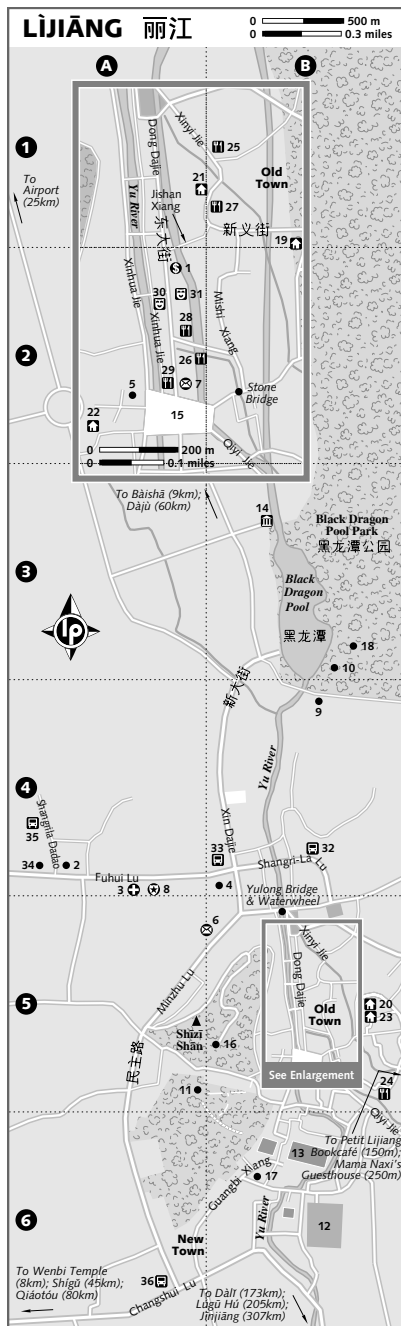
INTERNET ACCESS 网吧

There are lots of places where you can go online in the old town.

Prague Café (p713; per hr Y5)

MONEY

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Dong Dajie) This branch is in the old town and has an ATM machine.



INFORMATION

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Post Office 邮局.....7 A2
PSB 公安局.....8 A4

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Five Phoenix Hall.....10 B3
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Moon Inn 新月阁客栈.....20 B5
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Lamu's House of Tibet
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Naku Café 阿酷咖啡.....27 B1
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Express Bus Station
高快客运站.....35 A4
Long-Distance Bus Station
长途汽车站.....36 A6
Minibuses to Báishā
到白沙的班车.....(see 33)

POST & TELEPHONE

Many of the backpacker cafés in the old town have IDD lines.

Post office (yóujú; Mìnzhū Lu; ☎ 8am-8pm) Offers EMS (Express Mail Service), so your postcards might actually make it home before you do. Another post office is in the old town just north of the Old Market Sq.

China Telecom (Mìnzhū Lu), next door to China Post, is where you can make international calls.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

PSB (Gōngānjú; Fuhui Lu; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) is reputedly very speedy with visa extensions.

TOURIST INFORMATION & TRAVEL AGENCIES

There's a slew of Travel Reception Centres all over the old town but they mostly arrange tours. The best place for info is at your accommodation.

CITS (Zhōngguó Guójì Lǚxíngshè; 3rd fl, Lifang Bldg, cnr Fuhui Lu & Shangrila Dadao) can arrange tours in and around Lijiāng.

Eco-tours (☎ 131-7078 0719; www.ecotourchina.com) is run by Zhao Fan at the Café Buena Vista (p716). He can organise tours to nearly anywhere you want to go in northern Yünnán, as well as trekking and camping trips in less well-known areas. Avid bike-riders should check out his free maps of Lijiāng-area cycling trails.

Dangers & Annoyances

You'll need to be alert for pickpockets as you make your way through the old town's crowds. There's also been a handful of reports of solo women travellers being mugged when walking alone at night in isolated areas of his-

toric Lijiāng. Also take care if travelling alone to isolated sights like Xiàng Shān (Elephant Hill) in Black Dragon Pool Park (Hēilóngtán Gōngyuán) where you may be vulnerable to thieves.

Sights

OLD TOWN 古城

Crisscrossed by canals, bridges and a maze of narrow streets, the old town is the reason why people come to Lijiāng. The town's web of artery-like canals once supplied the city's drinking water. There are several wells and pools still in use around town. You can see one of the original wells opposite the Well Bistro.

The focus of the old town is the **Old Market Sq** (Sifāng Jiē). Once the haunt of Naxi traders, they've long since made way for tacky souvenir stalls. However, the view up the hill and the surrounding lanes are still extraordinary, just be prepared to share the experience with hundreds if not thousands of other people.

Above the old town is a beautiful **park** that can be reached on the path leading past the radio mast. Sit on the slope in the early morning and watch the mist clearing as the old town comes to life.

Now acting as sentinel of sorts for the town, the **Looking at the Past Pavilion** (Wànggù Lóu; admission Y15) was raised for tourists at a cost of over one million yuán. It's famed for a unique design using dozens of four-storey pillars – unfortunately these were culled from northern Yünnán old-growth forests. A path (with English signs) leads from the Old Market Sq.

MU FAMILY MANSION 木氏土司府

The former home of a Naxi chieftain, the **Mu Family Mansion** (Mùshì Tǔsīfǔ; admission Y35; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) was heavily renovated (more like built from scratch) after the 1996 earthquake. Mediocre captions do a poor job of introducing the Mu family but many travellers find the beautiful grounds reason enough to visit.

BLACK DRAGON POOL PARK 黑龙潭公园

On the northern edge of town is the **Black Dragon Pool Park** (Hēilóngtán Gōngyuán; Xin Dajie; admission Y30, free after 6pm; ☎ 7am-7pm). Apart from strolling around the pool – its view of Yúlóng Xuěshān (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain) is the most obligatory photo shoot in southwestern China – you can visit the **Dongba Research Institute** (Dōngbā Wénhuà Yánjiūshì; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), which is part of a renovated complex on the hillside. Here

you can see Naxi cultural artefacts and scrolls featuring a unique pictograph script.

At the eastern side of the pool are buildings used for an art exhibition, a pavilion with its own bridge across the water and the Ming dynasty **Five Phoenix Hall** (Wǔfēng Lóu).

Trails lead up **Xiàng Shān** (Elephant Hill) to a dilapidated gazebo and then across a spiny ridge past a communications centre and back down the other side, making a nice morning hike. See also *Dangers & Annoyances*, p711.

The **Museum of Naxi Dongba Culture** (Nàxī Dōngbā Wénhuà Bówùguǎn; admission Y5; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) is at the park's northern entrance.

Festivals & Events

The 13th day of the third moon (late March or early April) is the traditional day to hold a **Fertility Festival**.

THE NAXI 纳西

Lijiang has been the base of the 286,000 strong Naxi (also spelt Nakhi and Nahi) minority for about the last 1400 years. The Naxi descend from ethnically Tibetan Qiang tribes and lived until recently in matrilineal families. Since local rulers were always male it wasn't truly matriarchal, but women still seem to run the show, certainly in the old part of Lijiang.

The Naxi matriarchs maintained their hold over the men with flexible arrangements for love affairs. The *azhu* (friend) system allowed a couple to become lovers without setting up joint residence. Both partners would continue to live in their respective homes; the boyfriend would spend the nights at his girlfriend's house but return to live and work at his mother's house during the day. Any children born to the couple belonged to the woman, who was responsible for bringing them up. The man provided support, but once the relationship was over, so was the support. Children lived with their mothers and no special effort was made to recognise paternity. Women inherited all property and disputes were adjudicated by female elders.

There are strong matriarchal influences in the Naxi language. Nouns enlarge their meaning when the word for 'female' is added; conversely, the addition of the word for 'male' will decrease the meaning. For example, 'stone' plus 'female' conveys the idea of a boulder; 'stone' plus 'male' conveys the idea of a pebble.

Naxi women wear blue blouses and trousers covered by a blue or black apron. The T-shaped traditional cape not only stops the basket worn on the back from chafing, but also symbolises the heavens. Day and night are represented by the light and dark halves of the cape; seven embroidered circles symbolise the stars. Two larger circles, one on each shoulder, are used to depict the eyes of a frog, which until the 15th century was an important god to the Naxi. With the decline of animist beliefs, the frog eyes fell out of fashion, but the Naxi still call the cape by its original name, 'frog-eye sheepskin'.

The Naxi created a written language over 1000 years ago using an extraordinary system of pictographs – the only hieroglyphic language still in use. The most famous Naxi text is the Dongba classic *Creation*, and ancient copies of it and other texts can still be found in Lijiang, as well as in the archives of some US universities. The Dongba were Naxi shamans who were caretakers of the written language and mediators between the Naxi and the spirit world. The Dongba religion, itself an offshoot of Tibet's pre-Buddhist Bon religion, eventually developed into an amalgam of Tibetan Buddhism, Islam and Taoism. The Tibetan origins of the Naxi are confirmed by references in Naxi literature to Lake Manasarovar and Mt Kailash, both in western Tibet.

Useful phrases in the Naxi language are '*nuar lala*' (hello) and '*jiu bai sai*' (thank you).

July brings the **Torch Festival** (Huǒbǎ Jié), also celebrated by the Bai in the Dàli region and the Yi all over the southwest. The origin of this festival can be traced back to the intrigues of the Nanzhao kingdom, when the wife of a man burned to death by the king eluded the romantic entreaties of the monarch by leaping into a fire.

Sleeping

There is no shortage of charming Naxi guest-houses in the old town. The new town boasts lots of modern hotels, but staying there kind of defeats the purpose of visiting Lijiang.

Mama Naxi's Guesthouse (Gúchéng Xiānggēyǐn Kèzhàn; ☎ 510 0700; 78 Wenhua Lane, Wuyi Jie; 五一街, 文化巷78号; dm Y15, s/d from Y50) There's nothing quite like arriving in Lijiang after a long sweaty bus ride, calling this hostel for directions. 'Directions? No worry, right *now* Mama come find *you!*' And that's just the beginning. Mama also cooks (Y2-10 per meal), make travel arrangements (including to Tiger Leaping Gorge) and distributes free tea and bananas to guests with wild abandon. Mama's team of four-legged friends also have their run of the place and have been known to leave their calling cards near the bedpost. Midnight curfew.

International Youth Hostel Lijiang (Lìjiāng Lǎoxié Chēmǎdiàn; ☎ 511 6118; 25 Jishan Alley, Xinyi Jie; 新义街, 积善巷25号; dm Y20, s/d/tr Y40-120/100-140/150-180) A huge amount of effort has gone into this new hostel. There's an astounding choice of rooms with rate determined by size, bed width and attached amenities. Touches like flowers or patterned bedspreads sets it apart from the generic hostels in town. You can also rent bikes here for Y15 per day. Hot water from 6pm to 2am only.

Wang Gu Youth Inn (Wànggǔlóu Qīngnián Kèzhàn; ☎ 512 9778; 50 Huangshan Lane, Xinhua Jie; 新华街, 黄山下段50号; 4-bed dm Y20, d Y120) Perched on the hillside just off the path up to Looking at the Past Pavilion, dorms here are simple floor mattresses in bright, breezy rooms. It's all very simple, very clean and very tidy, but with views from the rooms and adjoining restaurant terrace that are spectacular, especially at night.

Moon Inn (Xīnyuégé Kèzhàn; ☎ 518 0520; moon inn@163.com; 34 Xingren Xiaduan, Wuyi Jie; 五一街, 兴仁下段34号; s & d Y200) This low-key inn is packed with charm. Bright and breezy rooms have wood furniture and brightly coloured striped bedspreads; and are set around a lovely courtyard. A bright common room has

TV and internet. Breakfast Y10, dinner Y20 per person.

Zen Garden Hotel (Rùihé Yuán Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 518 9799; www.zengardenhotel.com; 36 Xingren Lane, Wuyi Jie; 五一街, 兴仁下段36号; d Y400, 'wedding rooms' Y1400) This museum-like hotel was opened by a Naxi teacher and decorated in conjunction with her artist brother. The results are sumptuous: the complimentary breakfasts of tiny cakes and hard-boiled eggs are ritually set up amid candles and a Chinese musician sets up in the courtyard twice week to play traditional music. Standard rooms are immaculate; 'wedding rooms' have Ming-style beds and silk sheets. Glittery night views of old Lijiang on the second floor.

Sānhé Jiǔdiàn (☎ 512 0891; 4 Jishan Xiang, Xinyi Jie; 新一街, 积善巷4号; s/d Y600/560) Everything here feels new and shiny. There's wood floors, blond wood furniture and sleek modern bathrooms. Staff are friendly and professional, but this is a bigger, slicker operation than most accommodation choices in the area so service is more impersonal than at other sleeping options listed here.

Eating

Like Dàli, Lijiang has a legion of small, family-operated restaurants catering to travellers. The following run-down is by no means exhaustive, and almost every menu will have both Chinese and Western dishes.

Bābā is the Lijiang local speciality – thick flatbreads of wheat, served plain or stuffed with meats, vegetables or sweets. There are always several 'Naxi' items on the menu, including the famous 'Naxi omelette' and 'Naxi sandwich' (goats' cheese, tomato and fried egg between two pieces of local *bābā*). Try locally produced *pinjiu*, a lychee-based wine with a 500-year history – it tastes like a decent semi-sweet sherry.

Ma Ma Fu's (Māmāfū Cǎntīng; Mishi Xiang; dishes from Y10) Walk the plank across the stream into one of Lijiang's stalwarts. While popular for its Western food, it rarely rises above mediocre; stick with the Chinese dishes which run from very good to outstanding.

Prague Café (18 Mishi Xiang; meals from Y15; ☎ from 7.30am) An old favourite, the Naxi breakfast (Y22) is a must; fried goats' cheese, ham and an obscenely large potato pancake are just some of the goodies heaped on your plate – you'll be set for the rest of the day. Great atmosphere with a loyal crowd, this café also

has a book-exchange, magazines and internet (Y5 per hour).

Sakura Café (Xinhua Jie) This popular café serves up a belly-busting *bimbap* (rice, egg, meat and vegetables with hot sauce; Y23) set meal that should only be taken on by the masochistic. There are several other 'Sakura Cafés' along this lane; figuring out which is the original is part of the fun.

Petit Lijiang Bookcafé (☎ 511 1255; 50 Chongren Xiang, Qiyi Jie; dishes from Y15) Run by a travel-mad Chinese-Belgian couple, this café serves terrific Chinese and Western food along with surprises like fresh squeezed juice; in-season fruit pies and Australian Chardonnay. The book store has an outstanding collection of English and French language titles focusing on Yúnnán and elsewhere in China. You can also watch DVDs in the sitting room for free. Owners Mei and Olivier are also great sources of travel info and can suggest treks and off-the-beaten track trips around Lijiāng.

Lamu's House of Tibet (Xizàngwú Xicānting; 56 Xinyi Jie; dishes from Y10) Away from the main drag, this place serves excellent food from a hugely varied menu. Try the *momo* (Tibetan dumplings) which come with a variety of fillings, but make sure you save room for the desserts – they're massive.

Blue Papaya (☎ 512 6635; Lán Múguā; 70 Xinyi Jie; dishes from Y30) Serves terrific pasta and fish dishes by Chinese as well as any other benchmark. Service is outstanding and the menu has creative flourishes like pineapple or sweet potato ice cream. This is a perfect place to relax and linger over a first-rate meal.

Naku Café (☎ 510 5321; Ākú Káfēi; 4 Jishan Xiang, Xinyi Jie; dishes from Y20) This is a low-key eatery run by some very shy but very friendly staff. The usual Chinese/Western/Japanese hybrid dishes litter the menu but the local dishes are most interesting. The Naxi claypot needs salt but is packed with tofu, potato, turnip, carrots, broccoli and cabbage. Free internet upstairs for diners.

Entertainment

One of the few things you can do in the evening in Lijiāng is attend performances of the **Naxi Orchestra** (Nàxī Gǔyuè Hui; Naxi Music Academy; tickets Y100-140; 🎫 performances 8pm) inside a beautiful building in the old town.

Not only are all 20 to 24 members Naxi, but they play a type of Taoist temple music (known as *dòngjīng*) that has been lost elsewhere in China. The pieces they perform are

supposedly faithful renditions of music from the Han, Song and Tang dynasties, and are played on original instruments.

Xuan Ke usually speaks for the group at performances – speaks too much, some say – explaining each musical piece and describing the instruments. Taped recordings of the music are available; a set of two costs Y30. If you're interested, make sure you buy the tape at the show – tapes on sale at shops around town, and even in Kūnmíng, are often pirated copies.

The government-run **Dongba Palace** (Dong Dajie; tickets Y100-140; 🎫 performances 8pm) has a less authentic song-and-dance show.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lijiāng's airport is 25km east of town. Tickets can be booked at the **CAAC** (Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 516 1289; cnr Fuhui Lu & Shangrila Dadao; 🕒 8.30am-9pm). Most hotels in the old town also offer an air-ticket booking service.

From Lijiāng there are oodles of daily flights to Kūnmíng (Y660), three flights daily to Chéngdū (Y1010) and Shànghǎi (Y2560) and two flights daily to Shēnzhèn (Y1760) and one daily to Guǎngzhōu (Y1790).

BUS

Lijiāng has three bus stations: one is just north of the old town; the main long-distance bus station is in the south; and an express bus station to Kūnmíng and Xiàguān is in the north of town on Shangrila Dadao.

From the express bus station there are daily departures to Kūnmíng (Y171-193; 8am, 9am, 10am, 11am and 12.30pm). Two sleeper buses also leave daily for Kūnmíng at 8.30pm; one terminates at Kūnmíng's west station, the other at its south station. Buses also leave for the 160km trip to Xiàguān (Y41 to Y58, 3½ hours, 8am, 11.10am, noon, 2.10pm, 3.50pm and 6.10pm). Daily buses also leave for Shangri-la from here (Y45, five hours, 8.40am and 2.30pm).

Getting Around

Buses to the airport (Y15) leave from outside the CAAC office 90 minutes before flight departures.

Taxis start at Y6 in the new town and are not allowed into the old town. Bike hire is available at the International Youth Hostel Lijiāng (Y15 per day).

