

The Timeless Heritage of Southern China

A journey to Wind-Rain Bridges & the Backbone of the Dragon including Guilin, the Mountainous Backcountry of Southern China & Southern Yunnan
March 28–April 13, 2012

Dear Travelers:

Join us and discover the **timeless heritage of Southern China**. On this expedition, we will visit famous landscapes along the **Li River near Guilin**, before venturing off the beaten track for extraordinary cultural experiences in the **mountain enclaves of Guangxi and Guizhou**. The adventure will continue as we fly to Kunming in Yunnan Province to explore the hinterlands of southern Yunnan.

Our journey begins in a landscape iconic of Southern China. Here in **Guilin** and nearby **Yangshuo**, farmhouses are set amidst overhanging crags, and cormorants catch fish along the Li River. The misty silhouettes of Guilin beckon travelers from across the world.

From Guilin, we will set forth on back roads into **“a subtropical labyrinth of mountains and plunging river valleys”** (in the words of historian Mark Elvin) where several of China’s ethnic minority groups retain traditional lifestyles. Many of these people—the **Yao, Dong, and Miao (Hmong)**—inhabit picturesque wooden villages that cling to steep, forested or terraced hillsides. Their architecture—**drum towers** and gracefully proportioned **“wind & rain bridges”**—is unique in China. The terraces



are spectacular and often are compared to the **Backbone of a Dragon!**

Tremendously scenic and culturally diverse, these provinces encompass **a vast swath of China that is little known to outsiders, and remains an exotic destination for most Chinese as well**. Local people still retain their traditional dress, architecture, and many of their indigenous customs.



Handicrafts include the beautifully wrought silver ornamentation and hand-stitched textiles of the **Miao (Hmong)** and **Yao** people, and the pounded indigo fabric of the **Dong**.

We will then take a short flight to Kunming (Yunnan Province) to explore Yunnan’s southern frontier. Wonderful experiences

await us at **Shilin**, land of the **South China Karst**, a World Heritage site that features labyrinths of sharply eroded limestone, and its distinctive ecology. **Jianshui** and **Yuanyang**, on opposite sides of the Red River, include unique cottage industries and the spectacular “stairstep” rice terraces of the Hani, one of southern Yunnan’s many indigenous ethnic minority groups.

Our route includes the **Stone Forest**, a Cambrian fossil site that holds some of the oldest animal fossils ever found, and **Xingmeng Village** whose residents descend from Kublai Khan’s garrison that was posted here in the 13th century (and they still speak Mongolian!).

We will also stay at the **Zhu Family Garden**, the estate of a 19th Century aristocrat, and enjoy the **tofu-making heritage of Jianshui**, a delightful town, far from the route taken by most of China's foreign visitors.



Over the years we have focused on finding places in China that are engrossing and that express China's timeless heritage and dynamic culture.

We believe Southern China epitomizes these qualities and hope you will join us!

Sincerely,

Margaret

Margaret M. Betchart, President
Betchart Expeditions Inc.



LEADERSHIP

Leading this expedition will be **Dr. Chris Carpenter**. Chris has been a popular leader of our China Expeditions since 1994 and has conducted trips to Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam, Xinjiang, and Hunza, Pakistan. When he is not leading Betchart trips, Chris lives in Chiangmai, Thailand and works as a lecturer in biology and environmental science for the Wildlands Studies Asia programs, accredited by California State University, Monterey Bay. He leads university field studies courses in Thailand, China, and the Himalayan region.

Chris has lived and explored remote areas in China many times, and looks forward to sharing the spectacular landscapes and fascinating cultures of Southern China with you.

ITINERARY

Days 1/2 Los Angeles to Beijing

Meet at Los Angeles International Airport for our flight to Beijing, which departs shortly after midnight.

