

HERITAGE OF SOUTHERN CHINA

A Journey to Wind-Rain Bridges & the Backbone of the Dragon
March 8-21, 2010



**BETCHART
EXPEDITIONS**



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A Journey to Wind-Rain Bridges & the Backbone of the Dragon Including Hong Kong

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Join us on a journey of discovery through the mountains and valleys of China's scenic south. On this expedition, we will visit intricately eroded rural landscapes along the **Li River near Guilin**, then venture off the beaten track for extraordinary cultural experiences in the **mountain enclaves of Guangxi and Guizhou**. Our overland adventure will culminate at the celebrated Buddhist Grottoes of **Dazu**, Sichuan, before we fly to the dynamic, cosmopolitan city of **Hong Kong**.

Our journey begins in a landscape that is iconic of southern China: steep limestone hills and meandering rivers, whose misty silhouettes beckon travelers from across the world. Here in **Guilin and nearby Yangshuo**, farmhouses are set amidst overhanging crags and cormorants catch fish along the Li River.

From Guilin, we'll set forth on back roads into a “**a subtropical labyrinth of mountains and plunging river valleys**,” (in the words of historian Mark Elvin) where several of China's distinctive ethnic minority groups retain traditional lifestyles. Many of these people -- the **Yao, Dong, and Miao (Hmong)** - inhabit picturesque wooden villages that cling to steep, terraced hillsides. Their architecture - **drum towers and Wind and Rain bridges** - is unique in China. Although they gained minority status with the incursion of the Han Chinese centuries ago, each group today retains a strong sense of ethnic identity.

Among such folded terrain, there is little opportunity for conventional farming. Instead, the local people, working by hand over centuries, have terraced the slopes to such an extent that in some places they have been compared to the **Backbone of a Dragon** or, if you like, a life-sized topographic map. To flood the rice crop, a complex system of pipes and canals is used to transfer water to each terrace. In the valley bottoms, wooden paddle wheels harness the power of the river to lift water for irrigation.

Over the course of several days, we'll traverse this mountainous heartland of southern China, pausing in numerous villages and staying in larger towns that lie far from the Western tourist circuit. Cultural highlights include **ancient wooden villages, stone bridges, sacred banyan groves and the colorful, gracious people**, many of whom still favor local styles and traditional dress. Handicrafts include the beautifully-wrought silver ornamentation and hand-stitched textiles of the Miao, and the pounded indigo fabric of the Dong.

Our overland journey will terminate in the city of **Guiyang, an exotic destination for most Chinese even today**. From here we'll fly to Chongqing on the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, China's greatest waterway. After visiting the **Buddhist grottoes at Dazu**, we'll fly to Hong Kong for two memorable days and nights.

We invite you to join us for an amazing journey to explore the rich heritage of **Southern China and Hong Kong!**

LEADERSHIP

Leading this expedition will be **David Huang**. David has led many China trips for Betchart Expeditions since 1994. David has degrees in English and Tourism, and has been a superb organizer and guide for Betchart throughout China. We look forward to exploring the amazing backcountry of Southern China and the magic of Hong Kong with him. David will be joined by local guides who are specialists on the different areas of our visit.

ITINERARY

DAYS 1/2 SAN FRANCISCO TO HONG KONG

Depart San Francisco International Airport for Hong Kong, crossing the International Date Line en route.

DAY 3 HONG KONG TO GUILIN

Arrive in Hong Kong this morning and transfer to a morning flight to Guilin, China. Our program will begin with an afternoon city tour of Guilin, long-associated with the spectacular landscapes of Southern China. Welcome dinner. *Guilin Park Hotel (2 nights)*. D

DAY 4 YANGSHUO & THE LI RIVER

Today, we will enjoy an excursion from Guilin to Yangshuo including the Li River cruise. Landscapes here are iconic of southern China -- sharp, verdant pinnacles of weathered limestone tower in all directions. Intricately contoured fields boast winter crops. Cormorants go about their business of fishing on the river. There will be time to explore the markets of Yangshuo before our late-afternoon return to Guilin. B,L,D

