



Guǎngxī

POPULATION: 50 MILLION

Includes »

Guilín	584
Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces	590
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Best Places to Eat

- » Luna (p595)
- » River Bar (p595)
- » Āmóu Meishí (p600)

Best Places to Stay

- » Jìngguān Mínglóu Hotel (p587)
- » Yángshuo Village Inn (p594)
- » Wànjǐnglóu (p591)

Why Go?

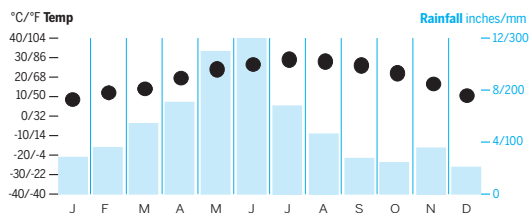
Tell someone in China that you're heading to Guǎngxī (广西) and they'll seethe with envy. It's hard not to fall for this achingly beautiful province, which offers endless rewards for those with an outdoorsy temperament. The star attraction is the much-loved karst scenery in Guilín and Yángshuò, where travellers can venture off by bicycle or hike through lush, green valleys.

Expect the mighty rush of the Détiān Waterfall, and the marvellous Chéngyáng Wind and Rain Bridge on the highlands, to dazzle you. A trek through the lofty Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces gives you a glimpse into the distinct tradition of each village, populated by diverse minority groups like the Zhuang, Yao and Dong.

For less-active travellers, come and discover the secrets of the 2000-year-old Huāshān cliff murals in a peaceful boat journey on the Zuǒ River; or simply wander along the quaint old settlements in Běihǎi and savour its wonderful human landscape.

When to Go

Guilín



April & May The karst scenery in Guilín and Yángshuò turns lush green.

June–September Summer rains give the fields on Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces full sparkle.

September & October Let the cool breeze from Gulf of Tonkin caress you when strolling on Weizhou Island.



Guǎngxī Highlights

- 1 Lose yourself among the dramatic limestone scenery in **Yángshuò** (p592) when cycling alongside the Yùlóng River
- 2 Trek through China's most spectacular highland vistas at **Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces** (p590)
- 3 Admire the striking **Chéngyáng Wind and Rain**

Bridge (p591) near Sanjiang and experience the rural pleasure around nearby paddies

- 4 Feel the spray of the **Dětian Waterfall** (p607) before village-hopping to **Míngshì Tiányuán** (p608)
- 5 Enjoy the pattering boat journey from Panlóng to the

2000-year-old **Huāshān cliff murals** (p606)

- 6 Promenade through the 19th-century streets of the old town of **Běihǎi** (p602)
- 7 Take a breather on breezy **Wéizhōu Island** (p605), and marvel at its diverse coral communities by swimming or snorkelling

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

Sleeping

\$	less than Y150
\$\$	Y150 to Y350
\$\$\$	more than Y350

Eating

\$	less than Y40
\$\$	Y40 to Y100
\$\$\$	more than Y100

History

In 214 BC a Qin-dynasty army attempted to assimilate the Zhuang people, living in what is now called Guǎngxī, into their newly formed Chinese empire. But while the eastern and southern parts submitted, the western extremes remained largely controlled by hill-tribe chieftains. The system was further complicated in the northern regions by the Yao and Miao tribespeople who had been driven from their homes in Húnán and Jiāngxī by the advance of the Han Chinese. Unlike the majority of the Zhuang, the Yao and Miao refused to be assimilated and remained in conflict with the Han for centuries.

Major tribal uprisings occurred in the 19th century, the most significant being the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64), which began in Guǐpíng and became one of the bloodiest civil wars in human history.

Communist bases were set up in Guǎngxī following the 1929 Baise Uprising led by Deng Xiaoping, although they were eventually destroyed by Kuomintang forces. And much of Guǎngxī fell briefly under Japanese rule following highly destructive WWII invasions.

Today the Zhuang, China's largest minority group, make up 32% of Guǎngxī's population, leading to the province being reconstituted in 1955 as the Guǎngxī Zhuang Autonomous Region. As well as Zhuang, Miao and Yao, Guǎngxī is home to significant numbers of Dong people.

Language

Travellers with a grasp of Mandarin (*pǔtōnghuà*) will have few problems navigating Guǎngxī's vast sea of languages.

Cantonese (*guǎngdōnghuà*), known as *báihuà* in these parts, is the language of choice in Nán níng, Chóngzhuō, Píngxiáng and Dàxīn, but most people also understand Mandarin. Visitors will also hear a number of minority languages being spoken, such as Zhuang, Dong, Xiang, Hmong, Sui, Haka, Jing (Vietnamese) and Yi.

The Zhuang romanisation system, looking like badly spelled Pinyin, is prominently displayed, while bilingual Chinese/Vietnamese signs can be seen in areas near Vietnam.

In Guǐlín and Yǎngshuò, you'll come across locals with excellent knowledge of English.

Guǐlín

桂林

☎0773 / POP 740,000

Whether you're going north to the highlands, or south to Yǎngshuò and beyond, Guǐlín is where you're likely to spend a night or two. Set off alongside the tranquil Lí River (漓江; Lí Jiāng) for a good introduction to Guǎngxī's dreamlike scenery, with its otherworldly karst topography as a backdrop. Many streets are embroidered with osmanthus trees, filling the air with a sweet fragrance.

The city's complete reliance on tourism means that it's well managed and clean, but you'll have to share it with the crowds, and admission fees to most sights soar. However, you'll see scenery that outstrips Guǐlín in Yǎngshuò, so you won't miss too much if you skip sightseeing here.

With modern facilities and a high percentage of English-speaking locals, Guǐlín is a convenient base to plan trips to the rest of the province.

👁 Sights

Solitary Beauty Peak

PARK

(独秀峰; Dúxiù Fēng; 1 Wangcheng; 王城1号; admission Y70; ☉7.30am–6pm) A peaceful, leafy retreat from the city centre, the entrance fee for this famous pinnacle includes admission to **Wáng Chéng** (王城), a 14th-century Ming prince's mansion, now home to Guǎngxī Normal University (lucky students!). The 152m peak is a steep climb, but affords fine views of Guǐlín. Buses 1 and 2 both stop nearby.

Reed Flute Cave

CAVE

(芦笛岩; Lúdí Yán; admission Y90; ☉7.30am–6pm) Former US Secretary of State Henry

Kissinger described the cave as 'poetic', although chances are he didn't have the dulcet tones of a Chinese tour guide ringing in his ears when the thought came to him. The huge Reed Flute Cave is a garish but nonetheless impressive grotto housing multicoloured lighting and fantastic stalactites and stalagmites. The entrance was once distinguished by clumps of reeds used to fashion musical instruments, hence the name, and the enormous **Crystal Palace of the Dragon King** was used as an air-raid shelter during wars. It's tempting to slip away from the tour groups, but bring a torch, as the illuminations are often turned off as the crowds walk on. Bus 3 and free bus 58 both go here.

Seven Stars Park

PARK

(七星公园; Qīxīng Gōngyuán; admission Y35, Seven Star Caves Y30; ☉park 6am-9.30pm, caves 8am-5.30pm) One of China's original tourist attractions, first opening to sightseers during the Sui dynasty, the 137-hectare Seven Stars Park makes for some pleasant strolls. There are peaks to climb, caves to explore, lawns to picnic on and even wild monkeys to see; early evening on Moon Tooth Hill (月牙山; Yuèyá Shān) is your best bet. Skip the thoroughly depressing zoo.

To get here, walk, cycle or catch bus 10 or 11 from the train station. From the park, free bus 58 runs to Wave Subduing Hill, Folded Brocade Hill and Reed Flute Cave.

City Wall

WALL REMNANTS

About 1km north of Folded Brocade Hill is the **East Gate** (东镇门; Dōngzhèn Mén), a part-reconstructed gateway flanked by crumbling sections of the original Song-dynasty city wall (城墙; *chéng qiáng*). Take bus 1, 2 or free bus 51 and get off at Dōngzhèn Lù, then turn right down the road of the same name. Alternatively it's a short walk or cycle north along the riverbank, just east of the entrance to Folded Brocade Hill. The gate lies on the northeast edge of **Mùlóng Lake Park** (木龙湖; Mùlóng Hú; admission Y10; ☉9am-10pm), which houses a pretty reconstruction of a Song-dynasty pagoda (木龙塔; Mùlóng Tǎ) and is a picturesque setting for Chinese classical music performances, held at 8pm every evening.

On the northern shore of Róng Lake (榕湖; Róng Hú), and strikingly illuminated at night, the more centrally located **South Gate** (南门; Nán Mén) is the only surviving part of this section of the wall.

Sun & Moon Twin Pagodas

PAGODAS

(日月双塔; Riyuè Shuāng Tǎ; admission Y30; ☉8.30am-10.30pm) Elegantly embellishing the scenery of **Shān Lake** (杉湖; Shān Hú), the Sun and Moon Twin Pagodas, beautifully illuminated at night, are the highlight of a stroll around Guilin's two central lakes. The octagonal, seven-storey **Moon Pagoda** (月塔; Yuè Tǎ) is connected by an underwater tunnel to the 41m-high **Sun Pagoda** (日塔; Rì Tǎ), the world's tallest copper pagoda and one of the few pagodas anywhere in the world with a lift.

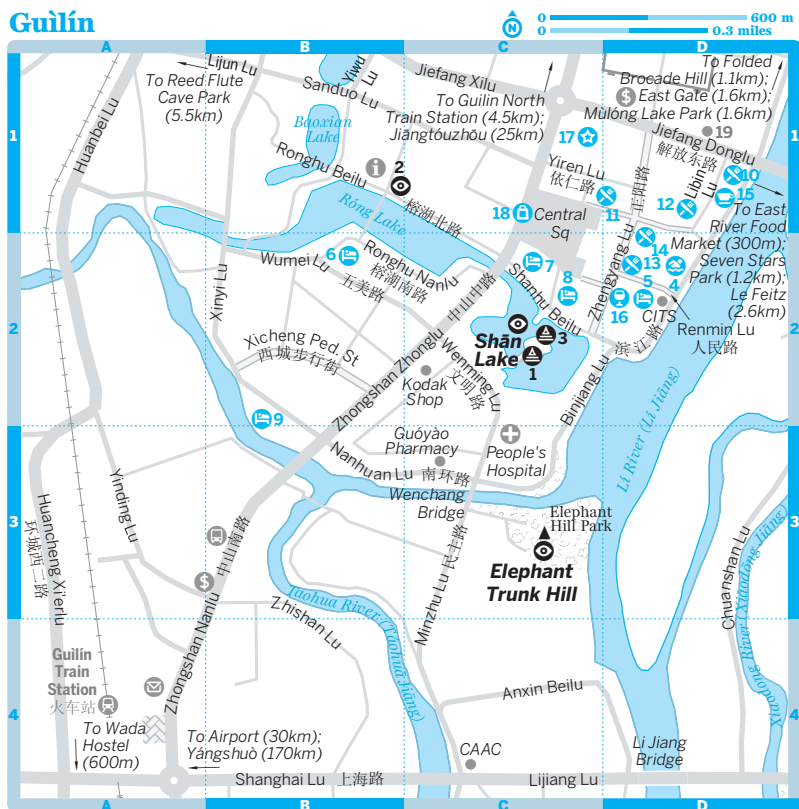
Other Hills

HILLS

Just west of Solitary Beauty Peak is **Wave-Subduing Hill** (伏波山; Fùbō Shān; admission Y25; ☉7am-6pm), which offers more great views as well as the chance to see Song- and Tang-dynasty Buddhist carvings etched into the walls of **Returned Pearl Cave** (还珠洞; Huánzhū Dòng). A short walk further north is **Folded Brocade Hill** (叠彩山; Diécǎi Shān; admission Y20; ☉7am-6pm), where you can find arguably the best views of the city, some restored Ming-dynasty pavilions and, inside **Wind Cave** (风洞; Fēngdòng), another fine collection of Buddhist sculptures. Just south of the city centre is **Elephant Trunk Hill** (象鼻山; Xiàngbí Shān; admission Y40; ☉7am-6.30pm), perhaps best viewed

RISING PEAKS

Scraping your jaw off the floor as you gape at the stunning karst peaks that attract mountains of tourists to Guǎngxī every year, it's hard to imagine how the view could get any better. In fact, the sheer beauty of this region may not yet have reached its pinnacle. The peaks here are the result of erosion from carbonic acid, created when rainwater reacts with carbon dioxide in the air. This erosion allowed cracks to open up in the limestone, which later widened to form caves whose tops eventually collapsed, leaving only their tall sides still standing. But because levels of carbonic acid here are lower in rainwater than they are in soil, the base of these dramatic peaks is being eroded at a greater rate than their bulk, the sides of which are too steep for soil to settle on. The result is that Guǎngxī's famous towering peaks are actually slowly growing taller.



from one of the bamboo rafts (about Y5) that float down the Lí River.

Activities

Swimming in the Lí River is very popular in summer. If that's not clean enough for you, the **Shერთan** (喜来登酒店; Xíláidēng Jiǔdiàn; ☎282 5588; 15 Binjiang Lu; 滨江路15号) has an outdoor pool (admission Y30).

Tours

The very popular Lí River trip from Guilín to Yángshuò lasts about 4½ hours and includes a wonderfully scenic boat trip to Yángshuò, lunch, and a bus ride back to Guilín. Expect to pay Y350 to Y450 for a boat with an English-speaking guide or Y245 for the Chinese version. China International Travel Service (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójì Lǚxíngshè), p589, can arrange it, as can pretty much every hotel and tourist information service centre in Guilín.