Day 3 Beijing to Guilin

Arrive in Beijing this morning and transfer to a morning flight to Guilin, China. Our program will begin with an afternoon city tour of Guilin, emblematic of the spectacular landscapes of Southern China. Welcome dinner. *Guilin Park Hotel (2 nights)*. D

Day 4 Yangshuo & the Li River

Today, we will enjoy an excursion from Guilin to Yangshuo including a cruise on the Li River. Here are the classic landscapes of southern China—sharp, verdant pinnacles tower in all directions, surrounded by intricately contoured fields while cormorants go about their business of fishing on the river. There will be time to explore the markets of Yangshuo before our late-afternoon return to Guilin. B,L,D



Day 5 Dazhai & Sanjiang

Our adventure through the mountainous backcountry of Southern China will begin with a drive to Sanjiang. En route, we will visit Dazhai, a delightful Yao Minority enclave near Jinkeng (Golden Hollow). Spectacular terraced landscapes descend the mountain slopes and create the image of the Backbone of the Dragon. We will have a chance to visit some of the local people and walk among the terraces. *Fengyu Qiao International Hotel (2 nights)*. B,L,D

Day 6 Chengyang

This morning, we will visit the Dong Minority area of Chengyang, situated in a bucolic river valley. Here the local Dong people have constructed several beautiful "Wind and Rain" covered bridges, and drum towers that epitomize their culture. In Chengyang, a path leads along the river and connects several Dong villages where old wooden houses suggest another time. Afternoon visit to the Sanjiang Museum of Dong Minority Culture. B,L,D

SOUTHERN CHINA





Day 7 Guilin to Guiyang

This morning, we will return to Guilin for our connecting flight to Guiyang, the bustling capital of Guizhou Province, homeland of China's Miao (Hmong) Nationality. The Miao retain a strong ethnic pride. They ascribe themselves to several extended clans whose names—Black, Green, Flowery, and “Short-skirted”—refer to the character of their traditional dress. We will enjoy an evening stroll in Guiyang. *Tianhao Hotel*. B,L,D

Day 8 Tunpu & Kaili

This morning, we will visit the historic town of Tunpu, established 600 years ago in the early Ming Dynasty when the Chinese army came into Guizhou to subdue tax-dodging locals. In contrast to many of the other places we have seen in recent days, this town has a Han Chinese ethnic heritage. Many of the houses are made of stone; they are very old, well preserved, and picturesque.

This afternoon we will drive to Kaili, cultural center for the Miao ethnicity in Guizhou. Nearby, beautiful wooden villages ascend the hillsides and local people grow their crops and orchards in the traditional way amidst steep, green mountain slopes. *Tenglong Hotel (2 nights)*. B,L,D



Day 9 Shiqiao, Xijiang & Sankeshu, Miao Villages

This morning we will visit Shiqiao (Stone Bridge), a village whose residents make traditional paper the ancient way. Shiqiao is a wonderful place to stroll; we will explore its narrow, busy streets on foot and enjoy lunch in a local restaurant. In the afternoon we will visit the expansive wooden village of Xijiang, the largest Miao settlement in Guizhou Province. In Sankeshu, near Kaili, we will visit a small, interesting museum devoted to the textiles and silver ornamentation of the Miao and Dong people. In the evening, we will explore Kaili's “People's Square,” a popular venue for traditional folk dance. B,L,D

Day 10 Kaili to Guiyang & Kunming

This morning, we'll return to Guiyang for our flight to Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province. *Kunming Hotel*. B,L,D

Day 11 South China Karst World Heritage Site

We will depart Kunming this morning for the “Stone Forest” landscapes of Naigu and Shilin, spectacular formations of eroded karst limestone that were recognized in 2007 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In Shilin, we can visit the Stone Forest in the soft evening light on the pinnacles—an exquisite sight! *Xingya Hotel*. B,L,D

Day 12 Shilin to Xingmeng & Jiangshui

Our route today will take us along the shore of two “Great Lakes” on the Yunnan Plateau at 6,000 feet in elevation. En route, we'll pass near a fossil site where the remains of simple, archaic organisms represent some of the most ancient animal fossils ever found.

En route we will pass the old town of Xingmeng where homes are still constructed in the ancient style, using rusty-red rammed earth. Xingmeng's residents descend from the garrison troops of Kublai Khan, posted here in the 13th Century, who subsequently intermarried with the local Yi people. Remarkably, they still speak Mongolian and retain traditional customs and Mongolian names.



