

8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

### DESCRIPTION

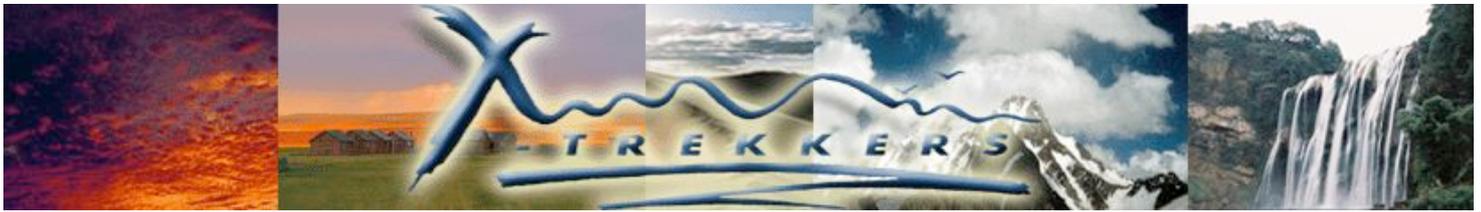
Patchwork of oxidized lands, fields of flowers, karsts peaks, lakes, waterfalls, rice terraces, improbable rock formations... this journey is an extraordinary immersion in some unknown places in Yunnan, a festival of colors and atmospheres that cater especially for photographers. Angles, lights and flowering seasons were studied in order to provide the best possible conditions for photography enthusiasts



## YUNNAN, PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE 8 DAYS / 7NIGHTS

- Day 1: Kunming / Hongtudi
- Day 2: Hongtudi / Luoping
- Day 3: Luoping / Jiulong / Puzhehei
- Day 4: Puzhehei
- Day 5: Puzhehei / Yuanyang
- Day 6: Yuanyang
- Day 7: Yuanyang / Jianshui
- Day 8: Jianshui / Kunming / Shilin





## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

Brief Itinerary	Hotel
<b>Day 1</b> <b>Kunming – Hongtudi (Red earth) (L,D)</b>	Hongtu Yinxiang Hotel



En route you will stop off in Tangxun at a **Hui Muslim** minority restaurant. The Hui minority numbers around 10 million scattered all over China but with their principal base in Ningxia Autonomous Region, which is their traditional home. The Hui are indirect descendants of Persian and Arab merchants who started to trade with the Chinese in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and who settled more permanently in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, mixing with Uyghurs (Muslims from Northwest China), Han (the principal Chinese ethnic group) and the Mongols. They practice a moderate form of Islam, celebrating Ramadan, abstaining from the consumption of alcohol, and not eating pork. Hui men can be recognised by their white skull caps and the women by their headscarves and conservative dress. The Hui, like a majority of Muslims, are very concerned by cleanliness, and locals thus consider Hui restaurants as some of the most trustworthy and hygienic on offer. Some of you may have already had the chance to visit the large Hui district in Xi'an, if you have engaged in other trips prior to this one.

You will also pass through some villages with traditional houses made of mud bricks, totally surrounded by paddy fields, carefully designed by man's hand and the hooves of water buffalo.. Arriving in the small hamlet of **Huagou**, you will check into the hotel and then set off for the spectacular views at **Yuepu'ao**, one of Yunnan's many perfect photo opportunities. This is one of those marvels of nature and wondrous cultural sites that we wouldn't have in the world if it weren't for the harmony and creativity of man and Mother Nature. This harmonious blend is no better witnessed than at Hongtudi where the combination of the natural oxidation of iron and the manmade rice terraces and other fields give this region its superb rainbow of colour, encompassing the bright red earth, the green and white crops such as wheat, potatoes and corn, and the yellow colza flowers. Here you will start a one hour walk through the local countryside.

