

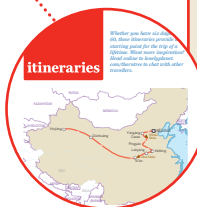
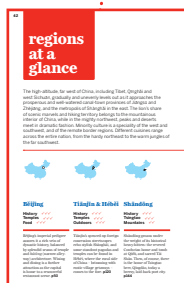
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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

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to help you put together your perfect trip

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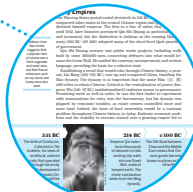
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GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Damian Harper

**Piera Chen, Chung Wah Chow, David Eimer,
Tienlon Ho, Robert Kelly, Michael Kohn, Shawn Low,
Bradley Mayhew, Daniel McCrohan, Christopher Pitts**

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



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China



Top Experiences >

Great Wall
Walking on the
mother of all walls (p113)

Píngyáo
China's most charming
walled town (p346)

Forbidden City
Imperial seat of
two dynasties (p55)



Terracotta Warriors
Astonishing artistry from
ancient China (p364)

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The Paris of the East (p176)

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China's mountain
of mists (p385)

Yangzi River Cruise
China's greatest
river journey (p770)

Labrang Monastery
Suffused with Buddhist
mystery (p816)

Cycling Yángshuò
Pedalling through gorgeous
karst scenery (p595)

**Tienlon Ho****Shāndōng, Húnnán**

Tienlon grew up in Worthington, Ohio, where the best Chinese food was always at her house. She's moved around a lot since then but keeps mostly to places where it's easy to find live seafood and mangosteens, including Shànghǎi, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, New York, and currently San Francisco where she writes about food, travel and other things. She previously worked on Lonely Planet's

Southwest China guide. You can find her at tienlon.com.

**Robert Kelly****Liáoníng, Jílín, Hēilóngjiāng, Hǎinán, Gānsù**

Born in Vancouver, Canada, Robert first landed in China in the mid-1980s, and has been a regular visitor since 2003. For the past 16 years Robert has lived in Taiwan, where he is currently working on a documentary about the loss of traditional Taoist temple arts. On his sixth trip to China for Lonely Planet Robert covered the boggy north, the tropical south, and the Silk Road province of Gānsù.

For an art and adventure lover, it doesn't get much better than that.

**Michael Kohn****Shaanxi, Yúnnán, Qīngghǎi**

After studying journalism at the University of California, Michael launched a career as a foreign correspondent, reporting for a handful of media outlets including the BBC and Reuters. His first trip to China was in 1994 when he visited Běijīng and Tibet on a university study program. This is his third tour of duty for Lonely Planet's *China*, having researched Gānsù, Xīnjiāng, Inner Mongolia and Níngxià in earlier editions. Michael is based in Ulaanbaatar. His work can be read online at www.michaelkohn.us.

**Shawn Low****Ānhuī, Hénán, Guǎngxī**

Shawn grew up in hot, humid, food-crazy Singapore but later made his way further south to less hot, less humid, food-crazy Melbourne (Australia, not Florida). He's spent the past six years working for Lonely Planet as an editor, commissioning editor, author, TV host and travel editor. When not exploring his love-hate relationship with China, Shawn finds time to eat and drink his way through other

parts of Asia. Find him on Twitter @shawnlow and all other social media @shawn_low.

**Bradley Mayhew****Xīnjiāng, Tibet**

Bradley has been drawn to China's borderlands since travelling to Kashgar and Lhasa 20 years ago, while studying Chinese at Oxford University. Bradley wrote first editions of Lonely Planet's guides to *Southwest China* and *Shanghai* and is the coordinating author of *Tibet, Bhutan, Central Asia and Nepal*. He recently starred in a five-part Arte/SWR TV documentary retracing the route of Marco

Polo from Venice across Iran and Afghanistan to Kublai Khan's summer capital at Xanadu in inner Mongolia. See what he's currently up to at www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com.