DAY 5 JINKENG & SANJIANG

Our backcountry adventure through the mountainous backcountry of Southern China will begin with a drive to Sanjiang. En route, we will visit a delightful Yao Minority enclave at Jinkeng (Golden Hollow). This village is about 30 minutes up a side road from the main highway to Sanjiang. Spectacular terraced landscapes descend the mountain slopes and create the image of the Backbone of the Dragon. We will have a chance to visit some of the local people and walk among the terraces. If time permits, we will visit the Sanjiang Museum of Dong Minority Culture. *Fengyu Qiao International Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

DAY 6 CHENGYANG & CONGJIANG

This morning, we will visit the Dong Minority area of Chengyang. Here the local Dong people have constructed several beautiful "Wind and Rain" covered bridges, and drum towers that epitomize their culture. In Chengyang, a path leads along the river and connects several Dong villages where old wooden houses suggest another time. Besides farming, local subsistence activities include the dyeing and pounding of indigo cloth to make traditional batik handicrafts. After lunch in Chengyang, we'll drive to the town of Congjiang with a possible side trip to Tongle. More cultural experiences await us! *Congjiang International Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

DAY 7 RONGJIANG

Approaching Guizhou Province, we will enter the homeland of the Hmong people, referred to within China as the "Miao." Although they are now part of China, the Hmong people have retained a strong sense of ethnic identity. They divide themselves into several clans whose names -- Black, Flowery, and "Short-skirted" -- refer to the manner of traditional dress. Today we will visit a group of Black Hmong villages situated on a ridgetop across the river from Congjiang. Later in the day, we'll make a scenic drive to Rongjiang, an isolated market town at the confluence of two rivers in a remote valley. (The names of these places -- Congjiang and Rongjiang, -- are sinicized versions of names in the local minority languages.) Banyan Park, just downriver from Rongjiang, has a small temple, big banyan figs, and friendly

locals who may be turned out in traditional blue garb. Rongjiang is one of those self-contained municipalities, common in the more remote parts of China, where it is possible to find almost anything for sale. Enjoy some free time to explore Rongjiang. It is an interesting town for walking about. *Dongxiang Mi Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

DAY 8 LEISHAN

Our drive to Leishan crosses a mountain divide on a scenic, winding road through forests of *Cunninghamia*, a conifer endemic to Southern China. We may be lucky to see some flowering rhododendron at the higher elevations as well. Along the way we'll have the opportunity to stop at some old towns like Tashi (Pagoda Stone) and interesting wooden villages like Datang, a 'Short-skirted Miao' village with grain storage houses built uniquely over a pool of water. *Lei Gong Shan International Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

DAY 9 XIJIANG & KAILI - MIAO VILLAGES

This morning we will visit Xijiang, the largest Miao village in Guizhou Province. Although it has been developed for tourism, Xijiang remains an interesting destination with large wooden homes ascending a steep, south-facing hillside. After lunch we will visit Sankeshu, near Kaili, where there is a small but interesting museum devoted to the textiles and silver ornamentation of the Miao and Dong people. In the afternoon, we'll visit Xijia and Gejia. These villages, about 2 km apart, have been developed for tourism but are still very interesting. Passengers may walk along a path that connects the two villages or travel between them by bus. In the evening, there will be time to explore Kaili's central "People's Square." *Tenglong Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

Day 10 KAILI TO GUIYANG VIA SHIQIAO

This morning we will drive to Guiyang, the bustling capital city of Guizhou Province, with a stop en route at the old town of Shiqiao (Stone Bridge) which is known for making paper the ancient way. We'll plan to eat lunch in Shiqiao, then have time to explore its narrow, busy streets on foot. In the afternoon, we will have leisure time to explore Guiyang's busy downtown area where many local products are available. *Jinzhu Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

DAY 11 GUIYANG TO TUNPU OLD TOWN & CHONGQING

Today, we'll visit the historic town of Tunpu, established 600 years ago in the early Ming Dynasty when the army came into Guizhou to try to subdue unruly locals. In contrast to many of the other places we've seen in recent days, this town has a Han Chinese ethnic heritage. Many of the houses are made of stone and are very old. In the afternoon we'll fly to Chongqing. Transfer to *Sofitel Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

