



Black Dragon Pool and Jade Dragon Mountain

Botanical Histories in the Kingdom of Flowers - Yunnan, southwest China

19 May – 1 June 2026

Extension to Xishuangbanna
1– 4 June 2026



Level 4
ACTIVE





Yuantong Temple and flowers, Kunming

This exciting new tour to one of the most spectacular regions of China has been designed with tour leader and renowned botanist, Professor Tim Entwisle. Yunnan is not only culturally rich but has exceptional botanical diversity.

Known as the Kingdom of Flowers, Yunnan is well named. Its extraordinary floral and botanical diversity stretches from the jungles

of Indochina to the Tibetan massif, with many of the plants we are familiar with in gardens across the world - camellias, azaleas, primroses, magnolias, rhododendrons, poppies, and others - hailing from this region.

It is also a region of great cultural diversity, intersecting with the southern part of the Silk Road and the trail of the tea horse, where once blocks of tea were transported from China to Tibet.

This spectacular region of lakes and mountains is dotted with beautiful old towns, such as Lijiang and Dali, which are rich in culture and history. There is the option to enjoy the lush tropical beauty of Xishuangbanna on a post-tour extension.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 4 | Active



Longer and fuller days. Significant levels of walking, covering longer distances, requiring very good fitness and mobility.

Tour Leader

Professor Tim Entwisle is an author, botanist and former botanic gardens director at three of the world's top botanic gardens.

Tim contributes regularly to Australian radio, print and social media, including a long running series on plant curiosities for Gardening Australia Magazine. For ten years, Tim was a regular on ABC RN's Blueprint for Living, with his seasonal walks through Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria with host Jonathan Green, a listener favourite. He also wrote and co-hosted two summer series of Talking Plants, Australia's first and only national gardening magazine show on radio.



Tim's recently published memoir, 'Evergreen: The Botanical Life of a Plant Punk', describes many of the gardens and countries he visited as a botanic garden director and answers the question of what it takes for a botanic garden to be among the best in the world. His latest book, 'The Sceptical Botanist', takes you deeper inside the mind of an always entertaining and inquiring plant obsessive.

Tim currently chairs the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust in Sydney, after heading up Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria for ten years, following two years in a senior role at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in London, and eight as head of Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust in Sydney. Tim is an Honorary Professorial Fellow at The University of Melbourne with a broad interest in algae, plants and public gardens.



National guide

Zhang Zhong Jiu (known as John) has worked with Jon Baines since 1994, taking a wide variety of professional groups around China. John's breadth of knowledge is second to none.

Educated in Beijing and London and widely travelled, with familial links in Australia, John is extremely knowledgeable and popular with our groups for his ability to bring China's history and society to life with personal anecdotes, and for his sense of humour.

'John accommodates everyone's needs, has very good knowledge of history and a good sense of humour. He speaks excellent English.'

Karen Li Chen, Medicine and Society in China, 4 – 18 April 2025

Itinerary 19 May – 1 June 2026

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

3 nights Kunming – 4 nights Dali – 3 nights Lijiang – 2 nights Shangri-la – 1 night Kunming



Day 1: Kunming (Tue 19, May)

D

Am/Pm: Arrive in Kunming, a relaxed city known as spring city or flower city for its spring-like climate and flower markets, and transfer to the hotel. May is a beautiful time to enjoy the city's parks and botanical gardens, which are in full bloom.

Eve: Local dinner.

Day 2: Kunming (Wed, 20 May)

B D

Biodiversity in the Kingdom of Flowers

Am: Visit Dounan Flower Market, the epicentre of China's flower trade, with over 300 species of 4–6 million flowers sold daily.

Pm: Head to the Stone Forest (Shilin), where unique limestone formations host endemic plants. Return to Kunming.

Eve: Welcome dinner.

Day 3: Kunming (Thurs, 21 May)

B D

Seeds and their Secrets

Am: Visit the Kunming Botanical Garden, which features a wide variety of plant species including an impressive orchid collection. Continue to the Seed Bank. Return via a walk around Green Lake Park, a pleasant environment in the summer with lotus flowers and willow trees.

Pm: Return to the hotel via the Old Street district, which retains the layout of the Ming and Qing dynasties and is home to many protected buildings.