LĪJIĀNG BUS TIMETABLES

Buses from the north bus station include the following:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Kūnmíng	Y119	8hr	daily	8pm
Xiàguān	Y35-37	3½hr	20 daily	7.30am-6pm
Shangri-la	Y39	5hr	2 daily	7.50am, 11am
Nínglàng	Y23	3-4hr	6 daily	8am, 9.30am, 10am, 12.30pm, 1.30pm, 2pm
Jīnjiāng	Y45-60	8hr	3 daily	7am, 8am, 11am

Buses from the long-distance bus station include:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Kūnmíng	Y151	12hr	hourly	8.30-11.30am & 1pm
Kūnmíng (sleeper)	Y119	8hr	11 daily	6.30-9pm
Xiàguān	Y35-50	3½hr	27 daily	7.10am-6.30pm
Shangri-la	Y39	5hr	15 daily	7.30am-5pm
Nínglàng	Y23	5hr	13 daily	8am-4.30pm
Qiǎotóu	Y20	2hr	daily	1pm
Lúgū Hú	Y63	7-8hr	1 daily	9.30am

AROUND LĪJIĀNG

It is possible to see most of Lijiāng's environs on your own, but a few agencies do offer half- or full-day tours, starting from Y150-200; it might be worth it if you take one that includes fees.

Monasteries

The monasteries around Lijiāng are Tibetan in origin and belong to the Karmapa (Red Hat) sect. Most were extensively damaged during the Cultural Revolution and there's not much monastic activity nowadays. Nevertheless, it's worth hopping on a bicycle and heading out of town for a look.

PUJI MONASTERY 普济寺

This **monastery** (Pǔjì Sì) is around 5km northwest of Lijiāng on a trail that passes the two ponds to the north of town. The few monks here are usually happy to show the occasional stray traveller around.

FUGUO MONASTERY 富国寺

West of Báishā lie the remains of this **temple** (Fùguó Sì), once the largest of Lijiāng's monasteries. Much of it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. To get there head west from the main intersection in Báishā (p716) until you reach a small village. Turn right at the fork in the road and continue

for around 500m before taking the next left that you come to. Walk up the hill for about 30 minutes and you will come to the monastery ruins.

JADE PEAK MONASTERY 玉峰寺

This small **lamasery** (Yùfēng Sì) is on a hillside about 5km past Báishā. The last 3km of the track require a steep climb. If you decide to leave your bike at the foot of the hill, don't leave it too close to the village below – the local kids have been known to let the air out of the tyres (or worse!)

The monastery sits at the foot of Yúlóng Xuèshān (5500m) and was established in 1756. The monastery's main attraction nowadays is the **Camellia Tree of 10,000 Blossoms** (Wànduǒ Shānchá). Ten thousand might be something of an exaggeration, but locals claim that the tree produces at least 4000 blossoms between February and April. A monk on the grounds risked his life to keep the tree secretly watered during the Cultural Revolution.

WENBI MONASTERY 文笔寺

To get to this **monastery** (Wénbǐ Sì) requires a steep uphill ride 8km to the southwest of Lijiāng. The monastery itself is not that interesting, but there are some good views and pleasant walks in the near vicinity.



Frescoes

Lijiang is famed for its temple frescoes. Most travellers probably won't want to spend a week or so traipsing around seeking them out, but it may be worth checking out one or two.

Most of the frescoes were painted during the 15th and 16th centuries by Tibetan, Naxi, Bai and Han artists. Many of them were restored during the later Qing dynasty. They depict various Taoist, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist themes and can be found on the interior walls of temples in the area. However, the Red Guards came through here slashing and gouging during the Cultural Revolution, so there's not that much to see.

In Báishā (below) the best frescoes can be found in **Dabaoji Palace** (Dàbǎoji Gōng; admission Y15; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm). Nearby, **Liuli Temple** (Liúli Diàn) and **Dading Ge** also have some and in the neighbouring village of Lóngquán, frescoes can be found on the interior walls of **Dajue Palace** (Dàjué Gōng).

BÁISHĀ 白沙

Báishā is a small village on the plain north of Lijiang, near several old temples, and is one of

the best day trips out of Lijiang, especially if you have a bike. Before Kublai Khan made it part of his Yuan empire (1271–1368), Báishā was the capital of the Naxi kingdom. It's hardly changed since then and offers a close-up glimpse of Naxi culture for those willing to spend some time nosing around.

The star attraction of Báishā will probably hail you in the street. Dr Ho (or He) looks like the stereotype of a Taoist physician and has a sign outside his door: 'The Clinic of Chinese Herbs in Jade Dragon Mountains of Lijiang'. The travel writer Bruce Chatwin propelled the good doctor into the limelight when he mythologised Dr Ho as the 'Taoist physician in the Jade Dragon Mountains of Lijiang'. Chatwin did such a romantic job on Dr Ho that the doctor has subsequently appeared in every travel book (including this one) with an entry on Lijiang. Journalists and photographers from every corner of the world have since visited Báishā, and Dr Ho, previously an unknown doctor in an unknown town, has achieved worldwide renown.

Almost directly opposite Dr Ho's clinic is **Café Buena Vista** (Nànwá Wéisītǎ Jùlèbù; ☎ 131-7078

THE CONDUCTOR From Songlines (1987) by Bruce Chatwin

The village schoolmaster was a chivalrous and energetic man with a shock of glinting blue-black hair, who lived with his chilllike wife in a wooden house beside the Jade Stream.

A musicologist by training, he had climbed to distant mountain villages to record the folksongs of the Na-Khi tribe. He believed, like Vico, that the world's first languages were in song. Early man, he said, had learnt to speak by imitating the calls of animals and birds, and had lived in a musical harmony with the rest of Creation.

His room was crammed with bric-a-brac salvaged, heaven knows how, from the catastrophes of the Cultural Revolution. Perched on chairs of red lacquer, we nibbled melon seeds while he poured into thimbles of white porcelain a mountain tea known as 'Handful of Snow'.

He played us a tape of Na-Khi chant, sung antiphonally by men and women around the bier of a corpse: Wooo...Zee! Wooo...Zee! The purpose of the song was to drive away the Eater of the Dead, a fanged and malicious demon thought to feast upon the soul.

He surprised us by his ability to hum his way through the mazurkas of Chopin and an apparently endless repertoire of Beethoven. His father, a merchant in the Lhasa caravan trade, had sent him in the 1940s to study Western music at the Kunming Academy.

On the back wall, above a reproduction of Claude Lorrain's *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, there were two framed photos of himself: one in white tie and tails behind a concert grand; the other, conducting an orchestra in a street of flag-waving crowds – a dashing and energetic figure, on tiptoe, his arms extended upwards and his baton down.

'In 1949,' he said. 'To welcome the Red Army into Künming.'

'What were you playing?'

'Schubert's *Marche Militaire*.'

For this – or rather, for his devotion to 'Western culture' – he got 21 years in jail.

He held up his hands, gazing at them sadly as though they were long-lost orphans. His fingers were crooked and his wrists were scarred: a reminder of the day when the Guards strung him up to the roof-beams – in the attitude of Christ on the Cross...or a man conducting an orchestra.

0719; info@ecotour.com) a lovely little café run by an artist, Zhao Fan, and his girlfriend. It also doubles up as an art gallery and is a good place to get travel information (see Eco-Tours p711).

There are a couple of frescoes worth seeing in town and surrounding the area; see opposite for details.

Báishā is an easy 20-30-minute bike ride from Lijiang. Otherwise take a minibus (Y15) from the corner of Minzu Lu and Fuhui Lu. From Báishā minibuses return to Lijiang regularly (Y20).

YÜLÓNG XUÈSHĀN 玉龙雪山

Also known as Mt Satseto, **Yùlóng Xuēshān** (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain; admission adult/student Y80/60, protection fee Y40) soars to some 5500m. Its peak was first climbed in 1963 by a research team from Beijing and now, at some 35km from Lijiang, it is regularly mobbed by hordes of Chinese tour groups and travellers.

Dry Sea Meadow (甘海子; Gānhǎizi) is the first stop you come to if travelling by bus from Lijiang. A chairlift (Y160) ascends to a

large meadow at 3050m which, according to geologists, was actually a lake 2000 years ago. It can often get freezing above even when warm down here; warm coats can be rented for Y30, deposit Y300, and oxygen tanks are Y40. (see p982)

Cloud Fir Meadow (云杉坪; Yúnshānpíng) is the second stop and a chairlift (Y40) takes you up to 4506m where walkways lead to awesome glacier views. Horses can be hired here for Y80.

Views from above are pretty impressive, but make sure you get here well before the first chair up at 8.30am. Unless you get a head start on the tour groups, prepare for up to an hour wait to get either up or down the mountain.

Around 60km from Lijiang, or a 30-minute drive from Dry Sea Meadow, is **Yak Meadow** (牦牛坪; Mǎoniúping) where yet another chairlift (Y60) pulls visitors up to an altitude of 3500m where there are ample hiking opportunities near Xuēhuā Hǎi (Snowflake Lake). Crowds and long waits are almost unheard of here.

JOSEPH ROCK

Yúnnán was a hunting ground for famous, foreign plant-hunters such as Kingdon Ward and Joseph Rock. Rock lived in Lijiāng between 1922 and 1949, becoming the world's leading expert on Naxi culture and local botany. More than his academic pursuits, however, he will be remembered as one of the most enigmatic and eccentric characters to travel in western China.

Rock was born in Austria, the son of a domineering father who insisted he enter a seminary. A withdrawn child, he escaped into his imagination and atlases, discovering a passion for China. An astonishing autodidact – he taught himself eight languages, including Sanskrit – he began learning Chinese at 13 years of age. He somehow wound up in Hawaii, and in time became the foremost authority on Hawaiian flora.

Asia always beckoned and he convinced the US Department of Agriculture, and later Harvard University, to sponsor his trips to collect flora for medicinal research. He devoted much of his life to studying Naxi culture, which he feared was being extinguished by the dominant Han culture. He became *National Geographic* magazine's 'man in China' and it was his exploits in northwestern Yúnnán and Sìchuān for the magazine that made him famous.

He sent over 80,000 plant specimens from China – two were named after him – along with 1600 birds and 60 mammals. Amazingly, he was taking and developing the first colour photographic plates in his field in the 1920s! Tragically, container-loads of his collections were lost in 1945 in the Arabian Sea when the boat was torpedoed.

Rock's caravans stretched for half a mile, and included dozens of servants, including a cook trained in Austrian cuisine, trains of pack horses, and hundreds of mercenaries for protection against bandits, not to mention the gold dinner service and a collapsible bathtub.

Rock lived in Yúhú village (called Nguluko when he was there) outside Lijiāng. Many of his possessions are now local family heirlooms.

The *Ancient Naxhi Kingdom of Southwest China* (1947) is Joseph Rock's definitive work. Immediately prior to his death, his Naxi dictionary was also finally prepared for publishing. For an insight into the man and his work, take a look at *In China's Border Provinces: The Turbulent Career of Joseph Rock, Botanist-Explorer* (1974) by JB Sutton, or Rock's many archived articles for *National Geographic*.

At the time of research, camping in the area was not prohibited but it's better to check when you get there as regulations have a tendency to change quicker than the cloud cover.

Bus 7 (Y15 to Y20) leaves for all three spots from the intersection of Míngu Lu and Fúhú Lu and passes by Báishā on the way. Returning to Lijiāng, buses leave fairly regularly but check with your driver to find out what time the last bus will depart.

If you enter the region from the north (Tiger Leaping Gorge) there's no ticket gate.

TIGER LEAPING GORGE 虎跳峡

☎ 0887

A hike here has gone from obscure adventure to the 'can't miss' experience of northern Yúnnán and is well worth the hype. The gorge (Hútiao Xiá), one of the deepest in the world, measures 16km long and is a giddy 3900m from the waters of Jinsha River (Jinshā Jiāng) to the snow-capped mountaintops of

Hābā Shān (Haba Mountain) to the west and Yùlóng Xuěshān to the east.

The best time to come is May and the start of June, when the hills are afire with plant and flower life.

Plan on three to four days away from Lijiāng doing the hike though it can be done in two. Many travellers have lingered up to a week.

The first thing to do is to check with cafés in Lijiāng for the latest gossip on the mini-trek, particularly the weather and its possibly lethal effects on the trail. Most cafés give away hand-drawn maps of the trek. They show paths, walking times and some places to stay, but remember that they aren't to scale.

Transport is easier than it once was. Finishing south in Qiátóu allows for quicker transport back to Lijiāng, but heading north towards Dàjù gives you the option of continuing on to Báishuítái (p727). Most people take a Shangri-la-bound bus early in the morning, hop off in Qiátóu, and hike quickly to stay overnight in Walnut Garden.

Development is taking its toll on the gorge. After three years of Herculean blasting and building, a road now leads all the way through the gorge from Qiátóu to Walnut Garden and a dirt track swings north to Báishuítái, joining the road to Shangri-la. Tour buses shuttle up and down the gorge and kitschy stop-off points are being constructed. This currently isn't too much of an annoyance for trekkers as the high path climbs way above all the activity.

This does mean that you can still see the gorge (if you don't want to trek) by taking a bus to Qiátóu and then catching one of the ubiquitous minibuses that shuttle people to the main viewpoint 10km away. The cost will depend on your bargaining skills, but aim for as close to Y15 as you can. You could even take a taxi (Y50) the 23km from Qiátóu to Walnut Garden and hitchhike back.

Admission to the gorge is Y50.

Dangers & Annoyances

The gorge trek is not to be taken lightly, particularly during the wet months of July and August – or any time it rains, really – when landslides and swollen waterfalls can block the paths, in particular on the low road. Half a dozen people – including a few foreign travellers – have died in the gorge. Most perished because they wandered off the trail, got lost and/or were unable to return to the trail, or fell. One hiker was buried while trying to scramble over a landslide and in 2004 a car was caught in a landslide on the low road and four people died. Two solo travellers have also reported being assaulted on the trail by locals, although this couldn't be officially confirmed.

Make sure you bring plenty of water on this hike, two to three litres is ideal, as well as plenty of sun screen and lip balm.

On a less severe note, several travellers have reported becoming ill after eating in Qiátóu or from drinking water along the trek.

Activities

GORGE TREK

There are two trails – the higher (the older route, known as the 24-bend path, although it's more like 30), and the lower, new road, replete with fume-belching tour buses. Only the high trail is worth hiking. Arrows litter the high trail, pointing out the path and the way to guesthouses.

The following route starts at Qiátóu.

To get to the high road, after crossing through the gate, cross a small stream and go 150m. Take a left fork, go through the school-yard's football pitch, and join the tractor road. Continue until the track ends and then follow the yellow arrows to the right. It's six hours to Bēndiwān or a strenuous eight hours to Walnut Garden.

Guesthouses dot the trail which means you're usually never more than a few kilometres from a bed – good news for those not willing to start trekking at the crack of dawn. The following list is not exhaustive.

Naxi Family Guesthouse (Nàxī Kèzhàn; dm Y15) Eight kilometres into the trek, this place still gets rave reviews from travellers.

Halfway Lodge (Zhōngtú Kèzhàn, Bēndiwān; dm Y15) This is an excellent, very popular place that's gone from a cosy little guesthouse to one of the bigger operations on the trek.

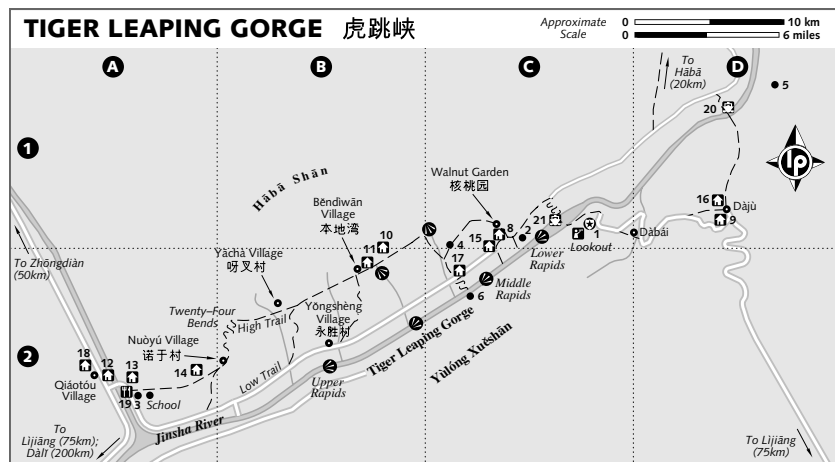
Five Fingers Guesthouse (Wúzhǐ Kèzhàn; dm Y15) Run by a friendly, enthusiastic family, you can eat with them for Y10.

Tina's Guesthouse (Zhōngxiá Lǚdiàn; dm Y15) About 1½ hours from Bēndiwān you descend to the road to this place – budget more time if you are ascending. Tina's is a friendly and convenient place to spend your first night from Dàjù. A good detour from here leads down 40 minutes to the middle rapids and Tiger Leaping Stone, where a tiger is once said to have leapt across the Yangzi, thus giving the gorge its name. The man who restored the path charges Y10 to take people down it (regardless of whether you want him to or not).

From Tina's to Walnut Garden it is a 40-minute walk along the road. A new alternative trail to Walnut Garden keeps high where the path descends to Tina's, crosses a stream and a 'bamboo forest' before descending into Walnut Garden.

Be aware that in peak times – particularly late summer – up to 100 people per day can make the trek, so bed space is short. Be prepared to sleep in a back room somewhere. Supplies of bottled water can be chancy; it's probably best to bring your own.

The second day's walk is slightly shorter, at four to six hours. There are two ferries and so two route options to get to Dàjù. After 45 minutes you'll see a red marker leading down to the new (winter) ferry (*xīn dùkǒu*; one way Y10); the descent includes one hairy section over planks with a sheer drop below.



INFORMATION

PSB 公安局	1	C1
Ticket Office 售票处	2	C1
Ticket Office 售票处	3	A2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Bamboo Forest 竹林	4	C1
Pagoda 塔	5	D1
Tiger Leaping Stone 虎跳石	6	C2

SLEEPING

Chateau de Woody 山白脸旅馆	8	C1
Daju Longhu Inn 大具龙虎客栈	9	D1
Five Fingers Guesthouse 五指旅馆	10	B1
Halfway Lodge 中途客栈	11	B2
Hotel 酒店	12	A2
Jane's Guesthouse	13	A2
Naxi Family Guesthouse 纳西雅阁	14	A2
Sean's Spring Guesthouse 山泉客栈	15	C1
Snowflake Hotel 雪花饭店	16	D1
Tina's Guest House 中峡客旅店	17	C2
Youth Hostel 青年旅馆	18	A2

EATING

Gorged Tiger Café	19	A2
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TRANSPORT

Ferry 渡船	20	D1
New Ferry 渡船	21	C1

Many trekkers call it a day when they reach the bottom and flag down anything heading back Qiátóu along the lower road. Or, you can try to arrange a car through your accommodation in Walnut Grove to meet you at the bottom and take you back to Qiátóu.

