MOMENTS on the road

From Shangri-La to the Lanna Kingdom (12 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...



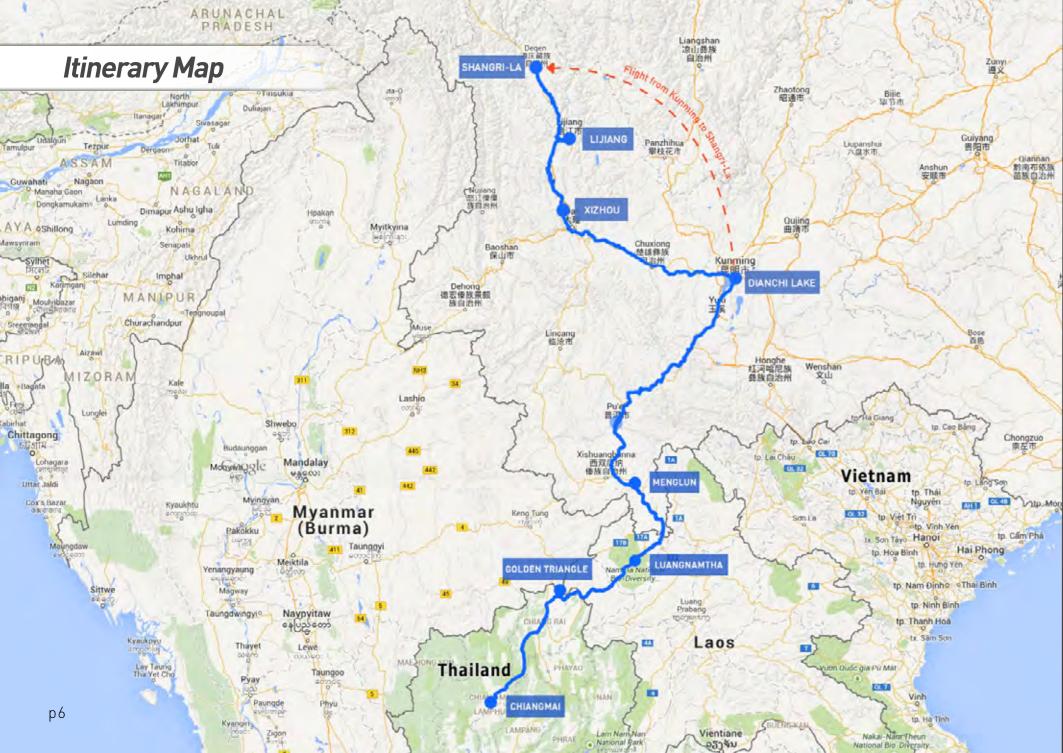
Table of contents

Itinerary Mapwhere you will travel	p. 000
Yes, it is possible	p. 008
Journey of Discovery	p. 010
Day-by-day	p. 060

In closing...

Any car you like, so long as it is an SUV	p. 076
Adventures and discoveries in local cuisines	p. 078
What's included/Best Months to Go	p. 080
Photo credits	p. 082





Day-by-Day

Day1

Arrival in Kunming – Preparing for Your Journey and onward to the edge of Tibet

Day2

Shangri-La to Lijiang – *Via the Tiger Leaping Gorge to Lijiang*

Day3

In and around Lijiang – Exploring the ancient Naxi Kingdom

Dav4

From Lijiang to Xizhou – Along the tea horse trail to Erhai Lake

Day5

From Xizhou to Dianchi Lake -Returning to Kunming and beyond...

Day6

Dianchi Lake to Menglun -Arriving in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan's deep south

Day7

In and around Xishuangbanna – Discovering Xishuangbanna.. Gateway to the Lanna Kingdom

Day8 Menglun/China to Luangnamtha/ Lao – Crossing the border into northern Lao

Day9 Luangnamtha/Lao to Chiang Saen/Thailand – *On to the formerly* infamous Golden Triangle...

Dav10 In and around the Golden Triangle – Relax at the Anantara or explore the Myanmar border area

Day11 Chiang Saen to Chiang Mai -To the capital of the old Lanna

Day12 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...





55 Prayer flags WELCOME YOU as you arrive in SHANGRI-LA..."

The edge of the Tibetan Plateau





56 One of the most important MONASTERY in South-West CHINA..."



66 ENJOY encounters with FRIENDLY fellow travellers..."

Young Tibetan monks

CONTIBETAN PRAYERS...always UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS to witness..."



