

# Húnán 湖南



Húnán's two most potent exports – its fiery cuisine and the combustible thought of firebrand Mao Zedong – have scorched trails across the Middle Kingdom. *Xiāngcài* restaurants have eyes streaming and foreheads sweating nationwide, and effigies of Mao stand unblinking through the land, monuments to a period of ideological fervour that took China to the brink of ruin.

Communist heritage sites may characterise Chángshā and Sháoshān – revered birthplace of Mao Zedong – and the communist stamp is magnified further by Liu Shaoqi, Peng Dehuai and Hu Yaobang, prominent communist bigwigs and Húnán men. But to exclusively pore over Húnán's revolutionary roll call would be to sell the province way short, for Húnán is blessed with some of China's most stupendous landscapes and fecund scenery.

Spreading east, west and south from the province's Yangzi River basin plain (and Chángshā) are rough, isolated mountain ranges. The splendid Miao hamlet of Déhāng finds itself surrounded by a fanciful panorama of lush terraced fields, waterfalls and the karst peaks that rise in further profusion at the astonishing park of Wúlingyuán.

Travellers hunting down classic scenes of China's riverside village life come to rest in Fènghuáng for its unique views and crumbling sense of history. South of Fènghuáng, Hóngjiāng wraps itself around an old quarter riddled with heritage architecture. Travellers eager to commune with sacred China can make a beeline to Héng Shān, where monks pursue a life dedicated to the *dào* – the Way – on the slopes of one of China's holiest Taoist peaks.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Get lost in the gorgeous scenery of **Wúlingyuán** (p515) in Húnán's rugged northwest
- Slip the crowds on an early-morning walk along the Yuquanxi Scenic Area outside the Miao village of **Déhāng** (p511)
- Have your camera working overtime in fantastic **Fènghuáng** (p512), Húnán's most captivating historic riverside town
- Marvel at the Han-dynasty mummy at the **Hunan Provincial Museum** (p502) in Chángshā
- Visit Chairman Mao's birthplace and childhood home (and buy a Mao watch) in **Sháoshān** (p506), the obligatory communist-history pilgrimage site



■ POPULATION: 64.6 MILLION

## History

Between the 8th and 11th centuries the population of Húnán increased fivefold, spurred on by a prosperous agricultural industry along with southerly migration. Under the Ming and Qing dynasties the region was one of the empire's granaries, and vast quantities of rice were shipped over to the depleted north.

By the 19th century, Húnán began to suffer from the pressure of its big population. Land shortage and landlordism caused widespread unrest among Chinese farmers and hill-dwelling minorities. This contributed to the massive Taiping Rebellion (p45) and the communist movement of the 1920s, which later found strong support among Húnán's

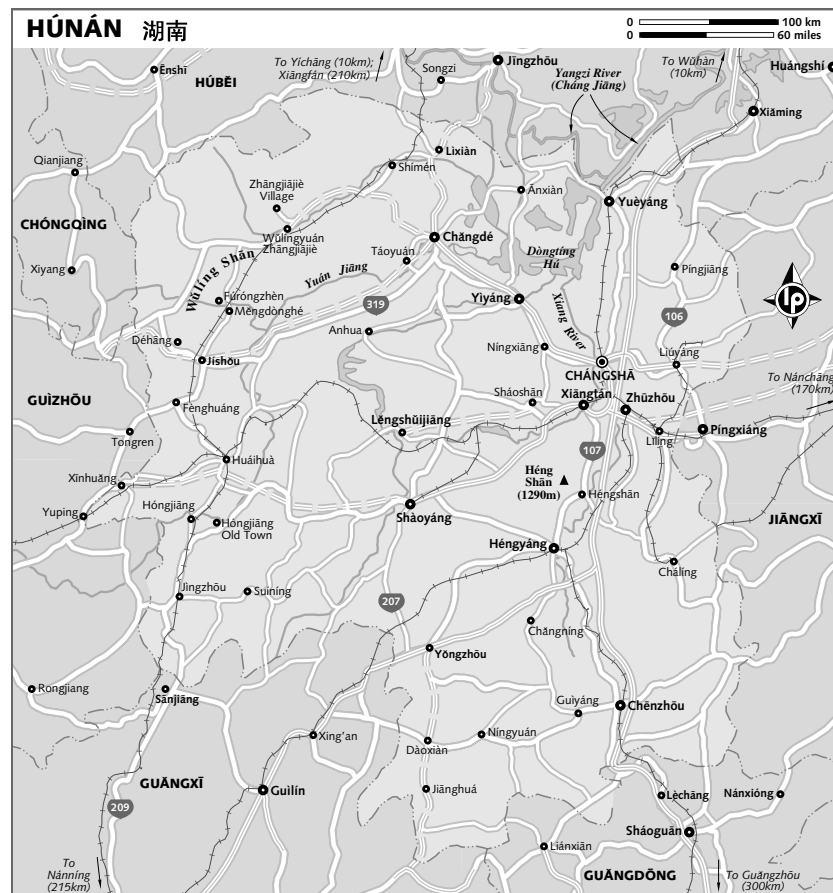
peasants, establishing a refuge on the mountainous Húnán–Jiāngxī border in 1927.

## Climate

Subtropical Húnán has more temperate forested elevations in the east, west and south. The northern half's climate is more fickle, with plunging winter temperatures and snow; the orange-growing south is more bearable. From April to June expect grey skies and most of the province's annual 125cm to 175cm of rain; thereafter, July and August are pressure-cooking months of heat and humidity.

## Language

Hunanese (*xiāng*), the language of Mao, is a Northern Mandarin dialect and has six to



eight ‘dialects’ of its own. Fewer consonants means confusion – l, n, f and h sounds, for example, are famously pesky. ‘Fronting’ (eg ‘zh’ sounds like ‘z’) is also noticeable.

Gàn, another Northern Mandarin dialect, is spoken in the west and south. Border regions are home to a mosaic of local dialects and minority languages that defy family group classification. Most of Húnán’s residents are Han Chinese, but hill-dwelling minorities occupying the border regions include the Miao, Tujia, Dong (a people related to the Thais and Lao) and Yao.

## Getting There & Around

The airports at Chángshā, Zhāngjiājiè and Huáihuà are useful points of access for air passengers, opening up the east, west and north-west. All of Húnán’s sights can be reached by either train or bus and expressways are tightening up travel times.

## CHÁNGSHĀ 长沙

☎ 0731 / pop 2.1 million

Though British philosopher Bertrand Russell described it as resembling ‘a mediaeval town’ when he passed by in the 1920s, today’s Chángshā has little to distinguish itself from other drab Chinese cities, which can come as a visceral disappointment. Chángshā is chiefly known for its sights related to Mao Zedong and as the gateway to his rustic birthplace, Sháoshān (p506).

## History

On the fertile plains of the Xiang River (Xiāng Jiāng), the Chángshā area has been inhabited for 3000 years, with a large settlement here by the Warring States period. In 1904, after the signing of the 1903 Treaty of Shanghai between Japan and China, Chángshā opened to foreign trade, but the city largely feeds from its associations with Mao Zedong (see the boxed text, p506).

## Orientation

Most of Chángshā lies on the eastern bank of the Xiang River. The train station is in the city’s far east. From the station, Wuyi Dadao leads to the river.

From Wuyi Lu, you cross the Xiang River bridge to the western bank, passing over Long Island (Júzi Zhōu) in the middle of the river. Chángshā’s pedestrian street runs along part of the south section of Huangxing Lu. City

maps are on sale at kiosks around the train station and in hotel shops.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS 网吧

**Internet Café** (wǎngbā; 1st fl, Xinxing Dàshìchāng, cnr Chezhan Zhonglu; per hr Y3; ☎ 24hr) Opposite the train station.

**Internet Café** (wǎngbā; 2nd fl, Sanjiu Chuyun Hotel, 239 Chezhan Zhonglu; per hr Y3) Opposite the train station.

### MONEY

**Bank of China** (Zhōngguó Yínháng; 43 Wuyi Dadao; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm) The Bank of China ATM at the Huatian Hotel takes international cards, and there’s another ATM on Zhongshan Lu.

### POST

**Post office** (yóujú) To the right of the train station exit.

### PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

**PSB** (Gōngānjú; ☎ 589 5000; 1 Dianli Lu)

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**China International Travel Service** (CITS; Zhōngguó Guójiā Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 446 8901; 160 Wuyi Dadao) On the corner of Changdao Lu and Wuyi Dadao, just east of Lotus Huatian Hotel.

## Sights

### HUNAN PROVINCIAL MUSEUM

湖南省博物馆

This first-rate **museum** (Húnán Shěng Bówùguǎn; 50 Dongfeng Lu; admission Y50; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) should not be missed due to its fascinating exhibits from the 2100-year-old Western Han tombs of Mǎwángduì, some 5km east of the city.

