

Journey Down South

10 days | Guilin to Tiger Leaping Gorge



Get off the beaten track and see the highlights of China's scenic south. Discover dramatic landscapes, trek in the beautiful Yunnan Province and meet the locals at eco lodges and homestays.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- **Guilin/Yangshuo** - free time. Karst landscape, riverside villages, quirky street markets. Local fisherman and Cormorants. Sailing, rafting, hiking and outdoor pursuits
- **Kunming** - Stone Forest. Opt to visit Western Hills or Dragon Gate Grotto
- **Lijiang** - UNESCO-listed Dayan Old Town, Tiger Leaping Gorge - trekking/walking
- **Wenhai** - Jade Dragon Snow Mountain
- **Lashishai District** - Naxi indigenous community, Yi Village
- **Liming** - Thousand Tortoise Mountain

What's Included

- Breakfast daily, 6 lunches, 3 dinners
- 5 nights Standard hotels (Superior and Deluxe available on request, 1 night simple Eco Lodge, 1 night Guesthouse & 1 night Homestay (with Naxi indigenous family)

- 1 night sleeper train (4-berth sort sleeper cabin) - Guilin to Kunming
- Touring and excursions as per itinerary
- Guided trekking and guiding at points of interest
- Airport arrival and departure transfer day 1 & day 10
- English speaking specialist guides at local sights
- All relevant transfers and transportation
- Entrance fees to all included sites

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Guilin

Welcome to Guilin, Guangxi Province! Airport arrival and transfer to your hotel.

Overnight - Guilin

Day 2 : Yangshuo

Guilin - Yangshuo. This morning drive onwards (approx 1.5hrs) to Yangshuo. Renowned for its striking, if bizarre scenery, vast areas of karst limestone outcrops which rise up from flat rice paddy fields. From Yangshuo it is possible to take a relaxing cruise by simple bamboo raft or motorised long boat along the Yulonghe River, passing an endless procession of peaks and remote

villages. The local fishermen use trained cormorants to catch fish and local village boys paddle out to the river boats with all manner of curios. **Overnight - Yangshuo (B)**

Day 3 : Yangshuo



Choose to go boating along the Yulonghe or Yu Long rivers, cycling, hiking, rafting or rock climbing or simply spend the day exploring this charming village laden with quirky shops, tea shops, antiques, art t-shirt designers and souvenir curios. Maybe take a calligraphers or beginners art class with a local painter or enjoy a morning class at the 'Cloud 9' cooking school. **Overnight - Yangshuo (B)**

Day 4 : Reed Flute Caves

Yangshuo - Guilin - Kunming. Returning to Guilin we tour the enormous Reed Flute Caves. Take an afternoon stroll along the picturesque riverside foot bridges and paths before our overnight train journey to Kunming. **Overnight - Sleeper Train (B, L)**

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Days 5-6 : Kunming & Lijiang



Kunming - Lijiang. Capital of Yunnan Province, Kunming lies 2000m above sea level. Its gentle weather and abundance of flowers have earned it the name 'City of Eternal Spring'. Arriving mid morning, hotel check in and free time. Visit the stunning Western Hills or the Dragon Gate Grotto if you choose. On day 6 visit the petrified Stone Forest, before flying onward to Lijiang. **Overnight - Kunming (1), Lijiang (1)** (B:2, L:2)

Day 7 : Trek to Wenhai

Lijiang – Wenhai. Seeing the reflection of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain on the surface of a picturesque lake, is the highlight of the 3 - 4 hour hike toward Wenhai Eco lodge. Upon arrival explore the village and drink tea with a local family. **Overnight - Wenhai Eco Lodge** (B, L, D)

Day 8 : Lashishai Homestay

Wenhai - Lashishai home stay. This morning you visit Yi Village before embarking on a 4 hour hike to visit the Lashishai community. Here, you'll meet and stay overnight with a traditional Naxi indigenous family. **Overnight - Lashishai homestay** (B, L, D)

Day 9 : Thousand Tortoise Mountain



Lashishai - Liming. En route to Liming (approx 3 hour drive) visit the town of Shigu, located

on the first bend of the Yangtze River. Here you undertake a 3 hour hike (or pony ride if you choose) to the 3000m summit of the Thousand Tortoise Mountain. After enjoying the spectacular panoramic views continue your walk (downhill) to Liming. **Overnight - Liming Guesthouse** (B, L, D)

