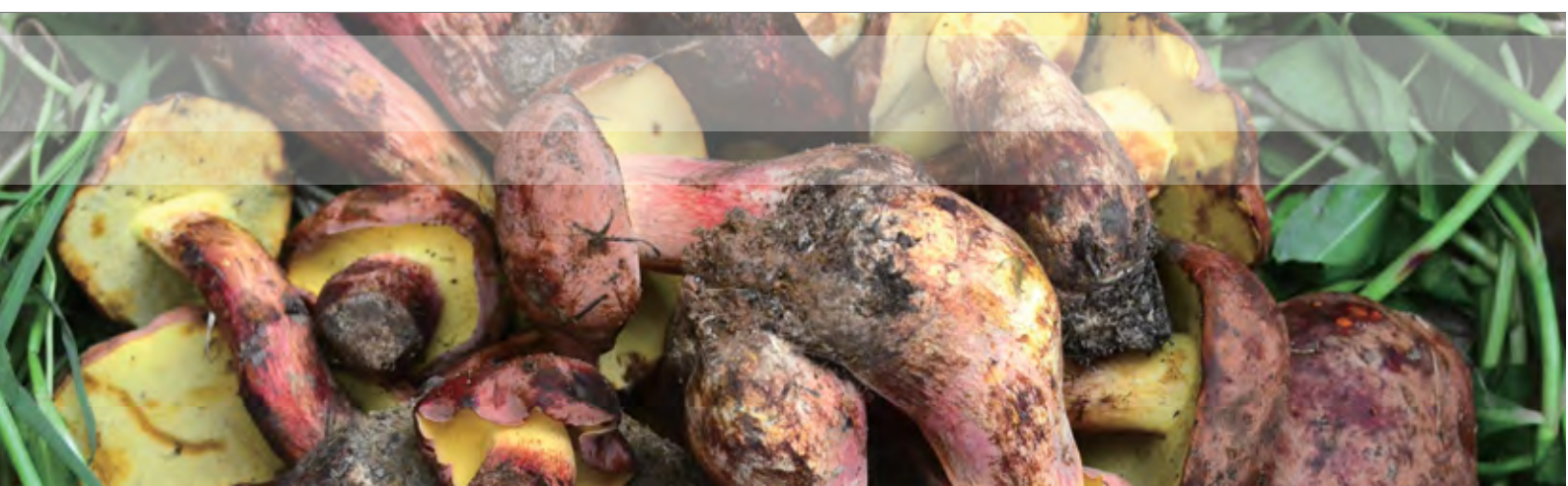


MOMENTS

on the road

Yunnan on a Plate – Wild Mushrooms

(9 Days)





ON THE ROAD EXPERIENCES

BACK ROADS | HIDDEN GEMS

We love road journeys. They are by far our favourite way of traveling. We think the world of western China and the countries that border on this region – think Vietnam, Lao, Thailand, Myanmar, for example.

