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GUILIN

LONGJI

YANGSHUO

THE PERFECT 1 WEEK ITINERARY

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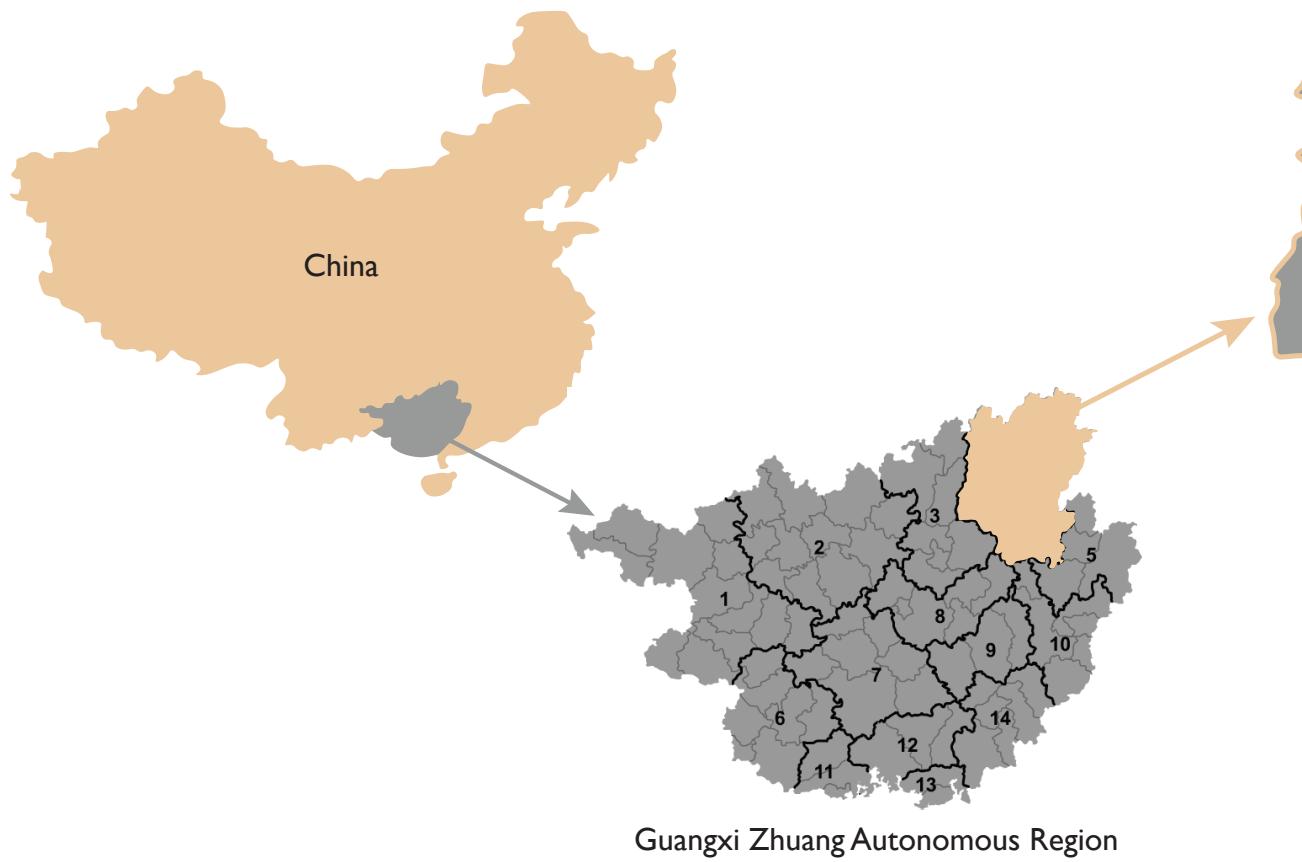
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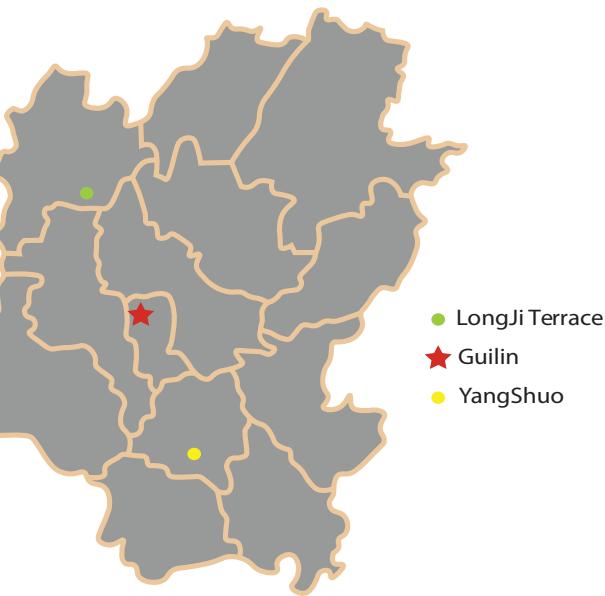
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# INTRODUCTION