The road to Dàjù and the village itself are pretty uninteresting so you won't be missing anything if you skip it.

If you do decide to head on to Dàjù, it's a hard climb to the car park where you should register with the Lijiāng PSB (Gōngānjū). The PSB officer offers a car to take you into Dàjù for Y10, avoiding the dull 1½-hour's walk along the road.

The second, lesser-used option continues along the road from Walnut Garden until it reaches the permanent ferry crossing (Y10). From here paths lead to Dàjù.

If you're doing the walk the other way round and heading for Qiátóu, walk north through Dàjù, aiming for the white pagoda at the foot of the mountains.

TIGER LEAPING GORGE TO BÀISHUÌTÁI

An adventurous add-on to the gorge trek is to continue north all the way to Hābā village and the limestone terraces of Bāishuìtái. This turns it into a four-day trek from Qiátóu and from here you can travel on to Shangri-la. From Walnut Garden to Hābā, via Jiāngbiān, it is seven to eight hours. From here to the Yì village of Sānbà is about the same, following trails. You could just follow the road and hitch with the occasional truck or tractor but it's longer and less scenic. Some hardy mountain bikers have followed the trail but this is really only fun from north to south, elevations being what they are. The best way would be to hire a guide in Walnut Garden for Y50 to Y100 per day, depending on the number of people. For Y100 to Y120 per day you should be able to get a horse and guide. Eventually buses will make the trip, but that is still some time off.

In Hābā most people stay at the **Haba Snow Mountain Inn** (Hābā Xuēshān Kèzhàn; beds Y15) which has toilets and showers. In Sānbà, beds can also be found for around Y15. From Sānbà there is an 8am bus to Shangri-la (Y40, five hours), or you could get off at the turn-off to Bitá Hǎi (Emerald Pagoda Lake) and hike there.

If you plan to try the route alone, assume you'll need all provisions and equipment for extremes of weather. Ask for local advice before setting out.

Sleeping & Eating

There are accommodation options at either end of the trek and all the way in between.

QIÁOTÓU

Jane's Guesthouse (☎ 880 6570; janetibetgh@hotmail.com; dm/s/d Y15/30/30; 🚻) Next to the school at the start of the trek, this is your best option in Qiátóu. Jane is a character, massively helpful and can tell you everything there is to know about the gorge trek. There are left-luggage facilities and internet access here.

Travellers will be warmly welcomed at the **Youth Hostel** (dm/d Y15/50) on the village's main road but rooms don't look like they've ever been cleaned. There's a **hotel** (d Y280) next the

Shangri-la–Qiátóu bus drop-off that seems appealing but with the lack of phones, disappearing desk staff and oddities like broken, three-legged chairs it's horrific value for the money.

Gorged Tiger Café (☎ 880 6300) Run by an Australian woman, Margo, this is another place you should stop by before starting your trek to get up-to-date information on the trail. The food gets mixed reviews from travellers, but Margo herself gets raves.

DÀJÙ

Snowflake Hotel (Xuēhuā Fāndiàn) Gets most TLG trekkers but though it gets high marks for friendliness, some travellers have complained about dingy rooms. Staff can arrange for the 7.30am bus to Lijiāng to pick you up at the hotel.

Daju Longhu Inn (Dàjù Lónghǔ Kèzhàn; standard/deluxe d Y20/50 without bathroom) If the Snowflake's owners are MIA (known to happen occasionally), climb the stone steps just opposite it and follow the road to the main street where this inn will be on your right. Communal showers and toilets are frankly monstrous, but rooms are quite nice. Standards are nondescript budget-basic, though the deluxe ones are quite impressively done up in gold decor.

THE END OF THE GORGE?

Tiger Leaping Gorge, one of the deepest canyons in the world and one of China's most spectacular natural attractions, could disappear in a matter of years if new plans to build eight dams along the upper reaches of the Yangzi River go ahead.

The proposed dams will stretch over 564km of river starting from Shígū near Lijiāng and ending in Pánzhīhūa, Sìchuān. Once completed, the dams will flood more than 13,000 hectares of prime farmland, force over 100,000 people to relocate and wash away local culture, history, unique architecture and indigenous plant and animal life.

Officials say the dams are a necessity and that hydropower can solve China's energy shortage problems. While the country's economy races ahead, power supplies are struggling to keep up and many coastal manufacturing hubs experience regular blackouts. The proposed dams will also divert water towards Kūnmíng and help ease urban water shortages. One of the project's major backers is a power company headed by Li Xiaopeng, the son of Li Peng, the former prime minister who pushed through the controversial Three Gorges Dam project (p484). Local authorities are also said to be backing the scheme, which will produce an estimated US\$50 million a year in tax revenue once power generation begins – double the current annual figure.

Although the central government has yet to grant final approval, Chinese media reports that preparatory work, including blasting, has already begun and proper construction on the dams is expected to begin by 2008. Local and international environmental groups are lobbying the government to halt plans, but others are also concerned. Locals are increasingly worried about their land and the impact that damming the gorge will have on the flow of tourist dollars to the region. However, with such a pro-development economic policy in full swing, it's hard to believe that those in charge will take much notice.

Sean's Spring Guesthouse (Shānquán Kèzhàn; ☎ 880 6300; www.tigerleapinggorge.com; dm Y15) This is one of the original guesthouses on the trail and still the spot for more lively evenings and socialising. Sean's has a free hot shower, electric blankets, mountain-bike hire (per hr Y10) and can organise camping, guides and horse trips.

Chateau de Woody (Shānbáiliǎn Lúguān; dm Y15) Woody's is definitely one of the friendliest stops on the trek, though travellers say the food can be disappointing.

Getting There & Away

From Lijiāng, Shangri-la-bound buses leave every hour or so from 7.30am to 5pm from the long-distance bus station and pass through Qiáotóu (Y20). The last bus to Shangri-la passes through at around 7pm.

From Dàjù to Lijiāng buses (Y20) leave at 7.30am and 1.30pm.

Returning to Lijiāng from Qiáotóu, buses start running through from Shangri-la around 9am. The last one rolls through around 7.40pm (Y20).

Eventually the new highway through the gorge will link Qiáotóu, Walnut Garden and the settlement across the river from Dàjù and then bend north to connect Báishuítái, allowing travellers to get to Shangri-la from here.

LÚGŪ HÚ 泸沽湖

☎ 0888

This stunning, forest-lined lake overlaps the remote Yúnnán-Sichuān border and is home to several Tibetan, Yi and Mosu (a Naxi subgroup) villages. The Mosu are the last practising matriarchal society in the world (see the box, opposite) and many other Naxi customs lost in Lijiāng are still in evidence here. The lake, formed by two sinking faults, is fairly high at 2685m and is usually snowbound over winter. Villages are scattered around the lake but Luòshuǐ (落水) is heavily developed for tourism and is where your bus will drop you off.

Consider heading for Lígé (里格; opposite), a much smaller village on the northeastern shore of the lake.

The best times to visit the lake are April to May, and September to October, when the weather is dry and mild. Entrance to the lake is Y80.

Sights & Activities

From Luòshuǐ you can visit several islands on the lake by dugout canoe, which the Mosu call

'pig troughs' (*zhūcáo*). The canoes are rowed by Mosu who also serve as guides and usually take you out to **Lǐwǔbǐ Dǎo** (里务比岛), the largest island. From here you can practically wade across to a spit of land in Sichuān. The second largest island is **Hēiwǎi Dǎo** (黑白俄岛). Canoes leave from a beach area to the south of the hotel strip in Luòshuǐ. In Lígé any of the hostels can help arrange boat trips. The price will vary wildly, depending on exactly what you want to see and how many people are in your group. If you're in a group of six to eight people expect to pay around Y10 per person.

Near the bus stop in Luòshuǐ is the worthwhile **Mosu Folk Custom Museum** (摩俗民族博物馆; Mósú Mínsú Bówùguǎn; admission Y20; ☎ hit & miss). The museum is set within the traditional home of a wealthy Mosu family. Chinese-speaking guides will show you around and explain how the matriarchal society functions. There is also an interesting collection of photos taken by Joseph Rock in the 1920s.

In the outskirts of nearby Yǒngníng is **Zhāmei Temple** (Zhāmei Sì), a Tibetan monastery with at least 20 lamas in residence. Admission is free, but a donation is expected. A private minivan costs Y15 per person for the half-hour ride. A bus passes through Luòshuǐ to Yǒngníng for Y5, or you could opt to walk the 20km or so through pleasant scenery.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotels and guesthouses line the lakeside in Luòshuǐ with doubles for from around Y50. Most have attached restaurants that serve traditional Mosu foods including preserved pig's fat and salted sour fish – the latter being somewhat tastier.

Husi Teahouse (湖思茶屋; Húsi Cháwū; ☎ 588 1170; dm Y15; ☑) Run by Sichuaner Táng Bin since 1998, this is one of the original and still the best backpacker hang-outs on the lake. Showers are a bit of a hike from the guesthouse, but there's a fleet of computers with internet, killer coffee, a terrific bar/café and travel info galore. If you're lucky, you'll be in one of four rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the lake.

Mósu Dàjiǔdiàn (摩梭大酒店; ☎ 588 1185; d/cabins Y160/400) The nearby Mosu guesthouses will likely have better doubles, but there's a handful of cabins away from the main building worth looking at. They don't have lake views, but each includes a living room, bedroom and bathroom.

WALKING MARRIAGE

The Mosu are the last practising matriarchal society in the world. This system, whereby kinship and clan names, and social and political positions are passed on through the female line, has fascinated visitors since the area was developed for tourism in the early 1980s. What's proved to be the biggest draw, however, is the Mosu tradition of a 'walking marriage' (*zǒu hūn*).

Mosu women never marry nor cohabit; instead women are free to choose as many lovers as they like throughout their lives. Mosu women come of age when they reach 13, after which they no longer have to sleep in the communal living areas but are given their own bedroom. Her lover visits at night and returns to his mother's home in the morning, hence the expression 'walking marriage'.

This idea of such free and easy love has been heavily publicised. Traditionally referred to as Nǚ Guó (Woman's Kingdom), the area of Lúgū Hú was renamed Nǚ'ér Guó (Girl's Kingdom) in order to spice up the romantic and exotic image of the local women.

It's a strategy that's worked. Thousands of tourists have ventured up to this remote area, resulting in the Mosu becoming the richest ethnic minority group in Yúnnán. But it's also had some damaging effects on their culture. 'Walking marriage' has become synonymous with 'one night stand' and many men, in particular Han Chinese, visit the area in the hope of having a walking marriage themselves. This in turn has seen a rise in prostitution in the area and brothels disguised as karaoke bars now sit on the edge of Luòshuǐ town; the ultimate proof, if it was ever needed, that's there's no such thing as free love.

Getting There & Away

Lijiāng's long-distance bus station has one direct bus a day to the lake (Y63, seven to eight hours, 9.30am) but buy your ticket at least one day in advance as it's often fully booked. Alternately, you can go to Nínglàng (宁蒗) from Lijiāng's north bus station (Y23, three to four hours, six buses daily from 8am to 2pm). From Nínglàng, there's a daily bus to the lake (Y20, three to four hours, 12.30pm).

For Lígé you will have to change for a minibus in Luòshuǐ (Y8 per person; if there are a lot of you they'll try to charge Y10 for the 20-25-minute ride).

Leaving Luòshuǐ, the direct bus to Lijiāng leaves daily at 10am. Again, tickets should be bought at least a day in advance. There's also a daily bus to Nínglàng (Y20, check time when you arrive). From Nínglàng, there are 13 buses daily to Lijiāng (Y25, 7.30am to 4pm) and once a day, Xiàguān (Y48, 7.50am).

The daily bus to Xichàng (Síchūan) leaves at 8am (Y60, seven hours). There are also dozens of minibuses that prowl the villages around the lake on both the Sichūan and Yúnnán sides if you want to do some exploring.

LÍGÉ 里格

With its velvet silence and vivid starry nights, arriving in this magical little village after Lijiāng feels like arriving at the very tranquil

end of the earth. Most travellers don't get past Luòshuǐ, so if you do make the effort to come here it will likely be just you, the Mosu and a handful of solo Chinese backpackers.

Set around a bay facing Lígé Dǎo (Lige Island), there's a day's worth of exploring to do either in the wilderness or on the lake, but a surprising number of travellers come and just chat, doodle and drink at one of the three waterside cafés.

But do get here as quick as you can. Construction plans are in the works and one part of the bay looks like it's being readied for the construction of at least a half-dozen two-storey guesthouses.

Sleeping & Eating

Yásè Dába Lǚxíngzhě Zhī Jiā (雅瑟达吧旅行堵之家; ☎ 588 1196; dm/d/tr Y20/40/60) Recently opened on the edge of the lake, this guest house has basic rooms with electric blankets, lovely owners and is just a spit away from the water. The cosy restaurant serves wonderful food (try Lugu Hu fish *lúgū Hú Yú*; 泸沽湖鱼) or sausage (*xiāngcháng*; 香肠) along with cold beer and an impressive choice of liqueurs (Bailey's anyone?). They can also suggest activities or arrange pretty much any excursion you want here. Bikes are Y20 per day, internet is Y5 per 30 minutes.

Right around the corner from here on the south side of this spit of land, is another terrific

guesthouse (☎ 588 1015; d from Y30) Waves from the lake lick at the walls of this charming café it's so close to the water. It's all headed up by Susan, the fantastically friendly and relaxed owner.

SHANGRI-LA 香格里拉 (ZHONGDIAN 中甸)

☎ 0887 / pop 125,000 / elevation 3200m

Shangri-la (also known as Zhōngdiàn) is home to remote temples, rugged scenery and the start of the Tibetan world. And while travellers have beat their way to northern Yúnnán's other ancient villages, this remote town hasn't shown up on many people's radars in the same way.

But seeing the town's potential to follow in the footsteps of Lijiāng and Dàlǐ, Zhōngdiàn got the attention of the government in a big way.

Officials declared the town (and by extension the rest of the country) the location of British writer James Hilton's fictional Shangri-la, described in his novel *The Lost Horizon*. Poo-poo-ed as a cynical gimmick to drum up tourism, the thing is, it's actually worked and has got everyone from backpackers to tour groups interested in visiting.

Principally a Tibetan town (its Tibetan name is Gyeltang or Gyalthang) the main reason to come here is to visit the monastery and to get a taste of Tibet if you can't make it to the real thing.

Shangri-la is also the last stop in Yúnnán for more hardy travellers looking at a rough five- or six-day journey to Chéngdū via the Tibetan townships and rugged terrain of western Sichuān.

Plan your visit to this neck of the woods between April and October. There is no point coming here during winter as the city is practically shut down and transportation is often halted completely by snow storms.

In mid-June Shangri-la plays host to a horseracing festival that sees several days of dancing, singing, eating and, of course, horseracing. Another new festival – usually in September – features minority artists of south-west China. Accommodation can be a bit tight around these times, so you may want to arrive a day or two early in order to secure a room.

Information

Agricultural Bank of China (Zhōngguó Nóngyè

Yínháng; cnr Changzheng Lu & Xiangyang Lu; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Can change cash, travellers cheques and give cash advances on credit cards.

CD Burning (Noah's Café; Nuoya Kāfēi; Changzheng Lu) Y10 per CD.

China Telecom (Changzheng Lu) There are two telephone offices along this road that offer cheap international phone calls.

Khampa Caravan (☎ 828 8648; www.khampacaravan.com; Heping Lu) Organises some excellent adventures, from day treks in the surrounding countryside to week-long treks in the remote wilderness. It can also arrange overland travel into Tibet (see p276), as well as flights and permits from Shangri-la to Lhasa. The company also runs a lot of sustainable development programs within Tibetan communities. One of these projects, Trinyi Eco-lodge, is a couple of kilometres outside town and is easy to get to by bike.

PSB (Gōngānjú; Changzheng Lu; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm) Issues on-the-spot visa extensions.

Tibet Café (☎ 823 0282; www.tibetcafeinn.com; Changzheng Lu; internet access per hr Y12) Another great place to go for travel information; it also organises overland travel to Tibet. A particularly worthwhile trip is a visit to its eco-farm, Shangbala, 40km from Shangri-la, where you can spend the evening with a Tibetan family (per person Y20). All money goes directly to the Tibetan community.

Dangers & Annoyances

Altitude sickness is a real problem here and most travellers need at least a couple of days to acclimatize. Brutal winter weather can bring the town to a complete standstill so try to plan your visit between March and October.

Sights

About an hour's walk north of town is the **Ganden Sumtseling Gompa** (Sōngzānlín Sì; admission Y10; ☎ 7.30am-8pm), a 300-year-old Tibetan monastery complex with around 600 monks. The monastery is the most important in south-west China and is definitely worth the trip to Shangri-la. Bus 3 runs here from anywhere along Changzheng Lu (Y1). Be advised the government is planning to raise the admission price to around Y30.

The view of town from the top is gorgeous, and a sunset from here is particularly picturesque among the tinkling bells and the fluttering prayer flags.

Much closer to the centre of things, just south of town and overlooking the old town district, is another **monastery** with exceedingly friendly monks.

Hidden within the old town is the **Scripture Chamber** (Gùchéng Cāngjīngtáng), formerly a memorial hall to the Red Army's Long March.

Guishan Park (Guīshān Gōngyuán) is nearby and has a temple at the top with commanding views of the area.

Besides the sights listed below, Shangri-la is a wonderful place to get off the beaten track, with plenty of trekking and horseback riding opportunities, as well as little visited monasteries and villages. However, the remote sights are difficult to do independently given the lack of public transport. You'll need to arrange a guide, or car and driver through your accommodation.

Sleeping & Eating

There are always interesting guesthouses and hostels popping up near the old town and city outskirts. Be aware however that despite

Shangri-la's often glacial night temperatures, many guesthouses are neither heated nor have 24-hour hot water.

Dragoncloud Guesthouse (Lóngxíng Kèzhān; ☎ 688 7573; www.dragoncloud.cn; 94 Beimen Jie, Jiantang Zhen; 建塘镇北门街94号; dm Y15-25, s/d with bathroom 80; ☎) The rooms here are in great condition with modern bathrooms. There's a great common area with fireplace, internet (Y4 per hour) and interesting comings and goings from the nearby old town. Bike rental for Y15 per day.