From Xingmeng, it's a short drive to Jianshui, an attractive, unpretentious town rich in local Yunnan culture, with many well-preserved historical sites. We will overnight in a lovely, historic compound called Zhu Family Garden, the estate of a 19th Century aristocrat. The renovated "old town" has good shopping and walking opportunities, and a produce market with all the earthy charm, haggling, and colorful vendors of rural China a generation ago. Possible evening musical performance. *Zhujia Huayuan (2 nights)*. B,L,D

Day 13 Jianshui

See the historic village of Tuanshan today, whose estates were built by wealthy families at the turn of the 20th Century, then taken by the Communists in 1949. The buildings are well preserved, the carved wooden window screens finely crafted with Red Army slogans and paintings added after 1949. A site like this is rare in China, because most of the aristocratic buildings from the end of the dynastic period were completely destroyed in the Mao years. Nearby is a graceful old stone bridge called Shuanglong (Twin Dragon).

We will also visit the Confucian Temple. Confucius is revered these days to an almost supernatural degree for his devotion to education. Parents take their children here for divine inspiration. We will



also explore Jianshui's historic tofu-making street, a completely local, non-touristy, and fascinating spot.

Also near Jianshui is an old pottery factory, a relic of the Communist years, where workers use antiquated machines to knead and turn Jianshui's fine clay to make pots for wholesale. The factory is intriguing in a Dickensian way, with clay splattered everywhere amidst antiquated, groaning ironworks—one of a few surviving examples of the State-run enterprises that dominated China through the 1980's. B,L,D

Day 14 Swallow Cave & Red River Valley to Yuanyang

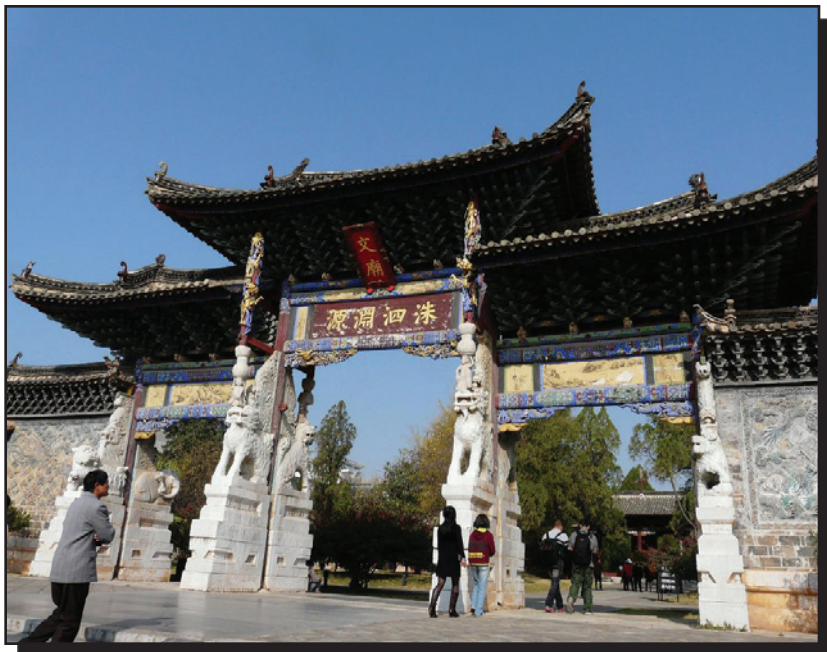
In the morning, we will visit Yuanzi Dong (Swallow Cave), an impressive limestone cave that holds a subterranean river and beautiful rock formations. People used to harvest edible bird nests from this cave, and today they offer a spellbinding demonstration of how to climb the overhanging walls of the cave.

We will then drive across hills and descend to the Red River which passes through Hanoi, Vietnam, on its way to the Tonkin Gulf. It follows an important fault line caused by the same tectonic forces that are building the Himalaya and raising the Tibetan Plateau.