66 The TIGER LEAPING GORGE... where the YANGTZE makes you TREMBLE!"



55 LIJIANG is touristy, but there ARE HIDDEN GEMS to DISCOVER..."



DD At the RIGHT time and in small alleys, LIJIANG as it used to be..."



Where DR. Joseph Rock lived and worked to INTRODUCE northwest YUNNAN to the outside word..."



66 Beautiful BACK ROADS...the best places for a coffee or tea stop!" 55 A small section of the ANCIENT TEA HORSE TRAIL..."





Take a lake shore DRIVE and enjoy the BEAUTIFUL sunset reflections..."



S XISHUANGBANNA is a FERTILE land..."



XISHUANGBANNA, where TEA thrives..."

66 XISHUANGBANNA,

the home of Yunnan's DAI MINORITY ..."

Dai minority village in Xishuangbanna





SG XISHUANGBANNA, home as well to MANY smaller MINORITIES..."

GOLDENTIONS CONTROL C





and the second second

Menglun Tropical Botanical Garden



66 YUNNAN's markets are LIVELY and COLOURFUL..."

In one of Xishuangbanna's markets





66 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



10.00

20

CELEPHANT encounters with KINDLY CARED FOR animals...one of your CHOICES in the GOLDEN TRIANGLE..."

In Thailand's Golden Triangle





55 ...or an OUTING to the MYANMAR border...or much else besides..." 55 KITCH or FLIGHT OF FANCY? Never mind, definitely worth a VISIT..."

The 'White' temple on the way to Chiang Mai

diminition in





55 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 and onward to the edge of Tibet

You will need to arrive in Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan province, before 2:30pm. After arrival, we will take you to China Driving Licenseing office. Don't worry, there are no medical tests, except for a simple eye test (which is easily passed), and then, within a few minutes, you will receive your temporary Chinese driving license.

After completing this step, you will return to Kunming airport for your short 1-hour flight to Shangri-La. With luck, you will still see the sun setting over the majestic mountains surrounding this northwestern corner of Yunnan: you have arrived at the edge of the Tibetan highlands.

A short transfer will take you from Shangri-La airport to your hotel which is set inside the grounds of one of the largest monasteries of South-West China.

You will enjoy dinner at the Songtsam Retreat where you can begin to acquaint yourself with the many flavours of Yunnan's cuisine and to meet your fellow travellers...then you will surely look forward to a good night's rest.

Details

Driving Distance & Duration Distance: NA Duration: NA

Elevation Highest Daytime: 3250m Overnight: 3250m

Hotel

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

Day 2 Via the Tiger Leaping Gorge to Lijiang

In the morning, we would like to give you a taste of Shangri-La by visiting one of the largest Tibetan monasteries outside of Tibet itself as well as a private Tibetan home.

The monastery is called Ganden Sumtseling and is, in many ways, modeled after the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Join our guide to learn more about Tibetan Buddhism and, with luck to see and hear monks chanting in subdued yak butter candlelight.

After the monastery visit, we invite you to a private Tibetan home. This will give you a chance to see how locals live in this part of Tibet. If you're adventures, sample a local delicacy called zangba, made from highland barley, or take a sip of Tibetan Yak Butter Tea. Both are elements of Tibetan's staple, protein-rich diet. Then your driving journey will begin along a relative short and easy route toward Lijiang.

En route, we will be stopping at the Tiger Leaping Gorge, of course, for you to admire the power of the gorge, up close. You will need to go down (and therefore come back up) quite a lot of stairs, so please prepare accordingly. Of course, for those who want to enjoy the view but do not want to do the walking, there will be people ready to carry you down in a chair.





Details

Driving Distance & Duration Distance: 260 km **Duration:** 6-7 hours

Elevation Highest Daytime: 3300m Overnight: 2470m

Hotel

InterContinental Lijiang Ancient Town Resort (*****)

Day 3 In and around Lijiang

Lijiang lies two valleys over from the main road, so you will climb over one set of hills before dropping down into the valley surrounding Lake Lashi and climbing once again into the Lijiang valley. The scenic highlight of the valley is the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (5,500m) – called Mt Saseto in the local language.