Read more about Bradley at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad

**Daniel McCrohan****Běijīng, The Great Wall, Húběi, Sìchuān, Chóngqīng, Cruising the Yangzi**

Daniel has been in China since 2005 and currently lives with his wife and children in a courtyard home, tucked away down an alley behind Běijīng's Drum Tower. He has written more than a dozen Lonely Planet guidebooks on China and India, is the creator of the smartphone app *Beijing on a Budget*, and is the co-host of the Lonely Planet television series *Best in China*. Find out more on his website: danielmccrohan.com or follow him on Twitter @danielmccrohan.

Read more about Daniel at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/danielmccrohan

**Christopher Pitts****Shànghǎi, Jiāngxī**

Chris started his university years studying classical Chinese poetry before a week in 1990s Shànghǎi (en route to school in Kūnmíng) abruptly changed his focus to the idiosyncracies of modern China. Several years in Asia memorising Chinese characters got him hooked, and he returns whenever he can to immerse himself in one of the world's most fascinating languages. He's written for Lonely Planet's *China* since

2004 and is also co-author of the *Shanghai* guide. Visit him online at www.christopherpitts.net.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Damian Harper

Coordinating Author, Shànghǎi, Zhèjiāng, Guìzhōu

After graduating with a degree in Chinese in the days when it was still an unfashionably exotic choice, Damian relocated to Hong Kong to see out the last year of British rule. Since undertaking a leg-busting nine-province journey for the sixth edition of this book in 1997, Damian has tumble-weeded his way around China, working on multiple editions of *China*, *Shanghai* and *Beijing*, contributing to *Hong Kong* and *China's Southwest* and road-testing incalculable hotel beds, hole-in-the-wall menus and wayside watering holes.

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lonelyplanet.com/members/damianharper



Piera Chen

Hong Kong, Macau, Guǎngdōng

Piera's acquaintance with Guǎngdōng began when she was a teenager living in Hong Kong. Some of her family had settled in southern China, so it was here that she learnt how to smoke, ride a bike and coax a water leech away – skills that came in handy during her research trips for this book. Piera has worked on Lonely Planet titles *Hong Kong*, *Hong Kong Encounter* and the previous edition of *China*.

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lonelyplanet.com/members/pierachen



Chung Wah Chow

Jiāngsū, Fújiàn, Hong Kong

Born with restless feet, Chung Wah has travelled extensively both in her native Hong Kong and elsewhere, and is forever returning to China for trips ranging from village stays in Yúnnán to upriver treks in Qīnghǎi. She contributed to the previous two editions of this book and co-authored Lonely Planet's *Hong Kong*. In this edition, she (un)covered the coastal beauty of southern China and fell for the region's sublime culture and seafood. She considers herself a resident tourist in Hong Kong.

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David Eimer

Běijīng, Tiānjīn & Héběi, Shānxī, Níngxià, Inner Mongolia

David first came to China in 1988, when cars and foreigners were both in short supply. After spells working as a journalist in LA and his native London, David spent seven years living in Běijīng. His travels have taken him to almost every province in the Middle Kingdom. David has co-authored the last three editions of both the *China* and *Beijing* guides. Now based in Bangkok, he contributes to a variety of newspapers and magazines in the UK.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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itineraries

Whether you have six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Four Weeks Northern Tour

Běijīng is fundamental to this tour, so you'll need at least five days to do the Forbidden City, size yourself up against the Great Wall, wander like royalty around the Summer Palace and lose your bearings amid the city's *hútòng* (narrow alleyways). The splendour of the **Yúngāng Caves** outside Dàtóng should put you in a Buddhist mood, heightened by a few nights on monastic **Wútái Shān**. We recommend a three-day stopover in **Píngyáo**, an age-old walled town you imagined China *should* look like. The historic walled city of **Kāifēng** in Hénán was the traditional home of China's small community of Chinese Jews and has a remarkable night market; move on to **Luòyáng** and the Buddhist spectacle of the Lóngmén Caves and the Shàolín Temple, also within reach. Four days' sightseeing in **Xī'ān** brings you face-to-face with the Army of Terracotta Warriors and gives you time for the Taoist mountain of **Huà Shān**. Xī'ān traditionally marked the start of the Silk Road which you can follow through Gānsù province all the way to the oasis-town of **Dūnhuáng**. From Dūnhuáng continue into **Xīnjiāng** for a taste of the mighty northwest.



