

Town & Country

TRAVEL

FALL 2008

THE
OTHER
CHINA

PLUS
COPENHAGEN
DESIGNER
FOR LIVING

NEW YORK
HUDSON
RIVER VALLEY
REVIVAL

ACCESSIBLE
EASTER ISLAND



Native Intelligence

WHEN TO GO

Yunnan has four distinct seasons, but even in summer, temperatures can be colder (and it can be much wetter) than you'd expect. I went in early autumn, just as the trees were changing from green to red. Days ranged from the 50s to the upper 60s, and each morning, there was frost on the bushes.

GETTING THERE

You need a visa to enter any part of mainland China; just as critical is a guide. Far outside the big cities of Beijing and Shanghai, no signs are in English. I chose to have everything, from my internal flights and private audiences with high-ranking monks to lunches in farmers' homes, arranged by **Remote Lands** (from \$1,000 per person a day, all inclusive; 646-415-8092; remotelands.com), a luxury outfitter that specializes in custom journeys throughout

Asia. The owner, Catherine Heald, is so connected that she and her team can handle pretty much anything you require: a private plane from Shanghai to Lijiang; an English-speaking babysitter in Shangri-La; a vegetarian dinner in a housewife's garden.

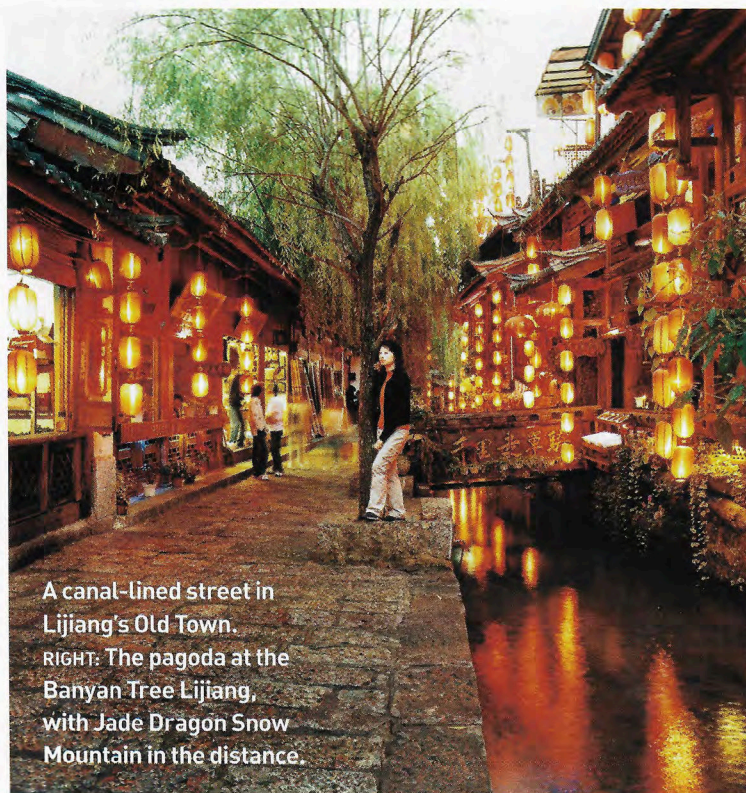
WHERE TO STAY

Banyan Tree Lijiang To enter this nineteen-acre retreat, which resembles a Naxi village, you must first cross a bridge over a koi pond and pass through a stone and wood archway framing a three-tiered pagoda. In the distance, white-capped Jade Dragon Snow Mountain marks the southernmost section of the Himalayas, but here it's warm enough to loll in an outdoor hot tub or plunge pool, order room service in your walled compound (each of the fifty-five villas is a modern remake of a Naxi courtyard

house) and even sleep with the sliding doors open. Pains have been taken to adhere to the local vernacular, so every tree and tile and silk throw is a reminder that you're in Yunnan, at a southern stop along the legendary Silk Road. *Villas from \$600. Yuerong Rd., Shuhe, Gucheng District, Lijiang; 011-86-888-533-1111; banyantree.com/lijiang.*

Banyan Tree Ringha When is a hotel in the middle of nowhere—with staffers who barely speak English and no amenities beyond a simple restaurant, a teahouse and a five-room spa—flawless? When it's the Banyan Tree Ringha, down a paved road three miles from Shangri-La. The thirty-two suites and lodges at the retreat are actually in a handful of Tibetan farmhouses that were slavishly taken apart and reconstructed on-site. Each has teak floors and a central firepit,

several daybeds for lounging around and an expansive courtyard overlooking a narrow river or an alpine valley. The one-bedroom Spa Suites come with 540-square-foot bathrooms whose handmade wooden tubs could fit at least five four-year-olds. The little extras are what really won me over: the silk scarf draped around your neck at check-in; Elemis toiletries presented in a beautiful linen bag (I swiped mine, shhh); a traditional Tibetan robe to wear when the mercury drops (it's quite a sight when every guest turns up at dinner in the same red and black dressing gown); free Internet access; and a telescope in the lobby. *Suites from \$450. Spa Suites from \$800, lodges from \$935. Hong Po Village, Jicang Tang Town, Shangri-La County, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture; 011-86-887-828-8822; banyantree.com/ringha. —H.M.*



A canal-lined street in Lijiang's Old Town. **RIGHT:** The pagoda at the Banyan Tree Lijiang, with Jade Dragon Snow Mountain in the distance.