Shangri-La Traveller Club (Zàngdì Guójī Qīngnián Lúshè; ☎ 822 8671; 98 Heping Lu; 和平路98号; dm/d Y20/50; ☎) If you want enthusiastic (or manic!) service this is a great, central place that attracts a real 'tumbleweed' type of traveller. Staff are also good setting up any kind of travel arrangements. You can rent bikes here (per day Y15) and go online (per hr Y6). The only downside is the cold, mad dash from the outdoor shower to the rooms.

International Youth Hostel (Guójī Qīngnián Lúshè; ☎ 822 6948; Jiantang Lu; 建塘路; dm/d Y20/80) Spartan and on the chilly side at night, this hostel is in a quiet part of town and run by a lovely family who doesn't speak English but goes out of their way to help.

Noah Café (Nuoya Kāfēi; Changzheng Lu; dishes from Y10) You can walk the streets all day, never see another traveller, then walk in here and there's dozens. This café has become a real travellers hub with great Western food and friendly service. You can also burn CDs here for Y10.



INFORMATION	
Agricultural Bank of China 中国农业银行	1 A2
Khampa Caravan 康巴商道探险旅行社	2 B4
PSB 公安局	3 A3
Tibet Café 西藏咖啡馆	4 A4
Tibet Tourism Bureau 西藏旅游局	5 A3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Scripture Chamber 中甸古城藏经堂	6 B4
SLEEPING	
Artist Space of the Sacred 圣地艺术空间	7 B4
Dragoncloud Guesthouse 龙行客栈	8 B4
International Youth Hostel 国际青年旅社	9 B3
Shangri-La Traveller Club 迪庆藏地国际青年旅舍	10 A4
EATING	
Noah Café 挪亚咖啡	11 A4
Tibetan Restaurants 西藏餐厅	12 A4
TRANSPORT	
Bus Station 汽车站	13 B1
CAAC 中国民航	14 A3

Artist Space of the Sacred (Shéngdí Yishú Kōngjiān; ☎ 823 1309; 16 Gangfang Jie; 仓房街16号; cocktails & beers Y10-Y30) A feast for the senses, set up by a local artist. Primarily a bar, the bar itself is all moody lighting and flimsy curtains, while outside there are tiered outdoor terraces with outrageous views. A Ming has a gallery full of paintings upstairs and will show you if you ask. It also has a 4-bed dorm with one of the most romantic views in the city.

Have a look around the old town and on Tuanjie Lu for Tibetan and Western restaurants and cafés. Also look out for locally produced Shangri-la wine. French missionaries working in the Mekong area taught the Tibetans wine-producing techniques, a tradition which has fortunately carried on through to today – look for the bottle with a church on the label.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are four flights daily to Kūnmíng (Y830), two a week to Guǎngzhōu (Y1880) and regular flights to Lhasa. Flights for other domestic destinations also leave from the airport but are completely irregular and destinations change from week to week. You can inquire about your destination or buy tickets at the **CAAC** (Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 822 9901; Wenming Jie).

The airport is 5km from town and is sometimes referred to as Dìqíng or Deqen – there is currently no airport at Dégīn. Don't expect to see any taxis here; they are rare around the airport. Shuttle buses (Y10) sometimes wait for incoming flights and will usually drop you right at your hotel. The drivers wear picture ID. If the shuttle bus isn't there you'll have to negotiate with the drivers of the black sedans in front of you or call your accommodation to try and arrange transport.

BUS

If you're up for the bus-hopping trek to Chéngdū, in Sìchuān, you're looking at a minimum of five to six days' travel at some very high altitudes – you'll need warm clothes. The first stage of the trip is Shangri-la to Xiāngchéng in Sìchuān. From Xiāngchéng, your next destination is Litáng, though if roads are bad you may be forced to stay overnight in Dàoichéng. From Litáng, it's on to Kāngdìng from where you can make your way

west towards Chéngdū. For more details on these towns see Western Sìchuān & the Road to Tibet (p777).

Note that roads out of Shangri-la can be temporarily blocked by snow at any time from November to March. If you are travelling at this time bring lots of warm clothes and a flexible itinerary.

For Bēnzilán you can also catch the Dégīn bus which passes through Bēnzilán on the way. See also individual local destinations for transport details.

TO TIBET

There are now flights from Shangri-la to Lhasa, but the situation is much the same as in Kūnmíng and Chéngdū and travellers must be part of an organised 'group' and have the necessary permits in order to travel. There are three companies in Shangri-la that sell 'packages' to Tibet (around Y2570 per person, including air ticket):

Khampa Caravan (☎ 828 8648; www.khampacaravan.com; Heping Lu)

Tibet Café (☎ 823 0019; www.tibetcafeinn.com; Changzheng Lu)

Tibet Tourism Bureau (Xizàng Lǚyóujú; ☎ 822 9028; yunnantibetour@yahoo.com.cn; room 2206, Shangbala Hotel, 36 Changzheng Lu)

These same companies can also organise overland trips from Shangri-la into Tibet via either the northern or southern highway to Lhasa. Likewise, you need official permits in order to do this and these trips don't come cheap (from Y800 per vehicle per day). You're also looking at an eight- to 12-day journey at high altitudes. That aside, the highway to Lhasa promises to be a spectacular adventure with some mind-blowing scenery.

The companies all offer slightly different trips so it's worth shopping around to see what best suits you. Remember that permits take five days to organise. The Tibet Café has arranged for travellers to start the permit process in Dàli courtesy of the MCA Guesthouse. Travellers can fax copies of their passports through to Shangri-la from the MCA Guesthouse so by the time they arrive in Shangri-la their permits will be ready to collect. Jim's Tibetan Guesthouse & Peace Café (p704) in Dàli can also organise overland travel to Lhasa.

Getting Around

Buses 1 and 3 zip between the monastery and town (Y1).

BUS TIMETABLES

Bus services from Shangri-la include the following:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Kūnmíng	Y167	15hr	7 daily	4-7.30pm
Lǐjiāng	Y35	4½hr	13 daily	7.10am-5.40pm
Xiānguān	Y56	8hr	hourly	7am-12.30pm
Dégīn	Y38	6hr	4 daily	7.20-noon
Xiāngchéng	Y65	8-9hr	daily	7.30am
Dōngwǎng	Y45	7-8hr	daily	7.30am
Báishuītái	Y23	4hr	2 daily	9.10am, 2.10pm
Bēnzilán	Y17	3hr	2 daily	1pm, 2pm

AROUND SHANGRI-LA

Some 7km northwest of Shangri-la you'll find the seasonal **Nàpà Hǎi** (Napa Lake; admission Y30), surrounded by a large grassy meadow. Between September and March there's a myriad of rare species, including the black-necked crane. Outside of these months, the lake dries up and there is little reason to visit.

Approximately 10km southeast of Shangri-la is the **Tiansheng Bridge** (Tiānshéng Qiáo; admission Y15; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct), a natural limestone formation, and further southeast, the subterranean **Xiagei hot springs** (admission Y15; ☎ 9am-late); for both places, ask at your accommodation for off-season hours. If you can arrange transport, en route is the **Great Treasure Temple** (Dàbǎo Sì), one of the earliest Buddhist temples in Yünnán.

The above sites are wildly popular with Chinese tour groups, but many foreign travellers seem underwhelmed.

Emerald Pagoda Lake 碧塔

Some 25km east of Shangri-la, the bus to Sānbà (see Báishuītái, following) can drop you along the highway for **Bità Hǎi** (Emerald Pagoda Lake; admission Y60), which is 8km down a trail. There are lots of hiking options and ponies can be arranged at the lake. There is a second, southern entrance, from where it is 2km to the lake. It's possible to rent boats between the two ends of the lake.

A taxi will cost around Y300 for the return trip.

Báishuītái 白水台

Báishuītái is a limestone deposit plateau 108km southeast of Shangri-la with some breathtaking scenery and Tibetan villages en route. The **terraces** (admission Y30) are resplend-

ent in sunlight, but can be tough to access if rainfall has made trails slippery. There are normally horses for hire.

A couple of **guesthouses** at the nearby towns of Báidì and Sānbà have rooms with beds from Y25.

From Shangri-la there are two daily buses to Báishuītái at 9.10am and 2.10pm (Y23).

One option is to trek or hitch all the way from Báishuītái to Tiger Leaping Gorge; see p720 for information.

Bēnzilán 奔子栏

This laid-back Tibetan village makes an excellent base to explore the wonderful **Dhondruping Gumpa** (东竹林寺; Dōngzhúlin Sì), 22km from Bēnzilán, heading northwest along the main road.

Bēnzilán has plenty of restaurants and small hotels. All offer decent beds for Y25-30. **Duówén Lǚguān** (bed Y25), around the bend in the northern end of town, is perhaps the best choice. This Tibetan-style place has a prayer wheel by the entrance and pleasant rooms.

To get to Bēnzilán take any bus between Shangri-la and Dégīn; buses pass through town between 11am and noon. There's two direct buses a day from Shangri-la (Y17, three hours, 1pm & 2pm). There are daily buses back to Shangri-la. Inquire about times when you arrive.

DÉQĪN 德钦

☎ 0887/elevation 3550m

Nestled in the wild west of Yünnán, among ragged, snowy peaks Dégīn is the last outpost before Tibet. It's a terrific little rough-and-tumble town with plenty of atmosphere. Part of Dìqíng Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the county is 80% Tibetan, though a dozen

other minorities are found here, including one of the few settlements of non-Hui Muslims in China. For borderholics, east is Sichuān, west is Tibet and Myanmar lies southwest. Dèqin County is also referred to as 'Shangri-la' in an effort to keep tourist dollars flowing up from the other Shangri-la (Zhōngdiàn).

Some 187km northwest of Shangri-la, the road crosses some serious ranges along this route and at any time from mid-October to late spring, heavy snows can close the road. Tibet beckons, to be sure, but the road is currently closed to individual travellers.

Sleeping & Eating

Deqin Tibet Hotel (Dèqin Lóu; 德钦楼; ☎ 841 2031; dm/d ¥20/70) Still the most charming accommodation in town. There are bright murals on the walls and ceiling, some gorgeous views from the roof-top terrace rooms and a nice communal sitting area. You'll find this place 200m south of the bus station.

Deqin Dasheng Hotel (德钦大声大酒店; d ¥468) Up the street on your right after leaving the bus station, this hotel offers huge discounts and is a good choice for those wanting something a bit slicker. Rooms have modern bathrooms and electric blankets – a god-send during the chilly nights. There's an **internet café** (per hr ¥3) across the street that serves free, bottomless cups of green tea while you surf or email.

Wéixi Nóngjiā Fēngwéi (维西农家风味; dishes from ¥5) Across from the Deqin Dansheng Hotel, this hole-in-the wall eatery has the cheapest and some of the best eats in town. It rarely sees tourists and gets a regular crowd of boisterous locals, particularly for the 7pm news.

Getting There & Away

From Shangri-la to Dèqin, buses leave four times daily between 7.20am and noon (¥38, five to six hours). The same number of buses return to Shangri-la from Dèqin on a similar schedule. For details on border crossings into Tibet, see p726.

AROUND DÈQIN

Approximately 10km southwest of Dèqin is the small but interesting Tibetan **Feilai Temple** (Fēilái Sì).

A further 800m along the main road brings you to a row of **chörten** (stupas) and, weather permitting, breathtaking views of the Méili

Xuěshān range, including the 6740m-high Kawa Karpo (also known as Méili Xuěshān or Tàizi Shān). The more beautiful peak to the south is the 6054m-high Miáocimu (Shěnnǚ in Chinese). Locals come here to burn juniper incense.

There are no local buses here. To get here from Dèqin a taxi will cost you ¥15-20, alternatively, get out on the road and flag down anything that moves.

Mingyong Glacier 明永冰川

Trumbling off the side of Kawa Karpo peak is the 12km-long **Mingyong Glacier** (Míngyǒng Bīngchuān; admission ¥63, expect price spike in high season). For millennia the mountain and glacier has been a pilgrimage site.

Trails to the glacier lead up from Míngyǒng's central square, marked by a new **chörten**. After 45 minutes a path splits off down to the scruffy toe of the glacier. Continuing on, after another 45 minutes you get to Tibetan **Tàizi Miào**, where there is a **guesthouse** (d ¥100-120 low season; ¥180 high season). A further 30 minutes along the trail is **Lotus Temple** (Liánhuā Miào), which offers fantastic views of the glacier framed by prayer flags and **chörten**. Horses can also be hired to go up to the glacier (¥150).

SLEEPING

Beds in all guesthouses are around ¥25-30 and toilet facilities are basic. Electricity is iffy so bring a torch (flashlight) or some candles.

Up some steps from Míngyǒng's main square, where the bus drops you off, is **Míngyǒng Shānzhuāng**, a government-run place with decent dorm rooms.

Heading back along the road towards Dèqin are some friendly, family-run places where beds go for around ¥20.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Dèqin, minibuses to Míngyǒng leave from the bridge near the market at the top end of town regularly (¥10 to ¥30, one to two hours). You can also try to rent a car through your accommodation. Returning buses run fairly regularly.

YUÁNYÁNG RICE TERRACES

元阳梯田

Fashioned over hundreds of years by the Hani, these rice terraces cover roughly 12,500 hectares, and are one of Yúnnán's most spectacu-



lar sights. They can be done in two days from Kūnmíng, though a visit of three or more would be ideal.

Photographers and Chinese tourists flock here in droves to watch sunrises and sunsets turn the terraces into pools of gold, red and silver. Even in poor weather they can be breathtaking. Fog rolling into the terraced valleys leaves hill-top villages the only things visible, and the effect can be dramatic, like islands floating in the clouds.

Xīnjiē

☎ 0873

Yuányáng is actually split into two: Nánshā, the new town, and Xīnjiē, the old town, which is an hour's bus ride up a nearby hill. Either can be labelled Yuányáng, depending what map you use. Xīnjiē is the one you want, so make sure you're getting off at the right one.

INTERNET

Agricultural Bank of China (中国农业银行; Zhōngguó Nóngyè Yínháng) Gives cash advances on credit cards and changes money but will not cash travellers cheques.

Internet café (山城网吧; Shānchéng Wǎngbā; per hr ¥2; ☎ 24hrs) There are plenty of internet places around Titian Square, but the fastest connections are at the ones down the stairs on your left facing the lookout.

Post office (yóujú) A bit hard to find. Go down the stone steps at the south end of Titian Square. Turn when you see the road fork behind you. The post office is halfway down on your left.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Dozens of villages spiral out from Xīnjiē. The terraces around each village have their own special characteristics which vary from season to season. Ask at your accommodation where the best place to start is, or just ask the photographers where they're going for the perfect shot.

Duōyīshù, about 25km from Xīnjiē, has the most spectacular sunrises and is the one you should not miss. For sunsets, **Bádá** and **Lǎohūzǔ** can be mesmerizing.

Maps are available at all accommodation in town and vary in quality from hand-drawn photocopies to slick brochures. Most are bilingual Chinese-English.

A fleet of minibuses leaves when full from Titian Square and whiz around the villages, but you are much better off arranging a car and driver through your accommodation. It's also easy just to hook up with other travellers and split the cost of chartering a minibus for the day (¥400-450).

There's also several **markets** worth checking out so check with your accommodation.

SLEEPING & EATING

Yuányáng Chénjiā Fāngshè (元阳陈家放社; ☎ 562 2342; dm/s/tr ¥10/40/60) This open and breezy guesthouse has spotless rooms with spectacular views of the rice terraces. It's all kept humming by four generations of the same family.

Government Guesthouse (元阳县山城大酒店; Yuányáng Xiānchéng Dǎjiùdiàn; ☎ 564 2659; s/d ¥150/180) Just off Titian Square, rooms here are grubby but the lobby has the best tourist information desk in the whole village.

Yúnti Dǎjiùdiàn (云梯大酒店; ☎ 562 4858; s/d ¥328/258) These are the swankest digs in town with clean, modern rooms and a staff used to foreigners.

There are boisterous food stalls in town. **Lǎo Sichuān Cǎntīng Guǎn** (老四川餐厅官; ☎ 10am-around 11pm) is probably the most popular and has standing room only some nights. For a more tranquil atmosphere try **Liújūn Fàndiàn** (六军饭店; ☎ 10am-9.30pm), the food is good and it's the cheapest in town.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are three buses daily from Kūnmíng to Yuányáng (¥90, 6½hrs, 10.40am, 7.30pm, 8pm). Other destinations include Hékǒu (¥37, four hours) and Gèjiú (¥22, one hour).

Buses from Xīnjiē back to Kūnmíng leave at 10.12am, 5pm and 9pm. Or, you can forge on to Xīshuāngbännà. At the time of research, there were no direct buses to Jīnghóng. To get there, take the 7.30am bus to Lūchūn (Y25, four hours), then you'll have wait to get the Jiāngchéng bus at 4pm (Y31, five hours). By the time you arrive, there'll be now more buses but you can stay at the hotel attached to the bus station which has cheap rooms (dm/d ¥10/60). Buses to Jīnghóng (Y50, 8½ hours) start running at 6am.

This can be a gruelling route over bumpy dirt roads, but it will take you through some magnificent scenery. Buses along this route are frequently stopped for routine police checks. It is likely that your passport will be collected and photocopied for your own protection.

XISHUANGBÄNNÄ REGION 西双版纳

With its tropical forests, brilliant Dai cuisine and laid-back Southeast Asian feel, Xīshuāngbännà (a Chinese approximation of the original Thai name, Sīp Sawng Panna (12 Rice-Growing Districts) is one of the most exciting destinations in Yúnnán.

Just north of Myanmar and Laos, 'Bännà' (as it is usually called) has become China's own mini-Thailand, attracting tourists looking for sunshine and water-splashing festivals, hikers readying for epic jungle treks and pissed-off expats fleeing the congestion and commercialization of Kūnmíng.

But despite Bännà's popularity, it's still easy to get away from the crowds and explore the countryside and nearby villages while watching the weeks slip away.

Environment

Xīshuāngbännà is home to many unique species of plant and animal life. Unfortunately, recent scientific studies have demonstrated the devastating effects of previous government policies on land use; the tropical rainforest areas of Bännà are now as acutely endangered as similar rainforest areas elsewhere on the planet.

The jungle areas that remain contain dwindling numbers of wild tigers, leopards, elephants and golden-haired monkeys. To

be fair, the number of elephants has doubled to 250, up 100% from the early 1980s; the government now offers compensation to villagers whose crops have been destroyed by elephants, or who assist in wildlife conservation. In 1998 the government banned the hunting or processing of animals, but poaching is notoriously hard to control.