Find a map of China, look at the south-west of the country and you'll find the region that borders Vietnam; the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, an area that feels distinctly less "Han-China" and quite lot more south-east Asian.

In the north-east of the region around the city of Guilin lies one of China's most beautiful and unique locations; an area that packs in the combined scenic beauty of misty karst mountains, gleaming rice terraces, winding rivers, and mountain villages not yet transformed by the Chinese development behemoth.





The region can fairly lay claim to having some of the most unusual, memorable and iconic landscapes of China. The Chinese clearly agree and have endorsed the area by placing the karst mountain landscape around Xingping on the Y20 note.

Guilin itself is a great city, with a few worthwhile sights to hunt out, some pagodas to view, and plenty of good bar and restaurants, but mainly it is a great base for exploring two areas around the city. To the north are the Longji Rice terraces of Longshen and to the south is Yangshuo and the Li River. Both of these would be included in any "top 20 China highlights", so the fact that they're about 2 hours apart is a coincidence that you ought to take advantage of.

# DAY 1

## GUILIN

Where to stay: Guilin Central WADA hostel

You can spent the morning exploring the town, walking along the river through the crowds of Tai Chi practising pensioners, pop into the Elephant Trunk Hill Park (Y55) and then walk back through the Sun & Moon Twin pagoda cultural park on your way home. All plans of extensive exploring were abandoned due to the 35 degree heat, so you essentially cafe hop (aircon to aircon) back to the hostel and arrive as sweaty-messes regardless.

You spent the evening exploring Zhengyang Street, a popular and buzzy area, with just a few more tourists than you'd hoped to find. You can eat in the Shangshui Food Court at a nifty hotspot restaurant where the ingredients circulated on a little conveyor belt.

Elephant Trunk Hill





Sun & Moon Twin Pagoda

# DAY 2

## GUILIN TO LONGJI RICE TERRACES

How to get there: Guilin to Longshen: 2 hours by mini-bus. Book transport only via your hotel or hostel

Where we stayed in Longji: Wanjinglou hotel

On your second day you head north to Longsheng to see the Longji rice terraces for 2 days. There are plenty of tours to the terraces, but as with everything we do, DIY is always our preference; it's nearly always cheaper, more flexible, and more fun!

It's a 2 hour journey so the idea of trying to get there, hike and back in one day was much too stressful for you. You can ask your hostel to book you onto a bus (¥50 pp) and left at 8:30am. There are plenty of these little buses, so booking yourself onto one shouldn't be too hard.



## HIKING THE LONGJI RICE TERRACES

The rice terraces are split between 2 villages; Ping'an and Dazhai, and most people choose to hike the trails of just one of the villages. Seeking something more adventurous.