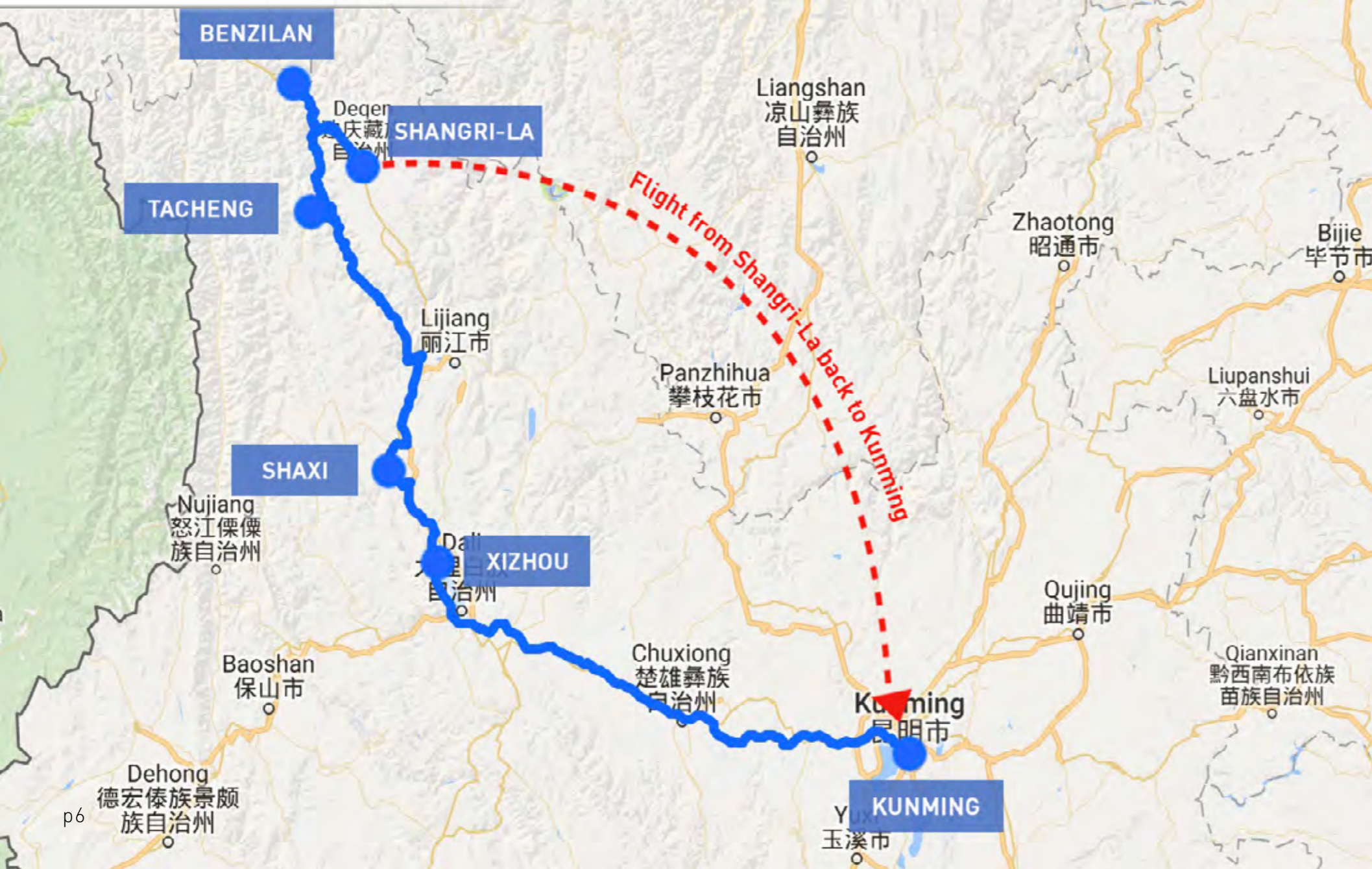
On the Road Experiences is all about sharing with like-minded travelers just how beautiful a road journey in these varied lands can be. Now turn the page to find out what we've come to love so much...



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Itinerary Map



Day-by-Day

Day1

Arrival in Kunming –
Preparing for Your journey

Day2

In and around Kunming –
*Starting off with a blast...mushrooms
galore in and around Kunming*

Day3

Kunming to Xizhou –
Heading west toward the mountains

Day4

Xizhou to Shaxi –
*Drive to Shaxi... a journey back in
time*

Day5

Shaxi to Tacheng –
*Along the Yangtse into the Three
Parallel Rivers region...*

Day6

Tacheng to Benzilan –
Further toward Tibet...

Day7

In and around Benzilan –
Matsutake Mushroom hunt...

Day8

Benzilan to Shangri-La –
Onward to Shangri-La...

Day9

Shangri-La back to Kunming –
Life goes on...

Yes, it is possible...

A driving holiday in this part of the world is indeed possible. We take care of everything. All you need to do is come, drive and enjoy a rare adventure!

This itinerary, Yunnan on a Plate – Wild Mushrooms has been specially crafted for foodies. The journey can only take place between July and September when the rains descend on southwest China's rugged mountains, and hundreds of varieties of mushrooms erupt from the forest floors of northwest Yunnan.

Drive through one of the most bio-diverse regions in the world, home to 700 endemic species of flowering plants, 800 varieties of mushrooms and follow our "mushroom nose" on a route that takes you from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan all the way to edge of the Tibetan plateau, mostly on beautiful back roads.

