



Yúnnán

POPULATION: 46.7 MILLION

Includes »

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Best Places to Eat

- » Tángcháo Yípǐn (p644)
- » Cāng Ēr Chūn (p658)
- » Silent Holy Stones (p676)
- » Dai barbecue restaurants in Jǐnghóng (p694)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Jade Emu (p657)
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- » Kūnmíng Cloudland Youth Hostel (p641)
- » Green Lake Hotel (p641)
- » DōngbāHotel (p663)

Why Go?

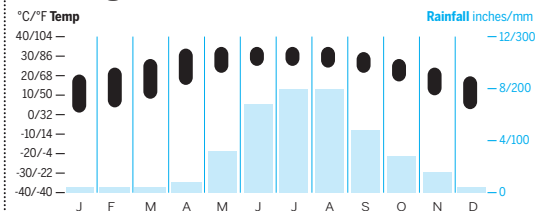
Once a place of banishment for disgraced officials (who must have arrived and chuckled at their inadvertent luck), Yúnnán (云南) offers a diversity of both people and landscapes that makes it a dream destination for travellers. If you have time to visit only one province in China, then it should be Yúnnán.

More than half of the country's ethnic minority groups reside here, providing an extraordinary glimpse into China's mixed salad of humanity. Then there's the hugely varied splendour of the land – triple-thick jungle sliced by the Mekong River in the south, soul-recharging glimpses of the sun over rice terraces in the central and southeastern regions, and towering, snow-capped mountains as you edge towards Tibet.

In one week you can sweat in the tropics and freeze in the Himalayas, and in between check out ancient towns. So however long you've given yourself in Yúnnán, double it. Trust us on this one.

When to Go

Kūnmíng



April Prepare to get soaked in Xīshuāngbǎnnà during the Dai Water-Splashing Festival.

July & August Head for the mountains and glaciers around Déqín.

December & January Escape the winter chill in Kūnmíng, the city of eternal spring.



Yunnan Highlights

- 1 Gaze out over the magical **Yuányáng Rice Terraces** (p652)
- 2 Test your legs and lungs trekking **Tiger Leaping Gorge** (p670)
- 3 Marvel at the peaks (and glacier) around **Déqín** (p679)
- 4 Lose your way amongst the canals and cobbled streets of **Lijiang's old town** (p661)
- 5 Look for elephants and hike to minority villages in the jungle of **Xishuāngbǎnnà** (p690)
- 6 Kick back in the cafes and bars of **Dàlì** (p658)
- 7 Laze around the shores of stunning **Lúgū Hú** (p673)
- 8 See how time has stood still in the former Tea-Horse Trail oasis of **Shāxī** (p669)
- 9 Get way off the map in the remote **Nù Jiāng Valley** (p681)
- 10 Check out the classic architecture in **Jiànshuǐ** (p650)

History

With its remote location, harsh terrain and diverse ethnic make-up, Yünnán was once considered a backward place populated by barbarians.

The early Han emperors held tentative imperial power over the southwest and forged southern Silk Road trade routes to Burma. From the 7th to mid-13th century, though, two independent kingdoms, the Nanzhao and Dàlǐ, ruled and dominated the trade routes from China to India and Burma. It wasn't until the Mongols swept through that the southwest was integrated into the Chinese empire as Yünnán. Even so, it remained an isolated frontier region, more closely aligned with Southeast Asia than China.

Today, Yünnán is still a strategic jumping-off point to China's neighbours. Despite its geographical isolation, much of the province has modernised rapidly in recent years.

Climate

With its enormous range of geomorphology – 76.4m above sea level near Vietnam to 6740m in the Tibetan plateau (averaging around 2000m) – Yünnán's diverse climate is part of its appeal. In the frozen northwestern region around Dèqīn and Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la), winters reach chilling lows of -12°C, but in the subtropical climate of Xishuangbǎnnà you can still walk around in a T-shirt in January.

Dàlǐ has an ideal temperature year-round, never dipping below 4°C in winter or above 25°C in summer, while the capital Künmíng has a pleasant climate where it can be downright springlike in the winter months and it's never too hot in the summer.

Language

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

i Getting There & Around

AIR Künmíng is served by all Chinese airlines and has daily flights to most cities. International destinations are increasing all the time; Künmíng is busily building the fourth-largest airport in the country.

All major – and some obscure – tourist spots within Yünnán are served by daily flights from Künmíng (and at times from other major Chinese cities). The northwest is linked by Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la), Dàlǐ and Lǐjiāng. Mángshì and Tèngchōng in the southwest offer flights to the

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

Sleeping

\$	less than Y160
\$\$	Y160 to Y300
\$\$\$	more than Y300

Eating

\$	less than Y20
\$\$	Y20 to Y50
\$\$\$	more than Y50

capital, and Jǐnghóng is Xishuangbǎnnà's primary air link.

Dàlǐ airport has flights to Künmíng, Jǐnghóng and Guǎngzhōu. From Lǐjiāng there are daily flights to Bèijīng, Shànghǎi, Chéngdū, Shēnzhèn and Guǎngzhōu. From Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) you can fly to Künmíng, Chéngdū, Lhasa, Guǎngzhōu, Shēnzhèn and Guiyáng. Destinations from Jǐnghóng include Lǐjiāng, Dàlǐ, Shànghǎi and Guǎngzhōu. Mángshì and Tèngchōng currently only have flights to Künmíng.

BOAT Water levels permitting, you can float between Thailand and Jǐnghóng in the south.

BUS Yünnán leads the pack in southwest China in beaverishly building new expressways and highways. Expressways link Künmíng with Dàlǐ, east to Guizhōu and Guǎngxī, southwest past Bǎoshàn to Ruìlǐ (hopefully within the life of this edition) and past Jǐnghóng to the Laos border. An expressway is also being built from Künmíng to Hèkǒu on the Vietnam border and beyond to Hanoi; it may be complete by 2012.

TRAIN Railways link Yünnán to Guizhōu, Guǎngxī, Sìchuān and beyond. In Yünnán itself, development of the railways has been slower than elsewhere, due mostly to topographical interference. A daily train links Dàlǐ and Lǐjiāng and will be travelling on to Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) by 2015.

CENTRAL YÜNNÁN

Künmíng

昆明

 0871 / POP 1.1 MILLION

Künmíng, known as the 'Spring City' for its equable climate, is one of China's most laid-back and liveable cities, and an enjoyable place to spend a few days. Indeed, 'hurry up' doesn't seem to exist in the local vernacular. Sure, like other cities it has

TRANS-ASIA RAILWAY, MAYBE

In March 2010 the Chinese government announced that it was in negotiations to build three high-speed rail lines connecting it with the rest of Asia, Europe and the Middle East. One of those lines is set to link Kūnmíng with Singapore, via Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, as well as extending west to Myanmar (Burma) and India.

Sceptics, though, wonder if the lines will ever be built. After all, Běijīng said in 2006 that it was starting work on a different Trans-Asia rail network that would connect China with Southeast Asia and India. But so far, the only line definitely taking shape is one between Lashio in Myanmar (Burma) and the Yúnnán border town of Jiěgào, and there is no date yet for its completion.

The huge costs involved in laying high-speed tracks, ongoing niggles between China and its neighbours, and the fact that Běijīng wants the trains to run on the gauge Chinese trains use, mean it will likely be sometime yet before travellers can jump on a train in Kūnmíng and race south to Singapore at 320km/h-plus.

busily deconstructed much of its old neighbourhoods, and the number of cars on the roads increases inexorably. Yet, Kūnmíng has some intriguing temples and historic structures, while grand parks are nearby and the legendary Stone Forest is a day trip away.

History

The region of Kūnmíng has been inhabited for 2000 years, but it wasn't until WWII that the city really began to expand, when factories were established and refugees fleeing the Japanese poured in from eastern China. As the end point of the famous Burma Road, a 1000km haul from Lashio, in Myanmar (Burma), the city played a key role in the Sino-Japanese war. Renmin Xilu marks the tail end of the road.

Following the war, the city fell back into its usual role of overlooked and isolated provincial city. When China opened to the West, however, tourists really noticed the province, and Kūnmíng used its gateway status to the rest of Yúnnán to slowly become one of the loveliest cities in southwest China.

👁 Sights & Activities

Yuántōng Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(圓通寺; Yuántōng Sì; Yuan tong Jie; admission Y6, surrounding park Y10; ☉8am-5.20pm) This temple is the largest Buddhist complex in Kūnmíng and a draw for pilgrims. It's over 1000 years old and has been refurbished many times; the latest renovations were going on at the time of writing. To the rear a hall has been added, with a statue of Sakya-muni, a gift from Thailand's king. The good

vegetarian restaurant (p645) here is to the left of the temple entrance.

Green Lake Park

PARK

(翠湖公園; Cuihú Gōngyuán; Cuihu Nanlu; ☉6am-10pm) Come here to people-watch, practise taichi or just hang with the locals and stroll. The roads along the park are lined with wannabe trendy cafes, teahouses and shops. In November everyone in the city awaits the return of the local favourites, red-beaked seagulls; it's a treat watching people, er, 'flock' to the park when the first one shows up.

Yúnnán Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(雲南省博物館; Yúnnán Shěng Bówùguǎn; 118 Wuyi Lu; admission Y10; ☉9am-4.30pm) Fresh off an aesthetic rehab, this museum has reasonable exhibitions on Diān Chí (Lake Dian) prehistoric and early cultures, and Yúnnán's minorities.

Chuàng Kù (The Loft)

ART GALLERIES

West of downtown in a disused factory area known as Chuàng Kù (The Loft) (創庫藝術主題社區) are a small number of galleries and cafes featuring modern Chinese artists and photographers. **Yuánshēng Art Space** (源生坊; Yuánshēngfāng; 101 Xiba Lu; ☎419 5697; ☉9am-1.30am) is a gallery-bar-restaurant-theatre focusing on the province's ethnic groups. The cornerstone of sorts is **TC/G Nordica** (諾地卡; Nuòdìkǎ; ☎411 4692; www.tcgnordica.com/en; 101 Xiba Lu; ☉5-11.30pm Mon, 11.30am-11pm Tue-Sat, noon-4pm Sun), best described as a gallery-exhibition hall-cultural centre – with, oddly, a restaurant serving Scandinavian and Chinese food. Not many taxi drivers know this place as The Loft; ask to go to 101 Xiba Lu.

Tang-Dynasty Pagodas

HISTORIC SITES

These pagodas won't give you a 'wow!' moment, but you can hang with the old dudes getting haircuts, slurping tea and playing their endless mah jong games, south of Jinbi Lu. **West Pagoda** (西寺塔; Xīsi Tǎ; Dongsī Jiē; admission free; ☺9am-5pm) has surroundings a tad livelier; **East Pagoda** (东寺塔; Dōngsī Tǎ; 63 Shulin Jiē; ☺9am-5pm) smacks of a new edifice – it was rebuilt in the 19th century after either a Muslim revolt or an earthquake (foreign and Chinese sources conflict).

Mosques

MOSQUE

The oldest of the lot, the 400-year-old **Nánchéng Mosque** (南城清真古寺; Nánchéng Qīngzhēn Gǔsī; 51 Zhengyi Lu), was ripped down in 1997 in order to build a larger version, which looks vaguely like a bad Las Vegas casino. And sadly, that's now about it for the area's once-thriving Muslim neighbourhood (ripped down *in toto* in 2007).

Sleeping

Kūnmíng Cloudland Youth Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(昆明大脚氏青年旅社; Kūnmíng Dàjiǎoshī Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎410 3777; 23 Zhuantang Lu; 篆塘路23号; 4-/6-/8-bed dm Y40/35/30, s/d without/with bathroom Y110/180; @☺) Run by some friendly inveterate backpackers who know the needs of travellers, Cloudland hasn't let standards slip over the years. The staff smile and hustle, there's a pleasant communal area to hang out in, and the rooms are bright, comfy and well kept. Wi-fi equipped. To get here from the train or long-distance bus station, take city bus 64 and get off at the Yūnnán Daily News stop (云南日报社站).

Green Lake Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(翠湖宾馆; Cuihú Bīnguǎn; ☎515 8888; www.greenlakehotel.com; 6 Cuihu Nanlu; 翠湖南路6号; d from Y1680, discounts from 30%; ☺@☺) Proud but subdued, this gentle giant of Kūnmíng *hôtellerie* history has a fabulous location, opposite Green Park, and has kept up with modernity and done so tastefully and with top-notch service. The panorama from the top floors is worth the price alone.

Hump Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(驼峰客栈; Tuófēng Kèzhàn; ☎364 0359; Jimabiji Sq, Jinbi Lu; 金碧路金马碧鸡广场; 4-/6-/8-/10-bed dm Y40/40/35/35, s/d without/with bathroom Y90/150; @) There's nothing bad about this popular place whatsoever except that its superlative draw – central loca-

tion amidst dozens of Chinese-style bars, karaoke joints and restaurants – is also a drawback (yes, take earplugs). Dorms are big, there's a great terrace and around the corner the Hump Bar is the current hot spot for carousing in the wee hours.

Camellia Youth Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(茶花国际青年旅舍; Cháhuā Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎837 4638; newcamellia@gmail.com; 96 Dongfeng Donglu; 东风东路96号; dm Y40, s & d Y120; ☺@) A spit apart but separate from the Camellia Hotel, this newly upgraded place is the most sedate hostel in town. The dorms are spotless and come with en suite bathrooms, the rooms are spacious and there's a gardenlike communal area.

To get here from the train station, take bus 2 or 23 to Dongfeng Donglu, then change to bus 5 heading east and get off at the second stop.

Camellia Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(茶花宾馆; Cháhuā Bīnguǎn; ☎316 3000; www.kmcamelliahotel.com; 96 Dongfeng Donglu; 东风东路96号; s & d Y388; @☺) Recently refurbished with pleasant, smart rooms, the Camellia remains a solid midrange choice. It's also very convenient, thanks to the location and the presence of travel agencies and tour operators on the ground floor. The staff are helpful and efficient too.

Zhènzhūāng Guest House

HISTORIC \$\$\$

(震庄迎宾馆; Zhènzhūāng Yíngbīnguǎn; ☎310 0088; fax 313 9756; 514 Beijing Lu; 北京路514号; d/ste Y600/1200; @☺) A fascinating place, this 1936 city-state of sprawling villas, ponds, gardens and trees covers 9 hectares in the heart of downtown (it was once the home of Yūnnán's governor). Rooms are lovely enough, with huge, comfy beds, but the grounds are even better; you can actually awaken to birds singing. The staff are wonderful but bemused by foreigners.

Sun Kiss

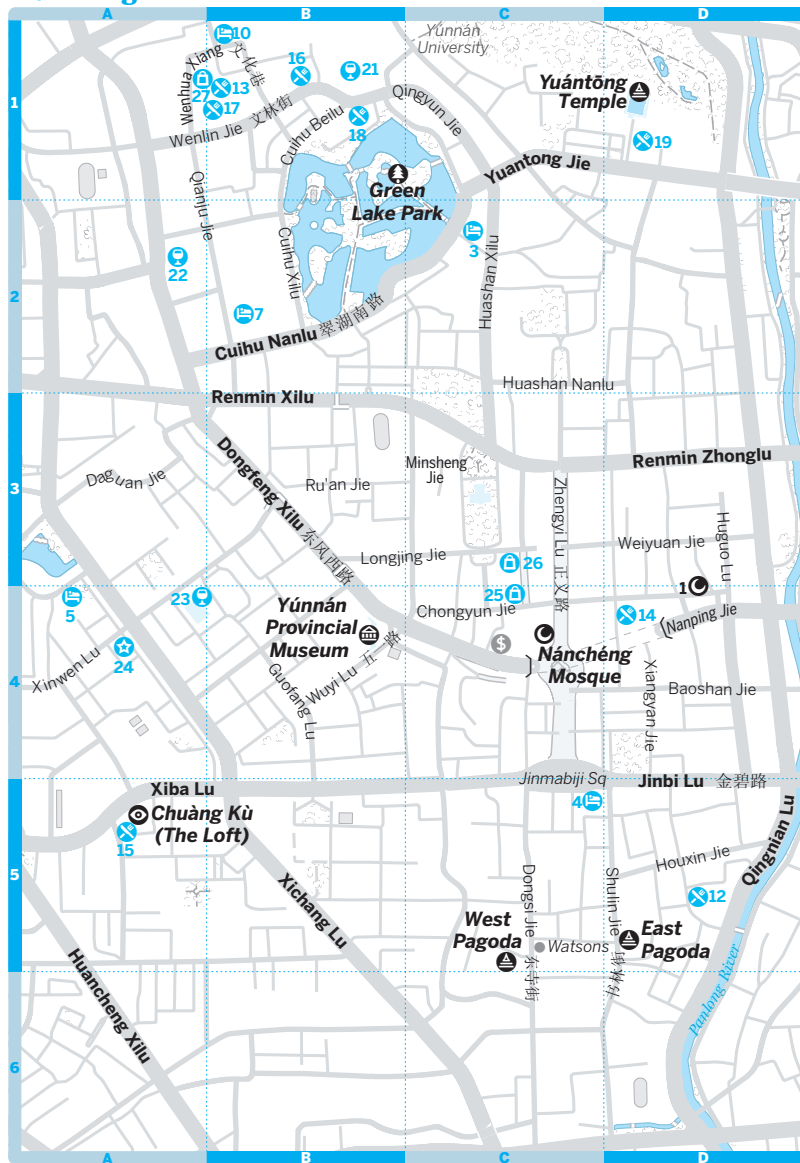
HOTEL \$

(阳光酒店; Yángguāng Jiǔdiàn; ☎805 9400; 252 Beijing Lu; 北京路252号; s/d Y158/168; @☺) The bouncy staff give the impression that this new place, very handy for the train station, has indeed been blessed with a big smacker from the weather gods. Heart-shaped pillows and bright, modern rooms make it a real standout from the tired cheapies that surround it.

Kūnmíng Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(昆明饭店; Kūnmíng Fàndiàn; ☎316 2063; www.kunminghotel.com.cn; 52 Dongfeng Donglu;



东风东路52号; s & d Y780, ste Y1419, discounts of 30%; (☎️🍷🍷) A hangover from the 1950s, but the service has improved a lot since then. Professional staff and comfortable rooms, which are a good deal with the dis-

counts sometimes given. Chinese and Western restaurants are also on-site.

Yúndà Bīnguǎn

(云大宾馆; Yunnan University Hotel; ☎️ 503 4179; fax 503 4172; Wenhua Xiang, 文化巷; d & tw Y298-

HOTEL \$\$



468, discounts of 40%; (☎@) Conveniently close to the restaurant/bar hub of Wenhua Xiang and Wenlin Jie, the Yúndà's rooms are not exciting but do the job. The hotel is divided into two, with the cheaper rooms in the wing across the road from the main entrance.

Kūnmíng

☉ Top Sights

Chuàng Kù (The Loft).....	A5
East Pagoda.....	D5
Green Lake Park.....	B1
Nánchéng Mosque.....	C4
West Pagoda.....	C5
Yuántōng Temple.....	D1
Yúnnán Provincial Museum.....	B4

☉ Sights

1 Mosque.....	D4
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🏠 Sleeping

2 Camellia Hotel.....	F3
Camellia Youth Hostel.....	(see 2)
3 Green Lake Hotel.....	C2
4 Hump Hostel.....	C5
5 Kūnmíng Cloudland Youth Hostel.....	A4
6 Kūnmíng Hotel.....	F3
7 Kūnmíng Youth Hostel.....	B2
8 Míngtōng Hotel.....	E3
9 Sun Kiss.....	E6
10 Yúndà Bīnguǎn.....	B1
11 Zhènzhuāng Guesthouse.....	E3

🍴 Eating

12 1010 La Gare du Sud.....	D5
13 Box Bar.....	B1
14 Carrefour Supermarket.....	D4
15 Déhóng Ruǎnjiā Dǎiwèi Yuán.....	A5
16 Hóng Dòu Yuán.....	B1
17 Salvador's.....	B1
18 Tǎngcháo Yipin.....	B1
19 Yùquánzhāi Vegetarian Restaurant.....	D1
20 Zhènxíng Fàndiàn.....	F3

🍷 Drinking

21 Ganesh.....	B1
22 Halfway House.....	A2
23 Kúndū Night Market.....	A4

🎮 Entertainment

24 Uprock.....	A4
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🛍 Shopping

25 Flower & Bird Market.....	C4
26 Fú Lín Tǎng.....	C3
27 Mandarin Books & CDs.....	A1
28 Tiānfú Famous Teas.....	E4

Míngtōng Hotel

HOTEL \$

(明通印象青年酒店; Míngtōng Yīnxiàng Qīngnián Jiùdiàn; ☎312 8858; 94 Míngtōng Xiàng; 明通巷 94号; d Y80-168, tr with shared bathroom Y100; @)

Tucked into an alley off Beijing Lu, this low-key 'youth hotel' has big, bright rooms and pleasant staff (though without much English). The en suite doubles are great value.

Kūnmíng Youth Hostel YOUTH HOSTEL \$ (昆明国际青年旅舍; Kūnmíng Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎517 5395; Yúnnán Provincial Library Annex, Cuihu Nanlu; 翠湖南路省图书馆侧楼; dm/s/d Y30/120/130; 📍) Mostly patronised by local travellers and considerably less busy than the other hostels in town, the facilities here are pretty basic. But the location is fine and there's wi-fi throughout. The entrance is off Qianju Jie; look for the small red YHA sign.

Eating

Kūnmíng is home to all of Yúnnán's fabulous foods. Noodles (rice or wheat) are absolutely the top quick food, usually served in a meat broth with a chilli sauce. You'll always find *párou ǎrsī* (扒肉饵丝), basically braised meat chunks laden atop noodles; toppings vary by shop but the best will have everything under the sun – even ground peanuts and fresh coriander.

Regional specialities are *qìguōjī* (汽锅鸡; herb-infused chicken cooked in an earthenware steampot and imbued with medicinal properties depending on the spices used – *chóngcǎo*: 虫草; caterpillar fungus, or pseudoginseng is one); *xuānwēi huǒtuǐ* (宣威火腿; Yúnnán ham); *guòqiáo mìxiàn* (过桥米线; across-the-bridge noodles); *rǔbǐng* (辱饼; goat's cheese); and various Muslim beef and mutton dishes.

Yúnnán is blessed with infinite varieties of mushrooms (蘑菇; *mógū*), of which many are rare and pricey in other provinces but delightfully common and dirt cheap here. Try *cháshùgū* (茶树菇; tea tree mush-

rooms), which grow only in proximity to tea trees and are infused with their essence.

For all manner of foreign restaurants, including Korean, Japanese and Thai, head to Wenhua Xiang. For self-catering, try **Carrefour Supermarket** (家乐福超级市场; Jiālèfú; Nanping Jie), a branch of the popular French chain.

TOP CHOICE **Tāngcháo Yīpīn** YUNNAN \$\$ (唐朝一品; ☎515 1518; 18 Wenlin Jie; dishes from Y18; ☎9am-9pm) Descend the stairs to this cosy courtyard restaurant for its very tasty array of just about every local dish you can think of. Get here early in the evening, before the most popular have been snapped up by eager locals. No English is spoken, but the picture menu will guide you. It's across the road from the Ganesh restaurant-bar; look for the red lanterns.

Hóng Dòu Yuán YUNNAN \$ (红豆圆; 142 Wenlin Jie; dishes from Y10; ☎11am-9pm) An old-school Chinese eatery, with cigarette butts on the floor, a duck-your-head stairway and plastic-film-covered tables, this is a real locals hang-out on cosmopolitan Wenlin Jie. The food is excellent and will draw you back. Try regional specialities like the *táoazī rǔbǐng* (fried goat's cheese and Yúnnán ham) and *liáng bái ròu* (peppery, tangy beef). Picture menu.

Déhóng Ruǎnjiā Dǎiwèi Yuán ETHNIC MINORITY \$ (德宏阮家傣味园; ☎412 8519; 101 Xiba Lu; dishes from Y12; ☎9am-9pm) Inside The Loft complex, this fine place serves up authentic, sour and spicy Dai cuisine in a laid-back atmosphere. Try the fantastic barbecued fish, and accompany it with a few glasses of the rice wine stored in giant vats awaiting your

ACROSS-THE-BRIDGE NOODLES

Yúnnán's best-known dish is 'across-the-bridge noodles' (过桥米线; *guòqiáo mìxiàn*). You are provided with a bowl of very hot soup (stewed with chicken, duck and spare ribs) on which a thin layer of oil is floating, along with a side dish of raw pork slivers (in classier places this might be chicken or fish), vegetables and egg, and a bowl of rice noodles. Diners place all of the ingredients quickly into the soup bowl, where they are cooked by the steamy broth. Prices generally vary from Y5 to Y15, depending on the side dishes. It's usually worth getting these, because with only one or two condiments the soup lacks zest.

It is said the dish was created by a woman married to an imperial scholar. He de-camped to an isolated island to study and she got creative with the hot meals she brought to him every day after crossing the bridge. This noodle dish was by far the most popular and christened 'across-the-bridge noodles' in honour of her daily commute.

attention. There's a small outside area and a picture menu.

1910 La Gare du Sud

YUNNAN \$\$

(火车南站; Huǒchē Nánzhàn; ☎316 9486; dishes from Y22; ☎11am-9pm; 🍷) Offering Yúnnán specialities in a pleasant neocolonial-style atmosphere, this place is now a fave with both expats – it's the kind of place foreign students take their parents when they come to visit – and cashed-up locals. It's hidden down an alley off Chongshan Lu, south of Jinbi Lu.

Yùquánzhāi Vegetarian Restaurant

VEGETARIAN \$

(玉泉斋餐厅; Yùquánzhāi Cāntīng; 22 Yuantong Jie; dishes from Y18; ☎10am-9pm) Popular with locals, monks and expats, head here for dishes that look and taste like meat but aren't. We like the Endless Buddha Force (assorted veggies and tofu), but all the dishes here are worth sampling.

Salvador's

WESTERN \$\$

(萨尔瓦多咖啡馆; Sà'ěrwǎduō kāfēiguǎn; 76 Wenhua Xiang; sandwiches from Y15, mains from Y25; ☎8am-11pm) Always busy with travellers and foreign students, Salvador's is now a Kūnmíng staple. With a Mexican/Mediterranean food theme, as well as solid breakfasts, good coffee and a decent range of teas, it caters for all hours of the day. In the evening you can hang around the bar and watch as Kūnmíng's beautiful people parade along Wenhua Xiang.

Box Bar

ITALIAN \$\$

(老夫子酒吧; Lǎofūzǐ Jiǔbā; 76 Wenhua Xiang; pizzas from Y25; ☎11am-midnight) Cute cubbyhole of a restaurant run by two Italians whose big, sloppy pizzas are deservedly popular. Also has homemade lasagne and gelato. It's good for coffee or cocktails too.

Zhènxíng Fàndiàn

YUNNAN \$

(振兴饭店; Yúnnán Typical Local Food Restaurant; cnr Baita Lu & Dongfeng Donglu; dishes from Y12; ☎24hr) A good introduction to Kūnmíng fare, especially for *guòqiáo mǎxiàn*, and handy for late-night eats. Pay upfront at the desk where the grumpy middle-aged ladies sit.



Drinking

Foreigners congregate in the bars on and around Wenhua Xiang, while Jinmabiji Sq is home to many Chinese-style bars and karaoke joints. The Kūndū Night Market area

is also a club and bar zone. Just a stone's throw south of Xinwen Jie, **Uprock** (167 Xichang Lu; ☎8am-late) maintains its status as the city's best-known club.

Ganesh

BAR

(印象国; Yìnxiàng Guó; 156 Wenlin Jie; ☎10am-2am) Foreign beers at reasonable prices! Great Indian food! Live football on the telly! Brits will love this place, but so it seems do most expats in Kūnmíng. The all-day thalis (meat or vegetarian, Y38) are a tremendous deal.

Halfway House

BAR

(半山咖啡; Bānshān Kāfēi; ☎535 2702; Kunshi Lu; ☎10.30am-3am) A locals' hang-out, but one without the 'let's order a bottle of Chivas and play dice games' silliness that can make Chinese bars an alienating, deafening and expensive experience. There's live music here every week. Just off Dongfeng Xilu, it's hard to spot.



Shopping

Yúnnán specialities are marble and batik from Dǎli, jade from Ruìli, minority embroidery, musical instruments and spotted-brass utensils.

