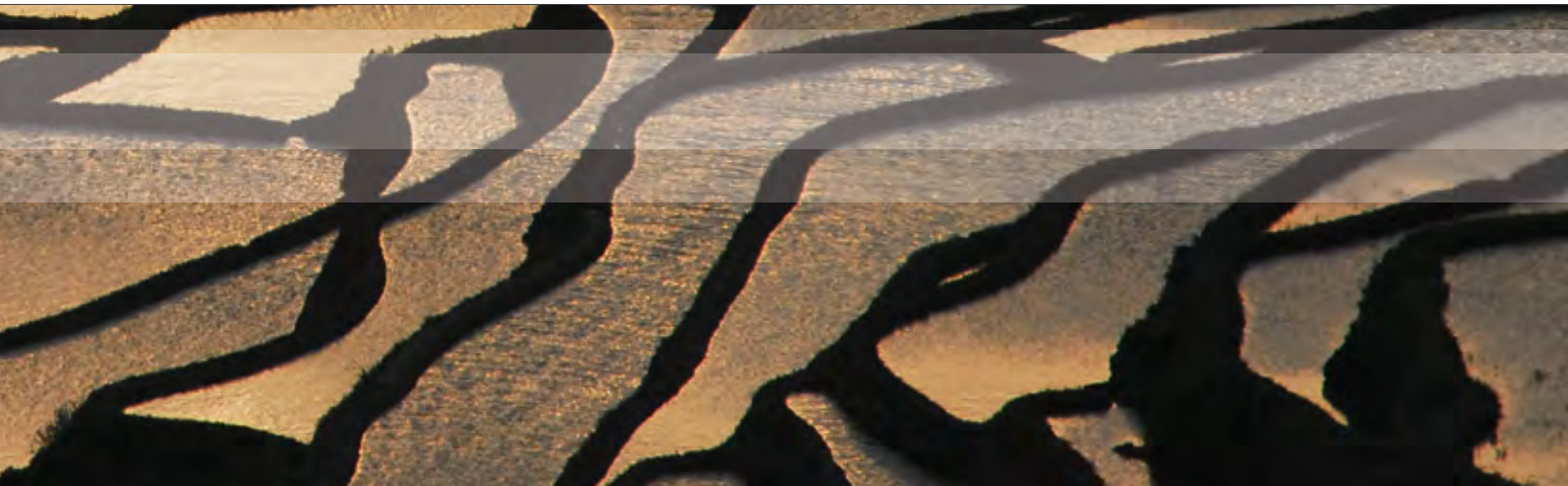


MOMENTS

on the road

From Yunnan to the Lanna Kingdom (11 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.