The exhibits allow you to get a rare handle on Western Han aesthetics – check out the astonishing expressions on the faces of some of the wooden figurines. Also excavated are more than 700 pieces of lacquer ware, Han silk textiles and ancient manuscripts on silk and bamboo wooden slips, including one of the earlier versions of the Zhōuyi (*Yijing*, also called *I Ching*; see p74), written in formalised Han clerical script. But the highlight is the body of the Marquess of Dai, extracted from her magnificent multi-layered lacquered coffin after 2100 years. Due to the air-tight seal and 80 litres of preserving fluid, her body is marvellously well pickled. The mummy wears a horrified expression – perhaps aghast at her exposure to hordes of tour groups, bright lights and the sur-

gery she underwent at the hands of modern doctors who removed her internal organs.

A further hall is devoted to marvellous Shang- and Zhou-dynasty bronzes from Húnán; look out for the ‘elephant-shaped *zūn*’ and the ‘cover of square bronze *léi* with inscriptions’.

### MAOIST PILGRIMAGE SPOTS

A colossal 1968 statue of Mao – cast out of an aluminium-magnesium alloy in Heilóngjiāng – affably greets you at the entrance to the **Changsha City Museum** (Shì Bówùguǎn; 480 Bayi Lu; admission Y10; ☎ 6am-8.30pm). Compare his carriage – right arm raised aloft, heralding a new dawn – with that of his more demure statue in Sháoshān from the 1990s, when the reform drive had long kicked in and Mao was a demigod no more. Head right towards the almost empty **exhibition hall** with the huge red-tiled façade and a huge portrait of a youthful Mao, if only to gawp at its magnificent exterior. Upstairs, visitors are serenaded by a Chinese-language paean to Mao Zedong and his second wife, Yang Kaihui. Also in the museum grounds is the former site of the **Hunan CPC Committee** (Zhōng Gōng Xiāngǔ Wēiyuánhuì Jìzhǐ; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-5.30pm), where Mao’s living quarters, along with photos and historical items from the 1920s and a wall of Mao’s poems are on view.

A small and fun **antiques market** materialises at the museum gate on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

**Hunan No 1 Teachers’ Training School** (Dìyī Shīfān Xuéxiào; 324 Shuyuan Lu; admission Y6; ☎ 8am-5.30pm) is where Mao attended classes between 1913 and 1918; he returned as a teacher and principal from 1920 to 1922. A fun self-guided tour takes in Mao’s dormitory, some study areas, halls where he held some of his first political meetings and an open-air well where he enjoyed taking cold baths.

### YUELU PARK 岳麓公园

This park (Yuèlù gōngyuán), at the bottom of the High Mountain Park, and Hunan University (Húnán Dàxué) are pleasant places to visit on the western bank of Xiang River. The university evolved from the site of the **Yuelu Academy** (Yuèlù Shūyuàn; Lushan Lu; summer Y30, other times Y18; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm), which was established during the Song dynasty for scholars preparing for civil examinations.

The hike to **Loving Dusk Pavilion** (Àiwǎn Tíng) offers lovely views.

To get to the university, take bus 202 from Wuyi Dado or the train station and get off three stops before the end. Continue downhill and turn right (the bus goes left); walk straight for the Mao statue.

### OLD CITY WALLS

The only remaining part of the old city walls is **Tiānxīn Gé** (Heart of Heaven Pavilion; park Y2, pavilion Y5), off Chengnan Xilu, which is an interesting area to explore.

## Sleeping

Most hotels able to admit foreigners tend to be quite expensive.

**Hunan Normal University Foreign Experts Building** (Húnán Shīfān Dàxué Zhuānjiāoliù; ☎ 887 2211; Lushan Lu; 麓山路; d Y30, tw with bathroom Y120-180; ☎) It’s in the west, so phone first. Take bus 202 from the train station and disembark at the *shīfān dàxué* stop. Nearly opposite the stop is a dorm and housing complex with budget rooms. Travellers usually have to slog about 750m uphill to a white building with the rates given here.

**Taicheng Hotel** (Tāichéng Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 217 9999; 309 Chezhan Zhonglu; 车站中路309号; s/d/st Y238/238/348; ☎) Less busy than other nearby tourist hotels, carpeted rooms here are good and clean and the location near the train station is optimum. Discounts bring doubles down to Y108.

**Lotus Huatian Hotel** (Fúróng Huātián Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 440 1888; fax 440 1889; 176 Wuyi Dadao; 五一大道176号; s/d Y338-538/Y338-538; ☎) A quite luxurious Chinese-themed four-star hotel offering 30% discounts on rooms, making prices a bargain, especially if you’re doing business on a budget.

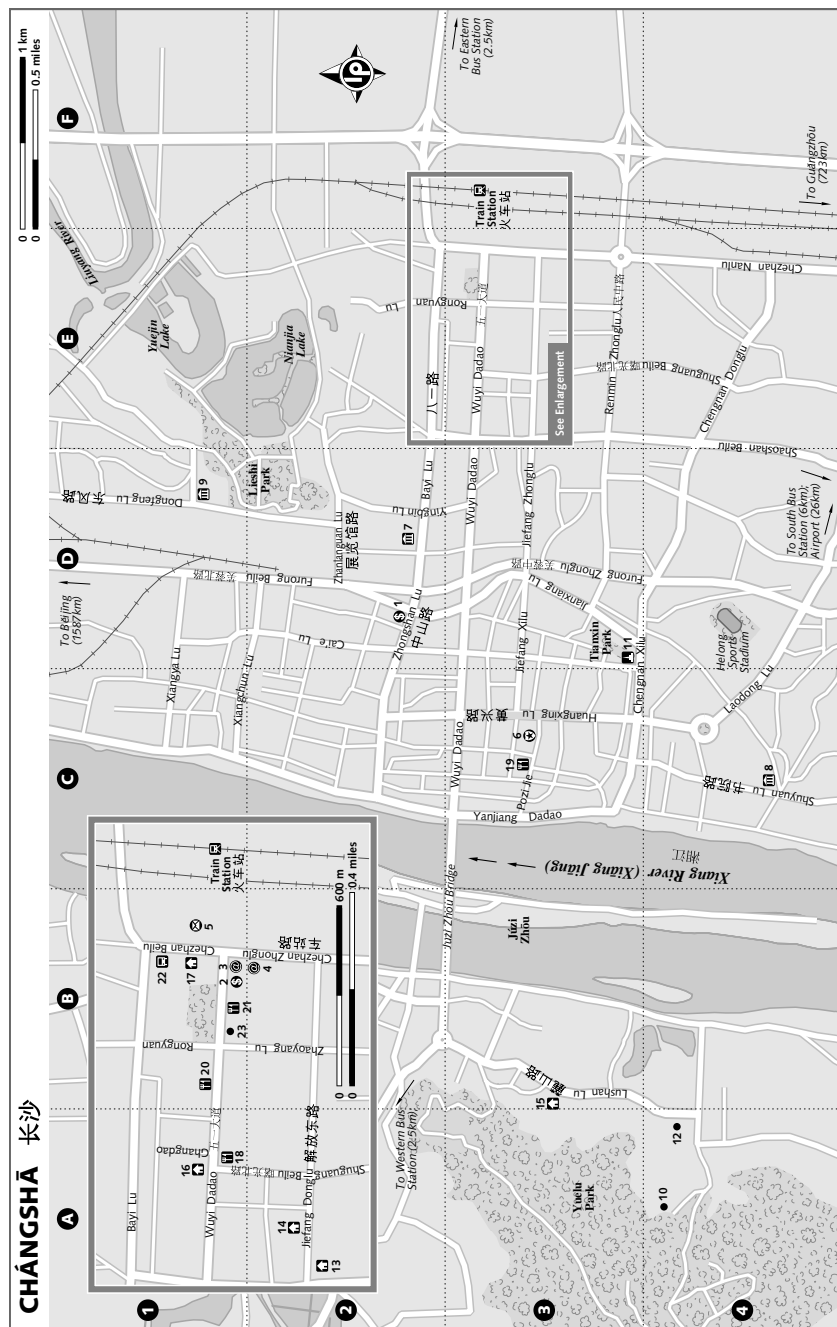
**Dolton Hotel** (Tōngchéng Guójiā Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 416 8888; www.dolton-hotel.com; 149 Shaoshan Beilu; 韶山北路149号; d Y918; ☎) One of the two best hotels in the city (the other being the Huatian Hotel), the rooms and service here rarely fail to impress. An excellent all-round hotel.

**Huatian Hotel** (Huá Tiān Dàjiùdiàn; ☎ 444 2888; www.huatian-hotel.com; 380 Jiefang Donglu; 解放东路380号; tw/st Y588/318 plus 15% service charge; ☎) This much-renovated and reinvented five-star hotel has excellent rooms and a much-lauded reputation for good service, backed up by a panoply of select restaurants.

## Eating & Drinking

Plenty of street-side stalls pop up at night on Zhaoyang Lu.