Day 10 : Tiger Leaping Gorge

Liming – Tiger Leaping Gorge – Lijiang. After breakfast head to spectacular Tiger Leaping Gorge on the Yangtze River. Some 16km long and up to 3000m deep, it is the world's deepest canyon. The gorge is so narrow at various points that legend has it a tiger once escaped pursuit by leaping across. Visiting the gorge, you'll have a chance to walk a section and take in the dramatic, yet stark scenery. After lunch return to Lijiang for your onward flight or onward journey to Dali, should you choose. (B)

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Entrance Fees

Entry fees to most sites are not included, although reasonably priced. In China, we collect entrance fees on Day 2 of the tour (the amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document). A comprehensive breakdown of the entrance fee total is provided upon arrival.

All funds collected in China for entrance fees and optional excursions, that you may wish to undertake are payable in local currency - Chinese Yuan (CNY).

Tipping Kitty

At the start of your group tour, we take a small tipping kitty (the amount is noted under exclusions) from all tour participants to cover tips throughout your holiday. This saves you the hassle of knowing when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage luggers, bus drivers, train conductors and other support staff throughout the tour.

This amount does not include a tip for your tour guide. For a job well done, we would suggest USD\$3 - 5 per person per day. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal

gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

If travelling on a short stay, private tour or a group tour with less than 6 participants we do not collect a tipping kitty and recommend the following amount to cover tips paid directly by you to bellhops, luggage handlers, your driver and local guide: CNY50/USD\$8 - per person per day of your tour.

Arrival Transfers

For tours starting in Beijing When arriving into Beijing International Airport and attending to immigration and customs formalities, please proceed to the arrival hall. If arriving to Beijing into Terminal 2, when exiting immigration to the arrivals hall, please turn right where our representative will be waiting. If arriving into Terminal 3 you will be met just outside the restricted area.

Please have your tour voucher handy and make it available to our representative who will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall, holding a prominent On The Go Tours logo signboard, ready to escort you to our awaiting transportation and onward to your tour start hotel.

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (remember Beijing is a busy International Airport) after waiting 30 minutes in the arrival hall or your flight to China is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher. Please do not leave the airport and travel to the hotel yourself. Please call the contact number as stated on your tour voucher.

Groups & Guides

Some of our group tours are sectors of a larger tour. Some travellers on your trip may only travel with you for part of your tour. It also might be that you end your holiday part way through a longer tour and others in the group continue on.

Guides: We believe the best way to see a country is through the eyes of a local and as such we only employ tour guides native to the country you are visiting. Our guides are passionate, caring, knowledgeable and

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fun, and by travelling with a local you get to see the wonders of the country through their eyes. Tour guides will remain with groups of 6 or more. Where groups are less than 6, travel between cities will be unescorted with transfers at either side of the airport/train station and a local guide will conduct the scheduled sightseeing in that city.

China Country Guide

Visas

China Visa

Visas are required by all visitors to China. It is essential that a tourist visa is procured prior to travel. We will provide you with an invoice/itinerary indicating that you are travelling to China on a pre-arranged holiday. The visa is valid for entry within 3 months, so you cannot apply any earlier. Please ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of return from China.

If you're a resident of the UK and would like someone to handle your visa application for you then we recommend CIBTvisas. Please visit <http://www.cibtvisas.co.uk/onthego> for more information.

Visa for Hong Kong

Most Western visitors to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China do not require a tourist visa issued in advance of travel. Currently, UK nationals can stay up to 180 days. Nationals of Australia, Canada, Eire, most other EU countries, New Zealand and the US do not require a visa for a stay not exceeding 90 days, while holders of RSA passports can remain for up to 30 days. If entering Hong Kong from mainland China and returning to mainland China a multiple Chinese entry visa is required.

Visa for Tibet

Tibet - If travelling to Tibet, a Tibet Travel Permit is required. The permit will be arranged by our office in China. Please contact On The Go Tours prior to departure for the most up to date Tibetan entry information.

The information above is not applicable for the Beijing and Shanghai Visa Free Tours.

NOTE: Visa requirements are subject to change so please check with your embassy before booking your holiday.

Climate

In all, China has a great diversity of climates. To sum it up - China experiences hot summers in most parts of the country, very cold winters in the north and comfortable winters in the south! Sep-Oct is warm to hot and dry across the country. Nov-Mar is winter with very cool temps in the north, whilst mild in the south. If combining the north and south, you'll experience 2 distinct weather patterns. Apr-May - perfect in the north, if a little humid and rainy in the south. Jun-Aug can bring a few showers.

