

# Yangshuo Sightseeing Information

We have put together this information booklet to help you get the most of your stay in Yangshuo.

If you need to arrange any tours or activities, then our staff at reception or any good travel agency in Yangshuo can arrange these. Please do not use touts as they promise many things but provide very little in return

## 1. The Li River

The section of the Li River that is the most beautiful is between Yangdi and Xingping. This is between Guilin and Yangshuo. Another section that is very beautiful is between Yangshuo and downstream to Liugong. The 1<sup>st</sup> section can be very busy, especially as all the cruise boats go past this section every day

By boat or bamboo raft: Cruises are available on a motorized (imitation) bamboo raft from Yangdi to Xingping or Yangshuo to Liugong. The rafts can hold up to 6 people. There are times during the year when these cruises are not permitted by the local authorities, so just check with us before booking one.

There are also trips that you can do out of Xingping, these can be nice, but we find that Xingping is very crowded with local tourists who rush over to see the location for the photo on the back of the 20 Yuan note. Boat cruises from Xingping can be much cheaper as you would share a boat with other people (these can be very crowded at times). You can easily arrange this if you make your own way to Xingping

## 2. The Yulong River and the Yulong River valley

This is a small tributary of the Li River and has some beautiful scenery of it's own.

The Yulong River is the place for relaxing and scenic rides on bamboo rafts. There are several parts of the river where you can begin your raft ride. One of them is at the Yulong Bridge, then there are several between the Yulong Bridge till the main road near Moon Hill. This makes it very handy to incorporate a bamboo raft ride with an excursion by bike

The Yulong River valley is full of small towns and rice paddies surrounded by Karst peaks. You will get some great images here. Travelling on a bike or a scooter gives you the chance to stop and walk around whenever you want.

We recommend doing one of two trips. There are two sites that people want to visit, Moon Hill or the Yulong Bridge. By taking a bike ride to the Yulong River Valley and then onto either one of these sites, you will see rural China at its best and can fit in a ride on a bamboo raft. The Moon Hill ride is more organized with a paved road most of the way, but also very busy with other visitors whereas the road to the Yulong Bridge is bumpier but less travelled, which means that the locals are less exposed to a constant stream of tourists. For both of these trips we recommend taking a guide. However, you could try it on your own. You will probably get lost, but they will add to the experience, as it is beautiful out there

## 3. The Yulong Bridge

This 400 Year old stone bridge is very picturesque and just like Moon Hill, it is best visited as part of an excursion through the Yulong River Valley. You could also just have a car drive you here before starting a trip on a bamboo raft

#### **4. Moon Hill**

This is Yangshuo's most visited site. Many local visitors just take a bus there and take photos from the bottom. Many other visitors just ride a bike on the main road before climbing it. The best way to visit it is to do it as part of an excursion through the Yulong River valley as you will have a great day out

Moon hill is a park with an entrance fee. There is parking for your bike in the park and there is also a good restaurant there. There is a concrete path with many steps that will take you to the hole of Moon Hill. Beyond that is a very rough path to the top. You do get very good scenic views of the countryside from here

#### **5. Fuli Old Town**

The town of Fuli has two parts to it. The new part, which is next to the main road, and the old part that sits next to the Li River. The old town is worth a visit but more so on the town's market days. Fuli's market days are any days of the month that end in 2, 5 or 8. People from the villages nearby will come to Fuli by bus, ferry, on foot, tractor and other interesting ways to either buy or sell produce. The concept of market days comes from the time when these villages were isolated. Each main town was allocated its market days so the locals would know which town to go to buy or sell their produce. Market days are great for seeing real locals. Please note that because several tourists go there and it can be very crowded, pickpockets are attracted. Just take the basics to Fuli

There is a nice and easy bike ride to Fuli. It goes on the west bank of the Li River, which means that you need to cross the river to reach Fuli. There is a ferry available for you which overcharges. After your Fuli visit, you can come back on the main road, but beware that it does get heavy traffic. You can do this trip on your own, but a local guide could also show you the way