From the Red River Valley, we will ascend to a ridge along the flank of the Ailao Mountains, to Yuanyang, an area populated by people of Yi and Hani ethnicity. Yuanyang is renowned for spectacular terraced rice fields. They provide an interesting counterpoint, having been built by people of different ethnicity and distinctly different culture, with an architecture that reflects the ambiance of the tropical highlands. The local people, especially the women, take great pride in their traditional clothing. *Yunti Hotel*. B,L,D

Days 15/16 Yuanyang to Kunming

This morning, we will enjoy a scenic loop road along a spectacular rice-terraced mountain ridge, with stops at vantage points and traditional settlements. In the afternoon, we will begin our return drive to Kunming with an overnight in the town of Yuanjiang. *Yuanjiang Hotel*. B,L,D



Arrive in Kunming around noon on Day 16, with time for some last minute shopping, leg-stretching, and a farewell dinner in celebration of our fascinating journey! *Kunming Hotel*. B,L,D

Day 17 Kunming to Beijing & USA

Transfer to the airport for flights to Beijing and Los Angeles. B



RESPONSIBILITY

Betchart Expeditions Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, and the American Chemical Society (ACS) act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels, and exercise every care possible. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or reserve the right to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.

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 Photos by Chris Carpenter and David Huang.
 Map by April Milne.

CST# 2036304-40

RESERVATIONS #1187

Yes! I/we want to join the Heritage of Southern China Expedition, March 28-April 13, 2012, offered by AAAS Travels, Sigma Xi & ACS Expeditions. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for \$ _____ (\$500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____

_____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home (_____) _____

Work (_____) _____

Email Address _____

Membership: AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference:

Twin Single Twin Share: with a friend or

Nonsmoker Smoker assign a roommate

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

**Please Mail To: Southern China 2012
 Betchart Expeditions Inc.
 17050 Montebello Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014-5345**



AAAS Travels & SIGMA XI & ACS Expeditions
 THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH SOCIETY

AAAS Travels ACS & Sigma Xi Expeditions

BETCHART EXPEDITIONS Inc.

17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

FIRST CLASS



*Discover the Timeless Heritage
of Southern China!*

March 28–April 13, 2012

COSTS & CONDITIONS

Trip Fee: \$3,995 per person (plus air fare of \$1,195 from Los Angeles to Beijing and Guilin with return from Kunming, plus \$350 in-tour flights).

Questions: Please call **Betchart Expeditions Inc.**

Telephone: (800) 252 4910

or (408) 252 4910

Fax: (408) 252 1444

Email: Renee@betchartexpeditions.com

Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; all meals; tips to drivers and local guides; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: International air fare and in-tour air fare (quoted separately); visa fees; gratuities to expedition leaders; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, sodas, snacks, personal insurance; or foreign airport departure taxes.

What to Expect: This expedition is for travelers who would like to explore the timeless Chinese landscapes and cultures around Guilin and Yangshuo—an area of uncommon cultural richness—as well as southern Yunnan. Explore the spectacularly terraced mountains between Guilin and Guiyang, populated

by fascinating local cultures, including the Miao, Dong, and others. Then fly to Kunming to discover off-the-beaten track natural and cultural wonders near its southern borders. The trip is a rich cultural experience, amidst fantastic landscapes.



Leading the expedition will be Dr. Chris Carpenter. The group will travel from 2 to 4 hours by bus or van many days, and will cruise a half-day through the iconic landscape along the Li River. We will explore villages populated by minority cultures, to meet the people and learn about their way of life. Walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery. It will be spring with midday temperatures in the 70s to 80s and some rain. The expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure. (No smoking in vehicles or meals please.)

Air Fare & Airline Ticketing: Group flights are reserved with Air China from Los Angeles to Beijing and Guilin, with return from Kunming. To ensure all travelers get the group rate (which requires 10 or more traveling together, round trip), we ask that all group members depart from Los Angeles together. All air bookings will be handled by Betchart Expeditions Inc. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Accommodations: Are twin-share with private bath, comfortable, and among the best available in the locations. Expect a good bed, showers, Western toilets, and carefully prepared food. If you want a single, or do not have a roommate, the single supplement is \$795.

Reservations, Deposits, & Payments: Please mail a deposit of \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to:

**Southern China 2012, Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**

The balance is due 60 days before departure.

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.