People

About one-third of the 800,000-strong population of this region are Dai; another third or so are Han Chinese and the rest is made up of a conglomerate of minorities that include the Hani, Lisu and Yao, as well as lesser-known hill tribes such as the Aini (a subgroup of the Hani), Jinuo, Bulang, Lahu and Wa.

Xīshuāngbännà Dai Autonomous Prefecture, as it is known officially, is subdivided into the three counties of Jīnghóng, Měngǎi and Měnglà.

Climate

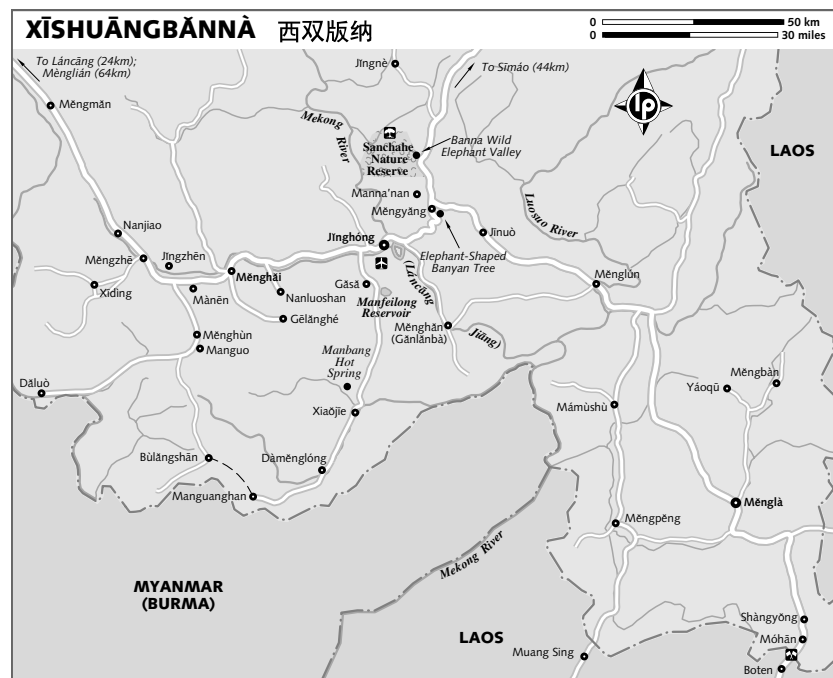
The region has two seasons: wet and dry. The wet season is between June and August, when it rains ferociously almost every day. From September to February there is less rainfall, but thick fog descends during the late evening and doesn't lift until 10am or even later.

November to March sees temperatures average about 19°C. The hottest months of the year are from April to September, when you can expect an average of 25°C.

Festivals & Events

The **Water-Splashing Festival** is held in mid-April and washes away the dirt, sorrow and demons of the old year and brings in the happiness of the new. Jīnghóng usually celebrates it from the 13th to the 15th. Dates in the surrounding villages vary. In Jīnghóng, the first day of the festival is devoted to a giant market. The second day features dragon-boat racing, swimming races and rocket launching. The third day features the water-splashing freakout. Foreigners get special attention so prepare to get drenched all day. Remember, the wetter you get, the more luck you'll receive.

During the **Tanpa Festival** in February, young boys are sent to the local temple for initiation as novice monks. At approximately the same time (between February and March), **Tan Jīng Festival** participants honour Buddhist texts housed in local temples.



The **Tan Ta Festival** is held during the last 10-day period of October or November, with temple ceremonies, rocket launches from special towers and hot-air balloons. The rockets, which often contain lucky amulets, blast off with a curious droning sound, like mini space shuttles, before exploding above; those who find the amulets are assured of good luck.

The farming season (from July to October) is the time for the **Closed-Door Festival**, when marriages or festivals are banned. Traditionally this is also the time of year that men aged 20 or older are ordained as monks for a period of time. The season ends with the **Open-Door Festival**, when everyone lets their hair down again to celebrate the harvest.

During festivals, booking same-day airline tickets to Jīnghóng can be extremely difficult – even with 17 flights per day! You can try getting a flight into Sīmáo, 162km to the north, or take the bus. Hotels in Jīnghóng town are booked solid and prices are usually tripled. Most people end up commuting from a nearby Dai village. Festivities take place all over Xīshuāngbännà, so you might be lucky further away from Jīnghóng.

JINGHONG 景洪

☎ 0691

Jīnghóng is the capital of Xīshuāngbännà prefecture, but with its palm-lined streets and relaxed ambience it can feel like a giant, over-populated village. With more and more multi-storey concrete buildings puncturing the skyline, Jīnghóng is taking on some of the grey, concrete characteristics of typical Chinese provincial capitals.

Prepare yourself for searing late-day heat that can put the entire city into a kind of deep sleep or serious slow motion. Trying to rouse street vendors (or even bus drivers!) from their afternoon siestas can be near impossible.

Situated along the Mekong River, the town's name means 'City of Dawn' in Dai.

Information

The travellers' books at Mei Mei, Forest Café and the Mekong Café are by far the best source of travel tips and trek notes.

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Xuanwei Dadao); branch office (Ganlan Zhonglu) Changes travellers cheques and foreign currency, and has an ATM machine.

China Post & Telecom (Yóudiàn; cnr Mengle Dadao & Xuanwei Dadao; ☎ 8am-8.30pm) You can make international calls from here.

CITS (Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 663 8459; Jinghóng International Travel Bldg; Luandian Jie) can arrange all manner of one-day tours from Y200-300. However, you're better off going to the Mekong Café (opposite) and Mei Mei Café (opposite), which will help with trekking information and put you in touch with English-speaking guides.

Internet cafés (wǎngbā; Manting Lu; per hr Y2) There are literally dozens along this street.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; Gōngānjú; Jingde Lu; ☎ 8-11.30am & 3-5.30pm) Has a fairly speedy visa extension service.

Dangers & Annoyances

There have been two reports (unconfirmed) from travellers regarding drug-and-rob incidents (one successful, one not) on the Kūnmíng–Jinghóng bus trip. Like other countries in Southeast Asia, be careful who your friends are on buses, accept nothing, and leave nothing unattended when you hop off on breaks.

Sights

TROPICAL FLOWER & PLANTS GARDEN

热带花卉园

This terrific **botanic garden** (Rèdài Huāhuìyuán; ☎ 212 0493; 28 Jinghóng Xilu; admission Y40; ☎ 7am-6pm), west of the town centre, is one of Jinghóng's better attractions. Admission gets you into a series of gardens where you can view over 1000 different types of plant life. Take the path on the left-hand side as you enter the gardens to head towards the lovely tropical rainforest area. The gardens also house the **Zhou Enlai Memorial** (Zhōu Ènlái Zōnglǐ Jìniǎnbēi), a contemporary sculpture commemorating a 1961 visit by China's best-loved premier.

PEACOCK LAKE PARK 孔雀湖公园

This artificial lake in the centre of town isn't much, but the small **park** (Kōngquè Hú Gōngyuán) next to it is pleasant. The English Language Corner takes place here every Sunday evening, so this is your chance to exchange views or to engage with the locals practising their English.

Activities

Jinghóng's oft-recommended **Blind Massage School** (Mǎnggrén Ànmò; ☎ 212 5834; cnr Mengle Dadao & Jingde Lu; ☎ 9am-midnight) offers hour-long massages for Y30. Staff are extremely kind and

travellers give it terrific reports. Head down the lane off Mengle Dadao and climb the stairs on your left up to the second floor.

Nonguests can use the **swimming pool** at the Crown Hotel for Y5.

Sleeping

Banna College Hotel (Bǎnnà Xuéyuán; ☎ 213 8365; Xuanwei Dadao; 宣慰大道; dm Y15, tw/d per person Y40/50; ☎) This has the best-value rooms in town. Some of the staff speak English and are good for travel info. Bike rental for Y15 per day, Y150 deposit.

Dai Building Inn (Dǎijiū Huàyuán Xiǎolù; ☎ 216 2592; 57 Manting Lu; 曼听路; dm Y25) People either love or hate this popular backpacker hang-out. All accommodation is in two- or four-bed bamboo bungalows on stilts. Some travellers have been less than impressed with the occasional rodent visitor and lack of privacy (the bamboo walls are definitely not soundproof!).

Wanli Dai Style Guesthouse (Wǎnlǐ Dàiwèi Cǎnting; ☎ 1357-811 2879; Manting Lu; 曼听路; dm Y30) With only a handful of simple rooms, this place is basic but comfortable, although the rooms can get very hot in the summer months. There is a nice garden here and a good restaurant.

Golden Banna Hotel (Jīn Bǎnnà Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 212 4901; Mengle Dadao; 猛泐大道; s/d Y380/580; ☎) This hotel has a kind of industrial factory feel to it just because of the masses of people (and tour groups) that churn in and out. Though rooms are nondescript, staff are very efficient and offer great deals outside of festival times.

Tai Garden Hotel (Tǎiyuán Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 212 3888; fax 212 6060; 8 Minghang Lu; 民航路8号; d Y640 plus 15% tax; ☎) Quiet grounds replete with pool, sauna, gym and tennis court. It's full of the sophisticated and the moneyed, which makes the elegant morning buffet all the more entertaining when it inevitably disintegrates into a rough-and-tumble free-for-all.

Eating

Manting Lu is lined with restaurants serving Dai food, the majority of which dish up Dai dance performances along with their culinary specialities. Dai women thump drums at the entrance and the restaurants are filled nearly every night with tourists being festive.

Dai dishes include barbecued fish, eel or beef cooked with lemongrass or served with peanut-and-tomato sauce. Vegetarians can order roast bamboo shoot prepared in the same fashion. Other specialities include fried

THE DAI PEOPLE 傣族

The Dai are Hinayana Buddhists (as opposed to China's majority Mahayana Buddhists) who first appeared 2000 years ago in the Yangzi Valley and who were subsequently driven southwards by the Mongol invasion of the 13th century. The Dai state of Xishuangbännä was annexed by the Mongols and then by the Chinese, and a Chinese governor was installed in the regional capital of Jinglan (present-day Jinghóng). Countless Buddhist temples were built in the early days of the Dai state and now lie in the jungles in ruins. During the Cultural Revolution, Xishuangbännä's temples were desecrated and destroyed. Some were saved by serving as granaries, but many are now being rebuilt from scratch. Temples are also recovering their role as village schools where young children are accepted for religious training as monks.

The Dai live in spacious wooden houses, raised on stilts to keep themselves off the damp earth, with the pigs and chickens below. The most common Dai foods are sticky rice (*khao nio* in Dai) and fish. The common dress for Dai women is a straw hat or towel-wrap headdress, a tight, short blouse in a bright colour, and a printed sarong with a belt of silver links. Some Dai men tattoo their bodies with animal designs, and betel-nut chewing is popular. Many Dai youngsters get their teeth capped with gold, otherwise they are considered ugly.

Linguistically, the Dai are part of the very large Thai family that includes the Siamese, Lao, Shan, Thai Dam and Ahom peoples found scattered throughout the river valleys of Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, northern Vietnam and Assam. The Xishuangbännä Dai are broken into four sub-groups – the Shui (Water) Dai, Han (Land) Dai, Huayao (Floral Belt) Dai and Kemu Dai – each distinguished by variations in costume, lifestyle and location. All speak the Dai language, which is quite similar to Lao and northern Thai dialects. In fact, Thai is often as useful as Chinese once you get off the beaten track. The written language of the Dai employs a script that looks like a cross between Lao and Burmese.

In temple courtyards, look for a cement structure like a letterbox; this is an altar to local spirits, a combination of Buddhism and indigenous spirit worship. Some 32 separate spirits exist for humans.

Zhang khap is the name for a solo narrative opera, for which the Dai have a long tradition. Singers are trained from childhood to perform long songs accompanied by native flute and sometimes a long drum known as the elephant drum. Performances are given at monk initiations, when new houses are built, weddings and on the birthdays of important people; they often last all night. Even if you do understand Dai, the lyrics are complex – if not fully improvised. At the end, the audience shouts '*Shuay! Shuay!*' which is close to 'Hip, hip, hooray!' Even courtship is done via this singing. Some Dai phrases include *douzao li* (hello), *yindii* (thank you) and *goihán* (goodbye).

river moss (better than it sounds and excellent with beer), spicy bamboo-shoot soup and *shaokao* (skewers of meat wrapped in banana leaves and grilled over wood fires).

Mei Mei Café (Měiměi Kāfēiting; ☎ 212 7324; Manting Lu roundabout; dishes from Y5) It's got cold beer, genius Dai chicken and some of the best travel information in Jinghóng (ask to see the travel binder). At the time of research, government officials were planning to boot Mei Mei's out of this location to make way for a multi-storey building. If it isn't here when you arrive, check out Manting Lu next to the Thai restaurant, where it was planned to relocate it.

Mèngzǐ Guóqiáo Mìxiàn (Jingde Lu; dishes Y5-20; ☎ 24hrs) This breezy, modest restaurant serves up round-the-clock noodles and rice dishes to

be washed down with beakers of quenching lemonade (Y4). English menu available.

Mekong Café (Měigōng Cānguǎn; ☎ 216 2395; 111 Manting Lu) The chicken in coconut (Y18) is an absolute must – you'll be served pieces of chicken and coconut flesh, bobbing in searing hot broth and served in a hollowed out coconut shell. The wait is worth it. The upstairs balcony is a pleasant place to sit with a beer in the winter and read about the sub-zero temperatures in Beijing.

Thai Restaurant (Tàiguó Cǎnting; ☎ 216 1758; Manting Lu; mains Y8-15) Pounce the moment you spy a free seat at this popular Thai restaurant. Phad Thai devotees literally flock here and the crowds never really thin out. Wash the authentic Thai dishes down with snake whisky if you're feeling brave.

There is a huge **night food market** by the new bridge over the Mekong where dozens of stalls serve up barbecued everything from sausages to snails. There are plenty of tables and chairs for those who want to linger.

Entertainment

Mengbala Naxi Arts Theatre (Měngbālǎ Nàxī Yìshùgōng; Ganlan Zhonglu; tickets Y160; ☎ 8.30pm) This theatre has daily song and dance shows.

YES Disco (Mengle Dadao; admission free; ☎ 9pm-late) Perch in any local café weekend mornings and you'll find at least one person nursing a killer hangover and recounting their antics at YES Disco the night before. YES remains the most popular nightspot in town.

Shopping

Market groups have two terrific places to head for shopping, people-watching and at-

mosphere. A fabulous fish and produce **market** is tucked behind some modern buildings across from the long-distance bus station. The **Jade Market**, nearby on Zhuanghong Lu, features lots of Burmese and other South Asians hawkling their goods alongside locals.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are several flights a day to Kūnmíng (Y730) but in April (when the Water-Splashing Festival is held) you'll need to book tickets several days in advance to get either in or out.

There's also two flights daily to Lijiāng (Y840). You can also fly to Bangkok (Y1630) and Chiang Mai (Y1630) from here.

Tickets anywhere can be bought at the **CAAC booking office** (Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 212 7040; Jingde Lu; ☎ 8am-9pm). Credit cards and travellers cheques are not accepted. Cash only.

BUS

The Jinghóng long-distance bus station (Minghang Lu) is the most useful for long-distance destinations. If you want to explore Xishuangbännä, go to the No 2 bus station.

Getting Around

There's no shuttle bus or public transport to the airport 5km south of the city. A taxi will cost around Y20 but expect to be hit up for up to three times that during festivals.

Jinghóng is small enough that you can walk to most destinations, but a bike makes life easier and can be rented through most accommodation for Y15-25 a day.

A taxi anywhere in town costs Y5.

AROUND JINGHÓNG

While most travellers may base themselves in Jinghóng, it's the endless trekking possibilities and the minority villages that keeps them lingering weeks longer than they intended.

Some have cycled up to Měnghǎi and Měngzhē on mountain bikes (it's almost impossible on bikes without gears), and one French photographer hitched up with a local medicine man and spent seven days doing house calls in the jungle.

Obviously, it's the longer trips that allow you to escape the hordes of tourists and get a feel for what Xishuangbännä is about. But even with limited time there are some interesting possibilities. Most destinations in Xishuangbännä are only two or three hours

ETIQUETTE IN DAI TEMPLES

Around Dai temples the same rules apply as elsewhere: dress appropriately (no tank tops or shorts); take off shoes before entering; don't take photos of monks or the inside of temples without permission; leave a donation if you do take any shots and consider a token donation even if you don't – unlike in Thailand, these Buddhists receive no government assistance. It is polite to 'wai' the monks as a greeting and remember to never rub anyone's head, raise yourself higher than a Buddha figure or point your feet at anyone. (This last point applies to secular buildings too. If you stay the night in a Dai household it is good form to sleep with your feet pointing towards the door.)

away by bus, but generally they are not much in themselves – you need to get out and about. Note that to get to many villages, you'll often first have to take the bus to a primary village and stay overnight there, since only one bus per day – if that – travels to the tinier villages.

If you're a serious collector of local market experiences, there are plenty to be found in the region. Like anything else, markets are subjective things, but most people seem to prefer the Thursday market in Xiding, then Měnghùn, followed by Měnghǎi.

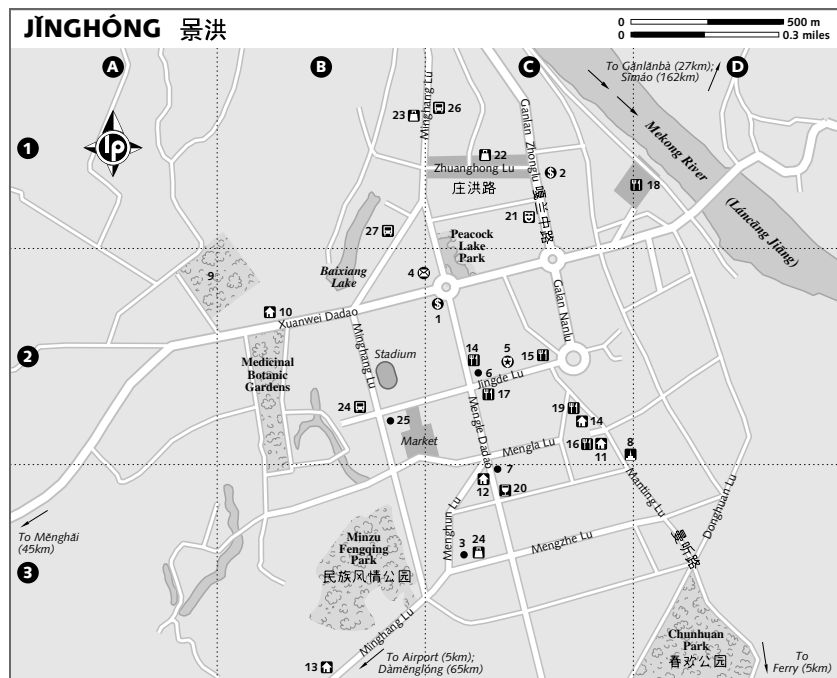
The best advice is to get yourself a bike or some sturdy hiking boots, pick up a map, put down this book and get out of town.