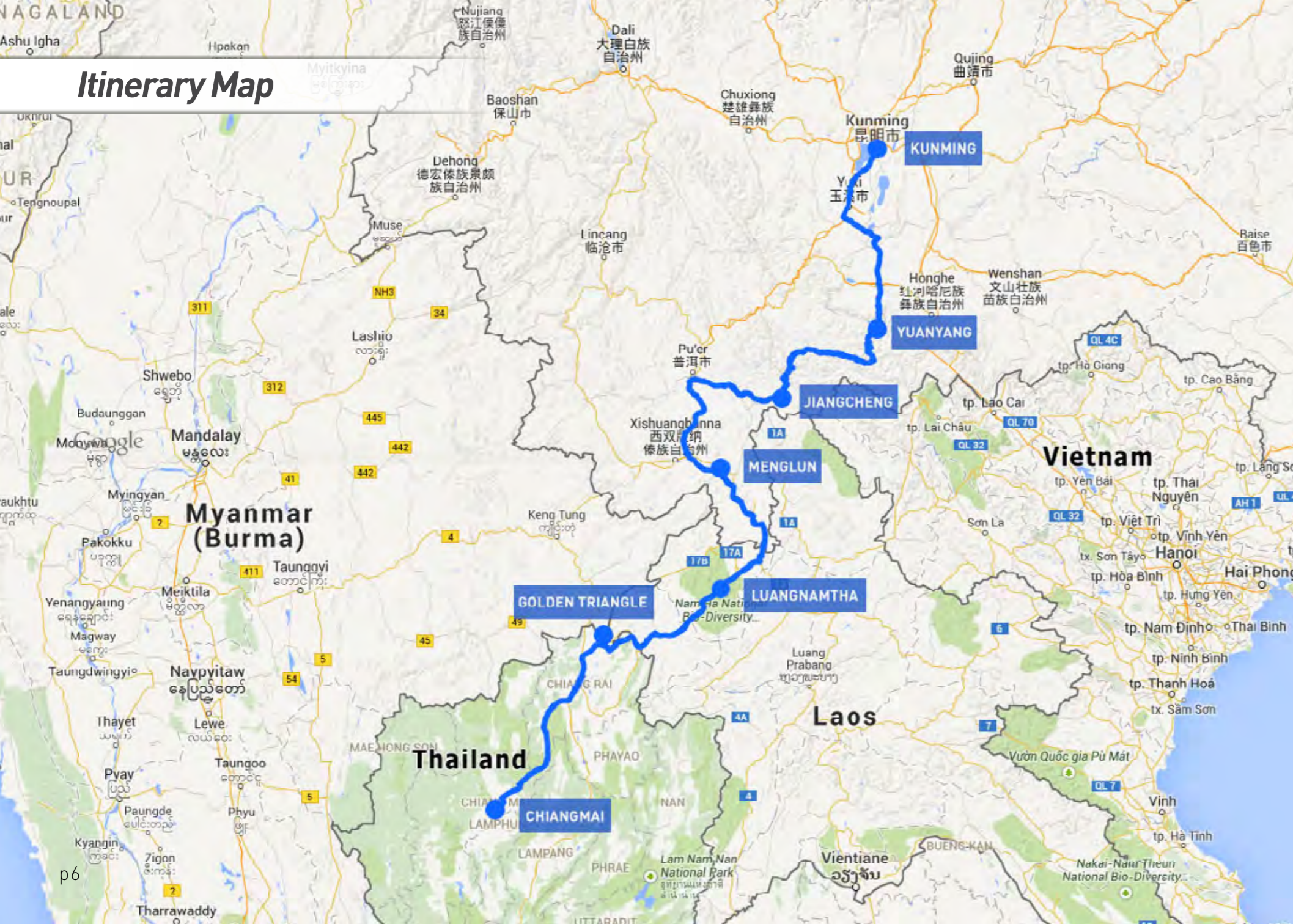
On the Road Experiences is all about sharing with like-minded travelers just how beautiful a road journey in these varied lands can be. Now turn the page to find out what we've come to love so much...



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Itinerary Map



Day-by-Day

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- Day2
Kunming to Yuanyang – *On the road to the 'Mirrors of God'...*
- Day3
In and around Yuanyang – *Exploring the hillside villages of Yuanyang*
- Day4
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Depart from Chiang Mai – *Life must go on? Or why not extend your journey?*

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 beautiful itinerary will take you from Kunming, the capital of China's exotic Yunnan province, to the tropical heart of the Golden Triangle and on to Chiang Mai in Thailand – former capital of the ancient Lanna Kingdom. All along this exciting route you will enjoy the best accommodation available – staying in some of Asia's loveliest hotels – and travel through an area steeped in the cultures of many different ethnic minorities and through some of the region's most stunning countryside.

On the Road Experiences has paved the way for you to cross borders in your own properly insured SUV, so that you can enjoy the romance of a classic overland journey – crossing the Mekong on a local car ferry, winding your way along lush country roads – without any of the logistical headaches that typically accompany such journeys...

Journey of discovery





“ You have LEFT THE BIG CITY BEHIND...”

Zhu Family Garden, Jianshui

“...and are
**ON THE ROAD
IN CHINA...**”



Along the Red River...

“Fishermen on the
RED RIVER
at SUNSET...”

