MOMENTS on the road

Family Adventures: Travel Photography in Yunnan
(8 or 10 Days)
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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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!

Our Adventures in Yunnan family photography journey will take you and your family through some of Yunnan’s best-loved destinations—Dali, Lijiang and Shangri-La—and via some little-known gems on an itinerary designed specifically for families to enjoy together. To make this journey even more special, On the Road Experiences has teamed up with Ron Yue, one of Hong Kong’s best photographers. Ron will be on-hand to coach you through a series of child-friendly, but formal lectures and workshops as you travel along a route designed with budding family travel photographers in mind. Ron will also work with you or your children, hands-on, side-by-side to help you improve your skills!

With Ron on the journey, rest assured that all special moments will be captured along this leisurely itinerary, where you and your children will join a range of fun activities and share new experiences. Go fishing with cormorants in Dali, explore Lijiang’s old town, watch endangered monkeys at play outside Tacheng and visit a lively Tibetan monastery in Shangri-La. There will be opportunities to interact with the region’s colourful minorities and try delicious local foods throughout the journey, which we hope will give your family a wonderful opportunity to experience a new, beautiful and unexpected side of China together. 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 stunningly beautiful countryside.

Return home from this unique road-trip with photographs that are as beautiful and vivid as your memories...

On the Road Experiences has paved the way for you to drive in your own properly insured SUV, so that you can enjoy the romance of a classic overland journey without any of the logistical headaches that typically accompany such journeys....
Our Family Photography and Driving Journeys:

Today’s busy parents have too little time to spend with their children. Our “Family Adventures: Travel Photography in Yunnan” journeys offer busy parents the opportunity to spend “quality time” with their children On the Road, which helps them feel more confident, builds stronger family bonds and balances their emotional health.

Besides including many new experiences for you and your children, this journey will also give you all a chance to be exposed to and perhaps pick up an interest in photography. Photography does not only allow you and your children to bring back home beautiful memories, but you may also learn to see beauty in unexpected places and to capture special moments that might otherwise pass without notice. By acquiring a new skill together you will be able to develop an interest shared with your children through photography. Ron will inspire you to see things that you’ve never seen before and, per chance, to come away with a shared passion for the art of ‘painting with light’. We hope it is an opportunity for you to connect with each other deeply.

A road journey together as a family also means being able to enjoy the privacy of your car, talking in turn and getting to know each other better without time constraints: turn off your cell phones and your computer and enjoy time together while being on a holiday together.
About Master Photographer Ron Yue

Originally from the North Shore in Vancouver, Canada, and based in Hong Kong since 1998, award-winning photographer Ron Yue travels widely to capture the inspiring image. His work has taken him throughout much of Asia to some of the most intriguing places. Initially trained as a chartered accountant, he now uses his diverse photography skills and outdoor experience to produce spectacular photographs for his clients. He has photographed in locations ranging from the torrid heat of Death Valley to Alaska’s frozen tundra, from the jungles of southeast Asia to the Tibetan plateau, and from executive boardrooms to the pinnacle of China’s skyscrapers.

Many of Ron’s images are built around spectacular environments, captured at their peak moments, often incorporating authentic, local people in their native life surroundings. The images frequently blur the division between the dramatic, nostalgic, and the serene.

He produces images for international commercial clients, editorials, and travel and documentary features primarily in the Asia region. Ron’s fine print images are found in both home collections and corporate offices. Ron has photographed for the National Geographic Channel on projects in Vietnam and Hong Kong, and he spent two months traveling in remote areas of Tibet and across thirteen provinces in China on a documentary assignment for Nokia, accompanying On the Road in China founder, Peter Schindler. His work has also been featured as part of a documentary program for CCTV. Ron has conducted inspiring lectures to audiences throughout Asia, and he has instructed at international schools and accreditation programs. He is a guest lecturer for Nikon. Ron feels that photography journeys, or “photographic learning experiences” as he describes them, is a perfect way to improve your photography. Our guests will discover that the new and interesting environments will significantly enhance the learning experience, and there are plenty of opportunities to try out concepts right away. The regular feedback, plus the camaraderie of sharing images with fellow travelers further adds to the enjoyment of your new abilities. When you embark on an amazing journey, you will want to ensure that you bring back images that do justice to the places you have been to so you can show all your friends the incredible experience that you have had.