Arrive in Ping'an before 12, sample some bamboo rice for lunch (a local dish) and then head up to "High Dragons and Five tigers" scenic area. This walk up to this viewing spot offers the first true view of just how spectacular the perfectly sculptured rice terraces are. From here it was a breezy 4km to Zhongliu, a small hamlet on the trail, and another 5km to Dazhai.

Two hours of some very sweaty hiking later, you will arrive at a small compound, and as a flock of chicken announced your arrival, a small head poked out the window.

. With only a 3 hour detour you will arrive your hostel at 6pm.

\*\*The path was actually fairly easy to follow, looking back this hike through the real-life terraces & over-grown Chinese forest was probably one of the best bits of the trip\*\*

You stay at Wanjinglou hotel, which is further up the slopes, but commands some impressive views of the rice terraces & hands down the most beautiful view in the morning light. A very friendly host family and some tasty food made it a winner.



# DAY 3

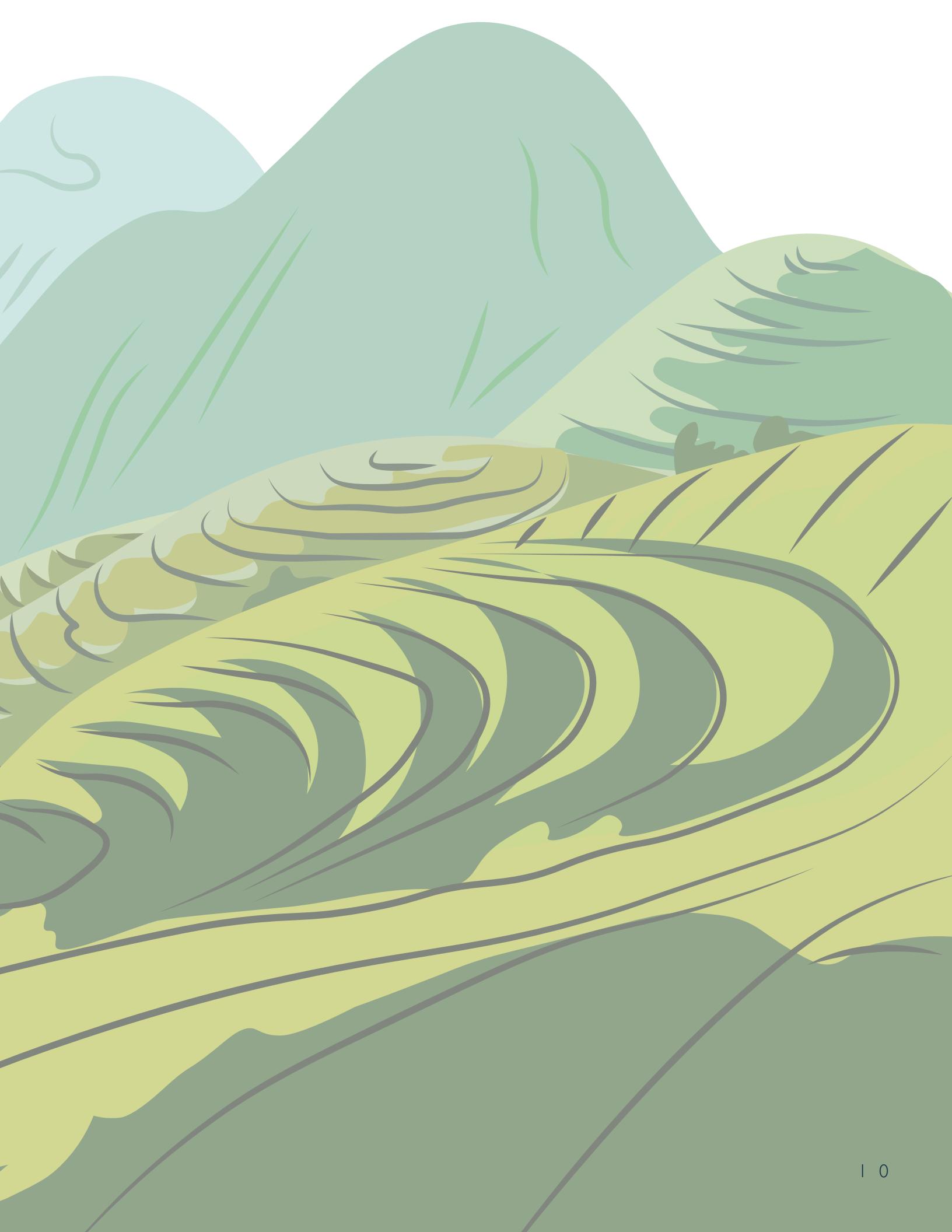
## LONGJI RICE TERRACES TO GUILIN

How to get back to Guilin: Mini-bus to Longshen. Bus from Longshen to Guilin (2.5 hours). Buy bus tickets from your hotel/hostel.

Where you stay in Guilin: Guilin Central WADA hostel

Refuelled on Chinese breakfast (i.e. noodle soup and sweet potato) you set out on achy legs to reach the various scenic points around Dazhai. It was hot, you will tired, but the hill climbs were worth it. The typically poetic Chinese names were "Music from Paradise", "Seven Stars chasing the moon" and "Thousand layers of heaven", the last being particularly apt as gleaming layers of rice terraces covered every possible slope in slight.

You have a fried noodle lunch at a small cafe before walking to Dazhai car-park where you will arrange a mini-bus to get you back to Guilin at 2pm (tickets buy from your hostel).



# DAY 4

## LI RIVER CRUISE TO XINGPING

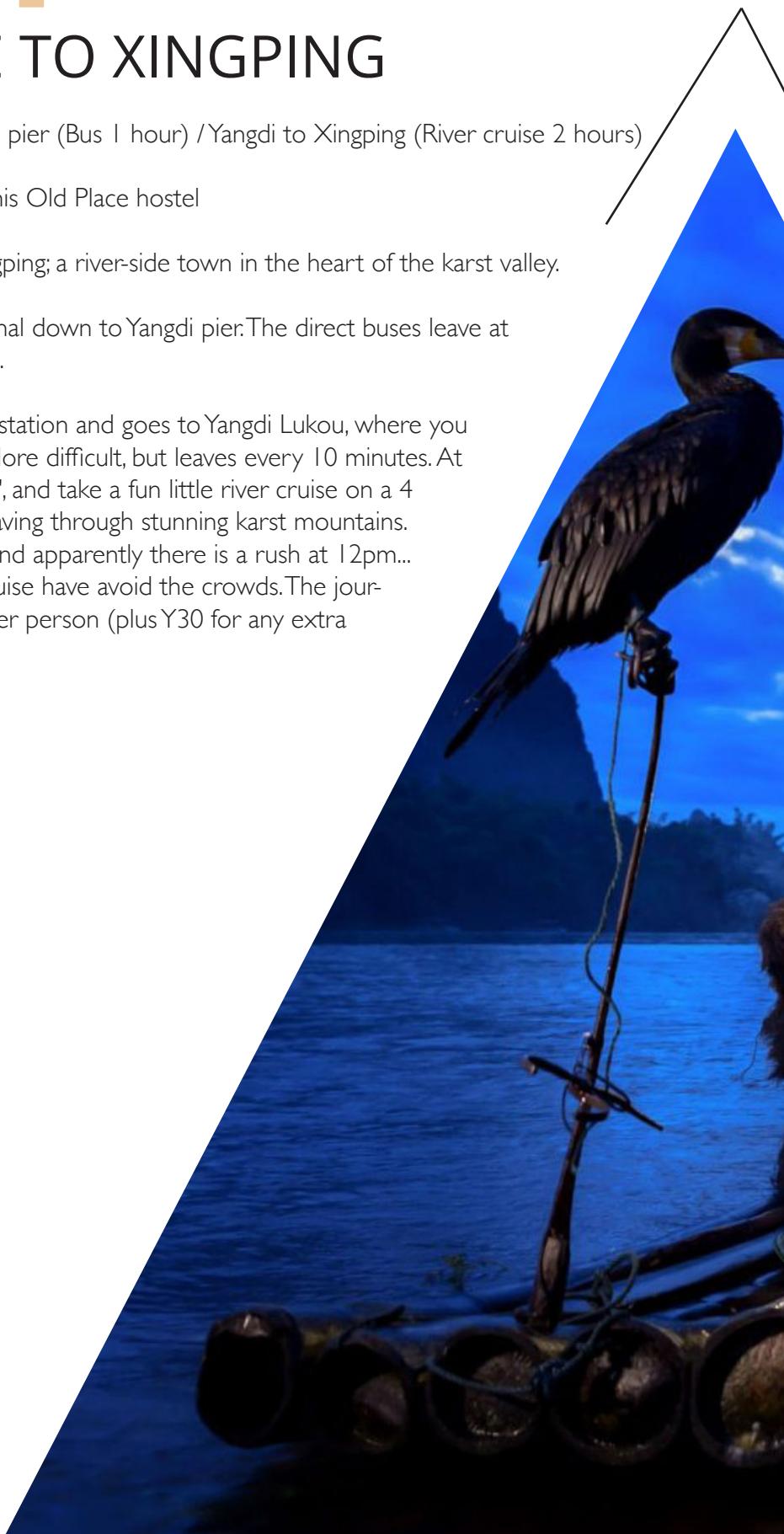
How to get to Xingping: Guilin to Yangdi pier (Bus 1 hour) / Yangdi to Xingping (River cruise 2 hours)