Yunnan is one of China's most popular destinations, but with the freedom and privacy of your own car, the comforts of the boutique hotels available en route and the mushroom-related activities that we have arranged, you will see and experience this stunning region in a way few others have.

Beautiful, nearly undisturbed nature ... accessible by car

A few thoughts about this journey by Angie Koong, the designer of your 'foodie' mushroom experience!

When was your first mushroom moment?

For me, it was my first taste of a beautifully grilled portabella mushroom just off a BBQ on a hot summer day with friends. The aromatic whiff, the thin and crisp crunch on the first bite followed by a burst of strong meat-like textures on the inside...that was my mushroom moment. Life hasn't been the same since!

Why this trip and why mushrooms?

I feel mushrooms are not used as much in cuisine as they could be. Mushrooms are nutritious, healthy, and medicinal (as the Chinese know so well). They are flavourful and a great substitute for meat. Most people only eat 2-3 types of mushrooms as part of their normal diet. For the Chinese in general and the Yunnanese in particular, mushrooms are also an important source of medicines to cure various ailments. If we knew just a little bit more about them, a colourful and rich new world of

mushrooms would be available to us. I hope you come away from this journey excited to do more with mushrooms....and along the way enjoy a great many more 'aha' mushroom moments.

Experience. Due to its remoteness and mountainous landscape, the wild mushrooms of Yunnan are largely still unknown to the average mushroom and food enthusiast. You will have many first-hand opportunities to see mushrooms as they move from being underground to being on your plate. You will be able to forage for wild mushrooms, meet mushroom hunters, and immerse yourself in the unbelievably heady buzz of the mushroom markets we have selected for you to visit at the height of the mushroom season in various villages.

Taste. For the foodies, this journey has been crafted to give you the opportunity to taste the different



mushrooms and see different ways they are cooked by local people in Yunnan. You will also get to meet some of the local chefs and

hear about the do's and don't's of preparing mushrooms.

Learn. With knowledge comes


responsibility. There are edible mushrooms that can be cultivated and ones that cannot. The former enjoy a thriving commercial trade.

The latter are the wild edible mushrooms which we will give you the opportunity to forage, experience and taste. You will get an academic perspective of wild mushrooms in Yunnan and find out about what mycologists and fungi associations in Yunnan are researching to ensure a future for these delectable treasures.

I hope Yunnan on a Plate – Wild Mushrooms will give you a whole new perspective on Yunnan as you explore it both on and off the road, discover how beautiful it is culturally and scenically, and savour the unique sensory experiences – smell, taste, texture - that its mushrooms can offer you...on your plate!

Journey of discovery





“ BEGIN the day...
understanding the
WORLD of wild
MUSHROOMS...”



“Odd. Unassuming. But the TASTIEST family of umbrellas ever...sweet umami promises...”

Termitomyces Mushroom (鸡枞菌) or Chicken Fir



“ Subtle. Beautiful.
DELICIOUS when prepared
in ways that allow its
subtle flavours to shine...”

Green Russula (青头菌)



“MAJESTIC. Musty in
SMELL...but beautiful
fresh pine and earthy
anise in FLAVOUR...”

Ganbajun (干巴菌) or Thelephora mushroom



“DRIVE to the old forests where wild mushrooms live - on the way enjoy the BEAUTIFUL sunset reflections...”

“Stepping
BACK in
TIME...”

A Bai minority village near Shaxi



“Explore SHAXI’s beautiful old town - much of which dates from the MING Dynasty...”

Beautiful old town of Shaxi

“A small section
of the ANCIENT
TEA HORSE TRAIL...”





“ Early morning...
your FIRST
mushroom hunt...”

A little Porcini in wet forest, Shaxi



古镇鞋店

电话 15887389115

財源永茂

利

財如晚日

“ CHINA 德濱雅居
as in
TIMES GONE BY...”

Cobbler and artist in Shaxi...



“Your JOURNEY
in the THREE
PARALLEL
RIVERS region...”

The Yangtze's upper reaches

“Lunch
in THE
MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE...”

In the Tacheng lodge



“ SLEEPING
WELL while
FAR AWAY from
anywhere...”

“Visiting the
CUTEST
MONKEYS in
the world...”



Yunnan Snub-Nosed monkeys

“A colourful
WELCOME as
you APPROACH
TIBET...”