Lijiang is home to the Naxi minority – introduced to the West by Austrian-American botanist, Joseph Rock, who lived in the valley between 1922 and 1949. He spent much of his time in the region studying the Naxi, whose culture he feared would be extinguished by the encroaching Han Chinese culture. Luckily for us, many aspects of Naxi culture are still visible in Lijiang – elderly ladies walk the streets proudly wearing their traditional costumes – but Lijiang's beauty and atmosphere are

spoiled after dark by the noise and neon of 'bar street'. Fortunately the very touristy section of Lijiang is confined to just a few streets, and it is easy to lose the crowds down quiet back streets.

Enjoy a stroll around Lijiang's old town – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – and shop for souvenirs, or visit the nearby Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and take the cable car up – but beware of altitude sickness at the top (5,600m)! Alternatively, there are many wonderful hiking and horse-riding trails to nearby villages and in the countryside surrounding Lijiang. We will be happy to make suggestions and arrangements for you and our staff can accompany you should you wish.

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



Details

Driving Distance & Duration Depending on your chosen activity

Elevation Highest Daytime: Depending on your chosen activity Overnight: 2450m

Hotel InterContinental Lijiang Ancient Town Resort (*****)

Day 4 Along the tea horse trail to Erhai Lake

Short Itinerary

For those joining the shorter itinerary, today you will arrive in Kunming and process your temporary driving licenses, before driving south to the new Intercontinental Kunming.

Full Itinerary

For those on the full itinerary, today you will drive from Lijiang to Shaxi, formerly a stop on the Tea Horse Road – an ancient trade route that carried Yunnan's fragrant tea into the arid highlands of Tibet. Shaxi is a small town, but its centre is very well-preserved and a delight to explore.

After eating lunch in a former coaching inn in the old town, we will continue along a beautiful country road to Xizhou, our overnight stop. Tonight you will stay in the Linden Centre, a lovingly converted Bai-minority mansion that has recently been converted to a lovely hotel. Sit and enjoy the view of the

Details

Driving Distance & Duration Distance: 195 km Duration: 5 hours

Elevation Highest Daytime: 3100m

Hotel

Linden Centre, Xizhou (****)

nearby Cangshan Mountains and Lake Erhai from the Linden Centre's roof terrace.

Day 5 Returning to Kunming and beyond

Short Itinerary

Spend the day around Dianchi Lake, or venture further afield to Yunnan's famous 'Stone Forest' area of karst scenery – we will show you the beauty of this region away from the crowds... In the evening, you will join those on the full itinerary, ready for your journey into South-East Asia together...

Full Itinerary

Today you will drive along

excellent highways back towards Kunming and on to a wonderful country hotel on the other side of the city. First however, spend the morning in Xizhou – either linger over a home-cooked breakfast or stretch your legs on a gentle walking tour of Xizhou. Setting out mid-morning, you will drive to the town of Chuxiong, where we will stop for lunch, before continuing along excellent roads in the afternoon to the superb Intercontinental Hotel, located on the shores of Dianchi Lake, 20 kilometres south of Kunming itself.





Details

Driving Distance & Duration Distance: 360 km Duration: 4-5 hours (Depending on traffic toward Kunming)

Elevation Highest Daytime: 2100m Overnight: 1800m

Hotel InterContinental Kunming (*****)

Day 6 Arriving in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan's deep south

In the morning you will drive from the Intercontinental onto the Kunming – Jinghong highway. In the beginning, you will likely experience morning Kunming rush hour, but after an hour or so the traffic will become thinner, the air cleaner again and the highway better. In fact, the highway from Kunming to Jinghong is one of the nicest highways we've driven on. The number of tunnels and bridges – including one of the tallest in the world - and the engineering that's gone into it is impressive. After approximately four hours of driving (and gradually losing altitude from Kunming's 1,800m), you will have lunch in a small town called Mojiang. Don't expect anything fancy, but it will have to do for the day...it's really the best en route this morning.

In the afternoon, you will continue driving on the Kunming – Jinghong highway for approximately 3.5 hours. The air and vegetation will become more and more subtropical. In Mengyang village, you will arrive at a toll booth where we turn south-east toward Mohan. The last part of today's drive will be an excellent national road to the Anantara Hotel in Menglun where you will stay for two nights while you explore Xishuangbanna.

