



# China



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# Itineraries



**4**  
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 within the city's *hútòng* (narrow alleyways). The splendour of the **Yúngāng Caves** outside Dàtóng should put you in a Buddhist mood, sharpened 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 some remarkable night markets; 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**, and beyond.



## 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 **Shāxī** and **Shùhé** on the old Tea-Horse Road, and being blown away by the magnificent views of Yùlóng Xuèshān. Also consider (warmer months only) a trip from Lǐjiāng northeast towards west Sichuān 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. An afternoon 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 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 **Sòngjī** 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, jump 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 Ānhuī. Alternatively, travel direct to Nánjīng and thread your way to **Shànghǎi** via a delightful string of canal towns – Sūzhōu, Tónglǐ, Lùzhí and Zhūjiājǐǎo. Explore Shànghǎi and consider launching into the East-South Rural Tour.



## Silk Road Tour

This breathtaking journey takes you 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 specialities – one of the culinary high points of China travel – and climb atop the imposing city walls. Hop aboard the train to **Lánzhōu** but get off in south-east Gānsù at **Tiānshuǐ** for the remarkable Buddhist grottoes at verdant Mǎjī Shān. From Lánzhōu you have the option to disengage temporarily from the Silk Road to ramble along the fringes of the Tibetan world in the Buddhist monastic settlements of **Xiàhé** and **Lángmùsī**. 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 also 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 Xīnjiāng 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 Hwy or, in the other direction, work out how to get back into China proper.



4  
WEEKS

## Coastal China

From **Běijīng**, zip on the high-speed train to face-lifted **Tiānjīn** en route to the Ming-dynasty garrison town of **Shānhǎiguān** on the edge of Manchuria. Beyond the ancient port town of **Xīngchéng** and around the coast lies urbane **Dàlián**, where you can ponder trips to the North Korean border at **Dāndōng**, or the ferry crossing to **Yántái** en route to a two-day sojourn around breezy **Qīngdǎo**, the eye-catching Shāndōng port city. Cashing in on dashing **Shànghǎi** is crucial – allow five to six days to tick off surrounding sights, including a trip to the cultured former southern Song dynasty capital of **Hángzhōu**. Work your way south around the coast to **Xiàmén** (Amoy) to capture some of the magic of **Gǔlàng Yǔ**, using the port town as a base to explore the roundhouses around **Yǒngdīng**. Conclude the tour feasting on dim sum and getting in step with the rhythms of **Hong Kong** before surrendering to the Portuguese lilt of **Macau**, or go further along the coast to the sleepy port town of **Běihǎi** in Guǎngxī and bounce over the sea in a boat to the volcanic island of **Weizhōu**.

2  
WEEKS

## Big Ticket Tour

After four days satiating yourself on **Běijīng's** mandatory highlights – the Forbidden City, Tiān'ānmén Square, the Summer Palace, the Great Wall and the city's charming *hútòng* (alleyways) – hop on the high-speed G-class train across north China from Běijīng West to **Xī'ān** to inspect the famed Terracotta Warriors, walk around the city's formidable Ming-dynasty walls and climb the granite peaks of Taoist **Huà Shān**. Then climb aboard the 11-hour overnight high-speed D-class sleeper to pulsating **Shànghǎi**, which pulls into town before 8am. After three days sight-seeing, museum-going, shopping and sizing up the sizzling skyscrapers of Pǔdōng, detour for a day to the former southern Song-dynasty capital of **Hángzhōu**, before flying from either Hángzhōu or Shànghǎi to **Guilín** for some of China's most serene and ageless panoramas, the breathtaking karst landscapes of **Yángshuò**. For a fitting and natural conclusion to your journey, fly straight from Guilín to **Hong Kong**, or to Guǎngzhōu or Shēnzhèn to make your way south across the border to the former British territory. Squeeze in a day for exploring **Macau** to add a Portuguese complexion to your voyage.