“MAGIC
REFLECTIONS
at SUNRISE...”

The Yuanyang Rice Terraces



“MIRRORS of
GOD...
rightfully so!”



“Not only RICE
TERRACES, but
also CHARMING
VILLAGES...”

A village near Xinjie...

“ Wonderful SMILES
are NATURAL and
FREQUENT in YUNNAN's
countryside...”



An Yi minority women in Yuanyang...

“Where the
DRIVING is
pure JOY...”

A typical provincial road in South-West Yunnan...

“ From the
ROADSIDE,
VIEWS like these...”





“XISHUANGBANNA
is a
FERTILE land...”



“XISHUANGBANNA,
where TEA
thrives...”

“XISHUANGBANNA,
the home of Yunnan’s
DAI MINORITY...”



Dai minority village in Xishuangbanna





“XISHUANGBANNA,
home as well to
MANY smaller
MINORITIES...”

Aini minority lady in Xishuangbanna

“Golden-robed
MONKS in
XISHUANGBANNA
are a commonplace...”

A young monk in Xishuangbanna



“Over TEN THOUSAND
plant species
are found here in this
GARDEN...”

“YUNNAN's
markets are
LIVELY and
COLOURFUL...”

In one of Xishuangbanna's markets

“ Off the beaten path
in Lao... where
VISTORS are...
as RARE as UFOs...”



A small village in northern Lao

“Where CHILDREN
are as LOVEABLE
and UNSPOILED
as anywhere on
the PLANET...”



In a small village in northern Lao

“ELEPHANT encounters
with KINDLY CARED
FOR animals...one of
your CHOICES in the
GOLDEN TRIANGLE...”

In Thailand's Golden Triangle



“...or an OUTING
to the MYANMAR
border...or much
else besides...”

“KITCH or FLIGHT
OF FANCY? Never
mind, definitely
worth a VISIT...”



The 'White' temple on the way to Chiang Mai



“ A BEAUTIFUL HOTEL
right by Chiang Mai’s
NIGHT MARKET...
a wonderful way to
end the journey...”

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.

After settling into the hotel, you may want to go for a stroll along the city-center Green Lake where many locals enjoy relaxing hours. The vicinity of the lake bustles with people young and old and throughout much of the year is lush green. Depending on the season, energetic migratory birds make the lake their temporary home.

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 On the road to the 'Mirrors of God'...

Today you will be taking to the roads of China.

After spending thirty minutes or so navigating out of Kunming, you will enjoy a wonderful drive south to the magnificent Yuanyang rice terraces, poetically referred to as the '*Mirrors of God*'. On the way, you will stop at Jianshui, a small city with a charming old town – the perfect place for lunch and a stroll around some of the beautiful Qing-dynasty buildings.

The afternoon's drive give you a goof first of being on China's mountainous roads as you first climb up to 2,000m and then descend through many turns on a perfectly paved, wide road to the banks of the Red River which lies at only just over 200m elevation.

Just before you reach the river, you will see both sides of the

ride lined with sellers of all sorts of nuts and fruits, local and exotic. It is a good moment to stop, soak up the afternoon sun and stock up on sweet tangerines or mangoes or pineapples.

From there it is but a little more than an hour before you arrive in Yuanyang. If the weather is good, you will enjoy a stunning view over the rice paddies as the sun glints off them.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 340 km

Duration: 6 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 2000m

Overnight: 1600m

Hotel

Yunti Hotel, Yuanyang (***)

Day 3 Exploring the hillside villages of Yuanyang

At dawn (or before it, depending on the season), you will drive to one of the best viewing points in Yuanyang.

We will serve you coffee and you may want to munch on breakfast while you wait for the sun to rise above a mountain range that casts a long shadow over the valley. Well before the sun rises, the rice terraces begin to reflect the ever-changing light.

Once the sun peeks across the mountain top, the terraces begin to glitter as the golden early morning sunlight dances across the surface of the water.