Sleeping

Wada Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(瓦当旅舍; Wǎdāng Lǚshè; ☎215 4888; www.wada-hostel.com; 212 Huanchengxi Yilu; 环城西一路212号; dm Y15-Y35, d Y110; ㊟) This new hostel is a bit out from the action in the city centre but the useful bus 10 will connect you to most of the attractions. A plus is that all buses to Yángshuò stop at its main entrance. It has a comfortable bar and cafe, and various types of dorms with huge bunk beds. To get there from the train station, take the first right on Shanghai Lu. Go under the bridge and turn left at the intersection onto Huanchengxi Yilu. From there it's a 10-minute walk (600m) and the hostel is on the left.

Backstreet Youth Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(后街国际青年旅舍; Hòujiē Qíngnián Lǚshè; ☎281 9936; guilinhosel@hotmail.com; 3 Renmin Lu; 人民路3号; dm/d Y45/120; ㊟) The pros: rooms are big (even the dorms) and

Guilin

📍 Top Sights

Elephant Trunk Hill.....	C3
Shān Lake.....	C2

🏯 Sights

1 Moon Pagoda.....	C2
2 South Gate.....	B1
3 Sun Pagoda.....	C2

🎟 Activities, Courses & Tours

4 Sheraton.....	D2
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🏠 Sleeping

5 Backstreet Youth Hostel.....	D2
6 Jingguān Mínglóu Hotel.....	B2
7 Lakeside Inn.....	C2
8 Lijiāng Waterfall Hotel.....	C2
9 Riverside Hostel.....	B2

🍴 Eating

10 Amani.....	D1
11 Armani.....	D1
12 Bāiwèi Dumpling Restaurant.....	D1
13 Fúji Chángfēnzhōu.....	D1
Zhèngyáng Tāngchéng.....	(see 14)
14 Zhèngzōng Yóuzhǎwáng.....	D2

☺ Drinking

15 Little Italian.....	D1
16 Paulaner.....	D2
Steam Coffee.....	(see 15)

🎮 Entertainment

17 Joys Bar.....	C1
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🛍 Shopping

18 Night Market.....	C1
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🚗 Transport

19 Ride Giant.....	D1
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decorated tastefully with wood furnishings, and the location is superb, with bars, restaurants and shops just a stone's throw away. The cons: Caucasian travellers are preferred here, and some of the rooms are smelly (check them out before paying).

Riverside Hostel

INN \$\$

(九龙商务旅游酒店; Jiǔlóng Shāngwù Lǚyóu Jiǔdiàn; ☎258 0215; www.guilin-hostel.com; 6 Zhumu Xiang, Nanmen Qiao; 南门桥竹木巷6号; s & d Y100-220; 🍷🍷) This cosy inn by the Táohuā River (桃花江) is highly recommended by travellers (especially couples). Staff are attentive and rooms are comfy. The tatami rooms fill up fast. Its three-room branch, **Lakeside Inn** (背包驿站;

Beibao Yizhan; ☎280 6806; 1-1-2 Shanhu Beilu; 杉湖北路杉湖综合楼1-1-2号) by Shān Lake is equally good. Advance bookings by phone or via the website are essential.

Jingguān Mínglóu Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(静观茗楼度假酒店; Jingguān Mínglóu Dǔjià Jiǔdiàn; ☎228 3265; 9 Ronghu Nanlu; 榕湖南路9号; standard/deluxe d Y380/480, deluxe ste Y1380; 🍷) If luxury chain hotels are not your cup of tea, book this one. This adorable hotel with stunning views of Róng Lake and Guilin's surrounding karst scenery is simply exquisite. Reproduction antique Chinese furniture adorns the lobby and extends into the fabulous rooms. The friendly staff don't speak English and there's nowhere to eat here, but small restaurants and cafes line the lakeside, so you won't have far to walk.

Lijiāng Waterfall Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(漓江大瀑布饭店; Lijiāng Dàpùbù Fàndiàn; ☎282 2881; www.waterfallguilin.com; 1 Shanhu Beilu; 杉湖北路1号; d without/with river view Y1320/1480, discounts of 10-30%; 🍷🍷🍷) This top-notch hotel has first-class facilities, wonderfully accommodating staff and a general feeling of grandeur, particularly if you walk up to its magnificent 2nd-floor atrium. Some rooms have stunning views of the river and lakes. It's also the proud owner of the world's tallest man-made waterfall (45m high), turned on daily from 8.30pm to 8.45pm and best viewed from Central Sq.

🍴 Eating

Local specialities include Guilin rice noodles (桂林米粉; Guilin *mǐfěn*), beer duck (啤酒鸭; *píjiǔ yā*) and Guilin snails (桂林田螺; Guilin *tiánluó*), while the ubiquitous *chǎoguō fàn* (炒锅饭; claypot rice dishes; from Y6) make a great snack.

Cantonese and Western food are not uncommon in the city. The pedestrianised Zhengyang Lu and its surrounding lanes are the busiest dining area, while there's a cluster of fish restaurants on Nanhuan Lu, just east of Wenchang Bridge.

Zhèngyáng Tāngchéng

SOUP \$\$

(正阳汤城; 8 Zhengyang Lu; dishes Y25-78; ☺11.30am-3am; 🍷) Easily one of the most popular soup restaurants in the city serving local specialities. The alfresco dining area is a prime people-watching spot. We especially recommend the grilled Li River fish and soup with sea bass and chrysanthemum.

Zhèngzōng Yóuzhǎwáng

(正宗油炸王; Yiren Lu; skewers from ¥1.50; ☎10.30am-2am) For late-night spicy, and we mean spicy, *má là chuàn* (麻辣串; spicy kebabs), you could do worse than this friendly hole-in-the-wall near the corner of Zhengyang Lu and Yiren Lu. No menu. No need. Just point, pay and eat. It's next to KFC.

Amani

(阿玛尼; Āmǎnǐ; ☎210 6351; Binjiang Lu; pizzas from ¥38; ☎10am-1am) Customers flock here for the tasty pizza, possibly the best in town. The laid-back setting makes this an easy place to while away the hours. It has a more hectic **branch** (☎280 9351; 159 Zhengyang Lu; ☎10am-2am) on the pedestrianised street.

Fújì Chángfēnzhōu

(福记肠粉粥; Yiren Lu; dishes from ¥5.50-15; ☎10am-midnight) A simple, neat, canteen-style restaurant that serves dim sum and light Cantonese meals. Porridge and steamed vermicelli rolls are the specialties here. Try the steamed roll with shrimp (鲜虾拉肠; *xiānxiā lācháng*) and minced pork congee with preserved egg (皮蛋瘦肉粥; *pídàn shòuròuzhōu*). No English menu. For dim sum you can pick from the cart.

Bǎiwèi Dumpling Restaurant

(百味饺子馆; Bǎiwèi Jiǎozigǎn; ☎210 6743; 9-5 Libin Lu; dishes from ¥8; ☎9.30am-10.30pm; 图) This pocket-sized restaurant in an alley just off Yiren Lu is a dumpling lover's heaven. The minimum order is 20 pieces (¥0.30 to ¥0.40 per piece). English menu now available.

**Drinking & Entertainment**

Guilin's streets are dotted with trendy little cafes, while Zhengyang Lu has a short stretch of bars with outdoor seating.

Le Feitz

(翡翠酒吧; Fěicuī Jiǔbǎ; ☎137 3773 4082; 1-8 Chaoyang Lu, University Residence; 朝阳路大学生公寓城1-8号; ☎10am-midnight) Frequented by local college students and expats alike, Le Feitz is arguably the most popular Irish pub in Guilin. It has live music almost every evening. It's near the north gate of Guangxi Normal University (朝阳路师大北门; Cháoyáng Lù Shìdàbèimén).

Joys Bar

(爵色酒吧; Juésè Jiǔbǎ; inside Guilin Culture Palace; 桂林文化宫内; ☎9pm-2.30am) The sturdy wooden furnishing and velvet curtains give this Chinese-style club a classy yet unfussy feel. The clientele is mostly a trendy, 20ish

SNACKS \$

local crowd, but it has started to attract a smattering of expats.

Paulaner

(柏龙酒吧; Bólóng Jiǔbǎ; 2 Zhengyang Lu; ☎4pm-1.30am) Prices surged after its recent facelift but it still serves the best German beer in town. The big-screen TV is still there for sports fans.

Little Italian

(这里; Zhèlǐ; 18 Binjiang Lu; ☎10am-midnight; 图) A pleasant, studenty place that offers great coffee and breakfast goodies. Free internet access.

Steam Coffee

(爱上咖啡; Àishàng Kāfēi; 10 Binjiang Lu; ☎10am-midnight) One of several trendy cafes on this stretch of street and serves equally good coffee.

 **Shopping**
Night Market

(夜市; Yèshì; Zhongshan Zhonglu; ☎from 7pm) For souvenirs, check out Guilin's night market, which runs along Zhongshan Zhonglu from Ronghu Beilu to Sanduo Lu.

East River Food Market

(东江市场; Dōngjiāng Shìchǎng; ☎6am-8pm) On the way to Seven Stars Park, this bustling undercover market sells everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to live eels.

 **Information**

Buy a map of Guilin (桂林地图; Guilín Dìtú) from bookshops or kiosks (¥6).

CD Burning & Internet Access

Many hostels have internet access and wi-fi.

Kodak shop (柯达商店; Kēdǎ shāngdiàn; 8 Zhongshan Zhonglu; ☎8.30am-10.30pm) Burns CDs (刻光盘; kè guāngpán) for ¥20 a disk. Located outside the Mingchéng Hotel (Mingchéng Jiǔdiàn).

Medical Services

Guòyào Pharmacy (国药大药房; Guóyào Dàyuàofáng; 19 Nanhuan Lu; ☎8am-8pm) Just around the corner from the People's Hospital.

People's Hospital (人民医院; Rénmín Yīyuàn; Wenming Lu)

Money

The **Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng) branches on Zhongshan Nanlu (near the main bus station) and Jiefang Donglu change money and travellers cheques, give credit-card advances and have 24-hour ATMs.

PIZZA \$\$

DIM SUM \$

BAR

CLUB

BAR

CAFE

CAFE

MARKET

MARKET

Post

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Zhongshan Beilu; ☎8am-7pm) A large branch of China Post: it's 500m north of the roundabout of Jiefang Donglu. There's another handy branch by the train station.

Public Security Bureau

PSB (公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎582 3492; 16 Shijiyayan Lu; ☎8.30am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) Can extend visas. It's located by Xiāodōng River and 500m south of the Seven Stars Park. A taxi ride from downtown will cost around ¥18.

Telephone

You can buy IC and IP phonecards, and top up your mobile, at any number of corner shops displaying a small telephone sign. There's one (小卖店; Xiǎomài Diàn) beside Backstreet Youth Hostel.

Tourist Information

Guilin Tourist Information Service Centre (桂林旅游咨询服务中心; Guilín Lǚyóu Zīxún Fúwù Zhōngxīn; ☎280 0318; South Gate, Ronghu Beilu; ☎8am-10pm) These helpful centres dot the city. There's a good one by the South Gate on Róng Lake.

Travel Agencies

China International Travel Service (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshè; www.guilintravel.com; Binjiang Lu) Helpful staff. There are other branches everywhere.

i Getting There & Away**Air**

Air tickets can be bought from the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎384 7252; cnr Shanghai Lu & Anxin Beilu; ☎7.30am-8.30pm). Direct flights to/from Guilin include Běijīng (Y1440), Chéngdū (Y980), Chóngqìng (Y840), Hǎikǒu (Y890), Guǎngzhōu (Y990), Hong Kong (Xiānggǎng; Y1410), Kūnmíng (Y840), Shànghǎi (Y1300) and Xī'ān (Y1090).

International destinations include Seoul, Korea (Hànchéng; Y2185), and Osaka, Japan (Dàbǎn; Y3500).

Bus

Guilin's **main bus station** (客运总站; Guilín kèyùn zǒngzhàn; ☎382 2666; Zhongshan Nanlu) is north of the train station. There are regular buses to the following destinations:

Běihǎi Y172, seven hours, three daily (8.30am, 9.20am and 9pm)

Guǎngzhōu Y169, 9½ hours, six daily

Huángyáo Y47, five hours, three daily (9.10am, 1.10pm and 2.20pm)

Lóngshèng Y30, two hours, every 40 minutes

Nánning Y98 to Y108, five hours, every 15 minutes

Sānjiāng Y33, four hours, hourly

Shēnzhèn Y252, 12 hours, two daily (1.20pm and 5.40pm)

Yángshuò Y15 to Y18, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes

Train

Few trains start in Guilin, so it's often tough to find tickets, especially for hard sleepers. Buy them at least a couple of days in advance if possible. Most trains leave from Guilin Station (桂林站; Guilín Zhàn), but some may leave from Guilin North Train Station (桂林北站; Guilín Běizhàn), which is 9km north of the city centre.

Direct services include:

Běijīng Y416, 23 hours, four daily (1.56am, 1.28pm, 3.36pm and 7.02pm)

Chóngqìng Y272, 19 hours, one daily (8.42am)

Guǎngzhōu Y207, 12 hours, two daily (6.28pm and 9.23pm)

Kūnmíng Y281, 18 hours 30 minutes, three daily (3.34pm, 4.30pm and 4.56pm)

Nánning Y65, five hours 30 minutes, regular services

Shànghǎi Y341, 22 hours, four daily (12.12pm, 2.05pm, 5.02pm and 5.33pm)

Xī'ān Y385, 27 hours, one daily (5.54pm)

i Getting Around**To/From the Airport**

Guilin's Liǎngjiāng International Airport (两江国际机场; Liǎngjiāng Guójí Jīchǎng) is 30km west of the city. Half-hourly shuttle buses (Y20) run from the CAAC office between 6.30am and 9pm. From the airport, shuttle buses meet every arrival. A taxi costs about ¥80 (40 minutes).