## 2 WEEKS East-Southwest Rural Tour

From **Shànghǎi**, head to **Zhūjiājiǎo** in the municipality's rural west to catch its canal-side charms; to further the canal-town mood, the water towns of Jiāngsū and north Zhèjiāng – including **Tónglǐ**, **Lúzhí** and **Wūzhèn** – are within easy reach. From either **Sūzhōu** or **Hángzhōu**, bus it to **Túnxi** in Ānhuī province to spend several days exploring the delightful ancient Huīzhōu villages of **Yíxiàn** and **Shèxiàn** and to scale gorgeous Huáng Shān. Bus it again across the border to Jiāngxī province for two or three days' fabulous hiking from village to village in the gorgeous rural landscape around **Wúyuán**. Take the bus to Nánchāng and then a high-speed train to Chángshā, the Húnán provincial capital, from where you can fly or take the train to the stunning karst panoramas of **Zhāngjiājiè**. Jump on a bus to the funky rivertown of **Fèng-huáng**, from where it's a hop, skip, and a bus-then-train jump via Huáihuà through the backdoor into Guìzhōu and the scenic riverside town of **Zhènyuán**. **Kǎilǐ** and the rest of the province lies beyond.



## 3 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' immersion in the dreamy karst landscape of **Yángshuò**. Join a local tour from Yángshuò to delightful **Huángyáo** before backtracking to Guǐlín and journeying north to the **Lóngjǐ 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 **Zhàoqīng**, 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 **Shangri-la (Zhōngdiàn)**. Consider exploring the border area with Sīchuān at the remote **Lúgǔ Hú**, from where you can head into Sīchuān. 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 southwest borders.

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 high altitudes. The 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 Sharda 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 from there, and you can stay in Yùshù as it has officially reopened after the 2010 earthquake. Buses from Yùshù run to **Sěrsu** (Shíqú Xiàn) in northwest Sichuan, where bus connections run through some stunning scenery past **Manigango** (perhaps with a side trip to **Dégé**), the Tibetan town of **Gānzī** (check ahead to see it's open) and on past **Tǎgōng** to **Kāngdīng** (Dardo) along the Sichuan-Tibet Hwy, from where you can head west in the direction of Tibet or east to **Chéngdū**.

3  
WEEKS

## Tibet Fringes Tour

Travel permits are required for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), a land periodically inaccessible to foreigners and an arduous undertaking at the best of times. This tour immerses you in more accessible areas. Only undertake the tour in the warmer summer months; other times can be dangerous. From **Lánzhōu** in Gānsù province, head southwest to **Lángmùsī** and **Xiàhé**, before passing by bus or taxi into Qīnghǎi via the monastery town of **Tóng rén**. Pick up a *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art) and continue by bus to **Xīníng**, then fly to **Chéngdū** in Sichuan and take the bus to **Kāngdīng**, or fly to Kangding via Chéngdū. The overland bus route from Xīníng to Kāngdīng is also possible via Yùshù in south Qīnghǎi. (Allow an extra week if taking this route.) Yùshù has officially reopened after the 2010 earthquake and transport connections are available. From Kāngdīng you can journey by bus west to the stupendous scenery around **Lǐtáng**, or travel south by minivan to **Xiāngchéng** and on to **Shangri-la (Zhōngdiàn)** and the gorgeous Tibetan region of north Yúnnán. From Shangri-la take a bus to high-altitude **Dēqīn**, enveloped in gorgeous mountain scenery.



## 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 **Lǔshùn** 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 Yālǐ 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 **Hā'ěrbīn** to wonder at the city's Russian and Jewish ancestry. If you've really picked up momentum and can't stop, carry on to China's 'North Pole Village' to try to catch the aurora borealis in **Mòhé** or to bask in the summer's midnight sun.



## 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 Gegental 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 bus from Hohhot to **Lánqí** and **Shàngdū** – vanished site of Kublai Khan's celebrated palace at Xanadu – and then on to **Hāilā'ěr** in the far north of Inner Mongolia, towards the border with Mongolia and Russia. The grasslands outside Hāilā'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, jump aboard a flight to **Choibalsan** in eastern Mongolia.