Throughout the course of this journey, Ron will be on hand to answer questions, review photographs and give hints and tips that will help to make guest’s photographs as beautiful as the scenes that inspired them. As well as specially arranged workshops and field sessions en route, Ron will also be available to ride in guest’s cars during each day’s drive.

Ron Yue will make it easy for your family to understand photography and after a lecture you can practice right away together.
Concept 1: Understanding light in terms of its quality, direction, and ratios can turn a good photograph into a much more dramatic image.
Concept 2: Learning to keep a composition simple can result in a more powerful and less distracting photograph.
Concept 3: Drawing on the knowledge of various photographic concepts and using your imagination can significantly alter the look and quality of an image.
Here are some inspirations for your family photography trip:

• Give your kids an entry level SLR camera (Ron can be of assistance to buy the right equipment if needed) and get them involved in the shoot. Depending on their age, give them a theme for the day, clues to look for, objects of a specific color, etc. You’ll all have fun looking at their pictures later and you may discover a natural talent!

• Include your children in the pictures. If you are traveling in a different culture, try to capture those candid moments instead of posing them in front of a monument. We believe you rather have a picture of your kid playing in the ricefields than a picture of them posing in front of a doorway.

• Work fast. You can’t expect non professional photographers (children or adults) to wait patiently behind you to compose the perfect shot every 15 minutes during your vacation. They’re on vacation too. Set some time aside without a camera. Just family time. Memories are all that really matter!

• Kids can be a great ice breaker when you want to do people or street photography. You are a lot less threatening to strangers if you ask permission to do a street portrait when you have a couple of kids by your side. This will also open your children’s eyes and make them appreciate different cultures.
Awaking in China’s RURAL COUNTRYSIDE…

Xiahou, photo taken by an 11 year old
JADE DRAGON SNOW MOUNTAIN seen from the Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang...

JADE LAKE not far from Lijiang...

"LIJIANG is touristy, but there ARE HIDDEN GEMS to DISCOVER..."
The lovely winding alleys of LIJIANG’S OLD TOWN are a UNESCO World Heritage site...”
Where DR. Joseph Rock lived and worked to INTRODUCE northwest YUNNAN to the outside word...
The Yangtze’s upper reaches...
In the Tacheng Lodge.

“Lunch in THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE...”
In the Tacheng Lodge.

“SLEEPING WELL while FAR AWAY from anywhere...”
“Visiting the CUTEST MONKEYS in the world...”
A colourful WELCOME as you APPROACH TIBET..."
Along the way, one of the LARGEST MONASTERIES in SOUTH-WEST China..."
At the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery

RED-ROBED MONKS in Shangri-La...
A chance to **PURIFY YOUR MIND?**
Day 1
Arriving in Kunming and 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.

Day 2
To the heart of the Nanzhao Kingdom

Today you will drive to Dali and on to Xizhou, home of the Linden Centre – a lovingly converted Bai minority mansion, where you will stay for the next two nights.

Today’s route is designed to ease you into driving in mainland China...mostly on a wonderful highway that allows us to gain distance from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province.

Yunnan has one of the best road networks in China. As you leave the big city behind you will soon see small villages beside the highway nestled into the landscape. Many of these houses belong to the Yi minority, recognizable on the paintings of the sun on their houses, as the Yi minority worships the sun.

After a lunch in nearby Chuxiong we will drive on the same superb modern expressway that we used earlier today to Dali – formerly the capital of Yunnan’s Nanzhao Kingdom.

Coming closer to Dali, the population of the region is predominantly the Bai minority and you will see ladies wearing the traditional Bai headdress all over Dali. Tourism is now the mainstay of Dali’s economy, but in years gone by the city was the capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom, which ruled a swathe of what is today Yunnan Province and northern Burma between the 8th and 9th centuries AD.

From Dali it is only a short drive north to the Bai minority village of Xizhou, where you will stay for two nights in the award-winning Linden Centre. The Centre comes complete with a playroom, a fleet of bicycles, a roof terrace and a well-stocked bar—something for everyone!

Slowly, we’re sure, you will feel your workday stresses ebb as you ease into the rhythm of travelling.