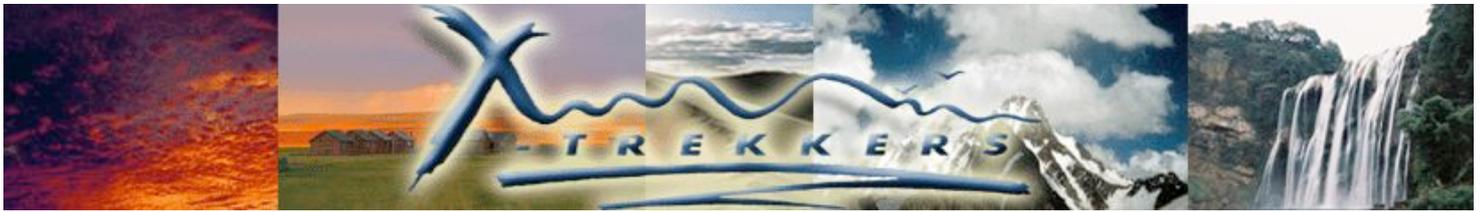
Photographers are particularly drawn to the region in spring, especially in February and March, when the flowers are in bloom providing a marvellous array of colour.

Head to **Damaka**, passing through **Jinxiuyuan**, you will enjoy a relaxing journey through the peaceful countryside, far from the hustle and bustle of modern Chinese cities. Not only can you appreciate the spectacular views Hongtudi has to offer as the fields of wheat and flowers cover the hills as if they were a giant carpet, but you also hear the beauty on offer as the wind gently caresses the fields, making the ears of wheat sway majestically back and forth.

You can watch the locals working in the fields, the majority of who is from the **Yi Minority** – otherwise known as the Lolo and who number almost 8 million in China, the largest grouping to be found in Yunnan Province. They are often considered to be the original inhabitants of the region and their "Torch Festival", which takes place at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month, is a major festival celebrated throughout the province. The Yi society still practiced slavery until the 1950s when Communist forces brought an end to that particular tradition during the early years of the Republic.

Your driver will bring you back to Damaka from where you will go just a few kilometres away to admire the sunset from **Luoxiagou**, a small village in a valley whose colours are particularly vibrant in the evenings, where you will enjoy dinner.

Note: according to the weather forecast, places to watch sunset or sunrise can be modified



## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

**Highlights** Minorities: Hui and Yi  
Flower: Colza  
Principal Colour: Red

### Day 2 Hongtudi - Luoping (B,L,D)

Xinyuan Hotel

If we find the time and you have the desire to do so, the day will start rather early to watch the sunrise at Jinxiuyuan. Although you will have already been there the night before, you may not recognise it in the blue dawn light. This mysterious hue slowly gives way to the bright rays of sunshine the illuminate the colourful fields, all the while accompanied by bird song. We recommend that you wrap up warm – the nights and early mornings are particularly fresh in this region. We will then head back to the hotel for a well-earned breakfast.



Before noon we set off for **Luoping** (located around 300km / 185 miles away, taking at least 6 hours dependant on traffic). The first hour of your journey will allow you to further appreciate the unusual countryside of the region. We will take a small photo opportunity break at **Yueliangtian** where the panorama is particularly stunning. We will then stop for lunch in the early afternoon in Qujing, the biggest town along the route.

Upon arrival at Luoping, we will either visit the town of the nearby village of Jinji, or you will climb the steps to the top of **Golden Rooster Peak**, which takes its name from the village it surrounds. You will firstly visit the small **Lingyi Temple** which is more of an improvised place of worship for the locals than an official Buddhist site. The view from the promontory just below the temple is stupefying, in particular between January and March when the green-black Karst formation hills are adorned by fields of vibrant yellow colza flowers, or in summer when chrysanthemum are in bloom. From here you can admire the sun setting over this astounding vista.

**Highlights** Flower: Colza/Chrysanthemum  
Principal Colour: Yellow

### Day 3 Luoping – Jiulong – Puzhehei (B,L,D)

Cristal Guesthouse

After breakfast you will take a walk to the colza fields, dotted with the rock formations typical of Southern China, and equally of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. It is advisable to have a good, strong pair of shoes with you.

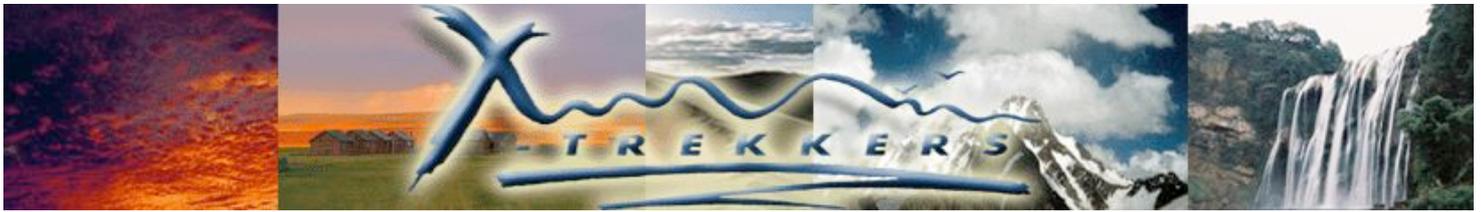
You will then visit a factory specialising in the production of canola honey, famous in the region. However beware the roadside canola honey hawkers as some of them have been known to sell fake honey!