**Huogongdian** (☎ 412 0580; 93 Wuyi Dadao) Perhaps famous for its stinky *dòufu* (tofu; as Mao said:

**INFORMATION**

ATM 自动柜员机	1 D2
Bank of China 中国银行	2 B1
CITS 中国国际旅行社	(see 16)
Internet Café 网吧	3 B1
Internet Café 网吧	4 B2
Post Office 邮局	5 B1
PSB 公安局	6 C3

Hunan Provincial Museum	9 D1
Loving Dusk Pavilion	
爱晚亭	10 A4
Tianxin Gé 天心阁	11 D3
Yuelu Academy 岳麓书院	12 A4

Lotus Huatian Hotel	16 A1
Taicheng Hotel	
泰成大酒店	17 B1

**EATING**

Huōgōngdiàn 火宫殿	18 A1
Huōgōngdiàn 火宫殿	19 C3
Xīnhuá Lóu 新华楼	20 B1
Xīnhuá Lóu 新华楼	21 B1

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Changsha City Museum	
市博物馆	7 D2
Hunan No 1 Teachers' Training	
School 第一师范学校	8 C4

**SLEEPING**

Dolton Hotel	
通程国际大酒店	13 A2
Huatian Hotel 华天大酒店	14 A2

Hunan Normal University Foreign	
Experts Building	
湖南师范大学专家楼	15 B3

**TRANSPORT**

Bus Station 汽车站	22 B1
CAAC 中国民航售票处	23 B1

'The stinky *dòufu* at Chángshā's Huōgōngdiàn smells stinky, but tastes great' but there's much else here, from tasty *dīm sum* wheeled round in carts to the excellent *máoshì hóngshāoròu* (毛氏红烧肉; Mao-style braised pork; Y32) and its scrummy pale green vegetable parcels, *xiāngjiān sùcàibāo* (香煎素菜包; Y6 for six). There are three branches in town – another can be found at 78 Pozi Jie (☎ 581 4228).

**Xīnhuá Lóu** (35 Wuyi Dadao; dishes Y4-25; ☎ 6.30am-2am) This local institution is a can't-miss option for local dishes; harried staff wheel around trolleys for patrons to pick and choose. Another branch is across the way at 108 Wuyi Dadao (open from 6.30am to 1.30am).

**Getting There & Away****AIR**

**Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 411 2222) is one block west of the train station, next to the Civil Aviation Hotel.

**China Southern** (☎ office hrs 228 8000, 24hr 950 333; 336 Chezhan Zhonglu; ☎ 8am-7.30pm) has an office at the train station.

From Chángshā, there are daily flights to major cities such as Běijīng (Y1210), Chéngdū (Y910), Guǎngzhōu (Y690), Shànghǎi (Y890) and Xī'ān (Y890). Flights going to Zhāngjiājiè (Y460) officially (but occasionally optimistically) run daily.

**BUS**

The bus station (61 Chezhan Beilu) across from the train station has limited services.

Buses for Shǎoshān (Y20, two hours, every 30 minutes, 8am to 5.30pm), Guílín (Y166, six hours, three per day), Héng Shān (Y24 to Y32, two to three hours), Hóngjiāng Cíy (Y99, seven hours, 9.50am) and Jǐnggāng Shān (Y77, five hours, 12.30pm) leave from the south bus station (*qīchē nánzhàn*), way down in the south of town. Take bus 107 from the train

station to the south bus station (Y2). From the train station, bus 126 goes to the eastern bus station (*dōngzhàn*), where buses run to Wūhàn (Y135, four hours) and Yuèyǎng (Y55, two hours). Bus 12 followed by bus 315 goes to the western bus station (*xīzhàn*) for buses to Zhāngjiājiè (Y101, seven hours, once daily) and Huáihuà (Y99, 11 hours).

**TRAIN**

There are two Guǎngzhōu–Chángshā–Běijīng express trains daily in each direction and a daily train to Shànghǎi (Y300, 20 hours) from Chángshā's train station (☎ 263 8682). Other routes via Chángshā are Běijīng–Guílín–Kūnmíng and Guǎngzhōu–Xī'ān–Lánzhōu. Not all trains to Shànghǎi, Kūnmíng and Guílín stop in Chángshā, so it may be necessary to go to Zhūzhōu first and change there. Trains run to Zhāngjiājiè, but only N375 leaves at a good time (6.30am); the trip takes 12 hours. To Wūhàn (Y50, three to four hours), it's no problem.

If you're heading to Hong Kong, you can take one of a few overnight Chángshā–Shēnzhèn air-conditioned express trains that get into Shēnzhèn early in the morning. The Běijīng–Kowloon express train also passes through Chángshā. The daily train to Shǎoshān (Y11, three hours) leaves at 7.30am, returning at 4.55pm. Counter 7 at the Chángshā train station is supposedly for foreigners.

**Getting Around****TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

Huanghua International Airport is 26km from the city centre. CAAC shuttle buses (Y16) depart every 30 minutes between 6.30am and 8.30pm from the Civil Aviation Hotel, next to CAAC on Wuyi Dadao.

**TAXI**

Taxi fares start at Y3.

**SHǎOSHĀN** 韶山

☎ 0732

Unassuming Shǎoshān, about 130km south-west of Chángshā, looms monumentally as Mao Zedong's birthplace. Three million pilgrims once traipsed here each year (including Mao himself on a return visit in 1959), and a railway line and paved road from Chángshā were laid. Mao's death and Cultural Revolution excesses slowed things, but that didn't stop a statue of the Great Helmsman being erected in Shǎoshān in 1993 (the skies ominously darkening when it was unveiled) and huge battalions of tour groups still earmark the village for obligatory obeisance on communist heritage tours.

**Orientation & Information**

Shǎoshān has two distinct parts: the new town clustered around the train and bus stations, and the original Shǎoshān village about 5km away.

From the train station, minibuses (Y1.50) and motorcycle taxis head to village sites. Some minibuses will take you to all the key sites and back for Y10.

**THE GREAT HELMSMAN**

Mao was born in Shǎoshān, not far from Chángshā, in 1893. Once poor, his father served in the military to make money. Ultimately, their new surpluses raised their status to 'rich' peasants.

A famine in Húnán and a subsequent uprising of starving people in Chángshā ended in the execution of the leaders by the Manchu governor, an injustice that deeply affected Mao. At the age of 16 he left Shǎoshān to enter middle school in Chángshā. Though not yet antimonarchist, he felt that the country was in desperate need of reform.

In Chángshā, Mao was first exposed to the ideas of revolutionaries active in China, most notably Sun Yatsen's revolutionary secret society. Later that year an army uprising in Wúhàn quickly spread and the Qing dynasty collapsed. Mao joined the regular army but resigned six months later, thinking the revolution was over when Sun handed the presidency to Yuan Shikai and the war between the north and south of China did not take place.

Voraciously reading newspapers, Mao was introduced to socialism. While at the Hunan No 1 Teachers' Training School (p503), he inserted an advertisement in a Chángshā newspaper 'inviting young men interested in patriotic work to make contact with me...'. Among those who got in touch was Liu Shaoqi, who later became president of the People's Republic of China (PRC); Xiao Chen, who became a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); as well as Li Lisan.

Mao graduated in 1918 and went to Běijīng, where he worked as an assistant librarian at Beijing University. In Běijīng he met future co-founders of the Chinese Communist Party: the student leader Zhang Guodao, Professor Chen Duxiu and university librarian Li Dazhao. Chen and Li are regarded as the founders of Chinese communism.

On returning to Chángshā, Mao became increasingly active in communist politics. He became editor of the *Xiang River Review*, a radical Húnán students' newspaper, and began teaching. In 1920 he organised workers and truly felt himself a Marxist. In Shànghǎi in 1921 Mao attended the founding meeting of the CCP and helped organise Húnán's provincial branch. Differing from

A branch of CITS (Zhōngguó Guóji Lǚxíngshè) can be found next to Nanan School (see below).

**Sights & Activities**

The number of Mao-related sights has mushroomed over the years in a lucrative bid to separate tourists from their hard-earned *máo*, but only a handful have a genuine connection with the communist revolutionary.

**MAO'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE** 毛泽东故居

Standing in front of a pond, this simple mud-brick **house** (Máo Zédōng Gūjū; admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm, closes 5pm outside summer) with a thatched roof and stable is the village's shrine. Mao was born here in 1893 and returned to live here briefly in 1927. Among the paraphernalia are kitchen utensils, original furnishings, bedding, and photos of Mao's parents, with facilities including a small barn and cattle pen. No photography is allowed inside.

**NANAN SCHOOL** 南岸私塾

This frugal and spartan **school** (Nán'àn Sīshú; admission Y10; ☎ 8am-5.30pm), its interior illuminated

by light wells, is where Mao began his education. Climb the stairs to glimpse Mao's place of study, eyeball the teacher's bed downstairs and peer at fading photos of relatives and descendants.

