

## Guangxi and Hunan



*China's southernmost province, Guangxi, has long been famed for its great natural beauty and unique topography, epitomised by the weathered karst hills and limestone rock towers that surround the regional capital of Guilin, starting point of this 8-day scenic tour. From Guilin, you travel north-east to Yangshuo, China's adventure capital and gateway to the most beautiful sections of the Li River. Travelling further north, you'll climb to the top of the famous rice terraces at Longsheng, before crossing the border into oft-overlooked Hunan Province, where, after a brief stopover in Fenghuang Ancient Town, your tour ends amid the mystical landscapes of Zhangjiajie National Park.*

### **Day 1 – Arrive Guilin**

Your tour begins in Guilin, capital of Guangxi province and one of China's most attractive cities.

The one-hour scenic drive from the airport to your hotel in downtown Guilin will provide an introduction to the region's dramatic topography, the spectacular karst landscapes which have been eulogised for centuries by painters, poets and photographers.

On arrival in Guilin, check into the 5-star Shangri-La Hotel, or similar. The rest of the evening is at leisure to explore the city. Take a stroll through Guilin's lively night markets, or just enjoy a leisurely walk around Banyan and Fir Lakes. Alternatively, we can arrange for a "Two-Rivers-Four-Lakes" evening cruise, which grants wonderful views of the city skyline and the famous illuminated Sun and Moon Pagodas (at additional cost).

### ***Your Financial Protection***

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

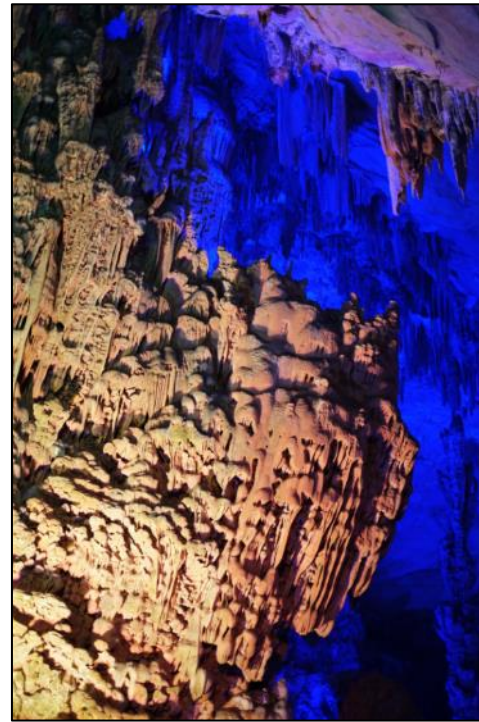
For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

## Day 2 – Guilin to Yangshuo (B, L)

Your guide and driver will meet you at the hotel lobby this morning after breakfast. When you're ready, set off for Yangshuo (approx. two hours).

On the way out of Guilin, make a brief stop at the Reed Flute Cave. This spectacular cave complex, the most impressive and visited of the many caves in and around Guilin, contains curious rock formations and million year old stalactites. Allow an hour to explore the complex in full, before continuing to Yangshuo.

Often dubbed the “adventure capital of China”, Yangshuo is a small but lively town of 30,000 residents. Though it has a thriving centre, Yangshuo's real attraction is in its surroundings. From its secluded position in a sheltered valley, bordered on one side by the Li River and surrounded by karst hills, Yangshuo serves as a gateway to some of China's most exquisite countryside.



As one of the country's major resort towns, Yangshuo can get busy in the peak travel seasons, which is why we normally recommend a stay in a lodge or guesthouse outside of town, with the option to travel into the centre for dinner and entertainment. This evening, you stay in the Secret Garden, a small guesthouse set in a quiet village about 20 minutes' drive from Yangshuo.

### ***The Secret Garden***

*This charming guesthouse is tucked away in the quiet village of Jiuxian, just outside Yangshuo. Comprised of a collection of Qing-era mud and grey-brick homes (mostly old farmer's cottages), connected by courtyard gardens and ancient stone pathways, the Secret Garden has a wonderfully rustic atmosphere. From the outside, you wouldn't be able to tell the Secret Garden apart from the other, predominantly residential buildings in the village. The cottages have been carefully refurbished so as to preserve their original features, while the interiors have been converted into cosy guest areas and comfortable bedrooms. There are eleven rooms in total.*



*Surrounding the guesthouse are rice paddy fields and karst rock towers. There are bikes available to hire, allowing you to explore the surrounding region at your own pace, while Yangshuo is a hop and a skip away by taxi.*



### **Day 3 – At leisure in Yangshuo (B)**

Today is free for you to explore Yangshuo and the surrounding countryside independently. (If you prefer an escorted tour, we can arrange for a guide to accompany you to some of the major sights and attractions.)