Three to Four Weeks

Yangzi River Tour

After exploring north Yúnnán's ancient Naxi town of **Lǐjiāng**, pick up the trail of the Jinshā River (Gold Sand River, which spills down from Tibet and swells into the Yangzi River) on a breathtaking multiday hike along **Tiger Leaping Gorge**. Rest your worn-out legs before discovering the scattered villages and old towns around Lǐjiāng, including **Shàxī** and **Shùhé** on the old Tea-Horse Road, and being blown away by the magnificent views of Yǐlóng Xuěshān. Also consider (warmer months only) a trip from Lǐjiāng northeast towards west Sìchuān and the gorgeous **Lúgū Hú** on the provincial border, where you can spend several days unwinding by the lakeside. During the winter months this entire area is snowbound, so you may have to fly on from Lǐjiāng. A morning bus from Lúgū Hú runs to **Xīchāng** in Sìchuān, from where you can reach **Yībīn** and then **Chóngqīng**; alternatively, return to Lǐjiāng to fly to Chóngqīng, home of the spicy and searing Chóngqīng hotpot and gateway to the Three Gorges. Detour by backtracking by bus to the stunning landscapes and natural beauty of **Chishuǐ** on the Guǐzhōu border to relax, unwind and explore the region before returning by bus to urban Chóngqīng. You'll need around three days in Chóngqīng for the sights in town and for a journey to the Buddhist Caves at **Dàzú** and a trip to the Yangzi River village of **Sōngjǐ** to keep a perspective on historic, rural China. Then hop on a cruise vessel or passenger boat (or even a bus followed by hydrofoil) to **Yíchāng** in Húběi through the magnificent **Three Gorges**. Journey from Yíchāng to the Yangzi River city of **Wúhàn** via the walled town of **Jīngzhōu**, where it's worth spending the night. After two days in Wúhàn, hop on a bus to **Lúshān** in Jiāngxī province, from where you can reach **Nánjīng** or make your way to **Huángshān** in the Yangzi River province of Ànhuī. Alternatively, travel direct to Nánjīng and thread your way to **Shànghǎi** via a delightful string of canal towns – Sūzhōu, Tónglǐ, Lùzhí and Zhūjiājiao. Explore Shànghǎi and consider launching yourself into the East-South Rural Tour (p38).



Three Weeks Silk Road Tour

Overlapping with the end of the Northern Tour (p34), this breathtaking journey takes you on an epic journey along the ancient Silk Road. From the southernmost extents of the Silk Road at **Xi'an**, discover one of imperial China's most iconic remains at the Army of Terracotta Warriors and, for a major workout, climb the precipitous Taoist mountain of **Huà Shān** – just don't look down. Back in Xi'an, explore the Muslim Quarter to feast on local Hui specialties – one of the culinary highpoints of China travel – and climb atop the imposing city walls. Hop aboard the train to **Lánzhōu** but get off in southeast Gānsù at **Tiānshuǐ** for the remarkable Buddhist grottoes at verdant Mǎijī Shān. From Lánzhōu you have the option of disembarking temporarily from the Silk Road to ramble along the fringes of the Tibetan world (see the Tibet Fringes Tour, p40) in the Buddhist monastic settlements of **Xiàhé** and **Lángmùsì**. The Hèxī Corridor draws you on to the ancient Great Wall outpost of **Jiāyùguān**, via the Silk Road stopover town of **Wǔwēi**, and the Great Buddha Temple with its outsize effigy of a reclining Sakyamuni in **Zhāngyè**. Stand on the wind-blasted ramparts of Jiāyùguān Fort, the last major stronghold of imperial China, and tramp alongside westerly remnants of the Great Wall. The delightful oasis outpost of **Dūnhuáng** is one of China's tidiest and most pleasant towns, with the mighty sand dunes of the Singing Sands Mountains pushing up from the south, a scattered array of sights in the surrounding desert and some excellent food. The town is the hopping-off point for China's splendid hoard of Buddhist art, the spellbinding Mògāo Caves. From Dūnhuáng you can access the mighty northwestern Uighur province of Xinjiang via the melon-town of **Hāmì** before continuing to **Turpan** and **Ürümqi**; consider also spending the night in a yurt or camping on the shores of mountainous **Tiān Chí**. Thread your way through a string of Silk Road towns by rail to the Central Asian outpost of **Kashgar**, or reach the distant Uighur town via the Marco Polo-journeyed Southern Silk Road along the cusp of the Taklamakan Desert. From Kashgar, hatch exciting plans to conquer the Karakoram Highway or, in the other direction, work out how to get back into China proper.