**MUSEUM OF COMRADE MAO**

毛泽东同志纪念馆

A further paean to Mao, this **museum** (Máo Zédōng Jìniànguǎn; ☎ 568 5347; admission Y30; ☎ 8am-5pm) is without English captions, but the exhibits of his belongings and photos with communist leaders are graphic enough. To the right as you face the museum and opposite the bronze statue of Mao Zedong (decorated with calligraphy from Jiang Zemin) is the **Mao Family Ancestral Hall** (毛氏宗祠; Máo Shì Zōngcí; admission Y10; ☎ 8am-5.30pm) where staff snooze, a precursor to a disentangling of the Mao family genealogy and photos of Chinese leaders paying obligatory visits to Shǎoshān.

**OTHER SIGHTS**

Some 3km up from Shǎoshān village is the **Dripping Water Cave** (滴水洞; Dī Shuǐ Dòng; admission

orthodox Marxists, Mao saw the peasants as the lifeblood of the revolution, and from 1922 to 1925 the CCP organised its first unions of peasants, workers and students. Vengeful warlords impelled Mao's flight to Guǎngzhōu (Canton).

In April 1927, following Chiang Kaishek's massacre of communists, Mao was dispatched to Chángshā to organise what became known as the 'Autumn Harvest Uprising'. Mao's army scaled Jínggāng Shān's peaks to embark on a guerrilla war – step one towards the 1949 communist takeover.

Mao became the new chairman of the PRC (until his death in 1976) and embarked on radical campaigns to repair his war-ravaged yet jubilant country. In the mid-1950s he became increasingly disillusioned with the Soviets and began to implement peasant-based and decentralised socialist development. The outcome was the ill-fated Great Leap Forward and, later, the chaos of the Cultural Revolution (for details, see p51).

The current regime officially says Mao was 70% correct and 30% wrong. Torturous experiences are remembered – upwards of 70 million Chinese died during his rule – but he is revered as a man who united his people and returned China to the status of world power. 'Great Leader', 'Great Teacher' and 'supremely beloved Chairman' are oft-used monikers; his ubiquitous images reveal a saint who will protect people (or make them rich).

The most controversial dissection of his life and purpose came with the 2005 publication of *Mao: The Unknown Story* by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, the fruit of 10 years' research. Seeking to balance the hagiographical bias of much Chinese commentary on Mao, Chang and Halliday endeavoured to demolish the myth of the Long March and portray Mao as an unscrupulous schemer whose collusion with communist ideology simply served as a route to total supremacy. Other biographies of Mao Zedong include Ross Terrill's *Mao*, Jerome Ch'en's *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* and Stuart R Schram's *Mao Tse-tung*. The five-volume *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* provide abundant insight into his thoughts.

Y32; ☎ 8am-5.30pm). Mao lived in this retreat (no, it's not a cave, but his villa was quite bunker-like) for 11 days in June 1966. The Mao clan are entombed nearby. Buses and motorbikes head here from the car park opposite the Shaoshan Hotel.

**Shao Peak** (韶峰; Shǎo Fēng; admission Y45) is the cone-shaped mountain visible from the village. The summit has a lookout pavilion, and the 'forest of stelae' (毛泽东诗词碑林; Máo Zédōng Shīcí Bēilín; admission Y17) on the lower slopes has stone tablets engraved with Mao's poems.

From Shǎoshān village you can take a minibus or motorcycle taxi (Y5) south to the end of the road at the cable-car station. Hiking to the top of the mountain takes about an hour.

**Sleeping & Eating**

Remember that Shǎoshān can be easily done as a day trip from Chángshā, so spending the night can be avoided. In the village itself look out for hotel tents inducing you to stay with a local family or *nóngjiā* (农家); no-one seems to mind.

**Sháoshān Bīnguǎn** (韶山宾馆; ☎ 568 5262; 16 Guyuan Lu; 故园路16号; s/d Y368/398; 🚻) Midrange tourist option tucked away over the road and up the drive behind the statue of Mao Zedong. A variety of buildings offer variously priced rooms including Mao's roost when he paid a return visit to Sháoshān in 1959.

Restaurants are all over the place in the village itself, all typically cooking up Mao's favourite dish, Mao Family Braised Pork (毛氏红烧肉; Máo shì Hóngshāoròu), but expect tourist prices.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Chángshā's southern bus station (*qīchē nánzhān*) has several buses a day to Sháoshān (Y20, two hours, every hour) running from 8am onwards. During summertime, travel group kiosks sprout up around the train station. Buses return to Chángshā from Sháoshān's **long-distance bus station** (长途汽车站; chángtú qīchēzhàn; Yingbin Lu), just north of the train station, with the last bus leaving at around 5.30pm.

### TRAIN

A daily train (Y11, 3 to 3½ hours) to Sháoshān runs from Chángshā, departing Chángshā at 7.30am and returning from Sháoshān at 4.55pm.

## YUÈYÁNG 岳阳

☎ 0730 / pop 529,730

Perched on enormous Dòngtíng Hú (Dongting Lake) and home to a tea so sublime that emperors demanded it as a gift of respect, Yuèyáng has a sprinkling of attractions that can fit into a day trip from Chángshā.

## Orientation

Yuèyáng is situated south of the Yangzi on the northeastern shore of Dòngtíng Hú, where the lake flows into the river. Yuèyáng proper is in the southern section of the city, where the train, bus stations, hotels, sights and Buxing Jie (步行街) – the town's pedestrianised street – can be found.

## Information

**Baihui Internet Café** (Bāihùi Wǎngbā; Buxing Jie; per hr Y2; 🕒 24hr) Upstairs through a clothes store on pedestrianised Buxing Jie.

**China Post** (yóujú; train station concourse; 🕒 8am–7pm)

**CITS** (Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshì; ☎ 823 2010; 25

Yunmeng Lu) This not very helpful office is in the courtyard of the Yunmeng Hotel, on the 2nd floor.

**Internet Café** (Buxing Jie; per hr Y2; 🕒 24hr) At the western end of Buxing Jie.

## Sights & Activities

Yuèyáng's most celebrated landmark, the overpriced **Yueyang Tower** (岳阳楼; Yuèyáng Lóu; Dongting Beilu; admission Y46; 🕒 7.30am–5.45pm) is a historic triple-eaved structure overlooking the lake in the west of town, constructed without a single nail and rising from its namesake park.

Under renovation at the time of writing, the halls of Yuèyáng's impressive **Confucian Temple** (文庙; Wénmiào) are ringed by a long, high brick wall topped with green tiles and cruelly surrounded by the empty shells of deserted apartment blocks. The entire complex exudes substantial nobility, with *Magnolia grandiflora* standing near the entrance and a massive hall at the rear.

Dating back to 1242, the ill-repaired and overgrown **Cishi Pagoda** (慈氏塔; Cí Shì Tǎ; Baota Xiàng), off Dongting Nanlu, sprouts a healthy crop of saplings whose roots aim to dislodge as many bricks as possible. Towering from within a courtyard ringed by small family homes and washing hanging out to dry, the pagoda is shrieking out for preservation. There is no access up into the interior of the pagoda itself.

Yuèyáng borders the 3900-sq-km **Dòngtíng Lake** (洞庭湖; Dòngtíng Hú), China's second-largest body of fresh water. Among the several islands in the lake, the most famous is **Junshan Island** (君山岛; Jūnshān Dǎo; admission Y40), where the legendary *yínzhēn chá* (silver needle tea) is grown. Added to hot water, the tea is supposed to remain on the surface, sticking up like tiny needles.

The island is also known for its late-spring or early-summer dragon-boat races, held since ancient times. Trails lined with pavilions cover the island.

Boats (Y40, 45 minutes) leave when full from the Yueyang Tower Ferry Dock (Yuèyáng Lóu Lúnchuán Kéyinzhàn; ☎ 831 7487), north of the Yueyang Tower, between 8am and 3pm or 4pm. They also operate during similar hours from the dock by the south entrance to the Yueyang Tower.

## Sleeping

**Xuèlián Bīnguǎn** (☎ 832 1633; Dongting Beilu; 洞庭北路; s/d/tr Y105/125/135; 🚻) Smart and well looked after, the twins and doubles at this popular

and busy hotel near the Yueyang Tower are decent, spacious and clean, and there's a large restaurant attached. From the train station, take bus 22 to the Yueyang Tower.

**Yúnmèng Bīnguǎn** (☎ 822 1115; fax 822 1115; 25 Yunmeng Lu; 云梦路25号; d Y318; 🚻) Offering good discounts, this three-star hotel has clean and tidy doubles with bathrooms tucked away behind its uninviting exterior. The recommended restaurant serves up a variety of local dishes.

## Eating

Yuèyáng cuisine is recognisable for its liberal usage of starch and oil in many dishes. There are good fish and seafood restaurants, particularly on Dongting Beilu, which also has cheap places where you can buy dumplings, noodles and breakfast; food stalls and small restaurants are near Nanyuepo Dock.