After enjoying this spectacle, it is well worth taking a gentle hike down into the rice terraces themselves. No tourists will follow you: except perhaps for a few farmers with their water buffalos, you will be alone. It is magically beautiful!

Spend the rest of the day exploring exotic local markets and lively Hani and Yi minority villages before driving on to watch the sunset from another stunning viewpoint.

No matter what, today you will not want to forget to bring your camera!

In the evening, we will take you, if you're up for it, to a small eatery that is about as local as you can get...prepare for a culinary adventure!



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 60 km

Duration: 2 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1800m

Overnight: 1600m

Hotel

Yunti Hotel, Yuanyang (***)

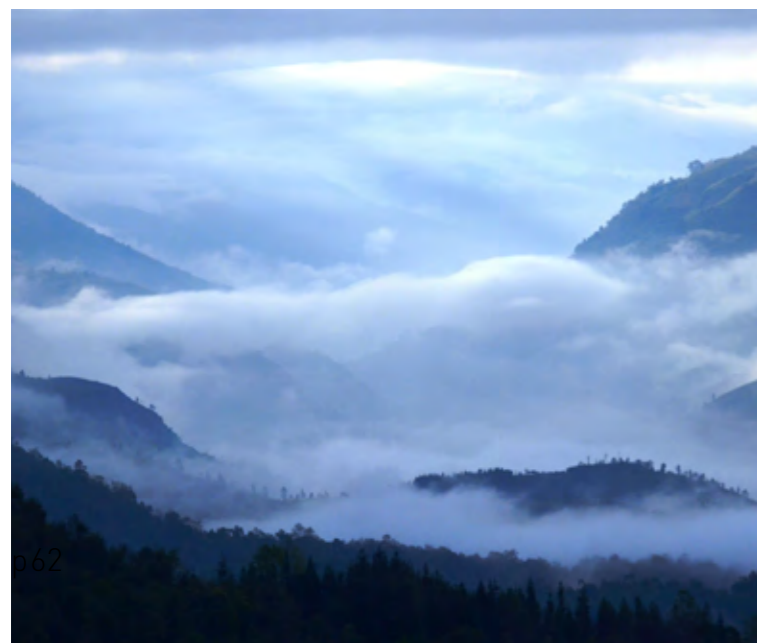
Day 4 On the way south into the subtropics

You've joined this trip because, surely, you enjoy driving. You will be in your element today and tomorrow because the next few days are spent on beautiful back roads winding through lush green countryside. After an early breakfast, you start your drive from Yuanyang into Yunnan's deep south, the region called Xishuangbanna. Today's drive is part one!

You will drive through beautiful parts of Yunnan that

hardly any tourist ever sees – through tea plantations and across rolling hills – before reaching your overnight stop in Jiangcheng, close to both the Vietnamese and Laotian borders: so close will you be to the border that most shops and restaurants carry name plates in three languages: Chinese, Vietnamese and Laotian.

As you approach Jiangcheng, the air will become balmy – softer and warmer – and you will spot the first palm trees. Within the span of one day's drive, you've arrived in the subtropics.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 245 km

Duration: 8-9 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 2000m

Overnight: 1200m

Hotel

Man cheng Business Hotel,
Jiangcheng (***)

Day 5 Arriving in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan's deep south

In the morning, you will continue to drive deeper into Xishuangbanna as the road drops down through a series of lush valleys to the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture.

You will stop for lunch in the Tea Capital of China, the city of Pu'er. The small restaurant along a road leading up a hill overlooking Pu'er is a bit of a find and offers an Al-Fresco dining experience under leafy, vine-like creepers: welcome to Xishuangbanna! Not only the climate will have changed, but the cuisine as well.

After an easy drive on one of China's most beautiful highways, you will reach Menglun where, right next to the Xishuangbanna Tropical

Botanical Garden, you will find the beautiful Anantara hotel which will be your home for the coming two nights.