Your countryside jaunt will continue with a visit to a tobacco field. The Chinese are big smokers and the tobaccos of Yunnan and the neighbouring Guizhou province are some of the most sought-after in China. It is common to see local farmers smoking their water pipes at all hours of the day. Maybe you'll be tempted to have a try...

Onwards to **Niujie**, where you will see the "snail-shell shaped fields" – another eccentricity of the region that is only really of interest during the January-March period when the colza is in flower. The local country folk farm the colza flower in small circular terraces which when viewed from afar strangely resemble the shells of snails.

Afterwards we will head to the **Jiulong Waterfalls**, Jiulong meaning "Nine Dragons", which are counted amongst the most beautiful in the country. It will take around half an hour to get there if the traffic is





## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

We will then return to Puzhehei to enjoy a pleasant boat trip on the lake lasting around an hour. You will be able to marvel at the natural beauty of the water lilies covering the lake, which bloom in the summertime.

Your day will end with a walk along the embankment admiring the sun gently setting over the lake and reflecting the "sugar loaf" hills. Arched bridges and some traditional wooden houses where people come to play Mah-jong punctuate this superb walk through a beautiful natural setting. The walk can last anywhere from 1 to 2 hours depending on your speed, and runs alongside a perfect flagstone path upon which electric cars run for those who are tired from the day's activities. You will finally arrive at a small fishing village and there be able to feast your eyes and your stomach on the catch of the day, which you can later try for your dinner. In the language of the Yi (one of the principal minorities in the region), Puzhehei means "the lake with many fish and prawns". Bon appétit!



### Highlights

Flower: Water-Lily

Principal Colour: Green or White depending on the season

### Day 5

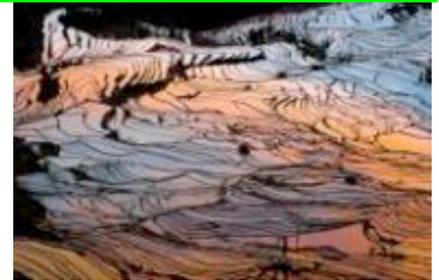
### Puzhehei- Yuanyang (B,L,D)

Jacky guesthouse  
Guesthouse

We will set off in the morning for the rice terraces at **Yuanyang**. It will take around 6 to 7 hours to cover the 300km (185 miles) part of which is on a well maintained fast-moving motorway, but the final stage will be considerably slower.

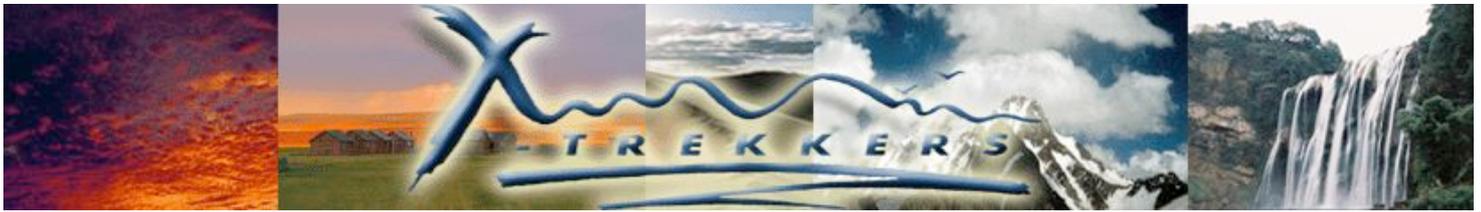
En route a stop will be made at a Hui restaurant for lunch, before arriving at our destination in the afternoon.