Health & Water

You should seek medical advice before travelling to China from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide it is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven't had a booster in the last ten years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so we recommend vaccinations for Typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). There is a malarial risk in remote southern areas of China, so do check the current situation before travelling.

As tap water is not safe to drink in China, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available from hotels, shops and restaurants. Make sure bottled water is sealed.

Currency

The currency of China is the Chinese Yuan.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars, Euro and other major currencies can be exchanged in China. Exchange facilities are available at various bureau de changes and banks in major towns have ATMs or it is possible to get some before you leave home. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Time & Voltage

China is 8 hours ahead of GMT. The country operates on one time zone, so clocks are set according to Beijing time, meaning, given the size of the country, sunrise and sunset can occur at peculiar times! Voltage is 220v, 50Hz AC. Chinese plugs come in many designs: 3-pronged angle pins as used in Australia; 3-pronged round pins as used in Hong Kong; 2-pronged flat pins as used in the USA; or 2 round narrow pins as used in Europe. To cover all bases, pack a travel adaptor!

Essential Packing

As light as possible! In China, most often portage is not available at railway stations and you will be required to carry your own luggage. Bags with wheels can be a hindrance when climbing several flights of stairs, though are a blessing when walking lengthy distances to reach our awaiting transportation. If travelling in early spring we recommend you pack warm clothes, layering works best this time of year.

- Food in China is very different and arguably better than your local takeaway! If you prefer western snack food, consider bringing a supply
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume, basic torch/ flash light & umbrella for sun or rain
- Comfortable closed in walking shoes for climbing the Great Wall
- DEET based mosquito repellent & antihistamine cream
- Chinese plugs come in many designs: 3 prong angle pins similar, though smaller than those used in Australia; 2 prong flat pins (type A) or 2 round pins, European style (type C). To cover all bases, pack a travel adaptor!
- Two spare passport photos & a photocopy of your passport
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Plastic poncho to go over your jacket. Whilst site-seeing, you can be in the rain for an extended period and even a rain jacket can get soaked. You can purchase a cheap one locally, but we suggest taking one from home of a better quality that doesn't rip easily

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PLEASE NOTE:

- If your tour includes an internal flight, that most airlines have a 20kg baggage limit.
- As of July 2019, the Shanghai government has introduced a new policy for the purpose of environment protection, whereby all hotels will no longer supply disposable items such as slippers, shower caps, tooth brush/paste, body lotion, combs, nail files etc. Currently, these items are provided in Xian, Beijing, Luoyang etc, but this policy will be rolled out eventually throughout the rest of China also. Items that may still be provided by hotels (should they choose) are shampoo, conditioner and soap. With this in mind, please ensure you pack any necessities needed for your holiday.

Toilets/Washrooms

Public toilets, when found, are usually 'squats' - holes in the ground with footrests at either side and often don't possess a door! The custom is to wash with water from a jug or little pipe attached to the toilet using your left hand. Doesn't appeal? Here are some hints!

- Time yourself with the accommodations you are staying at
- If you are out and about, find the nearest hotel, restaurant, fast food outlet, or toilets at tourist attractions, which all tend to have Western style facilities
- Ask your tour guide to make a stop
- Pack a roll of toilet paper and anti-bacterial wipes for your own comfort

Media Restrictions

There are restrictions on all media, including social media and free press throughout China. Whilst on holiday, you will have limited or no access to social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus - so no Google Maps and no Play Store. To bypass the firewall, you could download a VPN. It is much easier to do this before you go to China.

WeChat: If travelling on one of our budget tours, communication between the group and Adventure Leader is via the app: WeChat. Please install this App and open an account before your trip as it is harder to do so in mainland China.

There is also limited international calling options, so please check with your local provider before leaving home, to source the best roaming or online options to keep in regular contact with family and friends during your travels.

Travelling By Train

Fast and efficient, China's first rail lines were laid in the 19th century, and today, the government continues to invest heavily in this crucial mode of transport which connects many parts of the country. When travelling during the day, 'soft' seats, that is to say 'upholstered' seats are provided.