Some functional items that make good souvenirs include large bamboo water pipes for smoking angel-haired Yúnnán tobacco;

ONE-STOP SHOPPING

The **Flower & Bird Market** (花鸟市场; Huāniǎo Shìchǎng; Tongdao Jie), also known as *lǎo jiē* (old street), has shrunk dramatically in recent years and is now ominously hemmed in by encroaching modernity. Nor are flowers and birds the main draw here any more. Instead, strollers peruse stalls chock-full of jewellery, endless curios, knick-knacks and doo-das (the contents of someone's back hall often enough), some occasionally fine rugs and handmade clothing, and a hell of a lot of weird stuff.

One block west of the intersection of Guanghua Jie and the pedestrian-only Zhengyi Lu sits **Fú Lín Táng** (福林堂), the city's oldest pharmacy, which has been dishing out the *sāngqī* (the legendary Yunnanese cure-all root mixed into tea; about Y20 to Y100 per gram) since 1857.

THE HUI

Wandering about Kūnmíng you will note its Hui (回; Chinese Muslim) residents. Of the province's approximately 550,000 Hui, Kūnmíng holds the lion's share.

In the 13th century Mongol forces swooped into the province to outflank the Song-dynasty troops and were followed by Muslim traders, builders and craftsmen. Yúnnán was the only region put under a Muslim leader immediately after Kublai Khan's armies arrived, when Sayyid Ajall was named governor in 1274.

Yúnnán's Muslims are rightfully proud of their legendary local boy done good Cheng Ho (Zheng He), the famed eunuch admiral who opened up the Chinese sea channels to the Middle East (and who some believe may actually have been the first to voyage to the Americas).

Heavy land taxes and disputes between Muslims and Han Chinese over local gold and silver mines triggered a Muslim uprising in 1855, which lasted until 1873. The Muslims chose Dàlǐ (Xiàguān) as their base and laid siege to Kūnmíng, overrunning the city briefly in 1863. Du Wenxiu, the Muslim leader, proclaimed his newly established Kingdom of the Pacified South (Nánpíng Guó) and took the name Sultan Suleyman. But success was short-lived and in 1873 Dàlǐ was taken by Qíng forces and Du Wenxiu was captured and executed. Up to a million people died in Yúnnán alone, the death toll rising to 18 million nationwide. The uprisings were quelled, but they also had the lasting effect of eliciting sympathy from Burma and fomenting a passion for local culture among many of southwestern China's ethnic minorities, most of whom had supported the Hui.

and local herbal medicines, such as Yúnnán Báiyào (Yúnnán White Medicine), which is a blend of over 100 herbs and is highly prized by Chinese throughout the world.

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

Tiānfú Famous Teas

(天福茗茶; Tiānfú Míngchá; cnr Shangyi Jie & Beijing Lu; ☎8.30am-10.30pm) Worth checking out.

Mandarin Books & CDs

(52 Wenhua Xiang; ☎9.30am-9.30pm) For guidebooks, novels, magazines and a selection of travel writing in English and other languages.

i Information

For any and all information on the city, check out www.gokunming.com (it also covers parts of the rest of Yúnnán). You can also head to Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/china/yunnan) for planning advice, author recommendations, traveller reviews and insider tips.

Maps (¥8) are available from the train/bus station areas and in hotels, but they're not much use to non-Chinese speakers.

Kūnmíng is one of the safest cities in China but, as always, take special precaution near the

train and long-distance bus stations. Reports of pickpockets are not unheard of, and there have been a number of victims of drug-and-robbs on overnight sleeper buses.

CD Burning

Kodak (柯达; Kédá; 429 Beijing Lu; ☎8.30am-10.30pm) Burns CDs for ¥20. Most hostels will also do the same.

Internet Access

Every hotel and cafe frequented by travellers offers the internet (网吧) or wi-fi, either for free or around ¥5 per hour; the city's zillion internet cafes charge ¥2 to ¥4 per hour.

Medical Services

Richland International Hospital (瑞奇德国际医院; Ruiqíde Guójí Yīyuàn; ☎574 1988; Beijing Lu) The first of its kind in Yúnnán, even if most of the doctors are Chinese, it's on the bottom three floors of the Shàngdū International building; Yanchang Xian extension near Jinxing Flyover.

Watsons (屈臣士; Qū Chén Shì; Dongsi Jie; ☎9am-10pm) Western cosmetics and basic medicines. There are other branches around town.

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

Money

Some banks other than Bank of China have ATMs which should accept international cards.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; 448 Renmin Donglu; ☎9am-noon & 2-5pm)

Offers all necessary services and has an ATM. Branches are at Dongfeng Xilu and Huancheng Nanlu.

Post

China Post (国际邮局; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; 223 Beijing Lu) The main international office has a very efficient poste restante and parcel service (per letter Y3, ID required). It is also the city's Express Mail Service (EMS) and Western Union agent. Also on Dongfeng Donglu.

Public Security Bureau

(PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎301 7878; 399 Beijing Lu; ☎9-11:30am & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) To visit the givers of visa extensions, head south-east of Government Sq to the corner of Shangyi Jie and Beijing Lu.

Another **PSB office** (☎571 7001; Jinxing Lu) is off Erhuan Beilu in northern Kūnmíng; take bus 3, 25 or 57.

Tourist Information

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

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

Travel Agencies

China International Travel Service (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójí Lúxíngshè; 1118 Huancheng Nanlu; ☎9am-6.30pm) A good source of information. Organises tours; English and French spoken. Another branch is at 322 Beijing Lu.

i Getting There & Away

Air

When Kūnmíng's new airport is finished (possibly in 2012), it will be China's fourth largest and include direct services to/from North America, Europe, Australia and throughout Asia. Kūnmíng has international flights to most major Asian cities, including Hong Kong (Y1550), Vientiane (Y1800), Yangon (Y2318) and Kuala Lumpur (Y3088).

China Eastern Airlines/Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC; Zhōngguó Mínháng; 28 Tuodong Lu; ☎8.30am-7.30pm) issues tickets for any Chinese airline but the office only offers discounts on certain flights.

Daily flights from Kūnmíng:

Běijīng Y1630

Chéngdū Y790

Chóngqīng Y710

Guǎngzhōu Y1010

Guīyáng Y440

Lhasa Y1960

Nánjīng Y1750

Náníng Y630

Qīngdǎo Y1810

Shànghǎi Y1900

Shēnzhèn Y1050

Xī'ān Y1280

Destinations within Yúnnán:

Bǎoshān Y360

Jīnghóng Y450

Lǐjiāng Y420

Mángshì/Déhóng Y450

Xiànguān/Dàilǐ Y640

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) Y500

Bus

In an effort to reduce traffic congestion, Kūnmíng's five bus stations have been relocated to the outskirts of the city.

Buses departing the **south bus station** (彩云南路南客运站; Cǎiyún Běilù Nán Kèyùnzhan):

Jiànshuǐ Y78, 3½ hours, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 7.30pm)

Jīnghóng Y198 to Y246, nine to 10 hours, hourly (8am to 3pm and 10pm)

Yuányáng Y132, 6½ hours, three daily (10.20am, 3pm and 7.30pm)

Buses departing the **west bus station** (马街西客运站; Mǎjiē Xī Kèyùnzhan):

Bǎoshān Y169 to Y207, nine hours, every hour (8.30am to 10pm)

Dàilǐ Y100, four to five hours, every 20 minutes (7.30am to 7.30pm)

Lǐjiāng Y180, 10 hours, every hour (7.30am to 7.30pm)

Ruǐlǐ Y248, 12 hours, five daily (8.30am, 10.30am, 1pm, 5pm and 9pm)

Téngchōng Y214, 12 hours, four daily (9am, 9.50am, 6.30pm and 9pm)

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) Y217, 12 hours, one daily (9am)

Buses departing the **east bus station** (白沙河东客运站; Báishāhé Dōng Kèyùnzhan):

Hékǒu Y150, eight hours, four daily (9.40am to 7.30pm)

Shílin Y30 to Y35, two hours, every 30 minutes (8am to noon)

Allow plenty of time to get to the bus stations. Bus 154 runs to the south bus station from the train station, as does bus 80 to the west bus station and bus 60 to the east bus station. A taxi will cost Y35 to Y45.

BORDER CROSSINGS: GETTING TO LAOS & VIETNAM

Getting to Laos

A daily bus from Kūnmíng to Vientiane (Y486) leaves from the old main long-distance bus station, by the train station, at 5pm if there are enough passengers. By the time you read this, it may be leaving from the south bus station, so check. See p699 for more about the border crossing.

Getting to Vietnam

Apart from getting on a plane, the only way to get to Vietnam from Kūnmíng for now is by bus. Regular buses run from Kūnmíng's east bus station to the border town of Hékǒu.

A big by-the-way: official proceedings at this border crossing can be frustrating (and officials have been known to confiscate Lonely Planet guides because they show Taiwan as a different country to China). Just keep your cool.

On the Chinese side, the **border checkpoint** is technically open 8am to 11pm but don't bank on anything after 6pm. Set your watch when you cross the border – the time in China is one hour later than in Vietnam. Visas are unobtainable at the border crossing.

Train

You can buy train tickets up to 10 days in advance. The following prices are for hard-sleeper middle berths on the fastest train:

- Běijīng** Y558
- Chéngdū** Y248
- Éméi town** Y224
- Guǎngzhōu** Y341
- Guiyáng** Y157
- Liùpánshuǐ** Y106
- Shànghǎi** Y491
- Xī'ān** Y385

Two overnight trains run daily to Dàlǐ (Y67) but travel agents book these out well in advance, so it can be tough to get a berth at short notice. You have a slightly better chance for the day train at 9.26am.

i Getting Around

A subway is under construction and scheduled to open sometime in 2013.

To/From the Airport

Buses 52 and 103 run between the centre of town and the airport. A taxi will average Y20 to the dead centre of town.

Traffic jams aren't at Běijīng levels yet, but you may do a lot of waiting in taxis.

Bicycle

Many backpacker hotels and hostels rent bikes for around Y15 to Y20 per day.

Bus

Bus 63 runs from the east bus station to the Camellia Hotel and on to the main train station. Bus 2 runs from the train station to Government Sq (Dongfeng Guangchang) and then past the west bus station. Fares range from Y1 to Y4. The main city buses have no conductors and require exact change.

Around Kūnmíng

There are some grand sights within a 15km radius of Kūnmíng, but getting to most of them is time-consuming and you'll find most of them extremely crowded.

If you don't have much time, the Bamboo Temple (Qióngzhú Sì) and Xī Shān (Western Hills) are the most interesting. Both have decent transport connections. Diān Chí (Lake Dian) has terrific circular-tour possibilities of its own.

BAMBOO TEMPLE

箬竹寺

This serene **temple** (Qióngzhú Sì; admission Y6; ☉8am-7pm) is definitely one to be visited by sculptors as much as by those interested in temple collecting. Raised during the Tang dynasty, it was rebuilt in the 19th century by master Sichuanese sculptor Li Guangxiu and his apprentices, who fashioned 500 *luóhàn* (arhats or noble ones).

Li and his mates pretty much went gonzo in their excruciating, eight-year attempt to perfectly represent human existence in statuary – a fascinating mishmash of superb realism and head-scratching exag-

Around Kūnmíng



Around Kūnmíng

Sights

- 1 Bamboo Temple A1
- 2 Dragon Gate A2
- 3 Huátíng Temple A1
- 4 Sāngíng Gé A2
- 5 Tàihuá Temple A2
- 6 Yúnnán Nationalities Museum B1

Transport

- 7 Gāoyáo Bus Station A1

gerated surrealism. How about the 70-odd surfing Buddhas, riding the waves on a variety of mounts – blue dogs, giant crabs, shrimp, turtles and unicorns? And this is cool: count the arhats one by one to the right until you reach your age – that is the one that best details your inner self.

So lifelike are the sculptures that they were considered in bad taste by Li Guangxiu's contemporaries (some of whom no doubt appeared in caricature), and upon the project's completion he disappeared into thin air.

The temple is about 12km northwest of Kūnmíng. The C61 bus (Y5, 40 minutes) runs there regularly from the eerily empty old west bus station. A taxi to the temple will cost around Y60.

Diān Chí

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

The lake is elongated – about 40km from north to south – and covers an area of 300 sq km. Plying the waters are *fānchúán* (pirate-sized junks with bamboo-battened canvas sails). It's mainly for scenic touring and hiking, and there are some fabulous aerial views from the ridges at Dragon Gate in Xī Shān.

XĪ SHĀN

西山

Kunmingites like to give you the local creed: 'If you haven't seen Xī Shān (the Western Hills), you haven't seen Kūnmíng'. Xī Shān is spread out across a long wedge of parkland on the western side of Diān Chí, and a day trip to this range, full of walking (some very steep sections), exploring and discovering all the temples and other cultural relics, is perfectly lovely. Its hills are also called the 'Sleeping Beauty Hills', a reference to the undulating contours, which are thought to resemble a reclining woman with tresses of hair flowing into the sea. (This is certainly more of a draw than the original 'Sleeping Buddha Hills'!)

It's a steepish approach from the north side. The hike from Gāoyáo bus station, at the foot of the hills, to Dragon Gate takes 2½ hours, though most people take a connecting bus from Gāoyáo to the top section. Alternatively, it is possible to cycle to the hills from the city centre in about an hour – to vary the trip, consider doing the return route across the dikes of upper Diān Chí.

At the foot of the climb, about 15km from Kūnmíng, is **Huátíng Temple** (华亭寺; Huátíng Sì; admission Y20; ☉8am-6pm), a country temple of the Nanzhao kingdom believed to have been constructed in the 11th century. It's one of the largest in the province and its numerous halls have more arhats.

The road from Huátíng Temple winds 2km from here up to the Ming-dynasty **Tàihuá Temple** (太华寺; Tàihuá Sì; admission Y6; ☉8am-6pm). The temple courtyard houses a fine collection of flowering trees, including magnolias and camellias.

Sānqīng Gé (三清阁), near the top of the mountain, was a country villa of a Yuan-dynasty prince, and was later turned into

a temple dedicated to the three main Taoist deities (*sānqīng* refers to the highest level of Taoist 'enlightenment').

From near here you can catch a **chairlift** (one way/return Y25/50) if you want to skip the final ascent to the summit. Alternatively, a tourist tram takes passengers up to the Dragon Gate for Y5.

Further up, near the top of the mountain, is **Dragon Gate** (龙门; *Lóng Mén*; admission Y40). That quote about *Xī Shān* has a part two: 'And if you haven't seen *Lóng Mén*, you haven't seen *Xī Shān*'. This is a group of grottoes, sculptures, corridors and pavilions that were hacked from the cliff between 1781 and 1835 by a Taoist monk and coworkers, who must have been hanging up there by their fingertips. At least that's what the locals do when they visit, seeking out the most precarious perches for views of *Dīan Chí*.

To get here, take bus 5 (Y1) from the *Kūnmíng* Hotel to the terminus at *Liǎngjiāhé*, and then change to bus 6 (Y1), which will take you to *Gāoyáo* bus station at the foot of the hills. Alternatively, minibuses (Y6) run from opposite *Liǎngjiāhé* and drop passengers at spots along the way.

Returning, you could also take the cable car across to *Hāigēng* Park for Y40. From there, take the 94 bus or a taxi for the 3km or so to the *Yúnnán* Nationalities Village, opposite the *Yúnnán* Minorities Museum, where you can catch bus 44 (Y1, 40 minutes) to *Kūnmíng*'s main train station.

YÚNNÁN NATIONALITIES MUSEUM

云南民族博物馆

On the northeast corner of the lake, the **Yúnnán Nationalities Museum** (*Yúnnán Mínzú Bówùguǎn*; admission Y10; ☎9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) is reputedly the largest minorities museum in China, even if it doesn't have a whole lot on display. But the ground-floor exhibition of costumes is comprehensive and comes with proper English captions.

Across the road is the **Yúnnán Nationalities Village** (云南民族村; *Yúnnán Mínzú Cūn*; admission Y70; ☎8.30am-10pm). Walk through a tacky re-creation of an old *Kūnmíng* street to reach the 'village', where all-smiling, all-dancing minorities perform for mostly domestic tour groups. Skip it and head to *Xīshuāngbānnà* for the real thing instead.

Buses 24 and 44 (Y1) run to both the museum and village from the main train station.

Shílín

石林

☎0871

A conglomeration of utterly bizarre but stunning karst geology and a hell of a lot of tourists, **Shílín** (Stone Forest; admission Y175), about 120km southeast of *Kūnmíng*, is equal parts tourist trap and natural wonderland. A massive collection of grey limestone pillars split and eroded by wind and rainwater (the tallest reaches 30m high), the place was, according to legend, created by immortals who smashed a mountain into a labyrinth for lovers seeking privacy.

Yes, it's packed to the gills, every single rock is affixed with a lame name that reads like the purple prose of a high-schooler; Sani women can be persistent in sales, and it's all pricey as hell. Yet, idyllic, secluded walks are within 2km of the centre and by sunset or moonlight *Shílín* becomes otherworldly.

Shílín can easily be visited as a day trip from *Kūnmíng*, and it doesn't have much in the way of budget accommodation. But if you want to stay the night, the rooms at **Shílín Bishūyuán Bīnguǎn** (☎771 1088; d/tr Y300/360, discounts of 30%) are quiet and have good views over *Shílín*.

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

Sani song-and-dance evenings are organised when there are enough tourists. Shows normally start at around 8pm at a stage next to the minor stone forest but there are sometimes extra performances. There are also Sani performances at the same location during the day between 2pm and 3pm.

During the July/August **Torch Festival**, wrestling, bullfighting, singing and dancing are held at a natural outdoor amphitheatre by Hidden Lake south of *Shílín*.

Buses to *Shílín* (Y30 to Y35, two hours, every 30 minutes, 8am to noon) leave from the east bus station.

Jiànshuǐ

建水

☎0873 / POP 17,400

Jiànshuǐ is a charming town of old buildings, an enormous Confucian temple, a cave laden with swallows, and some of the best steampot cooking and barbecue you'll find in *Yúnnán*. The architecture is constantly being 'facelifted', but still retains much of its distinct character, and the locals, who

are a mix of Han, Hui and Yi, are extremely friendly.

Known in ancient times as Bùtǒu or Bādian (巴甸), Jiànshuǐ's history dates back to the Western Jin period, when it was under the auspices of the Ningzhou kingdom. It was handed around to other authorities until its most important days as part of the Tonghai Military Command of the Nanzhao kingdom. The Yuan dynasty established what would eventually become the contemporary town.

Sights

Classic architecture surrounds you in Jiànshuǐ, and not just in the old-style back alleys. Virtually every main street has a historically significant traditional structure. The architecture here is especially intriguing because of the obvious mixture of central plains and local styles. Many old buildings, despite official decrees positing them as state treasures, have been co-opted for other purposes and the trick – and the great fun – is trying to find them.

Note that you can buy a Y133 **through ticket** (通票; *tōngpiào*) that gets you into the Confucian Temple, the Zhu Family Garden and Swallow's Cavern. It's on sale at any of those places.

Confucian Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(文庙; Wénmiào; Linan Lu; admission Y60; ☉8am-6.30pm) Jiànshuǐ's famous temple was modelled after the temple in Confucius' hometown of Qūfū (Shāndōng province) and finished in 1285; it covers 7.5 hectares and is the third-largest Confucian temple in China. (Some locals employ a flurry of Byzantine mathematics to prove it's the largest; either way, Xué Lake, around which it sits, uses the Chinese word for 'sea' in its name!)

The temple has operated as a school for nearly 750 years and was so successful that over half of all Yúnnán's successful candidates in imperial examinations during this period came from Jiànshuǐ. Many of the names of buildings in Jiànshuǐ use the ideogram *wén*, or 'literacy'.

Zhu Family Garden

HISTORIC SITE

(朱家花园; Zhūjiā Huāyuán; Hanlin Jie; admission Y50; ☉8am-8pm) This spacious 20,000-sq-metre complex, a fascinating example of Qing-era one-upping-the-Joneses, comprises ancestral buildings, family homes, ponds and lovely gardens, and took 30 years to build (it's now partially converted into an atmospheric inn with Qing-style rooms for Y480). The Zhu family made its name

through its mill and tavern, and dabbled in everything from tin in Gèjiù to opium in Hong Kong, eventually falling victim to the political chaos following the 1911 revolution.

Cháoyáng Gate

HISTORIC SITE

(朝阳楼; Cháoyáng Lóu) Guarding the centre of town, Cháoyáng Gate, an imposing Ming edifice, was modelled on the Yellow Crane Tower in Wūhàn and Yuèyáng Tower in Húnán, and bears more than a passing resemblance to the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Běijīng. There's no charge to walk up into the gate and admire the building and views; you'll find a wonderful traditional teahouse, often with local musicians playing.

Zhīlín Sì

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(指林寺) The largest preserved wooden structure in Yúnnán, this monastery was built during the latter stages of the Yuan dynasty; its distinctive design feature is the brackets between columns and crossbeams.

Sleeping

Huáqīng Jiǔdiàn

HOTEL \$\$

(华清酒店; ☎766 6166; 46 Hanlin Jie; 翰林街46号; s & d Y280-468, discounts of 40%; ☹️) Decorated in a neo-Qing-dynasty style, the rooms here are nicely set up and come with lovely, small terraces. The attached cafe-bar next door is an OK place for a coffee or evening drink. Obliging staff and discounts in quiet times complete the picture.

Lín'ān Inn

INN \$\$

(临安客栈; Lín'ān Kèzhàn; ☎765 5866; 32 Hanlin Jie; 翰林街32号; d & tw Y198-218, discounts of 30%; ☹️) A prime location in the heart of the old town, but the biggest draw is the great communal outside area, which is very pleasant in the evening. Regular discounts make this a budget choice, but the rooms are a big step up from the cheapies. They'll cook for you too.

Garden Hotel

HOTEL \$

(花园宾馆; Huāyuán Bīnguǎn; ☎765 2310; 36 Lin'an Lu; 临安路36号; s & d with shared bathroom Y30, with private bathroom Y60-80; ☹️) The largest of a number of no-frills places on Linan Lu. As the price suggests, the rooms are basic, but they are clean.

Eating

Jiànshuǐ is legendary for its *qìguō* (汽锅), a stew made in the county's famed earthenware pots and often infused with medicinal herbs. The cook may make use of the

local speciality – grass sprout (*cǎoyá*; 草牙), also known as elephant's tooth grass root, which tastes like bamboo. Only found in Jiànshuǐ County, it's often used in broth or fried with liver or pork. Vegetarians might find a place that will substitute tofu.

You'll also find tons of places serving delicious *liáng miàn*, cold rice noodles served with sesame paste and tofu balls cooked on a grill.

Then there's glorious **Jiànshuǐ barbecue** (建水烧烤; Jiànshuǐ *shāokǎo*). Cubbyhole restaurants are filled with braziers roasting meats, veggies, tofu and perhaps goat's cheese. A perfect night out is a roasted meal under the Jiànshuǐ stars with friends. Try the intersection of Hanlin Jie and Lin'an Lu for barbecue places.

i Information

There are **internet cafes** (山城网吧; wángbā; per hr ¥2.50, ☎24hr) on Yongning Jie, just south of Lin'an Lu, and on Hanlin Jie next to the Huáqing Jiǔdiàn. There are a few ICBC ATMs around town that take foreign cards.

i Getting There & Away

Jiànshuǐ has a couple of bus stations. The main one is 3km north of Cháoyáng Gate. For very local destinations, you need to head to the second small (regional) bus station a few minutes' walk west at the corner of Chaoyang Beilu and Beizheng Jie.

From the main station, there are buses continually leaving for Yuányáng (Y33, 2½ hours), but these go to Nánshà. For Xīnjiē and the rice terraces, there are six buses in the morning and one in the evening (Y39, four hours, from 6.50am to 8pm).

Frequent buses head to Kūnmíng (Y73, every 25 minutes, three to four hours, 7am to 7.35pm). Hékǒu-bound travellers have three morning buses (Y70, five hours, 6.40am, 8.16am, 10.57am). The masochistic can take one of the sleepers to Jǐnghóng (Y170, 17 hours), scheduled for 1.30pm and 4.30pm.

Around Jiànshuǐ

SWALLOW'S CAVERN

燕子洞

This freak of nature and ornithology is halfway between Jiànshuǐ and Gèjiù. The karst formations (the largest in Asia) are a lure, but what you'll want to see are the hundreds of thousands of swallows flying around in spring and summer. The **cave** (Yànzi Dòng; admission ¥80; ☎9am–5pm) is split into two – one high and dry, the other low and wet. The higher cave is so large that a

three-storey pavilion and a tree fit inside. Plank walkways link up; the Lú River runs through the lower cave for about 8km and you can tour the caverns in 'dragon-boats'.

There's no direct bus, but the ones bound for Méngzǐ, Kāiyuán or Gèjiù which don't take the expressway pass the cavern (Y10, one hour).

TWIN DRAGON BRIDGE

双龙桥

This bridge (Shuānglóng Qiáo) across the confluence of the Lú and Tàchōng Rivers is 5km from the western edge of town. One of the 10 oldest in China, the bridge features 17 arches, so many that it took two periods of the Qing dynasty to complete the project. To get there, take minibus 4 from Jiànshuǐ's second bus station (Y2). Note that you have to ask the driver to tell you where to get off and then point you in the right direction. Bus 4 continues to **Huánglóng Sì** (黄龙寺), a small temple.

Yuányáng Rice Terraces

元阳梯田

☎0873 / POP 22,700

Picture hilltop villages, the only things visible above rolling fog and cloud banks, an artist's palette of colours at sunrise and sunset, spirit-recharging treks through centuries-old rice-covered hills, with a few water buffalo eyeing you contentedly nearby. Yes, it's hard not to become indulgent when describing these *tītián* (rice terraces), hewn from the rolling topography by the Hani over centuries. They cover roughly 12,500 hectares and are one of Yúnnán's most stunning sights.

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

XĪNJIĒ

新街

Xīnjiē is a bit grubby, but it's a very friendly place and easy to use as a base of operations. The bus station is a minute's walk from Titian Sq, the town's hub.

👁 Sights & Activities

The terraces around dozens of outlying villages have their own special characteristics. Ask at your accommodation for the best place to start your explorations, or just ask any photographers around where they're

THE HANI (AKHA) PEOPLE

The Hani (哈尼族, also known in adjacent countries as the Akha) are of Tibetan origin, but according to folklore they are descended from frogs' eyes. They are closely related to the Yi as a part of the Tibeto-Burman group; the language is Sino-Tibetan but uses Han characters for the written form.

They are mostly famed for their river valley rice terraces, especially in the Red River valley, between the Āiláo and Wúliàng Shān, where they cultivate rice, corn and the occasional poppy. There is a great variety in dress among the Hani, particularly between the Xīshuāngbǎnnà and the Hónghé Hani around Yuányáng. Hani women (especially the Aini, a subgroup of the Hani) wear headdresses of beads, feathers, coins and silver rings, some of which are made with French (Vietnamese), Burmese and Indian coins from the turn of the century.

The Hani have two animated New Year celebrations. The seven-day **Misezha** New Year festival takes place in the 10th month of the lunar calendar; this is preceded by the **Kuzhazha** god-worshipping celebration in the sixth lunar month, lasting three to six days. As part of the festivals, the Hani use an ox hide swing to symbolically ward off bad fortune and augur a favourable year ahead.

going for the perfect shot. We've been warmly welcomed wherever we wandered. Bilingual maps are available at all hotels in town. Bear in mind that the *títian* are at their most extraordinary in winter when they are flooded with water which the light bounces off in spectacular fashion.

Duōyìshù (多依树), about 25km from Xīnjiē, has the most awesome sunrises and is the one you should not miss. **Quánfúzhūang** (全福庄) is a less-crowded alternative and has easy access down to the terraces. For sunsets, **Bádá** (八达) and **Měngpīn** (勐品), also known as **Lǎohǔzǐ** (老虎嘴), can be mesmerising.

Commercialisation has come to the *títian* and there are now charges for the most popular spots. A combined Y60 ticket gets you

to Duōyìshù, Bádá and Quánfúzhūang. For Měngpīn/Lǎohǔzǐ, the entrance fee is Y30.

Buses run to all the villages from the bus station, but you are much better off arranging your own transport, or hooking up with other travellers to split the cost of a sunrise-sunset drive. Minibuses and motorickshaws congregate around the Yúntī Shùnjié Dàjiūdìàn and on the street west of the bus station. Expect to pay Y400 in peak season for a minibus. Less comfortable motorickshaws can be got for Y150 to Y200.