Eve: Visit the Nanqiang Street Night Market for dinner.

Day 4: Kunming / Dali (Fri, 22 May)

B D

The Origins of Tea

Am: Take the train to Dali, situated on the shores Lake Erhai; the second largest highland lake in Yunnan, with clear water and a backdrop of the three Marble Pagodas framed by the Marble Mountains.

Pm: Take a walking tour of Dali. Visit the Xiaguan Tuo Tea Museum and enjoy a traditional tea ceremony with a cup of tea. Transfer to Lake Erhai and take a cruise to see the Three Pagodas.

Day 5: Dali (Sat, 23 May)

B D

In the Land of Rhododendrons

Am: Full day excursion on the west slope of Cangshan Mountain. Visit a mountain 'garden' covering 30sq km, with altitude ranging from 2,600 to 3,900 metres above sea level. The garden includes high rates of biodiversity and exhibits an ecosystem of latifoliate forests, highlighted by at least 20 kinds of rhododendrons, alongside camellias, oaks, wild cherry, maple and banyan trees.

Day 6: Dali (Sun, 24 May)

B L

Ancient Roots - Indigo in China

Am: Learn about the indigo trade and take part in indigo dyeing and tie-dyeing at a traditional indigo workshop.

Pm: Local lunch and at leisure in Dali.

Day 7: Dali (Mon, 25 May)

B D

Sacred Plants

Am: Visit Weibao Mountain, a short drive southeast of Dali. This auspicious mountain is one of the most famous

Taoist mountains in China. Visit the monastery, surrounded by attractive vegetation including the evergreen chiquapin, cypress and camphor and a large camellia tree, dating from the late Ming Dynasty.

Pm: Return to Dali for a local dinner.

Day 8: Dali / Lijiang (Tue, 26 May) B D

Silk Roads, Trade and Diversification

Am: Take a scenic drive past villages and farms to Lijiang.

Pm: Arrive and check in to the hotel. Visit spectacular Jade Dragon Mountain, Black Dragon Pool and the Museum of the Naxi People and explore the old town.

Day 9: Lijiang (Wed, 27 May) B D

Joseph Rock and the Plant Collectors

Am: Visit the Lijiang Alpine Botanical Garden, believed to be the highest botanical garden in the world, built jointly by the Edinburgh Royal Botanical Garden and the Kunming Plant Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Lijiang is one of the world's top ten regions for biodiversity research.

Pm: Return via Yuhu Village on the outskirts of Lijiang at the foot of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Joseph Rock, an Austrian American botanist, lived in this lovely village from 1922. Visit the museum housed in his courtyard home, containing a large number of Rock's photographs, which are among the earliest and most extensive photographic examples of pre-revolutionary Lijiang.

Day 10: Lijiang (Thurs, 28 May) B L D

Cuisine and the Three Sisters; Algae, Lichen and Fungi

Am: With a culinary guide visit Lijiang's oldest market to buy local ingredients before taking part in a cooking class within a dedicated home cooking studio, led by local Naxi instructors. Each person will prepare and eat three dishes.

Pm: Drive back to Lijiang in the late afternoon and at leisure.

Eve: Dinner at a local restaurant. Lijiang is famous for its wild mushrooms and local food can include algae, lichen and fungi.

Visit the water meadows near Lijiang



3 nights Kunming – 4 nights Dali – 3 nights Lijiang – 2 nights Shangri-la – 1 night Kunming

Day 11: Lijiang / Shangri-la (Fri, 29 May)

B D

Trail of the Tea Horse

Am: Drive via dramatic Tiger Leaping Gorge, where the upper Yangtze River flows between the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and Haba Snow Mountain; one of the longest, deepest, and narrowest gorges in the world.

Pm: Continue along the ancient Silk Road trade route, the 'trail of the tea horse,' on which enormous bricks of tea from southern Yunnan were carried over the mountains by pack horse to Tibet. Arrive in Shangri-la, or Zhongdian, **at an altitude of 3,160m**. Visit the old town and Songtsam Monastery, built in 1679 and one of the most important monasteries in north Yunnan. Check in to the hotel.

Day 12: Shangri-la (Sat, 30 May)

B D

National Parks and Botanic Gardens

Am: Visit Pudacuo National Park, China's first national park. Walk along the shores of Shudu Lake and Bita Lake, flanked by ancient oak trees and many species of azaleas.