#### **6. Xingping**

Xingping is about 25kms from Yangshuo. The main feature is that it was the location for the photo on the back of the 20 Yuan note. You can do a motorized (imitation) bamboo raft trip from Yangdi to Xingping or you can come by local bus from Yangshuo. Xingping has many touts and will promise you everything. They can arrange boat trips and bamboo raft trips out of Xingping. These do not go all the way to Yangdi. Also the river from Xingping to Yangshuo is not very impressive

Xingping also has its own market days on any day of the month ending in 3, 6 or 9

#### **7. Silver Cave**

Silver Cave is about 30kms from Yangshuo. There are local buses that go past or you can hire your own car to take you there

Silver Cave is very similar to Reed Flute Cave in Guilin, only not as busy. It has a large number of caverns all with stalactites and stalagmites lit with different colour lights and with names like 'umbrella' and 'vegetable garden'. This cave is great to visit on rainy days or when it is too hot to be outside

#### **8. Assembling Dragon Cave**

This cave is convenient to visit as it is near to Moon Hill and the Big Banyan Tree. It is much smaller than Silver cave, but it still has some interesting formations and you get to do a very short trip on a boat linking two caves

## 9. Butterfly Cave

This one is just not worth a visit. It was named after a Romantic Chinese story and it was in the hope that Chinese visitors would flock here.

## 10. Big Banyan Tree

This is another site for Chinese visitors. The Big Banyan Tree features heavily in the story of Liu Sanjie and it was here where she threw her 'love ball' to her future husband. At the end of the day, it is still just a tree. It is also located on the main road between Moon Hill and Yangshuo. You may be able to get a glimpse of it from the road without needing to pay the entrance fee

## 11. Liugong

Liugong is a little old village in the southern part of this region. It is relatively untouched which makes it nice to walk around and get a feel for the old ways. You could do a nice river cruise from Yangshuo to Liugong returning by the same boat or you could come back on a bicycle. Liugong is about 16kms from Yangshuo

## 12. Shangri-La

This site is a man made site. It is in a beautiful location but it was built to accommodate the masses of tourists who come down on a cruise boat from Guilin to Yangshuo and then return to Guilin and need a break in between. The site has an old minority area, which you go past on a small boat, and it also has some traditional wooden buildings from the Longsheng area. Basically it is setup to sell traditional wares to tourists. They are not accustomed to having people just turn up at the gate as there is no ticket office. Almost everyone comes as part of a tour package

## Activities

### 1. Boat Trips (Bamboo Raft)

- b) The Li River – You can also do a short trip from Yangshuo town. The rafts head upstream past the Li River Retreat and then return to Yangshuo. These trips take about 40 minutes and the rafts have an engine on the back
- a) Yangdi to Xingping – This covers the best part of the Li River. You need to pre-book this so the raft would be waiting for you in Yangdi. The cruise takes about one and a half hours (this varies during the year with the different water levels). Once in Xingping, you can have your own car bring you back or just come back to Yangshuo on the local bus. The best time to this trip is early in the morning before the river fills up with the large boats coming from Guilin
- b) Yangshuo to Liugong – This part of the river has its own spectacular sections and is not as crowded as the previous cruise. You could also return to Yangshuo by bike through the countryside. This trip takes about one and a half hours.
- c) Trips out of Xingping – You could go to Xingping and jump on the next farmer's boat to leave. These are cheap, but you will most likely be in a crowded boat and travel a short distance upstream before returning to Xingping. These boat trips do not go to Yangdi
- d) Xingping to Yangshuo – Many touts in Xingping will try to sell you a trip on a boat back to Yangshuo. This part of the river has very few Karst peaks, so most people find it a bit boring

## 2. Bike Rides

These can be replaced by riding a scooter.