## Getting There & Away

Yuèyáng is on the main Guǎngzhōu–Běijīng railway line, with trains to Wúhàn (Y17 to Y33, four hours), Chángshā (Y12 to Y24, 1½ to two hours) and Guǎngzhōu (12 hours). The train station is on Zhanqian Lu, north of Baling Lu.

Buses run to Chángshā (Y36 to Y55, two hours, every 30 minutes from 7am to 6pm), Nánchāng (Y98, nine hours, once daily) and Hǎnkǒu (Y55, three hours, twice daily) from the Yueyang long-distance bus station (Yuèyáng qīchēzhàn), opposite the humungous Wal Mart on Baling Lu (not far from the train station). Buses to Yíchāng (Y75, seven hours, twice daily) and Zhāngjiājìe (Y115, once daily) leave from the Dongting bus station (Dòngtíng chēzhàn). Buses to Chángshā (Y30) also depart when full from the train station forecourt.

## HÉNG SHĀN 衡山

☎ 0734

Around 120km south of Chángshā, **Héng Shān** (☎ 566 2571; admission Y100) is also known as Nányuè (Southern Peak), the name given to the village that marks the start of the climb. The southernmost of China's five Taoist mountains, kings and emperors once came here to hunt and make sacrifices to heaven and earth.

## Sights & Activities

Located in Nányuè, the attractive **Nanyue Temple** (南岳大庙; Nányuè Dàmiào; ☎ 566 2353;

admission Y20; 🕒 7am–7pm) dates from the Tang dynasty and was rebuilt during the Qing dynasty. Take note of the column supports, one for each of the mountains in the range, purportedly.

To reach Héng Shān, follow Dengshan Lu north of Nanyue Temple until it curves to your right. Hiking on the paved road or marked paths to **Wishing Harmony Peak** (祝融峰; Zhùróng Fēng), the mountain's highest point, takes four hours and another four hours to descend, although visiting the monasteries, temples, villas and gardens on the mountain takes longer. Minibuses run to the summit for Y12 or there's a cable car (up/down Y30/25) that starts midway on the mountain and goes nearly to the top.

**Wishing Harmony Palace** (祝融殿; Zhùróng Diàn), built during the Ming dynasty, is the resting place of Zhu Rong, an official 'in charge of fire' during one of China's early periods. Zhu Rong used to hunt on Héng Shān, so Taoists selected the mountain to represent fire, one of the five primordial elements of Chinese philosophy.

Plentiful cheap accommodation can be found along Dengshan Lu and Zhurong Lu. The cheapest option is to find a bed (typically around Y35) above a restaurant along Dengshan Lu. If you want to stay overnight on the mountain, further hotels can be found midway up the mountain as well as on the summit.

## Getting There & Away

From the archway on Bei Jie, turn right and the long-distance bus station is a few minutes' walk across the street on your left, where buses run to Chángshā (Y30, two to three hours). Arriving buses may drop you at Dengshan Lu. Trains from Chángshā (Y22, two hours) are an option, but they're slower than buses on the new expressways and require switching to a minibus for a half-hour ride from the railroad.

### SHĀN: HILL, MOUNTAIN



This character can be seen either as a mountain range with three peaks or as a mountain in its own right, with its peak in the middle. Either way, it is one of the simplest to remember!

**HUÁIHUÀ** 怀化

☎ 0745 / pop 127,000

A town built around a railway junction in western Húnán, Huáihuà is useful as a transit point to Fènghuáng (p512) and Hóngjiāng (right), and as a rail conduit to Zhāngjiājiè (p515) or Liǔzhōu.

**Information**

**Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; ☎ 223 4309; 18 Yingfeng Xilu) Near the train station.

**China Post** (邮局; yóujú; cnr Renmin Nanlu & Hezhou Beilu) Next to KFC.

**Internet Café** (wǎngbā; either side of the Huaihua Great Hotel on Hezhou Beilu, south of train station; per hr Y2; ☎ 24hr) There are many other internet cafés just south of the train station.

**Sleeping**

**Huaihua Great Hotel** (怀化大酒店; Huáihuà Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎ 226 9888; 18 Hezhou Beilu; 鹤州北路18号; s/d Y168/188; ☎) A reasonably comfortable three-star hotel with a sparkling foyer, semiprofessional staff and clean, serviceable rooms. Located just south of the train station.

**Tianfu Hotel** (天副饭店; Tiānfù Fàndiàn; 226 2988; fax 226 4146; 30 Huochezhan Kou; 火车站口30号; s/d tr Y148/198/248; ☎) By the train station, this usefully located hotel has neat and recently decorated singles with plastic wood floors and clean shower rooms. There's a variety of rooms so check them over first.

**Getting There & Away**

Huáihuà's Zhijiang Airport is 35km west of town.

Buses to Fènghuáng (Y26, 2½ hours, every hour from 7.30am to 5.30pm), Jìshǒu (Y33, 3½ hours, three daily) and Guílín (Y92, 12 hours, once daily) depart from the west bus station (*qīchē xīzhàn*) on Zhijiang Lu (芷江路). Buses to Hóngjiāng (Y15, 80 minutes, every 40 minutes) depart from the south bus station (*qīchē nánzhàn*) on Hongxing Nanlu (红星南路), south of town. Bus 19 travels between the train station and the south bus station.

Běijīng–Kūnmíng, Chéngdū–Guǎngzhōu and Shànghǎi–Chóngqīng express trains run via Huáihuà. Ticket prices include Chángshā (Y112, eight hours), Jìshǒu (hard seat Y6 to Y16, two hours), Zhāngjiājiè (hard seat Y15 to Y37, four to 5½ hours) and Yíchāng (hard seat Y31 to Y75). You can also catch a train to Sānjiāng (5½ hours) in northern Guǎngxi.

Taxis start at Y4.

**HÓNGJIĀNG OLD TOWN**

洪江古商城

☎ 0745

Located 55km south of Huáihuà, Hóngjiāng is a historic town situated at the confluence of the Yuan (沅江) and Wu (舞水; 舞水) rivers. Dating back to the Northern Song, much of the city is now modern and developed, but the remarkable Old Town (Hóngjiāng Gǔshāngchéng) recalls the town's Qing-dynasty heyday as a prospering financial centre. The riverine journey by bus to Hóngjiāng alongside the Yuan River is gorgeous; look out for the magnificent white hilltop pagoda sprouting branches that faces you as you cross south over the river.

**Sights & Activities**

Exploring the **old town** – an activity that can be completed in half a day – is the reason to visit Hóngjiāng. Essentially enclosed within Xinmin Lu (新民路), Yuanjiang Lu (沅江路) and Xiongxi Lu (雄溪路) – the latter becoming Xingfú Lu (幸福路) – the old town undulates in a delightfully higgledy-piggledy and occasionally steep maze of narrow stone flagged alleys and lanes. Its buildings – old banks, merchant businesses and shrines, in the main – have been partially restored, with renovation work continuing. You can poke your head through doorways to admire the interiors, which are often naturally lit up by light wells (天井; *tiānjǐng*), rectangular apertures in the roof that admit both sunshine and rain.

It's easy to get lost in this labyrinth, so meandering in the lanes is inevitable. Notable buildings include the **Taiping Temple** (太平宫; Táipíng Gōng), built in 1723 and largely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Pop in and mourn among the ruins of the main hall and admire the ornamental carvings on the front gate (*ménfāng*). Other buildings of interest include the sadly decaying **Jífādūzhàn** (吉发堆栈), which dates from 1855, and the **Money God Hall** (财神殿; Cáishén Diàn) on Caishen Lane (财神巷; Caishen Xiang), which dates back to 1683. Occasional slogans from the Cultural Revolution still appear, for example above the door of the old **Newspaper Office** (报馆旧址; Bàoguǎn Jiùzhǐ). Another noteworthy temple is the **Big Buddha Temple** (大佛寺; Dàfó Sì) housing a substantial statue of Sakyamuni and an effigy of a 1000-armed Guanyin.

**Sleeping & Eating**

A string of restaurants line the riverbank next to Hong Bridge alongside the Wu River selling river food dishes and local dishes.

**Qiáotóu Bīnguǎn** (桥头宾馆; ☎ 763 4848; 4 Xinmin Lu; 新民路4号; s/d without air-con Y28/48, d with air-con & toilet Y90; ☎) The pricier double rooms are simple and clean with plastic wood floors, shower and squat loo. It's at the base of Xinmin Lu near the Hong Bridge (洪桥; Hóng Qiáo).

**Hongjiang Hotel** (洪江大酒店; Hóngjiāng Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎ 766 2999; Xinmin Lu; 新民路; s/d Y168/188; ☎) Towering two-star hotel next to the Bank of China on the left-hand side as you walk up Xinmin Lu. Rooms are comfortable enough and you can get into the old town through an alley on the other side of Xinmin Lu. Good discounts.