Before dinner, why not take a drink at the bar right next to the pool? Or go for a quick swim? Except for in December, perhaps, the air will be warm enough to make you want to consider it.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 280 km

Duration: 5.5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1600m

Overnight: 600m

Hotel

Anantara Xishuangbanna,
Menglun (*****)



Day 6 Of tropical botanical gardens, the Dai minority and tea

Today you will have a big choice to make: enjoy the environs and facilities of the Anantara or go on an exploration of Xishuangbanna?

If you opt for the latter, there are a number of attractions. One, for sure, is the nearby tropical botanical garden where, depending on your interest in botany, you can spend an hour or a day.

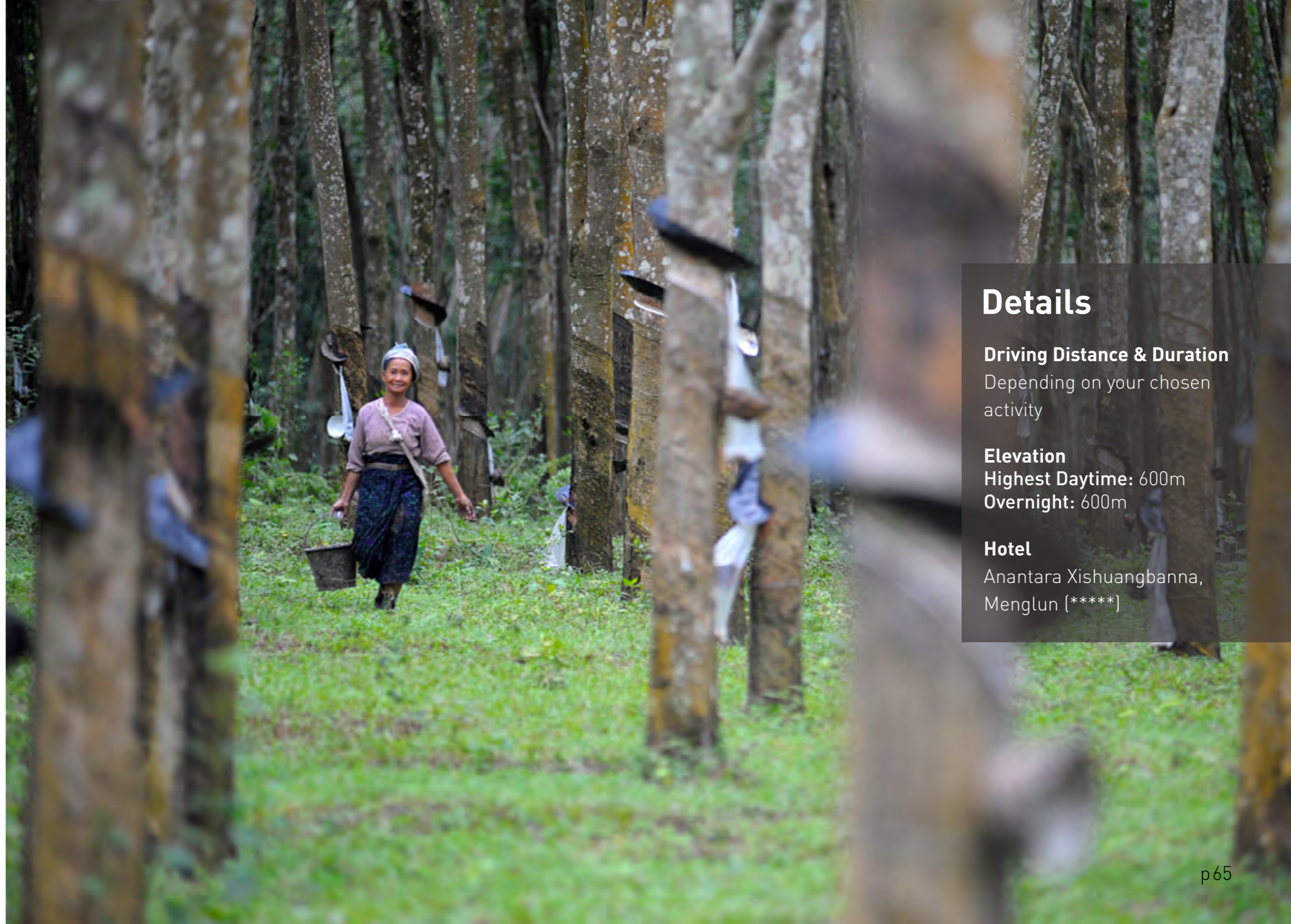
It is also very much worth visiting Ganlanba, one of the loveliest Dai minority villages in Xishuangbanna. The drive there and back and a leisurely visit of the village with its Thai-style architecture and temples, will take up a good half day.