The best bike rides (not in any particular order)

- a) Yangshuo to Moon Hill via the Yulong Valley – This is a very popular trip. Head out to the Yulong River Valley and explore the countryside, perhaps take a ride on a bamboo raft then carry on to Moon Hill. On the way back you can visit the Assembling Dragon Cave, Butterfly Cave or the Big Banyan Tree. This you can do on your own but a guide is recommended – About 25kms total. The ride is on flat, paved roads
- b) Yangshuo to the Yulong Bridge – This is a less touristy bike ride. It follows the same route at the beginning like the above bike ride, but it follows the Yulong River upstream all the way to the bridge. You can return in part by taking a bamboo raft or riding your bike on the opposite side of the river. There is a good chance that you may get lost on this trip, but it may lead to a great experience – About 30kms. This ride is on a combination of paved roads and really bumpy village paths. A sore backside is almost assured
- c) Yangshuo to Fuli. This one follows the Li River on the West Bank going through some small villages. Once you reach the village of Dutou, you will need to take a ferry across to Fuli. You can come back the same way or once in Fuli, just take the main road to Yangshuo. There is heavy traffic on this road. If you did it on your own, there is a good chance that you will miss the ferry point and end up in Liugong – About 20kms all up. Again a guide is recommended as you will probably miss one of the turn offs. This ride is a combination of paved roads and really bumpy village paths. A sore backside is almost assured
- d) Yangshuo to Fuli and Liugong – You could do the same trip to Fuli and then come to the West Bank of the Li River on the ferry and ride on to Liugong. There is a road that comes back to Yangshuo from Liugong, which you can take, but we recommend doing this trip in reverse with a boat/bamboo raft. That is, take a boat/raft to Liugong and ride back from Liugong to Fuli and Yangshuo. Liugong is about 17kms away from Yangshuo. This ride is a combination of paved roads and really bumpy village paths. A sore backside is almost assured

## 3. Hikes

There really is only one marked hike in this area

- a) Yangdi to Xingping – If you don't want to do a cruise, then you can just walk this section of the Li River. You can do this hike by taking the local bus to Yangdi and then paying the hike fee on arrival in Yangdi. The fee covers the entrance to the area and three ferry crossings that you need to do to get all the way to Xingping. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> ferry crossing, the view becomes a bit dull, so some people take a ride on one of the motorbikes or rickshaws that may be waiting. This hike takes 4-6 hours and there are some places for food and drinks. From Xingping you can come back on the local bus to Yangshuo
- b) Just go for a walk – I have found so many great little walks by just walking down little paths. You will discover great places where very few visitors have been to, just by walking around. Ask our staff for hikes around the hotel

#### **4. Cooking Schools**

Yangshuo has several cooking schools but only two that really teach how to cook local dishes

- a) The Yangshuo Cooking School – This was the first real cooking school in Yangshuo. They now have two locations. The original school is in the village of Chaolong in the Yulong River Valley and the other school is on the Li River bank in Yangshuo. Both locations offer beautiful views. This school offers two menus that alternate each day and they have two classes per day, morning and afternoon. Their teachers speak excellent English and explain the subtleties in each dish. You start by visiting the local market where you can see what is fresh, afterwards you go to the school where you get to cook 5 dishes and then eat them yourself.
- b) Cloud 9 Cooking School – Cloud 9 is a restaurant that has a side business in teaching how to cook food. They are located just off West street. This cooking school teaches you less dishes

#### **5. Hot Air Balloon Rides**

These are no longer available after a major accident

#### **6. Swimming**

The summer months can be hot and a refreshing swim is nice during the day. At the bottom of the Li River Retreat, there is a small 'beach' that offers shade and a place to swim. Near the riverbank, there is no current but as you get towards the middle of the river, the current does get strong, so if you are a weak swimmer, stay close to the bank.

