

Australian International Bicycle Travel Fact Sheets

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China : Part 1 :

Yunnan by Bicycle 2004

Resources

China Road Atlas (only in Chinese 13 x 25 cm (5.1 x 9.8 inches) 374 pages. It's brown and has got a plastic cover with white text and a golden steering wheel. You'll find it in larger book shops; or US\$14.00 surface.(ISBN: 7-5031-2000-2) In general, good maps are not easy to find in Yunnan. It would be best to combine an all-China bi-lingual map (Chinese + Roman alphabet) with a provincial map (in Chinese only). These are available from BikeChina (www.bikechina.com) .Buy it before you go.

Roads & Traffic

Roads surfaces vary a lot. Most parts are ok, some parts are excellent, and others could be painful. They are building a lot of new roads, which usually are wider, less steep than old roads (older roads tend to be very steep), and pass fewer small towns. So sometimes you may pass roads that are under extensive re-construction, you would look like you were washed by sand after a day's ride, and the road surface would be very bad. In some poorer areas, some roads have rocks about 50mm square, and there is a 50mm gap between each rock. It's painful riding on it, you could be bumping for two hundreds kms or more !

Motor traffic in rural Yunnan is OK. Places near Kunming would be the worst, tho the city itself is bicycle-friendly. Always be careful , they don't have any idea of the good manners on roads. Don't expect other people to drive carefully or follow traffic signs: dangerous overtaking is a norm. The road user who is less mighty has to give way, cyclists would have to give way. No rules on roundabouts. China has one of the worst road safety records in the world. However, China is the "Kingdom of Bicycles", still quite a lot of people travel by bike. It wouldn't be difficult to find a bike shop to repair your bike in any sizable towns. Except in the capital, no 700c tires or French-style valve tubes or fancy bike parts.

You can carry/send your bike on train for a small charge, but you should go a day before your train leaves, as it sometimes takes a long time to run all the process. Busses usually will carry bikes for a small charge, negotiable.

Hazards : Dogs are common anytime, anywhere, they do bark and bite, even you are not on a bike, and they may carry rabies – injections are recommended. Dogs are not treated very well, even if they have an owner, and this may account for their attitude. You need also to be careful to protect bike & luggage against theft !

Water

Hot water is always available: it's vital for Chinese daily life (they drink tea all the time, without sugar and milk). If you stay in any hotel, they will offer you free boiled water in a vacuum bottle, so you can fill your water bottles every night. Bottled drinking water is 1 litre = Y2 but not reliably safe. Don't drink water from taps or rivers.

Food

A Chinese meal usually is plain rice with several dishes and a soup; one huge dish is usually Y3 – 5. In some restaurants, they have several ready-to-eat dishes for you to choose, 3 dishes with rice is Y3-5. Noodle soup is common for lunch, Y1.5-5 (plain/fancy, with fish, eggs etc). You'd better ask for the price before you eat it. Beer is common & cheap; there are many different Chinese brands. Markets are good for breakfast, usually with fresh soymilk, steam buns (Y0.5). There are tourist restaurants, with menus in English but they are expensive; there are plenty of simple restaurants, usually they don't have menus, they would put all their fresh veggies or cooked meals in the kitchen and you can

indicate what you want to eat. Milk or coffee is not common though special shops sell milk, dairy products and ice creams, of varying quality. Near Da-li, look for good yogurt in returnable glass bottles. Some places will have flat bread. In some most touristic towns, you would find Western food, expensive. Bigger towns have fixed price grocery stores. Local people bargain hard for vegetables or fruits in markets. Standard unit of weight is “jin”=500g and “liang”(16 liang=1 jin). They don’t have an idea of vegetarianism, it’s quite common to cook with tiny meat dots or lard. Food is fascinating in China, different areas usually have their own special foods, see and try!

Accommodation

Accommodation is cheap. There is plenty of accommodation but it may difficult to recognize. In small places, they usually have no signs, you could miss it. So you have to ask around, or even guess! Remember, there are several words for “hotel”. Between towns, there are guesthouses for truck drivers to stay (Y5-10 pp), they would provide food too but may have no shower, and are quite basic. It’s good to bring a sheet sleeping bag from home.

Any bigger towns would have plenty of choices, always some around bus or train stations. Some fancy hotels or clean guesthouses are good value, Y30-60 per double room. They are everywhere, but since you don't read Chinese, you may miss too. So try to learn to read some related Chinese character, guess or ask around. In some provinces in China, some hotels, guesthouses don't allow foreigner to stay, but in Yunnan this shouldn't be a problem. They are usually quite good, but you may find toilet is a disaster, even if your room has a TV. You would find public toilet has no door between each cubicle, or the toilet is just a ditch, and it smells. It would be horrible if you have diarrhea.

Services

Town / Place	Accommodation	Comments, Other features
Daju	Snow Flake GH, 10Y pp English speaking, popular with cyclists. Food provided.	Nice town, traditional houses
Dali	Yu Yuan Ke Zhan, 15Y pp	Pleasant old town. Western restaurants, Backpacker hostels.
Jinghong	Manting Rd. 15-20pp	From Laos, it’s the first biggest city. Nice. Western restaurants, hostels.
Kunming	Camelia Hostel, 30Y pp YHA Dorms. Not a good place to store bike.	Bike shop: "Fat Tire Fun."
Lijiang	Xiao Feng Youth Inn, 20pp	Lots of tourists in old town.
Lugu Lake	GH's around lake. Most in Luoshui Village.	Beautiful lake. Entrance fee: 40Y. Matriarchal Mosuo people.
Mohan	Plenty of hotels	Laos-China boarder. Lots shops. Get rid off Laos money at vendors. One bank, doesn't buy Laos money.
Quiaoto		Town near Tiger Leaping Gorge. Western restaurants, hostels. Nasty.
Zhong Dian	YHA	Western restaurants, hostels.

Glossary

Hotel	Restaurant	Rice	Fried Rice	Noodle	Soup	Have a meal	Water	No meat	Vegetable	Dollar	10cents
旅馆	餐厅	饭	炒饭	面	汤	吃饭	水	不要肉	青菜	元	角
liu guan	can ting	fan	chao fan	mian	tang	chi fan	shui	bu yao ro	qing cai	yuan	jiao

Other words for hotel: 宾馆 bin guan; 住宿 zhu su etc.

Other Internet Resource:

<http://home.planet.nl/~raythu/country/yunnan.htm>

http://www.mark-ju.net/bike_ride/countries/china_yunnan.htm

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