If you want to venture further, you may want to drive up to Nan Nuo Shan, a small mountain whose slopes are

home to the King of Tea Trees which can be reached via a gentle, 30-45min walk.

We propose dinner for you at a local restaurant that offers Dai minority cuisine dishes that are a fascinating blend between Thai and Chinese. (If you've had enough Asian dishes, the hotel offers good international fare as well.)

Today's breakfast is included in the tour price, dinner, lunch and activities are entirely up to you.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Depending on your chosen activity

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 600m

Overnight: 600m

Hotel

Anantara Xishuangbanna,
Menglun (*****)

Day 7 Crossing the border into northern Lao

After a relaxed morning at the Anantara, you will depart for the China-Laos border which you will reach after about an hour and a half.

We have prepared you for all the border formalities to go smoothly, but it will nonetheless take a bit of time: here in South-East Asia,

crossing borders is still an event where in much of Europe or America it has become a non-event. Crossing borders is not only an event, it is a romantic one...where nostalgia blends with adventure to deliver a powerful emotional mix.

Once in Laos, it's a short drive to your overnight stop in Luang Namtha, a charmingly sleepy little town that nevertheless counts as one of northern

Laos' most important. Enjoy dinner in a pretty riverside restaurant that belongs to the Boat Landing hotel where you will stay. The Boat Landing is a charming inn that consist of small bungalows built in northern Laotian style. It is peaceful and calm and reminiscent of a simpler life.

Before dinner, why not try one of the bar's delicious drinks, for example one that

is an icy mint cocktail? Very refreshing!

The cooking is fabulous and a mix of Chinese and Thai flavours, but with distinct and different overtones. After dinner, continue with another drink and relax to the sound of crickets in the gardens – the perfect way to ease into the relaxed rhythms of South-East Asia...



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 180 km

Duration: 3 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 600m

Overnight: 400m

Hotel

The Boat Landing, Luang
Namtha (***)

Day 8 On to the formerly infamous Golden Triangle...

This morning you will drive across beautiful northern Laos to the Thai border.

You will cross the lovely Nam Ha Eco-Park, a region of tiny villages and rolling, thickly forested hills. As you drive, you might just feel as if you had gone back in time – the road dates from 2008, but life in the surrounding villages seems to have continued unchanged for centuries. This feeling will be re-enforced during a visit to a gem of a small Laotian village set 1km off Route 3. Life there is as untouched by modernity as you will find along this entire journey...

After lunch in Houay Xai, which lies on the Laotian bank of the Mekong, you will cross the Mekong on a newly built bridge. Compared to the exit from China and entry into Lao the day before, the border crossing

is quite uncomplicated. While you eat lunch, our team takes care of it all.

Once in Thailand, it will be a short drive north along the Mekong to the Golden Triangle and the luxurious Anantara Golden Triangle Hotel which is a gem in this part of the world – a hotel in the finest tradition of Thai hospitality and service.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 240 km

Duration: 4-5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 600m

Overnight: 400m

Hotel

Anantara Golden Triangle
Elephant Camp & Resort [*****]

Day 9 Relax at the Anantara or explore the Myanmar border area

You may want to take a break from the road today – make an excursion into the rainforest on elephant-back, eat a leisurely lunch at a riverside restaurant, lounge by the Anantara Golden Triangle Hotel's pool or visit the splendid Grand Hall of Opium, a modern museum where you can learn all about the poppies and opium for which the Golden Triangle gained notoriety in the past.