Bicycle

Guilin's sights are all within cycling distance. Many hostels rent bicycles (about ¥20 per day). For decent bikes with gears, head to **Ride Giant** (捷安特自行车; Jié'āntè Zìxíngchē; ☎286 1286; 16 Jiefang Donglu; 解放东路16号; ☎9am-8.30pm). Bike rental is ¥30 per day, although the deposit is a whopping ¥500.

Bus

Buses numbered 51 to 58 are all free. The following are the most useful for tourists:

Bus 2 Runs past the train and main bus stations, Elephant Trunk Hill, Liberation Bridge and Folded Brocade Hill.

Bus 10 Goes from Wada Hostel to the train and bus stations, and Seven Stars Park.

Bus 51 Starts at the train station and heads north along the length of Zhongshan Lu and beyond.

Bus 58 Goes to Elephant Trunk Hill, Seven Stars Park, Wave Subduing Hill, Folded Brocade Hill and Reed Flute Cave.

Around Guílín

The fascinating 1000-year-old village of **Jiāngtóuzhōu** (江头洲), whose 800 inhabitants are all surnamed Zhōu (周), is tucked away among farmland about 25km north of Guílín. There's an unmistakable rustic charm, with ducks and chickens running freely through narrow, cobblestone alleyways, which in turn house weathered, grey-brick courtyard homes fronted by huge wooden gates. As you approach the village, you'll notice the ancient and misshapen arched **Hùlóng Bridge** (护龙桥; Hùlóng Qiáo), opposite which is a public noticeboard. Follow the alleyway alongside the noticeboard and just keep wandering.

The only place to stay is the basic **Láishānlǐ Fànzhuāng** (米山里饭庄; ☎0773-633 1676; tw without/with air-con Y50/70; 餐) on the corner of the main road from Jiūwū, about 500m back from the village. You can also eat here.

Jiāngtóuzhōu is a two- to three-hour bike ride from Guílín (see p596). Alternatively, take an orange minibus on the stretch of Zhongshan Beilu near Guílín North Train Station to Língchuān (灵川; Y3, 30 minutes), then change to a bus to Jiūwū (九屋; Y4, 35 minutes), from where it's a 15-minute walk to the village. Buses stop running around 5.30pm.

Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces

龙脊梯田

☎0773

This part of Guǎngxī boasts stunning views of terraced paddy fields, and the clear stand-out is **Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces** (Lóngjǐ Títián; adult Y50). The rice fields rise up to 1000m high and are an amazing feat of farm engineering on hills dotted with minority villages. The best time to visit is after the summer rains, which leave the fields glistening with reflections. The fields turn golden just before harvesting (October), and become snow-white in winter (December).

Avoid visiting in early spring (March), when the mountains are shrouded in mist.

Dàzhài (大寨) is a laid-back Yao village that has an idyllic rural allure with a bubbling stream (look out for the snakes in the water). The number of guesthouses has mushroomed in recent years, but it remains relatively unspoiled by tourism. Continue uphill to the village of **Tiántóuzhài** (田头寨) atop the mountain. It's a sublime place to marvel at the panoramic views of the terraces, not to mention the sunrise or a starry night sky. **Píng'ān** (平安), a beautiful 600-year-old Zhuang village, is the biggest settlement and most popular among tourists. It has the best facilities, but expect to share your experience with the masses.

Most locals here are Zhuang or Yao, but you'll also find Dong and Miao people in the area.

There's nowhere in this area to change money, not even in Lóngshèng, so come prepared.



Activities

You can take any number of short **walks** from each village to some fabulous viewing points, and to really get among the terraces there are great **hiking** opportunities. The four- to five-hour trek between the villages of Dàzhài and Píng'ān, passing through the villages of Tiántóuzhài and Zhōngliù (中六), is highly recommended. The route is clearly signposted, but if you want a local to guide you, there will be plenty of offers. Expect to pay Y30 to Y40.



Sleeping & Eating

You can stay in traditional wooden homes of minority villagers (offer locals around Y20 for a simple bed), but three in particular – Dàzhài, Tiántóuzhài and Píng'ān – are set up for tourists.

Nearly all guesthouses offer food, and most guesthouses and restaurants have English menus. Look out for **zhútǒng fàn** (竹筒饭; Y10), a rice meal barbecued inside large bamboo sticks.

DÀZHÀI

Minority Cafe & Inn

GUESTHOUSE \$

(龙脊咖啡店; Lóngjǐ Kafēidiàn; ☎758 5605; r Y30-45) Perched above the village on the trail leading up to Tiántóuzhài, this small, friendly guesthouse has a cute terrace and an English menu (dishes Y10 to Y25). It's about a 20-minute walk (1km) uphill from the main gate.

Yínhé Lǚguǎn

(银河旅馆; ☎133 2473 5211; tw without/with bathroom Y60/80) Rooms are basic but clean and go for Y30 to Y50 most of the time. It's on the left of the stream just as you enter Dàzhài from the bus stop.

GUESTHOUSE \$

TIÁNTÓUZHÀI**Wànjiǎnglóu**

(万景楼; ☎758 5665; www.wanjianglou.com; in Chinese; tw Y70-90) This excellent guesthouse is located above Tiántóuzhài. Rooms with sweeping views don't have bathrooms (but rooms without views do). The staff don't speak English but are helpful enough. After you leave the village of Tiántóuzhài, take the path up to the right (the left is to Píng'ǎn). From there it's another 15-minutes' walk (about 800m) and the guesthouse is above Dazhai Hostel. It can arrange direct shuttle buses to/from Guilín.

INN \$

Jintián Guesthouse

(金田酒店; Jintián Jiùdiàn; ☎758 5683; www.ljttjd.com; r Y80-100, discounts of 10-30% weekdays) All rooms are adequately comfortable, and the owner, Hanna, speaks excellent English. It's on the left as you walk up the hill from Dàzhài.

GUESTHOUSE \$

PÍNG'ǎN

Wàngjǐ Peasant Family Happy FARM STAY \$ (望脊农家乐; Wàngjǐ Nóngjiālè; ☎758 3262; beds per person Y20) This weirdly named family-run guesthouse offers a less comfortable, but friendly, alternative to the ski-resort chalet lookalikes elsewhere in Píng'ǎn. On the way up the hill, bear right after the concrete Countryside Inn, walk past the school and continue up to the end of the path. Shared bathrooms only. Now has an English menu (dishes Y12 to Y40).

Lóngyíng Hotel

(龙颖饭店; Lóngyíng Fàndiàn; ☎758 3059; tw without/with air-con incl breakfast Y220/280; ☎@) Located near the top of the village, this is the best-quality option in Píng'ǎn. Decent rooms with air-con often go for Y120. The manager speaks English and there are terrific views from the terrace. A new branch next to Dazu Hotel, with cheaper rooms (Y70 to Y100), is now open.

HOTEL \$\$

Getting There & Away

Hotels in Tiántóuzhài, including Wànjiǎnglóu and **Quánjǐng Lóu** (全景楼; ☎758 5688), arrange direct **shuttle service** between Guilín and

Dàzhài for their guests. They also take other passengers if seats are available. The bus (Y40, three hours) usually leaves Guilín train station at 8.30am. Reservations are a must. These private shuttles are run by villagers, so if you speak Chinese you can book directly with the drivers. Among them are **Mr Liu** (☎152 9585 8826) and **Mr Pan** (☎137 3737 7986). Buses return to Guilín at 11.30am.

All hotels in Píng'ǎn provide a similar service. The bus (Y30) leaves Guilín train station at 1pm and returns at 10am. Again, **reservations** (☎138 7735 0504) are necessary.

If you opt for **public transport**, take a bus to Lóngshèng (龙胜) and ask to get off at Héping (和平). From that road junction, minibuses trundle back and forth between Lóngshèng and the rice terraces, stopping there to pick up passengers to Dàzhài (Y8, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6pm) and Píng'ǎn (Y7, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes between 7.40am and 5pm). Buses to Guilín (Y27, 1½ hours, 6.30am to 7pm) also stop over there. To continue to Sānjiāng (Y15, 1½ hours, hourly between 7am and 6pm), you have to catch a bus from Lóngshèng bus station.

Sānjiāng

三江

☎0772 / POP 360,000

Sānjiāng is notoriously humdrum, but it's a jumping-off point to get to the idyllic Dong villages and the exquisite Chéngyáng Wind and Rain Bridge.

The 78m-long **Chéngyáng Wind and Rain Bridge** (程阳桥; Chéngyáng Qiáo; admission Y60) is one of more than 100 nail-less bridges in the area built by the Dong (they are renowned carpenters) at the turn of the last century from fir logs. It took 12 years to knock together and is a picture of elegance.

You can **swim** in the river by Chéngyáng Bridge, while the surrounding network of villages makes for great **walks**. Possible **bike rides** include the tough, three-hour climb to the remote hilltop village of Gāoyǒu (高友; see the boxed text, p592).

There are a number of places to stay in the charming village of **Mǎ'ǎn** (马鞍) behind Chéngyáng Bridge. For its great location by the river (wooden waterwheel in front of you, bridges to your left), the pick of the bunch is **Dong Village Hotel** (侗家旅馆; Dòngjiā Lǚguǎn; ☎858 2421; www.donghotel.com; s/d/tr Y50/60/90). Walk over the bridge from the bus stop and turn left. Just inside the village, the friendly **Yang's Guesthouse** (程阳客栈; Chéngyáng Kèzhàn; ☎858 3126; r Y50-70; @)

GREAT GUǎNGXĪ BIKE RIDES

Lí Valley Boat-'n'-Bike Combo

YǎNGSHUÒ TO XĪNGPÍNG & BACK (15KM BOAT, 20KM CYCLE, HALF-DAY)

Combine a river cruise from Yǎngshuò to Xīngpíng (p597) with a bike ride back along this glorious valley. Put your bike on a bamboo raft (Y170 to Y250, 1½ hours), then sit back and enjoy the view to the historic village of Xīngpíng. From here, cycle south, following the trail past the villages of Gǔpí Zhài (古皮寨), Qiǎotóu Pù (桥头铺) and Dòngxīn (洞心) before reaching Fúli (福利), 4km east of Yǎngshuò. Just past Fúli take your bike on a ferry (Y5) across the Lí River, then continue past Dùtóu (渡头) and back to Yǎngshuò, crossing the river once more, this time over a bridge.

Dong Village Lung Buster

CHÉNGYÁNG BRIDGE TO GǎOYŌU VILLAGE (16KM, THREE HOURS)

This challenging trip starts at the elegant Chéngyáng Wind and Rain Bridge and ends with a muscle-stretching 6km climb to the hilltop village of Gǎoyōu (高有). From the bridge, follow the river along the 10km road to Línxī (林溪), passing the villages of Píngzhài (平寨), Dōngzhài (东寨), Dàzhài (大寨), Píngpǔ (平铺) and Guàndòng (冠洞). If you don't have the time or energy for the climb up to Gǎoyōu, lunch here and head back to Chéngyáng Bridge (two to three hours round trip). If your thighs are up to it, turn right in the village centre, soon leaving the paved road behind you, and after 1.5km, by a small wind-and-rain bridge, turn sharply right to begin the big ascent. The mountain views are stunning, but even without stopping for photos it will take about 1½ hours to reach Gǎoyōu, where, just before the drum tower, on your right, you'll find the family-run **Gǎoyōu Guesthouse** (高有客栈; Gǎoyōu Kèzhàn; r Y20). Meals (Y30) are available, but no English is spoken. The freewheel back to Chéngyáng takes about two hours.

has bikes (Y20 per day), English-speaking staff and free internet.

i Getting There & Away

Most buses go to and from the **east bus station** (河东车站; *hédōng chēzhàn*), but buses to Chéngyáng Bridge go from the **west bus station** (河西车站; *hèxī chēzhàn*), a 10-minute walk (about 500m, or a Y2 rickshaw ride) across the river. To get to the west bus station, turn right from the east bus station, right again over the river and right once more after you cross the river. Steps up to the ticket office are 20m on the left. Bring cash; there's nowhere to withdraw money.

Buses depart regularly from Sānjiāng east bus station for Lóngshèng (Y18, 1½ hours, 6.30am to 5.50pm) and Guǐlín (Y40, 3½ hours), and four daily depart for Tóngdào in Húnán (Y20, 2½ hours, 7.20am, 8.30am, 12.35pm and 1.45pm). For Chéngyáng Bridge, take the half-hourly bus bound for Línxī (林溪) from Sānjiāng west bus station (Y6, 30 minutes, 7.30am to 5.30pm). Do not despair if you miss the last bus. Private minivans to Línxī wait on the main road outside the west bus station. The fare is the same as the buses but they won't leave until they're full. If you're in a hurry, expect to pay Y30 to Y40 for the whole thing.

Yǎngshuò

阳朔

☎0773 / POP 310,000

Seasoned travellers to Guǎngxī spend as little time in Guǐlín as possible, preferring to make Yǎngshuò their base, though many of these veterans will gripe about Yǎngshuò's lack of authenticity – 'too many tourists', they complain. Yes, parts of it are very Western indeed. Whether you find this influence of Western culture repulsive or attractive, it doesn't change the fact that Yǎngshuò is gorgeous.