Tibetan prayer flags

“ At 2000 meters above sea level...discover FIRST- hand... the KING of mushrooms...”



Matsutake from a mushroom hunt, Benzilan

Matsutake or Pine Mushrooms (松茸)



“ Along the way,
one of the **LARGEST**
MONASTERIES in
SOUTH-WEST China...”

Day-by-day



Day 1 Preparing for your journey

Arrive in Kunming according to your own arrangements.

We will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. If you require a temporary Chinese driving license, we will take you to the hotel via the Vehicle Licensing Bureau. All the documents for your temporary license will be

prepared; you will just need to take a simple eye test and sign the forms.

In the evening, enjoy a group dinner together in a lovely, local restaurant near your hotel and attend our staff's safety briefing.

Dinner will be an opportunity to begin to acquaint yourself with the many flavours of Yunnan's cuisine and to meet your fellow travellers.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: NA

Duration: NA

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1850m

Overnight: 1850m

Hotel

Green Lake Hotel (*****)

Day 2 Starting off with a blast...mushrooms galore in and around Kunming

Your journey begins with a day full of mushroom-centered activities: a talk by a reputable Professor of Mycology from the Kunming Botanical Institute, a visit to Kunming's liveliest wild mushroom market, lunch at a restaurant that specializes in mushrooms and, in the evening, an opportunity to taste the mushrooms you may have bought at the market. In between and for variety, we would like to take you to one of Kunming's loveliest Buddhist temples.

You will then continue southwest to relax and stay in the hot springs district of Anning, one hour southwest of Kunming.

Mushroom & foodie activities

– Start with a lecture by the Mycologist who will introduce the great variety of Yunnan's

wild mushrooms, which ones are edible and which ones are not, fungi ecology and efforts in Yunnan to conserve and harvest them sustainably. After this lecture, we will visit Kunming's liveliest mushroom market where you will see many of the mushrooms mentioned by the Mycologist 'for real'. We will arrange lunch at a specialist wild mushroom restaurant. And at dinner you will get to sample some of the mushrooms we will have bought at the market.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 60 km

Duration: 2 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1900m

Overnight: 1900m

Hotel

Spring Soul Garden Spa Resort, Anning (****)



Day 3 Heading west toward the mountains

Today your road journey will begin in earnest with your drive from Anning via Nanhua to Xizhou, home of the beautiful Linden Centre.

Along the way, you will stop at a small Yi minority village for lunch and then pay a visit to Nanhua, well-known as Yunnan's largest mushroom collection and distribution center.

Mushroom & foodie activities – In the early afternoon, catch the mushroom hunters coming back from their hunts to Nanhua. Nanhua is the largest collection and distribution center for wild mushroom in Southwest China. We will visit the Nanhua retail market where we will select and buy some of the mushrooms on offer – we hope to find Chicken Fir mushrooms (鸡枞菌) and prepare them, among others, in a special way for our dinner. Time permitting, we may also visit one of the collection and

distribution factories to see how Yunnan's wild mushrooms are prepared for export.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 330 km

Duration: 5-5.5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1800m

Overnight: 1800m

Hotel

Linden Centre, Xizhou (****)

Day 4 Drive to Shaxi... a journey back in time

Today you will make the short drive from Xizhou, across the Cangshan Mountains that loom over Dali behind Lake Erhai, to Shaxi. This short journey will take you back centuries to when the Tea Horse Road was in its heyday as you drop down into the pretty valley where Shaxi is located.

Along the way, we will stop for a picnic lunch...where which you will find goodies such as freshly baked bread, aged Yunnan ham

(with dried figs!), and porcini frittatas...

Shaxi itself is an incredibly well preserved caravan town – spend the afternoon wandering its cobbled streets and visiting local craftsmen, drive out to see a small cave complex nearby or simply relax at the hotel, a converted Ming dynasty coaching inn, and imagine that you are about to set out on the long road to Lhasa...

You will arrive relatively early in Shaxi to allow you to get a good night's sleep; the next day you will bring your first mushroom hunting opportunity...which means an early start!



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 150 km

Duration: 3.5-4 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3000m

Overnight: 2000m

Hotel

Landscape Lodge (***)



Day 5 Into the Three Parallel Rivers region...