**Getting There & Away**

Hóngjiāng old town should not be confused with Hongjiang City (洪江市; Hóngjiāng Shì), the town on the railway to the west. Buses from Huáihuà to Hóngjiāng old town (Y15, 80 minutes, every 40 minutes) depart from Huáihuà's south bus station between 6.50am and 6pm. Buses returning to Huáihuà (Y15, 80 minutes, every hour) leave from the bus station on Yuanjiang Lu, opposite the main entrance to the old town in Hóngjiāng.

**JÌSHǒU** 吉首

☎ 0743 / pop 103,624

The town of Jìshǒu has little to divert travelers, but it's the gateway to Dēhāng (right), a Miao village embedded in picturesque karst scenery to the north of town. It's also a transit point to the historic riverside town of Fènghuáng (p512).

**Information**

**Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; 30 Renmin Beilu) Can change money.

**Jinxin Internet Café** (金鑫网吧; Jīnxīn Wǎngbā; per hr Y2; ☎ 24hr) On the southeast corner of the train station concourse.

**Xiangxi Tourist Service Center** (湘西州游客服务中心; Xiāngxī Zhōu Yóukè Fúwù Zhōngxīn; ☎ 823 3333) On the southwest corner of the train station concourse.

**Sleeping**

**Báiyún Bīnguǎn** (白云宾馆; ☎ 873 0168; 8 Renmin Beilu; 人民北路8号; d/ste Y188/388; ☎) This four-storey hotel is handily located a short walk

south of the train station. Rooms are smart with wood flooring and clean, bright shower rooms, but there's no lift.

**Getting There & Away**

Jìshǒu's **train station** (☎ 214 0710) has connections to numerous destinations, including Huáihuà (hard seat Y17), Chángshā (hard seat Y82), Zhāngjiājiè (hard seat Y22), Yíchāng (hard seat Y31) and Xiāngfán (hard seat Y41).

Buses to Dēhāng (Y6, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes from 6.40am to 7pm) depart from in front of the train station; buses to Fènghuáng (Y12, one hour, every 20 minutes) leave from the **long-distance bus station** (☎ 137 879 035 58) on Wuling Donglu.

**DÉHĀNG** 德夯

In a seductive riverine setting overlooked by towering, other-worldly karst peaks, the Miao hamlet of **Dēhāng** (admission Y60) to the northwest of Jìshǒu in western Húnán province offers a tantalising spectrum of treks into picturesque countryside. Rising into columns, splinters and huge foreheads of stone, the local karst geology climbs over verdant valleys layered with terraced fields and flushed by clear streams. Side-stepping the bovine traffic and the occasional cowpat could be the only thing distracting your eyes from the gorgeous scenery.

The village itself has been partially dolled up for domestic tourism, but on its fringes the feeling survives of a pleasant riverside minority Miao village where wood-constructed and highly affordable hotels turn Dēhāng into an inexpensive and alluring retreat. Avoid the inauthentic, tourist-crowd-oriented Dēhāng Miáozhài (德夯苗寨) hub where evening shows are staged, and keep to the narrow lanes and riverside views of the old village leading to the arched **Jielong Bridge** (接龙桥; Jiélong Qiáo), where old folk decked out in blue-clothed Miao outfits and bamboo baskets cluster and cows and water buffalo wander quietly around chewing the cud. Occasional Maoist slogans from the Cultural Revolution make an appearance, old men thread together baskets from strips of bamboo and Miao weavers sit hunched over mills, creating colourful cloth for attractive cotton jackets (Y80).

**Walks**

Surplus to its charming village views, Dēhāng is itself located within a huge 164-sq-km

geological park where some delightful treks thread into the hills. Try to time your walks for the early morning or late afternoon, when visitor numbers are down. The beautiful **Nine Dragon Stream Scenic Area** (九龙溪景区; Jiǔlóngxī Jīngqū) winds along a stream out of the village, past Miao peasants labouring in the terraced fields, over a wooden bridge, alongside fields croaking with toads and into an astonishing landscape of peaks blotched with green and valleys carpeted with lush fields. The **Nine Dragon Waterfall** (admission Y10) is so-so, but continue to the end of the trail for the stunning **Liusha Waterfall** (Liusha Pubu; admission free) which descends in fronds of spray onto rocks above a green pool at its foot. The waterfall is particularly impressive after the rain. Climb the steps behind the waterfall for stirring views through the curtains of water. The return walk to the Liusha Waterfall takes about two hours.

Cross the bridge over the river to visit the 2.6km-long **Yuquanxi Scenic Area** (玉泉溪景区; Yùquánxī Jīngqū), where you follow a path along a valley by the Yuquan Stream, past haystacks (consisting of stout wooden poles sunk into the ground onto which are tossed clumps of hay) and gorgeous belts of layered terraced fields. Walk along the valley for a good 1.5km before the path ducks into a small gorge where you will cross the river at several points and continue on into a thick profusion of green. Cross the **Jade Fountain Gate** (玉泉门; Yùquán Mén) and follow the path to the waterfall which spills down in a single thread of water. If you have the energy, climb the steps up to the **Tianwen Platform** (天问台; Tiānwèn Tái), where fabulous views span out through the gorge above the waterfall and a few simple Miao homesteads find a perch. Note how a whole new series of terraced slopes commence at this altitude.

Another pleasant walk can be made by crossing the river over Jielong Bridge and climbing up the stone-flagged steps through the bamboo for views over the village.

### Sleeping & Eating

Several simple inns (客栈; kèzhàn) can be found in the village, overlooking the square, stuffed down alleyways or picturesquely suspended over the river. Travellers aiming for more midrange comfort can stay overnight in Jíshǒu (p511).

**Jielongqiao Inn** (接龙桥客栈; Jiēlóngqiáo Kèzhàn; ☎ 135 174 309 15; s/tw Y30/40) This small, all-wood inn has a handful of singles and doubles (one of which still reeked of drying varnish) suspended above the river next to the Jielong Bridge. It's inauthentic and sticks out like a sore thumb, but the positioning is excellent and the clean, comfortable rooms come with fan, TV and water bottle. Shower and toilet are communal, down in the damp basement.

**Fengyuqiao Inn** (风雨桥客栈; Fēngyǔqiáo Kèzhàn; ☎ 135 743 090 26; dm/d Y20/40) Another riverside alternative, over the bridge from the square and at the start of the Yuquanxi Scenic Area trail.

Most inns around the village have small restaurants serving local dishes, and hawkers proffer skewers of grilled fish (*táohuāyú*; Y1) and crab kebabs (Y10) to travellers from the square and surrounding alleys. Round off snacking with Miao hand-rolled cigars (Y3).

### Getting There & Away

The best way to reach Dēhāng is to travel via Jíshǒu, a railway town to the south of the village. Regular buses to Dēhāng (Y6, 50 minutes) leave from outside Jíshǒu's train station, arriving at and departing (every 20 minutes) from the square/parking lot in Dēhāng.

## FÈNGHUÁNG 凤凰

☎ 0743

In a round-the-clock siege from Chinese tourists – the Taiping of the modern age – this fascinating riverside town of ancient city walls and gate towers, houses on stilts overlooking the river and hoary temples dotted about the old town can easily fill a couple of days. Home to a lively population of the Miao (苗) and Tujia (土家) minorities, Fènghuáng's architectural legacy shows distressing signs of neglect, so get to see it before it crumbles away under a combined onslaught of disrepair and over-development aimed at luring marauding tour groups.

### Orientation

Fènghuáng's old town (凤凰古城; Fènghuáng Gǔchéng) lies on either side of the Tuo River (Tuó Jiāng). The southernmost section of the old town is largely bounded by Jianshe Lu and Nanhua Lu but also extends along Huilong Ge, in the east by the river; the northern part of town is framed by the long curve of Jiang-



### INFORMATION

Dianxin Internet Café  
电信网吧 ..... 1 B3  
Tourism Administrative Bureau of Fènghuáng 凤凰旅游中心 ..... 2 B3  
Zhongxi Pharmacy  
中西药店 ..... 3 A3

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Chaoyang Temple 朝阳宫 ..... 4 B2  
City Walls 城墙 ..... 5 C2  
Confucian Temple 文庙 ..... 6 B2  
East Gate Tower 东门城楼 ..... 7 C2  
East Pass Gate ..... (see 23)  
Fènghuáng Bridge  
凤凰大桥 ..... 8 B1  
Former Home of Shen Congwen  
沈从文故居 ..... 9 B3

### Former Home of Xiong Xiling

熊希龄故居 ..... 10 B2  
Fucheng Gate ..... 11 B3  
Heavenly King Temple  
天王庙 ..... 12 C3  
Hong Qiao Bridge 虹桥 ..... 13 C2  
Jiangxin Buddhist Temple ..... 14 C3  
North Gate Tower 北门城楼 ..... 15 B2  
Queen of Heaven Temple  
天后宫 ..... 16 C3