It is hard to describe in writing the Yuanyang rice terraces, which are without a doubt the most beautiful in China and possibly the most impressive in the whole of Asia. Even UNESCO recognises the natural beauty of the rice terraces and is in the process of registering them as a World Heritage Site. Cascading down the mountainside through bamboo canals, the water transforms the mountain face into a truly wonderful vision giving the impression that the rice terraces are steps for giants leading to the mountaintop. In spring (between March and April), considered by photographers as the best time to visit, the sky is reflected in the paddy fields full with water, resembling a never-ending mosaic of mirrors. In summer they turn an emerald colour and from October onwards they look like pools of honey. Other than in December and January when the fields are dry, each season offers something different but equally breath-taking.



From here we will visit a **Hani Minority Village**. The Hani, otherwise known as the Akha in Southeast Asia, number around 1.5 million and are mainly to be found in Yunnan. In spite of their modest numbers (compared with the scale of the Chinese population as a whole), they are famous for their mastery in the art of rice terrace sculpting and drainage systems. It is believed that they were the first people to implement this rice production method. Often living in rugged areas where fertile land is hard to come by, throughout the centuries the Hani have adapted their farming methods and have transformed 12,000 hectares of hillside into arable land making rice production their principal source of income. Nowadays tourism brings much money to the region, also considerably improving the local infrastructure. The Hani, also found in Xishuangbanna in the Southwest of the region, are well known for their tea culture.

For the more adventurous in the group you will be able to savour the local delicacy of eel, easily found in many local restaurants, and which are used in the rice production process. Just before the rice is harvested they are added to the paddy fields saturated with water to aid in this process. We will eat fairly early in the evening in preparation for a heavy day to come.



## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

### Highlights

Minority: Hani  
Principal Colour: Green

### Day 6

### Yuanyang (B,L,D)

Jacky guesthouse  
Guesthouse

We will set off extremely early so as to be able to admire the sunrise at **Laohuzui**, literally "The Tiger's Mouth". Here rice terraces continue as far as the eye can see, and the panorama is breath taking, even dizzying for some. It is recommended to wrap up warm as the early morning can be rather fresh.

We will head back to the hotel for a short break and breakfast before visiting a local market. The market is held daily, rotating between the villages of Niujiaozhai, Shengcun, Panzhihua, Yuanyang, Huangcaoling, and Laomeng depending on a complex system based on the lunar calendar. On "dragon sign" days the market is held in Yuanyang, but if it's a "pig sign" day the market will be held in Shengcun and so on...

It is mainly the Yi and the Hani who come to buy their supplies for the week ahead or who sell their produce on the market. The busy market is to be savoured for its traditional hustle and bustle and its bright and vivid colours.



Afterwards we will head on to the viewpoint at **Duoyishu** where the rice paddies seem to melt into the valley floor. It is sometimes difficult to see the hilltops, especially when the cloud base is low and they mix with the crops in their terraces, giving photographers the chance to snap one of nature's real masterpieces.

You'll then walk through the rice terraces starting at Duoyishu and finishing at **Bada**, taking around 3 hours depending on your speed. You will be able to see, without disturbing their toil, some of the local men and the buffalo working the fields while the women pick the rice.

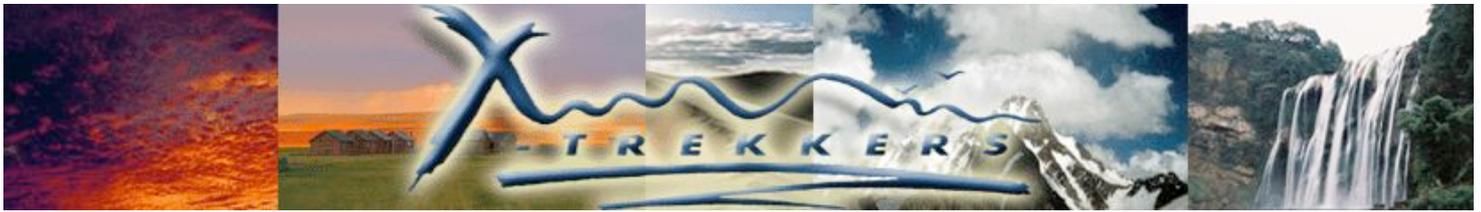
You will be rewarded for your efforts upon your arrival in Bada from where you can enjoy the sunset. Although the view from Duoyishu and Laohuzui are more impressive, the view from Bada is special for its visceral beauty. Your view is from a less elevated vantage point, you are much closer to the terraces themselves enabling you to take in the full glory of the work of the Hani. Depending on the season you may be able to enjoy the sun sparkling on the water in the rice paddies and the crickets chirping in the trees. It's an unforgettable experience.