Yǎngshuò's dramatic karst landscape is at times otherworldly. Take a leisurely bamboo-raft ride or cycle through the dreamy valleys and you'll see. There's also a host of well-run courses and activities to keep you occupied far beyond your original intended length of stay. Travelling with kids is easy here. It's one of the more family-friendly Chinese destinations, with English-speaking locals, well set-up hostels and food for the finicky.

👁 Sights

Peaks & Hills

WALKS, VIEWS

Yǎngshuò is surrounded by towering, leafy, limestone peaks. The most accessible is **Bilián Peak** (碧莲峰; Bilián Fēng; admission Y30), which

overlooks Xi Jie (West St) and the Lí River; and can be climbed in about half an hour for some excellent views. **Yángshuò Park** (阳朔公园; Yángshuò Gōngyuán) is a short walk west of Xi Jie and where you'll find **Man Hill** (西郎山; Xiláng Shān), which supposedly resembles a young man bowing to a shy young girl represented by **Lady Hill** (小姑山; Xiǎogū Shān). **Dragon Head Hill** (龙头山; Lóngtóu Shān) is a short walk north of the town centre.



Activities

Rock Climbing

CLIMBING

Yángshuò is fast becoming one of the hottest climbing destinations in Asia. There are eight major peaks in regular use, already providing more than 250 bolted climbs. More are being bolted every year. **China Climb** (中国攀岩; Zhōngguó Pányán; ☎881 1033; www.chinaclimb.com; 45 Xianqian Jie; ☀9am-9pm), located inside Lizard Lounge bar, is the biggest climbing club in China and the most professional outfit in town. It offers local advice for experienced climbers and fully guided, bolted climbs for beginners. Prices start at Y300 per person for a half-day climb, with everything included. Also ask here for information on renting kayaks (from Y150 per day).

Cycling

CYCLING

There's no shortage of places to rent bikes (from Y15 per day), but for the best equipment and strong advice on possible trips, try **Bike Asia** (☎882 6521; www.bikeasia.com; 42 Guihua Lu; 桂花路42号; ☀9am-6pm), above Bar 98. Bikes go for Y50 per day (deposit Y350), including safety helmet and map. English-speaking guides (from Y300) are available.

Courses

Once you've exhausted the splendid countryside, Yángshuò is a premier place to expand your skills with a course or two.

Yángshuò Taichi Health Centre

TAICHI

(阳朔太极拳健康中心; Yángshuò Tàiqián Jiànkāng Zhōngxīn; ☎890 0125; www.chinasouth-taichi.com; Baoquan Lu; classes per hr/week/month Y80/1500/4000; ☎office 8-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm) Runs classes for both the Yang and Chen styles of taichi. Cheap accommodation is available for students.

Omeida Chinese Academy

CHINESE LANGUAGE

(欧美达书院; Ōuměidá Shūyuàn; ☎881 2233; www.omeida.com.cn; Pantao Lu) Has reader-recommended Chinese-language classes. It offers two-week classes (10 hours per week) for Y1000 and also hires English teachers.

Yángshuò

Activities, Courses & Tours

- 1 Bike Asia C1
- 2 China Climb C1
- 3 Cloud 9 Restaurant B2

Sleeping

- 4 Hóngfú Palace Hotel C2
- 5 Monkey Jane's Guesthouse C1

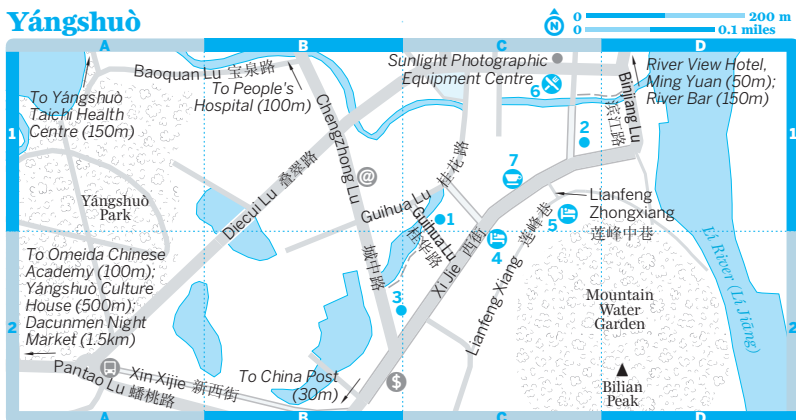
Eating

- Le Vôte (see 4)
- 6 Pure Lotus Vegetarian Restaurant C1

Drinking

- Bar 98 (see 1)
- 7 Ming Yuan C1

Yángshuò



Cloud 9 Restaurant

(聚福楼; Jùfúlóu Fàndiàn; ☎881 3686; Chengzhong Lu) Runs two three-hour cooking courses a day, for around Y150 per person including market tour and lunch. Would-be chefs receive printouts of the recipes they've just messed up.

Sleeping

Yángshuò is teeming with hotels run by English-speaking staff, especially at the budget end of the market, and all provide internet access. While the Xi Jie neighbourhood has abundant options, some of the best lodgings are located on the outskirts of Yángshuò.

Yangshuo Village Inn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(听月楼; Tīngyuè Lóu; ☎139 7836 9849; www.yangshuoguesthouse.com; Moon Hill Village; Yueliang Shan Licun; 月亮山历村; d Y380-390, ste Y500; ㊟) Located below Moon Hill (9km south of Yangshuo centre), the Village Inn is proud of its ecofriendly practices and high-quality services. Indeed, it exceeded all our expectations. Rooms with local handmade bamboo furniture are beyond fabulous, especially those in the tastefully renovated mudbrick farmhouse. Refillable water bottles are provided for guests to use. Staff are attentive and speak excellent English. The rooftop houses an Italian restaurant, Luna, with stunning views of Moon Hill. From Yángshuò bus station, take a minibus to Gāotiān (高田) and tell the driver to drop you at Lì Cūn (历村; Y5, every 15 minutes). A taxi from Xi Jie costs around Y30.

Its equally excellent sister hotel **Yangshuo Mountain Retreat** (阳朔胜地; Yángshuò Shèngdì; ☎877 7091; www.yangshuo mountainretreat.com; Gāotiān Zhèn Fēnglóu Cūnwēi Wánggōng Shānjiǎo; 高田镇凤楼村委王公山脚; r from Y500; ㊟), located by the beautiful Yùlóng River (遇龙河; Yùlóng Hé), is an affordable luxury.

Trippers Carpe Diem

HOSTEL \$\$

(山景假日酒店; Shānjǐng Jiàri Jiǔdiàn; ☎882 2533; www.guesthouseyangshuo.com; 35 Shibanjiaocun; 石板桥村35号; dm/s Y35/120, d Y160-300; ㊟) This brand-new hostel run by a Belgian-Chinese family is highly recommended by travellers. In addition to stunning views of the rice fields and karst peaks, excellent staff and spotless rooms, the hostel has an MSG-free cafe with European highlights such as potato croquettes and chicken cordon bleu. It's out of town (1.5km north

COOKING

of Xi Jie) but close enough to walk to. Walk along the river (upstream) for 15 minutes to Shíbǎnqiáo Village. A taxi from the bus station costs no more than Y20.

**Yangshuo Outside Inn**

HOSTEL \$

(荷兰饭店; Hélán Fàndiàn; ☎881 7109; www.yangshuo-outside.com; Cháolóng Village, Jimǎ; 驢马朝龙村; dm/s Y50/100, d Y120-200; ㊟) Run by a Swiss family, this fabulous farmhouse-turned hostel surrounded by rural vistas is located 4km southwest of Yángshuò. The whole adobe complex is filled with rustic charm and a communal feel, which gives you a glimpse of rural life in China without compromising the standard of hygiene and comfort. An annex with modern-furnished family suites (Y300 to Y500) was recently added. It's close to the Yùlóng River; a taxi here will cost Y25 or it's 20 minutes by bike. Check the website for directions and bookings.

Yangshuo Culture House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(阳朔文化小屋; Yángshuò Wénhuà Xiǎowū; ☎882 7750; www.yangshuo-study-travel.com; 110 Beisan Xiang, Chengxi Lu; 城西路北三巷110号; dm Y70, d & tw without/with bathroom Y70/80; ㊟) The pinewood rooms are nothing to write home about but they are bright and spacious. Owner Mr Wei can help organise activities and classes, but best of all he throws in three meals a day for free! It's about a 10-minute walk west of the bus station, along Chengxi Lu. Look out for the yellow sign on the right. This place gets booked up, so it's well worth making an online reservation.

River View Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(望江楼酒店; Wàngjiānglóu Jiǔdiàn; ☎882 2688; www.riverview.com.cn; 11 Binjiang Lu; 滨江路11号; s Y100, d Y100-230, tw Y230-250; ㊟) If you prefer staying in downtown but want to avoid the hubbub of Yángshuò's nightlife, this hotel around the corner from Xi Jie is good value for money. The balcony rooms overlooking the Lì River are bright and spacious, and they fill up fast. The helpful manager, Rocky, speaks English.

Hóngfú Palace Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(鸿福饭店; Hóngfú Fàndiàn; ☎137 3739 7888; www.yangshuohongfuhotel.com; 79 Xi Jie; 西街79号; d Y380-480, tw/ste Y660/880; ㊟) Cracking location, set back from Xi Jie in the historic Jiangxi Guildhall and sharing its premises with Le Vôtre. Roomy doubles, regularly discounted to Y220, overlook a Qing-style courtyard. Identical rooms without the courtyard view go for as little as Y170.

Monkey Jane's Guesthouse HOSTEL \$
(背包客栈; Bèibāo Kèzhàn; ☎882 1603; www.monkeyjane.pyksy.com; 28 Lianfeng Zhongxiang; 莲峰中巷28号; dm Y20, d without/with air-con Y60/80; ㊟) This famous hostel is perhaps more for those who want to party hard. Some travellers really enjoy the 'beer pong' game on its legendary rooftop bar (the views are jaw-dropping), while others find it crazy. The outer rooms are generally OK but others are gloomy and damp. Staff members are as friendly as ever, though.

🍴 Eating & Drinking

Local specialities include *píjiǔ yú* (啤酒鱼; beer fish) and *tiánluóniàng* (田螺酿; stuffed snails). Also look out for street vendors making and selling *jiāngtáng* (姜糖; ginger sweets; Y5 per bag) or those with copper kettles selling *hēi zhīma hú* (黑芝麻糊; Y3), a sweet syrupy drink made from sesame paste.

Dàcūnmén Night Market MARKET \$
(大村门夜市; Dàcūnmén Yèshì; Pantao Lu; ☎5pm-late) This night market is a culture-filled slice of nontourist Yangshuo life. Watch locals sniffing out the best spices or bartering for their snails, but be warned: it's not for the squeamish. Exotic tastes such as beer fish, dog hotpot, fish-head soup, frogs and snails can be found here. It's a 30-minute walk from Xi Jie. After you pass the gas station on Pantao Lu, look for the fire station on the left. Behind it is the night market.

Luna ITALIAN \$\$\$
(☎139 7836 9849; Moon Hill Village; Yuèliàng Shān Lìcūn; 月亮山历村; dishes from Y38; ☎7.30am-midnight) The spectacular views of Moon Hill definitely makes Luna worth a visit, but what really seems to keep customers coming are its organic salad, and exquisitely cooked pasta. The menu features a wide selection of Italian fare, and the wine list is impressive. It's located on the rooftop of Yangshuo Village Inn (p594).

🍃 Pure Lotus Vegetarian Restaurant
CHINESE VEGETARIAN \$\$

(暗香蔬影素食馆; Ànxiāng Shūyǐng Sùcǎiguǎn; Diecui Lu; dishes from Y18-35; ☎11am-2pm & 5-10pm; ㊟) If you've just been taking photos of dogs being skinned in the night market, this is the place to come to repair your damaged karma. Buddhist music creates an enchanting atmosphere in which to delve into Lotus' sumptuous menu. The tomatoes

stuffed with tofu, potatoes and mushrooms (Y28) come highly recommended. There's a cute little terrace out back.

Le Vôtre FRENCH \$\$\$
(乐德法式餐厅; Lèdè Fǎshì Cāntīng; 79 Xi Jie; dishes from Y38; ☎8am-midnight) The first French restaurant in town, and still the best. This one shares its historic premises with the Hóngfú Palace Hotel. The interior, flanked by a dazzling array of Christian and Buddhist statues and hung with portraits of Chairman Mao, oozes an eccentric charm. The huge outdoor seating area draws big crowds, as do the fine menu and home-brewed beer (from Y25).

River Bar BAR \$\$
(漓湾酒吧; Lǐwān Jiǔbā; Binjiang Lu; drinks from Y25, dishes from Y28; ☎5pm-late) It's all in the name - stunningly situated by Lí River, this outdoor bar has a hideaway vibe and provides sublime river views while you sip a bewildering array of cocktails. The varied menu includes steaks, pasta, kebabs, and a big list of teas and coffees.

Bar 98 BAR \$\$
(47 Guihua Lu; ☎2pm-late) First choice for many of Yangshuo's expat English teachers, this bar has no-nonsense ambience and a pool table. It keeps you entertained most weekdays: live music on Wednesday and Friday evenings, and a trivia quiz game on Tuesdays (after 9pm). All-day breakfasts and veggie burgers are served here.