## Off the Beaten Track

### JULY 1ST GLACIER

High up in the Qilián Shān range at 4300m, this glacier provides a cooling escape from the deserts of Gānsù. Avoid winter visits unless you're totally hardcore. (p844)

### KHARA KHOTO

Hunt out this ruined and remote Tangut city in the northwest of the Badain Jaran Desert in Western Inner Mongolia. It was once buried by centuries of dust storms and today is embedded in a sublime landscape. (p876)

### HIGHWAY 219

The repaved Xinjiāng–Tibet highway is China's remotest road and an awesome route through the largely uninhabited expanses of Aksai-Chin. (p816)

### TALAM KHANG GUESTHOUSE

This small, remote temple-stay in West Sichuan matches rustic accommodation with a beautiful setting of snowcapped mountains and grasslands, a hot spring and the nearby monastery of Darjay Gumpa. (p758)

### NÙ JIĀNG VALLEY

This epic gorge in Yúnnán – pinched between Gāolígōng Shān, Myanmar, Tibet and Biluó Shān – is the stunning habitat of a rich and vibrant diversity of fauna and flora. (p698)

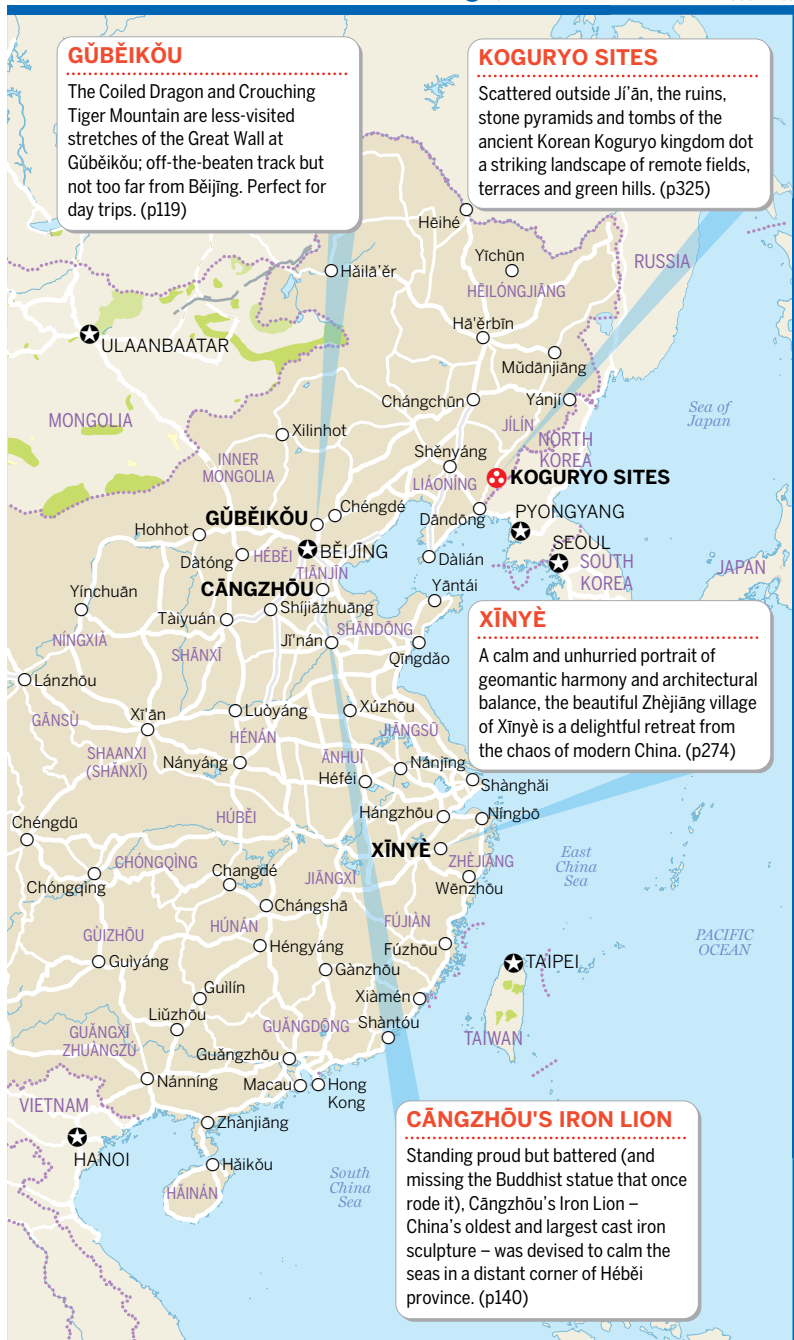


**GŪBĚIKǑU**

The Coiled Dragon and Crouching Tiger Mountain are less-visited stretches of the Great Wall at Gūbēikǒu; off-the-beaten track but not too far from Běijīng. Perfect for day trips. (p119)

**KOGURYO SITES**

Scattered outside Jǐ'ān, the ruins, stone pyramids and tombs of the ancient Korean Koguryo kingdom dot a striking landscape of remote fields, terraces and green hills. (p325)

**XĪNYÈ**

A calm and unhurried portrait of geomantic harmony and architectural balance, the beautiful Zhèjiāng village of Xīnyè is a delightful retreat from the chaos of modern China. (p274)

**CĀNGZHŌU'S IRON LION**

Standing proud but battered (and missing the Buddhist statue that once rode it), Cāngzhōu's Iron Lion – China's oldest and largest cast iron sculpture – was devised to calm the seas in a distant corner of Héběi province. (p140)



**Dai Min (Daisy Harper)**

**Ānhuī, Hénán, Húběi, Jiāngsū, Shànghǎi, Zhèjiāng** Dai Min grew up in beer-making Qīngdǎo (Tsingtao) on the Shāndōng coast before hopping on the train north to university in Běijīng to read English. She moved to the UK in the 1990s, then to Shànghǎi for two years in the mid-noughties, living on the gritty cusp of the French Concession and, for a while, in West Shànghǎi. Regularly returning to visit her family in China, Dai Min has contributed to several editions of Lonely Planet's *China* and also works as a freelance English-Chinese translator (and multitasking mum).