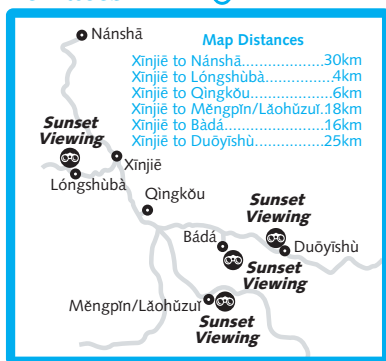
Several **markets** are worth visiting; check with Window of Yuányáng (see p654) for up-to-the-minute schedules.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a number of places surrounding the bus station where rooms can be found for Y30 to Y100, depending on the level of comfort you desire. There are restaurants surrounding Titian Sq. Try **Liù Jūn Fàndiàn** (六军饭店; dishes from Y12; ☺8am-10pm), on the corner of the square closest to the bus station.

Sunny Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(多依树阳光客栈; Duōyìshù Yángguāng Kèzhàn; ☎159 8737 1311; sunny-guesthouse@163.com; 10-/4-bed dm Y30/40; @) Surrounded by rice paddies in Duōyìshù's Pūgāolǎo village, this is the place to come if you want to spend a few days walking in the area. Simple, fresh rooms (some with smashing terrace views), with shared shower, and they cook fine food too. Call first so you can arrange to be picked up.

Yuányáng Rice Terraces



Yúntí Shùnjié Dàjiǔdiàn

HOTEL \$\$

(云梯顺捷大酒店; ☎562 4858; s/tr Y198/268) Just off Titian Sq and a few minutes from the bus station, this place has clean, compact rooms. Discounts bring the price down to Y100; a good deal.

i Information

Agricultural Bank of China (中国农业银行; Zhōngguó Nóngyè Yínháng) Has an ATM that takes foreign cards and will change money, but won't touch travellers cheques. To find it, head down the stairs by the entrance to the Yúntí Shùnjié Dàjiǔdiàn and walk on for a couple of minutes; it's on the left-hand side.

Internet cafe (山城网吧; wǎngbā; per hr Y2.50-3; ☎24hr) There are places close to the bus station and on Titian Sq near the Yúntí Shùnjié Dàjiǔdiàn.

Window of Yuányáng (☎562 3627; www.yuanyangwindow.com; @) Do visit this place, down the steps from the main square (on the 2nd floor of a building on your right). Associated with World Vision, staff here work in sustainable economic development in local villages. Volunteers – from Hong Kong – are very friendly and helpful. Great locally produced items are here, too (not to mention coffee!).

i Getting There & Away

There are three buses daily from Kūnmíng to Yuányáng (Y128, 6½ hours, three daily at 10.20am, 3pm and 7.30pm); these return at 9.05am, 4pm and 6.30pm. Other destinations include Hékǒu (Y46, four hours).

You could forge on to Xīshuāngbǎnnà by taking the 7.30am bus to Lúchūn (Y34, four hours), where you'll pray to get the Jiāngchéng bus at noon (Y34, five hours). If you miss it, try for a Sīmáo bus. By the time you arrive in Jiāngchéng, there'll be no more buses for the day, but you can stay the night and buses to Jǐnghóng (Y52, 8½ hours) start running at 6am.

Alternatively, backtrack to Jiànshuǐ (Y39, 3½ hours, six daily from 10.20am to 4.30pm) and catch the twice-daily Jǐnghóng sleepers (Y170, 17 hours, 1.30pm and 4.30pm) from there.

Xiàguān

下关

☎0872 / POP 138,000

Always remember: Xiàguān, the capital of Dàli Prefecture, is also referred to as Dàli (大理) on tickets, maps and buses. Coming from anywhere but northern Yúnnán, you'll likely have to stop off in Xiàguān to get to the 'real' Dàli.

At the southern tip of Ērhǎi Hú (Erhai Lake), about 400km west of Kūnmíng, this formerly important staging post on the

Burma Road is still a key centre for transport. There is no reason to stay in Xiàguān and you only need to come here in order to catch a bus or train.

i Information

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

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎214 2149; Tái'an Lu; ☎8-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Handles all visa extensions for Xiàguān and Dàli. Take bus 8 from Dàli and ask to get off at the Shi Ji Middle School (世纪中学; Shìjì Zhōngxué).

i Getting There & Away

AIR Xiàguān's airport is 15km from the town centre. The CAAC ticket office is inconveniently situated near the train station. No public buses run to the airport; taxis will cost Y50 from Xiàguān or Y100 from Dàli. Three flights daily leave for Kūnmíng (Y640) and one or two to Xīshuāngbǎnnà (in peak seasons).

BUS Xiàguān's new main bus station, known as the Dàli Express Bus Station (Kuàisù Kèyùn-zhàn), is on Nan Jian Lu and is where most long-distance buses arrive and depart.

Jǐnghóng Y199, 17 hours, three daily (noon, 2pm and 8.30pm)

Kūnmíng Y100, five to six hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 7pm)

Mángshì (Lǔtī) Y103, six to eight hours, two daily (10.30am and 6pm)

Ruǐlì Y123 to Y187, 10 to 12 hours, two daily (8.30am and 8pm)

Buses from the north bus station, reached by bus 8 (Y2) or Y10 taxi ride:

Lǐjiāng Y38, three hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 7pm)

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) Y65, eight hours, every 30 minutes (7am to midday, then one at 8pm)

Some buses depart from the Gāo Kuài Kèyùn-zhàn bus station, which also has services to Kūnmíng and Lǐjiāng. To get there, turn right out of the main bus station, head to Xīngsheng Lu and turn left, then walk for 100m. It's a five-minute walk.

Bǎoshān Y65, 2½ hours, hourly (8am to 6.30pm)

Téngchōng Y118, six hours, three daily (10am, 1pm and 8pm)

If you want to head to Wēishān, you must go to the south bus station. For Hǎidōng, Wàsè and Bīnchuān, head to the east bus station next to the train station.

Buses to Dǎlǐ (Y2, 30 minutes) leave from outside the Gāo Kuài Kēyùnzhàn bus station. Bus 8 (Y2, 30 minutes) also runs from the train station, through the centre of Xiàguān to Dǎlǐ's west gate. If you want to be sure, ask for Dǎlǐ Gùchéng (Dali Old City).

Tickets for nearly all destinations can (and sometimes should) be booked in Dǎlǐ.

TRAIN There are two overnight sleeper trains from Kūnmíng's main train station at 10.30pm and 11pm, arriving in Xiàguān between 4am and 6am. Returning to Kūnmíng, overnight trains leave Xiàguān at 8.53pm and 10.20pm. There is one train daily to Lǐjiāng at 5.12pm (Y15, two hours).

Bus 8 (Y2, 40 minutes) goes to downtown Xiàguān and on to Dǎlǐ.

Jízú Shān

鸡足山

Packed with temples and pagodas, this **Chicken Foot Mountain** (admission Y60) is a major attraction for Buddhist pilgrims – both Chinese and Tibetan. Most come for that rite of passage in China: a sunrise over a sacred mountain. Jǐndǐng (金顶), the Golden Summit, is at a cool 3240m so make sure to bring warm clothing.

👁 Sights & Activities

In the Qīng dynasty there were approximately 100 temples on the mountain and somewhere in the vicinity of 5000 resident monks. Not today, but the many temples do include **Zhùshèng Temple** (祝圣寺; Zhùshèng Sì), the most important on the mountain, and about an hour's walk up from the bus stop at Shāzhǐ.

Just before the last ascent is the **Magnificent Head Gate** (华首门; Huáshǒu Mén). At the summit is **Lèngyán Pagoda** (楞严塔; Lèngyán Tǎ), a 13-tier Tang-dynasty pagoda that was restored in 1927.

A **cable car** (admission Y30) lifts you to the summit from the halfway point. Ubiquitous pony ride options exist – the touts will find you!

If you're travelling here via Bīnchuān, consider a stopover in **Zhōuchéng** (州城), once the administrative centre of the area and another of the important salt capitals. You can check out a 15th-century temple, ancient bridge and some residual old architecture.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation is available at the base of the mountain, about halfway up and on the summit at Golden Summit Temple (金顶寺;

Jǐndǐng Sì) – a sleeping bag might be a good idea. Prices average Y30 to Y40 per bed. Food gets expensive once you reach the summit.

📍 Getting There & Away

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

Wēishān

巍山

📍0872 / POP 20,700

Some 55km or so south of Xiàguān, Wēishān is the heart of a region populated by Hui and Yi. It was once the nucleus of the powerful Nanzhao kingdom, and from here the Hui rebel Du Wenxiu led an army in revolt against the Qīng in the 19th century. Today, it's an attractive small town of narrow streets lined with wooden houses, with drum towers at strategic points and a lovely backdrop of the surrounding hills.

The town's central point is the unmistakable **Gǒngcháng Lóu** (拱长楼; Gǒngcháng Tower). South from Gǒngcháng Lóu you'll come to **Mēnghuà Old Home** (蒙化老家; Mēnghuà Lǎojiā; admission Y6; ☀8am-9pm), the town's best-preserved slice of architecture.

Línyè Bīnguǎn (林业宾馆; 📍612 0761; 24 Xi Xīn Jiē; 西新街24号; s & d Y40-70; 🚗) is a hop, skip and a jump from Gǒngcháng Lóu and has big, newly decorated rooms. It's a Y4 ride from the bus station in a moto-rickshaw.

The only restaurants in the town are cubbyhole eateries. Head north or south of Gǒngcháng Lóu to find most of them. You may see people indulging in a local Yi speciality, baked tea.

Xiàguān's south bus station has buses (Y13, 1½ hours) to Wēishān from 6am to 6pm.

Around Wēishān

WĒIBǎO SHĀN

巍宝山

Eminently worthy **Wēibǎo Shān** (Weibǎo Mountain; admission Y60), about 10km south of Wēishān, has a relatively easy hike to its peak at around 2500m. During the Míng and Qīng dynasties it was the zenith of China's Taoism, and you'll find some superb Taoist murals; the most significant are at **Wéncháng Gōng** (文昌宫; Wéncháng Palace; No 3 on the entrance ticket) and **Chángchún Cave** (长春洞; Chángchún Dòng; No 1 on the entrance ticket). Birds in particular love the

mountain; the entire county is a node on an international birding flyway.

The only lodging on the mountain is the uninspired **Wēibào Shān Bīnguǎn** (巍宝山宾馆; ☎135 7725 2206; d Y40-180), near the main entrance, which has rooms in various states of repairs.

There are no buses here. Head to the street running east of Gōngcháng Lóu in Wēishān to pick up a microvan to the mountain. Expect to pay Y60 for the round trip; you'll need the driver to wait for you.

Dàlǐ

☎0872 / POP 40,000

Dàlǐ, the original funky banana-pancake backpacker hang-out in Yúnnán, was once *the* place to chill, with its stunning location sandwiched between mountains and Ērhǎi Hú (Ērhǎi Lake). Loafing here for a couple of weeks was an essential Yúnnán experience.

Today, though, Dàlǐ routinely gets bashed for being – you guessed it – too ‘touristy’. Yes, much of the old has been garishly re-done and, oh my goodness, have Chinese tour groups found the place. Then again, this sniffy attitude has resulted in fewer Westerners heading here, so you won't be as taken for granted as in years past. Forget the whingers, for there are fascinating possibilities for exploring, especially by bicycle and in the mountains above the lake, and getting to know the region's Bai culture.

History

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

The main inhabitants of the region are the Bai, who number about 1.5 million and are thought to have settled the area some 3000 years ago. In the early 8th century they succeeded in defeating the Tang imperial army before establishing the Nanzhao kingdom, which lasted until the Mongol hordes arrived in the mid-13th century.

👁 Sights

Three Pagodas

HISTORIC SITES

(三塔寺; Sān Tǎ Sì; adult/student incl Chongsheng Temple Y121/62; ☎7am-7pm) Absolutely *the* symbol of the town/region, these pogo-

das 2km north of the north gate are among the oldest standing structures in south-western China.

The tallest of the three, **Qiānxún Páogoda**, has 16 tiers that reach a height of 70m. It was originally erected in the mid-9th century by engineers from Xī'ān. It is flanked by two smaller 10-tiered pagodas, each of which are 42m high. While the price is cheeky considering you can't go inside the pagodas, **Chóngshèng Temple** (Chóngshèng Sì) behind them has been restored and converted into a relatively worthy museum.

FREE Dàlǐ Museum

MUSEUM

(大理博物馆; Dàlǐ Shì Bówùguǎn; Fuxing Lu; ☎8.30am-5.30pm) The museum houses a small collection of archaeological pieces relating to Bai history, including some fine figurines.

Catholic Church

CHURCH

(off Renmin Lu) Also worth checking is Dàlǐ's Catholic Church. It dates back to 1927 and is a unique mix of Bai-style architecture and classic European church design. Mass is held here at 9am every Sunday.

★ Festivals & Events

Third Moon Fair

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Merrymaking – along with endless buying, selling and general horse-trading (but mostly merrymaking) – takes place during the Third Moon Fair (Sānyuè Jié), which begins on the 15th day of the third lunar month (usually April) and ends on the 21st day.

Three Temples Festival

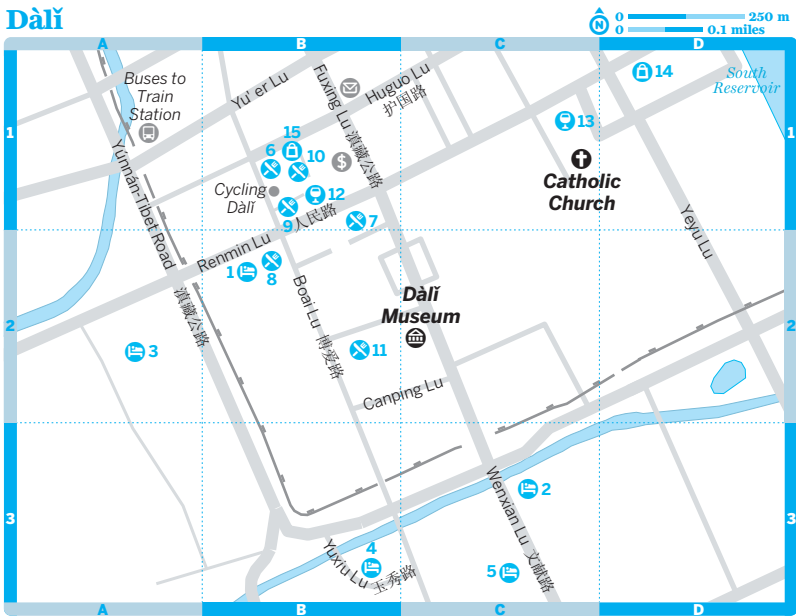
CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The Three Temples Festival (Ràosān Líng) is held between the 23rd and 25th days of the fourth lunar month (usually May). The first day involves a trip from Dàlǐ's south gate to Sacred Fountainhead Temple (Shèngyuán Sì) in Xizhōu. Here travellers stay up until dawn, dancing and singing, before moving on to Jīnguì Temple (Jīnguì Sì) and returning by way of Mǎjiūyì Temple (Mǎjiūyì) on the final day.

Torch Festival

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The Torch Festival (Huōbǎ Jié) is held on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month (normally July) and is likely to be the best photo op in the province. Flaming torches are paraded at night through homes and fields.



Dàlǐ

📍 Top Sights

- Catholic Church.....C1
Dàlǐ Museum.....C2

🏠 Sleeping

- 1 Bird Bar & Nest.....B2
2 Friends Guesthouse.....C3
3 Jade Emu.....A2
4 Jim's Tibetan Hotel.....B3
5 MCA Hotel.....C3

🍴 Eating

- 6 Café de Jack.....B1

- 7 Cang Ēr Chūn.....B1
8 Jim's Peace Café.....B2
9 Sweet Tooth.....B1
10 Tower Café.....B1
11 Yī Rán Táng.....B2

🍷 Drinking

- 12 Bad Monkey.....B1
13 Daliba Vodka.....C1

🛍 Shopping

- 14 Bookworm.....D1
15 Mandarin Books & CDs.....B1

🏠 Sleeping

There's heaps of accommodation in Dàlǐ, but the popular places often fill up quickly during peak summer months.



Jade Emu

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(金玉缘中澳国际青年旅舍; Jīnyùyuán Zhōng'ào Guójiā Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎267 7311; <http://jade-emu.com>; West Gate Village; 西门村; dm without/with bathroom Y25/30, s & d Y120-150; @) This Aussie-owned and run venture smack in the shadow of Cāng Shān (a five-minute walk from the old town) sets the

standard for hostels in Dàlǐ. The staff here know what travellers want, the attention to detail is impressive and the only criticism is that the big and airy rooms are rather characterless. Around the corner, sister establishment **Jade Roo** copes with the overflow of travellers, with similar but slightly cheaper rooms.

Jim's Tibetan Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(吉姆和平酒店; Jímǔ Héping Jiǔdiàn; ☎267 7824; www.china-travel.nl; 13 Yuxiu Lu; 玉秀路13号; d Y280; @📶) The rooms here are the most

distinctive in Dàlǐ, packed with antique Chinese-style furniture and managing to be both stylish and cosy. The bathrooms too are a cut above the competition. There's a garden, rooftop terrace, restaurant and bar. Travel services and tours can be booked.

Bird Bar & Nest

HOTEL \$
(鸟吧鸟窝; Niǎobā Niǎowō; ☎266 1843; birdbar dali.com; 22 Renmin Lu; 人民路22号; dm Y30, s Y120-200; @) Set around an attractive tree- and plant-filled garden, the handful of rooms here attract a good mix of local and foreign travellers, as well as vacationing Kùnmíng expats. The attached bar is a mellow joint for a drink and a game of pool.

MCA Hotel

HOTEL \$
(MCA酒店; MCA Jiǔdiàn; ☎267 3666; www.mca hotel.com; Wenxian Lu; 文獻路; d Y60-80, tr/f Y120/200; @) This sprawling outfit gets a deservedly good rep from travellers, thanks to its sizeable rooms, many of which have shared balconies, and obliging staff. It's a shame, though, that the swimming pool lacks water.

Dragonfly Garden

GUESTHOUSE \$
(蜻蜓花园; Qīngtíng Huāyuán; ☎269 1518; dragon flydali.com; Cáicūn wharf; 才村码头; dm Y30, log cabins s/d Y10/40, standard s & d Y80-100, r with mountain view Y150) On the edge of Ērhǎi Hú, 5km or so from Dàlǐ, this bohemian place is not as popular as it once was, but remains a place to relax far from the madding crowds of the old town. The dorm and log cabin shared bathrooms are rough and ready, but the standard rooms are good value.

Friends Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$
(大理古城三友客栈; Dàlǐ Gǔchéng Sānyǒu Kèzhàn; ☎266 2888; www.friendsdali.com; 2 Wenxian Lu; 文獻路2号; dm Y20, s & d Y60-100; @) The choice for cheapo digs in the old town, this place has always been super-busy (and friendly) and has upgraded its facilities recently.



Eating

Bai food makes use of local flora and fauna – many of which are unrecognisable! Province wide, *ěr kuài* (饵块) are flattened and toasted rice 'cakes' with an assortment of toppings (or plain). 'Milk fan' (*rǔshàn*; 乳扇) may not sound appetising, but this 'aired' yogurt/milk mixture (it ends up as a long, thin sheet) is a local speciality and is often fried or melted atop other foods. This is distinct from *rǔbǐng*. Given Ērhǎi Hú's proximity, try *shāguō yú* (沙锅鱼), a claypot fish casserole/

stew made from salted Ērhǎi Hú carp – and, as a Bai touch, magnolia petals.

TOP CHOICE Cāng Ēr Chūn

YUNNAN \$
(苍洱春; 84 Renmin Lu; dishes from Y6; ☎9am-10.30pm) Surrounded by cookie-cutter Western-style eateries, this small, two-storey place is a local favourite. A great place for classic Bai dishes like Grandma's potato (*lǎo nǚ yángyù*) and Yunnan staples like *táo zá rǔbǐng*. There's a limited English menu, but you can also point at anything that takes your fancy.

Tower Café

WESTERN \$\$
(钟楼咖啡; Zhōnglóu Kǎfēi; 44 Yangren Jie; mains from Y26; ☎11am-11pm) Comfortable, professionally run, three-storey place with a roof terrace that serves up solid Western comfort food and a selection of tasty Thai dishes. There's a good range of foreign beer and wine too.

Café de Jack

WESTERN \$
(樱花格; Yīnghuā Gé; 82 Boai Lu; dishes from Y10; ☎8am-1am; @) A capacious but cosy retreat with soft booth seating, a fireplace and splendid rooftop patio – this is now a Dàlǐ institution. Not all the dishes are equally good, but the lasagne and chocolate cake are standouts. Also has a limited but decent selection of Bai dishes.

Sweet Tooth

CAFE \$
(甜点屋; Tiándiǎn Wū; 52 Boai Lu; dishes from Y10; ☎8.30am-10.30pm; @) Owned and run by a culinary arts graduate, the homemade ice cream and desserts here are simply inspiring. There's also fine coffee and proper English tea. As an added bonus, the cafe benefits local deaf culture.

Yī Rán Táng

VEGETARIAN \$
(一然堂; 20 Honglong Alley; dishes Y5; ☎11.30am-1pm & 5.30-7pm) An altruistic, Buddhist-inspired, all-vegetarian buffet where you pay Y5 for a bowl of rice and whatever dishes the cooks have come up with on the day.

Jim's Peace Café

TIBETAN \$
(吉姆和平餐厅; Jímǔ Héping Cāntīng; 63 Boai Lu; mains Y18-32; ☎7.30am-10pm) The Tibetan banquet (Y35; minimum four people) here is not to be missed, but there's also a wide range of Western and Chinese dishes on offer, including breakfasts.



Drinking

The Western-style restaurants double as bars. Also worth trying is **Daliba Vodka** (Dàlǐ Bā;

143 Renmin Lu; ☎5.30pm-late), a cool bar off the main strip with a great selection of home-made flavoured vodkas, including Sichuan hotpot! Then there's the eternally happening, Brit-run **Bad Monkey** (坏猴子; Huài Hóuzi; Renmin Lu; ☎9am-late), which brews its own beers in the nearby mountains, has occasional live music and endless drink specials.



Shopping

Dàlì is famous for its marble blue-and-white batik printed on cotton and silk.

The centre of town has a profusion of clothes shops. Most shopkeepers can also make clothes to your specifications – which will come as a relief when you see how small some of the items of ready-made clothing are.

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

A few more or less useful maps (Y12) can be picked up at hostels and restaurants around town. You can also find them at **Mandarin Books & CDs** (五华书苑; Wúhuá Shūyuàn; Huguo Lu), along with guidebooks and novels in Chinese, English, French and German, as well as at the **Bookworm** (书呆子; Shūdāizi; 63 Renmin Lu), which also has books for exchange.



Information

On hikes around Cāng Shān there have been several reports of robbery of solo walkers (and violence has been increasing in these incidents). On the overnight sleeper bus from Kūnmíng, a bag is often pinched or razored. Mostly, though, you'll simply be pestered constantly by the middle-aged Bai women who control the local ganja trade.

All hostels and many hotels offer travel advice, arrange tours and book tickets for onward travel. There are also numerous travel agencies and cafes that will book bus tickets and offer all manner of tours. They can be expensive unless you can get a group together.

Internet cafes can be found along all the main streets (Y2 to Y2.50 per hour), but all hostels and hotels also offer online access.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Fuxing Lu) Changes cash and travellers cheques, and has an ATM that accepts all major credit cards.

China Minority Travel (chinaminoritytravel@gmail.com) Henriette, a Dutch expat, can offer a long list of trips, including tours to Muslim markets and Yi minority markets as well as through remote areas of Yúnnán and overland travel to Lhasa from Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) when it is allowed. Jim's Peace Café and Jim's Tibetan Hotel do work with her but she technically works from home, so send an email in advance.

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; cnr Fuxing Lu & Huguo Lu; ☎8am-8pm)

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; 21 Tianbao Jie, Xiàguān; ☎8-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Visas cannot be renewed in Dàlì, so you'll have to head to Xiàguān.



Getting There & Away

The golden rule: most buses advertised to Dàlì actually go to Xiàguān. Coming from Lijiang, Xiàguān-bound buses stop at the eastern end of Dàlì to let passengers off before continuing on to the north bus station.

From Kūnmíng's west bus station there are numerous buses to Dàlì (Y100, four to five hours, every 20 minutes from 7.30am to 7.30pm). Heading north, it's easiest to pick up a bus on the roads outside the west or east gates; buy your ticket in advance from your guesthouse or a travel agent and they'll make sure you get on the right one. (You could hail one yourself to save a surcharge but you're not guaranteed a seat.)

Buses run regularly to Shāpíng (Y7), Xīzhōu (Y5) and other local destinations from outside the west gate.



Getting Around

From Dàlì, a taxi to Xiàguān airport takes 45 minutes and costs around Y100; to Xiàguān's train station it costs Y50.

Bikes are the best way to get around (Y20 to Y40 per day). You can't do better than **Cycling Dàlì** (cyclingdali.com; 55 Boai Lu; ☎7.30am-8pm), which has solid bikes and offers loads of other travel services.

Buses (Y2, 30 minutes, marked大理) run between the old town and Xiàguān from as early as 6.30am; get on along Yu'er Lu or where it meets the road one block west of Boai Lu (coming in it will drop you off along Boai Lu). Bus 8 runs between Dàlì and central Xiàguān (Y2, 30 minutes) on the way to the train station every 15 minutes from 6.30am.

Around Dàlì

Travellers have a **market** to go to nearly every day of the week. Every Monday at **Shāpíng** (沙坪), about 30km north of Dàlì, there is a colourful Bai market (Shāpíng

Gǎnji). From 10am to 2.30pm you can buy everything from tobacco, melon seeds and noodles to meat, jewellery and wardrobes. In the ethnic clothing line, you can look at shirts, headdresses, embroidered shoes and money belts, as well as local batik. Remember, it's a compliment to be quoted insanely high prices, as it means you're welcome there; so bargain back – politely.

Regular buses to Shāpíng (Y7, one hour) leave from just outside the west gate. By bike, it will take about two hours at a good clip.

Markets also take place in **Shuāngláng** (双廊, Tuesday), **Shābā** (沙巴, Wednesday), **Yòusuǒ** (右所; Friday morning, the largest in Yúnnán) and **Jiāngwēi** (江尾; Saturday). **Xīzhōu** (喜州) and **Zhōuchéng** (州城) have daily morning and afternoon markets, respectively. **Wāsè** (挖色) also has a popular market every five days with trading from 9am to 4.30pm. Thanks to the lack of boats, travellers now have to slog to Xiànguān's east bus station for buses to Wāsè.

Many cafes and hotels in Dàlǐ offer tours or can arrange transportation to these markets for around Y150 for a half day.

ĚRHǎIHÚ

洱海湖

Ěrhǎi Hú (Ear-Shaped Lake) dominates the local psyche. The seventh-biggest freshwater lake in China, it sits at 1973m above sea level and covers 250 sq km; it's also dotted with trails perfect for bike rides and villages to visit. It's a 50-minute walk, a 15-minute bus ride or a 10-minute downhill zip on a bike from Dàlǐ.

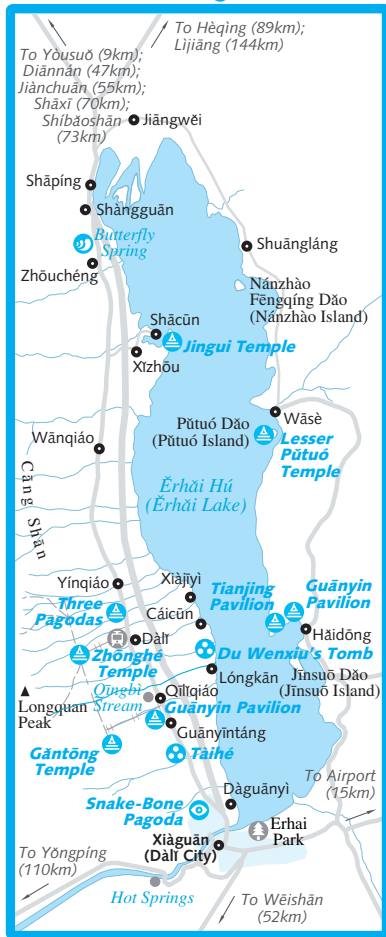
Cáicūn (才村), a pleasant little village east of Dàlǐ (Y1 on bus 2), is the nexus of lake transport. Sadly, putt-putt local ferries are a distant memory. All boat travel is now on 'official' vessels. Expect to pay Y150 for a three-hour trip. That said, ask around at cafes and guesthouses – you may find someone who knows someone who...you know the drill.