Ming Yuan CAFE \$
(明园咖啡; Míngyuán Kāfēi; ☎134 5736 9680; 50 Xi Jie; coffees from Y26; ☎10am-midnight) If the constant bustle of Yangshuo gets too much, creep into this small cafe. The downstairs tables are a bit cramped, but it's still a quiet slice of civilisation and the cream of the crop for coffee, with a rich range of blends including some more obscure offerings. It recently opened a bigger, elegantly decorated **branch** (14 Binjiang Lu; ☎8am-11pm) adjacent to River View Hotel.

★ Entertainment Impressions Liú Sānjiè

OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE \$\$
(印象刘三姐; Yìnxiàng Liú Sānjiè; ☎881 7783; tickets Y198-680; ☎8-9pm) The top show in town is directed by moviemaker Zhang Yimou, the man who also directed the opening ceremony at the Běijīng Olympics. Six hundred performers, including local fishermen, take to the Lí River each night.

MORE GREAT GUǎNGXĪ BIKE RIDES

Ancient Village Pursuit

GUĪLÍN TO JIǎNGTÓUZHŌU (25KM, 2½ HOURS)

Leave the city behind and take this relaxing, countryside spin to the 1000-year-old village of Jiǎngtóuzhōu (p590). From the west gate of Solitary Beauty Peak, head north along Zhongshan Beilu for 1km, then turn left onto Huancheng Beiyilu (环城北一路) before taking the first right. Keep cycling north until you leave the suburb town of Dingjiāng Zhèn (定江镇), then continue along the country lane for about 30 minutes (15km). When the road forks, bear right towards Tánxià Zhèn (潭下镇). At the Tánxià Zhèn junction, turn left then follow signs to Jiǔwū (九屋). Jiǎngtóuzhōu is down a track on the right, just past Jiǔwū.

Yùlóng River Loop

YǎNGSHUÒ TO DRAGON BRIDGE & BACK (20KM ROUND TRIP, FOUR HOURS)

Soak up the rural charm as you follow the beautiful Yùlóng River past rice paddies, fish farms and water buffalo to the 600-year-old Dragon Bridge (p598). From Yǎngshuò, cycle along Pantao Lu and take the first main road on the left after the Farmers Trading Market. Continue straight, past the hospital on your right, and through the village of Jimǎ (驥马) before following the road round to the right to reach the start of a bumpy track. Follow this all the way to Dragon Bridge (遇龙桥; Yùlóng Qiáo). Note: the last few hundred metres are on a main road. Cross the bridge and follow another track south for 20 minutes (around 8km) until it becomes a small, paved road, which eventually stops at the river's edge. Take a bamboo raft across the river (Y5), then turn left off a small paved road down a tiny pathway, which leads you back to the Jimǎ village road.

Twelve surrounding karst peaks are illuminated as part of the show, which gets rave reviews from many travellers. Book at your hostel or hotel: hotels often arrange slight discounts.



Shopping

Souvenir shops run the length of Xi Jie, while stalls set up daily along Binjiang Lu. Bargain your socks off.



Information

Travel agencies are all over town, while backpacker-oriented cafes and bars, as well as most hotels, can often dispense good advice. Shop around for the best deals.

Touts are an almost constant nuisance in Yǎngshuò, but with perhaps a greater percentage of English speakers here than in any other place in China, there's little need for their services. Fend them off firmly but politely.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Xi Jie; ☎9am-5pm) Foreign exchange and 24-hour ATM for international cards.

Café Too & Hostel (自游人旅店; Zìyóurén Lǚdiàn; ☎882 8342; 7 Chengzhong Lu; ☎8am-midnight) Friendly, bite-sized cafe with fresh coffee, free internet and an impressive range of foreign-language books that you can swap.

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Pantao Lu; ☎8am-5pm) Has English-speaking staff and long-distance phone services.

People's Hospital (人民医院; Rénmín Yīyuàn; 26 Chengzhong Lu) English-speaking doctors available.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; Chengbei Lu; ☎8am-noon & 3-6pm summer, 2.30-5.30pm winter) Has several fluent English-speakers. Doesn't issue visa extensions. It's 100m east of People's Hospital.

Sunlight Photographic Equipment Centre (阳光照相器材店; Yángguān Zhàoxiàng qicái diàn; Xi Jie; ☎8am-8pm) Burns CDs for Y15 per disc.



Getting There & Away

Air

The closest airport is in Guílín; see p589 for details of available flights. Your hotel should be able to organise taxi rides directly to the airport (about Y240, one hour).

Bus

Direct bus links:

Guílín Y15 to Y18, one hour, every 10 minutes (6.45am to 8.30pm)

Nánning Y121, 6½ hours, two daily (8am and 11.30am)

Shēnzhèn Y232, 13 hours, one daily (8.20pm)

Xīngpíng Y7, one hour, every 15 minutes (6.30am to 6pm)

Yángdī Y10, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes (6.30am to 6pm)

The bus from Guǐlín to Huángyáo only stops in Yángshuò (Y35, three hours, 11.10am) if it's not full.

Train

Yángshuò has no train station, but train tickets for services from Guǐlín and Nán níng can be bought from hotels and travel agencies around town. Expect to pay Y50 commission.

i Getting Around

The best way to get around is by bicycle; you can rent one at almost all hostels, and from street-side outlets for Y15 per day. A deposit of Y200 is standard, but don't hand over your passport. For better-quality bikes, and sound advice on bike trips, head to **Bike Asia** (☎882 6521; www.bikeasia.com; 42 Guihua Lu; ☎9am-6pm); for details, see p593.

Around Yángshuò

The highlight of a trip to Guǎngxī is to get out into the countryside of Yángshuò. There are weeks of exploring possibilities here, by bike, boat, foot or any combination thereof. Unfortunately, the local authority has plans to privatise the whole area. It's very likely that you'll be forced to pay admission fees just for entering the territory by the time you read this book.

The villages in the vicinity of Yángshuò, especially Xīngpíng, come alive on **market days**, which operate on a three-, six- and nine-day monthly cycle.

LĪ RIVER

漓江

There are also a number of picturesque, ancient villages to visit, and the river here far outstrips anything you'll see around Guǐlín. Classic rural scenes of wallowing water buffalo and farmers tending to crops are dominated by a backdrop of prominent limestone peaks.

Xīngpíng (兴坪), the location of the photo on the back of Y20 banknotes, is more than 1000 years old and houses a number of historic residences. Most travellers base themselves here to explore the surrounding countryside. The HI-affiliated **This Old Place** (老地方; Lǎo Difang; ☎870 2887; www.topxingping.com; 5 Rongtan Lu; dm Y30-40, s Y60,

d Y80-180) is an excellent place to stay. It has a cafe on Lao Jie. The stunning 16km-**hiking trail** (扬堤) between Xīngpíng and Yángdī (扬堤) takes around four to five hours to complete, crossing the river three times. The admission fee is Y16, which includes two ferry crossings. The last crossing is an extra Y4.

You can take a bus (Y8) from Yángshuò to Yángdī, then walk the trail to Xīngpíng before getting a raft (Y170) or bus (Y7, until 7pm) back. A raft between Xīngpíng and Yángdī is Y120.

Another fun option in this area is the boat-and-bike trip from Yángshuò to Xīngpíng and back (see p592).

Also very popular, and much closer to Yángshuò (about 9km east), is the historic village of **Fúli** (福利), with its stone houses and cobbled lanes. Fúli is famous in these parts for its handmade fans. You'll see them everywhere. It takes about an hour to get here by bike. First cycle south from Yángshuò before turning east over the bridge that takes you on towards Dùtōu Village (渡头村; Dùtōu Cūn). There, take your bike on the ferry (Y5) across the river. Fúli is on the other side. There are also regular buses from Yángshuò to a drop-off point within walking distance of Fúli (Y3, 15 minutes).

Around Yángshuò



YÙLÓNG RIVER

遇龙河

The scenery along this smaller, quieter river, about 6km southwest of Yángshuò, is simply breathtaking. There are a number of great swimming spots and countless exploring possibilities. Just rent a bike and get out there.

One option is to aim for **Dragon Bridge** (遇龙桥; Yùlóng Qiáo), about 10km upstream. This 600-year-old stone arched bridge is among Guǎngxī's largest and comes with higgledy-piggledy steps and sides that lean inwards with age. Locals say the water under the bridge is 7m deep. It's certainly a great spot for a swim. For details of how to get here by bike, see the boxed text, p596. Alternatively, take a bus to Jīnbǎo (金宝) and ask to get off at the bridge (Y5, 35 minutes), just after Báishā (白沙).

MOON HILL

月亮山

For mind-blowing views of the surrounding countryside, head to the surreal limestone pinnacle **Moon Hill** (Yuèliàng Shān; admission Y15), famed for its moon-shaped hole. To get here by bike, take the main road south of Yángshuò towards the river and turn right onto the road about 200m before the bridge. Moon Hill is another 8km down the road on your right.

BLACK BUDDHA CAVES & WATER CAVES

黑佛洞、水岩

For many travellers, the squelchy highlight of a visit to these caves is getting completely covered in a vast pool of mud as you navigate your way around the **Black Buddha Caves** (Hēifó Dòng; half-/full-day tour Y80/120), located just before Moon Hill as you're coming from Yángshuò. There are freshwater pools to wash off the mud afterwards. Tours into the **Water Caves** (Shuǐ Yán; half-/full-day tour Y78/108), located several kilometres beyond Moon Hill, enter by boat and take in an underground waterfall. Both caves can be reached by bike. Hostels organise tours. Note that prices are unofficial, so bargain all you want.

SHÍTOUCHÉNG

石头城

A visit to this fascinating Qing-dynasty village, perched on top of a limestone peak, is an unusual foray into the countryside and makes a great day trip for those looking for an off-the-beaten-track adventure. The village was once a garrison town and the ancient gates and walls are mostly still intact.

It's a steep 30- to 50-minute climb up the hill from the village's 'new town' to the 'old town' where the wall begins. Once at the top, it will take another four to five hours to walk around to all four of the main gates. Locals will show you around the stone ruins for about Y30.

To get here from Yángshuò, take any Guilín-bound bus to Pútáo (Y5), from where a motorbike taxi (Y20) will take you the rest of the way to Shítouchéng. You should be able to arrange a motorbike ride back to Pútáo through one of the villagers. From there, you can flag down a southbound bus back to Yángshuò.

Huángyáo

黄姚

0774

Huángyáo is one of China's most high-profile villages, with many movies and TV series filmed there; Edward Norton's *The Painted Veil* is among them. The lovingly preserved 900-year-old **village** (adult Y68) is dotted with two dozen temples, a number of pavilions and clan halls, and an old stage (古戏台; *gǔ xìtái*). Bucolic charm permeates when you amble along the stone pathways. Two 500-year-old banyan trees wind their way up from the river's edge to the side of the village and make a lovely place to rest after wandering the streets.

Booker Inn (泊客驿站; Bókè Yìzhàn; 0672 2586; 33 Yingsiu Jie; 迎秀街38号; r Y50; ☺) and **Chance** (偶然间; Ōuránjiān; 0672 2046; 33 Zhongxing Jie; 中兴街38号; dm & d Y80; ☺) on the other side of the river are particularly set up for backpackers. Both have rooms (shared bathrooms only) with wood furnishing, free wi-fi and a mini-bar. Huángyáo is famed for its *dòufu* (豆腐; tofu). Dine in the courtyard of **Guōjiā Dàyuàn** (郭家大院; 44 An Dongjie; 安东街44号), which does simply delicious *dòufu niàng* (豆腐酿; tofu slabs stuffed with minced pork and vegetables; Y20). Across the river, **Dàilóngqiáo Fānzhuāng** (带龙桥饭庄) has an English menu and serves similar dishes.

There are three direct buses daily from Guilín (Y48, five hours, 9.15am, 1.10pm and 1.30pm); one goes via Yángshuò (Y35, three hours, 11.10am). The return from Huángyáo (Y50, 8.10am and 2.20pm) will drop you off in Yángshuò if you ask. From Guǎngdōng, it's possible to get to Huángyáo via Hèzhōu (贺州).

☎0771 / POP 7.1 MILLION

Like many provincial capitals in China, Nánning is a bog-standard city with few sights of note. But at heart it's a fairly relaxed place to recharge your batteries before leaving for or coming back from Vietnam. Travel agencies and hostels can arrange Vietnam visas in one to three days and there's just about enough to keep you occupied while you wait.

👁 Sights & Activities

FREE **Guǎngxī Provincial Museum** MUSEUM (广西省博物馆; Guǎngxī Shěng Bówù-guǎn; www.gxmuseum.com; Minzu Dadao; ☎9am-5pm Tue-Sun) This ugly, mammoth museum actually has a superb collection of ancient Dong bronze drums, some dating back more than 2000 years. They were used as sacrificial and ritual vessels as well as musical instruments, and the biggest is a whopping 165cm in diameter. In the leafy back garden are some full-size examples of Dong and Miao houses, and a nail-less Wind and Rain Bridge, which now houses an impressive restaurant, Āmóu Meishí.

Guǎngxī Medicinal Herb Botanical Garden

GARDEN

(广西药用植物园; Guǎngxī Yàoyòng Zhíwùyuán; admission Y10; ☎dawn-dusk) The fascinating subtropical Guǎngxī Medicinal Herb Botanical Garden is the largest medicinal botanical garden in China. More than 4000 medicinal plants from over 20 countries can be found here. Buses 22 and 81 from Cháoyáng Garden stop by the main gate. Buses 7 and 66 from the train station also go there.

Yōng River Bridge

SWIMMING

The river at the southwestern end of the modern Yōng River Bridge (邕江桥; Yōngjiāng Qiáo) is a very popular swimming spot, particularly on summer evenings. For the less adventurous, nearby Yōngjiāng Hotel has a small outdoor pool (Y50).