### Day 7

### Yuanyang - Jianshui (B)

Lin An guesthouse

We will travel to the ancient Chinese garrison town of **Jianshui**, taking us back to a more traditional age (it should take between 2 and 3 hours to cover the 90km/55 miles dependant on traffic). Yunnan, much like the majority of the regions on the peripherals of China, is stuck between two worlds, a kind of time warp between central China and its bordering nations. Lots of the local members of ethnic minority groups have "cousins" in Laos, Vietnam and Burma. Yunnan, just as in the neighbouring regions of Guangxi and Guizhou, has long represented the rebellious or "separatist" part of China, in part due to its inaccessible location far from the Empires' powerbases, and its rugged landscape. The ancient kingdoms of Nanzhou and Dali, the best known from this region's history, for a long time controlled the trade routes between Imperial China and Southeast Asia. Not until the Mongols conquered China (13<sup>th</sup> century) was the region truly integrated into the Empire, later becoming a place of refuge for members of the ruling class of the Ming Dynasty fleeing the Manchus. Jianshui was a centre for the military and politicians of the Yuan (Moongols) who sent their Hui soldiers here, going some way towards explaining



## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

the Muslim influence on and presence of the Hui in this region.

You will visit the **Confucius Temple**, which despite its remoteness from the heart of "Classical China" is still considered to be one of the most beautiful in the country. It is particularly known for its green lotus pool which poetically symbolises the immense scale of knowledge... Whilst there you can absorb the unique ambience of Chinese parks, filled with the elderly chatting and playing Mah-jong.



The region is equally as well known for the residences of two families built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, **The Zhang Family Estate** and **The Zhu Family Estate**.

The Zhu Estate is located at the heart of the old town and is one of the most stunning examples of traditional housing in the entire country. An intricate labyrinth of more than 2 hectares of bamboo groves, pavilions, courtyards and bandstands, it is entirely concurrent with one's mental image of Imperial China – and this at the heart of a border region! The Zhu brothers, rich merchants from Hunan province, took 30 years to complete the complex and quickly became noted celebrities in the south of Yunnan. The estate is today a hotel, but its old-worldly charm is well protected, and this tourist role will probably protect it against an uncertain future.



The Zhang Estate is located at **Tuanshan**, around 15km (10 miles) from Jianshui. This seemingly timeless village is an interweaving lattice of avenues that hide the stunning former residences of merchants, who made their money in the salt trade. These houses are interspersed with the more common ochre houses of the village, which are often left unoccupied. The Zhang Estate, with its square courtyards, sculpted doors and richly decorated friezes is the best example of such a house.

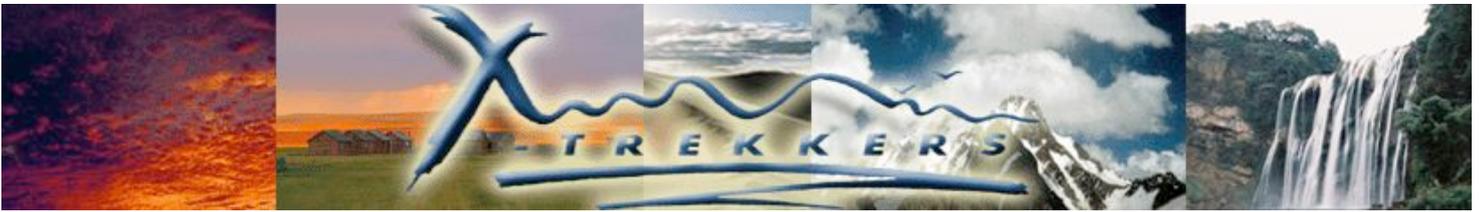
Before returning to Jianshui we will visit the **Twin Dragon Bridge**, taking its name from the two rivers which weave dragon-like through its 17 arches. It is one of the oldest bridges in all of China, and is a wonderful piece of stonework. After this stop we will head back to the hotel.