Close to Wāsè are **Pǔtuó Dǎo** (普陀岛; Pǔtuó Island) and **Lesser Pǔtuó Temple** (小普陀寺; Xiǎopǔtuó Sì), set on an extremely photogenic rocky outcrop.

Roads now encircle the lake so it is possible to do a loop (or partial loop) of the lake by mountain bike. A great day's bike trip is from Dàlǐ to Shāpíng. Some hard-core cyclists continue right around the lake, stopping at other markets on the way. (However, the lack of boats means you're looking at an overnight stay or an extremely long ride in one day.) From Dàlǐ to Wāsè it's around 58km by road.

Dàlǐ & Ěrhǎi Hú

0 5 km
0 3 miles



Plenty of cafes in Dàlǐ can arrange whatever else you dream up.

CĀNGSHĀN

苍山

This range of gorgeous peaks rises impressively above Dàlǐ and offers the best legwork in the area. Most travellers head first for **Zhōnghé Temple** (中和寺; Zhōnghé Sì), a long, steep hike up the mountainside behind Dàlǐ; or take the **chairlift** (one way/return Y35/60) up **Zhōnghé Shān** (中山; Zhōnghé Mountain; admission Y30; ☀8am–6pm).

You can also hike up the mountain, a sweaty two to three hours for those in

moderately good shape (but note the warning that there have been several reports of robbery of solo walkers). Walk about 200m north of the chairlift base to the riverbed (often dry). Follow the left bank for about 50m and walk through the cemetery, then follow the path zigzagging under the chairlift. When you reach some stone steps, you know you are near the top.

Branching out from either side of Zhōnghé Temple is a trail that winds along the face of the mountains, taking you in and out of steep, lush valleys and past streams and waterfalls. From the temple, it's an amazing 11km up-and-down hike south to the **Gǎntōng Temple** (感通寺; Gǎntōng Sì), **Qīngbì Stream** (清碧溪; Qīngbì Xī) and/or **Guānyīn Pavilion** (观音堂; Guānyīn Táng), from where you can continue to the road and pick up a Dàlǐ-bound bus. There's also a **cable car** (one way/return Y50/80) between Qīngbì Stream and Gǎntōng Temple. If you buy your tickets for chairlifts from a travel agent or your guesthouse you can score a discount.

You can loaf in basic luxury at 2950m near Zhōnghé Temple at **Higherland Inn** (高地旅馆; Gāodì Lúguǎn; ☎266 1599; www.higherland.com; dm Y30, d Y80-120). If you want to get away from the crowds in Dàlǐ, this is the place to do it. The hostel has fabulous views, regular barbecues and only a handful of rooms, which means it's an incredibly relaxing place to stay.

XǐZHŌU

喜洲

A trip to the old town of Xǐzhōu for a look at its well-preserved Bai architecture is lovely. You can catch a local bus from the south gate in Dàlǐ (Y3) or take a taxi (Y30 to Y35) to make the 18km trip, but a bicycle trip with an overnight stop in Xǐzhōu (there's accommodation in town) is also a good idea. From here, the interesting town of **Zhōuchéng** (州城) is 7km further north; it too has basic accommodation.

NORTHWEST YÜNNÁN

Lijiāng

丽江

☎NEW TOWN 08891, OLD TOWN 0888 / POP OLD TOWN 40,000

How popular is this timelocked – if touristified – place? Lijiāng's maze of cobbled streets, rickety (or rickety-looking, given gentrification) wooden buildings and gushing canals suck in around five million peo-

ple a year. At times, the old town's tiny alleys can seem less like thoroughfares from ancient China than central London or New York at rush hour.

But remember the 80/20 rule: 80% of the tourists will be in 20% of the places. Get up early enough and more often than not you'll avoid the crowds. And if they do appear, that's the cue to beat a retreat into the delightful labyrinth of old streets, where soon enough it'll be just you again.

A UN World Heritage Site since 1999, Lijiāng is a city of two halves: the old town and the very different and modern new town. The old town is where you'll be spending your time and it's a jumble of lanes that twist and turn. If you get lost, head upstream and you'll make your way back to the main square.

👁 Sights

Note that the old town technically has a Y80 entrance fee. Nobody usually pays this, but you may be asked for it if you try to buy a ticket for other sights around town.

Old Town

HISTORIC AREA

(古城) If a waterside location indeed engenders good fortune, then Lijiāng is lucky, lucky, lucky. The old town is dissected by a web of arterylike canals that once brought the city's drinking water from Yuquan Spring, in what is now Black Dragon Pool Park. Several wells and pools are still in use around town (but hard to find). Where there are three pools, these were designated into pools for drinking, washing clothes and washing vegetables. A famous example of these is the **White Horse Dragon Pool** (白马龙潭; Bǎimǎlóng Tán; ☎7am-10pm) in the deep south of the old town, where you can still see the odd local washing their veggies after buying them in the market.

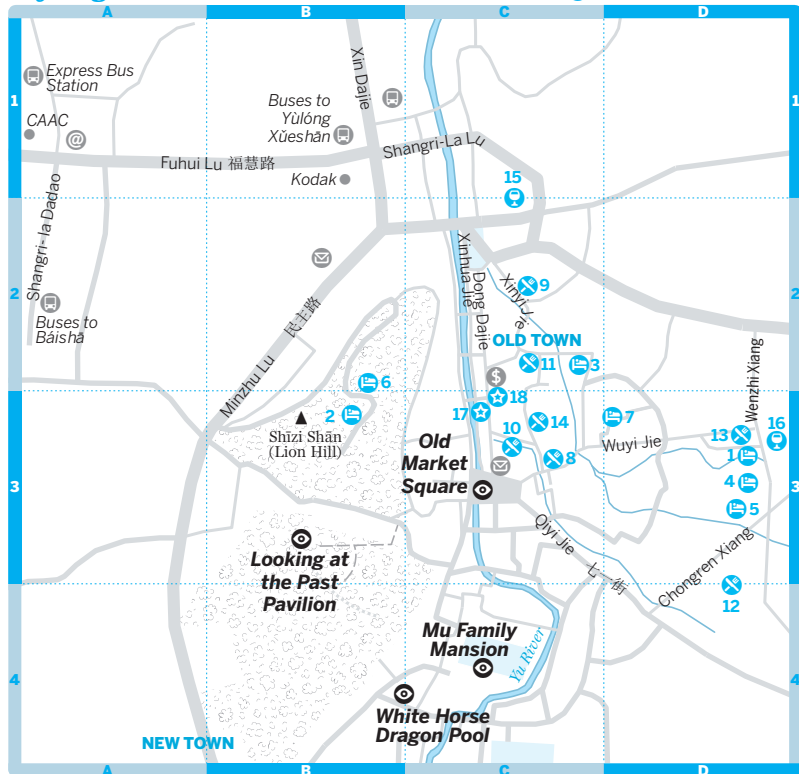
The focus of the old town is the busy **Old Market Square** (四方街; Sīfāng Jiē). Once the haunt of Naxi traders, they've long since made way for tacky souvenir stalls. However, the view up the hill and the surrounding lanes are still extraordinary.

Now acting as sentinel of sorts for the town, the **Looking at the Past Pavilion** (望古楼; Wànggǔ Lóu; admission Y15; ☎7am-9pm) has a unique design using dozens of four-storey pillars – culled from northern Yünnán old-growth forests.

Black Dragon Pool Park

SCENIC AREA

(黑龙潭公园; Hēilóngtán Gōngyuán; Xin Dajie; admission free with Y80 town entrance ticket; ☎7am-



8.30pm) On the northern edge of town is the Black Dragon Pool Park; its view of Yulong Xuēshān (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain) is the most obligatory photo shoot in southwestern China. The **Dōngbā Research Institute** (东巴文化研究室; Dōngbā Wénhuà Yánjiūshì; ☉8am-5pm Mon-Fri) is part of a renovated complex on the hillside here. You can see Naxi cultural artefacts and scrolls featuring a unique pictograph script.

Trails lead up **Xiàng Shān** (Elephant Hill) to a dilapidated gazebo and then across a spiny ridge past a communications centre and back down the other side, making a nice morning hike, but note the warning on p665.

The **Museum of Naxi Dongba Culture** (纳西东巴文化博物馆; Naxi Dōngbā Wénhuà Bówùguǎn; admission free; ☉9am-5pm) is at the park's northern entrance and is a decent introduction to traditional Naxi lifestyle and religion, complete with good English captions.

Mu Family Mansion

HISTORIC SITE

(木氏土司府; Mùshì Tǔsīfǔ; admission Y60; ☉8.30am-5.30pm) The former home of a Naxi chieftain, the Mu Family Mansion was heavily renovated (more like built from scratch) after the devastating earthquake that struck Lijiang in 1996. Mediocre captions do a poor job of introducing the Mu family but many travellers find the beautiful grounds reason enough to visit.

★ Festivals & Events

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

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

Lijiang

📍 Top Sight

Looking at the Past Pavilion	B3
Mu Family Mansion	C4
Old Market Square	C3
White Horse Dragon Pool	B4

🏠 Sleeping

1 Dongba Hotel	D3
2 Jiri Guājing Kèzhàn	B3
3 Lijiang International Youth Hostel	C2
4 Mama Naxi's Guesthouse 1	D3
5 Mama Naxi's Guesthouse 3	D3
6 Panorama Guesthouse	B2
7 Zen Garden Hotel	D3

🍴 Eating

8 Ama Yi Naxi Snacks	C3
9 Lamu's House of Tibet	C2
10 Mama Fu's	C3
11 N's Kitchen	C2
12 Petit Lijiang Bookcafé	D4
13 Tiān Hé Cānting	D3
14 Well Bistro	C3

🍷 Drinking

15 New Amsterdam	C1
16 Stone the Crows	D3

🎭 Entertainment

17 Dongba Palace	C3
18 Naxi Orchestra	C3

entreaties of the monarch by leaping into a fire.

🏠 Sleeping

Throw a stick and you'll hit a charming Naxi guesthouse in the old town. There are well over 700 places to stay in the old city, with more appearing all the time. In peak seasons (especially holidays), prices double (or more).



Dōngbā Hotel

HOTEL \$

(东巴客栈; Dōngbā Kèzhàn; ☎512 1975; www.dongbahotel.com; 109 Wenzhi Alley; 文治巷109号; s & d Y120-280; @) A family-style atmosphere (free laundry and tea and coffee), great staff, and cute rooms (some on two

levels) with huge, comfy beds and nice bathrooms make this very well maintained in a lovely place to stay. It gets a lot of repeat guests, which says it all.

Mama Naxi's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(古城香格里拉客栈; Gǔchéng Xiānggéyùn Kèzhàn; ☎510 7713; 70 Wangjia Zhuang Lane, Wuyi Jie; 五一街文化巷70号; dm Y25-30, s & d Y60-150; @) With two guesthouses close to each other, named '1' and '3' ('2' is in Dàlǐ), which are always busy, the ever-energetic Mama is doing her best to corner the backpacker market in Lijiang. Certainly, she knows what travellers want, even if it not all of them like what they get. Head to '3' at 70 Wangjia Zhuang Lane for solid dorms, cramped

THE NAXI

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

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

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

but clean standard rooms, information-gathering, socialising and cheap eats. 'I', at 78 Wangjia Zhuang Lane (☎510 0700), is dorm-free and more peaceful.

Panba Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(潘巴家院青年旅舍; Pānbā Jiāyuán Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎511 9077; apan1125@hotmail.com; Wenming Xiang, Wuyi Jie; 五一街文明巷; dm Y25-35, s & d Y110-120; @) At the as yet undeveloped eastern end of Wuyi Jie, this increasingly popular place is a 15-minute walk from the centre of the old town, and so far from the tour group madness. The rooms are a decent size and come with shared balconies, while the solicitous staff get rave reviews. Book ahead.

Zen Garden Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(瑞和园酒店; Ruihé Yuán Jiǔdiàn; ☎518 9799; www.zengardenhotel.com; 36 Xingren Lane, Wuyi Jie; 五一街兴仁下段36号; d/ste Y500/1200; @) As befits its name, this is a serene, hushed establishment. Run by a Naxi teacher and decorated with help from her artist brother, the furniture and design in the communal areas is tremendous, even if the rooms themselves are a little more functional than their price suggests.

Panorama Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(黄山壹号客栈; Huángshān Yīhào Kèzhàn; ☎512 8784; 1 Upper Huangshan Lu; 黄山上段1号; s & d Y100-180; @) The self-proclaimed first choice on the street and set around a little garden on winding Huangshan Lu, the 2nd- and 3rd-floor rooms here offer cool views over the old town, as does the cosy bar/communal area. The cheapest rooms come with squat toilets.

Jiri Guānjīng Kèzhàn

INN \$

(吉日观景客栈; ☎888 1788; 55 Huangshan Lu; 黄山下段55号; s & d Y120-280; @) Another one of the increasing number of inns looming over Old Market Square, this has spacious, comfortable rooms, the more expensive of which come with great views and computers, as well as a cool, courtyard vibe.

Lijiāng International Youth Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(丽江老谢车马店; Lijiāng Lǎoxiè Chēmǎdiàn; ☎518 0124; 44 Mishi Xiang, Xinyi Jie; 新义街密士巷44号; dm Y25, s & d Y50-120, tr Y150-180; @) The dorms here are big (eight and 12 beds) and a bit run down, the rooms generic, but there's a great bar/communal area and the staff are helpful.

Eating

There are many, many eateries around the old town, and almost every menu will have both Chinese and Western dishes.

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

Mama Fu's

YUNNAN \$

(马马付餐厅; Māmǎfù Cāntīng; Mishi Xiang; dishes from Y18; ☎9am-10.30pm) An original Lijiāng culinary cornerstone from way back, alfresco dining here beside a tranquil stream provides one of the best people-watching opportunities in the old town. The Chinese dishes are very solid, especially the Naxi ones (try the *chǎo hǎicài*, a local vegetable speciality).

Ama Yi Naxi Snacks

ETHNIC MINORITY \$

(阿妈意纳西饮食院; Āmāyī Nàxī Yīnshí Yuàn; www.ljamy.com; Wuyi Jie; dishes from Y22; ☎10am-9.30pm) The name doesn't do justice to the small but very authentic selection of Naxi cuisine on offer at this calm courtyard restaurant. Fantastic mushroom dishes, as well as *zhūtōng fàn*, rice that comes packed in bamboo. It's down an alley off Wuyi Jie, close to the Stone Bridge.

Lamu's House of Tibet

TIBETAN \$

(西藏屋西餐馆; Xìzàngwū Xīcāntīng; 56 Xinyi Jie; dishes from Y18; ☎7am-midnight; @) Lamu has been putting smiles and service before *yuán* for over a decade and, after a few relocations, she's finally nailed her spot in this casual pine-and-bamboo place on the north side of the old town. The upstairs is great for people-watching. It's a UN menu, but the Tibetan items are all you really need (though the Naxiburger rocks).

Well Bistro

WESTERN \$

(井卓餐馆; Jǐngzhuó Cānguǎn; 32 Mishi Xiang; dishes from Y10; ☎8am-11pm; ☎) Laid-back and friendly, this is an oasis in a busy part of the old town and a great place to relax after a day's walking. Western breakfasts, burgers, pasta and pizza (from Y30), as well as rice and noodle dishes, and great coffee and proper booze. There's a book exchange here too and wi-fi.

★ Entertainment

Naxi Orchestra

MUSIC

(纳西古乐会; Nàxī Gǔyuè Huì; Naxi Music Academy; tickets Y120-160; ☺performances 8pm) One of the few things you can do in the evening in Lijiāng is attend performances of this orchestra inside a beautiful building in the old town. Not only are all two dozen or so members Naxi, but they play a type of Taoist temple music (known as *dòngjīng*) that has been lost elsewhere in China. The pieces they perform are said to be faithful renditions of music from the Han, Song and Tang dynasties, and are played on original instruments. Local historian of note Xuan Ke often speaks for the group at performances.

Dongba Palace

MUSIC

(东巴宫; Dōngbā Gōng; Dong Dajie; tickets Y120-180; ☺performances 7pm) This government run place has a less-authentic song-and-dance show.

i Information

Crowded, narrow streets are a pickpocket's heaven. Solo women travellers have been mugged when walking alone at night in isolated areas of historic Lijiāng. Xiàng Shān (Elephant Hill) in Black Dragon Pool Park (Hēilóngtán Gōngyuán) has been the spot of quite a few robberies.

Lijiāng's cafes and backpacker inns are your best source of information on the area. There are no internet cafes in the old town, but all hostels and hotels have internet access and/or wi-fi, as do virtually all the cafes in town.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Dong Dajie) This branch is in the old town and has an ATM machine. There are other banks around town with ATMs too.

China International Travel Service (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshè; 3rd fl, Lifang Bldg, cnr Fuhui Lu & Shangrila Dadao) Can arrange tours in and around Lijiāng. The entrance is down an alley off Shangrila Dadao.

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Minzhu Lu; ☺8am-8pm) Offers EMS (Express Mail Service). Another post office is in the old town just north of Old Market Sq.

Eco-tours (www.ecotourchina.com) Run by Zhao Fan at the Café Buena Vista in Báishā; you can get information at **Lamu's House of Tibet** (56 Xinyi Jie). Check out Zhao Fan's maps of Lijiāng-area cycling trails.

Kodak (柯达; Kēdá; Fuhui Lu) CD burning for Y20 per CD.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; Fuhui Lu; ☺8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Is reputedly very speedy with visa extensions.

KEEPING THE GOOD FORTUNE

An interesting local historical tidbit has it that the original Naxi chieftain, whose former home is the Mu Family Mansion, would not allow the old town to be girdled by a city wall because drawing a box around the Chinese character of his family name would change the character from *mù* (wood) to *kùn* (surrounded, or hard pressed).

Tiān Hé Cāntīng

YUNNAN \$

(天和餐厅; 139 Wuyi Jie; dishes from Y10; ☺7am-10.30pm) It's hard to find a neighbourhood-style restaurant in the old town, or one that doesn't also serve Western food, but this place hits the spot with a mix of Naxi dishes and Chinese staples like dumplings, hotpots and *gōng bǎo jī dīng*.

Petit Lijiāng Bookcafé

WESTERN \$

(www.petitlijiang.com; 50 Chongren Xiang, Qiyi Jie; dishes from Y15; ☺8.30am-10.30pm; @) Owners Mei and Olivier are great sources of travel information, and the food (a mix of classic Chinese and Western dishes) and atmosphere are fine (head upstairs for the best seats). The bookshop has a small but good collection of English- and French-language titles focusing on Yúnnán and elsewhere in China.

N's Kitchen

WESTERN \$

(二楼小厨; Èrlóu Xiǎochú; 17 Jishan Xiang, Xinyi Jie; dishes from Y22; ☺9am-9pm; @) Clamber up the steep stairs for one of the best breakfasts in town, a monster burger and a cheery welcome. It's a good source of travel info too, as well as having mountain bikes for hire.



Drinking

Xinhua Jie, just off Old Market Square, is packed out with Chinese-style drinking dens. More amenable to Western tastes is expat hang-out **New Amsterdam** (小荷兰酒吧; Xiǎo Hélan Jiǔbā; 44 Block C, Yuhe Corridor; ☺11am-late), run by a Dutch guy and his Chinese wife, with a happy hour between 5pm and 6pm, pub grub, pool and darts. Also worth checking is the Irish-owned **Stone the Crows** (130 Wuyi Jie; ☺7pm-late), an endearingly ramshackle rooftop bar with great views over the old town.

JOSEPH ROCK

Yúnnán has always been a hunting ground for famous, foreign plant-hunters such as Kingdon Ward and Joseph Rock (1884–1962). Rock lived in Lijiāng between 1922 and 1949, becoming the world's leading expert on Naxi culture and local botany. Enigmatic and eccentric, he is remembered to this day; everywhere you go in northwestern Yúnnán you still hear that 'Luòkè' (Rock) passed through in (name the year).

Born in Austria, the withdrawn autodidact taught himself eight languages, including Sanskrit. After becoming the world's foremost authority on Hawaiian flora, the US Department of Agriculture, Harvard University and later *National Geographic* (he was their famed 'man in China') sponsored Rock's trips to collect flora for medicinal research. He devoted much of his life to studying Naxi culture, which he feared was being extinguished by the dominant Han culture.

Rock sent over 80,000 plant specimens from China – two were named after him – along with 1600 birds and 60 mammals. His caravans stretched for half a mile, and included dozens of servants, including a cook trained in Austrian cuisine, a portable darkroom, trains of pack horses, and hundreds of mercenaries for protection against bandits, not to mention the gold dinner service and collapsible bathtub.

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

The *Ancient Naxi Kingdom of Southwest China* (1947) is Joseph Rock's definitive work. Immediately prior to his death, his Naxi dictionary was finally prepared for publishing. Take a look at *In China's Border Provinces: The Turbulent Career of Joseph Rock, Botanist-Explorer* (1974) by JB Sutton.

i Getting There & Away

Air

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

From Lijiāng there are oodles of daily flights to Kūnmíng (Y420), as well as daily flights to Chéngdū (Y790), Běijīng (Y2410), Shànghǎi (Y2430), Shēnzhèn (Y1630), Guǎngzhōu (Y1790) and Xīshuāngbǎnnà (Y790).

Bus

The main long-distance bus station (客运站; Kèyùnzhan) is south of the old town; to get there, take bus 8 or 11 (Y1; the latter is faster) from along Minzhu Lu.

Kūnmíng Y170 to Y190, nine to 10 hours, regular services (9am, 10.30am, 11.30am, 2pm, 6.30pm and 9pm); sleeper Y164, nine hours, four daily (7pm, 8pm, 8.30pm and 9pm)

Lúgū Hú Y75, seven to eight hours, two daily (9am and 10am)

Nínglàng Y30, five hours, 14 daily (9am to 3.30pm)

Qiǎotóu Y17, two hours, two daily (7.50am and 8.30am)

Xiàguān Y43 to Y69, 3½ hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 6.30pm)

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) Y40, five hours, every 40 minutes (7.30am to 5pm)

In the north of town, the **express bus station** (高铁客运站; Gāo Kuài Kèyùnzhan; Shangrila Dadao) for Kūnmíng has daily departures:

Kūnmíng Y160 to Y170, six daily (8.30am, 10am, 11am, noon, 1.30pm and 8.30pm)

Lúgū Hú (Lúgū Lake) Y72, seven to eight hours, two daily (8.30am and 9.30am)

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) Y61, five hours, four daily (8.30am, 9.30am, 1pm and 2.30pm)

Buses to Xiàguān run from both the long-distance station and the express bus station; the long-distance station has more services, however.

Train

There is one train daily to Dàlì at 9.58am (Y15, two hours) and one sleeper to Kūnmíng (Y92, nine hours) at 10.12pm.

i Getting Around

Buses to the airport (Y15) leave from outside the CAAC office 90 minutes before flight departures. The long-distance bus station also has buses to the airport (Y7).

Taxis start at Y7 in the new town and are not allowed into the old town. Bike hire is available at most hostels and at N's Kitchen (Y30 per day).

Around Lìjiāng

It is possible to see most of Lìjiāng's environs on your own, but a few agencies offer half- or full-day tours, starting from Y200, plus fees.

There are a number of monasteries around Lìjiāng, all Tibetan in origin and belonging to the Karmapa (Red Hat) sect. Most were extensively damaged during the Cultural Revolution and there's not much monastic activity nowadays.

Jade Peak Monastery (玉峰寺; Yùfēng Sì) is on a hillside about 5km past Báishā. The last 3km of the track requires a steep climb. The monastery sits at the foot of Yúlóng Xuēshān (5500m) and was established in 1756. The monastery's main attraction nowadays is the **Camellia Tree of 10,000 Blossoms** (Wānduō Shānchá). Ten thousand might be something of an exaggeration, but locals claim that the tree produces at least 4000 blossoms between February and April. A monk on the grounds risked his life to keep the tree secretly watered during the Cultural Revolution.

Lìjiāng is also famed for its **temple frescoes**, most of which were painted during the 15th and 16th centuries by Tibetan, Naxi, Bai and Han artists; many were restored during the later Qing dynasty. They

depict various Taoist, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist themes and can be found on the interior walls of temples in the area. The Cultural Revolution did lots of ravaging here, keep in mind.

Frescoes can be found in Báishā and on the interior walls of **Dàjué Palace** (Dàjué Gōng) in the village of Lóngquán.

Báishā

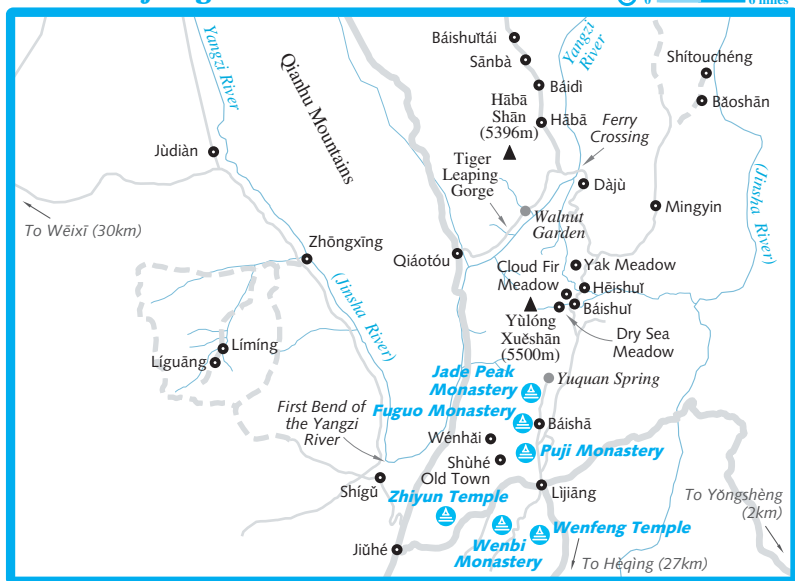
白沙

Báishā is a small village on the plain north of Lìjiāng, near several old temples, and is one of the best day trips out of Lìjiāng, especially if you have a bike. Before Kublai Khan made it part of his Yuan empire (1271–1368), Báishā was the capital of the Naxi kingdom.

The 'star' attraction of Báishā is **Dr Ho Shi Xiu**, a legendary herbalist who was propelled to fame by the travel writer Bruce Chatwin when he mythologised him in a 1986 *New Yorker* story as the 'Taoist physician in the Jade Dragon Mountains of Lìjiāng'.

A sprightly 87 at the time of writing and still treating the ill every day with herbs collected from the nearby mountains, Dr Ho is very chatty (he speaks English, German and Japanese) and is happy to regale visitors with great stories about Joseph Rock (whom

Around Lìjiāng



he knew as a young boy), Chatwin and the various other celebrities he has encountered down the years.

Almost directly opposite the clinic of Dr Ho's is **Café Buena Vista** (Nàna Wéisitǎ Jùlèbù; www.ecotourchina.com), a gallery-cum-café run by an artist. Café Buena Vista runs eco-tours and is a good place to get travel information.

There are a couple of frescoes worth seeing in town and the surrounding area. The best can be found in Báishā's **Dàbǎoji Palace** (大宝积宫; Dàbǎoji Gōng; admission Y15; ☉8.30am-5.30pm), and at the neighbouring **Liúfǎ Temple** (Liúfǎ Diàn) and **Dàding Gé** (大鼎阁).

Báishā is an easy 20- to 30-minute bike ride from Lijiāng. Otherwise, catch one of the frequent minibuses (Y3) from Shangri-la Dadao, about 500m south of Fuhui Lu. They return to Lijiāng regularly.

Shùhé Old Town 束河古城

More rustic and tranquil than Lijiāng, Shùhé Old Town (Shùhé Gǔchéng) is attracting increasing numbers of travellers looking to escape the crowds. A former staging post on the Tea-Horse Road that's just 4km from Lijiāng, Shùhé can be done as a day trip, or makes a tempting alternative base for exploring the region.

Although there's little in the way of sights to see, and parts of the town have been redeveloped in tacky fashion, the cobblestoned alleys and streets south of its main square are very picturesque and much more peaceful at night than Lijiāng. Head for the so-called 'core zone', which is sandwiched between the Jiǔdǐng and Qīnglóng Rivers and nestles between the foothills of Yùlóng Xuěshān.