DAY 12 DAZU BUDDHIST GROTTOS TO HONG KONG

In the morning, we'll explore the Buddhist stone grottoes of Dazu. Dozens of grottoes, carved in the pink Sichuan sandstone more than a thousand years ago, contain hundreds of figures whose demeanor ranges from wrathful to whimsical to serene. We'll spend the morning enjoying this calm, beautifully secluded place situated at the source of a village stream. Lunch in Dazu. Then enjoy a return drive to Chongqing, and flight to Hong Kong. Transfer to the *Salisbury Hong Kong Hotel (2 nights)* in the Kowloon part of Hong Kong. At leisure to enjoy Hong Kong! B,L

DAYS 13/14 HONG KONG TO USA

Following breakfast, the day will be at leisure to explore your personal interests in Hong Kong. Enjoy your choice of sightseeing or a shopping frenzy! On Day 14, group transfer to the airport for the group flight back to the USA. B

COSTS & CONDITIONS

China Expedition Fee: \$2,990 per person twin share (plus air fare of \$995 + tax from San Francisco to Hong Kong, including in-tour flights Hong Kong-Guilin, Guiyang-Chongqing & Chongqing-Hong Kong). Air Fares Are Subject to Change.

Hong Kong: Two nights in Hong Kong, twin share with breakfast are included in the trip fee. Additional nights may be booked for \$185 per room including breakfast.

China Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; all meals from dinner on Day 3 until lunch on Day 12; breakfasts in Hong Kong; tips to local guides and drivers; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

China Expedition Fee Does Not Include: International air fare and in-tour air fare (quoted separately); China visa fee; gratuities to leaders; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, snacks; personal insurance, or foreign airport departure taxes.

What to Expect: This expedition is for travelers who would like to explore the classic Chinese landscapes around Guilin and Yangshuo, plus the spectacularly terraced mountains between Guilin and Guiyang, populated by fascinating minority people, including the Miao, Dong, and others. This is a rich cultural experience, amidst fantastic landscapes. Leading the expedition will be Betchart's longtime guide David Huang, and local guides. The group will travel from 2 to 7 hours by bus or van most days, and will cruise a half day on the Li River. We will explore villages populated by minority cultures, meet the people and learn about their way of life. Walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery. It will be spring with midday temperatures in the 70s to 80s and some rain. The expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would like a chance to explore the fascinating landscapes and rich cultures of Southern China, culminating in the extravaganza of Hong Kong. Please be flexible with bumpy roads or long drives, hotels or itinerary changes (which may occur if we learn about nearby festivals or other opportunities). With this in mind, we will have a grand adventure of discovery. (No smoking in vehicles or meals please.)

Air Fare & Airline Ticketing: Please phone **Renee at Betchart Expeditions (800) 252-4910** for information about the group flights. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Accommodations: Are in comfortable and reasonably clean Chinese hotels based on twin share. Expect a good bed, showers, Western style toilets and carefully prepared food. Single accommodations are available for a supplement of \$595.

Reservations, Deposits & Payments: To reserve a place on this expedition, please mail a deposit of \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to: **Southern China Expedition, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435.** Balance of land fee is due 60 days before departure.

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.

Questions: Please call **Renee, Betchart Expeditions Inc., (800) 252-4910** or **(408) 252-4910.** Email: renee@betchartexpeditions.com

SEE RESERVATION FORM ON NEXT PAGE

RESERVATIONS

#1124

YES! I/We want to join the **Southern China Expedition, March 8-21, 2010**, offered by Betchart Expeditions Inc. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we have enclosed a check for \$ _____ (\$500 per person), payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____ Sex _____
_____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: Home (____) _____ Work or Cell (____) _____

Email #1: _____ #2: _____

Membership (please circle): AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference: _____ Twin _____ Twin share _____ Single
_____ Nonsmoker _____ Smoker

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please mail to: **Southern China Expedition**
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

Responsibility: *Betchart Expeditions Inc. acts only as agent for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels and exercises every care possible. Betchart can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident, or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, terrorism, quarantine, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or to cancel any tour prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.*