Two Weeks East-South Rural Tour

From **Shànghǎi**, head to **Zhūjiājiǎo** in the municipality's rural west to catch its canal-side charms; if you find yourself in a canal-town mood, the water towns of Jiāngsū and north Zhèjiāng – including **Tónglǐ**, **Lùzhí**, **Wūzhèn** and **Nánxún** – are easy to get to. From either **Sūzhōu** or **Hángzhōu**, take a bus to **Túnxi** in Ānhuī province to spend several days exploring the delightful clusters of ancient Huīzhōu villages of **Yixiàn** and **Shèxiàn**. Bus it across the border to Jiāngxī province for two or three days' fabulous hiking from village to village in the gorgeous rural landscape around **Wùyuan**. Work your way to the south of the province to enter Hakka country – a hilly region dotted with fortified villages around **Lóngnán** – and give yourself four days to ramble around the neighbouring roundhouse areas of **Méizhōu** and **Yǒngdīng** in Guǎngdōng and Fújiàn, where you can spend the night in an earth building and fully tap into the local rhythms. Round off the tour at coastal **Xiàmén**, spending a night or two amid the colonial remains of **Gǔlàng Yǔ**.

Three Weeks Southwest China

Four days' wining and dining in **Hong Kong** and **Macau** should whet your appetite, before you head inland to **Guǐlín** and three days' immersing yourself in the dreamy karst landscape of **Yángshuò**. Jump on a bus to delightful **Huángyáo** before backtracking to Guǐlín and journeying north to the **Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces** and the wind-and-rain bridges and ethnic hues of **Sānjiāng**. Creep over the border to explore the minority-rich villages of eastern Guìzhōu, including **Lángdé**, **Shíqiáo**, **Lónglǐ**, **Bāshā** and **Zhàoxīng**, before continuing to **Guìyáng** and on by train to the capital of Yúnnán province, **Kūnmíng**. Spend a few days in Kūnmíng before penetrating north Yúnnán to explore **Dǎlǐ**, **Lǐjiāng** and **Shāngri-la (Zhōngdiàn)**. Consider exploring the border area with Sìchuān at the remote **Lúgū Hú**, from where you can head into Sìchuān. In the other direction, the fertile **Xīshuāngbǎnnà** region lies in the deep south of the province, where Yúnnán's Southeast Asian complexion comes to the fore. You will be rewarded with a profusion of ethnic villages and countless hiking opportunities around China's south-west borders.



- » (above) Buddha statues at the Unesco World Heritage site of the Lóngmén Caves (p407)
- » (left) Grand (Sunday) bazaar in the old Silk Road town of Kashgar (p790)



10 Days Qīnghǎi to Sìchuān

This colossal, rough-and-ready journey draws you through stunning landscapes from Xīníng to Chéngdū.

The scenery is sublime but do this trip only in summer (it's too cold even in spring), and take cash and lots of food with you (you won't be able to change money). Prepare also for bus breakdowns, irregular transport connections, simple accommodation and the effects of high altitude. The epic bus journey from **Xīníng** to **Sharda** in the former Tibetan kingdom of Nangchen, where monasteries and dramatic scenery await, takes 20 to 24 hours. From Nangchen you can continue to Sichuan via the Tibetan trading town of **Yùshù** (Jyekundo). You can also fly direct (or take the bus) from Xīníng to Yùshù to continue to Sichuan direct from there, but we don't recommend staying in Yùshù as it is still recovering from the 2010 earthquake. Buses from Yùshù run to **Sêrshu** (Shíqú Xiàn) in northwest Sichuan, where bus connections run through some stunning scenery past **Manigango** (perhaps with a side trip to Dege), the Tibetan town of **Gǎnzī** and on past **Tǎgōng** to **Kǎngdìng** (Dardo) along the Sichuan-Tibet Hwy, from where you can head west in the direction of Tibet or east to **Chéngdū**.