The **K2 Hostel** (K2国际青年旅舍; K2 Guóji Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎513 0110; www.k2yha.com; 1 Guailiu Xiang, Kangpu Lu; 康普路拐柳巷1号; dm Y25-30, s & d Y108-138; @) has become the go-to place in town. The dorms are a bit cramped, but they push all the right buttons with a free breakfast and pick-up, and a big communal area. To get there, don't enter the town's main gate, but take the road to the right, which leads on to Kangpu Lu after five minutes. There are many other guesthouses, cafes and restaurants on and off Renlin Jie, the heart of the 'core zone', and around the main square.

Getting to Shùhé is easy from Lijiāng, with regular minibuses (Y2) running from

NAXI SCRIPT

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

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

the corner of Fuhui Lu and Shangri-la Dadao.

At present, there is no admission charge, but that may change.

Yùlóng Xuěshān 玉龙雪山

Also known as Mt Satseto, **Yùlóng Xuěshān** (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain; adult Y190, protection fee Y80) soars to some 5500m. Its peak was first climbed in 1963 by a research team from Běijīng and now, at some 35km from Lijiāng, it is regularly mobbed by hordes of Chinese tour groups and travellers.

Absolutely everywhere you go in this area is extremely expensive (add in transport, entrance fees and chairlifts, and you'll be lucky to pay less than Y450). Note also that buses may or may not be running between sights.

Dry Sea Meadow (甘海子; Gānhǎizi) is the first stop you come to if travelling by bus from Lijiāng. A chairlift (Y170) ascends to a large meadow at over 4400m which, according to geologists, was actually a lake 2000 years ago. It can often get freezing above, even when warm down below; warm coats can be rented for Y30 (deposit Y300) and oxygen tanks are Y40.

Cloud Fir Meadow (云杉坪; Yúnsānpíng) is the second stop, and a chairlift (Y77 return) takes you up past 3300m where walk-

ways lead to awesome glacier views. Horses can be hired here for Y80.

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

Around 60km from Lijiāng, or a 30-minute drive from Dry Sea Meadow, is **Yak Meadow** (牦牛坪; Máo niú píng), where yet another chairlift (Y80) pulls visitors up to an altitude of 3500m. Here there are ample hiking opportunities near **Xuē huā hú** (雪花湖; Snowflake Lake). Crowds and long waits are almost unheard of here.

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

Minibuses (Y15 to Y20) sometimes leave for all three spots from near the intersection of Minzhu Lu and Fuhui Lu in Lijiāng. Returning to Lijiāng, buses leave fairly regularly but check with your driver to find out what time the last bus will depart.

Shíbǎoshān

石宝山

About 75km southwest of Lijiāng (or 110km northwest of Dàlǐ) are the **Stone Treasure Mountain Grottoes** (石宝山石窟; Shíbǎoshān Shíkū; admission Y30; ☀dawn-dusk). The local tourism bureau loves to tout purported (but anonymous) scholars who compare them favourably with the grottoes of Dūnhuáng, Dàzú and Dàtóng. The most famous temple group, **Stone Bell** (石钟; Shízhōng), includes some of the best Bai stone carvings in southern China and offers insights into life at the Nanzhao court of the 9th century. (And some, er, rather racy sculptures of female genitalia.)

If you need accommodation, **Shíbǎoshān Bīnguǎn** (石宝山宾馆; ☎478 6093; d Y220; ☹) is nothing special. Otherwise, you're looking at extremely basic beds at Bǎoxiàng Sì Temple (宝相寺) halfway up the front of the mountain or Shízhōng Temple (石钟寺; Shízhōng Sì) halfway up the mountain's back side. These are often full.

To get here, take a bus to Jiànchuān, then hope for a shuttle van from in front of the bus station taking tourists to the mountain. If there is no shuttle van, take one headed towards Shāxī (Y8, 30 minutes) and get off at the entrance to the mountain, where you have a 2km hike uphill to the main entrance.

If you're coming from Dàlǐ on the old Dàlǐ-Lijiāng road, you'll have to take a Jiànchuān-bound bus, then get off at the small village of Diānnán, about 8km south of Jiànchuān, where a narrow road branches southwest to the village of Shāxī, 23km away, and then catch a local van.

Shāxī

沙溪

☎0872

Arrive in **Shāxī** (admission Y20) and you enter a wormhole, every step harkening back to the clippety-clop of horses' hooves and shouts of traders.

Shāxī was once a crucial node on one of the old Tea-Horse Roads that stretched from Yúnnán to India. Only three caravan oases remain, Shāxī being the best preserved and the only one with a surviving market (held on Fridays).

The village's wooden houses, courtyards and narrow, winding streets make it a popular location for period Chinese movies and TV shows, but this is still a wonderfully sleepy place where nightlife means sitting out under the canopy of stars and listening to the frogs croaking in the rice paddies.

👁 Sights

Sideng Jie (寺登街) is the ancient town street leading off the main road. The Y20 ticket to the village gets you admission to the multi-frescoed **Xingjiào Sì** (兴教寺; Xingjiào Temple), the only Ming-dynasty Bai Buddhist temple, as well as the **Three Terraced Pavilion** (三层楼; Sāncénglǒu), which has a prominent theatrical **stage** (古戏台; gǔxìtái), something of a rarity in rural China. The absolute highlight, however, is the **Ōuyáng Courtyard** (欧阳大院; Ōuyáng Dàyuàn), a superb example of three-in-one Bai folk architecture in which one wall protected three yards/residences (it's now an inn).

Exit the east gate and head south along the Huì River (惠江; Huì Jiāng) for five minutes, cross the ancient **Yùjīn Qiáo** (玉津桥; Yùjīn Bridge), and you're walking the same trail as the horse caravans. (If you look hard enough, you'll still be able to see hoofprints etched into the rock, or so the locals claim.)

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

A number of old courtyard homes on and off Sideng Jie have been converted into up-market inns; there are also places offering beds from Y20.

THE TEA-HORSE ROAD

Less well-known than the Silk Road, but equally important in terms of trade and the movement of ideas, people and religions, the Tea-Horse Road (茶马古道; Chámǎgǔdào) linked southwest China with India via Tibet. A series of caravan routes, rather than a single road, which also went through parts of Sichuān, Burma, Laos and Nepal, the trails started deep in the jungle of Xīshuāngbǎnnà. They then headed north through Dǎil and Lǐjiāng and into the thin air of the Himalayan mountains on the way to the Tibetan capital Lhasa, before turning south to India and Burma.

Although archaeological finds indicate that stretches of the different routes were in use thousands of years ago, the road really began life in the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907). An increased appetite for tea in Tibet led to an arrangement with the Chinese imperial court to barter Yǔnnán tea for the prized horses ridden by Tibetan warriors. By the Song dynasty (AD 960–1279), 20,000 horses a year were coming down the road to China, while in 1661 alone some 1.5 million kilos of tea headed to Tibet.

Sugar and salt were also carried by the caravans of horses, mules and yaks. Buddhist monks, Christian missionaries and foreign armies utilised the trails as well to move between Burma, India and China. In the 18th century the Chinese stopped trading for Tibetan horses and the road went into a slow decline. Its final glory days came during WWII, when it was a vital conduit for supplies from India for the allied troops fighting the Japanese in China. The advent of peace and the communist takeover of 1949 put an end to the road.

Some of the inns on Sideng Jie operate as cafes and restaurants, or try the hole-in-the-wall places on the village's main road.

Tea and Horse Caravan Trail Inn INN \$
(古道客栈; Gǔdào Kèzhàn; ☎472 1051; 83 Sideng Jie; 寺登街83号; s & d without/bathroom Y40/150, discounts of 30%) The cheap rooms at this friendly place are basic and clean, but the more expensive ones are a significant step up and come with comfy beds and big bathrooms, as well as being set around a pleasant garden area.

Dragonfly GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎472 1464; shaxi-travel@hotmail.com; Duànjiādēng Village (段家登); s & d Y150) This small guesthouse 3km north of Shāxī is run by a friendly English teacher. It's popular, so book ahead.

Karma Cafe CAFE \$\$
(卡玛聚; Kǎ Mǎ Jù; Sideng Jie; dishes from Y12; ☺8am-10pm) Has decent, and a few expensive Chinese and Tibetan dishes.

Trail Cafe CAFE \$
(细语咖啡; Xìyǔ Kāfēi; 47 Sideng Jie; ☺9am-10pm) The Trail Cafe is a cool spot for a coffee or drink.

i Getting There & Away

From Jiànchuān, there are hourly buses (Y8, one hour) to Shāxī, or catch a shared minivan ride that also stops at Shíběo Shān.

Tiger Leaping Gorge 虎跳峡

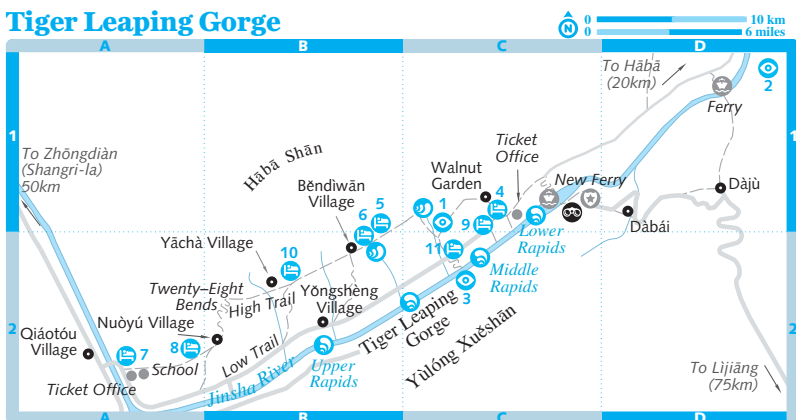
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Gingerly stepping along a trail swept with scree to allow an old fellow with a donkey to pass; resting atop a rock, exhausted, looking up to see the fading sunlight dance between snow-shrouded peaks, then down to see the lingering rays dancing on the rippling waters a thousand metres away; feeling utterly exhilarated. That pretty much sums up **Tiger Leaping Gorge** (Hǔtiào Xiá; admission Y50), the unmissable trek of southwest China.

One of the deepest gorges in the world, it measures 16km long and is a giddy 3900m from the waters of the Jīnshā River (Jīnshā Jiāng) to the snowcapped mountains of Hābā Shān (Hābā Mountain) to the west and Yùlóng Xuēshān to the east, and, despite the odd danger, it's gorgeous almost every single step of the way.

At the time of writing, extensive road-works in the area meant that the Y50 admission fee had been suspended. Expect it to rise when the road through the gorge reopens.

The gorge trek is not to be taken lightly. Even for those in good physical shape, it's a workout. The path constricts and crumbles; it certainly can wreck the knees. When it's raining (especially in July and August), landslides and swollen waterfalls can block the paths, in particular on the low road. (The best time to come is May and the start



Tiger Leaping Gorge

Sights

- 1 Bamboo Forest C1
- 2 Pagoda D1
- 3 Tiger Leaping Stone C2

Sleeping

- 4 Chateau de Woody C1

5 Five Fingers Mountain

- Guesthouse B1
- 6 Halfway Guesthouse B2
- 7 Jane's Guesthouse A2
- 8 Naxi Family Guesthouse A2
- 9 Sean's Spring Guesthouse C1
- 10 Tea Horse Guesthouse B2
- 11 Tina's Guesthouse C2

of June, when the hills are afire with plant and flower life.)

A few people – including a handful of foreign travellers – have died in the gorge. Over the last decade, there have also been cases of travellers being assaulted on the trail. As always, it's safer in all ways not to do the trek alone.

Check with cafes and lodgings in Lǐjiāng or Qiátóu for trail and weather updates. Most have fairly detailed gorge maps; just remember they're not to scale and occasionally out of date.

Make sure you bring plenty of water on this hike – 2L to 3L is ideal – as well as plenty of sunscreen and lip balm.



Activities

There are two trails: the higher (the older route) and the lower, which follows the new road and is best avoided, unless you enjoy being enveloped in clouds of dust from passing tour buses and 4WDs. While the scenery is stunning wherever you are in the gorge, it's absolutely sublime from the high trail. Make sure you don't get too distracted by all

that beauty, though, and so miss the arrows that help you avoid getting lost on the trail.

It's six hours to Bēndiān or a strenuous eight hours to Walnut Garden. It's much more fun, and a lot less exhausting, to do the trek over two days. By stopping overnight at one of the many guesthouses along the way, you'll have the time to appreciate the magnificent vistas on offer at almost every turn of the trail.

Ponies can be hired (their owners will find you) to take you to the gorge's highest point for between Y100 and Y150; it's not uncommon to see three generations of a family together, with the oldies on horseback and the young ones panting on foot behind them.

The following route starts at **Jane's Guesthouse**. Walk away from **Qiátóu** (桥头), past the school, for five minutes or so, then head up the paved road branching to the left; there's an arrow to guide you. After about 2.5km on the road, you'll reach the **Sunrise Guesthouse**. It's here that the gorge trail proper starts and the serious climbing begins. Note that locals may try and hit you up for an additional 'fee' at

this point, which they will claim is reward for them keeping the trail litter-free.

From here on, you start to ascend past mountain goats who scatter out of the way as you approach, as well as the odd old geezer smoking a reflective pipe by the side of the trail. In places, the path clings to the sides of the cliffs.

The toughest section of the trek comes after **Nuòyú** (诺余) village, when the trail winds through the 28 agonising bends, or turns, that lead to the highest point of the gorge. Count on five hours at normal pace to get through here and to reach **Yáchà** (牙叉) village. It's a relatively straightforward walk on to **Běndiwān** (本地湾). About 1½ hours on from there, you begin the descent to the road on slippery, poor paths. Watch your step here; if you twist an ankle, it's a long hop down.

After the path meets the road at **Tina's Guesthouse**, there's a good detour that leads down 40 minutes to the middle rapids and **Tiger Leaping Stone**, where a tiger is once said to have leapt across the Yangzi, thus giving the gorge its name.

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

The next day's walk is shorter at four to six hours. There are two ferries and so two route options to get to **Dàjù** (大具). After 45 minutes you'll see a red marker leading down to the new (winter) ferry (*xīn dùkǒu*; one way Y20); the descent includes one hairy section with a sheer drop.

Many trekkers call it a day when they reach the bottom and flag down anything heading back Qiáotóu. The road to Dàjù and the village itself is pretty uninteresting. If you do decide to go on, it's a hard climb to the car park, where you may have to register with the PSB (Gōng'ānjú).

The second, lesser-used option continues along the road from Walnut Garden until it reaches the permanent ferry crossing (Y20). From here paths lead to Dàjù, where there are two buses a day back to Lijiāng (Y40, three hours, 7.30am and 1.30pm).

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

Sleeping & Eating IN THE GORGE

The following list of accommodation options along the way (listed in the order that you'll come to them) is not exhaustive. In the unlikely event that everywhere is full, basic rooms will be available with a local. We've never heard of anyone who had to sleep rough in the gorge.

All the guesthouses double as restaurants and shops, where you can pick up bottled water and snacks along the way.

Naxi Family Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(纳西雅阁; Nàxī Kèzhàn; ☎880 6928; dm Y20, s & d Y120; @) Taking your time to spend a night here instead of double-timing it to Walnut Garden isn't a bad idea. It's an incredibly friendly, well-run place (organic veggies and wines, and the only internet access in the gorge), set around a pleasant courtyard.

Tea Horse Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(茶马客栈; Chámǎ Kèzhàn; ☎139 8871 7292; dm Y20, s & d Y120) Just after Yáchà village, this bigger place has a great 'Naxi mama' running things, and even has a small spa and massage parlour where aching limbs can be eased.

Halfway Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(中途客栈; Zhōngtú Kèzhàn, Běndiwān; ☎139 8870 0522; dm Y20, s & d Y120-150) Once a simple home to a guy collecting medicinal herbs and his family, this is now a busy-busy operation. The vistas here are awe inspiring and perhaps the best of any lodging in the gorge; the view from the communal toilets is worth the price of a bed alone.

Five Fingers Mountain Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(五指客栈; Wǔzhǐ Kèzhàn; ☎139 8877 6286; dm/s Y25/50) An endearingly rustic place, where chickens run around and you're part of the family during your stay. The 200m climb up from the road to get here is a killer after five hours of walking, though.

Tina's Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(中峡旅店; Zhōngxiá Lǚdiàn; ☎820 2258; tina999@live.cn; dm Y25, s & d Y60-280). It's a bit concrete-blocky and lacks the charm of other places on the mountain, but there are lots of beds and the location is perfect for those too knackered to make it to Walnut Garden.

Sean's Spring Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(山泉客栈; Shānquán Kèzhàn; ☎820 2223; www.tigerleapinggorge.com; dm Y25, s & d Y60-200) One of the original guesthouses on the trail,

and still the spot for lively evenings and socialising. It's run by the eponymous Sean, a true character. Recently refurbished, the best rooms have great views of Yùlóng Xuěshān.

Chateau de Woody

GUESTHOUSE \$
(山白脸旅馆, Shānbáiliǎn Lǔguǎn; ☎139 8871 2705; s & d Y60) Another old-school gorge guesthouse, the rooms here all have views and bathrooms and are a very good deal. Across the road, the less-attractive modern extension has rooms for the same price.

QIÁOTÓU

Jane's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$
(峡谷行客栈, Xiǎgǔ Xíng Kèzhàn; ☎880 6570; dm Y20, s & d Y50-80; @) This two-storey place with tidy, clean rooms is where many people start their trek. The breakfasts here make for good walking fuel and it has left-luggage facilities (Y5 a bag).

Getting There & Away

From the Lijiāng long-distance bus station, buses run to Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) every 40 minutes (7.30am to 5pm) and pass through Qiáotóu (Y21).

Returning to Lijiāng from Qiáotóu, buses start running through from Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) at around 10am. The last one rolls through at around 7.40pm (Y20). The last bus to Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) passes through at around 7pm.

At the time of writing, there were no buses to Báishuǐtái from Lijiāng. There is one bus a day from Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) to Báishuǐtái (Y25, three hours, 9.10am).

Eventually, new road building will result in paved roads connecting Qiáotóu, Walnut Garden and the settlement across the river from Dàjù, then north to connect Báishuǐtái and Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la).

Tiger Leaping Gorge to Báishuǐtái

An adventurous add-on to the gorge trek is to continue north all the way to Hābā (哈巴) village and the limestone terraces of Báishuǐtái (白水台). This turns it into a four-day trek from Qiáotóu and from here you can travel on to Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la). From Walnut Garden to Hābā, via Jiāngbiān (江边), is seven to eight hours. From here to the Yi village of Sānbà (三坝) is about the same, following trails. You could just follow the road and hitch with the occasional truck or tractor, but it's longer and less scenic. Some hardy mountain bikers have followed the trail. This is really

only fun from north to south, elevations being what they are. The best way would be to hire a guide in Walnut Garden for around Y100 per day, depending on the number of people. For Y150 per day you should be able to get a horse and guide.

In Hābā most people stay at the **Hābā Snow Mountain Inn** (哈巴雪山客栈; Hābā Xuěshān Kèzhàn; ☎0887 886 6596; beds Y30; @). In Sānbà, beds can also be found for around Y25. From Sānbà there is an 8am bus to Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la; Y40, five hours), or you could get off at the turn-off to Bitā Hāi (Emerald Pagoda Lake) and hike there.

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

Lúgū Hú

泸沽湖

☎0888

Straddling the remote Yúnnán-Sichuān border, this **lake** (admission Y78) remains a laid-back, idyllic place that makes for a great getaway, even if it is more popular than it once was, especially with Chinese travellers. The ascent to the lake, which sits at 2690m, is via a spectacular switchback road and the first sight of the 50 sq km body of water, surrounded by lushly forested slopes, will take your breath away.

Villages are scattered around the outskirts of the lake, with **Luòshuǐ** (落水) the biggest and most developed, and the one where the bus will drop you. As well as guesthouses, and a few cafes with English menus and Western food, there are the inevitable souvenir shops. Nevertheless, it's hardly a boomtown, with the dominant night-time sound being the lapping of the lake.

Most travellers move quickly to **Lígé** (里格), a much smaller village on the north-western shore of the lake. Although guesthouses make up most of the place, along with restaurants serving succulent, but pricey, barbecue, the sights and nights here are lovely. If you want a less touristy experience, then you need to keep village-hopping around the lake to the Sichuān side. At the moment, top votes for alternative locations are **Luòwǎ** (洛瓦) and **Wǔzhīluó** (五支罗).

The area is home to several Tibetan, Yi and Mosu (a Naxi subgroup) villages. The Mosu are the last practising matriarchal society in the world and many other Naxi customs lost in Lijiāng are still in evidence here.

The best times to visit the lake are April to May, and September to October, when the weather is dry and mild. It's usually snow-bound during the winter months.

👁 Sights & Activities

From Luòshuǐ and Lígé you can punt about with local Mosu by dugout canoe – known by the Mosu as 'pig troughs' (*zhūcáo*). Expect to head for **Liwùbǐ Dǎo** (里务比岛), the largest island (and throw a stone into Sichuan). The second-largest island is **Hēiwǎé Dǎo** (黑瓦俄岛). Boat-trip prices vary wildly. If you're in a group of six to eight people, it's around Y30 per person.

🆓 Mosu Folk Custom Museum MUSEUM

(摩俗民族博物馆; Mósú Mínzú Bówùguǎn; Luòshuǐ; ☎9am-8pm) This museum in Luòshuǐ is set within the traditional home of a wealthy Mosu family, and the obligatory guide will show you around and explain how the matriarchal society functions. There is also an interesting collection of photos taken by Joseph Rock in the 1920s.

🏯 Zhāměi Temple MONASTERY

(扎美寺; Zhāměi Sì) On the outskirts of Yǒngníng, this is a Tibetan monastery with at least 20 lamas in residence. Admission is free, but a donation is expected. A private minivan costs Y10 per person for the half-hour ride, or you could opt to walk the 20km or so through pleasant scenery.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

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

Yǎsè Dába Lǚxíngzhě Zhìjiā HOTEL \$

(雅瑟达吧旅行者之家; ☎588 1196; Lígé; s & d Y80-180; @) All the rooms at this Lígé retreat come with decent views, but the ones on the 2nd floor are tremendous. In the restaurant, try Lúgū Hú fish (泸沽湖鱼; *lúgū hú yú*) or sausage (香肠; *xiāngcháng*).

Àkè Dàjiùdiàn HOTEL \$

(阿客大酒店; ☎588 1167; Luòshuǐ; s & d without/bathroom Y30/50; 🍷) In Luòshuǐ and run by a friendly Mosu lady who can cook local dishes for you and arrange visits to traditional homes, the Ake has big, well-kept rooms and is just a few metres from the lake itself.

Húsi Teahouse YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(湖思茶屋; Húsi Cháwū; ☎588 1170; www.husihostel.com; Luòshuǐ; dm Y30, s & d Y120-150; @) The granddaddy of all Lígū Hú backpacker joints, this place in Luòshuǐ is functional (no private bathrooms) but clean and friendly. Some of the rooms come with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the lake.

Lao Shay Youth Hostel YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(老谢车马店; Lǎoxiè Chēmǎdiàn; ☎588 1555; www.laoshay.com; Lígé; dm Y25, s, d & tr Y50-180; @) The staff here aren't the most helpful, but it's smack in the middle of Lígé, the best rooms have lake views and you can rent a bike for Y30 a day.

📍 Getting There & Away

Lijiāng's long-distance bus station has two direct buses a day to the lake (Y72, seven to eight hours, 9am and 10am) but buy your ticket at least one day in advance as it's often sold out. (The express bus station also has two buses a day at 8.30am and 9.30am for the same price.)

Alternatively, you can go to Nínglàng (宁蒗; Y30, four hours, 13 buses daily, 8am to 3.30pm), from where there's a daily bus to the lake (Y30, three to four hours, 12.30pm). For Lígé you'll have to change for a minibus in Luòshuǐ (Y15 per person).

Leaving Luòshuǐ, the direct buses to Lijiāng leave daily at 10am, noon and 3.30pm. Again, tickets should be bought at least a day in advance. There are also two buses to Nínglàng at 10am and noon. From Nínglàng, there are plenty of buses to Lijiāng and at least one a day to Xiàguān.

To Sichuan, there's a daily bus to Xìhàng (西昌; Y95, seven to eight hours, 2pm), although it wasn't running at the time of writing due to road repairs.

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) 中甸 (香格里拉)

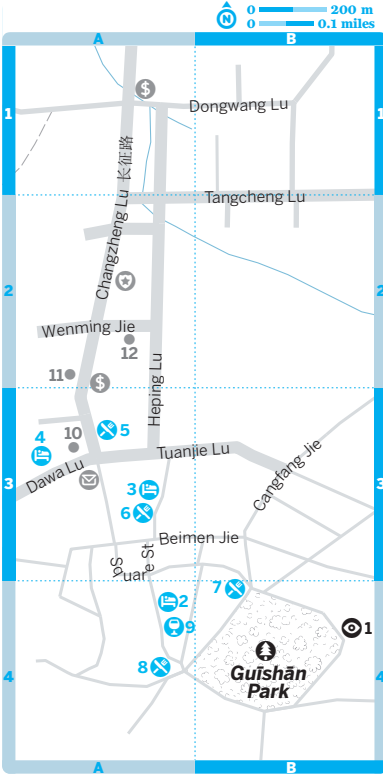
☎0887 / POP 120,000 / ELEV 3200M

Zhōngdiàn, which is now better known as Shangri-la (and also has the Tibetan name Gyalthang), is where you begin to breathe in the Tibetan world. That's if you can breathe at all, given its altitude.

Home to one of Yunnan's most rewarding monasteries, Zhōngdiàn is also the last stop in Yunnan for a rough five- or six-day journey to Chéngdū via the Tibetan townships and rugged terrain of western Sichuan.

How times change. A mere decade ago, Zhōngdiàn was just a one-yeak town. Pigs nibbled on garbage-strewn street corners; there was but one place to stay and pretty much nowhere to eat. Then, watching Lijiāng and

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la)



Dàlì zoom into the tourism stratosphere, local and provincial officials declared the town/county the location of British writer James Hilton's fictional Shangri-la, described in his novel *The Lost Horizon*.

The result was a big jump in visitors, and the numbers are increasing all the time, as well as a building boom that continues to this day. But while the old town is doing its best to mimic Lǐjiāng in its profusion of clothes and jewellery shops, Zhōngdiàn remains far less frenetic and an easy place to kick back for a few days.

Plan your visit for between March and October. During winter the city practically shuts down and transportation is often halted completely by snow storms.

In mid- to late June, the town hosts a horse-racing festival that sees several days of dancing, singing, eating and, of course, horse racing. Accommodation is tight at this time.

Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la)

👁️ Top Sights

Guīshān Park.....B4

👁️ Sights

1 Scripture Chamber.....B4

🏠 Sleeping

2 Cobbler's Hill Inn.....A4

3 Dragoncloud Guesthouse.....A3

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🍴 Eating

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Information

CD Burning.....(see 5)

Haiwei Trails.....(see 9)

10 Khampa Caravan.....A3

11 Kodak.....A2

Transport

12 CAAC.....A2

👁️ Sights

Zhōngdiàn is a wonderful place for getting off the beaten track, with plenty of trekking and horse-riding opportunities, as well as little-visited monasteries and villages. However, the remote sights are difficult to do independently given the lack of public transport.

Ganden Sumtseling Gompa MONASTERY

(松赞林寺; Sōngzàn lín Sì; admission ¥85; ☀️7am-7pm) About an hour's walk north of town is this 300-year-old Tibetan monastery complex with around 600 monks. Extensive rebuilding (and a 150% jump in the ticket price in the last two years alone) has robbed the monastery of some of its charm, but it remains the most important in southwest China and is definitely worth the visit. Bus 3 runs here from anywhere along Changzheng Lu (Y1). You can sometimes avoid paying by coming after 5pm.

Old Town HISTORIC AREA

After checking out the monastery, everyone just wanders about the old town, specifically **Square Street** (Sifang Jie); from this branches a spider web of cobbled lanes and renovated buildings (some say tacky, others

say cool). You'll also see white stupas everywhere. Hidden within the old town is the **Scripture Chamber** (古城藏经堂; Gǔchéng Cángjīng Táng), a reconstructed temple that was previously used as a memorial to the Red Army. **Guīshān Park** (Guīshān Gōngyuán) is also nearby and has a temple at the top with some commanding views of the area.

Bǎijī Sī

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(百鸡寺; 100 Chickens Temple) For even better views, head to this delightfully named and little-visited temple. To get there, walk along Dawa Lu past Kevin's Trekker Inn and turn left at the big white stupa.