There's a huge amount to do around Yangshuo, particularly for more active travellers. Gentle hikes, river rafting, rock climbing, caving, and marvellous cycling routes. The karst landscape is widely considered to be among the most beautiful in China, and a pleasure to explore whether on foot or by bike. Here are some of the more notable sights and activities which you might like to find time for:

*Yulong river rafting* – These gentle cruises take place on traditional bamboo rafts, rather than motorboats, and offer a relaxing way to explore the region and take in its magnificent scenery.



*Moon hill trek* – A short but steep hike to the top of Moon Hill, on the outskirts of Yangshuo, from where you have a panoramic view of the landscape and, in the distance, Yangshuo.



*Liu San Jie impression show* – The dramatic scenery of the Li River sets the stage for this famous light and dance show, the format of which is adapted to suit the weather on the day of the performance.

*Cooking class* – Attend a class in Chinese cooking, which includes a tour of Yangshuo market. During the class, you'll learn to make local favourites such as beer fish, egg wrapped dumplings, and Chinese stir-fry, with fresh ingredients bought from the market!

*Rock-climbing* – There are a number of local companies offering rock climbing on the karst pinnacles, geared towards both novice and experienced climbers. Let us know in advance if you'd like to book a half or full-day climbing experience.

#### **Day 4 – Yangshuo to Longsheng (B, L)**

Depart Yangshuo early this morning with your guide and drive to the Longsheng rice terraces (three hours).

The Longsheng (or Longji) Rice Terraces are one of Guangxi's most famous scenic spots. The view of the terraced fields, arranged in intricate patterns in line with the natural contours of the hills, is just spectacular, particularly in the late autumn (Oct-Nov) when the harvest begins and the hills turn to red and gold. First established during the Yuan Dynasty (13<sup>th</sup>-century), the fields are still worked to this day by the local Zhuang and Yao peoples.

You stay tonight in the charming village of Ping'an, situated close to the top of the terraces. Expect to arrive around noon. The terraces are steep (and prone to mud slides!) meaning your vehicle can only



get you so far. Once you reach the entrance to Ping'an village, it's a walk of about half an hour uphill to reach the Longji Star-Wish Resort, your guesthouse near the summit of the terraces. (Porters are available to hire if you need help with your baggage).



After checking in, the rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore the terraces. As the evening approaches, you can climb to the top of the terraces to receive a wonderful view of the rice paddies and the mountains at sunset.

### ***Longji Star-Wish Resort***

*Located high in Ping'an village, near the famous Seven Stars & Moon and Nine Dragons viewpoints, Longji Star-Wish is a Miao-style guesthouse with beautifully presented en-suite rooms. It offers just 20 guest rooms, all of them uniquely furnished; some are Western-style, while others adopt Japanese tatami mats or traditional Chinese hard beds. Several of the rooms are split across two floors, with upstairs bedroom and downstairs lounge (with tatami beds). The rooms are separated by stone walls with wood panelling (meaning noise isn't as much of an issue at Star-Wish as it is at many of the traditional wooden guesthouses in town) Most of the rooms open onto shared balconies with a view of the village, while a small number have private balconies with a view of the rice terraces.*



*Star-Wish Resort has a cosy dining area where meals are served with a view of the town.*

NB. Access to Longsheng is conditional on the weather. During the wet season, rock slides are common on the road leading up to terraces, making them inaccessible. Your itinerary may have to be re-routed at the last minute if the weather conditions are poor.



### **Day 5 – Longsheng to Fenghuang (B, L)**

The morning is at leisure in Longsheng. Wake early to watch the sun rise, returning to the guesthouse for breakfast.

Depart Ping'an with your guide and driver late morning for the drive to Fenghuang Ancient Town in neighbouring Hunan province. It's a 6 hour drive from Longsheng to Fenghuang, with time to stop at a remote Dong village along the way. You'll be taking a new route which receives very little traffic (whereas previously the journey to Fenghuang required a 13 hour drive/train ride via Changsha, the opening of a new highway in 2014 has made this remote town much easier to access).