In the morning, you will have a chance to go on your first mushroom hunt.

After lunch, you will begin your drive from Shaxi to Tacheng. After about an hour and a half of driving on the main road that leads from Yunnan to Tibet (the G214), you will turn left onto a small, but wonderful provincial road that follows the course of Yangtse. Only a few minutes later you will come to what the Chinese hold in high regard, the “first bend of Yangtse” where, at a town called Shigu, this mighty river does, indeed, make a 120-degree turn and seemingly begins to flow uphill. You will continue along the Yangtse in a broad, but gradually narrowing valley, more or less level with the

river. In a tiny village called Qizong, you will turn west, leaving the Yangtse behind, and drive a little distance further until you come to the idyllic hamlet of Hada where, to your great surprise, you will find a beautiful lodge set in one of Yunnan’s loveliest regions. This lodge, in Tacheng county, is located between the Yangtse and Mekong rivers, where some of the best old-growth forests in the world can be found. This region also harbors

one of the most fertile valleys in Yunnan with two crops of rice annually and fruit trees. The semi-wild boars of the area, which feed on wild nuts before winter, simply make excellent ham. Tacheng is also famous for its rich Tibetan culture and Naxi and Lisu villages with charming distinctive black-roofed farmhouses. The rare species of snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus biteti*), is one of the world’s most endangered primates: less than 2000 can

be now found in the wild. They live at the highest altitude (3,000-4,500m) of any primate, except for humans.

Mushroom & foodie activities – The morning’s mushroom hunt will begin early and be led by an experienced local mushroom hunter. We have a hunter’s stick and bamboo basket ready for you...along with a sandwich and some drinks for the outing. Today’s hunt will focus on a type of porcini grown in Yunnan; in Chinese it’s called

Yellow Niuganjun (黄牛肝菌). While not easy to find, they are relatively abundant in these lower altitudes. You will have to get up early since other hunters are out as well and it is the early mushrooer that gets the fungi. With luck, you may return in the mid-morning with some treasures from your hunt! This can be prepared by the chef as part of your lunch if you wish. There will be time for a short nap or rest before lunch.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 220 km

Duration: 5-5.5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 2000m

Overnight: 2000m

Hotel

Songtsam Lodge, Tacheng
(****)



Day 6 Further toward Tibet....

In the morning, you will get a chance to visit Yunnan's snub-nosed monkeys. They live in the wild but have become accustomed to descending from the mountains they inhabit to one of several places where they rangers feed them delicious moss...delicious for them at least! These monkeys are entirely friendly and well worth a visit!

Lodge for a lunch made all of natural and local ingredients and then begin driving further north toward Tibet.

The drive from Tacheng to Benzilan will take just over 2 hours and take you through some of the most beautiful landscapes yet on the journey.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 130 km

Duration: 2-2.5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 2000m

Overnight: 2000m

Hotel

LUX Tea Horse Road Resort & Hotel, Benzilan (*****)

Day 7 Matsutake Mushroom hunt...

Today you won't do much driving at all, except for an ascent to just over 3,000m along a winding dirt road that will take you to a tiny Tibetan village that prides itself in collecting and trading superb Matsutake (松茸) mushrooms. It is the ideal place for our second mushroom hunt. (See more below.)

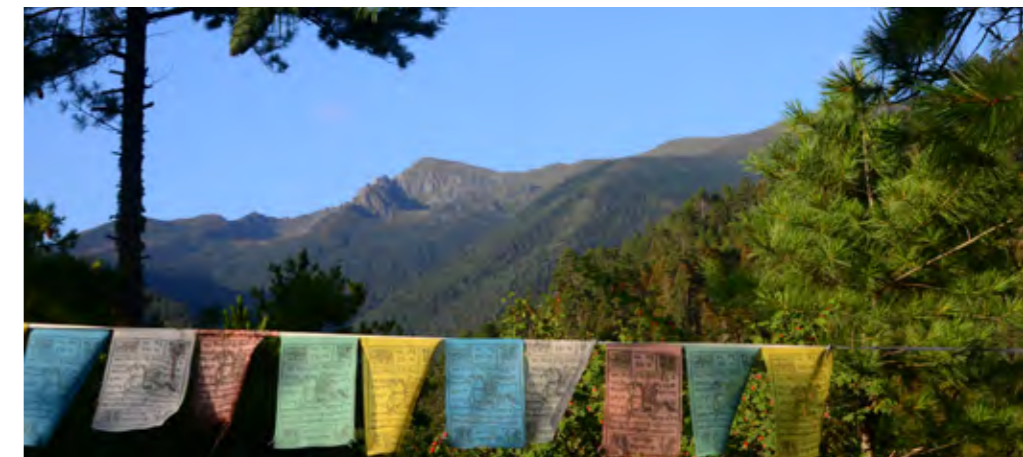
In the afternoon, you may want to relax in the hotel or take a short drive to the Tibetan Shusong Nunnery...home to over 100 Buddhist nuns and well worth a brief visit.