Where you stay in Xingping: Xingping This Old Place hostel

At 12pm you check out to head to Xingping: a river-side town in the heart of the karst valley.

You take a bus from the main bus terminal down to Yangdi pier. The direct buses leave at 7:30, 9:00, 10:30 and 12:30 and cost Y19.

The in-direct bus leaves from the south station and goes to Yangdi Lukou, where you need to take a connection to the pier. More difficult, but leaves every 10 minutes. At Yangdi pier you can hire a "bamboo raft", and take a fun little river cruise on a 4 person boat downriver to Xingping, weaving through stunning karst mountains. The rafts operate from 12pm -> 3pm, and apparently there is a rush at 12pm... you arrive at 2pm and enjoy an idyllic cruise (be sure to avoid the crowds). The journey lasts about an hour and costs Y90 per person (plus Y30 for any extra seats you don't fill).



Once you arrive at Mashan bamboo boat terminal, you avoid the hawkers and the rather scary offer to have a picture holding a cormorant and walk down to the bus terminal (straight ahead, ignore the taxi hawkers, turn right) where you will be able to get on a free shuttle which is included in the boat ticket price. The golf-buggy shuttle takes you all the way to Xingping main town (about a 15 minute ride).

You can plan to climb a karst mountain that afternoon to watch the sunset, but if it is extremely hot by this point, so you can buy some beers and shelter whilst admiring the famous views. If you don't want to leave the roof top balcony at Xingping This Old Place hostel for several hours, only stirring to head for a tasty dinner in the hostel restaurant next door.

\*\*There are no ATMs in Xingping. If you have no cash then the hostel restaurant is the only place that will accept card.\*\*