On the other hand, if you do feel like a bit more touring, we have an optional half-day driving excursion into the hills of northern Thailand. This excursion will take you, first, to the top of a mountain along which runs the border between Thailand and Burma: you'll be driving on the Thailand side, but less than 5m away will be Burma...there's an Army camp there, too... From the hill crest you will descend toward a Royal

garden as beautiful as we've seen. And then, after lunch, enjoy a beautifully brewed cup of local coffee (Doi Tung Coffee...which is nowadays grown instead of poppy!) This coffee is to die for! (If you don't like coffee, they also have good tea and locally grown macadamia nuts!)

Today's breakfast is included in the tour price, dinner, lunch and activities are entirely up to you.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Depending on your chosen activity

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 400m

Overnight: 400m

Hotel

Anantara Golden Triangle
Elephant Camp & Resort [*****]

Day 10 To the capital of the old Lanna Kingdom

This is your last day of driving on this journey...and on wonderful roads it will be!

In the morning we drive from the Golden Triangle to just south of Chiang Rai for a visit to the stunning, vivid white temple of Wat Rong Khun. This visit is followed by a lovely al fresco lunch at the Le Meridien hotel in Chiang Rai which is situated on a piece of land near the Mae Kok River. and is home to two

beautiful, enormous trees. The story goes that the two trees, planted over a century ago, are the symbols of two lovers whose love was forbidden by their parents. When Le Meridien built the hotel, it was discovered that the roots of the two trees are entwined...

In the afternoon you will drive the remaining few hours to Chiang Mai where you will be staying in one of the town's finest hotels before enjoying a farewell dinner in the evening... for which we have chosen a rather special location and culinary experience for you!

Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 260 km

Duration: 6-7 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 400m

Overnight: 400m

Hotel

Anantara Chiang Mai Resort



Day 11 Or would you like to stay on in Chiang Mai for a few more days with the beautiful Anantara hotel as your base?

Do you have to start your journey home today?

Or will you be tempted to fly south to relax on Thailand's gorgeous beaches? Or would you like to stay on in Chiang Mai for a few more days? We are happy to assist you with an extension of your stay.

Regardless of how your trip ends, we hope that you will leave us refreshed and with many new memories of your exotic journey through South-East Asia...





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

While this itinerary is *not* one of our 'Foodie'-themed journeys, we do believe that each one of our journeys should introduce you not only to hidden gems of cultural and scenic beauty, but that sampling local cuisines is also a must.

Wherever you travel with us, we will order, with very few exceptions, dishes fresh and on location with an emphasis on local produce. It is not uncommon for our guides to venture into the kitchen to pick this, that or the other vegetable and to ask the cook to prepare them in the finest possible way. (On occasion we do pre-order a meal: this will normally be the case only for special occasions!)

Wine and beer is always included in our meals for you to enjoy. (When we travel into high-altitude, we suggest moderation!)

Finally, if you have special dietary requirements are particularly interested in the culinary aspect of one of our journeys, please let us know.

For private journeys, we can, of course, tailor the meal experience to your taste (and budget).



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 Chiang Mai 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 in China 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 require an International Driving Permit for Lao and Thailand. You will also 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



- **Airport Transfers** – all airport transfers are included
- **Permits and logistics** – all arrangements for the crossing of the China-Laos and Laos-Thailand borders for travellers and cars, including the Mekong toll bridge crossing
- **Hotels** – the best available or five-star accommodation is included in each overnight stop

- **Exclusive Package from Anantara Gold Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort** – Complementary ticket for the Opium Museum/60 Minutes Spa Treatment/ A choice of activities including: Elephant Camp Experience or Spice Spoons with Anantara cooking school
- **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 in our prices are flights to Kunming and back from Chiang Mai, your Chinese, Lao and Thai visas, and personal purchases (e.g., gifts, souvenirs).



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“ 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