Villages

Before heading further afield, there are numerous villages in the vicinity of Jinghóng that can be reached by bicycle. Most of them you will happen upon by chance and it's difficult to make recommendations.

On the other side of the Mekong are some small villages, and a popular jaunt involves heading off down Manting Lu – if you go far enough (about 5km) you'll hit a ferry crossing point on the Mekong (Y1), beyond which there are plenty of Dai temples and villages to explore.

It can feel like every second village begins with the prefix 'Meng' and it's not unheard of to hear of travellers ending up at the wrong village because of communication problems. Have your destination written down in script



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		DRINKING	
Bank of China 中国银行	1 C2	Banna College Hotel	10 B2	YES Disco 迪斯科	20 C3
Bank of China 中国银行	2 C1	版纳学院		ENTERTAINMENT	
CITS 中国国际旅行社	3 C3	Dai Building Inn		Mengbala Naxi Arts Theatre	
Post Office 邮局	4 B2	傣家花苑小楼	11 C2	蒙巴拉娜西艺术宫	21 C1
PSB 公安局	5 C2	Golden Banna Hotel		SHOPPING	
		金版纳酒店	12 C3	Jade Market 玉市场	22 C1
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Tai Garden Hotel 傣园酒店	13 B3	Market 市场	23 B1
Blind Massage School		Wanli Dai Style Guesthouse		Xishuangbanna Travel and Study	
太极盲人按摩	6 C2	婉丽傣味餐厅	14 C2	Club 西双版纳游学俱乐部	24 C3
Crown Hotel		EATING		TRANSPORT	
皇冠大酒店	7 C3	Mei Mei Café 美美咖啡厅	15 C2	CAAC 中国民航	25 B2
Swimming Pool (Crown Hotel)		Mekong Café 湄公餐館	16 C2	Long-Distance Bus Station	
游泳池 (皇冠大酒店)	(see 7)	Měngzǐ Guóqiáo Mixiàn		长途汽车站	26 C1
Temple		蒙自过桥米线	17 C2	No 2 Bus Station 第二客运站	27 B1
曼景兰金狮佛寺	8 C2	Night Market 夜市	18 D1		
Tropical Flower & Plants Garden		Thai Restaurant 泰国餐厅	19 C2		
热带花卉园	9 A2				

before you head off. Even travellers who know Chinese have found themselves kilometres away from where they intended just because they've messed up one tone.

Sanchahe Nature Reserve

三岔河自然保护区

This **nature reserve** (Sanchàhé Ziran Bǎohùqū), 48km north of Jinghong, is one of five enormous forest reserves in southern Yunnan. This one has an area of nearly 1.5 million hectares.

The part of the park that most tourists visit is **Banna Wild Elephant Valley** (Bǎnnà Yěxiànggǔ; admission Y25, with guide Y50), named after the 40 or so wild elephants that live in the valley; it's worth a visit if you want to see something of the local forest.

The reserve has two entrances. The main southern entrance has accommodation, displays on tropical birds and butterflies, and peacock shows. The other entrance has rather depressing 'wild' elephant performances for the throngs of shutterbug tourists. A **2km-cable car** (one way/return Y40/60) runs over the treetops from the main entrance into the heart of the park. There is an elevated wooden

walkway running through the jungle canopy and a number of dirt paths that run between the two main gates.

If you want to stay by the park there's a generic **hotel** (d 200) at the main entrance, although it will seem pricy for what you get. Alternatively, you can stay in one of 22 Swiss Family Robinson-type **canopy treehouses** (d Y200) in the heart of the park. On the plus side, travellers who have stayed here have reported seeing elephants bathing in the stream beneath them at dawn. You might be able to get a discount.

Just about any bus travelling north from Jinghong to Simáo will pass this reserve (Y12, one hour). Returning to Jinghong there is a bus that leaves the north entrance daily at 2.30pm (Y10).

Měngyǎng 勐养

The much photographed **Elephant-Shaped Banyan Tree** (Xiàngxíng Róngshù) is why most people visit Měngyǎng. It's also a centre for the Hani, Floral-Belt Dai and Lahu, one of the poorest minorities in the region.

Měngyǎng is 34km northeast of Jinghong on the road to Simáo.

BĀNNÀ BUS TIMETABLES

Buses from Bannà long-distance bus station include the following:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Kūnmíng	Y156.50	9hr	2 daily	4pm, 7.30pm
Kūnmíng (sleeper)	Y145-169	9hr	20 daily	7.30am-7pm
Ruìlì	Y254	26hr	daily	9am
Bāoshān	Y230	20hr	daily	noon
Xiàguān	Y152	18hr	daily	12.30pm

The following bus services leave from the No 2 bus station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Sānchàhé	Y10-11.50	1½hr	every 20min	6.15am-6.30pm
Měngyǎng	Y7	40min	half-hourly	8am-6pm
Měnglún	Y14	2hr	every 20min	7am-6pm
Měnglà	Y33	4-5hr	every 20min	6.30am-6pm
Gǎnlǎnbà	Y7.50	40min	every 20min	7.15am-10pm
Dànměnglóng	Y15	3-4hr	every 20min	6.30am-6.30pm
Měngzhāi	Y11	45min	every 20min	7.30am-1.40pm & 2.20-7pm
Jǐngzhèn	Y11	2hr	every 20min	7am-6pm
Měnghùn	Y15	90min	every 20min	7am-6pm
Simáo	Y33	5hr	every 15min every 30min	6.15am-4pm & 4-6pm

From Měngyǎng it's another 19km south-east to **Jinuó**, which is home base for the Jinuo minority. Travellers have reported a cool reception here (some minorities dislike tourists), so if you want to overnight you'll probably have to stay in Měngyǎng.

Měnghǎn 勐罕 (Gǎnlǎnbà 橄榄坝)

Watching this town come alive in the evening after its long afternoon siesta is reason enough to visit. If you arrive mid-afternoon, Měnghǎn (or Gǎnlǎnbà as it's sometimes referred to), can seem almost deserted. Shop owners and hotel clerks fall into such deep sleeps, taps and calls barely get a response.

But once it cools down, it's as if someone flipped a switch on the place. The streets fill up with the smells of cooking, the sounds of gossip and wandering locals trying to escape the indoor heat.

It's worth coming by bike (or hiring one in Měnghǎn) as there's plenty of scope for exploration in the neighbourhood.

SIGHTS

The premier 'attraction' in Měnghǎn is the **Dai Minority Park** (傣族园; Dǎizúyuán; ☎ 250 4099; Manting Lu; adult/student Y50/25; ⌚ 24hr), which is quite simply part of the town that has been cordoned off and had a ticket booth stuck at the entrance. Tourists can spend the night in villagers' homes and partake in water-splashing 'festivals' twice a day.

While the 'park' and Dai architecture are beautiful, spending the night here can feel a bit like you're spending the night in a zoo, albeit a minority one. Despite this, travellers who've come say it's been worth the trip and some have even stayed in touch with their host families.

If you do stay overnight in the park, your ticket is valid for the following day.

Travellers recommend heading to the south of town, crossing the Mekong by ferry (Y2 with a bike), and then heading left (east). The last ferry returns at 7pm. Check the visitors' book in the Sarlar Restaurant for further ideas.

SLEEPING & EATING

Beds in a Dai home within the park will cost around Y20 per person. Food is extra. Beds are traditional Dai mats and are usually very comfortable. Most homes will also have showers for you.

Yúnlì Bīnguǎn (运丽宾馆; ☎ 241 0204; Manting Lu; d/tr Y40/60) This is a modern hotel with spotless rooms that all come with private balconies.

Dai Family Restaurant (傣家餐厅; Manting Lu; mains around Y15-18) This place has an English menu on the wall and there are no prices listed, so check before you order as food is a little pricier than elsewhere.

You'll find a handful of Dai restaurants near the Dai Family Restaurant.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Microbuses to Měnghǎn leave from Jinghong's No 2 bus station (Y8, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6pm). Minibuses depart from Měnghǎn's bus station for destinations throughout the region including Jinghong (Y8), Měnglún (Y10, one hour) and Měnglà (Y29, five hours).

It's possible to cycle from Jinghong to Měnghǎn in a brisk two hours or a leisurely three hours, and it's a pleasant ride.

GETTING AROUND

You can rent a mountain bike (Y20 per day) at the entrance to the Dai Minority Park or from one of several bicycle shops (Y10 per day) along Manting Lu.

Měnglún 勐伦

Měnglún is the next major port of call east of Měnghǎn. The major attraction here is the **Tropical Plant Gardens** (热带植物园; Rèdài Zhīwùyuán; adult/student Y60/40; ⌚ 7am-midnight). The gardens are gorgeous and get high marks from visitors.

To get here, turn left out of the bus station and walk to the first corner. Walk one block and turn left again. You'll come to market hawkers, and a road leading downhill to the right side. Follow this until you reach a foot-bridge across the Mekong. The ticket booth is just in front of the bridge.

There's plenty of basic hotels in town and a couple near the park. Accommodation can get pretty run down, and some travellers have complained about the lack of basics like towels and promised hot water. It's worth taking a walk around when you arrive to see if anything new has opened up.

The **Bus Station Hotel** (车站招待所; Chēzhàn Zhāodàisuǒ; d Y30) is your best-value option. There's no aircon, but the shared bathrooms and showers are clean and there's a TV in each room.

THE JINUO PEOPLE 基诺族

The Jinuo, sometimes known as the Youle, were officially 'discovered' as a minority in 1979. The women wear a white cowl, a cotton tunic with bright horizontal stripes and a tubular black skirt. Earlobe decoration is an elaborate custom – the larger the hole and the more flowers it can contain the better. Teeth are sometimes painted black with the sap of the lacquer tree, which serves the dual dental purpose of beautifying the mouth and preventing tooth decay and halitosis.

Previously, the Jinuo lived in long houses with as many as 27 families occupying rooms on either side of the central corridor. Each family had its own hearth, but the oldest man owned the largest hearth, which was always the closest to the door. Long houses are rarely used now and the Jinuo seem to be quickly losing their distinctive way of life.

The **Friendship Restaurant** (友谊餐厅; Yǒuyi Cāntīng; Main Hwy) has lots of dishes made from strange vegetables, ferns and herbs only found locally.

From Jǐnghóng's No 2 bus station there are buses to Měnglún (Y14, two hours, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6pm). The buses pass through Měnghǎn. Some travellers have cycled here from Měnghǎn.

From Měnglún, there are buses to Měnglà (Y20-25, 2½ hours, 8.30am to 7.30pm) and Jǐnghóng every 30 minutes.

Měnglà 勐腊

Měnglà is a dire little town. The only reason you should find yourself here is if you're crossing into Laos at Móhǎn. As the bus journey from Jǐnghóng, or even Měnglún, will take the better part of the day, you'll probably be stuck here for the night.

There is a **Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; ☎ 8-11.30am & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) in the southern half of town that changes cash and travellers cheques but won't give cash advances on credit cards. To change Renminbi back into US dollars, you'll need your original exchange receipts.

Měnglà Bīnguǎn (勐腊宾馆; ☎ 812 2168; dm/d Y10/40) is set within a pretty shaded garden. The dorm beds are very basic but the doubles are clean and have their own balcony. It's near No 2 bus station; ask a local to point you in the right direction.

The **Jinqiáo Dàjiǔdiàn** (金桥大酒店; ☎ 812 4946; d/tr Y50/60; 🍷) is convenient for the north bus station just up the hill on the left, but don't expect much else.

There are loads of restaurants along Mengla Jie where you can get dishes for Y5.

Měnglà has two bus stations: the northern long-distance bus station which has buses to Kūnmíng (Y218, hourly, 8.30am-11.30am);

and No 2 bus station in the southern part of town. Buses from Měnglà's No 2 station are listed as follows:

Destination	Price	Frequency	Departures
Jǐnghóng	Y30-34	every 20min	6.20am-6pm
Měnglún	Y20-24	every 20min	6.20am-6pm
Yáoqū	Y12	4 daily	8.30am, 10.30am, 2.30pm, 4.30pm
Móhǎn	Y14	every 20min	8am-6pm

TO LAOS

The good news is that you can get an on-the-spot visa for Laos at the border. The price will depend on your nationality. From Měnglà there are buses to Móhǎn every 20 minutes or so from 8am. No matter what anyone says, there should be no 'charge' to cross. Once your passport is stamped (double-check all stamps) and you've waved goodbye to the border guards, you can jump on a tractor or truck to take you 3km into Laos for around Y5. Whatever you do, go early. Although the border doesn't officially close until 5.30pm Běijīng time (and don't forget that Laos is an hour ahead), things often wrap up earlier on the Lao side. There are guesthouses on both the Chinese and Lao sides; change money on the Lao side.

DÀMÈNGLÓNG 大勐龙

Dàměnglóng (written just 'Měnglóng' on buses) is one of those sleepy places to aim for when you want a respite from the beaten path and a base from which to do some aimless rambling. You won't find much to do in the village itself outside of visiting the Sunday market but the countryside is peppered with decaying stupas and little villages, and is worth a couple of days' exploration.

About 70km south of Jǐnghóng and a few kilometres from the Myanmar border,

Dàměnglóng is also a good base for hikes and bike rides through the surrounding hills. You can hire bicycles at Dàměnglóng Zhāodàisuǒ for Y15 per day.

The border crossing point (not open) with Myanmar (poetically named 2-4-0) has been designated as the entry point for a planned highway linking Thailand, Myanmar and China. If and when it does open, things should definitely pick up here.

Sights**WHITE BAMBOO SHOOT PAGODA**

曼飞龙塔

This **pagoda** (Mǎnfēilóng Tǎ; admission Y5), built in 1204, is Dàměnglóng's premier attraction. According to legend, the temple was built on the spot of a hallowed footprint left by Sakyamuni Buddha, who is said to have visited Xishuangbanna – if you're interested in ancient footprints you can look for it in a niche below one of the nine stupas. Unfortunately, in recent years a 'beautification' job has been done on the temple with a couple of cans of white paint.

If you're in the area late October or early November, check the precise dates of the Tan Ta Festival. At this time White Bamboo Shoot Pagoda is host to hundreds of locals whose celebrations include dancing, rocket launchings, paper balloons and so on.

The pagoda is easy to get to: just walk back along the main road towards Jǐnghóng for 2km until you reach a small village with a temple on your left. From here there's a path up the hill; it's about a 20-minute walk. There's an entry fee, but often there's no-one around anyway.

THE BULANG PEOPLE 布朗族

The Bulang live mainly in the Bulang Xiding and Bada mountains of Xishuangbanna. They keep to the hills farming cotton, sugarcane and Pu'er tea, one of Yunnan's most famous exports.

The men wear collarless jackets, loose black trousers and turbans of black or white cloth. They traditionally tattoo their arms, legs, chests and stomachs. The women wear simple, brightly coloured clothes and vibrant headdresses decorated with flowers. Avid betel-nut chewers, the women believe black teeth are beautiful.

BLACK PAGODA 黑塔

Just above the centre of town is a Dai monastery with a steep path beside it leading up to the **Black Pagoda** (Hēi Tǎ; admission free) – you'll notice it when entering Dàměnglóng. The pagoda itself is actually gold, not black. Take a stroll up, but bear in mind that the real reason for the climb is more for the views of Dàměnglóng and surrounding countryside than the temple itself.

Sleeping & Eating

Plenty of cheap options are available for foreigners.

Dàměnglóng Zhāodàisuǒ (大勐龙招待所; dm Y15) It's got basic beds and fragrant bathrooms but the main reason to take note of this hotel is for its bike rental (Y15 per day). To get here, walk uphill from the main highway to where the local government building sits. The hotel is in the grounds to the left, just past some ornamental frogs.

Lai Lai Hotel (来来宾馆; Láilái Bīnguǎn; d/tr Y20/30) Simple rooms and a lovely owner who is meticulous about cleanliness made this hotel the most popular accommodation choice with Dàměnglóng-Bùlǎngshān trekkers of yore. You'll see the English sign right next to the bus station.

There are a couple of decent restaurants down from the bus station, located near the steps leading up to the Black Pagoda; the Chinese signs proclaim them to be Dai restaurants.

Getting There & Away

Buses for the bumpy ride to Dàměnglóng (Y15, three to four hours, every 20 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm) leave from Jǐnghóng's No 2 bus station. Remember that the 'Da' character won't be painted on the bus window. Buses for the return trip run regularly between 6am and 6pm.

XIǎOJIÉ 小街

The village of Xiǎojiē, about 15km north of Dàměnglóng, is surrounded by Bulang, Lahu and Hani villages. Lahu women shave their heads; apparently the younger ones aren't happy about this any more and hide their heads beneath caps. The Bulang are possibly descended from the Yi of northern Yunnan. The women wear black turbans with silver decorations; many of the designs are of shells, fish and marine life.

There's plenty of room for exploration in this area, although you're not allowed over the border.

MĒNGHĀI 勐海

This modern town is another popular base for exploring the countryside. Grab a bike and head north for the most interesting pagodas and villages.

If you're passing through Měngzhài, it's worth visiting the huge daily **produce market** that attracts members of the hill tribes. The best way to find it is to follow the early morning crowds.

Buses run from Jínhóng's No 2 bus station to Měngzhài (Y11, 45min, every 20 minutes 7.30am-1.40pm & 2.20-7pm). From Měngzhài's flashy new bus station there are buses to Bùlǎngshān (Y18, 9am and 2pm), Xìdìng (Y11, 10.40am and 3.30pm), Měngmǎn (Y11, 7.30am, 8.30am, 9.30am and 5pm) and Kūnmíng (Y170-187, 2.30pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm, 6.30pm) among other destinations. Buses return to Jínhóng every 20 minutes until 7pm.

AROUND MĒNGHĀI

Měnghùn 勐混

This quiet little village, about 26km southwest of Měngzhài, has a colourful **Sunday market**. The town begins buzzing around 7am and the action lingers on through to noon. The swirl of hill tribespeople with the women sporting fancy leggings, headdresses, earrings and bracelets alone makes the trip worthwhile. Měnghùn is also a good place to buy local handicrafts for much cheaper prices than you would find in Kūnmíng (don't haggle too much, these women have yet to learn the idea of overcharging foreigners).