Just south of town and also overlooking the old town district is another monastery.

Sleeping

Despite Zhōngdiàn's often glacial night temperatures, many guesthouses are neither heated nor have 24-hour hot water. Most dorms in town are fairly basic too.



Kevin's Trekker Inn

GUESTHOUSE \$

(龙门客栈; Lóngmén Kèzhàn; ☎822 8178; www.kevintrekkerinn.com; 138 Dawa Lu; 达娃路138号; dm/tr Y25/120, d Y80-150; @) Kevin, a Yunnanese Bai, and his wife are charming, endlessly helpful and a fantastic source of local knowledge. Their guesthouse is cosy and comfortable, and the new roof terrace with views over the old town is a great addition. Book ahead, or miss out.

Dragoncloud Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(龙行客栈; Lóngxíng Kèzhàn; ☎828 9250; www.dragoncloud.cn; 94 Beimen Jie, Jiantang Zhen; 建塘镇北门街94号; dm/s/d Y30/80/120; @) Set around a courtyard, the dorms here are spacious, if rudimentary, while the standard rooms come with modern bathrooms. During bouts of chill, you'll love the fireplace in the common area, which also has a pool table.

Cobbler's Hill Inn

INN \$

(皮匠坡老客栈; Píjiàngpō Lǎokèzhàn; ☎828 9894; www.sozhen.com; 7 Dianlaka Jie; 甸腊卡7号; s & d Y80-120) A three-plus-century-old building houses this creaky but charming inn with obliging owners. Check out a variety of rooms – dark but relaxing – the priciest of which sport some grand vistas and funky antique beds.



Eating & Drinking

There are dozens of places to eat offering Tibetan, Indian, Western and Chinese food.



Silent Holy Stones

TIBETAN \$

(静静的嘛呢石; Jìngjìngde Mānǐshí; ☎152 8455 6908; 1 Zuobarui; dishes from Y16; ☉10am-10pm) In a town full of Tibetan restaurants, this is the one the locals head to. With a real neighbourhood feel and a menu of Amdo specialties like minced yak with *tsampa* (the roasted barley flour that is a Tibetan staple), it's a treat. You'll need to order the whole goat in advance, otherwise try the yak meat momo or hotpot.

Tara Gallery Café & Bar

TIBETAN \$\$

(No 29 Old Town; dishes from Y28; ☉10am-10pm; @) This upmarket restaurant, bar and cafe (and art gallery) is a lovely, thoughtfully designed space, and includes a plant-filled 2nd-floor terrace. The menu is a tantalising mix of Tibetan, Indian and Yunnan dishes; the seven-course Tibetan set meal (Y80) is a feast. It's also a relaxing spot for a coffee or an evening drink.

Noah Café

WESTERN \$

(挪亚咖啡; Nuòyà Kāfēi; Changzheng Lu; dishes from Y22; ☉8am-10.30pm Tue-Sun; ☉) It's been around for a spell now, but Noah's has consistently good food, mostly Western but with some Chinese dishes, and good service, as well as wi-fi for Y4 an hour. Its sister establishment **N's Kitchen** (☎688 6500; 33 Beimen Jie; ☉8am-10.30pm; ☉) is equally reliable and has free wi-fi.

Raven

BAR

(乌鸦酒吧; Wūyā Jiǔbā; 19 Beimen Jie; ☉10.30am-late) Owned by a Londoner, and with the comfy feel of a local boozer, this is the one place in Zhōngdiàn where you'll find English beers (along with decent coffee and proper English tea). Lounge on the sofas downstairs, or hit the pool table on the 2nd floor.

Information

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

There are no internet cafes in the old town, but all hostels and hotels and most cafes have some sort of web access.

Agricultural Bank of China (中国农业银行; Zhōngguó Nóngyè Yínháng; cnr Changzheng Lu & Xiangyang Lu; ☉8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Offers all services, but some travellers have reported difficulty using anything but cash. You can also try the ICBC ATM just north of Noah Café.

SHANGRI-LA – FACT & FICTION

At first it seemed like a typically overstated tourist campaign: 'Shangri-la Found'. Only they weren't kidding. In November 1997 'experts' had established with 'certainty' that the fabled 'Shangri-la' of James Hilton's 1933 bestseller *Lost Horizon* was, indeed, in Dégqīn County.

Hilton's novel (later filmed by Frank Capra and starring Ronald Coleman, Jane Wyatt and John Gielgud) tells the story of four travellers who are hijacked and crash-land in a mountain utopia ruled by a 163-year-old holy man. This 'Shangri-la' is in the Valley of the Blue Moon, a beautiful fertile valley capped by a perfect pyramid peak, Mt Karakul. According to Hilton's book, Shangri-la is reached by travelling 'southwest from Peking for many months', and is found 'a few hundred kilometres from a world's end market town...where Chinese coolies from Yúnnán transfer their loads of tea to the Tibetans'.

The claim is based primarily on the fact that Dégqīn's Kawa Karpo peak perfectly resembles the 'pyramid-shaped' landmark of Mt Karakul. Also, the county's blood-red valleys with three parallel rivers fit a valley from *Lost Horizon*.

One plausible theory is that Hilton, writing the novel in northwest London, based his descriptions of Shangri-la on articles by Joseph Rock that he had read in *National Geographic* magazine, detailing Rock's expeditions to remote parts of Lijiāng, Mǔlǐ and Dégqīn. Others believe that Hilton's 'Shangri-la' may just have been a corruption of the word *Shambhala*, a mystical Buddhist paradise.

Tourism authorities wasted little time latching onto the Shangri-la phenomenon and today there are Shangri La hotels, travel agencies and a Shangri-la airport. Sensing that 'there's money in them there Shangri-la hills', rival bids popped up around Yúnnán. Cizhōng in Wēxi County pointed out that its Catholic churches and Tibetan monasteries live side by side in the valley. One local was even told that she was the blood relative of one of the (fictional) characters! Meanwhile, Dàochéng, just over the border in Sìchuān, had a strong bid based around the pyramid peak of its mountain Channa Dorje and the fact that Rock wrote about the region in several articles. Then there's the town of Xiónggǔ, a Naxi village 40km from near Lijiāng, which boasts a stone tablet from the Qing dynasty, naming the town 'Xianggeli', from where the name Shangri-la is derived.

Cynics have had a field day with this and the resulting hijacking of the concept, part of which was to establish tourism to replace logging, which had been banned.

Shangri-la is at its heart surely a metaphor. As a skinny-dipping Jane Wyatt says in the film version of the book: 'I'm sure there's a wish for Shangri-la in everyone's heart...'

Kodak (柯达; Kēdǎ; crn Changzheng Lu & Rongba Lu; per CD Y15; ☀8am-11pm) CD burning. Noah's Cafe will also do this.

Haiwei Trails (www.haiweitrails.com; Raven, Beimen Jie) Foreign-run, it has a good philosophy towards local sustainable tourism, with over a decade of experience.

Khampa Caravan (康巴商道探险旅行社; Kāngbā Shāngdào Tànxiǎn Lǚxíngshè; www.khampacaravan.com; 2nd flr, cnr Dawa Lu & Changzheng Lu; ☀9am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Tibetan-run, this well-established outfit organises some excellent short or longer adventures that get good feedback and specialises in arranging travel into Tibet. The company also runs a lot of sustainable development programs within Tibetan communities. See www.shangrilaassociation.org for more details.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; Changzheng Lu; ☀8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm) Will extend visas.

i Getting There & Away Air

There are up to four flights daily to Kūnmíng (Y1000) and a daily flight to Lhasa in peak season. Flights for other domestic destinations also leave from the airport but are completely irregular and destinations change from week to week. You can enquire about your destination or buy tickets at **CAAC** (中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; Wenming Jie).

The airport is 5km from town and is sometimes referred to as Dìqíng or Deqen – there is currently no airport at Dégqīn. Don't expect to see any taxis here; you'll be lucky if there's a shuttle

bus. If the shuttle bus isn't there you'll have to negotiate with drivers or call your accommodation to try and arrange transport.

Bus

Destinations from Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la):

Bǎishuītái Y25, three hours, one daily (9.10am)

Déqín Y46, six to seven hours, four daily (7.20am to noon)

Dōngwàng Y49, seven to eight hours, one daily (7.30am)

Kūnmíng Y213, 11 hours, four daily (9am to 8pm)

Lǐjiāng Y40, 4½ hours, hourly (8am to 5.40pm)

Xiànguān Y65, seven hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 12.30pm, then 7.30pm and 8pm)

Xiāngchéng Y75, eight hours, one daily (7.30am)

For Bēnzǐlán you can catch the Déqín bus, which passes through Bēnzǐlán on the way.

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

Note that roads out of Zhōngdiàn can be temporarily blocked by snow at any time from November to March. Bring lots of warm clothes and a flexible itinerary.

Around Zhōngdiàn

The following is but a thumbnail sketch; many other sights – mountains, meadows, ponds, *chörtens* (Tibetan stupas) etc – await your exploration; just note that virtually everything either has or will have a pricey admission fee (those pesky chairlifts, especially).

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

Approximately 10km southeast of Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) is the **Tiānshēng Bridge** (天生桥; Tiānshēng Qiáo; admission Y15, hot springs Y85; ☉9am–6pm Apr–Oct), a natural limestone formation, and, further southeast,

the subterranean **Xiàngēi Hot Springs** (下给温泉; Xiàngēi Wēnquán; admission free, hot springs Y80; ☉9am–late); for both places, ask at your accommodation for off-season hours. If you can arrange transport, en route is the **Great Treasure Temple** (大宝寺; Dàbǎo Sì), one of the earliest Buddhist temples in Yúnnán.

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

EMERALD PAGODA LAKE & SHŪDŪ Hǎi

碧塔海、属都海

Some 25km east of Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la), the bus to Sānbà can drop you along the highway for **Emerald Pagoda Lake** (碧塔海; admission Y190), which is also known as Pǔdácùo (普达错), a Mandarinised-version of its Tibetan name. The lake is 8km down a trail (a half-hour by pony), and while the ticket price is laughably steep, there are other trails to the lake. A bike is useful for finding them; taxis will drop you at the ticket office.

Pony trips can be arranged at the lake. An intriguing sight in summer is the comatose fish that float unconscious for several minutes in the lake after feasting on azalea petals.

The whopping entrance fee is also due to the inclusion of **Shūdū Hǎi**, another lake approximately 10km to the north. The name means 'Place Where Milk is Found' in Tibetan because its pastures are reputedly the most fertile in northwestern Yúnnán.

Getting to the lake(s) is tricky. You usually have to catch the bus to Sānbà, get off at the turn-off and hitch. Getting back you can wait (sometimes interminably) for a bus or hike to one of the entrances or main road and look out for taxis – but there may be none. A taxi will cost around Y200 for the return trip, including Shūdū Hǎi.

BÁISHUĪTÁI

白水台

Báishuītái is a limestone deposit plateau 108km southeast of Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la), with some breathtaking scenery and Tibetan villages en route. For good reason it has become probably the most popular backdoor route between Lǐjiāng and Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la). The **terraces** (admission Y30) – think of those in Pamukkale in Turkey or Huánglóng in Sichuān – are lovely, but can be tough to access if rainfall has made trails slippery.

A couple of guesthouses at the nearby towns of Báidì and Sānbà have rooms with beds from Y30 to Y40.

GETTING TO TIBET

At the time of writing, it was not possible to travel overland to Tibet. That may well have changed by the time you read this. If it hasn't and you're tempted to try and sneak in, then think again. There were at least 11 checkpoints operating on the road between Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) and Lhasa in 2010; you will be caught, fined, detained and possibly deported.

It is possible to fly to Lhasa from Zhōngdiàn, but flights are cheaper from elsewhere (Kūnmíng and Chéngdū), and you'll need to be part of an organised group with all the necessary permits. By far the best people to talk to about Tibet travel in Zhōngdiàn are **Khampa Caravan** (康巴商道探險旅行社; Kāngbā Shāngdào Tànxiǎn Lúxíngshè; ☎828 8648; www.khampacaravan.com).

In Kūnmíng, **Mr Chen's Tour** (陈先生旅游; Chénxiānshēng Lǚyóu; ☎316 6105; Room 105, Camellia Hotel, 154 Dongfeng Lu) has been organising Tibet travel for years, although some travellers report that his sales pitch is better than his trips.

From Zhojngdian there is a daily bus to Báishuítái at 9.10am (Y25). One adventurous option is to trek or hitch all the way from Báishuítái to Tiger Leaping Gorge.

BĒNZILÁN

奔子栏

Roughly halfway to Bēnzilán, and where the highway intersects with the road to Wēixī, consider hopping off in **Nìxī** (尼西), famed for its pottery. Indeed, some three-quarters of the village's 100-plus families still make the 3km trek to and from local hills, where the clay is said to be sublime.

Bēnzilán makes an excellent base to explore the wonderful **Dhondrupling Gompa** (东竹林寺; Dōngzhúnlín Sì), 22km from Bēnzilán, heading northwest along the main road.

Bēnzilán has plenty of restaurants and small hotels. All offer decent beds from Y30. **Duówén Lǚguǎn** (bed Y30), around the bend in the northern end of town, is perhaps the best choice. This Tibetan-style place has a prayer wheel by the entrance and pleasant rooms.

To Bēnzilán, there is one bus a day at 2pm (Y20). Alternatively, take any bus between Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la) and Déqīn.

Déqīn

德钦

☎0887 / POP 60.100 / ELEV 3550M

Mellifluously named Déqīn (that last syllable seems to ring, doesn't it?) lies in some of the most ruggedly gorgeous scenery in China. Snuggly cloud-high at an average altitude of 3550m, it rests in the near embrace of one of China's most magical mountains, **Kawa Karpo** (梅里雪山; often referred to as Méilǐ Xuěshān). At 6740m, it is Yúnnán's

highest peak and straddles the Yúnnán-Tibet border.

A true border town, Déqīn is one of Yúnnán's last-outpost-before-Tibet entries, but from here you could also practically hike east to Sìchuān or southwest to Myanmar (Burma). Dìqīng Prefecture was so isolated that it was never really controlled by anyone until the PLA (People's Liberation Army) arrived in force in 1957.

More than 80% of locals are Tibetan, though a dozen other minorities also live here, including one of the few settlements of non-Hui Muslims in China. The town, though, is seriously unattractive – you've come here for the environs, remember!

If you are travelling in winter, remember you are crossing some serious ranges – three times over 5000m – and at any time from mid-October to late spring, heavy snows can close the roads. Pack sensibly and plan for a snowbound emergency.

Confusingly, Déqīn is the name of the city and county; both are incorporated by the Dìqīng Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (迪庆藏族自治州). The county seat (and destination of the bus from Zhōngdiàn) is spelled both ways, but you'll also see other variations on signs, maps, whatever. Plus, remember well – as if you could forget – that Déqīn County is also referred to as 'Shangri-la' in an effort to keep tourist dollars flowing up from the other Shangri-la (the erstwhile Zhōngdiàn).

Most people make immediate tracks for Fēilái Sì. If you do have to plunk down in the town for the night, head south some 200m from the bus station to **Déqīn Tibet Hotel** (德钦楼; ☎841 2031; Déqīn Lóu; dm/d Y30/100), the best cheap place in town. It's

basic but decently maintained, with some nice views from its rooftop.

From Zhōngdiàn (Shangri-la), buses leave four times daily for Dēqīn between 7.20am and noon (Y46, four hours). They return from Dēqīn on a similar schedule.

Around Dēqīn

The Gelukpa (Yellow Hat) sect **Dēqīn Gompa** (德钦寺) is 3km south of Dēqīn. The young monks are friendly but there's not a lot to see.

FĒILÁISÌ

飞来寺

Approximately 10km southwest of Dēqīn is the small but interesting Tibetan **Fēilái Temple** (Fēilái Sì), or Naka Zhashi (or Trash) Gompa in Tibetan, devoted to the spirit of Kawa Karpo. There's no charge but leave a donation. No photos are allowed inside the tiny hall.

Everyone comes here for the sublime views – particularly the sunrises – of the Méilǐ Xuēshān range, including 6740m-high Kawa Karpo (also known as Méilǐ Xuēshān or Tàizǐ Shān) and the even more beautiful peak to the south, 6054m-high **Miacimu** (神女; Shénnǚ in Chinese), whose spirit is the female counterpart of Kawa Karpo. Joseph Rock described Miacimu as ‘the most glorious peak my eyes were ever privileged to see...like a castle of a dream, an ice palace of a fairy tale’. Locals come here to burn ju-

niper incense to the wrathful spirit of the mountain.

Sadly, weather often as not does not cooperate, shrouding the peaks in mist. Winter is your best shot at a sunrise photo op.

Guesthouses come and go like the wind here; most lack a palpable sense of spirit and, often, basic amenities like running water and electricity. **Guānjǐng Tiāntáng** (观景天堂; ☎841 6466; d Y180) is overpriced but better than most.

To get here from Dēqīn a taxi will cost you Y30. Alternatively, head out onto the road and try to flag down any vehicle that's heading your way.

MÍNGYǒNG GLACIER

明永冰川

Tumbling off the side of Kawa Karpo peak is the 12km-long **Míngyǒng Glacier** (Míngyǒng Bīngchuān; admission Y63). At over 13 sq km, it is not only the lowest glacier in China (around 2200m high) but also an oddity – a monsoon marine glacier, which basically translates as having an ecosystem that couldn't possibly be more diverse: tundra, taiga, broadleaf forest and meadow. A conservation area has been created around the base of the peak. It also hauls, moving an average of 530m per year. (Well, at least it used to – it's been slowing a great deal since 1995 and the direst projections say it will start receding and become snowless within 80 years.)

For thousands of years the mountain has been a pilgrimage site and you'll still

THE YǔBĒNG & KAWA KARPO TREKS

A trek to the fabulous **Yǔbēng Waterfall** (雨崩神瀑; Yǔbēng Shénpù) is right up there. At the bridge over the Mekong River to Míngyǒng Glacier, the road leads 6km to Xīdāng (西当) and another 3km or so to a hot spring. Then it's possible to arrange pony hire to take you 25km (four to six hours) to Yǔbēng villages (upper and lower), where there are half a dozen basic guesthouses, including **Mystic Waterfall Lodge** (神瀑客栈; Shénpù Kèzhàn; ☎0887 8411082; dm/d Y20/100), run by a friendly guide named Aqīnpu.

You could hike all the way here from Fēilái Sì using local roads and paths, or using a combination of bus/pony/hiking, the easiest of which would be to bus to Xīdāng, hire a pony (Y100) to the mountain pass two-thirds of the way to Yǔbēng (雨崩) village, then hike the rest of the way.

From Yǔbēng village, loads of treks lie out there. It's a three- to four-hour trip on foot or horseback to the waterfall. Or, you could head south to a fabulous lake (it's around 4350m high and not easy to find, so take a guide).

There is a 3pm (and usually 8am) minibus from Dēqīn to Xīdāng (Y15) that returns the next morning at 8am (the other at 3pm). You could also use the Míngyǒng bus to get back to Dēqīn as it passes by Xīdāng at around 3pm or 4pm. A taxi from Fēilái Sì to Xīdāng is around a whopping Y150.

Then there's the legendary Kawa Karpo *kora*, a 12-day pilgrim circumambulation of Méilǐ Xuēshān. However, half of it is in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, so you'll need a permit to do it; you'll definitely need a guide.

meet a few Tibetan pilgrims, some of whom circumambulate the mountain over seven days in autumn. Surrounding villages are known as 'heaven villages' because of the dense fog that hangs about in spring and summer, even permeating into homes.

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

If you're coming from Yüběng, you could also hike to Míngyǒng from Xīdāng in around three hours if you hoof it.

Beds in guesthouses are ¥30 to ¥40, toilet facilities are basic, and electricity is iffy. A handful of new hotels that claim to be midrange have gone up in the last half-decade, most of which are uninspiring but still cost ¥100 to ¥250 for a standard room with bathroom.

From Déqín, minibuses to Míngyǒng leave regularly from the bridge near the market at the top end of town (¥15, one to two hours, 8am to 3pm or 4pm). You can also try to rent a car through your accommodation.

The road from Déqín descends into the dramatic Mekong Gorge. Six kilometres before Míngyǒng the road crosses the Mekong River and branches off to Xīdāng. Nearby is a small temple, the Bǎishùlín Miào, and a *chörten*.

NÜ JIANG VALLEY

The 320km-long Nü Jiāng Valley (怒江大峡谷) is one of Yúnnán's best-kept secrets. The Nü Jiāng (known as the Salween in Myanmar (Burma); its name in Chinese means 'Raging River') is the second-longest river in Southeast Asia and one of only two undammed rivers in China. Sandwiched between the Gǎolǐngōng Shān and Myanmar (Burma) to the west, Tibet to the north and the imposing Bilú Shān to the east, the gorge holds nearly a quarter of China's flora and fauna species, and half of China's endangered species. The valley also has an exotic mix of Han, Nu, Lisu, Drung and Tibetan nationalities, and even the odd

Burmese trader. And it's simply stunning – all of it.

Getting there is a pain. On a map, it seems a stone's throw from Déqín in the province's northwest. Nope. All traffic enters via the Bǎoshān region. Once there, you trundle eight hours up the valley, marvelling at the scenery, and then head back the way you came. Plans have been announced to blast a road from Gòngshān in the northern part of the valley to Déqín, and another from the village of Bǐngzhōngluò even further north into Tibet. Given the immense topographical challenges, these plans are a long way off.

Liùkù

六库

☑0886 / POP 17,800

Liùkù is the lively, pleasant capital of the prefecture. Divided by the Nü Jiāng River, it's the main transport hub of the region, although it's of little intrinsic interest. You may have to register with a police checkpoint about 2km before entering the town.

Sleeping & Eating

There are many places on Chuancheng Lu close to the main bus station where you can find tired rooms for ¥40 to ¥80. The **Nü Jiāng Traffic Hotel** (怒江交通宾馆; Nüjiāng Jiāotōng Bīnguǎn; ☎362 0046; 141 Chuancheng Lu; 穿城路141号; s & d ¥60-100; ☎) isn't the cheapest hotel in town, but the bathrooms don't smell and it's just around the corner from the bus station.

To eat, head to the riverbank, south of Renmin Lu, where loads of outdoor restaurants cook great barbecued fish.

Information

There's an **internet cafe** (山城网吧; wǎngbà; per hr ¥3; ☎8am-midnight) just south of Renmin Lu. You can't change money in Liùkù, but there are a few ATMs that take foreign cards.

Getting There & Away

Kǔnmíng buses leave and depart from the main bus station on Xiang Yang Donglu, as do a few buses to and from Xiàguān. Most Xiàguān-bound buses depart from the town's other bus station on Jiang Yilu across the river:

Bǎoshān ¥40, three to four hours, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 3pm)

Bǐngzhōngluò ¥74, nine hours, one daily (8.20am)

Gòngshān ¥65, eight hours, every 50 minutes (7am to 1pm)

Kūnmíng Y163 to Y245, 11 to 12 hours, five daily (8.30am, 7pm, 7.30pm, 8pm and 8.30pm)

Xiàguān Y67, five to six hours, every 40 minutes (6.20am to 2.20pm)

Bǐngzhōngluò

丙中洛

📍0886

The main reason to come to the Nù Jiāng Valley is to visit this isolated, friendly **village** (admission Y100), set in a beautiful, wide and fertile bowl. Just 35km south of Tibet and close to Myanmar (Burma), it's a great base for hikes into the surrounding mountains and valleys. The area is at its best in spring and early autumn. Don't even think about coming in the winter.

Potential short hops include heading south along the main road for 2km to the impressive 'first bend' of the Nù Jiāng River, or north along a track more than 15km long that passes through a host of villages. Longer three- or four-day treks include heading to the Tibetan village of Dímáluò (迪麻洛) and then onto Yànmén, where you can catch a bus to Déqín.

A guide is pretty much essential. Tibetan trek leader Alou comes highly recommended. He's based at his bar, **Road to Tibet** (☎356 6182; aluo_luosang@yahoo.com.cn), just off the village main drag, although he's often away on treks so email him first. Another pricier option is Peter, a Lemao guide, who offers treks for Y250 a day. You can find him at **Nù Jiāng Baini Travel** (☎139 8853 9641; yangindali@yahoo.co.uk) on the main street. He speaks English and is a good source of local information, as well as renting mountain bikes for Y50 a day.

An **internet cafe** (per hr Y3; ☎10am-midnight) is next to the **Road to Tibet** bar.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

There's no reason to pay more than Y60 for a room in Bǐngzhōngluò. At the time of writing, the characterless **Yù Dòng Bīngguǎn** (玉洞宾馆; ☎358 1285; s & d Y80-180, discounts of 60%) on the main street was the best option. There are a few eating options on the main street.

📍 Getting There & Away

There is one direct bus a day from Liùkù to Bǐngzhōngluò (Y74, nine hours, 8.20am). It returns from opposite the Yù Dòng Bīngguǎn at 8am. Otherwise, take a bus to Gòngshān (Y65, eight hours, seven daily, every 50 minutes from

7am to 1pm), where you can transfer to one of the regular buses that go back and forth to Bǐngzhōngluò (Y10, 1½ hours) until 5pm or 6pm.

From Gòngshān, there are 10 daily buses to Liùkù from 6.10am to 1pm.

Drung Valley

独龙江

Separated from the Nù Jiāng Valley by the high Gāolígòng Shān range and only reached by road in 1999, this is one of the remotest valleys in China and is home to the tiny Drung ethnic group, whose women still tattoo their faces. The Drung River actually flows out of China into Myanmar (Burma), where it eventually joins the Irrawaddy. There is a county guesthouse (*xiàn zhāodàisùo*) in capital **Dúlóngjiāng**.

No buses run into the valley. You'll have to hire a minivan from Gòngshān for the rough 96km trip to Dúlóngjiāng. Beyond that, most travel is on foot. All travel is dicey in rainy weather and the road is closed if there's snow.

BĀOSHĀN REGION

Scrunched against Myanmar (Burma) and bisected by the wild Nù Jiāng, the Bāoshān region (保山) has never seen too many wanderers passing through. That's difficult to understand, given its primary draws – the chance to immerse yourself in geothermally heated pools after days of traipsing around dormant volcanoes.

The eponymous capital is unremarkable; lovely Téngchōng (and its environs) is where it's at. The Téngchōng area is peppered with minority groups whose villages lie in and around the ancient fire mountains. Located to the west of the Gāolígòng Shān (Gaoiligong Mountain) range, Téngchōng is also prime earthquake territory, having experienced 71 earthquakes measuring over five on the Richter scale since 1500.

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

THE NÙ JIĀNG DAM

In 2003 Unesco named the Nù Jiāng Valley a World Heritage Site, calling it one of the world's most precious ecosystems of its kind. Then, almost simultaneously, the Chinese government announced plans for a series of 13 dams along the Nù Jiāng. The project would theoretically produce more electricity than even the Three Gorges Dam.

Opposition was immediate. Unesco warned that such a project could warrant the area's delisting; it was joined in its opposition to the project by more than 70 international environmental groups. More amazing was local opposition; more than 50 prominent Chinese (from pop stars to business billionaires) spoke out against the dams. In a very rare example of people power succeeding in China, the government has since backed away from the plan, with Premier Wen Jiabao ordering more studies on the scheme's potential impact. Local politicians, though, remain keen for the project to go ahead and the area's future remains highly uncertain.

Téngchōng

腾冲

📍0875

With 20 volcanoes in the vicinity, lots of hot springs and great trekking potential, there's plenty to explore in this neck of the woods. And the city itself is a bit of an oddity – one of the few places in China that, though much of the old architecture has been demolished, remains a pleasant place to hang out, with oodles of green space (you can actually smell the flowers!) and a friendly, low-key populace.

👁 Sights & Activities

Much of the old-time architecture is now gone, but some OK places for a random wander are still to be found.

Markets

MARKETS

The backstreets running off Yingjiang Xilu sport a couple of small markets with splashes of colour and activity in the mornings. Walking along Fengshan Lu from Feicui Lu, the first side street on the left has a small **produce market** (产品市场; *chǎnpǐn shìchǎng*). Further down on the right is a large, covered **jade market** (珠宝玉器交易中心; *zhūbǎo yùqì jiāoyì zhōngxīn*), where you can sometimes see the carving process. Walk east along Yingjiang Xilu and you will come across a larger **produce market** on your right.