Stepping Stones 跳岩 ..... 17 B2  
Tian Family Ancestral Temple  
田家祠堂 ..... 18 C2  
East Pass Gate ..... 19 D3  
Wanshou Temple 万寿宫 ..... 20 D2  
Wooden Foot Bridge 木头桥 ..... 21 B2  
Yang Family Ancestral Hall  
杨家祠堂 ..... 22 C2

### SLEEPING

Fènghuáng International Youth Hostel 凤凰国际青年旅馆 ..... 23 D2  
Hóngqiáo Biān Kèzhàn  
虹桥边客栈 ..... 24 C2  
Yǒnghóng Kèzhàn 永红客栈 ..... 25 C2

### EATING

Lóuwàilóu 楼外楼 ..... 26 D2  
Nomad Bar 流浪者酒吧 ..... 27 D2

### TRANSPORT

Bike Rental Shop 租自行车店 ..... 28 D2  
Bus Station 汽车站 ..... 29 A2  
Minsuyuan Bus Station  
民俗园停车场 ..... 30 D1

bei Zhonglu. Both sections are connected by an assortment of bridges: the covered Hong Qiao Bridge, a vehicular bridge, a wooden footbridge and twin rows of stepping stones (跳岩; tiàoyán).

### Information

Note that no banks can exchange foreign currency in Fènghuáng, so change money

before you arrive. The nearest bank that can exchange money is in Jíshǒu.

**Dianxin Internet Café** (Diànxīn Wǎngbā; Wenhua Lu; per hr Y2; ☎ 8am-midnight) Just south of Fucheng Gate.

**Tourism Administrative Bureau of Fènghuáng** (☎ 322 9364; cnr Daomen Kou & Wenxing Jie) It's alongside Culture Square.

**Zhongxi Pharmacy** (Zhōngxī Yàodiàn; Nanhua Lu, near cnr with Jianshe Lu; ☎ 8am-10pm)

## Sights & Activities

Strolling willy-nilly is the best way to see Fènghuáng. Many of the back alleys in the old town maintain an intriguing charm, a treasure trove of old family pharmacists, traditional shops, temples, ancestral halls and crumbling dwellings. Restored fragments of the city wall lie along the south bank of the Tuo River in the old town and a few dilapidated chunks survive elsewhere.

Strips of riverweed hang out to dry and cured meats (including flat pig's faces!) swing from shopfronts. Elsewhere platters of garlic, peanuts and fish are left out to dry. You can buy virtually anything from the clutter of tourist shops and stalls, from crossbows to walking sticks, wooden combs, embroidered Miao clothes and silver jewellery from rather sad-looking Miao hawkers.

Several sights can only be visited if you buy the through ticket (Y98), which includes entrance to the Yang Family Ancestral Hall, the Former Home of Shen Congwen, the Former Home of Xiong Xiling, a boat ride along the Tuo River, the East Gate Tower and a few other sights. If you don't want to fork out for this, you can still see much of Fènghuáng for free and you can take a boat trip along the river for Y30 from the North Gate Tower (atmospheric night trips included). Sights are generally all open from 8am to 5.30pm.

Wander along Fènghuáng's restored salmon-coloured **city wall** (chéngqiáng) with its defensive aspect along the southern bank of the Tuo River. Halfway along its length, the **North Gate Tower** (Běimén Chénglóu) is in a tragic state of neglect, scratched with names and downtrodden, but it remains a magnificent structure. While perusing this area, look up at the distinctive roof ridges on buildings above – many adorned with carvings of creatures and fish – which are far better preserved than much at ground level.

Further along the wall you will come to the **Yang Family Ancestral Hall** (Yáng Jiā Cítáng), its exterior still decorated with Maoist slogans from the Cultural Revolution.

To the east is the **East Gate Tower** (Dōngmén Chénglóu), a Qing-dynasty twin-eaved tower dating from 1715. Spanning the river is the magnificent covered **Hong Bridge** (Hóng Qiáo; admission free), from the east of which runs Huilong Ge, a narrow alley of shops, hotels, restaurants and the small Jiangxin Buddhist Temple (江心禪寺; Jiāngxīn Chánsì). A welcome respite from

the crowds and good views over town await at the **Heavenly King Temple** (Tiānwáng Miào), up a steep flight of steps off Jianshe Lu.

Off Dongzheng Jie is Fènghuáng's simple **Queen of Heaven Temple** (Tiānhòu Gōng; admission free), dedicated to the paragon deity of seafarers. One of several former residences in town, the **Former Home of Shen Congwen** (Shěn Cóngwén Gǔjū) is where the famous modern novelist was born and bred (the author's tomb can also be found in the east of town). Other significant buildings in the southern part of the old town include the 18th-century walled **Confucian Temple** (Wén Miào; Wenxing Jie), the twin roofs of its Dacheng Hall rising up almost claw-like; and the **Chaoyang Temple** (Chāoyáng Gōng; 41 Wenxing Jie; admission Y15), home to an ancient theatrical stage and a main hall.

Excellent views of Fènghuáng's riverside buildings on stilts can be had from the north side of the river. Crossing the river over the stepping stones or the wooden footbridge brings you to Laoying Shao, a street of bars, cafés and inns overlooking the river. The **Tian Family Ancestral Temple** (Tiān Jiā Cítáng; Laoying Shao; admission Y10) is a portrait of Fènghuáng in neglect: overgrown with weeds and in a very sorry state. Further along, **Wanshou Temple** (Wànshòu Gōng; admission Y50) is not far from the distinctive **Wanming Pagoda** (Wǎnmíng Tǎ; admission free), erected right on the riverbank.

After sundown, merry tourists gather at the stepping stones across the Tuo River by the North Gate Tower to send flotillas of lighted candles downstream aboard paper flowers. They travel a short distance before either setting fire to their combustible vessels or being doused by the river water.

The **Southern Great Wall** (Nánfāng Chángchéng; admission Y45), a Ming-dynasty construction 13km outside town, can be reached by bus from Fènghuáng, but it doesn't compare with the bastion that fortified north China. Also outside town is **Huangsi Bridge Old Town** (黃絲橋古城; Huángsī Qiáo Gùchéng; admission Y20), a village similar in character to Fènghuáng.

## Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

Inns (客棧; kèzhàn) can be found everywhere in Fènghuáng and provide a cheap and atmospheric means of sampling the village's pleasant nocturnal mien. Note that most inns are quite rudimentary, coming with squat toilets, but are comfortable enough. Prices listed are for the slack season; during the peak holiday season rates can double or even triple.

**Fenghuang International Youth Hostel** (Fènghuáng Guóji Qīngnián Lǚquán; ☎ 326 0546; 11 Shawan; 沙湾11号; dm/d Y15/50) Well located on the north side of the Tuo River, next to East Pass Gate and not far from the Wanshou Temple, with adequate six- and eight-bed dorm rooms. Air-con is Y20 extra.

**Hóngqiáo Biān Kèzhàn** (☎ 322 9609; 1 Huilong Ge; 回龙阁1号; d Y60) Clean double rooms (only four rooms in all) with shower and water heater and a romantic position overlooking the river and Hong Bridge. If it's full, try one of the other inns along this road.

**Yǒnghóng Kèzhàn** (☎ 135 743 064 53; 37 Laoying Shao; 老营哨37号; d Y60) Tidy doubles with balcony and shower, and superb river views; there's a downstairs restaurant.

**Lóuwǎilòu** (☎ 350 2498; 3 Huilong Ge; 回龙阁3号) Alongside the Hóngqiáo Biān Kèzhàn, this restaurant overlooking the river combines fish dishes with great views.

Be on the lookout for street vendors selling a cornucopia of snacks, from crab, fish or potato kebabs and snails to cooling bowls of *liángjēn* (bean-starch jelly); also look for shops selling Miao wines and spirits, and the locally favoured ginger sweets (*jiāngtáng*).

Laoying Shao, a long and narrow street running along the north side of the river, is full of small, rather samey, bars with river views. Other bars can be found along Huilong Ge on the other side of the river, including the **Nomad Bar** (Liúlangzhè Jiǔbā; ☎ 322 8924; 7 Huilong Ge).

## Getting There & Away

Regular buses to and from Jishou (Y12, one hour) depart from and arrive at the **bus station** (qìchē zhàn; Juyuan Lu) in the new part of town. Buses to Huáihuà (Y25, two hours, every 20 minutes) depart from the **Minsuyuan bus station** (Mínsuýuán Tíngchēchǎng; Jiangbei Donglu) in the north of town.

## Getting Around

Taxis start at Y2. Bikes (Y20, deposit Y200) can be rented from the shop on Hongqiao Lu and at other outlets, but there is little need to pedal about town.