Mushroom & foodie activities

– Today is your second chance to join a mushroom hunt. It will involve a short drive to a visit to a Tibetan village where you'll meet a family whose livelihood depends for more than 50% of their annual income on foraging for and picking matsutakes during July and August every year. This area is known for the precious Matsutakes (also called Pine Mushrooms or 松茸 in Chinese) due to the pine trees

that grow here (see the photo above right). But please bear in mind that Matsutake are not easy to find and rarely show their skin to the light.

Join our Tibetan guide to appreciate why they only thrive in their natural habitat and learn more about the lives of the mushroom hunters that depend on them. In the evening, at least one of the dishes will be prepared from the matsutakes we will bring back from our hunt.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 0 km

Duration: 0 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3600m

Overnight: 3600m

Hotel

LUX Tea Horse Road Resort & Hotel, Benzilan (*****)

Day 8 Onward to Shangri-La...

Today's drive is short which means you can make an easy start into the day. We suggest you arrive in Shangri-La (after less than 2 hours of driving) late in the morning to allow for sufficient time to spend some time in Shangri-La's old town (for some shopping, if you like) and to visit one of the largest Tibetan monasteries (the Ganden Sumtseling) outside Tibet itself, situated very near to your hotel. In the late afternoon light, bright and invisible and crisp as it is at this altitude, this monastery is a beautiful visit.

While Shangri-La is far from Lhasa, this region is nonetheless imbued with Tibetan "flavours", from the red-robed monks to the golden-roofed temples, from the weather-beaten faces of the Tibetan people to the colourful prayer flags, from the white stupas that protect the region to robust houses that dot the landscape.

You will spend the night at the Songtsam Retreat, a very special hotel set in the grounds of the Sumtseling monastery.

Mushroom & foodie activities
– Time permitting, we will visit the region's largest matsutake market in Shangri-La.

Note: This is the highest stop on your journey with us, please be prepared to take everything more slowly to help your body adjust to the altitude – and ask us for details of what else you can do to prevent altitude sickness from impacting your holiday.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 80 km

Duration: 1.5-2 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 3300m

Overnight: 3300m

Hotel

Songtsam Retreat Shangri-La
(*****)



Day 9 Life goes on...

Today you will start your journey home. After breakfast at the hotel, we will take you to Shangri-La Airport to catch a flight back to Kunming (1 hour, the economy class ticket is included in your journey).

You will be free to start your onward journey from Kunming any time after noon today. On the other hand, if you can spare a bit of extra time, you may want to stay another 2-3 days to drive to Lijiang and explore the Naxi Kingdom...!



Choice of Cars

We include in the package price an SUV we procure from Avis or Hertz or another reputable car rental company. Most of the SUVs are Toyotas, but on occasion Mitsubishi's or other brands may also make an appearance. For some itineraries, we are able to offer you an option to upgrade your car to the new models from Audi.

We wish the car rental markets of China would be more developed and we could give you more choice, but this is not so: since we want to provide well-maintained and well-insured cars, the choice is rather limited.

But SUVs are in fact the right choice for driving journeys in this part of the world because they are spacious enough to accommodate a lot of luggage, photography equipment, and

good-and-bad-weather gear. Also, they reinforce the feeling of adventure, exploration and discovery...which is, in the end, the mood of journeys in this region, no matter how comfortable or even luxurious the night's hotel may be.