There also several other 'beaches' up and down the Li River. You can also go swimming in the Yulong River

Just one thing, if you are going to go swimming, leave all of your valuables in your room as some visitors to Yangshuo have had their bags taken away whilst swimming

#### **7. White Water Rafting**

There are now 2 locations for white water rafting. Both are re-converted small hydro-electric plants that have been replaced by bigger dams elsewhere. Both are about an hour away from Yangshuo by bus. Their buses depart at certain times during the day, so please check with us on which time you prefer to go. Both locations have change rooms, storage lockers (for a fee) and you can also purchase photos of you whilst rafting

Both operate the same way. You go into a 2 person raft facing each other and without paddles.

- a) The original white water rafting place is just outside of Xingping and is by far the most adventurous of the two. However, to be more adventurous, it does drop its safety standards. The life-jackets are of very poor quality as are the safety helmets. This is ideal for someone who is willing to risk a few bruises. If you have no accidents, then it is a fun day out
- b) The second location is called Nine Horse Fresco Hill Driftage and has much newer equipment. This location is much safer because the drops are smaller and there are very few rocks, with most of the course being a narrow concrete path

## 8. Kayaking

You can also go out on a kayak for a few hours on the Li River. The kayaking begins near Fuli and you can get picked up at either of two towns. One is Liugong and the other Puyi. Most people are happy going to Liugong, as they like to paddle a bit, swim, paddle etc. The cost of the kayaking also includes transfers from/to Yangshuo

## 9. Cormorant Fishing

Every evening, there is a show put on for visitors where you can watch traditional cormorant fishing in action. There will be a local fisherman on a bamboo raft with his cormorant birds. You will follow on a small farmer's boat. The show normally lasts an hour and you will be able to observe how the birds catch the fish and how the farmer swoops the birds onto the raft before emptying the fish into his basket. At the end of the show you may be able to see his catch

## 10. Tai Chi And Kung Fu

If you want to try out some Tai Chi or Kung Fu whilst you are in Yangshuo, then we can arrange the experience for you

## Shows

### 1. The Liu Sanjie Sound And Light Show

This show is very special. It has a cast of 500 people who try to represent all of the local minorities of this region. Some sing traditional songs and others show how they live off the land and rivers, whilst in the background some of the karst peaks are lit up to give an impressive backdrop

There are several types of tickets available. The cheapest tickets take the front seats whilst the more expensive tickets are further back and it may be harder to see some of the costumes

The show runs every day of the year except for the 2 or 3 weeks prior to Chinese New Year as they do small changes to the show

The show begins at 8pm if there is only one show that night or 7.40pm and 9pm if there are 2 shows on that night

The ticket price normally includes a transfer from downtown Yangshuo to the show and back. The included transfer is a group transfer with pick ups at different places around Yangshuo. You could pay a bit extra and have your own car take you to the show and back

*Warning: Many touts in Yangshuo sell these very cheaply but then take you to a place on the opposite side of the river. Make sure that you go to the real show*

# Beyond Yangshuo

## 1. Longsheng Area

The Longsheng area is where you can see the famous terraced rice fields as well as some of China's minorities, including the Zhunag and Yao.

The terraced fields have rice on them from late April till early October, the rest of the year, they have some vegetables, or are left empty.

There are 2 towns that are easily accessible from here. They are Pingan and Dazhai.

- a) Pingan is the better setup town as it has had visitors for much longer than Dazhai. It is also easier to reach the top of the terraces than at Dazhai. Pingan also has more restaurants and guesthouses
- b) Dazhai is a little bit further away, but in our opinion, it has much more scenic terraces than at Pingan. However, it is a much longer hike from the car park to the top.

So, if you are healthy and fit, Dazhai is the place to go, if not, then Pingan is still worth a visit

Are you staying there overnight? Then you should really hike between the two towns. The walk is easy and beautiful. We can recommend a place to stay if you need one

The Rice Terraces are about 3 hours away and there is an entrance fee per person into the park.

A good way to visit the terraces from Yangshuo if you have an evening flight out of Guilin is to get up early, drive up to either Pingan or Dazhai, spend a few hours or even hike between them, if you have a guide, and then drive to the airport in Guilin as it is on the same side of Guilin as the rice terraces