# DAY 5

## XINGPING TO YANGSHUO

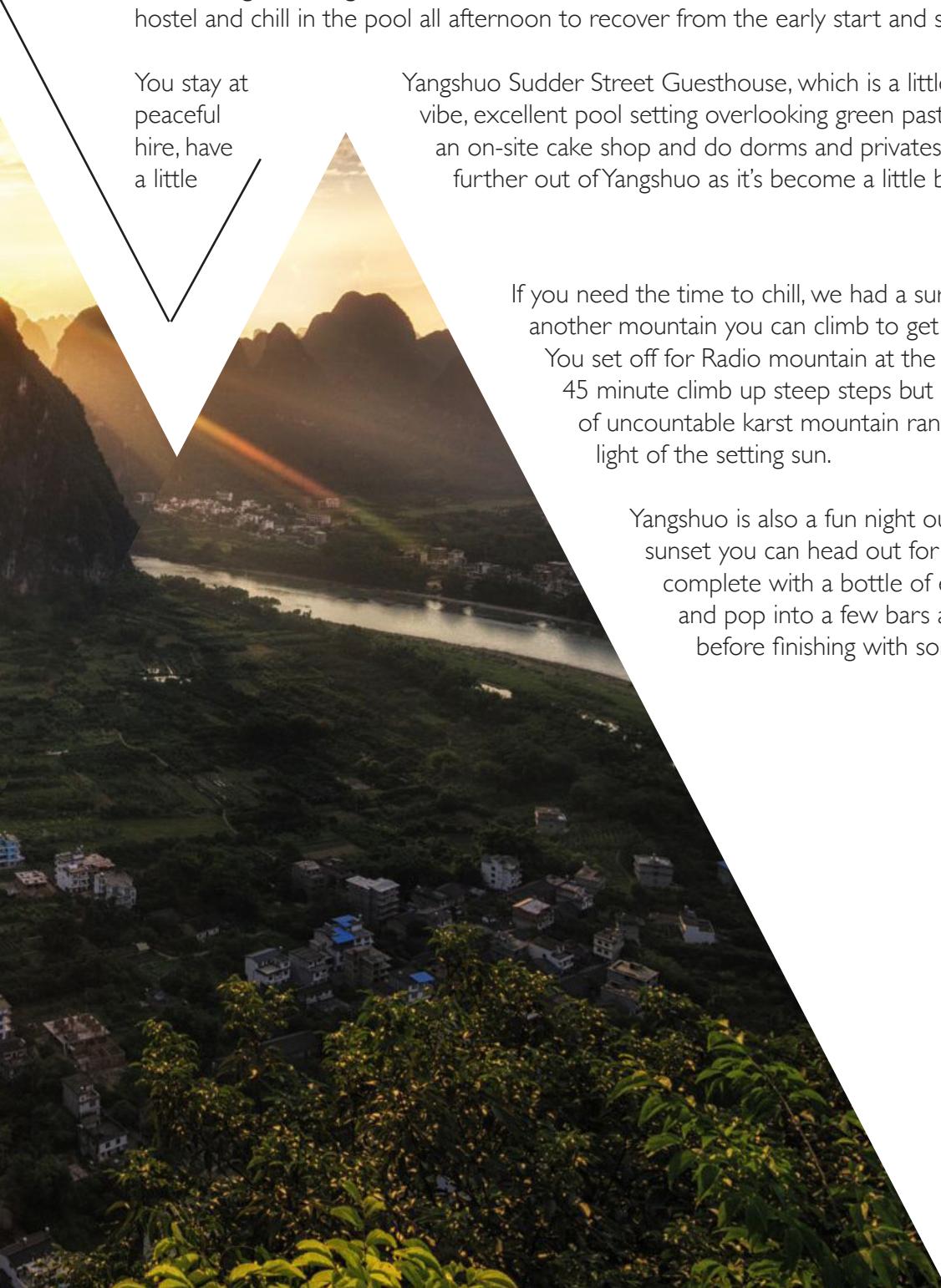
How to get to Yangzhou (from Xingping): Local bus from Xingping bus station to Yangshuo (1 hour)

Where you stay in Yangshuo: Yangshuo Sudder Street Guesthouse

Avoiding the heat, you set off to climb Mt. Laozhai before sunrise. This spot is famous for the view over the karst landscape (remember your 20 Yuan note!). The climb took 40 minutes and fair warning... it is steep and a little slippery! There are lots of warnings not to come off the path, but at the top we found a small pagoda overlooking the town and river. But WOW, what a sunrise, possibly one of the best scenes in China.