Details

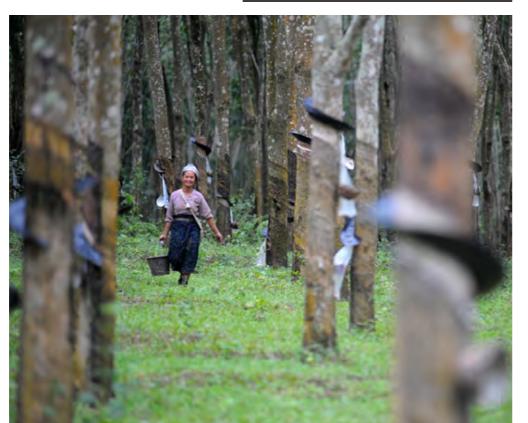
Driving Distance & Duration Distance: 580 km Duration: 8 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1800m

Hotel

Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort & Spa (*****)



Day 7 Discovering Xishuangbanna... Gateway to the Lanna Kingdom

Spend today as you wish - visit a local market, or visit the lush gardens of the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Gardens and learn about Xishuangbanna's shrinking rainforests, visit a hilltribe village or even visit a tea factory and watch Pu'er tea being made. The warmer climate may prompt you to rest for a day with a good book – the choice is yours.

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



Details

Driving Distance & Duration Depending on your chosen activity

Elevation Highest Daytime: 500m Overnight: 400m

Hotel Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort & Spa (*****)

Day 8 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 borers is still an event where in much of Europe or America it has become a nonevent. 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 (***)

p71

Day 9 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

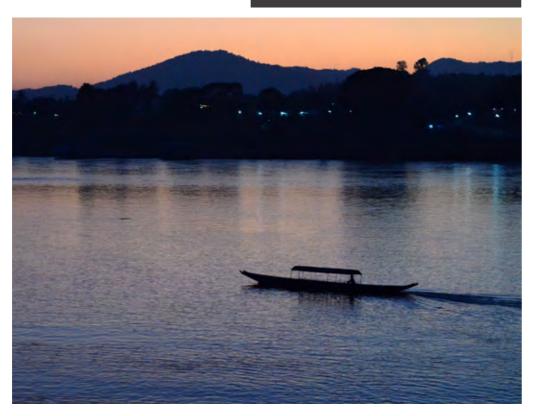
Driving Distance & Duration Distance: 240 km Duration: 4-5 hours

Elevation

Highest Daytime: 600m Overnight: 400m

Hotel

Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort (*****)



Day 10 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 then 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 11 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 12 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...



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!

b b ANY car, as long as it is an SUV"

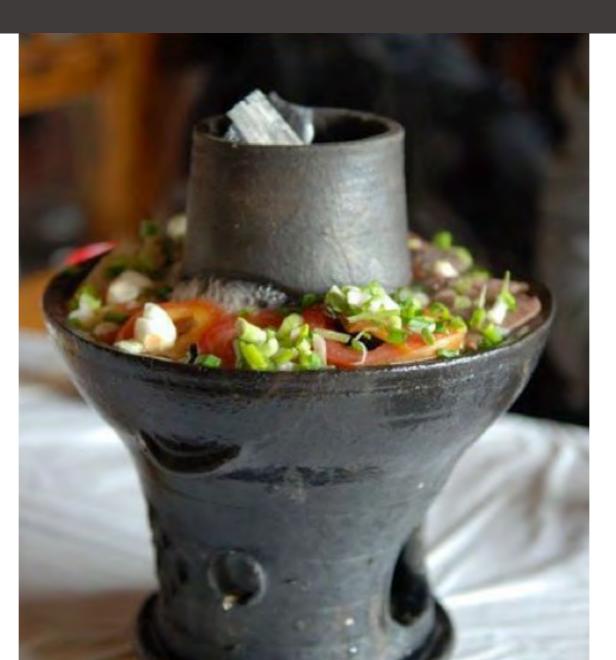
Adventures and Discoveries in Local Cuisines

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 preorder 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-ofthe-art satellite navigation system with a preprogrammed 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



- Flight Your flight from Kunming to Shangri-La
- 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).

*Surcharges may be applied on journeys that coincide with major festivals, particularly Christmas and New Year.



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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"





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

