Zhangjiajie & Guilin Nature

Zhangjiajie - Guilin - Yangshuo - 8 days / 7 nights

Sample itinerary - Subject to availability

Travel style: tailor made

Overview

Sandstone pillars on foot rather than by lift, then the Li River.

The journey

A nature-first route through China's two great landscape regions - the sandstone pillars of Zhangjiajie that inspired floating mountains on screen, and the river-carved karst of Guilin and Yangshuo. Eight days outside the cities, moving slowly enough for light to matter.

Highlights

- Yuanjiajie sandstone peaks, walked rather than lifted
- Li River between Guilin and Yangshuo
- Countryside cycling in Yangshuo

Day by day



Day 1 - Arrive Zhangjiajie

Met on arrival and driven out to a hotel near the park gate, positioned for a dawn start. The evening is unhurried: the gate town's night-market griddles, Tujia smoked meats hanging in shopfronts, and an early night. Photography-minded groups usually spend it checking gear and agreeing tomorrow's first light with the guide - the park is entered at opening.

Meals: - - Hotel: Zhangjiajie

Day 2 - Yuanjiajie

Into the park at opening, then Yuanjiajie on foot before the shuttle crowds thicken - pillar after pillar out of the forest, cloud moving through the valleys. The day is paced for light and viewpoints rather than distance; hiking distances and lift hours are confirmed before travel, as noted. Lunch is simple inside the park; the evening is free for a Tujia kitchen's smoked-pork table. (hiking distance and lift hours subject to confirmation)

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Zhangjiajie

Day 3 - Tianmen Mountain

The cableway to the cliff-hung walkways and the 999 steps, weather permitting - cloud can close the summit without warning, and the day flexes with the forecast. Ground level again after lunch for the slow half of the day: the gate town's old streets, a mountain-market browse, and Tujia weaving and silverwork watched at shopfront workbenches rather than staged for visitors.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Zhangjiajie

Day 4 - Zhangjiajie to Guilin

Rail south to Guilin, the karst beginning to rise through the window before the city does. On arrival, an unhurried evening by the water: the lakeside pagodas lit after dark, night-market stalls along the old streets, and a first bowl of Guilin rice noodles eaten standing at a counter with the after-work crowd. The Li River starts early tomorrow.

Meals: B - Hotel: Guilin



Day 5 - Li River to Yangshuo

The karst by water: a full day on the Li River south to Yangshuo, towers stacking and unravelling on both banks, buffalo on the shallows, fishermen's rafts between the bends, a simple lunch on board. Arrival mid-afternoon leaves the town's riverside lanes free before dusk. Vessel class and pier are confirmed before travel, as noted. (vessel class and pier subject to confirmation)

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Yangshuo

Day 6 - Yangshuo countryside

An early, quiet start: bicycles or a slow walk on village lanes between rice flats and karst outcrops, farmers heading to market as the mist lifts off the water. Lunch in a village kitchen - beer-fish and whatever was good that morning. The afternoon stays soft on purpose: a riverside tea stop, a slow read, and the day's last light from the bank.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Yangshuo



Day 7 - Yangshuo to Guilin

A slow final morning - the town market before the coaches, breakfast noodles at a street stall, last frames of the karst from the riverbank - then the drive back to Guilin for a gentle afternoon: lakeside walking streets, teahouse hours, and cormorant fishermen on the shallows at dusk when the water stills. Bags are packed once; tomorrow's transfer comes early.

Meals: B - Hotel: Guilin

Day 8 - Depart

Transfer to Guilin's airport for the international flight, timed from check-in backwards. With an afternoon departure there is room for a last riverside walk among the tai chi groups; the guide fixes the cut-off the night before. The China coordination team stays reachable until boarding, and this route pairs naturally with the classic-city itineraries if a future brief wants both.

Meals: B - Hotel: -

What makes this journey different

- Built for slow photography - early and late light at the pillars, not midday coach stops.
- Local Tujia and ethnic minority village life between the scenic areas, at village pace.
- Cable cars and the Bailong Elevator used where they buy back leg time; walking days kept quiet.
- Nature and culture in combination - landscape mornings, village food and craft afternoons - rather than indoor fillers.

Where you stay

Scenic-area gate hotels for dawn access at Zhangjiajie; Yangshuo riverside stays chosen for karst views. Standards are comfortable three-to-four-star; photography-friendly rooms quoted on request.

Food & local life

Tujia smoked and preserved specialities around Zhangjiajie, Yangshuo beer-fish and market produce, and village tables where the menu is whatever was good that morning.

Included

+ Accommodation in the agreed grade, with breakfast
+ Private guide and private vehicle on touring days
+ All internal transport between cities as stated - high-speed rail, internal flights and transfers
+ Entrance fees for the sites named in the itinerary
+ Meals as stated (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
+ Drinking water in the vehicle, and a 24-hour emergency contact while the group is in China

Not included

- International flights to and from China
- Chinese visa or visa-application costs
- Travel insurance, including medical and cancellation cover
- Meals not marked in the itinerary, drinks and personal spending
- Anything listed under subject to confirmation until it is confirmed
- Park shuttle buses and lift tickets, where the group chooses to use them

To be confirmed with suppliers

- cable car and lift operating hours
- hiking distances and total ascent per day
- national park entry booking rules for the group size

Customisation

Every framework can be re-built around your client's dates, party size, hotel grade, pace and interests - or combined with scheduled small group departures where budget matters. Send us the brief and we will quote in writing.