What's more, they offer sufficient clearance when required and thus add a sense of safety and all-round ability. (4-wheel drive capability is hardly needed in China these days since all roads are either very well-paved or, with good gravel, offer solid support.)

And so SUVs from reputable brands are our car of choice!

**“ ANY car,
as long as
it is an SUV”**



Adventures and Discoveries in Local Cuisines

As those of you who have traveled with us will know, all our journeys offer great sampling of very good local cuisines with emphasis on freshness and local produce. To the extent that, some of you have suggested we should highlight this more than we do - and we will in future.

This, however, is the FIRST of our food-themed journeys. Whilst mushroom hotpots are popular in the height of mushroom season and are wonderful to enjoy - we believe that there is much more to enjoy and appreciate when you get to "meet" each mushroom individually.

Each day, we will introduce you to specific mushrooms with emphasis on freshness and have worked with chefs to ensure dishes that showcase a specific single mushroom type.

During each meal - your host, Angie Koong, will explain what makes that mushroom thrive, where they are found and facilitate a tasting discussion with the aim to impart a sensory experience for you which will stay with you long after the journey ends. Depending on the location, we may introduce chefs who have a passion for mushrooms to share their knowledge during your meal.

We hope Yunnan on a Plate - Wild Mushrooms will give you a whole new perspective on Yunnan as you explore it both on and off the road, discover how beautiful it is culturally and scenically, and take away a unique 'Taste' experience and memory!



What's Included / Best Months to Go...

Generally speaking, our journey packages and prices are all-inclusive. Once you've paid and you arrive at the starting point, you really won't have to take out your wallet again.

- **Cars** – a modern SUV is provided for all driving days, expertly maintained and serviced by Avis, Hertz, or other reputable car rental companies, and covered by the best insurance available, and hire car return from Shangri-La back to Kunming is also included
- **International Journey Host, Guide and Support Vehicle** – you will be accompanied by a registered Chinese tour guide, an On the Road Experiences host and a fully equipped lead car with a local support driver
- **Routes** – we provide an extensively researched and carefully designed itinerary and state-of-the-art satellite navigation system with a pre-programmed route for the journey. You will also receive a detailed pre-departure pack and route book for the journey
- **Driving License** – You will need a temporary Chinese driving license for which all arrangements and fees are included.



- **Fuel & Tolls** – we provide petrol for the car throughout the journey and pay all tolls
- **Flight** – Your flight from Shangri-La to Kunming
- **Airport Transfers** – all airport transfers are included
- **Hotels** – the best available or five-star accommodation is included in each overnight stop

- **Meals** – breakfast (a choice of Western and Local is provided), and lunch and dinner are included on all driving days, as are drinks. Meals on non-driving days as specified above. Prepare for a culinary adventure!
- **Goodies** – you will enjoy an On the Road Home-Away-from-Home Kit containing wet towels, anti-bacterial gel and basic toiletries, and a daily picnic basket containing fresh fruit, fruit juice, water, and a mixture of sweets and nibbles

- **Other Essentials** – we provide each car with walky-talkies
- **Travel Insurance** – 24-hour medical assistance, evacuation and repatriation emergency service provided by International SOS is included, as is cancellation insurance
- **Tips & Entrance Fees** – basic tips and entrance fees for jointly attended activities are included
- **Activities, Meals, Transport** during 'free times' as indicated in this Journey Dossier
- **Top-up Collision Damage Waiver** insurance


What's Not Included

The only items not included are your flights to and from Kunming, your China visa, and personal purchases (e.g., gifts, souvenirs).



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*“Mushrooms are no longer the same to me.
Now I only want these wild gourmet mushrooms!”*

- Cassie W, 2013

Contact Us

E-mail
contact@ontheroadexperiences.com

Main office
Telephone: +852 3106 4839
Fax: +852 3012 1251

Overseas
Taiwan: +886 978 317 465
+886 921 162 079
Australia: +61 2 8003 5317
Switzerland: +41 (44) 586 58 43
UK: +44 121 288 6879
Germany: +49 160 9622 2506

“ A picture is worth a thousand words. True, but when it comes to a road journey, moving images are priceless. Please visit :
<http://www.ontheroadexperiences.com/en/video-gallery> ”





ON THE ROAD EXPERIENCES

BACK ROADS | HIDDEN GEMS

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

