



Húnán

POP 66 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Huǒgōngdiàn (p474)
- ➔ Sōnghuájiāng Jiǎoziguān (p474)
- ➔ Miss Yang Restaurant (p488)
- ➔ Máo Jiā Fàndiàn (p478)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ A Good Year (p488)
- ➔ Bǎijiè Youth Hostel (p482)
- ➔ Guiguān International Hotel (p482)
- ➔ Sheraton Chángshā Hotel (p474)

Why Go?

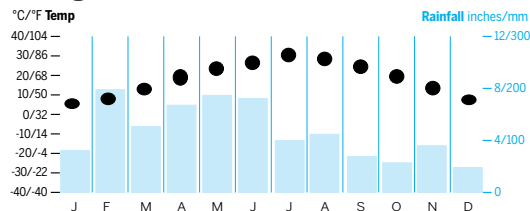
As the birthplace of Mao Zedong, Communist Party cadres might wax lyrical about the sacred standing of Húnán (湖南) in the annals of Chinese history, but it's Húnán's dramatic scenery that is the real draw.

A magnificent landscape of isolated mountain ranges and jagged, karst peaks envelops more than 80% of the province. The most astonishing example is found at the phantasmagorical Zhāngjiājìè, one of China's most surreal national parks. Here, as in other parts of the province, geological marvels thrust up majestically from green vales fed by tributaries in the fertile Yangzi River basin.

People have long made a home amid Húnán's natural wonders, taming the rocky slopes into terraces of lush fields, and their distinctive cultures live on in charming villages and towns, the most alluring being the historic riverside settlement of Fènghuáng.

When to Go

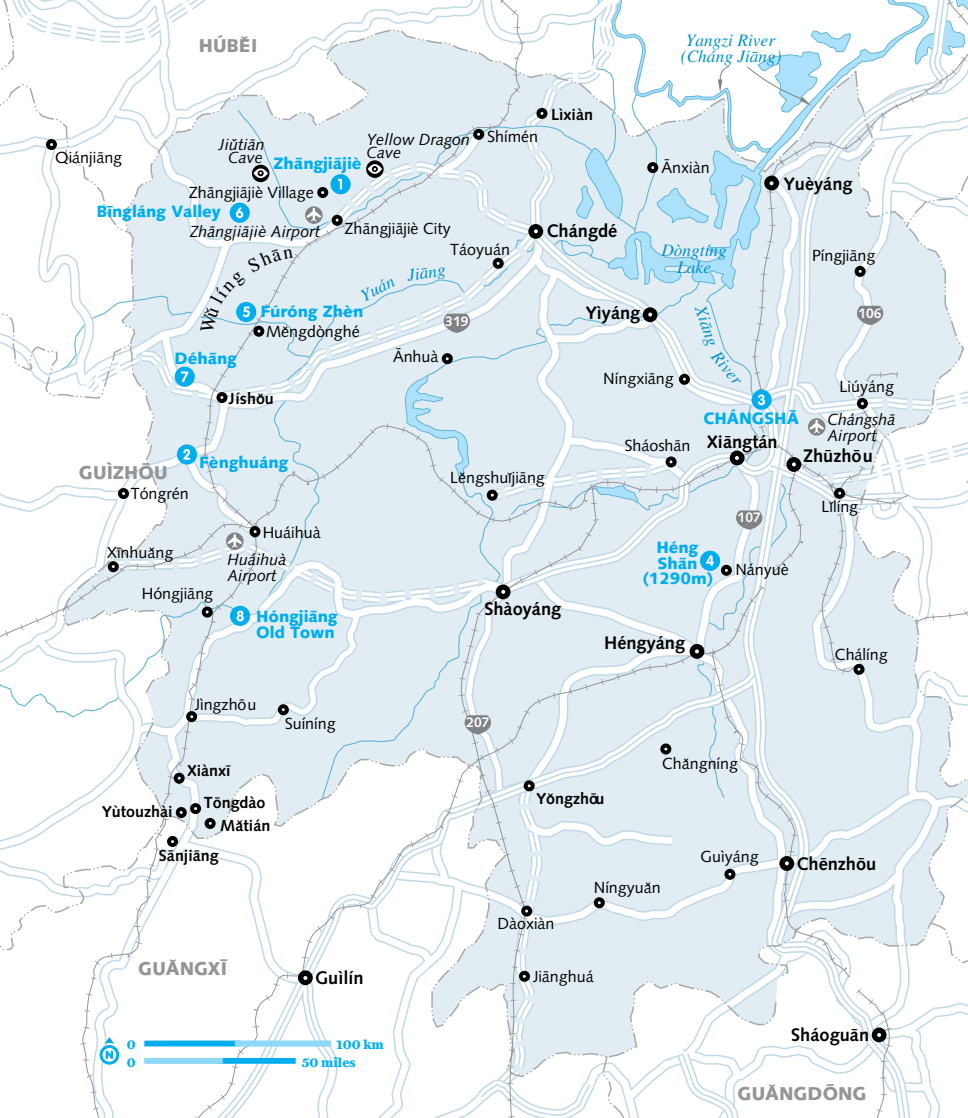
Chángshā



Apr & May After a chilly (though not freezing) winter, spring brings welcome warmth, and mountain flowers.

Sep & Oct Temperatures cool after a scorching summer. Autumnal leaves emblazon Zhāngjiājìè.

Dec–Feb Tour groups disappear from Fènghuáng. Zhāngjiājìè is sometimes brushed with snow.



Húnán Highlights

- 1 Zhāngjiājìe** (p480) Hiking among the otherworldly peaks of one of China's most spectacular national parks.
- 2 Fènghuáng** (p486) Wandering this gorgeous river town at night, marvelling at its lights.
- 3 Chángshā** (p473) Sampling authentic, chilli-laden *xiāng cài* (Húnán

cuisine) in the food-loving provincial capital.

- 4 Héng Shān** (p478) Ascending the slopes of the sacred Taoist mountain.
- 5 Fúróng Zhèn** (p490) Sizing up the magnificent waterfall alongside this quaint old town.

- 6 Bīngláng Valley** (p484) Exploring its magnificent 1km-long pitch-black cave before emerging into the sun.
- 7 Déháng** (p485) Hiking off in search of waterfalls amid the greenery of west Húnán.
- 8 Hóngjiāng Old Town** (p489) Meandering around the old town, checking out its ancient buildings.