Big groups of locals meet for a spot of **dancing** every evening in **Bīnjiāng Park** (滨江公园; Bīnjiāng Gōngyuán), just behind the riverbank where swimmers congregate. It's great to watch and anyone can join in.

On the eastern side of the bridge, just south of South Gate Market, is a small network of **alleyways**. Here you'll find some of Nánning's older, low-rise housing, a stark



Nánning

🛏 Sleeping

- 1 High-Class Hotel..... A1
- 2 Lotusland Hostel..... A2
- 3 Yōngjiāng Hotel..... B3

🍴 Eating

- 4 Farmers Market..... B1
- 5 South Gate Market..... B3
- 6 Xingdǎo Hào..... B3
- 7 Xù Courtyard Restaurant..... B3

contrast from the shiny shopping centres off nearby Chaoyang Lu, and an interesting place for a quiet stroll.

🛏 Sleeping

There's a cluster of budget hotels around the train station, displaying the price of their cheapest discounted rooms in oversized numbers on signs in the windows.

Nanning City Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(南宁市青年旅舍; Nánningshì Qīngniáng Lúshè; ☎152 7771 7217; www.nanningcityhostel.bravehost.com; Apt102, Block12, Ou Jing Ting Yuan Community, 63-1 Minzu Dadao; 民族大道63-1号阳光一百欧景庭园E座12单元1102号; dm from Y60, s without bathroom Y70, double with bathroom

Y120; ⓂⓂ) This spick-and-span hostel on the penthouse floor has the feel of a friendly boarding house. Dorms and rooms are neat. Self-caterers will appreciate the communal kitchen. It's hard to find, though. First, look for the landmark residential complex Sunshine 100 (阳光一百, Yángguāng Yībái), an orange building with parking and shops, on Minzu Dadao. The complex of Ōu Jīng Tíng Yuán is behind it (it's on the right-hand side). Then look for a black iron gate and a security guard next to a grocery store with the Chinese characters 上水百货 (*shàngshuǐ bǎihuò*) above it. Enter the gated area and look for block 12. It's almost at the east end of the residential quarter and it's on your right-hand side. For easier navigation, download a map from the hostel's website.

Lotusland Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(荷逸居; Héyì Jū; ☎243 2592; lotuslandhostel@163.com; <http://lotuslandhostel.spaces.live.com>; 64 Shanghai Lu; 上海路64号; d/tw Y50/100 Ⓜ) Lotusland is a hostel pioneer in Nán-níng. Everything feels clean and spanking new. Shared bathrooms only, but they are sparkling. It's a relatively easy 15-minute walk (about 900m) from the train station. Vietnam visa application service is provided here with no additional costs. From Lángdōng bus station, take bus 6 or 213.

High-Class Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(海格拉斯大酒店; Hǎigélasī Dàjiùdiàn; ☎579 6888; 76 Zhonghua Lu; 中华路76号; d & tw Y388; ⓂⓂ) Spacious doubles with spotless wooden floors, smart furniture, supportive mattresses and accommodating staff make this well-presented hotel the best choice in the train station area. Discounts bring rooms down to Y168 (Y178 with computer). All rooms have wi-fi.

Yōngjiāng Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(邕江宾馆; Yōngjiāng Bīnguǎn; ☎218 0888; www.yjhotel.cn; 1 Linjiang Lu; 临江路1号; standard/deluxe d Y680/880, discounts of 50%; ⓂⓂⓂ) If you plump for the deluxe double, this welcoming five-star hotel overlooking the river is worth the splurge. Decor is luxurious yet modern, with chunky canvases hanging in the corridors and in some rooms. There's a delightful little teahouse, as well as a small, kidney-shaped outdoor pool.



Eating

The place to eat is Zhongshan Lu, a bustling street jam-packed with food stalls and small restaurants selling all manner of tasty fare,

from squid kebabs (Y5) and *chòu dòufu* (臭豆腐; stinky tofu) to *lǎoyǒumiàn* (老友面; literally 'old friend' noodles). There's a cluster of cheap restaurants at the south end of Gonghe Lu, and you'll find simple restaurants around the train station selling breakfast *bāozi* (包子; dumplings; Y3) or Guilín *mǐfěn* (桂林米粉; Guilín noodles; Y3.50). For familiar Western fare and a sip of coffee or beer, there are a dozen cafes and bars in the Sunshine 100 complex on Minzu Dadao.

A great place for buying fruit and snacks is **South Gate Market** (南门市场; Nánmén Shìchǎng; ☎5.30am-7pm), off Zhongshan Lu. Closer to the train station, on the north side of Chǎoyǎng Stream, is the small **Farmers Market** (农贸市场; Nóngmào Shìchǎng; ☎5am-11pm), another excellent place for fresh fruit.

TOP CHOICE **Àmóu Měishì**

GUANGXI \$\$

(阿谋美食; 21 Gucheng Lu; ☎9am-9pm)

Well, this is a chain but this branch really stands out. Housed on the picturesque Wind and Rain Bridge behind Guangxi Provincial Museum, this restaurant has a beautiful, leafy garden as its backdrop. It dishes out various tribal food of the region. You may not know those ethnic minorities, but you'll sure like their grub. Try the Miao's *zhūxiāng* fish (苗家竹香鱼; *miáojiā zhūxiāngyú*; Y68). Other mouth-watering dishes include roasted eggplant in Tai style (傩家茄子; *dǎijiā qiézi*; Y25) and shredded Lí River duck (手撕漓江鸭; *shǒusī lǐjiāngyā*; Y38). No English menu.

Xù Courtyard Restaurant

SOUTHERN CHINESE \$\$

(旭园; Xù Yuán; Linjiang Lu; ☎10.30am-9.30pm) This friendly restaurant is in a converted courtyard that dates back to 1892. It whips up some scrumptious dishes, including orange-peel-flavoured pork-rib wraps (橙皮纸包骨; *chéngpí zhǐbāogǔ*; Y48), secret-recipe roast duck (密制丁香鸭; *mìzhì dīngxiāngyā*; Y38 per half duck) and plum-marinated *huángfēng* fish (梅子黄鲈鱼; *méizi huángfēngyú*; Y38). Chinese-only menu, but some English is spoken.

Xīngdǎo Hào

FISH \$

(星岛号; Xīngdǎo Hào; Linjiang Lu; ☎6pm-2am) Right on the river, with tables spread out across the deck of the now disused river-ferry wharf, this nonsensical restaurant-cum-bar is a great spot for an evening meal, or even just a few beers. No English menu, but the *hóngshāo luófēi yú* (红烧罗非鱼; Y20), a Yōng River fish speciality, comes recommended. Beers from Y8.

Just For You

CAFE \$\$

(为了你餐厅: Weilení Cántīng; ☎571 2801; 61 Minzu Dadao, Sunshine 100, No 33 Shangye Jie; 民族大道61号阳光一百商业街33号; ☎9am-midnight) If you want to meet up and yarn with other English speakers, head to Just For You. This cafe offers a range of American and Southeast Asian fare, and vegetarian pizza (Y38) is served. It's also a popular Chinese-dates-foreigners spot, located behind Sunshine 100.

i Information

The useful *Street Map of Nanning* (南宁街道图; Nánning Jiēdào Tú; Y4), in English and Chinese, can be found at bookshops and kiosks around town. Hawkers also sell it outside the train station.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Chaoyang Lu; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Changes travellers cheques and gives credit-card advances. Other Bank of China branches around town have 24-hour ATMs that accept international bank cards.

China International Travel Service (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójì Lǚxíngshè; ☎232 3330; 76 Chaoyang Lu; ☎7am-11pm) Has some English-speaking staff, issues one-month Vietnam visas (Y380) and sells bus tickets (Y150) to Hanoi (Hénnèi).

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Zhonghua Lu; ☎8am-6pm) This handy branch is just across from the train station.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎289 1260; 10 Xiuling Lu Xierli; 秀灵路西二里10号; ☎9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) The foreign affairs office is about 2km north of the train station, off Xiuling Lu (秀灵路).

i Getting There & Away**Air**

Direct daily flights from Nanning include Běijīng (Y1850), Shànghǎi (Y1660), Xī'ān (Y1800), Kūnmíng (Y630), Guǎngzhōu (Y730) and Hong Kong (Y1850). You can also fly to a number of other countries in Asia, including Vietnam (Yuènnà; Y1950).

The **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎243 1459; 82 Chaoyang Lu; ☎24hr) sells tickets. The twice-hourly airport shuttle bus (Y15, 40 minutes, 5.30am to 10.30pm) leaves from outside this office. A taxi to the airport is about Y100.

Bus

All long-distance bus stations are inconveniently located on the outskirts of the city. The main one is **Lángdōng bus station** (琅东客运站; Lángdōng kèyùnzhan; ☎550 8333), about 5km

east of the city centre. Buses to pretty much everywhere leave from there, although be aware that you may be dropped at one of the other bus stations when arriving in Nanning. It has a ticketing office in town on Chaoyang Lu near CAAC.

There are frequent daily services:

Běihǎi Y60, three hours, every 10 to 20 minutes (7am to 10.40pm)

Chóngzuǒ Y22, two hours, every 30 to 60 minutes (7.40am to 8.40pm)

Guǎngzhōu Y242, nine hours, 12 daily (9am to 11pm)

Gulín Y100 to Y110, 4½ hours, every 15 to 30 minutes (7.30am to 11.30pm)

Píngxiáng Y68, 2½ hours, 16 daily (7.30am to 8.30pm)

There is one direct bus daily to Dětian Falls (Dětian Pùbù; Y50, 3½ hours, 7.40am). Other daily routes include Chóngqìng, Chéngdū, Hǎinán Dǎo, Shànghǎi and Hong Kong (Xiānggǎng).

Local buses 6 and 213 (45 minutes) go from Chaoyang Lu and Minzu Dadao to Lángdōng bus station.

Train

A number of daily trains go to Gulín (Y32 to Y65, 4½ to 6½ hours), Kūnmíng (Y55 to Y113, 12½ to 14 hours) and Wúhàn (Y126 to Y170, 15½ to 21 hours). Some other daily services:

Běihǎi Y22 to Y25, three hours, two daily (9.36am and 1.30pm)

Běijīng West Y276, 27 hours, one daily (9.10am)

Chéngdū Y199, 36½ hours, one daily (7.38pm)

Chóngqìng Y152, 27 hours, one daily (7.38pm)

Guǎngzhōu Y94 to Y106, 11½ to 14 hours, three daily (12.27am, 5.12am and 7.13pm)

Shànghǎi Y199/231, 31/28 hours, two daily (5.49am and 11.16am)

Xī'ān Y223, 33 hours, one daily (12.07pm)

Two daily trains go to Píngxiáng (Y17/15, 3½/5½ hours, 8am/10.30am) near the Vietnam border. Both stop at Chóngzuǒ (Y10/9, two/three hours) and Níngmíng (Y13/11, 2½ to four hours), but only the slow one stops at Píngxiáng's north train station.

Booth 16 in the train station sells international tickets to Hanoi (Y147). The train leaves at 6.45pm (11 hours). Bring your passport.

i Getting Around

A number of buses, including bus 6 and 213, run the length of Chaoyang Lu and Minzu Dadao until around 11pm. A taxi ride from Lángdōng bus station to downtown is around Y30.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO VIETNAM FROM NÁNNÍNG

There are seven daily buses to Hanoi (Hénnèi, Vietnam; ¥150, 7½ hours) via the Friendship Pass (友谊关; Yǒuyì Guān). Two departures (8am and 8.20am) leave from the Nánning International Tourism Distribution Centre (南宁国际旅游集散中心; Nánning Guójì Lǚyóu Jísàn Zhōngxīn), and four departures (8.40am, 9am, 10am and 1.40pm) leave from Lángdōng bus station. One bus run by CITS (¥150, 7.30am) leaves from Nanfang Hotel (南方酒店; Nánfāng Jiǔdiàn). Note that you'll have to get off the bus and walk across the border at Friendship Pass before boarding another bus to Hanoi.

The border is open from 8am to 8pm Chinese time; however, travellers have reported that passports aren't always stamped after around 4.30pm. China is one hour ahead of Vietnam.

For further information, head to shop.lonelyplanet.com to purchase a downloadable PDF of the Hanoi chapter from Lonely Planet's *Vietnam* guide.

Around Nánning

YÁNGMĚI

扬美

This beautifully preserved **17th-century town** (admission ¥10) on the Yōng River (邕江; Yōng Jiāng), 26km west of central Nánning, makes a great day trip. You could easily spend a couple of hours wandering the cobbled streets and historic buildings.

Buses leave from behind Huátiān Guójì (华天国际), an office-block building on Huaqiāng Lu (华强路) just west of Nánning's train station, from around 8.30am to 4.30pm (¥10, 90 minutes, every 50 minutes) and return between the same times.

DÀMÍNG MOUNTAIN

大明山

About 90km northeast of Nánning, the **Dàming Mountain Reserve** (大明山保护区; Dàming Shān Bǎohùqū; admission ¥30) is home to more than 1700 species of plants. The average elevation is over 1200m, with Dàming Mountain, the highest peak, reaching 1760m. This is good hiking territory, with valleys, forests, scenic lookouts and waterfalls, but paths are poorly marked, so consider a guide.

You probably have to stay overnight in the small forestry village at the base of the mountain. **Dàming Shān Lóngténg Guest-house** (大明山龙腾宾馆; Dàming Shān Lóngténg Bīnguǎn; ☎0771-139 7815 3459; r from ¥150) has helpful staff, who can assist with arranging guides and transport up the mountain. Booking in advance is recommended. Try the room reservation hotline: ☎985 1122.