Driving Distance & Duration
Distance: 360 km
Duration: 4.5 - 5.5 hours
Elevation
Highest Daytime: 1850m
Overnight: 1850m
Hotel
Linden Centre, Xizhou (****)
Day 3
Explore pretty Xizhou and Dali

After breakfast Ron will spend the first part of the morning with you introducing you to some camera settings, which you can practice right away during a walk through Xizhou. For the afternoon we can arrange a variety of activities for you to experience the interesting area around Dali – visit a nearby market where you can try local snacks and practice your Chinese, ride around Xizhou by bicycle or horse-drawn cart. There are many other activities such as learning how to make Batik (for which the area is famous for) or cook a delicious local snack called Xizhou Baba. Please let us know what you’re interested in!

Please note, breakfast and dinner are included, lunch and activities are on your account.

Photography Session: In this first session, Ron will introduce you to some basic (and depending on interest) also more advanced photography principles such as composition, exposure and lighting.

Day 4
To the Naxi Kingdom

After a leisurely morning in Xizhou – perhaps working some more with Ron – we set out for Lijiang along a wonderful country road. Lijiang, former capital of the “Nakhi Kingdom”, was introduced to the West by eccentric American botanist Joseph Rock in the 1930s and 40s. The cobbled streets of Lijiang’s old town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, run alongside crystal clear streams and up the steep slopes of Lion Hill, from where you can enjoy a wonderful view over Lijiang’s old town to 5,000 metre (16,400 feet) tall Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

For the next two nights you will stay in the Intercontinental Lijiang, which lies right near the old town of Lijiang.

Photography Session: In the morning, you may want to join Ron for a sunrise photography session by Erhai Lake. During the drive to Lijiang (and during all other drives as well), Ron can join our guests’ cars, alternating from one to another, such that you can all chat with and learn from him more about photography. After arriving in Lijiang, Ron has organised a special dusk photography session in the old town of Lijiang. If you want to rest or wander around by yourself, of course, you’re free to do so. Dinner will be in the old town.
Day 5
Lijiang, Yuhu Village and more

This morning you will take an early-morning walk through Lijiang’s quaint old town, guided by Ron. Best explored in the morning before the tourist buses arrive, you will see old Lijiang at its best.

After lunch visit the tiny village of Yuhu, Joseph Rock’s home while he was stationed in the Yunnan region. Yuhu is a pretty Naxi minority village very close to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. It feels a few decades away from Lijiang’s busy old town thanks to the fact that it remains more or less undiscovered and is therefore almost tourist free!

Photography Session: Under Ron’s guidance, walk around Lijiang’s old town in the quiet of the early morning to experience and photograph the town as it was in years gone by. In the afternoon visit the tiny Naxi village of Yuhu and work with Naxi ladies with their horses to choreograph scenes to capture best their natural lives as you imagine it.

Details
Driving Distance & Duration
Distance: very little
Duration: 1 hour

Elevation
Highest Daytime: 3000m
Overnight: 2470 m

Hotel
Intercontinental Lijiang [*****]
Day 6
Along the Yangtse into the Three Parallel Rivers region...

Today your journey will continue further north. 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 to follow the course of Yangtse. After only a few minutes 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 Qi Zhong, 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, make the best ham in the world. Tacheng is also famous for its rich Tibetan culture and Naxi and Lisu villages with charming distinctive black-roofed farmhouses. The rare species of Yunnan Golden monkey (Rhinopithecus bitelii), 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.

After arriving at the lodge in mid-afternoon, you will have time to enjoy the lodge’s surroundings and at least get a glimpse of this wonderful region. Photography Session: On the drive from Lijiang to Tacheng, there will be opportunities to take photos along the Yangtse river valley. Before dinner, Ron will accompany you to a small village near the Tacheng lodge for you to continue to practice your skills to capture rural Naxi life.

Details
Driving Distance & Duration
Distance: 210 km
Duration: 4 hours
Elevation
Highest Daytime: 2470m
Overnight: 2000m
Hotel
Songtsam Lodge, Tacheng (****)

Photography Session: On the drive from Lijiang to Tacheng, there will be opportunities to take photos along the Yangtse river valley. Before dinner, Ron will accompany you to a small village near the Tacheng lodge for you to continue to practice your skills to capture rural Naxi life.
Day 8
Up and up to the edge of Tibet...