## WǔLÍNGYUÁN & ZhāNGJIĀJIÈ

### 武陵源、张家界

☎ 0744

Rising sublimely from the misty subtropical forest of northwest Húnán are 243 peaks surrounded by over 3000 karst upthrusts, a con-

centration not seen elsewhere in the world. The picture is completed by waterfalls, limestone caves (including Asia's largest chamber) and rivers suitable for organised rafting trips. Nearly two dozen rare species of flora and fauna call the region home and botanists delight in the 3000-odd plant species within the park. Even amateur wildlife spotters may get a gander at a clouded leopard or a pangolin.

Known as the **Wulingyuan Scenic Area** (Wǔlíngyuán Fēngjǐngqū; www.zhangjiajie.com.cn), the region encompasses the localities of Zhāngjiājiè, Tiānzīshān and Suǒxiyù. Zhāngjiājiè is the best known, and many Chinese refer to this area by that name. Recognised by Unesco in 1990 as a World Heritage Site, Wǔlíngyuán is home to three minority peoples: Tujia, Miao and Bai.

Several towns give access to Wǔlíngyuán, but the most popular ones are Zhangjiajie city (Zhāngjiājiè shì) and Zhangjiajie village (Zhāngjiājiè cūn). The city is near the railway line, while the village is situated nearly 600m above sea level in the Wǔlíng foothills, surrounded by sheer cliffs and vertical rock outcrops.

A staggering fee of Y245 (students Y165), good for two days with extension, plus an insurance fee of Y3, must be paid at the Zhāngjiājiè forest reserve's main entrance just past the village. Admission to other sights within the park can be additional. Chinese maps showing walking trails (only some of them with sites marked in English) are on sale in Zhangjiajie city and village.

## Information

Take money with you as the Agricultural Bank of China in Zhangjiajie village does not change money.

**Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; 1 Xinmatou Jie, Zhāngjiājiè City) Currency exchange.

**Chenlin Internet Cafe** (晨琳网吧; Chénlín Wǎngbā; per hr Y2; ☎ 8am-6am) It's 150m north of the Mínsu Shānzhuāng in Zhangjiajie village.

**Forest Park First Aid Centre** (☎ 571 8819)

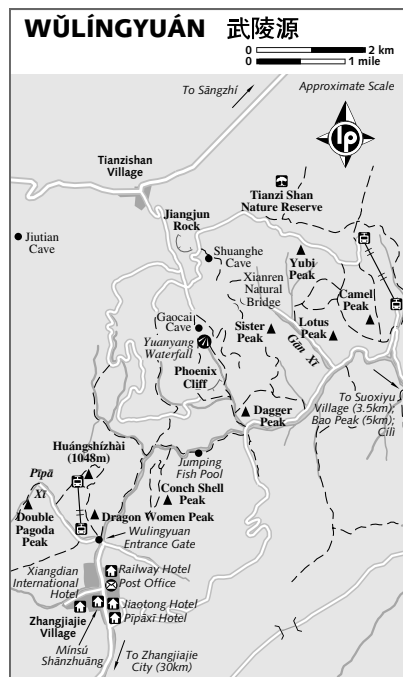
**Post office** (邮局; yóujú) Almost next door to Chenlin Internet Cafe in Zhangjiajie village.

**Zhangjiajie CITS** (www.zjtrip.net)

## Sights & Activities

The highest area closest to Zhangjiajie village is **Huángshízhài** (黄石寨), and at 1048m it's a two-hour hike up 3878 stone steps (cable car up/down Y52/42).





In the northern section of the reserve, **Tianzi Peak** (天子山; Tianzi Shan) is another popular expedition, also serviced by cable car (up/down Y48/38). As is the custom, every rock, crag and gully has been given a fanciful name.

Organised tours to the park and **Jiutian Cave** (九天洞; Jiutian Dong; admission Y64) often include a **rafting trip** (piāolǚ), or you can join a tour and just do the rafting trip. While good white-water rafting trips are possible northwest of Zhāngjiājiè near the Húběi border, you'll have to make special arrangements for the equipment and transport.

Most rivers are pretty tame, so don't expect great thrills, but the scenery is fantastic. The actual rafting usually lasts about two hours, with about the same amount of time taken up in travel to the launch area.

You can join tours or arrange your own through hotels in Zhāngjiājiè or at a travel agency in Zhāngjiājiè city. The Dongsheng Travel Agency (东升旅行社; Dongsheng Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 828 6258; 36 Jiefang Lu) offers good rates (Y180 to Y250 per person) for group tours. CITS (中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 822

7111; 37 Jiefang Lu) has English speakers and offers rafting tours from Y300 per person.

### Sleeping

Try to stay in Zhangjiajie village, where rooms are cheaper and the scenery more pleasant, unless you miss the last bus, in which case you can find a few budget-range places near the bus station.

### ZHANGJIAJIE TOWN

**Dragon International Hotel** (祥龙国际酒店; Xiānglóng Guójí Jiùdiàn; ☎ 822 6888; fax 822 2935; 46 Jiefang Lu; 解放路46号; tw in older/newer wing Y660/880, plus 15% service charge; 🍷) Self-proclaimed four-star establishment with serviceable rooms.

### ZHANGJIAJIE VILLAGE

Most places here accept foreigners; some travellers have also stayed with local families within the park, but don't expect it. For those hiking overnight, there are places to stay inside the park along the popular trail routes. Local visitors often do a two- to three-day circuit hike, going in at Zhangjiajie village and hiking or busing it to villages within the park boundaries such as Tiānzishān and Suǒxiyù, which each have a bewildering choice of hotels and hostels. All of the following hotels are on the main road.

**Railway Hotel** (铁路宾馆; Tiělù Bīnguǎn; ☎ 571 2272; fax 571 2271; d Y150) This place opposite the Zhangjiajie Hotel has OK, simple rooms that can be garnered for Y80 during slack periods.

**Mínsú Shānzhūāng** (民俗山庄; ☎ 571 9188; fax 571 2516; s/d/tr Y180/288/388; 🍷) Some rooms have balconies at this two-star option but generally things are dirty and tacky with old and worn furnishings and dodgy hygiene. Triples come with bath and doubles with shower.

**Jiaotong Hotel** (交通宾馆; Jiāotōng Bīnguǎn; ☎ 571 8188; s/d Y258/268) Quietly parked away in a courtyard car park north of the Pipaxi Hotel, this place has cleanish rooms and good discounts that bring singles down to Y120.

**Pipaxi Hotel** (琵琶溪宾馆; Pípáxī Bīnguǎn; ☎ 571 8888; www.pipaxi-hotel.com; d Y548-648) Well worth it as it's tucked away quietly out of the action. Standard rooms are bright and clean with good bathrooms and balcony; VIP rooms are lovely and large. Redecorated in 2004; 20% discounts are the norm.

**Xiangdian International Hotel** (湘电国际大酒店; Xiāngdiàn Guójí Jiùdiàn; ☎ 571 2999; www.xiangdian

hotel.com; s/d Y680/680) Self-billed as a four star hotel, but in reality we are talking a star lower at this acceptable hotel benefiting from professional service, a pleasing location and pleasant water and rock features, decent rooms, a bowling centre and health centre. There are 30% discounts frequently on offer.

### Eating

Simple eating houses are scattered around the village.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

**Zhangjiajie Airport** (☎ 825 3177) is 4km southwest of Zhāngjiājiè city and 40km from the park entrance; a taxi should cost around Y100 to the park. More and more flights link Zhāngjiājiè city with the rest of China, but prepare for frequent cancellations. Daily flights include a growing number of cities, including Běijīng (Y1340), Shànghǎi (Y1330), Guǎngzhōu (Y860), Chóngqīng (Y580), Chángshā (Y580) and Xī'an (Y690).

### BUS & MINIBUS

Minibuses to Zhāngjiājiè village (Y8, 40 minutes) pick up passengers at the car park in front of the train station, but they may not leave till full; otherwise, take bus 2 to the **long-distance bus station** (☎ 822 2417; 回龙路; Huilong Lu), where buses leave every 15 minutes to Zhāngjiājiè village (Y8). Buses to Tiānzishān (Y10, every hour) also leave from here, as do buses to Chángshā (Y120, 11 hours, twice daily), Fènghuáng (Y47, four hours, 8.30am and 2.30pm), Jǐshǒu (YY44, 2½ hours, every hour), Yuèyáng (Y89, seven hours, 8.20am), Wūhàn (Y151, 5.30pm), and Shànghǎi (Y435, 20 hours, 10.30am) via Héféi and Nánjīng.

### TRAIN

The train station is 8km southeast of the city; buy tickets well in advance of travel. Trains run to Chángshā (hard seat Y71, eight hours, twice daily), Běijīng (Y194, 27 hours, daily) and Guǎngzhōu (Y174, 23 hours, twice daily). Trains also run to Yíchāng, Jǐshǒu (hard seat Y22) and Huáihuà (hard seat Y15 to Y37, four to 5½ hours).

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