From Nánning, two daily buses (¥25, two hours, 10.30am and 3.30pm) leave from a special bus stop on Renmin Donglu, just east of Cháoyáng Garden. The morning bus, however, won't leave unless there are at least 10 passengers, and neither bus

will continue up the mountain beyond the ticket office for the final 27km unless there are enough people. Return buses are more frequent and run from Dàmíng Shān until around 5pm.

Běihǎi

北海

☎0779 / POP 560,000

Běihǎi (literally 'North Sea') is famed among Chinese tourists for its Silver Beach, dubbed 'the Number One beach on earth' in tourism brochures. It sure ain't southern Thailand, but it's still worth a visit. Much more charming is Běihǎi's quaint old quarter of colonnaded streets, where colonial-era architectural heritage has escaped the demolition ball. It's a rewarding area for a stroll.

👁 Sights & Activities

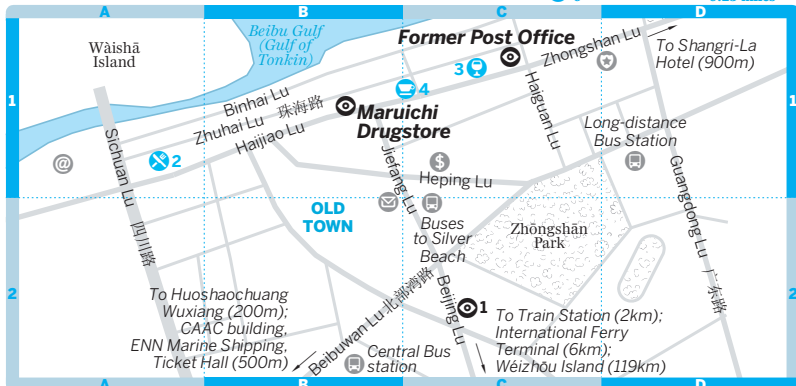
Turning left from the long-distance bus station, along Beibuwan Lu, the road soon forks. The right fork (Heping Lu; 和平路) takes you to a Bank of China, the post office and on towards the old town. The left fork takes you past Zhōngshān Park, Tiānhóng Hotel and the central bus station, all on your left.

Old Town

HISTORIC AREA

(老城; *lǎochéng*) Běihǎi's enchanting old town used to be a trading hub of old Běihǎi but is now a sleepy home of the city's older residents, who while away the hours playing mah jong and Chinese chess. It spreads east away from Sichuan Lu, with recently restored 19th-century *qilou* buildings (Chinese arcade houses) straddling the streets and alleys.

A few buildings of note include the attractive **former post office** (大清邮政北海



分局旧址; Dàqīng Yóuzhèng Běihǎi Fēnjū Jiùzhǐ; cnr Zhongshan Donglu & Haiguan Lu; admission Y5), which now serves as a simple museum devoted to relics of the Qing-dynasty postal system; and the **Maruichi Drugstore** (丸一药方; Wányī Yàofāng; ☎203 9169; 104 Zhuhai Lu; ☀8.30am-5.30pm), a site in the disguise of a pharmacy that allowed the Japanese to carry on espionage activities in the 1930s, which now houses a tiny national security museum (no English captions). The **former British Consulate Building** (英国领事馆旧址; Yīngguó Lǐngshìguǎn Jiùzhǐ), within the grounds of a high school, is an imposing building with a cream-coloured edifice built in 1885.

The best place to start your stroll is at the western end of Zhuhai Lu (珠海路), off Sichuan Lu, just before the Wàishā Island bridge. Look for the small white arch inscribed with the Chinese characters 升平街 (Shèngpíng Jiē), the road's former name.

Silver Beach

BEACH

(银滩; *yíntān*) This is what most Chinese tourists come to Běihǎi for: Silver Beach, a long stretch of silvery-yellow sand with so-so waters, about 8km south of the city centre. There's a host of midrange, doll's-house-lookalike hotels and a number of places to eat, serving expensive but very fresh seafood. Take bus 3 (Y2) from the central bus station; it runs until 10pm.

Sleeping

From the central bus station, cross Sichuan Lu (四川路), which leads north to Wàishā Island (外沙岛; Wàishā Dǎo), to reach Běihǎi's cheapest accommodation, on

Běihǎi

Top Sights

- Former Post Office C1
Maruichi Drugstore B1

Sights

- 1 Former British Consulate Building..... C2

Eating

- 2 Old Town Coffee, Bar & Restaurant A1

Drinking

- 3 Aussino..... C1
4 Gǎodī Coffee C1

Huoshaochuang Wuxiang (火烧床五巷), a small alley off Beibowan Xilu, jam-packed with *zhāodàisùǒ* (招待所), simple guest-houses offering doubles/twins from Y30.

Most budget and midrange options in town are crappy. For an affordable luxury, stay in the Shangri-La.

Tiānhóng Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(天虹宾馆; Tiānhóng Bīnguǎn; ☎221 0555; Beibowan Lu; 北部湾路; d/tw Y188/258; ☎) This midrange hotel by the central bus station has bright, spacious rooms with dark-wood furniture, as well as friendly staff. Doubles and twins drop to Y100. Turn right from the bus station and it's on your right. No English sign.

Shangri-La Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(香格里拉大饭店; Xiānggéllǐ Dàfàndiàn; ☎206 2288; 33 Chating Lu; 茶亭路33号; d with city/sea view from Y529/609; ☎@☎) Běihǎi's best

hotel has top-class facilities, including a pool, tennis courts and several good restaurants. Rooms are large and luxurious, and staff can be very helpful. It's about 1km northeast of the long-distance bus station.

Eating

Wàishā Island, just northwest of the old town, is awash with fish restaurants. It's not cheap – expect to pay at least ¥70 per *jīn* (600g) for fish – but the seafood is as fresh as it gets and the seaside location is hard to beat. Walk along Sichuan Lu and cross the bridge onto the island.

A growing number of Western-style cafes and bars, housed in fabulously renovated 19th-century buildings, have sprung up in the heart of the old town. Most are at the western end of Zhuhai Lu, off Sichuan Lu.

Old Town Coffee, Bar and Restaurant

CAFE \$

(老道咖啡; Lǎodào Kāfēi; ☎203 6652; 80 Zhuhai Lu; 珠海路80号; dishes from ¥15; ☺2.30pm-1.30am; ☺) Serves Chinese and Western food, fresh coffee (¥18) and beer (¥6), and has free wi-fi and English-speaking staff. Look out for the 'Backpacker' sign.

Gāodi Coffee

CAFE \$

(高地咖啡; Gāodi Kāfēi; ☎202 6586; 13 Zhuhai Lu; 珠海路13号; ☺1pm-1am) Housed in an elegantly decorated red brick building, this cafe specialises in Vietnamese coffee (from ¥30).

Drinking

Aussino

WINE BAR \$\$

(富隆海创七号会所; Fùlóng Hǎichuàng Qīhào Huisuǒ; ☎220 0800; 7 Zhuhai Lu; 珠海路110号; ☺1pm-1am) The wine cellar is housed in a beautifully renovated, open-roofed building. It stocks an impressive selection of European wines. No English sign. Look for the misspelt 'Aussino Wild Wines' sign on the east end of the street.

Shopping

Xīnhuá Bookstore

BOOKS

(新华书店; Xīnhuá Shūdiàn; ☺8.30am-10pm) Inside a multistorey department store opposite the central bus station; you can buy a city map (地图; *dìtú*; ¥5) here.

Information

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng)

Its 24-hour ATM accepts international cards.

China Post (邮局; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; ☺8am-6pm)

Dōngháng Internet (东航网吧; Dōngháng Wǎngbā; Sichuan Lu; per hr ¥1.50; ☺24hr)

Located on your left just before you cross the Wàishā Island bridge.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局;

Gōng'ānjú; 213 Zhongshan Donglu; ☺8am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm, 3-6pm summer) At the eastern end of the old town; can extend visas.

Getting There & Away

Air

There are daily flights to Guǎngzhōu (¥800), and four weekly flights to Běijīng (¥1800) and Shànghǎi (¥1420). The airport is 21km northeast of the centre of town.

Boat

The International Ferry Terminal (国际客运码头; Guójí Kèyùn Mátou) is on the road to Silver Beach (bus 3; Y2). One ferry daily (¥120 to ¥280, 12 hours, 6pm) leaves for Hǎikǒu on Hǎinán Dǎo (p568). Three express ferries (¥120 to ¥180, one hour 10 minutes, 8.30am, 11.15am and 4pm) leave daily for the nearby volcanic island of Wéizhōu. Ferries return to Běihǎi at 9.40am, 2.30pm and 5.15pm. The slow boats are no longer running.

Bus

Direct bus routes include Nánning (¥60, three hours, regular) and Guǐlín (¥180, seven hours, six daily).

Train

Two trains leave daily to Nánning from Běihǎi train station (¥40, three hours), at 9.24am and 12.53pm. Coming the other way, the trains from Nánning arrive in Běihǎi at 9.05am and 1.53pm. Tickets to onward destinations can be bought from the **train station ticket office** (☺8.10am-noon & 2-5pm) for a ¥5 fee.

Getting Around

To/From the Airport

Airport shuttle buses (¥10, 30 minutes) leave from outside the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎303 3757; Beibuwan Xilu; 北部湾西路; ☺8am-10pm), a few hundred metres beyond Huoshaochuang Wuxiang, and connect with every flight. Flight tickets can also be bought here.

Bus

The two main bus stations, long-distance (客运站总站; Kèyùn Zōngzhàn) and central (北海信禾客运中心; Běihǎi Xīnhé Kèyùn Zhōngxīn), are both on Beibuwan Lu (北部湾路). Buses will drop you at either station.

From the central bus station, bus 2 (¥1) goes to the train station.

Pedal-powered Tricycles

In an encouraging attempt to fend off air pollution, authorities have put more than 600 pedal-powered tricycles into operation. Use them. From the central bus station, expect to pay ¥1 to the long-distance bus station, ¥3 to Huoshaochuang Wuxiang, ¥5 to Wàishā Island, Zhuhai Lu or the Shangri-La Hotel, and ¥10 to the train station.

Around Běihǎi

WÉIZHŌU ISLAND

涠洲岛

With its friendly fishing families, the island of **Wéizhōu** (admission ¥90) is a beach site not yet overwhelmed by throngs of tourists. The island is 36 nautical miles from Běihǎi and is China's largest volcanic island. Make this 6.5km-long and 6km-wide island a day trip.

Boats from Běihǎi pull into the new ferry pier in the northwest of the island. The main settlement **Nanwan Port** (南湾港; Nánwān Gǎng) is 5km south of the pier. To get there, it's ¥5 by motor-rickshaw. The waters around Wéizhōu contain some of the most diverse coral communities in the area; ask in Nanwan Port about motorboat rides and diving opportunities. Beyond the island's beaches, caves, corals and dormant volcanic scenery, visitors will find a handful of historic sights awaiting exploration. Within Nanwan Port – the former volcanic nucleus of the island – is the **Three Old Women Temple** (三婆庙; Sānpó Miào), but of more interest are the two French-built churches on Wéizhōu. Built in 1853, the white-washed **Catholic Church** (天主堂; Tiānzhǔ Tāng) in Shèngtáng (盛塘) in the northeast of the island still attracts worshippers. The **Holy Mother Church** (圣母堂; Shèngmǔ Tāng), built in 1880, is in the village of Chéngzǎi (城仔), roughly on the same latitude but closer to the ferry terminal.

The smaller **Xieyang Island** (斜阳岛; Xiéyáng Dǎo) sits in the sea 9 nautical miles to the southeast of Wéizhōu Island, and can be reached by boat from Nanwan Port.

If you miss the last boat back to Běihǎi, accommodation is available in Nanwan Port. The HI-affiliated **Piggybar** (猪仔吧; Zhūzǎibā; ☎139 0779 0533; piggybar.com, in Chinese; Nanwan Port; dm ¥25-30, r ¥60-80) has primitive facilities and very basic rooms. Bike rental (¥20 per day) is also available. For a reasonable degree of comfort, **Dishui Courtyard Hotel** (滴水居; 滴水居; ☎329 9636; Dishui Village; Dishuicun; 滴水村; r ¥150-190), to the west of the port, has some pleasant cabins.

Tickets for boats to Wéizhōu Island can be purchased from the International Ferry Terminal, or **ENN Marine Shipping Ticket Hall** (新奥海运售票大厅; Xīn'ào Hǎiyùn Shòu-piào Dǎng; ☎306 6829, 388 0711) in Huāměi Guǎngchǎng (华美广场). It's on Sichuan Lu near the inner section with Beihai Dadao. For the ferry schedule, see p604.

Chóngzuǒ

崇左

☎0771 / POP 340,000

Situated beside a big loop in the Zuǒ River (左江; Zuǒ Jiāng), this unattractive city doesn't have much to see, except for the leaning pagoda and the ecology park, where you have the chance to see a rare species of monkey.

👁 Sights & Activities

Across the river from the train station is a semi-restored section of the old city wall that follows the river for a short distance and makes a pleasant walk.

Chóngzuǒ Ecology Park NATURE RESERVE

(崇左生态公园; Chóngzuǒ Shēngtài Gōngyuán; ☎793 0222; admission ¥80; ☀9am-noon & 2-6pm) The modest-sized Chóngzuǒ Ecology Park, run by a Peking University research centre, is a sanctuary for the extremely rare white-headed leaf monkey (白头叶猴; *báitóu yèhóu*), indigenous to China. It's estimated that fewer than 1000 are in the wild, where there are about 590 of these highly endangered primates in this small but important nature reserve alone.