Arrive at Fenghuang late afternoon and check into Poshan Inn, a cosy inn situated within Fenghuang's historic centre, close to Tuojiang Old Street.

### **Poshan Inn**

*This cosy courtyard hotel is hidden away down one of Fenghuang's many winding alleyways, a short distance from the lively riverfront area and Rainbow Bridge. It is one of the few hotels in Fenghuang that caters to foreign tourists, with spacious en-suite bedrooms (with Western-style loos) and a small but cosy dining room.*

*The staff at Poshan Inn speak limited English and will provide a Western-style breakfast (coffee, fried egg and toast, marmalade) or traditional Chinese breakfast if preferred.*





The rest of the evening is free for you to explore Fenghuang, or “Phoenix Town”. Enjoy a walk through the old quarter’s narrow alleyways to the lively riverfront area, where there are lots of restaurants, food stalls and trinket shops to explore. Tuojiang Old St, Fenghuang’s main thoroughfare, is a short five-minute walk from Poshan Inn.

#### **Day 6 – Fenghuang (B, L)**

Fenghuang is at its best in the early morning, when a mist descends over the town, and the streets and riverfront are almost silent. We recommend waking around dawn this morning for a stroll through town and along the Tuo River, where you can watch the boatmen cast their nets and the townsfolk take in their laundry, before returning to the inn for breakfast.

After breakfast, embark on a guided tour of Fenghuang old town, taking in the major sights and attractions, including the old merchant’s guild (now a museum and art gallery), the famous “rainbow bridge”, Tian ancestral temple, and the former home of Chinese writer, Shen Ts’ung-wen. The tour will culminate with a short cruise on the Tuo River before lunch. The afternoon and evening are free for you to explore the old town at leisure. Enjoy a trek along the old town wall for great views of the Tuo River and Fenghuang’s iconic waterside stilt homes.



#### **Day 7 – Zhangjiajie Forest Park (B, L)**

Depart Fenghuang this morning for Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, a drive of 3-4 hours, with the option of stopping at a Miao village along the way.

Arrive at Zhangjiajie early afternoon and check into the Qinghe Jinjiang Hotel, a comfortable 4-star resort located close to the entrance of the mountain park.

Formed in 1982 as the core of the Wulingyuan Scenic Area, Zhangjiajie was the first National Park to open in China. It is widely considered to be one of China's most beautiful and precious national parks, famed for its towering rock pinnacles, verdant forests and rushing rivers.

Spend the afternoon exploring the Yellow Stone region of Zhangjiajie, one of the easiest sections of the park to access (you'll have the chance to venture further into the park tomorrow). From Zhangjiajie's main entrance, a short cable car ride will take you to the Yellow Stone circuit trail, which covers some of the high peaks. Descend from the trail late afternoon and, time allowing, enjoy a short hike in the Golden Whip Valley before returning to your hotel. Evening at leisure.



#### **Day 8 - Zhangjiajie Forest Park (B, L)**

Spend a full day in Zhangjiajie Forest Park with your guide, exploring its myriad trails on foot and by cable car.

Your guide will plan your route this morning, depending on the weather and how busy the park is. Long walks into remote sections of the park are possible. Alternatively, the main scenic spots, such as Yuanjiajie, are easily visited via cable car and require relatively little walking.



NB. The core areas of Zhangjiajie, particularly the Yuanjiajie Scenic Area, can become very crowded at weekends and in the busy holiday season. Depending on the time of your visit, your



guide may recommend a visit to one of the quieter spots, such as Laowuchang or Yangjiajie, which don't usually attract large tour groups.



**Day 9 - Departure (B)**

Transfer to the airport for your return flight home or onward transfer.

**Price Guide:** The cost of this itinerary is from **£2,185 per person**, based on twin share and subject to availability at the time of booking. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).

**Includes:**

- Internal flights
- Accommodation and meals as described
- Activities as per itinerary (optional activities on self-guided days not included)
- Private guide and vehicle
- Return airport transfers

**Excludes:**

- International flights – ask us for a quote
- Travel insurance – ask us for a quote
- Items of a personal nature
- Additional activities
- Tips