For overnight travel on "Signature" tours, clients are accommodated in 'soft class' sleeper cabins. Aboard each wagon are 9 compartments that comprise 4 bunks per compartment. Four people of mixed sex share one compartment. On occasion, dependent upon group size, you may be sharing with local people on the overnight journey, though sometimes dependent upon how the Chinese Railways Booking Office configure the bookings, the cabin may be filled with four of our passengers.

For overnight travel on "Budget" tours, clients are accommodated in open 6 berth bunks. We try to get all of our travellers in the same compartment/seating area so that you can have fun getting to know each other better, playing games etc. It is possible to upgrade to a four-berth soft sleeper on your trip, please contact us at time of booking for rates (upgrades are only possible if the open class ticket has not already been purchased).

A dining wagon serves reasonably priced Chinese food of the noodles and rice variety, along with snacks and drinks. A very simple menu is published in English. On the Beijing - Xi'an service, there is also a small bar serving drinks including alcohol. Each wagon offers a WC and hand basin facility. At one end, is a Chinese squat-style WC, whilst at the other end is a modern Western-style WC. Cabins are lockable from the inside and luggage is stowed in overhead compartments and under the bottom bunk. Bed linen and slippers are supplied, and often there is a TV mounted on the wall at the end of each bed that

may even work. Most channels are broadcast in Mandarin, excluding one English Channel, which has little of interest on it!

Time Keeping

Punctuality is very important throughout the tour and you will usually be given a time to meet your tour leader and the rest of the group in reception. In the event that you miss the meeting time you will have to make your own way to where the group are, this will be at your own expense.

Delays can occur on the trips, although they are rare we recommend you do not book onward travel too close to the end of the tour to allow time for delays. We take no responsibility for any missed flights or additional expenses if the group arrives late to the departure city.

Porterage

In China most often porterage is not available at railway stations and you will be required to carry your own luggage. We recommend you pack as light as possible as there can be several flights of stairs and a lengthy walk to our awaiting transportation.

Shopping

China is a virtual Aladdin's Cave. Government-run Friendship Stores in almost all cities stock a range of fixed-price souvenirs and handicrafts and can offer a reasonable idea of what is acceptable in terms of quality and price. After a visit to the Friendship Store, visit private stores, craft shops and local department stores. However, the best shopping is often at public markets. If you see something you want, buy it when you see it - prices don't vary greatly, but selection can vary from location to location.

Top buys include silk products, embroidery, Chinese calligraphy and paintings, ceramics, jade and stone carvings, lacquer ware, Chinese tea, Cloisonne, Mao reproduction propaganda souvenirs such as the famous 'Red Book', caps and buttons, personalised ink seals and clothing of every kind. Markets in Beijing and Shanghai commonly sell top quality ski jackets and leisure attire by big name brands. Additionally, copied goods

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such as handbags, watches and shoes are available in plentiful supply in these markets. Ethnic crafts are a speciality in some regions including Xi'an and Kunming. If wishing to buy antiques, proceed with caution. It's highly likely that the antique will be a skilful reproduction. However, if it is the real deal, you'll need paperwork the Chinese Administrative Department of Cultural Relics which must then accompany the article being exported.

IMPORTANT: Set your budget and don't be swayed, remember the caveat – 'Let the buyer beware'. Any purchases made whilst on holiday with us, irrespective of whether the store is recommended by us or other, are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with the product you are purchasing and the delivery arrangements (we would recommend you take away with you any purchases rather than rely on shipping services). On The Go cannot be held responsible or accountable for items bought in country or shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution.

It's Not Like Home!

Travel to far - flung corners of the earth involves lifestyles and conditions that are sometimes very different from what you are used to back home. You must come prepared to cope with unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned. With the greatest respect and in the interest of your ultimate enjoyment you must understand this. Things can and do change in foreign countries.

- Be prepared as locals smoke everywhere in China
- The Chinese don't have an awareness of personal space, be ready to have people standing very close to you, nudge you or even walk into you, they are not being rude, it's just a very different culture
- Many tourists report scams in Shanghai, so be friendly but careful. Never ever follow a stranger anywhere

- Spitting and snorting is common in China as they see the use of tissues as unhygienic.
- Some locals won't queue and will often walk straight to the front of a line with no awareness or care of what they have done wrong
- Always take some antiseptic hand gel or antibacterial hand wipes with you and BYO toilet paper as its rare in public toilets. Squat toilets are very common, they can be a novelty and are easy to use
- Chinese people are delighted if you make any attempt to speak Mandarin, even if it's only a couple of words

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