A simple walking trail (45 minutes) takes you in a loop around the park's karst hills, where the monkeys spend most of the day. This is also king cobra territory, so resist the temptation to stray from the path.

You'll have the best chance of seeing monkeys at dawn or dusk when they make their way up to or down from the hilltops. There's accommodation inside the park but special arrangement has to be made via the research centre. To get here, take a minibus (¥8, 45 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm) to Bǎnlì (板利) from the bus station. Tell your driver to drop you off at Shēngtài Gōngyuán.

Zuǒjiāng Leaning Pagoda PAGODA

(左江斜塔; Zuǒjiāng Xiétǎ; admission ¥5; ☀8.30am-5.30pm) Do not expect anything like the Tower of Pisa. But nevertheless, the whitewashed brick Zuǒjiāng Pagoda is photogenic enough. Built in 1621, it's one of

only eight of its kind in the world – leaning. Standing 18m tall, it's perched, lighthouse-like, on top of a rocky outcrop on Phoenix Lake. However, climbing the pagoda was impossible at the time of research, as the interior was damaged by a flood in 2009. To reach it, take bus 3 from the bus station (Y1.20, 20 minutes). Don't forget to tell the driver you're going to *xietā*. A taxi is a fixed rate of Y20.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotels around the train and bus stations are shabby, but if you are just looking for a bed to sleep for a night there is no shortage of cheap hotels. Some offer beds for as little as Y30.

There are also plenty of cheap restaurants around both stations, offering simple, point-and-choose fried dishes for less than Y10. There's an enormous food market a few hundred metres west of the bus station underneath an ugly blue roof.

Yangguang Hotel

HOTEL \$

(阳光大酒店; Yángguāng Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎784 0501; fax 784 8498; 36 Jiangnan Lu; 江南路36号; s/d Y218/228, d with computer Y368; 包) Just east of the train station, this hotel is the most decent one we found that offers reasonable two-star comfort with relatively clean rooms. Discounts bring singles and doubles down to Y70.

Information

Exiting the train station, you'll see **Xiūxián Internet** (休闲网吧; Xiūxián Wǎngbā; per hr Y2; ☎24hr) on your right. There's a **Bank of China** with a 24-hour ATM accepting international cards next to the bus station. You can buy a city map (地图; *dìtú*; Y4) at both stations.

Getting There & Away

The train station is just south of the river on the east–west street of Jiang Nanlu (江南路). The bus station is about 1km further south on another east–west road, Yanshan Lu (沿山路). Just west of both stations, Xinmin Lu (新民路) connects these two roads. Turn left from the train station or right from the bus station to get to Xinmin Lu. Bus 2 (Y2) connects the stations, but takes only 10 minutes to walk.

Bus

Regular daily buses:

Dàxīn Y19, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes (6.20am to 4.55pm)

Nánning Y46, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 7.30pm)

Níngmíng Y19, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes (8.10am to 6pm)

Píngxiáng Y30, 80 minutes, every 20 minutes (8am to 6pm)

Train

Three trains leave daily for Nánning (Y9 to Y20, one hour 52 minutes to three hours 22 minutes, 8.10am, 11.36am and 2.21pm). In the other direction, three trains leave daily for Píngxiáng, at 9.44am (Y14, one hour 46 minutes), 2.58pm (Y7, two hours 38 minutes) and 8.28pm (Y16, one hour and 43 minutes). The Píngxiáng trains stop at Níngmíng (Y10/6, 55 minutes/1¼ hours).

Zuǒ River Scenic Area

左江风景区

The chance of catching a glimpse of white-headed leaf monkeys in the wild, gazing at 170m-high ancient rock murals and putting along a spectacular section of the Zuǒ River in a small wooden boat make this area, on the train line between Nánning and Píngxiáng, well worth checking out.

The village of **Pānlóng** (攀龙) is the launch pad. Behind it, you'll find **Lǒngruì Nature Reserve** (陇瑞自然保护区; Lǒngruì Zìrán Bǎohùqū), home to forest-covered karst peaks, elusive monkeys and endless hiking opportunities. But be sure to get a permit (许可证; *xǔkèzhèng*) from the police in the village before you head off into the hills.

Camping is no longer allowed here but just between Pānlóng and the nature reserve entrance there are some large wood cabins, set up for tour groups, where you can find decent accommodation for Y160. If that's too much like a holiday camp for you, you'll find basic rooms (Y70), and a great place to eat by the river, at **Nóngjiālè Restaurant** (农家乐餐馆; Nóngjiālè Cānguǎn), right beside the 100-year-old Guānyīn Temple (观音庙; Guānyīn Miào), about 200m from the ticketing office.

The main reason to come to Pānlóng, though, is to take a one-hour (one-way) boat trip past stunning, karst-rock scenery to the **Huāshān cliff murals** (花山岩画; Huāshān yánhuà). These crudely drawn depictions of ancient people and animals, painted in red on sheer cliff faces up to 172m above the river, are almost 2000 years old. They are apparently the work of the Luoyue people, ancestors of the Zhuang, but why they were painted is still a mystery. The admission fee (Y80) includes the boat fee if there are 10 or

more visitors; otherwise you have to pay an extra ¥120 to ¥200 for the boat.

i Getting There & Away

To get to Pánlóng, first catch a train or bus to Níngmíng (宁明). From the train station, take a motor-rickshaw (¥3 if full, ¥20 if you're the only passenger, 30 minutes) to Mínzú Shānzhài (民族山寨), another name for Pánlóng. From Níngmíng bus station, take local bus 9 to Bǎihuò Dàlóu (百货大楼). From there, the same bus goes to Mínzú Shānzhài at 7.30am, 9am, 11.30am, 2pm and 4.30pm. Or you can take a rickshaw (¥20). Bus 9 returns once every two hours, with the last bus leaving Mínzú Shānzhài at 5pm.

Regular buses leave Níngmíng for Píngxiáng (Y9), Chóngzuǒ (Y18) and Nánning (Y50), the last buses leaving at 6.45pm, 5.40pm and 7.40pm, respectively. Trains to Píngxiáng leave at 10.40am (Y10, 50 minutes) and 4.15pm (Y4, one hour 21 minutes).

Trains to Chóngzuǒ (Y4/10, 1½ hours/51 minutes) and Nánning (Y26/12, two hours 53 minutes/four hours 26 minutes) leave at 1.26pm (fast train) and 9.59am (slow train).

Píngxiáng

凭祥

☎0771 / POP 110,000

Guǎngxī's gateway to Vietnam (Yuènnán; 越南) is a modest market town with little in the way of tourist attractions, so there's no real reason to stay.

Turn right (south) out of the bus station to find the Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng), a couple of internet cafes (网吧; wǎngbā) and the north train station (北站; běi zhàn). For a quick bite to eat, turn left from the bus station, where there are a handful of noodle shops.

If you need accommodation, **Yǒuyi Binguǎn** (友谊宾馆; ☎853 6626; tw/tr Y70/80), located directly opposite the bus station, has acceptable rooms.

Only one train leaves from the north train station, Píngxiáng Beizhàn (冯祥北站), the 9.05am to Nánning (Y15, 5½ hours), via Níngmíng (Y4) and Chóngzuǒ (Y7). From the north train station turn left after Zhongyue International Hotel and 360 Bar, and its bizarre motorbike sculpture, then take the first right to the bus station. A faster train leaves for Níngmíng (Y10), Chóngzuǒ (Y14) and Nánning (Y30, 3½ hours) from the less central train station, Píngxiáng Zhàn (凭祥站), at 12.45pm. Motor-rickshaws (about ¥5) link the two train stations.

GUIDEBOOK CONFISCATION WARNING

There are still reports of Lonely Planet's *China* being confiscated by border officials at Friendship Pass, or even by police on the streets in Píngxiáng. We advise you to photocopy vital information and put a cover over your guidebook just in case. Note that all bags are searched as you walk into the north train station. Once you leave Píngxiáng, you should have no problem.

From Píngxiáng bus station there are regular buses to Níngmíng (Y9, one hour) until 7pm, to Chóngzuǒ (Y30, one hour 20 minutes) until 6.40pm and to Nánning (Y68, three hours) until 8pm.

Détiān Waterfall 德天瀑布

☎0771

Although it may not be Niagara Falls, **Détiān Waterfall** (Détiān Pùbù; www.detian.com), Asia's largest and the world's second-largest transnational waterfall, is absolutely sublime. Then there are the surrounding karst peaks and the added buzz of being on the Vietnamese border. Admission is ¥80, but if you take the direct bus from Nánning, the bus ticket will entitle you to a ¥10 discount.

The water drops 40m in three stages, creating an elegant collection of cascades and small pools across a total width of 200m. Swimming is not allowed, but bamboo rafts (Y20) will take you right up to the spray. When we visited, guards were no longer allowing tourists to walk all the way to the 53rd boundary marker, despite signs pointing you in that direction. You can, though, climb Fort Mountain (银盘山; Yínpán Shān; 1½ hours) for stunning views of the area.

Outside the entrance gates there are guesthouses offering doubles with air-con for around ¥60. **Détiān Kèzhàn** (德天客栈; ☎377 5201) is a decent option. Just inside the gates, **Détiān Shānzhūāng** (德天山庄; ☎377 3570; d & tw from ¥500; 罨) has overpriced rooms with views of the falls. There are a number of very similar restaurants with very similar menus (¥30 per dish) just outside the gates. Détiān Shānzhūāng has its own pricier version.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO VIETNAM FROM PÍNGXIÁNG

The Friendship Pass (友谊关; Yǒuyi Guān) border is located about 10km from Píngxiáng on the Chinese side, and a few kilometres from the obscure town of Dong Dang on the Vietnamese side; the nearest Vietnamese city (Liàngshān; Lang Son in Vietnamese) is 18km from Friendship Pass. The border is open from 8am to 8pm Chinese time (China is one hour ahead of Vietnam), but some travellers have reported that passports aren't always stamped after around 4.30pm.

To get to the border crossing, take a motor-rickshaw or taxi (about Y25) from Píngxiáng. From there it's a 600m walk to the Vietnamese border post. Onward transport to Hanoi, located 164km southwest of the border, is by bus or train via Lang Son.

If you're heading into China from the Friendship Pass, catch a minibus to Píngxiáng bus station, from where there are regular onward buses. A word of caution: because train tickets to China are expensive in Hanoi, some travellers buy a ticket to Dong Dang, walk across the border and then buy a train ticket on the Chinese side. This isn't the best way, because it's several kilometres from Dong Dang to Friendship Pass, and you'll have to hire someone to take you by motorbike. If you're going by train, it's best to buy a ticket from Hanoi to Píngxiáng, and then in Píngxiáng buy a ticket to Nánning or beyond.

Unless you catch the one direct bus, which departs from Nánning's International Tourism Distribution Centre (one way/return Y50/90, 3½ hours, 7.40am) and stops en route at Landong bus station (8.30am), you will have to come via Dàxīn (大新), then Shuòlóng (硕龙), from either Nánning or Chóngzuò. At Dàxīn, turn left from the bus station and walk for five to 10 minutes (about 600m) down Minsheng Jie (民生街) until you reach the traffic lights at the junction with Lunli Lu (伦理路). There on your right you'll see minibuses to Shuòlóng (Y10, one hour, last bus 6pm). At Shuòlóng you'll find minibuses (Y20 per vehicle) and motor-rickshaws (Y15 per vehicle) waiting under a big tree to take you the final 20 minutes to Dětian.

Coming back, the last bus leaves Shuòlóng for Dàxīn at around 4pm. There are regular buses from Dàxīn to Nánning (Y40, 2½ hours) until 8.30pm and to Chóngzuò (Y20, 1½ hours) until 4.40pm. The direct bus from the falls to Nánning leaves at 3.20pm.

Around Dětian Waterfall

From Shuòlóng it's possible to catch a minibus to Míngshì Tiányuán (明仕田园), a succession of scenic Zhuang villages

25km southeast of Shuòlóng. It's an unspoiled version of Yángshuò surrounded by jagged forest hills and emerald meandering rivers. There's no admission fee yet but signs of tourism are surfacing. **Míng Shi Mountain Village** (明仕山庄; Míngshì Shānzhuāng; ☎375 5028; gxmingshi@yahoo.cn; Kanxu Village; Kánxú Xiāng; 堪圩乡; d Y690-880, discounts of 50%) is a landmark and a beautiful resort where you can rent a bike (Y20 per hour) to explore the villages. Walking is an equally pleasant way to explore the valley. **Shānlǐrén Shēngtài Nóngjiālè** (山里人生态农家乐; ☎375 3532; Kanxu Village; Kánxúxiāng; 堪圩乡明仕村那乙屯; r Y80), a decent farm-stay 1km west of the resort, offers spacious double and fresh homemade meals. No English spoken.

To get there you can charter a van from Dětian (Y50) or Shuòlóng (Y25) directly. The minibus from Shuòlóng to Chóngzuò (Y5, 8am) will drop you at Míngshì Tiányuán if you ask. If you're stuck in Shuòlóng, **Guankou Hotel** (Guānkǒu Dàjiùdiàn; 关口大酒店; r 80), 200m east of the big tree, has basic rooms.

To leave, minibuses to Léipíng (雷平; Y6) pass through Míngshì's main road until 3pm. From Léipíng, buses go to Dàxīn; they stop running at 5pm.

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