Three to Four Weeks Tibet Fringes Tour

Travel permits are required for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), a land that is periodically inaccessible to foreigners and always an arduous undertaking. This tour immerses you in more accessible areas, rich with the colour of Tibet. Only undertake the tour in the warmer summer months; other times can be dangerous. From **Lánzhōu** in Gānsù province, go southwest to **Lángmùsì** and **Xiàhé**, before passing awesome scenery by bus or taxi into **Qīnghǎi** via the monastery town of **Tóngren**. Pick up a *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art) and continue by bus to **Xīníng**, then fly to **Chéngdū** in Sichuan and take the bus to **Kǎngdìng**, or fly to Kǎngdìng via Chéngdū. The long, overland bus route from Xīníng to Kǎngdìng is also possible via Yùshù in south Qīnghǎi. While Yùshù is still recovering from the 2010 earthquake, transport connections are possible. From Kǎngdìng you can journey by bus west to the stupendous scenery around **Lítáng**, with some breathtaking hiking opportunities, or travel south to **Xiāngchéng** and on to **Shangri-la** (**Zhōngdiàn**) and the gorgeous Tibetan region of north Yúnnán. From Zhōngdiàn take a bus to high-altitude **Dégqīn**, enveloped in gorgeous mountain scenery.



10 Days Northeast Tour

With **Běijīng** as a start point, hop on a train to stylish **Dàlián**, but plan to spend a few days exploring the historic walled coastal towns of **Shānhǎiguān** and **Xīngchéng** en route. You'll need several days for Dàlián's sights, including the historic port of **Lǚshùn** and an adorable coastline. Border watchers will be keen to get to **Dāndōng**, on the border with North Korea, for its peculiar frisson. Take a boat tour along the Yālù River, dine on North Korean food and visit Tiger Mountain Great Wall. Consider a trip by rail and bus to **Heaven Lake** in **Chángbái Shān** (the largest nature reserve in China) via **Tōnghuà**. Straddling the North Korea border, the volcanic lake is a stunning sight (only accessible mid-June to September). Alternatively, take the train to **Shěnyáng** and visit its Qing dynasty Imperial Palace and the tomb of Huang Taiji, founder of the Qing dynasty. Hop on a bus or a train to **Hǎ'ěrbīn** to Dàoliqū district and wonder at the city's Russian and Jewish ancestry. If you've really picked up momentum and can't stop, make a full meal by journeying to China's 'North Pole Village' to try to catch the *aurora borealis* in **Mòhé**.

One Week Běijīng to Mongolia

After exhausting the superb sightseeing, and wining and dining choices, in **Běijīng**, jump aboard a train to **Hohhot** in Inner Mongolia where a late-July arrival should coincide with the Naadam festivities at Gengental to the north, when the grasslands are turning green. Explore Hohhot's lamaseries and temples and make a trip to the grasslands outside town for a taste of the epic Inner Mongolian prairie. From Hohhot you can either take the train direct to **Ulaanbaatar** in Mongolia; or an alternative route to Mongolia is to first journey by train from Hohhot to **Shàngdū** – vanished site of Kublai Khan's celebrated palace at Xanadu – and then on to **Hǎilǎ'ěr** in the far north of Inner Mongolia, towards the border with Mongolia and Russia. The grasslands outside Hǎilǎ'ěr are a real highlight, so consider spending the night under the stars in a yurt on the prairie. If you are Russia-bound, you can enter the country via the nearby trading town of **Mǎnzhōulǐ** on the border. Alternatively, hop on a train from Hǎilǎ'ěr to Hǎ'ěrbīn in Hēilóngjiāng (to hook up with the Northeast Tour) or jump aboard a flight to **Choibalsan** in eastern Mongolia.

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