*Sunrise view from Mt. Laozhai*





This Old Place Hostel provides a decent breakfast deal, so after refuelling there you set off to the bus station to get to Yangshuo which takes 1 hr and costs Y10. Another scorcher, once you arrive at your hostel and chill in the pool all afternoon to recover from the early start and strenuous hill climbing.

You stay at  
peaceful  
hire, have  
a little

Yangshuo Sudder Street Guesthouse, which is a little out of town, and has a vibe, excellent pool setting overlooking green pastures. They offer free bike an on-site cake shop and do dorms and privates. We'd recommend staying further out of Yangshuo as it's become a little built up, so this was perfect.

If you need the time to chill, we had a surprise for you, we found another mountain you can climb to get your south China sunset!

You set off for Radio mountain at the edge of town. It's another 45 minute climb up steep steps but another unforgettable view of uncountable karst mountain range bathed in the golden light of the setting sun.

Yangshuo is also a fun night out, so after watching the sunset you can head out for a proper Chinese meal complete with a bottle of extra strength rice wine and pop into a few bars at the popular West Street before finishing with some tasty icecream.

# DAY 6

## EXPLORING YANGSHUO

Travel free day!

Where you stay: Yangshuo Sudder Street Guesthouse

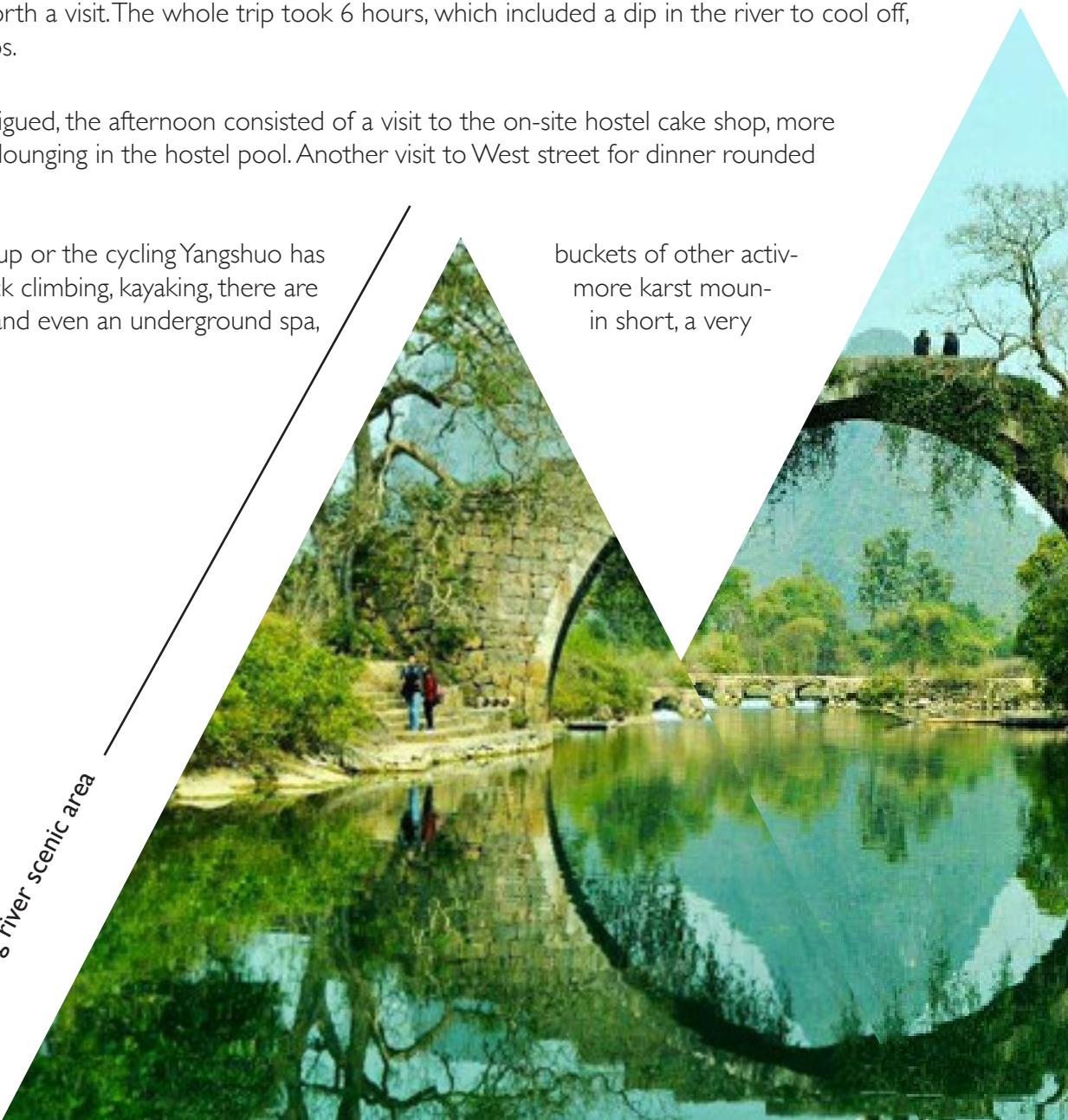
Using your free bikes from Sudder Street hostel you set out for an all-day cycling trip. Yangshuo is famous for it's beautiful cycling tracks through the small villages, along the river and surrounding area filled with rice paddies. You cycle down to Gongnong Bridge and cycle the Yulong river scenic area up to Jinlong Bridge. It's a completely flat 20km stretch of some seriously impressive landscape, on quiet lanes along the lazy Yulong river. This is nicely tranquil and the villages along these routes are a pleasant insight into how both Xingping & Yangshuo probably used to be before the explosion in Tourism. They are well worth a visit. The whole trip took 6 hours, which included a dip in the river to cool off, many photo stops.