There are several guesthouses here, though none are remarkable. Y40 will get you a double with bathroom and TV but there's no air-conditioning.

Buses departing from Jínhóng for Měnghùn (Y15, 90 min, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6pm) run from Jínhóng's No 2 bus station.

From Měnghùn, minibuses run regularly to Měngzhài (Y6), Xìdìng (Y11, 1½ hours, 7.10am and 4pm) and throughout the day to Jínhóng.

Unless you have a very good bike with gears, cycling to Měngzhài and Měnghùn is not a real option. The road up to Měngzhài

is so steep that you'll end up pushing the bike most of the way. Cycling from Měngzhài back to Jínhóng on the other hand, is almost entirely downhill.

Xìdìng 西定

This sleepy hillside hamlet comes alive every Thursday for its weekly **market**, reputedly one of the best in the region. At other times you'll find it almost deserted. If you want to see the market at its most interesting, you'll really have to get here the night before. The small guesthouse at the bus station has beds for Y20.

To get here by public transport you can either catch one of the two direct buses from Měngzhài (Y11, 10.40am and 3.30pm) or travel via Měnghùn and change for a bus to Xìdìng. Buses from Xìdìng leave twice a day (Y11, 7.20am and 1pm) for Měnghùn. If you miss the bus you can always get a ride on a motorbike (Y30), a spectacular if hair-raising experience, from the only bike shop in town.

Jìngzhēn 景真

In the village of Jìngzhēn, about 14km west of Měngzhài, is the **Octagonal Pavilion** (八角亭; Bājiǎo Tīng; admission Y10; ☎ 8am-6pm), first built in 1701. The original structure was severely damaged during the Cultural Revolution but renovated in 1978 and the ornate decoration is still impressive. The temple also operates as a monastic school. The paintings on the wall of the temple depict scenes from the *Jatataka*, the life history of Buddha.

Frequent minibuses from the minibus centre in Měngzhài go via Jìngzhēn (Y10 to Y15).

BĀOSHĀN REGION 保山

Other than English teachers or intrepid wanderers, the Bāoshān area doesn't initially make it on many travellers itineraries. Say the word 'volcano' however, (the region has several of them) and it's enough to get most visitors off their Ruili-bound buses for a day or two exploring the dormant peaks and dipping in the hot springs.

Téngchōng in particular is worth a bit more time, with some interesting old quarters and many distinctive minority groups in the surrounding areas. Located on the other side of Gāolígòng Shān (Gaoligong Mountain)

TREKKING IN XĪSHUĀNGBĀNNÀ

Treks around Xīshuāngbǎnnà used to be among the best in China – you'd be invited into a local's home to eat, sleep, and drink *báijiǔ*. Increasing numbers of visitors have changed this in places. Don't automatically expect a welcome mat and a free lunch just because you're a foreigner, but don't go changing the local economy by throwing money around either.

If you do get invited into someone's home, try to establish whether payment is expected. If it's not, leave an offering (ask at the backpacker cafés what's considered appropriate) or leave modest gifts such as candles, matches, rice etc – even though the family may insist on nothing.

Also take care before heading off, it's a jungle out there, so go prepared, and make sure somebody knows where you are and when you should return. In the rainy season you'll need to be equipped with proper hiking shoes and waterproof gear. At any time you'll need water purification tablets, bottled water or a water bottle able to hold boiling water, as well as snacks and sunscreen.

The Dàménglóng to Bùlǎngshān trek was by far the most popular route and the 48km hike would take you through Dai, Hani, Bulang and Lahu villages. Unfortunately, a road built between the two villages has effectively killed the trek and backpacker cafés are no longer even producing maps of the route.

The good news is this has spread out people (and the money) a bit more. No one route dominates these days.

Check in with Mei Mei Café (p733) and Mekong Café (p733). Talk to their guides, browse their books and choose the best route for your experience and physical ability.

Forest Café (☎ 6918985122; Galanba Nanlu), near Manting Lu, also has terrific trekking information and a fabulous website (www.forest-cafe.org/) where you can start your research.

Wherever you go, seriously consider taking a guide. You won't hear much Mandarin Chinese on the trail, let alone any English, so having a guide will allow you to communicate with villagers en route. Expect to pay around Y250 per day.

Try the Xīshuāngbǎnnà Travel and Study Club (Xīshuāngbǎnnà Lǚxué Jùlèbù; Mengzhe Lu) for trekking equipment.

range, Téngchōng is also prime earthquake territory, having experienced 71 earthquakes measuring over five on the Richter scale since 1500.

As early as the 4th and 5th centuries BC (two centuries before the northern routes through central Asia were established), the Bāoshān area was an important stop on the southern Silk Road – the Sichuān–India route. The area did not come under Chinese control until the Han dynasty when, in AD 69, it was named the Yongchang Administrative District. In 1277 a huge battle was waged in the region between the 12,000 troops of Kublai Khan and 60,000 Burmese soldiers and their 2000 elephants. The Mongols won and went on to take Pagan.

TÉNGCHŌNG 腾冲

☎ 0875

With 20 volcanoes in the vicinity and lots of hot springs (p744) there's lots to explore should you find yourself in this neck of the woods.

The town itself is also worth a half-day ramble. For the most part it's a rather drab, grey provincial town, but bizarrely, in the midst of it all, some lanes are still packed with the traditional wooden architecture that used to be commonplace in many towns and cities in Yúnnán. Construction is encroaching on them quickly, however, so they're not as obvious as they once were. You'll need some patience while seeking them out.

Information

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; cnr Fengshan Lu & Yingjiang Xilu) Will change cash and travellers cheques. There's also an ATM here.

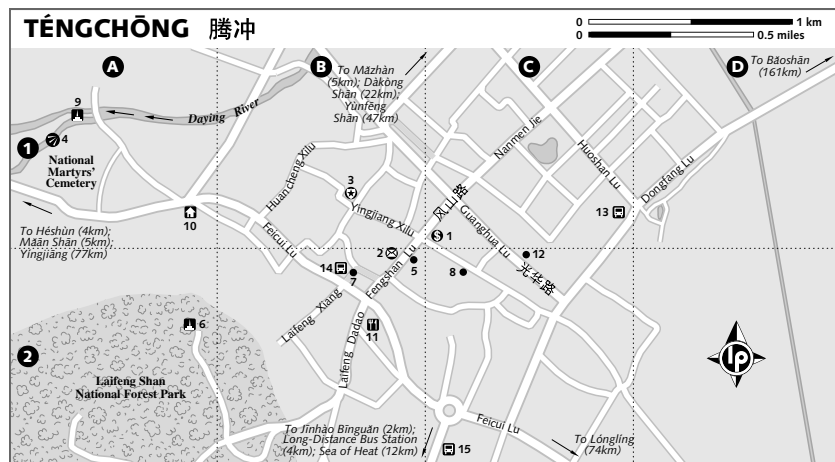
China Post & Telecom (Yóudiàn; Fengshan Lu)

Internet café (wǎngbā; Feicui Lu; per hr Y2)

PSB (Gōngānjú; Yingjiang Xilu; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Can help with visa extensions.

Sights & Activities

The best places for a random wander are the backstreets running off Yingjiang Xilu. There are a couple of small markets with plenty of



colour and activity in the mornings. Walking along Fengshan Lu from Feicui Lu, the first side street on the left has a small **produce market**. Further down on the right is a large, covered **jade market** where you can sometimes see the carving process. Walk east along Yinjiang Xilu and you will come across a larger **produce market** on your right.

On the western edge of town is the **Laifeng Shan National Forest Park** (Laifeng Shān Guójiā Sēnlín Gōngyuán; admission Y10; ☞ 8am-7pm). You can walk through lush pine forests to **Laifeng Temple** (Láifēng Sì) or make the sweaty hike up to the summit where a pagoda offers fine views. There are lots of further hiking possibilities.

In the western suburbs of town, **Xianle Temple** (Xiānlè Sì; admission Y5) is beside the small **Dieshui Waterfall**, which makes a good place for a picnic. The area makes a nice destination for a bike ride and you could easily combine it with a trip to Hésùn (opposite), a picturesque village 4km outside Téngchōng.

Sleeping & Eating

Téngchōng's accommodation options are fairly spread out. Rooms near the local bus station can get pretty decrepit. Check your bed sheets to avoid nasty surprises. Alternatively, try one of the new hotels along Rehai Lu north of the long-distance bus station. It's a less central location, but it's packed with new (clean!) hotels; some have doubles for as little as Y40 per night.

Jinhào Bīnguān (Rehai Lu cnr Mashi Lu; s/d Y60, tr Y70) Possibly the biggest and brightest rooms on

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Minibuses to Hésùn 到和顺的中巴车	14 B2
Minibuses to Sea of Heat 到热海的中巴车	15 C2

the entire street. If you're mid-slog through western Yúnnán, the pristine condition of bathrooms here will be cause for unbridled excitement if not full-on celebration. Head one block north from the long-distance bus station. The hotel is on the right side of the street. Discounted rooms usually go for Y30-40.

Xīnhuá Dàjiǔdiàn (☎ 513 2683; northeast of Laifang Shan National Forest Park; s/d Y220/380; ☞) It's got cruddy halls with a 'going-out-of-business' vibe, but the rooms themselves are terrific – dark wood, handsome furniture, obscenely

big bathrooms. Discounted doubles go for as little as Y120.

Your best option for lunch and dinner is the **food court** (cnr Feicui Lu & Laifeng Dadao; dishes Y5-10), where you'll find half a dozen restaurants serving up delicious food from morning to night. There's a huge choice of delicious dishes here including *shāokǎo*, grilled fish and chilli crabs.

Getting There & Away

There are two bus stations in Téngchōng; the shiny new long-distance bus station in the south of town and the old local bus station on Dongfang Lu. In general, for destinations north of Téngchōng, head to the long-distance bus station, and for all locations south of town head to the local bus station.

The local bus station has daily buses to Ruili (Y40, six hours, 7.40am, 8.30am, 10.40am and 11.40am) and Mángshì (Y22, 4½ hours, 7.30am, 10.20am and 1pm), and frequent departures to local destinations.

The long-distance bus station has sleeper buses to Kūnmíng (Y180, 12 hours, eight daily from 3.30pm to 8.10pm). An express bus also leaves for Kūnmíng at 8.30am (Y202, 11 hours). Buses to Bāoshān (Y28 to Y35, five hours, 7.30am to 5.30pm) leave every 30 minutes. Xiàguān buses leave twice a day (Y87, 10.30am; Y93, 7.40pm).

Buses going to local destinations north of Téngchōng, such as Mázhàn, Gùdōng, Ruidián, Diántān or Zìzhì either leave from, or pass through, Huoshan Lu in the northeast of town.

Getting Around

Téngchōng is small enough to walk around, but a bicycle is helpful for getting to some of the closer sights outside town – the surrounding scenery alone justifies a ride. You can hire a bike from a shop on Guanghua Lu (Y1 per hour).

Bus 2 runs from the town centre to the long-distance bus station.

AROUND TÉNGCHŌNG

There's a lot to see around Téngchōng but getting out to the sights is a bit tricky. Catching buses part of the way and hiking up to the sights is one possibility, while some of the closer attractions can be reached by bicycle.

Your other option is to hire a van, which may be affordable if there are several of you;

head down to the minibus stand just off the southern end of Huoshan Lu or to the minibus stand for the Sea of Heat in the south of town.

Some highlights of the region are the traditional villages that are scattered between Téngchōng and Yúnfēng Shān (Cloudy Peak Mountain). The relatively plentiful public transport along this route means that you can jump on and off minibuses to go exploring as the whim takes you.

Hésùn 和顺

Southwest of town is the village of Hésùn which is well worth a visit. It has been set aside as a retirement village for overseas Chinese, but it's of more interest as a quiet, traditional Chinese village with cobbled streets. There are some great old buildings in the village, providing lots of photo opportunities. The village also has a small **museum** (博物馆; *bówùguǎn*) and a famous old **library** (图书馆). Admission to the village is Y30, and it's open 8am to 7pm daily, however you may find modified hours from October to April outside of Chinese holidays.

Minibuses leave from the corner of Feicui Lu and Laifeng Xiang (Y1.50) in Téngchōng or you can hop on bus 3 that passes nearby. It's an easy bicycle ride out to the village but the ride back is an uphill slog.

Yúnfēng Shān 云峰山

Yúnfēng Shān (Cloudy Peak Mountain; admission Y60), 47km north of Téngchōng, is a Taoist mountain dotted with 17th-century temples and monastic retreats. Most people take the **cable car** (one way/return Y30/50), from where it's a 20-minute walk to **Dàxióngbǎo Diàn** (大雄宝殿), a temple at the summit. **Lǚzǔ Diàn** (鲁祖殿), the temple second from the top, serves up great vegetarian food at lunchtime. It's a quick walk down but it can be hard on the knees.

To get to the mountain, go to Huoshan Lu where you can flag down a bus to Ruidián or Diántān and get off at the turnoff to Yúnfēng (Y8). Alternatively, take a bus to Gùdōng (Y6) and then a microbus from here to the turn-off (Y2). From the turn-off you have to either hitch, or you can choose to take the lovely walk past the village of Heping to the pretty villages just before the mountain. Hiring a vehicle from Téngchōng to take you on a return trip will cost about Y300.

Volcanoes

Téngchōng County is renowned for its volcanoes, and although they have been behaving themselves for many centuries the seismic and geothermal activity in the area indicates that they won't always continue to do so. The closest one to town is **Mǎ'ān Shān** (马鞍山; Saddle Mountain), around 5km to the northwest. It's just south of the main road to Yíngjiāng.

Around 22km to the north of town, near the village of Mǎzhàn, is the most accessible cluster of **volcanoes** (admission Y20). The main central volcano is known as **Dàkòng Shān** (大空山; Big Empty Hill), which pretty much sums it up, and to the left of it is the black crater of **Heikòng Shān** (黑空山; Black Empty Hill). You can haul yourself up the steps for views of the surrounding lava fields (long dormant).

Minibuses run frequently to Mǎzhàn (Y5) from along Huoshan Lu, or take a Gūdōng-bound minibus. From Mǎzhàn town it's a 10-minute walk or take a motor-tricycle (Y5) to the volcano area.

Sea of Heat 热海

This is a cluster of hot springs, geysers and streams about 12km southwest of Téngchōng. In addition to the usual indoor baths, the **Sea of Heat** (Rèhǎi; adult/student Y30/20, with pool access Y100; ☎ 7.30am-11pm) features a couple of outdoor hot springs and a nice warm-water swimming pool. If the steep entrance fee puts you off swimming then you can pay Y30 for a quick dip in the **Měinǚ Chí** (Beautiful Lady Pool) instead. Some of the springs here reach temperatures of 102°C.

The site is a popular local resort and there are several hotels.

THE HANI (AKHA) PEOPLE 哈尼族

The Hani (also known in adjacent countries as the Akha) are of Tibetan origin and related to the Yi, but according to folklore they are descended from frogs' eyes. They stick to the hills, cultivating rice, corn and the occasional poppy and are famed for their intricate rice terraces.

Hani women (especially the Aini, who are a subgroup of the Hani) wear headdresses of beads, feathers, silver rings and coins, some of which are turn-of-the-century French (Vietnamese), Burmese and Indian coins.

Rehai Grand Hotel (热海大酒店; Rèhǎi Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎ 515 0366; d Y280) has two branches, one within the park and the other just outside the main entrance.

The basic rooms at **Rèhǎi Zhāodàisù** (热海招待所; ☎ 515 0306; d & tr Y80) are a bit damp but come with free access to the hotel's very own bathing pool (not such a bonus once you've seen it). This place is to the left of the park entrance.

Microbuses leave for Sea of Heat (Y5) when full from the Dongfang Lu turn-off in the south of town.

DÉHÓNG PREFECTURE 德宏州

Déhong Prefecture (Déhong Lisù) and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, like Xishuāngbǎnnà, border Myanmar and is heavily populated by distinctive minority groups, but hasn't yet captured travellers' imaginations as Bǎnnà has. It's in the far west of Yúnnán and is definitely more off-the-beaten track than Xishuāngbǎnnà.

Most Chinese tourists in Déhong are here for the trade from Myanmar that comes through Ruili and Wǎndīng – Burmese jade is a popular commodity and countless other items are spirited over the border. The border with Myanmar is punctuated by many crossings, some of them almost imperceptible, so be careful if you go wandering too close.

The most obvious minority groups in Déhong are the Burmese (normally dressed in their traditional sarong-like *longyi*), Dai and Jingpo (known in Myanmar as the Kachin, a minority long engaged in armed struggle against the Myanmar government). For information on etiquette for visiting temples in the region see the boxed text, p735.

Around Déhong are signs in Chinese, Burmese, Dai and English. This is a border region getting rich on trade – in the markets you can see Indian jewellery, tinned fruits from Thailand, Burmese papier-mâché furniture, young bloods with wads of foreign currency and Chinese plain-clothes police.

MÁNGSHÌ 芒市 (LÙXÌ) (潞西)

☎ 0692

Mángshì is Déhong's air link with the outside world. It's a large, sprawling town and most

travellers simply pass through on their way to Ruili. But if you're planning to fly out of Mángshì then you might have to stay overnight here, in which case there are enough things to keep you occupied for an afternoon or so. If you fly in from Kùnmíng there are minibuses running direct from the airport to Ruili and your best bet is to jump into one of these and head south.

Information

The **Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Dongfeng Lu) changes cash and travellers cheques and gives cash advances on credit cards. There is an ATM machine around the corner from the southern bus station on Weimin Lu.

Sights

Puti Temple (Pútí Sì), **Foguang Temple** (Fóguāng Sì) and **Five Clouds Temple** (Wǔyún Sì) dot the downtown area. The latter is heavily spruced up but still worth a visit, as much for the mischievous gang of oldsters that sets up in front of it, as for the temple itself.

Halfway along Youyi Lu, in a school playground, is the 200-year-old **Embracing Tree Pagoda** (Shùbào Tǎ; admission Y5 when staffed), so named because over the years it has fused with the surrounding tree.