Today’s drive is short, all the better to enjoy some more of the Tacheng region after breakfast and then one of the largest Tibetan monasteries (the Ganden Sumtseling) in Shangri-La in the lovely afternoon light, bright and invisible and crisp as it is at this altitude. While Shangri-La is far from Lhasa, this region is nonetheless imbued with Tibetan “flavours”, from the red-robbed 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. While Shangri-La’s atmospheric old town was tragically destroyed by a large fire in January 2014, it’s still possible to get a taste of the region’s Tibetan culture in the area surrounding the imposing Songzanlin Monastery.

In the evening we will enjoy dinner together in the hotel restaurant. Your hotel in Shangri-La overlooks the monastery, located slightly outside the town itself.

If you need to rush home, we can book an evening flight to Kunming for you. Please contact us to make the arrangements.

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.

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Day 7
Walking with monkeys, a treat for wild-life photographers!

We will take a break from long-distance driving today and start the day with a visit to the Baima Snow Mountain Nature Reserve near Tacheng, where it’s possible to watch the wild Yunnanese snub-nosed monkeys that gather on the hillside to breakfast on the moss and lichen that park rangers hang from the trees - a great outing for budding naturalists! Ron is there to assist you in order to get a great shot. This is a difficult subject, as the monkeys are moving but for sure it will be exciting for both, children and adults alike.

After a morning walk through the nature reserve, we will return to the hotel for lunch and an afternoon at leisure. Sit and relax in the sun on your balcony, take a dip in the hotel’s small swimming pool or stroll through the vineyards that surround the hotel to a nearby Naxi village, the choice is yours.

Photography Session: In the morning, we will drive and then take a short hike to the Golden Stub-Nosed Monkey reserve where Ron will work with you on techniques to capture these primates in the wild.

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Details
Driving Distance & Duration
Distance: very little
Duration: 1 hour

Elevation
Highest Daytime: 2000m
Overnight: 2000m

Hotel
Songtsam Lodge, Tacheng [****]

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Details
Driving Distance & Duration
Distance: 125 km
Duration: 3 hours

Elevation
Highest Daytime: 3300m
Overnight: 3300m

Hotel
Songtsam Retreat, Shangri-La [*****]
Day 9
Enjoy a day in Shangri-La to get a glimpse of Tibetan life

Spend today exploring the area around Shangri-La. You will have the opportunity to visit a local Tibetan family home and to try some traditional butter tea before exploring the monastery—and getting a blessing from one of the monks. The monastery buildings are all new, but the candlelit halls are full of traditional religious statues and paintings, making them a fascinating place to explore.

In the evening we will meet for our farewell dinner at the hotel restaurant. We hope you enjoyed the family time and will return home with many happy memories and pictures capturing them.

Photography Session:
Depending on the weather conditions today (highland weather can be very unpredictable), you will either visit one of the stunning natural regions around Shangri-La or visit a Tibetan family home and work with the family members. Visit the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery where we have arranged for you a private prayer session with monks... chanting in a beautiful prayer hall, lit only by yak butter candles. In the afternoon and evening you will have an opportunity to review your best photographs individually with Ron.

Day 10
Life goes on... fly from Shangri-La via Kunming back to Hong Kong

Today you will start your journey home. After breakfast at the hotel, we will take you to Shangri-La’s Airport to catch a flight back to Kunming (50 minutes, the one-way economy class ticket is included in your journey). You will be free to start your onward journey from Kunming any time after 1pm today (but check with us before you make your flight bookings).

We hope that you leave having enjoyed an amazing journey through Yunnan – discovering both an unexpectedly beautiful side of China and new photographic skills that will enable you to take photographs as vibrant and special as your memories, wherever you travel.
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 Mitsubishis 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!
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 or 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 Shangri-La 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 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** – including 24-hour medical assistance, evacuation and repatriation emergency service.

• **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 your flights to and from Kunming, your China visa, and personal purchases (e.g., gifts, souvenirs).
A picture is worth a thousand words. True, but when it comes to a road journey, moving images are priceless. Please visit:

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

Ralph Waldo Emerson