Feeling a little fatigued, the afternoon consisted of a visit to the on-site hostel cake shop, more beers and more lounging in the hostel pool. Another visit to West street for dinner rounded things off nicely.

\*\* If you're not up or the cycling Yangshuo has  
ties available, rock climbing, kayaking, there are  
tains to summit and even an underground spa,  
cool place \*\*

buckets of other activ-  
more karst moun-  
in short, a very

Yulong river Scenic area





Rice paddies in Yangshuo

# DAY 7

## YANGSHUO TO GUILIN

How to get back to Guilin: 90 minute bus from Yangshuo to Guilin

Where you stay in Guilin: Guilin Central WADA hostel

A lazy start after an action-packed week, you can enjoy the big breakfasts available at Sudder Street hostel and then head down to the south bus station to go back to Guilin. The bus takes 90 minutes and costs Y35. Make sure you get on the Express bus or you'll do a never-ending tour of the Guilin countryside. Once you finally arrive back into Guilin you can check back into Guilin Central WADA hostel, picked up your bags and headed out for one last meal. A dreamy week exploring South China.



## WHERE TO STAY IN GUILIN, LONGJI AND YANGSHUO

### ACCOMMODATION ROUNDUP

Guilin Central WADA hostel: Central location, on-site restaurant, luggage storage, large dorms and privates

Wanjinglou hotel, Dazhaif :Very friendly staff, amazing views, dinner available, large cheap privates

Xingping This Old Place hostel: Fantastic rooftop terrace, adjoining restaurant, central, lots of information,

Yangshuo Sudder Street Guesthouse: Hostel pool, on-site cake shop, breakfasts available, quieter area, free bike hire, dorms and privates

AND FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE FANCY;

The Wing hotel, Guilin: Amazing views over the city, in a central location, large modern rooms, fitness centre, and a shared lounge.

Tea Rhythm Guest House, Yangshuo: Beautifully decorated rooms overlooking Yangshuo's mountains, restaurant, room service, bar, garden, barbecue and terrace.