FREE Láifēng Shān National Forest Park

PARK

(来凤山国家森林公园; Láifēng Shān Guójiā Sēnlín Gōngyuán; ☀8am-7pm) On the western edge of town, walk through lush pine forests of this park to **Láifēng Temple** (来凤寺; Láifēng Sì) or make the sweaty hike up to the summit, where a pagoda offers fine views.

Diéshuǐ Waterfall

WATERFALL

(叠水瀑布; Diéshuǐ Pùbù; admission Y30) In the western suburbs of town, beside the **Xiānlè Temple** (仙乐寺; Xiānlè Sì), this is a good place for a picnic. The area makes a nice destination for a bike ride and you could easily combine it with a trip to **Héshùn** (和顺), a picturesque village 4km outside Téngchōng.

🍴 Sleeping & Eating

There's no shortage of places to stay: bargain hard at any hotel.

TOP CHOICE Téngchōng International Youth Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(腾冲国际青年旅舍; Téngchōng Guójiā Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎519 8677; tengchongyha2007@hotmail.com; Yuquanyuan; 玉泉园; dm/d Y25/140; 🏠📶) Fronting a redone public square just off the main road, this gem is one of the finest hostels in China. The dorms have great, thick mattresses, while the spacious standard rooms have sparkling bathrooms. The whole place is spotless and all the facilities, including wi-fi, you need are here. The obliging staff are an added bonus. It's a Y5 taxi ride from the long-distance bus station.

Xīnghuá Dàjiǔdiàn

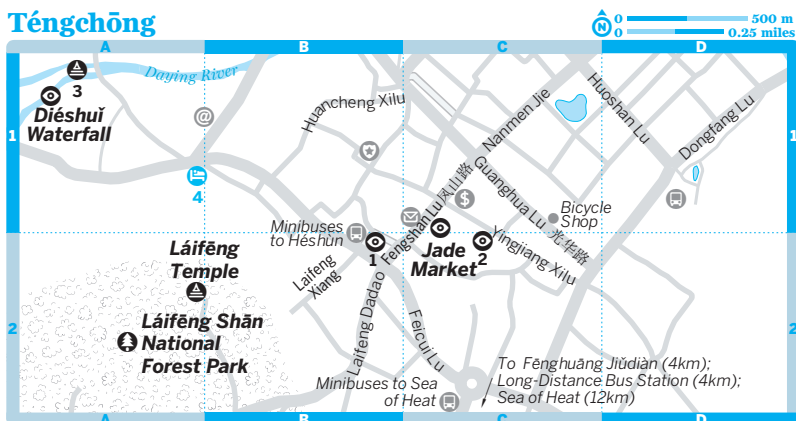
HOTEL \$\$

(兴华大酒店; ☎513 2688; 团城小区7号; s & d Y160; 🏠) There are alarming, tiger-pattern carpets here, but the rooms themselves are comfortable, if generic. The location, northeast of Láifēng Shān National Forest Park, is handy in what is a spread-out town.

Fēnghuāng Jiǔdiàn

HOTEL \$

(风光酒店; ☎516 0699; Re Hai Lu; 热海路; s & d Y120; 🏠📶) Two blocks north from the long-distance bus station (on the right side of the



Téngchōng

📍 Top Sights

Diéshuǐ Waterfall	A1
Jade Market	C1
Láifēng Shān National Forest Park	A2
Láifēng Temple	A2

📍 Sights

1 Produce Market	B2
2 Produce Market	C2
3 Xiānlè Temple	A1

🏠 Sleeping

4 Xinghuá Dàjiūdiàn	A1
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street), this hotel is not the cheapest of the many clustered here, but it has OK, clean rooms that come with broadband access.

There are many hole-in-the-wall eateries and barbecue places along Feicui Lu and elsewhere around town. At night, food stalls set up in the centre of town off Fengshan Lu.

📍 Information

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; cnr Fengshan Lu & Yingjiang Xilu) Has a 24-hour ATM and will change cash and travellers cheques. There are other ATMs around town that take foreign cards too.

China Post (国际邮局; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Fengshan Lu) Serves as post and telephone office.

Internet cafe (网吧; wǎngbā; 100m north of Xinghuá Dàjiūdiàn; per hr Y3) At the time of writing, internet cafes in Téngchōng were not admitting foreigners.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; Yingjiang Xilu; ☎8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Can help with visa extensions.

📍 Getting There & Away

Air

Téngchōng's airport 12km south of town has a daily flight to Kùnmíng (Y1000).

Bus

The city's long-distance bus station is in the south of town.

Bāoshān Y50, three hours, every 40 minutes (7.50am to 7pm)

Kùnmíng (express) Y234, 11 hours, one daily (9am); (sleeper) Y218, 12 hours, 10 daily (3.30pm to 8.10pm)

Xiànguān Y103, six to seven hours, two daily (10.30am and noon); (sleeper) Y108, six to seven hours, one daily (7.30pm)

Téngchōng's local bus station (客运站; Kèyùnzhàn) has frequent departures to local destinations:

Mǎngshì Y30, four hours, nine daily (7.30am to 4.30pm)

Ruǐlì Y57, six hours, nine daily (7am to 3.50pm)

Buses to local destinations north of Téngchōng, such as Mǎzhàn, Gùdōng, Ruidián, Diántán or Zìzhì, either leave from, or pass through, Huoshan Lu in the northeast of town. There's also an old local bus station on Dongfang Lu.

i Getting Around

Téngchōng's environs make for some fine bike riding. You can hire a bike from a shop on Guanhua Lu or from the Téngchōng International Youth Hostel (both Y20 per day).

Bus 2 runs from the town centre to the long-distance bus station. Taxis charge Y5 to hop around town.

Around Téngchōng

Getting out to the sights is a bit tricky. Catching buses part of the way and hiking is one possibility, while some of the closer attractions can be reached by bicycle.

Your other option is to hire a van, which may be affordable if there are several of you; head down to the minibus stand just off the southern end of Huoshan Lu or to the minibus stand for the Sea of Heat in the south of town.

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

HÉSHÙN

和顺

Southwest of town, **Héshùn** (admission Y80; ☉8am-7pm) is well worth a visit. It has been set aside as a retirement village for overseas Chinese, but it's of more interest as a quiet, traditional Chinese village with cobbled streets. There are some great old buildings in the village, providing lots of photo opportunities. The village also has a small **museum** (博物馆; *bówùguǎn*) and a famous old **library** (图书馆; *túshūguǎn*). You can avoid buying a ticket by coming after 7pm, when the ticket office shuts.

The newish **Lao Shay Youth Hostel** (老谢车马店; Lǎoxiě Chēmǎdiàn; ☎515 8398; Cunjiawan; 寸家湾; dm Y20, d Y50-88; @) in the village (by the big banyan tree) is pleasant and set around a small courtyard.

Frequent minibuses leave Téngchōng from the corner of Feicui Lu and Laifeng Xiang (Y2), or you can pick them up opposite the Xinghuá Dàjiūdiàn. It's an easy bicycle ride out to the village but the ride back is an uphill slog.

YÚNFĒNG SHĀN

云峰山

A Taoist mountain dotted with 17th-century temples and monastic retreats, **Yúnfēng**

Shān (Cloudy Peak Mountain; admission Y35) is 47km north of Téngchōng. At the time of writing, the **cable car** (one way/return Y30/50), from where it's a 20-minute walk to **Dàxióng Bǎodiàn** (大雄宝殿), a temple at the summit, was shut for repairs. **Lǔzǔ Diàn** (鲁祖殿), the temple second from the top, serves up solid vegetarian food at lunchtime. It's a quick walk down but it can be hard on the knees.

To get to the mountain, go to Huoshan Lu in Téngchōng and catch a bus to Gùdōng (Y15), and then a microbus from there to the turn-off (Y10). From the turn-off you have to hitch, or you could take the lovely walk past the village of Héping (和平) to the pretty villages just before the mountain. Hiring a vehicle from Téngchōng to take you on a return trip will cost about Y300.

VOLCANOES

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

Around 22km to the north of town, near the village of Mǎzhàn, is the most accessible cluster of **volcanoes** (admission Y40). The main central volcano is known as **Dàkōng Shān** (大空山; Big Empty Hill), which pretty much sums it up, and to the left of it is the black crater of **Hēikōng Shān** (黑空山; Black Empty Hill). You can haul yourself up the steps for views of the surrounding lava fields (long dormant).

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

SEA OF HEAT

热海

A cluster of hot springs, geysers and streams about 12km southwest of Téngchōng that is rapidly being turned into an upmarket resort for domestic tourists, the **Sea of Heat** (Rèhǎi; admission Y60, pool access Y80; ☉8am-11pm) features a couple of outdoor hot springs and a nice warm-water swimming pool along with indoor baths. Some of the springs here reach temperatures of 102°C (don't swim in these ones!).

The rooms at the **Yǎng Shēng Gé** (养生阁; ☎586 9700; s & d Y1600, ste Y3600) all come

with their very own mini-spa complete with water piped from the hot springs. It's close to the ticket office. Alternatively, you can visit the **spa** right by the ticket office and take a dip for Y268. If you don't want to douse yourself, then it takes a pleasant hour or so to walk through the park.

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

DÉHÓNG PREFECTURE

Déhong Prefecture (德宏州; Déhong Zhōu and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture) juts into Myanmar (Burma) in the far west of Yúnnán. Once a backwater of backwaters, as trade grew, the region saw tourists flock in to experience its raucous border atmosphere.

That's dimmed quite a bit, but most Chinese tourists in Déhong are still here for the trade from Myanmar (Burma) that comes through Ruili and Wǎndīng; Burmese jade is a popular commodity and countless other items are spirited over the border. The border with Myanmar (Burma) is punctuated by many crossings, some of them almost imperceptible, so be careful if you go wandering too close.

The most obvious minority groups in Déhong are the Burmese (normally dressed in their traditional saronglike *longyi*), Dai and Jingpo (known in Myanmar (Burma) as the Kachin, a minority group long engaged in armed struggle against the Myanmar (Burmese) government). For information on etiquette for visiting temples in the region see the boxed text on p697.

The best places to head for food are the point-and-choose places on Dongfeng Lu just west of the market or along Qingnian Lu.

The airport is 10km from the city, with daily flights between Mángshì and Kūnmíng (Y450). There are no buses to town, so a taxi will cost you Y25. Minibuses to Ruili (Y30, two hours) usually wait at the airport for incoming flights.

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

There are several bus stations in Mángshì. Both the long-distance bus station in the north of town and the southern bus station offer similar destinations, including Kūnmíng (Y195, 10 hours) at 10.30am, 6.30pm and 9pm.

A bus stand a block southwest of the southern bus stand has the most frequent departures to Wǎndīng (Y22) and Ruili (Y30, 7am to 8pm); they leave when full.

Ruili

瑞丽

☎0692

In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping rationalised the risks of China opening up to the outside world by saying, 'If you open the window, some flies naturally get in.' China's then leader probably didn't have Ruili in mind, but within a few years of trade with Myanmar (Burma) being allowed, the insects were swarming across the border and this tiny town had become Yúnnán's sin city.

Drugs, guns, gems, poached wildlife and smuggled goods of all kinds circulated, while brothels, casinos and some of the dodgiest nightclubs in China catered for the gangsters, newly flush import-export merchants and the voyeurs who flocked to Ruili in their wake.

Nowadays, visitors are more likely to stumble into a shopping mall than a den of thieves. But although the town has been cleaned up significantly since the late 1990s, on the surface at least, the mix of Han Chinese, minorities and Burmese traders is still intact, making for some great market action. And with its palm tree-lined streets, bicycle rickshaws and steamy climate, Ruili has a distinctly laid-back, Southeast Asian feel.

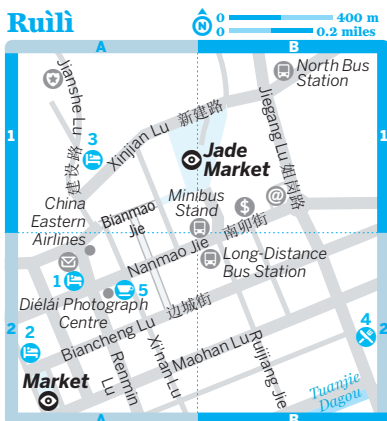
The minority villages nearby are also good reason to come; the stupas are in much better condition than those in Xīshuāngbǎnnà, and it's worth getting a bicycle and heading out to explore.

Mángshì (Lùxī) 芒市(潞西)

☎0692 / POP 15,100

Mángshì is Déhong's air hub. If you fly in from Kūnmíng, there are minibuses running directly from the airport to Ruili; your best bet is to jump onto one of these and head south. Leaving Mángshì, you might have to stay overnight. In which case just wander about the town and its few temples.

Chángjiāng Bīnguǎn (☎228 6055; 2 Weimin Lu; 为民路2号; d/tr Y160/240; 罍) is a standard hotel with standard rooms, while **Xīngjiàn Jiǔdiàn** (☎228 6788; Jianguo Lu; 建国路; d Y100; 罍@) is a newer place in a good location down the street from the bus station.



Ruili

Top Sights

- Jade Market A1
Market A2

Sleeping

- 1 Bāshí Jiǔdiàn A2
2 New Kǎitōng International Hotel A2
3 Ruili Bīnguǎn A1

Eating

- 4 Huáfēng Market B2

Drinking

- 5 Bo Bo's Cold Drinks Shop A2

Another draw for travellers is Myanmar (Burma), which lies only a few kilometres away. Though individual tourists are not allowed to cross freely, organising permits to take you through the sensitive border area is becoming easier.

China is furiously building an expressway to link Kūnmíng with the border, while on the Myanmar (Burma) side new highways stretch all the way to Mandalay, making what had been a horrible five-day journey much more sane. One day, foreign travellers may be able to re-create the 'Southern Silk Route', of which Ruili and Mandalay were a part.

The city is actually fairly tame at night, although prostitution remains an enormous and obvious industry here. Drugs are also still a major problem; vehicles, including buses, leaving Ruili are often searched

(if you're caught in possession of anything illegal, you're headed to Chinese prison). The easy availability of heroin in the recent past also means that Déhóng Prefecture has significant numbers of HIV/AIDS sufferers, from sharing needles, although there has been a decline in the number of new cases in the last few years. There's also a very nasty trade in trafficked women from Myanmar (Burma).

Sights

Think atmosphere rather than aesthetics. The huge **market** (市场; Shìchǎng) in the west of town is one of the most colourful and fun in Yúnnán; a real swirl of ethnicities, including Dai, Jingpo, Han and Burmese, as well as the odd Bangladeshi and Pakistani trader. Get here in the morning, when the stalls are lined with Burmese smokes, tofu wrapped in banana leaves, dodgy pharmaceuticals from Thailand, clothes, you name it. It's also a good place to grab lunch at one of the many snack stalls.

Also great for people-watching is Ruili's ever-expanding **jade market** (珠宝街; Zhūbǎo Jiē), the centre of town in all senses.

Sleeping

There are lots of hotels in Ruili, so it's generally a buyer's market; expect 50% discounts or more everywhere.

New Kǎitōng International Hotel HOTEL \$\$ (新凯通国际大酒店; Xīn Kǎitōng Guójī Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎415 7777; fax 415 6190; 150 Biancheng Lu; 边城路150号; s & d Y360; ㊟@㊟) In terms of service, this is a significant step up from other places in town, even if the rooms aren't too different. But it does have an outdoor swimming pool (Y10 for nonresidents) and snooker tables.

Bāshí Jiǔdiàn HOTEL \$ (巴石酒店; ☎412 9088; cnr Renmin Lu & Nanmao Jie; 南卯街; s & d Y160; ㊟) The staff here have been struck down by the stultifying, steamy atmosphere of Ruili and slumber most of the time. But you can normally grab one of the big rooms for a bargain Y50.

Ruili Bīnguǎn HOTEL \$\$ (瑞丽宾馆; ☎410 0899; 25 Jianshe Lu; 建设路25号; s & d Y220; ㊟@) The best bet for comfort at a reasonable price, with spacious, well-kept rooms, all with ADSL, a quiet location and pleasant staff.



Eating & Drinking

Street stalls set up all over town come nightfall; just follow your nose.



Bo Bo's Cold Drinks Shop CAFE \$

(步步冷饮店; Bùbù Lěngyǐndiàn; Xī'nán Lu; dishes from ¥5; ☎8am-1am) Busy from early to late, the *longyi*-clad Burmese waiters at this Ruili institution hustle as they serve up fantastic fruit juices, Burmese-style milky tea, ice cream and cakes, as well as simple but tasty rice and noodle dishes. There's a cool outside area at night, where you can quaff a Myanmar (Burma) lager under the stars.

Huáfēng Market

STREET MARKET \$

(华丰市场; Huáfēng Shìchǎng; off Jiegang Lu; ☎6pm-late) A big outdoor food court that thrives once darkness descends, come here for Burmese and Chinese food, including superb barbecue dishes as well as the odd Thai delicacy. The food is all on display, so just pick and point.



Information

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Nanmao Jie) Provides all the usual services and will cash travellers cheques for US dollars if you're headed to Myanmar (Burma). There are other ATMs around town that take foreign cards. You can also change/find US dollars at the Jade Market.

China Post (国际邮局; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; cnr Mengmao Lu & Renmin Lu) Despite (or perhaps because?) of its border location, sending any kind of package abroad from this post and telephone office is difficult, if not impossible.

Diélái Photograph Centre (蝶来摄影中心; Diélái Shèyǐng Zhōngxīn; Nanmao Jie) Can burn CDs for ¥15 each. Keep an eye out for the big yellow Kodak sign.

Internet cafe (网吧; wǎngbā; cnr Nanmao Jie & Jiegang Lu; per hr ¥3; ☎24hr) At the time of writing, foreigners weren't allowed to use Ruili's internet cafes.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; Jianshe Jie; ☎8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm)



Getting There & Away

Plans are under way to extend Xiàguān's rail line to Ruili. An expressway from Bǎoshān to Ruili was being built at the time of writing, which will link Ruili to Xiàguān and on to Kūnmíng.

Air

Daily flights come from Kūnmíng via Mángshì, a two-hour drive away. You can buy tickets

at **China Eastern Airlines** (东方航空公司; Dōngfāng Hángkōng Gōngsī; ☎411 1111; Renmin Lu; ☎8.30am-6pm). Shuttle buses leave daily from the office, three hours before scheduled flights (¥60). You can also use the ticket office to book and reconfirm return flights – do so early.

Bus

Ruili has a long-distance bus station (长途客运站; Chángtú Kèyùnzhàn) in the centre of town and a north bus station, really more of a forecourt, at the top of Jiegang Lu. Head to the north bus station (汽车北站; Qìchē Běizhàn) if you're trying to get to Mángshì (¥30, last bus 6pm – they leave when full); for everything else, you're better off going to the long-distance station:

Bǎoshān ¥72, six hours, every 30 to 40minutes (6am to 4pm)

Jīnghóng ¥293, 24 to 26 hours, one daily (9am)

Kūnmíng ¥247, 12 to 15 hours, five daily (9am, 3pm, 6pm, 7pm and 8pm)

Téngchōng ¥57, six hours, every 40 to 50 minutes (5.50am to 12.20pm)

Xiàguān ¥122 to ¥167, 11 to 12 hours, two daily (9am and 8pm)

For local destinations, minibuses leave from opposite the main bus station, or you can just flag one down in the street. Destinations include Wǎndìng (¥10), the border checkpoint at Jiègào (¥10) and the village of Nóngdǎo (¥8). Buses to Zhāngfēng (¥11, one hour) leave from Xinjian Lu.



Getting Around

The most interesting day trips require a bicycle. Ask at your accommodation about the best place to rent one.

A flat rate for a taxi ride inside the city should be ¥5, and up for negotiation from there. There are also cheaper motor and cycle rickshaws.

Around Ruili

Most of the sights around Ruili can be explored easily by bicycle. It's worth making frequent detours down the narrow paths leading off the main roads to visit minority villages. The people are friendly, and there are lots of photo opportunities. The *Tourism and Traffic Map of Ruili*, available from the Xīnhuá bookshop on Renmin Lu, shows the major roads and villages.

The shortest ride is to turn left at the corner north of China Post and continue out of the town proper into the little village of Měngmǎo. There are half a dozen Shan

temples scattered about; the fun is in finding them.

GOLDEN DUCK PAGODA 弄安金鸭塔

In the outskirts of town to the southwest, on the main road, this pagoda (Nòng'ān Jīnyā Tǎ) is an attractive stupa set in a temple courtyard. It was established to mark the arrival of a pair of golden ducks that brought good fortune to what was previously an uninhabited marshy area.

TEMPLES

Just past Golden Duck Pagoda is a crossroads and a small wooden temple. The road to the right (west) leads to the villages of **Jiěxiàng** (姐相) and **Nóngdǎo** (弄岛), and on the way are a number of small temples, villages and stupas. None are spectacular but the village life is interesting and there are often small markets near the temples.

The first major Dai temple is **Hānshā Zhuāng Temple** (喊沙奘寺; Hānshā Zhuāng Sì), a fine wooden structure with a few resident monks. It's set a little off the road and a green tourism sign marks the turn-off. The surrounding Dai village is interesting.

Another 20 minutes or so further down the road, look out for a white stupa on the hillside to the right. This is **Léizhuāngxiāng** (雷装相), Ruili's oldest stupa, dating back to the middle of the Tang dynasty. There's a nunnery in the grounds of the stupa as well as fantastic views of the Ruili area. Once the stupa comes into view, take the next path to the right that cuts through the fields. You will see blue signs written in Chinese and Dai pointing the way through a couple of Dai villages. When you get to the market crossroads at the centre of the main village, take the right path. You'll need to push your bicycle for the last ascent to the stupa. In all, it should take you about 50 minutes to cycle here from Golden Duck Pagoda.

About 2km past the town of Jiěxiàng is **Dēnghǎnnóng Zhuāng Temple** (等喊弄奘寺; Dēnghǎnnóng Zhuāng Sì), a wooden Dai temple with pleasant surroundings.

It's possible to cycle all the way to Nóngdǎo, around 29km southwest of Ruili. There's a solitary hotel in town that has cheap doubles or you can return to Ruili on one of the frequent minibuses.

JĪÈGÀO BORDER CHECKPOINT

姐告边检点

There's not much here but border fanatics will find the trip satisfying if only to mar-

vel at how everything seems so relaxed on both sides of the – quite literally – bamboo curtain.

On a thumb of land jutting into Myanmar (Burma), Jiěgào is the main checkpoint for a steady stream of cross-border traffic. As with Ruili, this place has seen its popular casinos and other dens of iniquity replaced by cheap electronics shops and pricey restaurants.

To get here, continue straight ahead from Golden Duck Pagoda, cross the Myanmar (Burma) bridge over Ruili Jiāng and you will come to Jiěgào, about 7km from Ruili.

Shared red taxis with signs for Jiěgào (Y10) circle the centre of Ruili from dawn until late at night.

WǎNDĪNG BORDER CHECKPOINT

畹町边检站

East of Ruili lies Wǎndīng, a second checkpoint for crossing into Myanmar (Burma). Foreigners can't cross here, although it's something of a tradition to pester the border officials so that maybe one day they'll allow foreigners to cross. It's not as busy as Jiěgào, nor is it as interesting, but if you're a true borderholic then it's worth making the 30-minute drive just so you can take a photo and say you've been.

Staff at the foreign affairs office of the PSB, just across from the Chinese border checkpoint, seem quite easy-going, and look bored enough to have a chuckle at your request for permission to cross.

You could spend some time at the **Wǎndīng Forest Reserve** (畹町森林公园; Wǎndīng Sēnlín Gōngyuán; admission Y2). There are some pleasant walks.

Local places to stay might be able to provide information on **river trips** that include a barbecue lunch in a minority village. Prices vary depending on the number of participants, but you should be able to do one for from Y50 per person. Alternatively, it is possible to catch a lift on a boat with locals. Take a minibus in the direction of Mángshì and get off at the bridge that connects with the main Ruili–Mángshì road. Travellers have caught boats back to the second bridge closer to Ruili and then hitched back to Ruili or Wǎndīng. Some very strenuous haggling is required for boat trips.

Minibuses for Wǎndīng (Y10) leave Ruili when full, and vice versa.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO MYANMAR (BURMA)

To cross from China into Myanmar (Burma), travellers must have the correct visa, travel permits and be part of an official 'group'. The group, which might consist entirely of yourself and no one else, will be escorted from Jiěgào in China to Hsipaw in Myanmar (Burma), an eight-hour drive from the border. Once you reach Hsipaw you can wave goodbye to your guide and are free to travel on your own further south to Mandalay, Yangon and so on.

Ask around at the various travel agencies and tour operators located at the **Camellia Hotel** (茶花宾馆; Cháhuā Bīnguǎn; www.kmcamelliahotel.com; 96 Dongfeng Donglu) in Kūnmíng for the best deals. Remember, it's not possible to organise a visa for Myanmar (Burma) in Ruìlì and you will have to do this either at the embassy in Běijīng (see p985) or in Kūnmíng at the Myanmar consulate (p986).

GOLDEN PAGODA

姐勒金塔

A few kilometres to the east of Ruìlì on the road to Wǎndīng is the Golden Pagoda (Jiělè Jīntǎ), a fine structure that dates back 200 years.

BÀNGMÁHÈ

棒麻贺

Another possible cycling route takes you west of Ruìlì, past the old town of Měngmǎo, now a suburb of Ruìlì. After 4km, just past the village of Jiědōng (姐东), a turn-off north leads to Bàngmáhè village, a Jingpo settlement with a small waterfall nearby.

XĪSHUĀNGBĀNNÀ REGION

North of Myanmar (Burma) and Laos, Xīshuāngbǎnnà is the Chinese approximation of the original Thai name of Sip Sawng Panna (12 Rice-Growing Districts). The Xīshuāngbǎnnà region (西双版纳), better known as simply Bǎnnà, has become China's own mini-Thailand, attracting tourists looking for sunshine and water-splashing festivals, hikers readying for epic jungle treks, and burned-out locals and expats

fleeing the cold and congestion of China's cities.

Still, Xīshuāngbǎnnà rarely feels overwhelmed by visitors – even the capital, Jīnghóng, is basically an overgrown, somnolent town.

Environment

Xīshuāngbǎnnà has myriad plant and animal species, although recent scientific studies have shown the tropical rainforest areas of Bǎnnà are now acutely endangered. The jungle areas that remain contain dwindling numbers of wild tigers, leopards, elephants and golden-haired monkeys. The number of elephants has doubled to 250, up 100% from the early 1980s; the government now offers compensation to villagers whose crops have been destroyed by elephants, or who assist in wildlife conservation. In 1998 the government banned the hunting or processing of animals, but poaching is notoriously hard to control.

People

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

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

Climate

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

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

★ ★ Festivals & Events

During festivals, booking same-day airline tickets to Jīnghóng can be extremely difficult. Hotels in Jīnghóng town are booked solid and prices usually triple. Most people end up commuting from a nearby Dai village. Festivities take place all over Xīshuāngbǎnnà, so you might be lucky further away from Jīnghóng.

**Tanpa Festival**

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

In February, young boys are sent to the local temple for initiation as novice monks.

Tan Jing Festival

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Between February and March, participants honour Buddhist texts housed in local temples.

Water-Splashing Festival

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Held in mid-April, the Water-Splashing Festival washes away the dirt, sorrow and demons of the old year and brings in the happiness of the new. Jínhóng usually celebrates it from 13 to 15 April but dates in the surrounding villages vary. Foreigners get special attention, so prepare to be drenched all day. Remember, the wetter you get, the more luck you'll receive.

Closed-Door Festival

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

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

Tan Ta Festival

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

This festival is held during the last 10-day period of October or November, with temple ceremonies, rocket launches from special towers and hot-air balloons. The rockets, which often contain lucky amulets, blast into the sky; those who find the amulets are assured of good luck.

Jǐnghóng

景洪

0691

Jínhóng – the ‘City of Dawn’ in the local Dai language – is the capital of Xishuangbanna Prefecture, but don’t take that too seriously. It’s still a drowsy Mekong River jungle town as much as a city. Taller buildings are going up, neophyte tour groups run around in all directions (great people-watching fun, actually) but it’s still a perfect representation of laid-back Bännà.

In the summer, the low season, prepare yourself for searing heat and a sapping humidity that puts the entire city into an extended slow motion. If you’ve acclimatised to higher and nippier elevations in Yún-nán, you’ll probably find yourself needing lots of midday siestas. During the winter months, though, the temperature is just perfect.