**Phillip Tang**

**Gānsù, Ningxià, Shaanxi (Shǎnxi)** Phillip first visited China in 1998 to put to use his Chinese degree and love of potent cigarettes. He is fascinated with China for the way it transforms itself. His return trips over the years can be signposted through witnessing VCD stores morph into DVD parlours and then mobile-phone emporiums. Phillip lives between Mexico City, London and Sydney. He no longer smokes. Find Phillip's China photos

on Instagram @mrtangtangtang, tweets @philliptang and more tips on the Middle Kingdom and elsewhere at <http://philliptang.co.uk>.

**David Eimer**

**Chóngqīng, Cruising the Yangzi, Guǐzhōu, Yúnnán** David first came to China in 1988, when cars and foreigners were both in short supply. After spells as a journalist in LA and in 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 four editions of both the *China* and *Běijīng* guides. Now based in Bangkok, he contributes to a variety of news-

papers and magazines in the UK.

**Tienlon Ho**

**Shāndōng, Sìchuān** Tienlon was born and raised in Worthington, Ohio, where the best Chinese food was always at her house. She moves around a lot but mostly keeps to San Francisco and other places where people eat thoughtfully and passionately, and mangosteens are readily available. This is her second round with the *China* guide, and she has also worked on Lonely Planet's *Southwest China* and *California* guides. Read more at <http://tienlon.com>.

**Robert Kelly**

**Qīnghǎi, Xīnjiāng** As a long-term resident of Taiwan, Robert appreciated being asked to cover another of China's 'rebel provinces'. For this edition, he had his hands full navigating a frontier with such a confounding history and culture. But the chance to delve into the subtleties of Islamic pilgrimage, the variations of Persian influence on Buddhist cave art and the origins of Uighur resistance to Han rule was a welcome challenge. A freelance writer since the early 2000s,

Robert is contributing to Lonely Planet's *China* for the fourth time.