### Day 8 Jianshui – Shilin – Kunming (altitude 1750m) (B,L) -

Next on our itinerary will be the county of Lunan where we will discover one of the major attractions of the region and a must see, **Shilin** or literally **The Stone Forest**. The journey here will take around 3 to 4 hours, covering 275km/180 miles. Due to its proximity to Kunming, Shilin can become a bit of a tourist trap. However, only a small part of the 26,000 hectare site is crowded and it is easy to escape the hordes of package holidaymakers. We therefore will take you instead to the quieter and less frequented **Black Stone Forest**, which is roughly 10km away from the main site but just as impressive.

According to legend, the immortals (divine beings worshipped by Taoists) created the Black Stone Forest by cutting up mountains into a maze of rocks so that they could offer them as gifts to loved ones. This maze of "stone trees" is therefore fascinating, but it's also easy to get lost, so it's very important that you follow your guide!

Shilin is an endless maze of rocky peaks in an intriguing array of shapes and sizes that are a result of chemical erosion of the rock over time caused by rain and wind. Depending on the weather, you will be able to enjoy a picnic lunch in the middle of the "forest" which will not only give you the opportunity to enjoy the scenery but also to avoid the rather high prices of the restaurants on-site.



## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

**En route to the Kunming airport**, you will be able to see some of **the old French train tracks**. China was never fully colonized (at least by Western powers) unlike some of its neighbors in South-East Asia, but Concessions were granted to Western powers during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the best known being in Shanghai. In 1910 the French launched a mammoth project in order to advance their expansionist desires by linking Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam and at the time a French protectorate, to Kunming. They laid more than 450km of rail track, built more than 3500 bridges and 170 tunnels, requiring a workforce numbering more than 60 000 often working in extreme conditions. What remains of this epic project is one of the most significant traces of the French presence in China and you will have the chance at the end of your trip to ride on a portion of this line still in use by freight trains to this day.

### Distance and journey time:

Jianshui – Shilin (approx. 280km): approx 3h45

Shilin – Kunming airport (100km) : approx 1h15



### **Please Note:**

This itinerary is intended as a guide only. Local conditions and weather may necessitate variations to the program and can affect the availability of views and panoramas described. Be aware that all times stated are approximate, and may vary with individual and group fitness.

**Customized trips available!!**



## 8 DAY YUNNAN PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP\_08

Tour Code: ACHN-YNPP_08	LAND Price per Person in SGD					
No of Person	1	2	3-4	5-6	7-10	SGL
01 Jan 2015 – 31 Dec 2015	5070	2800	2600	2430	1700	290
<b>Note</b> Rate during Chinese national holidays may differs						

### FIRST CLASS

City	Hotel Name	Hotel category	Room Type
Dongchuan	Hongtu Yinxiang Hotel	First class	Standard Twin Room
Luoping	Xinyuan Hotel	Standard	Standard Twin Room
Puzhehei	Cristal Guesthouse	First Class	Standard Twin Room
Yuanyang	Jacky guesthouse Guesthouse	Standard	Standard Twin Room
Jianshui	Lin An guesthouse	First class	Standard Twin Room

#### LAND Price includes

- All the accommodations in selected hotel
- All the meals in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Tours and transfers as mentioned by private air conditioned vehicle
- English Speaking Guide **without shopping**
- Entry fees for mentioned visits
- Briefing prior departure
- 15% discount for gear at X-Boundaries

#### LAND Price excludes

- All airfare & taxes
- Personal gear & expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Beverages and any expenditure of personal nature
- Tips
- Other meals not mentioned
- China Visa
- Laundry, telephone calls and expenditure of a personal nature

#### Reservation

A deposit of **S\$ 1500** is required upon confirmation and the balance must be paid in full 30 days prior to the departure date. Non-payment by required date may result in the cancellation of your booking and subjected to cancellation charges.

**Payment** should be made in **SINGAPORE DOLLARS** in favour of "X-TREKKERS ADVENTURE CONSULTANT PTE LTD" by Cheque or Credit to bank account

Bank Name: Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC)

Bank Branch: Clementi Branch (Branch code 522)

Account No: 522-076249-001

Account Name: X-Trekkers Adventure Consultant Pte Ltd

As soon as the payment is made, please send the bank-in slip or receipt (enlarged and darkened) by email ([info@x-trekkers.com](mailto:info@x-trekkers.com)).

**Please note that prices are subjected to change without prior notice**