THE DAI PEOPLE

The Dai (傣族) are Hinayana Buddhists (as opposed to China's majority Mahayana Buddhists) who first appeared 2000 years ago in the Yangzi Valley and were subsequently driven south to here by the Mongol invasion of the 13th century.

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

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

Zhang khap is the name for a solo narrative opera, for which the Dai have a long tradition. Singers are trained from childhood to perform long songs accompanied by native flute and sometimes a long drum known as the elephant drum. Performances are given at monk initiations, when new houses are built, at weddings and on the birthdays of important people; they often last all night. At the end, the audience shouts 'Shuay! Shuay!' which is close to 'Hip, hip, hooray!' Even courtship is done via this singing. Some Dai phrases include *douzaoli* (hello), *yindi* (thank you) and *goihan* (goodbye).

👁️ Sights & Activities

Tropical Flower & Plants Garden GARDENS
(热带花卉园; Rèdài Huāhuìyuán; 99 Jinghong Xilu; admission ¥40; ☀️7.30am-6pm) This terrific botanic garden, west of the town centre, is one of Jīnghóng's better attractions. Admission gets you into a series of gardens where you can view over 1000 different types of plant life. Take the path on the left-hand side as you enter the gardens to head towards the lovely tropical rainforest area.

Peacock Lake Park PARK
The artificial lake in the centre of town isn't much, but the small park (孔雀湖公园; Kǒngquè Hú Gōngyuán) next to it is pleasant. The English Language Corner takes place here every Sunday evening, so this is your chance to exchange views or to engage with the locals practising their English.

Blind Massage School MASSAGE
(盲人按摩; Mángrén Ànmó; cnr Mengle Dadao & Jingde Lu; ☀️9am-midnight) Jīnghóng's oft-recommended Blind Massage School offers hour-long massages for ¥40. Staff are extremely kind and travellers give it terrific reports. Head down the lane off Mengle

Dadao and climb the stairs on your left up to the 2nd floor.

🛏 Sleeping

Manting Lu is lined with cheapies, where you can find bearable rooms from ¥50. Outside of festival season, big discounts are normally on offer all over town.

Many Trees International Youth Hostel

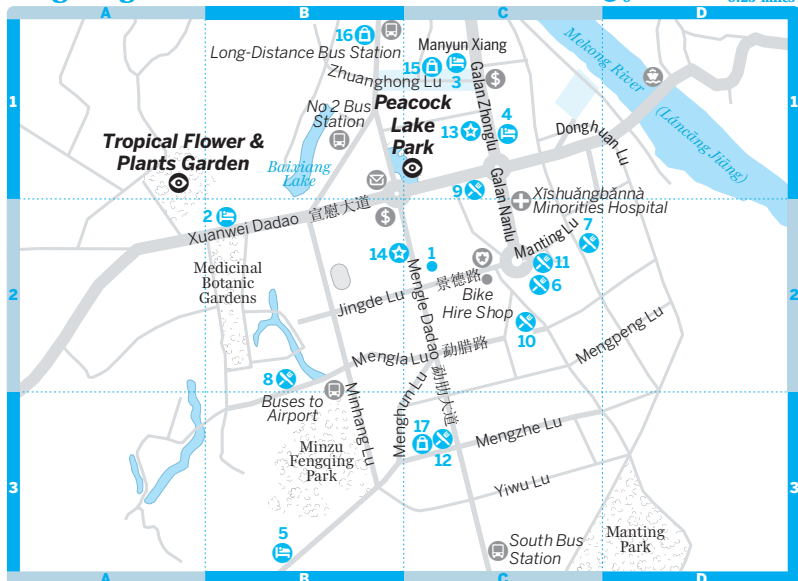
YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(曼丽翠国际青年旅舍; Mǎnlìcuì Gúojiāng Qīngnián Lúshè; ☎️212 6210; 5 Manyun Xiang; 嘎兰中路曼允巷5号; dm ¥30-35, d ¥85-95; 📞📞) Jīnghóng has been crying out for a proper hostel for years, now it has one. The dorms are smallish, but have en suite bathrooms; the doubles are a good deal for the price. There's wi-fi throughout and a cosy communal area. It's down an alley off Galan Zhonglu.

Popular Holiday Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(假日时尚酒店; Jiàrì Shíshàng Jiǔdiàn; ☎️213 9001; 104 Galan Zhonglu; 嘎兰中路104号; d ¥358; 📞📞) Standing out from the three-star pack by virtue of its sizeable, light, clean and modern rooms, many of which come with computers, the optimistic name



Jinghóng

📍 Top Sights

- Peacock Lake Park.....C1
Tropical Flower & Plants GardenA1

📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 1 Blind Massage School C2

🏠 Sleeping

- 2 Banna College Hostel.....B2
3 Many Trees International Youth
HostelC1
4 Popular Holiday HotelC1
5 Tai Garden Hotel.....B3

🍴 Eating

- 6 Banna Café.....C2

- 7 Dai BBQ Restaurants.....C2
8 Forest CaféB2
9 Luō Luō Bīng WǔC1
10 Měiměi Café.....C2
11 Thai Restaurant.....C2
12 Wàngtiānshù DeliC3

🎭 Entertainment

- 13 Měngbālā Nàxì Arts TheatreC1
14 YES Disco.....B2

🛍 Shopping

- 15 Jade MarketC1
16 Market.....B1
17 Xishuangbanna Travel & Study
ClubC3

of this place is well justified. Ignore the listed prices; you should be able to get a room for Y100 to Y120 outside of festival time.

Tai Garden Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(泰园酒店; Tàiyuán Jiǔdiàn; ☎216 6999; www.newtgh.com; 61 Minhang Lu; 民航路61号; d Y960 plus 15% tax, discounts of up to 60%; 🍷🍷🍷) Secluded and often eerily deserted in the low season, when rooms are hugely dis-

counted, the Tai is a great escape from the tour group chaos. Fine grounds and a large and clean outdoor swimming pool (Y20 for nonguests) to cool off in add to its allure.

Banna College Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(版纳学院; Bǎnnà Xuéyuàn; ☎213 8365; 93 Xuanwei Dadao; 宣慰大道93号; dm Y15-20, s/d Y60/70; 🍷🍷) For yonks, this was *the* budget hang-out in Jinghóng. It's still the cheapest

digs in town, the staff are friendly and the location is fine. However, the dorms and rooms are looking fairly beaten-up these days and could do with an upgrade. Bikes are available for hire at Y25 a day.

Eating

The Dai restaurants along Menghun Lu and the excellent Dai barbecue restaurants off Manting Lu are where you'll find the locals and the most authentic and tastiest food in town (as well as at the night markets that pop up all over town). You might want to avoid the eateries aimed at domestic tourists that dish up Dai dance performances along with their culinary specialities.

Dai dishes include barbecued fish, eel or beef cooked with lemongrass or served with peanut-and-tomato sauce. Vegetarians can order roast bamboo shoots prepared in the same fashion. Other specialities include fried river moss (better than it sounds and excellent with beer), spicy bamboo-shoot soup and *shāokǎo* (skewers of meat wrapped in banana leaves and grilled over wood fires).

Měiměi Kāféi

WESTERN \$

(美美咖啡厅; Měiměi Kāféiting; Menglu Lu; dishes from Y15; ☺8.30am-1am; ☎) You'll find it and you'll eat here. This is the original of all the Western-style cafes in town and still the best, thanks to its menu of burgers and sandwiches, pizza and pasta, and foreigner-friendly Chinese and Thai dishes. The owner Mei Mei is a great source of local info.

Luō Luō Bīng Wū

NOODLES \$

(啰啰冰屋; 96 Xuanwei Dadao; dishes from Y5; ☺7.30am-10pm) Busy as long as it is open, the locals flock here for the cheap and tasty rice noodle and fried rice dishes, but especially for the fruit juices, shakes and Taiwanese-style shaved ice desserts that are perfect for cooling off. There's an open-air area out back.

Thai Restaurant

THAI \$

(泰国餐厅; Tàiguó Cānting; Manting Lu; mains from Y12; ☺8am-9.30pm) If you're not making the trek overland to Southeast Asia, get your Thai fix at this ever-reliable open-air restaurant. It's not the most upmarket Thai place in town, but it's certainly the most popular and there's a huge range of dishes to choose from.

Forest Café

WESTERN \$

(森林咖啡屋; Sēnlín Kāféiwū; www.forest-cafe.org; 23 Mengla Lu; dishes from Y8; ☺9am-9pm) Almost as long as Mei Mei has been the owner, Sarah and her brother Stone have been at the Forest, dishing out healthful foods – try the homemade bread – and the best burgers in Bännà. Sarah also gets rave recommendations for her treks. Another good source of travel tips.

Banna Cafe

WESTERN \$

(版纳咖啡; Bännà Kāféi; 1 Manting Lu; breakfast from Y25; ☺7am-late) A good place for breakfast, this friendly, Dai-owned cafe also has a small terrace that is ideal for a sundowner or late-evening libation while watching the world go by.

Wàngtiānshù Deli

WESTERN \$

(望天树美食; Wàngtiānshù Měishí; 111 Mengzhe Lu; dishes from Y12; ☺8.30am-10.30pm) Swiss-owned deli with European bread, homemade ice cream and lots of other goodies, including French wine and cheese, you won't find anywhere else in the region. There's also a small but decent menu of salads and steaks.

★ Entertainment

Méngbālā Nàxī Arts Theatre

THEATRE

(蒙巴拉纳西艺术宫; Méngbālā Nàxī Yìshùgōng; Galan Zhonglu; tickets Y160; ☺8.10pm & 9.45pm) Wildly popular with tour groups, this theatre has nightly song and dance shows.

YES Disco

CLUB

(迪斯科; Dísīkē; Mengle Dadao; admission free; ☺8.30pm-late) Long-running, loud and always packed out with a young local crowd, YES is now a Jinghóng institution. Like all Chinese clubs, it's more about drinking than dancing.

Shopping

Market groupies can head to the fabulous fish and produce **market** tucked behind some modern buildings across from the long-distance bus station. The nearby **Jade Market** (玉市场; Yù Shìzhǎng; Zhuanghong Lu) features lots of Burmese and other South Asians hawking their goods alongside locals, and is fun for people-watching as well as shopping.

Information

Every once in a while we get reports from travelers regarding drug-and-rob incidents on the Kùnmíng–Jìngzhōng bus trip. Be friendly but

aware, accept nothing, and never leave your stuff unattended when you hop off for a break.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Xuanwei Dadao) Changes travellers cheques and foreign currency, and has an ATM machine. There are other branches on Galan Zhonglu and Minhang Lu.

China Post (国际邮局; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; cnr Mengle Dadao & Xuanwei Dadao; ☎8am-8.30pm) You can make international calls from here.

Internet cafes (山城网吧; wǎngbā; Manting Lu; per hr Y3) There are many internet cafes along this street.

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

Xishuāngbǎnnà Minorities Hospital (西双版纳民族医院; Xishuāngbǎnnà Mínzú Yīyuàn; ☑213 0123; Galan Nanlu) The best bet for having an English speaker available.

i Getting There & Away

Air

There are several flights a day to Kūnmíng (Y450) but in April (when the Water-Splashing Festival is held) you'll need to book tickets several days in advance to get either in or out.

In peak seasons you can hop on one or two flights daily to Dàlǐ (Y790) and/or Lǐjiāng (Y680), along with semiregular flights to Shànghǎi (Y2250, daily) and Chéngdū (Y1350, three per week). There are travel agents all over town selling tickets.

Bus

The **long-distance bus station** (长途客运站; Chángtú Kèyùnzhan; Minhang Lu) is the most useful for long-distance destinations, and also has a daily bus to Luang Nam Tha in Laos (Y78, seven hours, 10.40am).

Kūnmíng Y243, nine hours, 15 daily (8am to 9.50pm)

Lǐjiāng Y334, 20 hours, one daily (2.30pm)

Ruili Y320, 26 hours, one daily (9am)

Xiāguān Y202 to Y261, 17 hours, four daily (12.30pm, 4.40pm, 5.30pm and 7.30pm)

If you want to explore Xishuāngbǎnnà, go to the No 2 bus station (第二客运站; Dì'èr Kèyùnzhan), also known as the Bǎnnà Bus Station.

Gǎnlǎnbà Y8.50, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes (7am to 7pm)

Měngzhāi Y15, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes (7am to 7.20pm)

Měnghùn Y16, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes (7am to 6.40pm)

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO THAILAND

The days of hitching rides on cargo boats to Laos and Thailand are long gone. Now, fast ferries leave Jǐnghóng on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday for the seven-hour ride (Y800) to Chiang Saen in Thailand. Get there at 7.30am to start customs proceedings.

Travellers from most countries won't need a Thai visa unless they're planning on staying in the country longer than 30 days. The Thai consulate (p986) in Kūnmíng can issue a 60-day tourist visa for Y200. Visas take two days to process.

At the time of writing, these boats had been delayed by extremely low water levels; some claimed it was due to dam projects on the Mekong (yup, another day, another dam in China), while officials said it was 'seasonal'. Whatever – it had taken up to 15 hours!

Měnglà Y40, four hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 6.20pm)

Měnglún Y16, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes (7am to 6pm)

Měnyǎng Y10, 40 minutes, half-hourly (8am to 6pm)

Sānchàhè Y15, one hour, 10 daily (7.30am to 5pm)

Sīmáo Y41, two hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 7pm)

Head to the south bus station (客运南站; Kèyùn Nánzhàn), which mostly has departures to Kūnmíng, for buses to Dàměnglóng.

If you want to get to the Yuányáng Rice Terraces, first you'll have to take a bus to Jiāngchéng (江城; Y56, nine to 10 hours, 6.30am or 9.15am), stay there overnight and then hop on another bus to Lǚchūn (绿春; Y34, five hours), a nice Hani town with a good market, before hopping on a bus to Yuányáng (Y34, four hours). You could also take a bus from the main station to Shípíng (15 hours) or Jiànshuǐ (18 hours) and loop back if you're going to those places anyway.

i Getting Around

The no 1 bus (Y2) runs to the airport, 5km south of the city, from a stop on Mengla Lu near the corner with Minhang Lu. A taxi will cost around Y20 but expect to be hit up for up to three times that amount during festivals.

Jǐnghóng is small enough that you can walk to most destinations, but a bike makes life easier and can be rented through most accommodation for Y25 to Y30 a day or from the **bike shop** (☎212 0125; ☀8.30am-10pm) on Jingde Lu.

A taxi anywhere in town costs Y6.

Around Jǐnghóng

Trekking (or busing) to the endless minority villages is the draw. You can spend weeks, but even with limited time most destinations in Xīshuāngbǎnnà are only two or three hours away by bus. Note that to get to the most isolated villages, you'll often first have to take the bus to a primary (and uninteresting) village and stay overnight there, since only one bus per day – if that – travels to the tinier villages.

Market addicts can rejoice – it's an artist's palette of colours in outlying villages. The most popular markets seem to be the Thursday market in Xīdìng, then Měnghùn, followed by Měnghài.

Villages in the vicinity of Jǐnghóng can be reached by bicycle and this can be a good way to acclimatise yourself to the stifling heat. Many of them you will happen upon by chance. The most famous trek has always been the two- to three-hour ride to Měnghàn (Gǎnlǎnbà); the ride can be hairy

with traffic/pollution, but surrounding the village, it's sublime.

Take note: it can feel like every second village begins with the prefix 'Meng' and it isn't unheard of for travellers to end up at the wrong village entirely because of communication problems. Have your destination written down in script before you head off.

SĀNCHÀHÉ NATURE RESERVE

三岔河自然保护区

This nature reserve (Sānchàhé Zírán Bǎohùqū), 48km north of Jǐnghóng, is one of five enormous forest reserves in southern Yúnnán. It has an area of nearly 1.5 million hectares; seriously, treat it with respect – you get off-trail here, you won't be found. The madding crowds head for **Bǎnnà Wild Elephant Valley** (版纳野象谷; Bǎnnà Yéxiànggǔ; admission Y65), named after the 50 or so wild elephants that live in the valley. The elephants are very retiring and rare are the travellers who have actually seen any of them. You will see monkeys, though, and it's worth a visit if you want to see something of the local forest. A 2km-long **cable car** (one way/return Y40/60) runs over the tree tops from the main entrance into the heart of the park, as does an elevated walkway.

There's a ho-hum **hotel** (d 240) at the main entrance; staying in the park is no

TREKKING IN XĪSHUĀNGBǎNNÀ

Treks around Xīshuāngbǎnnà used to be among the best in China – you'd be invited into a local's home to eat, sleep and drink *mǐjiǔ* (rice wine). Increasing numbers of visitors have changed this in places. Don't automatically expect a welcome mat and a free lunch just because you're a foreigner, but remember that throwing your money around could change the local economy.

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

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

Seriously consider taking a guide. You won't hear much Mandarin Chinese on the trail, let alone any English. Expect to pay around Y250 per day.

Forest Café (☎0691 898 5122; www.forest-cafe.org) in Jǐnghóng is a great place to start. Sarah, the owner, has years of experience leading treks and comes recommended. The **Měiměi Café** (☎0691 212 7324), also in Jǐnghóng, is also recommended.

Try the **Xīshuāngbǎnnà Travel & Study Club** (Xīshuāngbǎnnà Lúxué Júlébù; ☎0691 213 1707; 19 Mengzhe Lu; ☀8.30am-9pm) for trekking equipment; it also rents mountain bikes for Y40 a day.

longer an option. There are 10 buses daily to Sānchàhé (Y15, 1½ hours, 7.30am to 5pm).

MĒNGYǎNG 勐养
The much photographed **Elephant-Shaped Banyan Tree** (象形榕树; Xiàngxíng Róngshù) is the reason most people visit Měngyǎng, 34km northeast of Jǐnghóng on the road to Simáo. It's also a centre for the Hani, Floral-Belt Dai and Lahu, one of the poorest minorities in the region.

From Měngyǎng it's another 19km south-east to **Jīnuò** (基诺), which is home base for the Jinuo minority.

MĒNGHǎN (GǎNLǎNBÀ) 勐罕(橄榄坝)
A few years ago, Měnghǎn (or Gǎnlǎnbà as it's sometimes referred to) was a grand destination – you'd bike here and chill. Sadly, much of the main attraction – the lovely, friendly, somnolent village itself – has basically been roped off as a quasi minority theme park (and a pricey one at that) with tour buses, cacophonous dancing – the usual. That said, the environs of the village are still wondrous.

👁 Sights

Dai Minority Park ANCIENT VILLAGE (傣族园; Dǎizúyuán; ☎0691 250 4099; Manting Lu; adult/student Y100/50) This was once the part of town that everyone came to this region to experience – especially for its classic temples and Dai families hosting visitors in their traditional homes. (It's now the aforementioned 'theme park'.) Tourists can spend the night in villagers' homes and partake in water-splashing 'festivals' twice a day. Despite the artificial nature of it all, some travellers have loved the experience.

For wonderful scenery along rivers and rice paddies, travellers recommend heading to the south of town, crossing the Mekong by ferry (Y2 with a bike), and then heading left (east). The last ferry returns at 7pm.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Beds in a Dai home within the park will cost between Y30 and Y50 per person. Food is extra. Beds are traditional Dai mats and are usually very comfortable. Most homes will also have showers for you. Restaurants inside the park are pricey and firmly aimed at tour groups.

📍 Getting There & Away

Buses to Měnghǎn leave from Jǐnghóng's No 2 bus station (Y8.50, every 20 minutes, 7.15am to 7pm). From Měnghǎn's bus station, there

ETIQUETTE IN DAI TEMPLES

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

are buses back to Jǐnghóng (Y8.50) every 20 minutes and two buses a day to Měnglún (Y9.50, one hour, 10am and 2pm).

It's possible to cycle from Jǐnghóng to Měnghǎn in a brisk two hours or a leisurely three hours, although the traffic can be heavy.

📍 Getting Around

You can rent a mountain bike from one of several bicycle shops along Manting Lu (Y20 per day).

MĒNGLÚN

勐伦
East of Měnghǎn, Měnglún sports the **Tropical Plant Gardens** (热带植物园; Rèdài Zhīwùyuán; adult/student Y80/50; ☎7.30am-midnight). The gardens are gorgeous and get some high marks from visitors.

To get there, turn left out of the bus station and then take the first left. Follow the road downhill and bear to the right and you'll reach the ticket office, which is just before a footbridge across the Mekong.

Your best bet for a clean bed in town is the **Chūnlín Bīnguǎn** (春林宾馆; ☎0691 871 5681; d Y50), which is close to the gardens' entrance.

From Jǐnghóng's No 2 bus station there are buses to Měnglún (Y16, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes, 6.30am to 6.20pm). Alternatively, Měnglún can be combined with a day trip to Měnghǎn.

From Měnglún, there are buses to Měnglà (Y24, 2½ hours, every 20 minutes, 8am to 6pm) and Jǐnghóng (Y16, 75 minutes, every 20 minutes, 6.30am to 7pm).

THE JINUO PEOPLE

The Jinuo people (基诺族), sometimes known as the Youle, were officially 'discovered' as a minority in 1979 and are among the smallest groups – numbering between 12,000 and 18,000. They call themselves 'those who respect the uncle' and are thought to possibly have descended from the Qiang.

The women wear a white cowl, a cotton tunic with bright horizontal stripes and a tubular black skirt. Earlobe decoration is an elaborate custom – the larger the hole and the more flowers it can contain, the more beautiful the woman is considered. Teeth are sometimes painted black with the sap of the lacquer tree, which serves the dual dental purpose of beautifying the mouth and preventing tooth decay and halitosis.

Previously, the Jinuo lived in longhouses with as many as 27 families occupying rooms on either side of the central corridor. Each family had its own hearth, but the oldest man owned the largest hearth, which was always the closest to the door. Longhouses are rarely used now and the Jinuo seem to be quickly losing their distinctive way of life. The **Temaoke Festival** is held in Jinuo villages on the 6th to 8th of the second lunar month. During this festival you can witness elaborate rituals with the sacred Sun Drum.

MĒNGLÀ

勐腊

Měnglā: not the nicest send-off from China, nor the nicest first port of call. (Though the scenery north of town is gorgeous.) The only reason you should find yourself here is if you're crossing into (or coming from) Laos at Mòhān. Depending on bus condition/road traffic/arrival time, you may be stuck here for the night.

At **Měnglā Bīnguǎn** (勐腊宾馆; ☎0691 812 2168; dm/d Y20/50) the dorm beds are spartan; the nicer doubles have their own balcony. It's near No 2 bus station. The **Jīnqiáo Dàjiǔdiàn** (金桥大酒店; ☎0691 812 4946; d Y50-70, tr Y80; 餐) is convenient for the north bus station just up the hill.

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

Měnglā has two bus stations. The northern long-distance bus station has buses to Kūnmíng (Y287, two or three, 8.30am to 11.30am). The No 2 bus station is in the southern part of town.

DÀMĒNGLÓNG

大勐龙

Dàměnglóng (just the latter two characters, 'Měnglóng', are written on buses) is a scrappy place with drowsy folks lolling about the dusty streets. Sights include some decent pagodas, but mostly you're here to traipse or bike through endless villages (ask about bike hire at the Huá Jié Bīnguǎn).

About 55km south of Jīnghóng and a few kilometres from the Myanmar (Burma) border, the border crossing point (not open for foreigners) with Myanmar (Burma) has been designated as the entry point for a planned highway linking Thailand, Myanmar (Burma) and China, which should really liven things up around here if it ever gets built.

👁 Sights

White Bamboo Shoot Pagoda

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(曼飞龙塔; Mǎnfēilóng Tǎ; admission Y5) Surrounded by jungle (watch out for stray snakes!), this pagoda dates back to 1204 and is Dàměnglóng's premier attraction. According to the legend, this pagoda's temple was built on the location of a hallowed footprint left behind by Sakyamuni Buddha, who is said to have visited Xīshuāngbǎnnà. If you have an interest in ancient footprints you can look for it in a niche below one of the nine stupas. The temple has been extensively renovated in recent years.

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

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

lect the entry fee. A moto-rickshaw from Dàměnglóng is Y10.

FREE Black Pagoda

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(黑塔; Hēi Tǎ) Just above the centre of town is a Dai monastery with a steep path beside it leading up to the Black Pagoda – you'll notice it when entering Dàměnglóng. The pagoda itself is actually gold, not black. Take a stroll up and have a chat with the four young monks in residence. The views of Dàměnglóng and surrounding countryside are more interesting than the temple itself.

Sleeping & Eating

Huá Jié Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$

(华杰宾馆; ☎0691 274 2588; d Y50) Not very prepossessing, but the best option in town. To get here, turn right out of the bus station, then left up the hill and it's on the left-hand side, set back from the road.

There are simple Dai barbecue places scattered around the village. Try the ones close to the Black Pagoda.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Dàměnglóng (Y16, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm) leave from Jǐnghóng's south bus station. Remember, the 'Da' character is sometimes not displayed. Buses for the return trip run on the same schedule.

Buses from Měnglà's No 2 station:

Jǐnghóng Y40, every 30 to 60 minutes (6.30am to 6.30pm)

Měnglún Y20 to Y25, every 20 minutes (6.40am to 7.30pm)

Móhān Y15, every 20 minutes (8am to 6pm)

XIǎOJIĒ

小街

The village of Xiǎojiē, about 15km north of Dàměnglóng, is surrounded by Bulang,

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

There's plenty of room for exploration in this area, although be careful not to drift across the Burmese border.

MĚNGHǎI

勐海

This modern town is another potential base for exploring the countryside, although it's not as pleasant a place as Jǐnghóng. Grab a bike and head north for the most interesting pagodas and villages.

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

Buses run from Jǐnghóng's No 2 bus station to Měnghǎi (Y15, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes, 7am to 7.20pm). They return every 20 minutes or so too.

MĚNGHÙN

勐混

This quiet little village, about 26km southwest of Měnghǎi, has a colourful **Sunday market**. The town begins buzzing around 7am and the action lingers on through to mid-day. The swirl of hill tribespeople alone, with the women sporting fancy leggings, head-dresses, earrings and bracelets, makes the trip worthwhile. Some travellers love it, while others decry the 'foreignisation' of locals.

There are several guesthouses, though none are remarkable. For Y50 you get a double with bathroom and TV, but no air-con.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO LAOS

On-the-spot visas for Laos can be obtained at the border. The price will depend on your nationality (generally US\$35 to US\$40). The **Chinese checkpoint** (☎0691 812 2684; ☀8am-5.30pm) is generally not much of an ordeal. Don't forget that Laos is an hour behind China.

A daily bus runs to Luang Nam Tha in Laos from Jǐnghóng (Y78, seven hours, 10.40am). Along with the bus to Vientiane from Kūnmíng (which leaves Kūnmíng at 5pm when there are enough passengers; Y486), it stops at Měnglà, but you're not guaranteed a seat.

No matter what anyone says, there should be no 'charge' to cross. Once your passport is stamped (double-check all stamps), you can jump on a tractor or truck to take you 3km into Laos for around Y5. Whatever you do, go early, in case things wrap up early on either side. There are guesthouses on both the Chinese and Lao sides; people generally change money on the Lao side.

BULANG PEOPLE

The Bulang people (布朗族) live mainly in the Bùlǎng, Xìdìng and Bādá mountains of Xīshuāngbǎnnà. They keep to the hills farming cotton, sugarcane and Pu'er tea, one of Yúnnán's most famous exports.

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

Buses departing from Jīnghóng for Měnghùn (Y16, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6.40pm) run from the No 2 bus station.

From Měnghùn, minibuses run regularly to Měngǎi (Y6, one hour), Xìdìng (Y12, 1½ hours, 7.10am and 4pm) and throughout the day to Jīnghóng.

XÌDÌNG

西定

This sleepy hillside hamlet comes alive every Thursday for its weekly **market**, one of

the best in the region. At other times you'll find Xìdìng almost deserted. If you want to see the market at its most interesting, you'll really have to get here the night before. There's a horrible hotel by the bus station; you're better off asking around and finding a bed with a local.

To get here by public transport you can either catch one of the two direct buses from Měngǎi (Y12, 10.40am and 3.30pm) or travel via Měnghùn and change for a bus to Xìdìng. Buses from Xìdìng leave twice a day (Y11, 7.20am and 1pm) for Měnghùn. If you miss the bus you can always get a ride on a motorbike (Y30), a spectacular if hair-raising experience.

JǐNGZHĒN

景真

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

Frequent minibuses from the bus station in Měngǎi go via Jǐngzhēn (Y6, 30 minutes).

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