**Shawn Low**

**Hēilóngjiāng, Inner Mongolia, Jílín, Liáoníng, Shānxī** 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 last eight years working for Lonely Planet: as an editor, commissioning editor, author, TV host and travel editor. Shawn's fourth foray into China for LP saw him explore the lush Inner Mongolian grasslands and some of the

more remote northerly provinces bordering North Korea and Russia. Hey, it's a hard job, but someone's gotta do it, right? He's on Twitter @shawnlw.

**Emily Matchar**

**Hǎinán, Hong Kong** Emily has contributed to some two dozen Lonely Planet guides, and she writes for newspapers and magazines all over the world. A native of North Carolina in the southern USA, she currently lives near the top of the world's longest outdoor escalator in Hong Kong.

**Bradley Mayhew**

**Tibet** Bradley has been visiting the Tibetan plateau for 20 years, since studying Chinese at Oxford University. Over the years he's been horse trekking in Kham, done the Kailash *kora* twice and clocked around 40,000km bumping across Tibet. Bradley has coordinated the last five editions of *Tibet* and wrote the first editions of Lonely Planet's *Shànghǎi* and *Southwest China*. See what he's up to at [www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com](http://www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com).

Read more about Bradley at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad)

**Daniel McCrohan**

**Běijīng, The Great Wall, Húnán, Jiāngxī, Tiānjīn & Héběi** Daniel has been living in China for more than a decade, and he has been working in China, India and beyond for much of that time. This is his 22nd Lonely Planet guidebook and his fourth successive stint on the *China* guide. Away from guidebooks, Daniel is the creator of the iPhone app *Běijīng on a Budget* and co-host of the TV series *Best in China*. He also builds personalised itineraries for travellers to

China, India, Mongolia and Bangladesh. Find out more at <http://danielmccrohan.com>, where you can also watch the videos he makes while on the road for Lonely Planet.

Read more about Daniel at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/danielmccrohan](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/danielmccrohan)





## 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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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, Ānhuī, Hénán, Húběi, Jiāngsū, Shànghǎi, Zhèjiāng**

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 6th 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 *Southwest China*, and road-testing incalculable hotel beds, hole-in-the-wall menus and wayside watering holes. Damian also wrote the Plan, Understand and Survive sections, as well as the Bund illustrated highlight.

Read more about Damian at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/damianharper](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/damianharper)



### Piera Chen

**Guǎngdōng, Guǎngxī, Macau** Hong Kong native Piera first travelled to China to visit relatives as a child. It's where she learned how to smoke, ride a bike and coax a water leech away – skills that came in handy during dozens of subsequent sojourns in different parts of the country, including research trips for this book. Piera also pays frequent visits to Macau for food, friends and her favourite secret places. Piera has worked on several editions of *Hong Kong* and *China*.



### Chung Wah Chow

**Fújiàn** Born and raised in Hong Kong, Chung Wah first visited the home of her ancestors in China when she was four. Since then, she has been returning to China to visit relatives in Guǎngdōng, study graves in Fújiàn and trek in the wilderness in Xīnjiāng. Chung Wah contributed to the previous three editions of this book and has co-authored other Lonely Planet titles, including *Hong Kong* and *Taiwan*.

Read more about Chung Wah at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/cwchow](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/cwchow)



### Megan Eaves

**Qīnghǎi** Lonely Planet's North Asia Destination Editor, Megan first went to China after getting hooked on a Mandarin language class at university in her native New Mexico. Extended stints living in small-town China taught her how to play guitar in front of a bonfire in 40-degree-celsius heat on regional television and how to weather a typhoon on the 2nd floor of a flooded guesthouse. In this edition, she explored the dusky high plateaus of Qīnghǎi province. You can follow her on Twitter @megozizy.

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Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

14th edition – May 2015

ISBN 978 1 74321 401 5

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Singapore

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