Sleeping & Eating

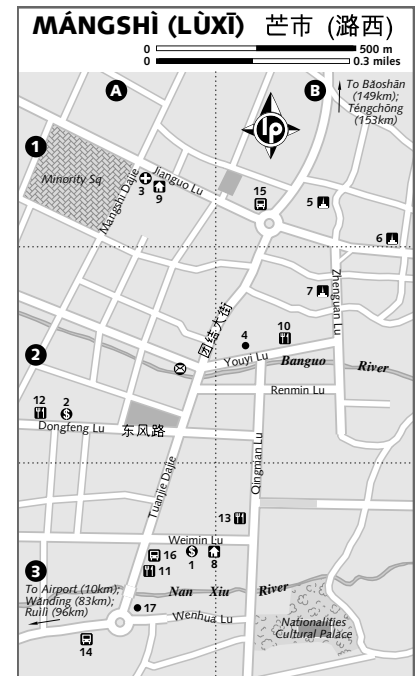
Chángjiāng Bīnguǎn (☎ 228 6055; 2 Weimin Lu; 为民路2号; s/d Y60/50, with bathroom Y100/80; ☎) This hotel is surprisingly clean and well kept up, however, do check the rooms before you hand over your cash as one or two smell a bit musty.

Xīngjiàn Jiǔdiàn (☎ 228 6788; Jianguo Lu; 建国路; s/d Y120) This is a newish, extremely welcoming hotel, in a good location down the street from the long-distance bus station. There's a gurgling fountain filled with gold fish in the lobby. Rooms are spotless with hard wood floors and clean bathrooms.

The best places to head for food in Mángshì are the point-and-choose places on Dongfeng Lu situated just west of the market or along Qingnian Lu. Otherwise try the extremely popular **noodle restaurant** (Tuanjie Dajie) near the southern bus station where you can get a big plate of fried noodles for Y5.

Fei Ma Movie and TV Bar (Fēi Mǎ Yǐngxiàng Gōngzuó Shì; ☎ 10am-late; dishes Y15-18) serves coffee and valiant stabs at Western cuisine like pizza, serving it all up among the jungle-like decor.

Make sure you try a freshly squeezed lime juice (large/small Y3/2) from one of the numerous stands dotting the town.



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MÁNGSHÌ BUS TIMETABLES

Bus services from Mángshì include the following:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Kūnmíng	Y160-180	10hr	3 daily	10.30am, 6.40pm, 9pm
Xiàguān	Y80-90	7hr	2 daily	11am, 8pm
Lǐjiāng	Y133	14hr	daily	5pm
Jǐnghóng	Y239	24hr	daily	11.30am
Téngchóng	Y22	3½hr	8 daily	7.40am-4.20pm
Bǎoshān	Y35	4hr	11 daily	7.20am-3.30pm
Yínjiāng	Y25	3hr	every 40min	7.30am-4.50pm

Getting There & Away**AIR**

The airport is 10km from the city. There are daily flights between Mángshì and Kūnmíng (Y790). There are no buses from Mángshì airport to the town centre so you'll have no choice but to negotiate with the taxi sharks at the airport (Y20-25). Minibuses to Ruili (Y30, two hours) usually wait at the airport for incoming flights.

Buses leave the Mángshì **Yunnan Airlines** (Wenhua Lu; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm) office for the airport around an hour before flight departures.

BUS

There are several bus stations in Mángshì. Both the long-distance bus station in the north of town and the southern bus station offer similar destinations at similar prices and schedules. If you don't find your bus at one, trudge along to the other.

See the box above for bus services from Mángshì.

A bus stand situated a block southwest of the southern bus stand has the most frequent departures to Wǎndīng (Y20) and Ruili (Y20, 7am to 8pm). Minibuses leave when they're full so you will need to be prepared to wait.

RUILI 瑞丽

☎ 0692

Ah, notorious Ruili. At one time, the town's reputation for wild nights, seedy casinos and bawdy karaoke bars drew everyone from the wild and adventurous to the shady and the crooked. Ruili was considered one of the 'it' places in Yúnnán, and young people with money would head here in droves, lured by the 'anything-goes' reputation and implicit prom-

ise that 'what-happens-in-Ruili-stays-in-Ruili' that the town's fringe location afforded.

Trade with Myanmar fuelled the boom. The border only opened for business in the 1990s but no sooner had it opened than Ruili became a hotbed of trade handling everything from raw goods to gems and arms. In return for the latter, China received huge quantities of heroin, which saw drug-taking and trafficking become part of everyday life.

The local government, with help from Běijīng, retaliated and drug dealers were hauled before sentencing panels and then executed.

These days Ruili can seem (dare we say it?) almost sterile. The dance halls and gambling dens are gone and shiny shopping malls and modern hotels stand in their place.

About the raciest thing the average traveller will encounter these days is the odd Burmese trader a little over-enthusiastically adjusting his sarong.

But despite the clean-up, Ruili has a great mix of Han Chinese, minorities and Burmese traders hawking jade, lively local markets and a laid-back Southeast Asian feel.

The minority villages nearby are also reason to come; the stupas are in much better condition than those in Xīshuāngbǎnnà, and it's worth getting a bicycle and heading out to explore.

Another draw for travellers is Myanmar, which lies only a few kilometres away from Ruili. Border-crossing restrictions are beginning to relax and although individual tourists are still not allowed to cross, organising permits to take you through the sensitive border area is becoming easier (see p748). New highways laid to facilitate border trade stretch all the way from the border to Mandalay, making what had been a horrible five-day journey much more sane. Foreign travellers

may one day be able to recreate the 'Southern Silk Route', of which Ruili and Mandalay were a part.

Information

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Nanmao Jie) Provides all the usual services and will let you cash travellers cheques for US dollars in case you're headed to Myanmar.

China Post & Telecom (Yóudiàn; cnr Mengmao Lu & Renmin Lu) Despite (or perhaps because?) of its border location; sending any kind of package abroad from this branch is a full-on nightmare if not completely impossible. For anything more complicated than buying stamps or making international calls, wait until you've move on from Ruili.

Dielaí Photograph Centre (Diélái Shéyǐng Zhōngxīn; Nanmao Jie) Can burn CDs for Y10 each. Keep an eye out for the big yellow Kodak sign. **Internet café** (wǎngbā; Nanmao Jie, cnr Jiegang Lu; per hr Y2; ☎ 24hrs)

Public Security Bureau (PSB; Gōngānjū; Jianshe Jie; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm) Just up the road from Ruili Bīnguǎn.

Ruili Overseas Travel Company (Ruili Hǎiwài Lǚyóushì; ☎ 414 1880; 27 Jianshe Lu; ☎ 8-11.30am, 2.30-5.30pm & 7.30-10pm) If it happens to be staffed, you should be able to get information on the local area.

Xīnhuá Bookshop (Xīnhuá Shūdiàn; Renmin Lu) Sells the *Tourism and Traffic Map of Ruili*, which includes some English.

Dangers & Annoyances

Despite Ruili's new look, old problems die hard and prostitution remains an enormous industry in Ruili. You don't have to look very hard to see the evidence: brothels disguised as hairdressers fill the town.

Another major problem is of the poppy-derived variety, Ruili being an entry point for Burmese opium headed to Hong Kong. This has resulted in a serious IV drug-use problem in the Déhóng region and a spike in HIV. The province, with Běijīng's help, has poured millions of yuán into anti-drug efforts along the border with Myanmar.

All vehicles, including buses, leaving Ruili are searched. Authorities are usually more interested in locals and foreigners are often completely ignored and not even asked for ID. However some travellers have reported epic grillings bordering on the farcical.

Sights

A visit to Ruili is about atmosphere, people watching, markets and aimless wandering rather than formal sights. It's small enough

that you can cover most of it in an hour or so. The huge **market** in the west of town is most colourful by day, especially in the morning, when the stalls are lined with Burmese smokes, tofu wrapped in banana leaves, snack stalls and charcoal sellers. There's also whirl of people from nearby minority villages, Myanmar and far flung places like Pakistan.

At the other end of town, Ruili's **jade market** is a hoot and one of the best locations for people watching. Most of Ruili's sights are outside town, and you'll need a bicycle to get out and see them.

Sleeping

There are some good deals to be found in Ruili's hotels and all the accommodation is within easy walking distance of the long-distance bus station.

Limín Bīnguǎn (☎ 414 2249; Nanmao Jie; 南卯街; dn Y20, s & d Y40-80; ☎) The biggest and cheapest selection of rooms in town. There is little to distinguish the singles and doubles, so you might as well opt for the cheaper ones. Dorm rooms can get hot and stuffy, and the shared bathrooms can be noisy.

Ruby Hotel (☎ 419 9088; Nanmao Jie; 南卯街; s/d Y80/180) After the bright green exterior and halls bedecked with pebble-encrusted wall panels, the very plain rooms, while clean, are a minor let down. No matter, there's more than enough atmosphere at the terrace bar with its thatched huts and floor cushions.

Ruili Bīnguǎn (☎ 410 0555; Nanmao Jie; 南卯街; s&d Y200) Across the street from the Ruby Hotel, this place has no fireworks but is comfortably average. Outside of holidays, rooms rarely go for more than Y100 though deft bargainers have gotten rooms for less.

New Kaitong International Hotel (Xīn Kǎitōng Guójiē Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 415 777; fax 415 6190; 2 Biancheng Lu; 边城路2号; d Y360, discounted d Y180; ☎) This is the original luxury hotel in Ruili and offers good discounts which make it a worthwhile option. The outdoor swimming pool is perhaps the best feature and is open to non-residents for Y10.

Eating & Drinking

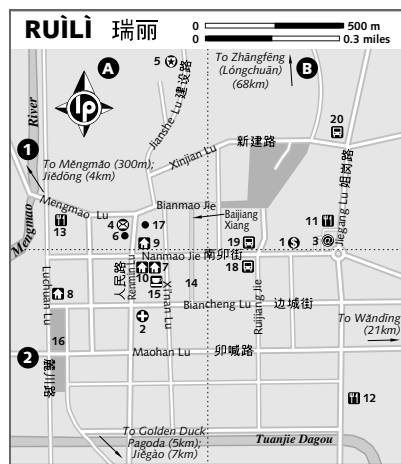
Reports concerning the existence of decent curries in Ruili are the result perhaps of wishful embellishment, but there is some good food available.

For good Burmese food, there are several restaurants in a small alley off Jiegang Lu. The

one at the top of the northwestern corner is particularly good, and sees a lot of Burmese patrons. This is also the spot to go for Thai Mekong whisky, served Thai-style with soda water and ice. There are also lots of Cantonese restaurants here. At night a small but lively market sets up on Baijiang Xiang between Bianmao Jie and Biancheng Lu.

Huafeng Market (Huáfēng Shìchǎng; Jiegang Lu) Make sure you eat here at least once. It has an enormous outdoor food court with an incredible selection of food including Thai, Burmese, Chinese and even some Western dishes on offer. You can eat well here for Y8 to Y12.

Kūnmíng Guóqiáo Xíngxián (Měngmào Lu; dishes Y12) You may have had your fill of across-the-bridge noodles while in Kūnmíng, but this place is charming, with its dark wood furniture, blue-and-white checked table clothes. There's a little garden with outdoor seating in back.



Bobo's Cold Drinks Shop (Bùbù Lěngyīndiàn; Baijiang Xiang; meals Y8) Serves excellent fresh fruit juices and small meals in a bright eating area buzzing with low-key commotion.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Ruili has daily flight connections to Kūnmíng via Mángshì p744, which is a two-hour drive away. You can buy tickets at **China Eastern Airlines** (☎ 411 1111; Renmin Lu; ✈ 8.30am-6pm). Shuttle buses leave daily from the office, three hours before scheduled flights (Y60). You can also use the ticket office to book and reconfirm return flights – do so early as this is an increasingly popular flight.

BUS

There are two bus stations in Ruili, the long-distance bus station in the centre of town and the north bus station at the top of Jiegang Lu. Head to the north bus station if you're trying to get to Mángshì (Y20, last bus 6pm, leaves when full) for everything else, you're better off going to the long-distance bus station.

For local destinations, minibuses and vans leave from the minibus stand near the jade market, or you can just flag one down in the street. Destinations include Wāndìng (Y5), the border checkpoint at Jiègào (Y5), and the village of Nóngdǎo (Y8). Buses to Zhāngfēng (Y10, one hour) leave from Xinjian Lu.

TO MYANMAR

To cross from China into Myanmar, travellers must have the correct visa, travel permits and be part of an official 'group'. The group, which might consist entirely of yourself and no-one else, will be escorted from Jiègào in China to Hsipaw in Myanmar, an eight-hour drive from the border. Once you reach Hsipaw you can wave good bye to your guide and are

RUILI BUS TIMETABLES

The following buses leave from Ruili long-distance bus station:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency	Departs
Téngchōng	Y25	6hr	every 40-50min	5.40-10.40am
Bǎoshān	Y45	6hr	every 30-40min	6am-2.30pm
Xiàguān	Y116	12hr	hourly	4-8pm
Kūnmíng	Y190	16hr	hourly	8am-8pm
Jīnghóng	Y195	25hr	daily	8.30am

free to travel on your own further south to Mandalay, Rangoon and so on.

Ko Wai Lin Travel (☎ 0871-313 7555; myanmarwailin@yahoo.com; Room 221, Camellia Hotel, 154 Dongfeng Lu, Kūnmíng) in Kūnmíng (see Map p690) can arrange permit and group travel. Remember it's not possible to organise a visa for Myanmar in Ruili and you will have to do this in Kūnmíng at the Myanmar consulate (see p943).

Getting Around

Ruili is easily seen on foot, but all the most interesting day trips require a bicycle. Ask at your accommodation for the best place to rent one.

The flat rate for a taxi ride inside the city should be Y5, and up for negotiation from there. There are also cheaper motor and cycle rickshaws.

AROUND RUILI

Most of the sights around Ruili can be explored easily by bicycle. It's worth making frequent detours down the narrow paths leading off the main roads to visit minority villages. The people are friendly and there are lots of photo opportunities. The *Tourism and Traffic Map of Ruili* shows the major roads and villages.

The shortest ride is to turn left at the corner north of the post office and continue out of the town proper into the little village of Měngmǎo. There are half a dozen Shan temples scattered about; the fun is in finding them.

Golden Duck Pagoda 弄安金鸭塔

On the outskirts of town, on the main road, this **pagoda** (Nòng'ān Jīnyā Tǎ) is an attractive stupa set in a temple courtyard. It was established to mark the arrival of a pair of golden ducks that brought good fortune to what was previously an uninhabited marshy area.

Jiègào Border Checkpoint 姐告边检点

There's not much here but border fanatics will find the trip satisfying if only to marvel at how everything seems so relaxed on both sides of the – quite literally – bamboo curtain.

On a thumb of land jutting into Myanmar, Jiègào is the main checkpoint for a steady stream of cross-border traffic. As with Ruili this place has seen its popular casinos and other dens of iniquity replaced by lemonade stands and cheap electronic shops.

To get here, continue straight ahead from Golden Duck Pagoda, cross the Myanmar bridge over Ruili Jiāng and you will come to Jiègào, about 7km from Ruili. (see opposite for more details).

Microbuses shuttle between the border and Ruili's long-distance bus station when full for Y5 or you can charter one for around Y25-30. Buses continue until late at night.

Wāndìng Border Checkpoint 畹町边检站

West of Ruili lies Wāndìng, a second checkpoint for crossing into Myanmar. It's not as busy here, nor is it as interesting as Jiègào, but if you're a serious borderholic then it's worth making the 30-minute drive here just so you can take a photo and say you've been.

Minibuses for Wāndìng (Y5) leave Ruili when full, and vice versa.

Temples

Just past Golden Duck Pagoda is a crossroad and a small wooden temple. The road to the right (west) leads to the villages of Jièxiàng and Nóngdǎo, and on the way are a number of small temples, villages and stupas. None are spectacular but the village life is interesting and there are often small markets near the temples.

The first major Dai temple is **Hansha Zhuang Temple** (Hánshā Zhuāng Sì), a fine wooden

INFORMATION	SLEEPING	DRINKING
Bank of China 中国银行.....1 B1	Limín Bīnguǎn 利民宾馆.....7 A2	Bobo's Cold Drinks Shop 步步冷饮丁食谱.....15 A2
Dielai Photograph Centre 蝶来摄影中心.....(see 7)	New Kaitong International Hotel 新凯通国际大酒店.....8 A2	SHOPPING
Hospital 医院.....2 A2	Ruby Hotel 巴石酒店.....9 A1	Market 市场.....16 A2
Internet Café 网吧.....3 B1	Ruili Bīnguǎn 瑞丽宾馆.....10 A2	TRANSPORT
Post & Telephone Office 邮电.....4 A1	EATING	China Eastern Airlines 东方航空公司.....17 A1
PSB 公安局.....5 A1	Burmese & Cantonese Restaurants 缅甸餐厅, 广东餐厅.....11 B1	Long-Distance Bus Station 长途汽车站.....18 B2
Ruili Overseas Travel Company.....(see 7)	Huafeng Market 华丰市场.....12 B2	Minibus Stand 中巴车站.....19 B1
Xinhua Bookshop 新华书店.....6 A1	Kūnmíng Guóqiáo Xíngxián 昆明过桥米线.....13 A1	North Bus Station 北车站.....20 B1
	Night Food Market 夜市.....14 A2	

structure that has a few resident monks. It's set a little off the road and a green tourism sign marks the turn-off. The surrounding Dai village is interesting.

Another 20 minutes or so further down the road, look out for a white stupa on the hillside to the right. This is **Léizhuāngxiāng**, Ruili's oldest stupa, dating back to the middle of the Tang dynasty. There's a nunnery in the grounds of the stupa as well as fantastic views of the Ruili area.

Once the stupa comes into view, take the next path to the right that cuts through the fields. You will see blue signs written in Chinese and Dai pointing the way through a couple of Dai villages. When you get to market crossroads at the centre of the main village, take the right path. You'll need to push your bicycle for the last ascent to the stupa. In all, it should take you about 50 minutes to cycle here from Golden Duck Pagoda.

About 2km past Jiěxiàng is **Denghannong Zhuang Temple** (Dēnghánnóng Zhuāng Sì), a wooden Dai temple with pleasant surrounds.

It's possible to cycle all the way to Nóngdǎo, around 29km southwest of Ruili. There's a solitary hotel in town that has cheap doubles or you can return to Ruili on one of the frequent minibuses.

Golden Pagoda 姐勒金塔

A few kilometres to the east of Ruili on the road to Wǎnding is the **Golden Pagoda** (Jiě lè Jīntǎ), a fine structure that dates back 200 years.

Bàngmáhè 棒麻贺

Another possible cycling route takes you west of Ruili, past the old town of Měngmǎo, now a suburb of Ruili. After 4km, just past the village of Jiědōng, a turn-off north leads to Bàngmáhè village, a Jingpo settlement with a small waterfall nearby.