Pm: At leisure.

Eve: Enjoy dinner in a local Tibetan restaurant.

Day 13: Shangri-la / Kunming (Sun, 31 May)

B D

Am: Fly to Kunming

Pm: At leisure.

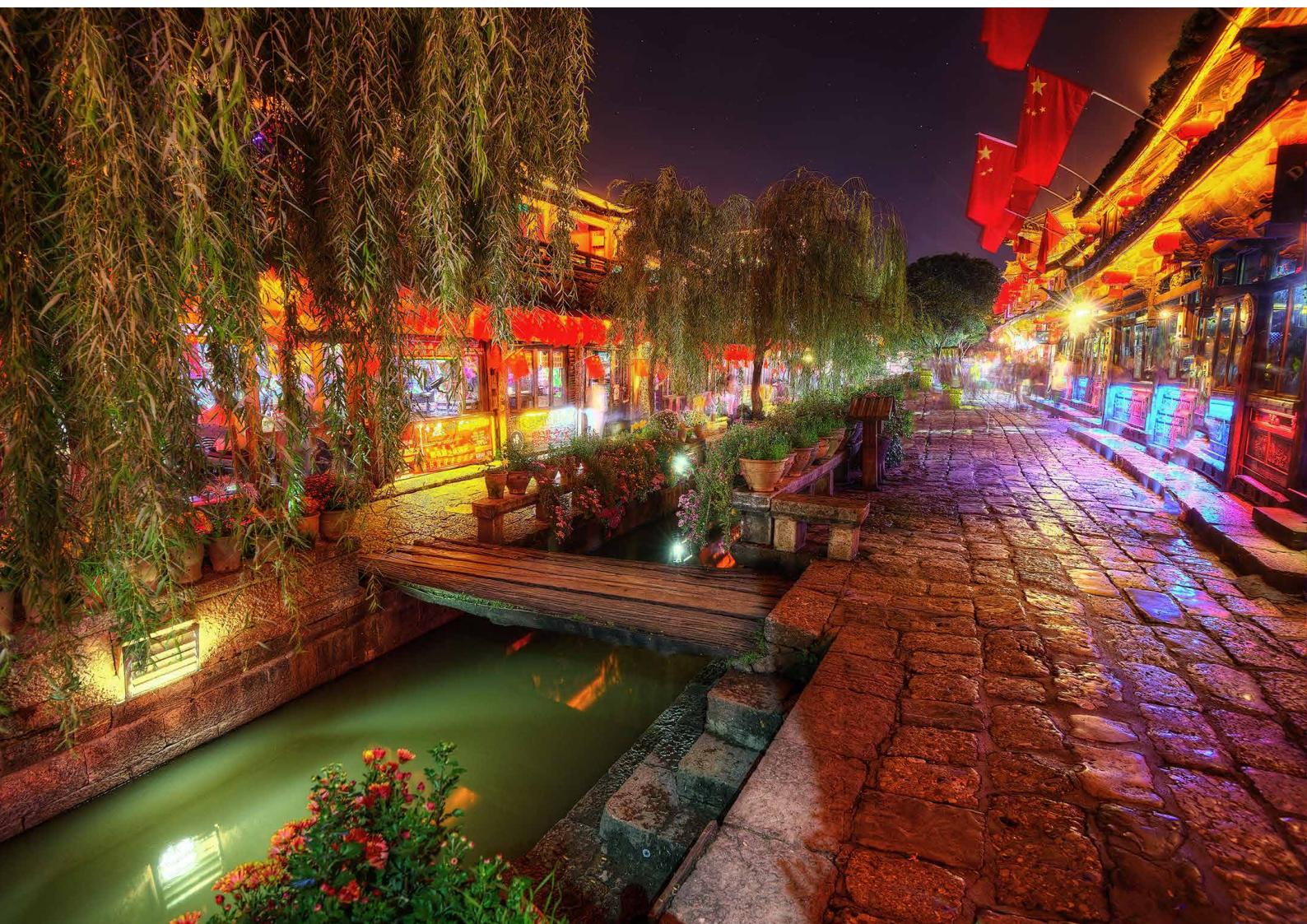
Eve: Farewell dinner

Day 14: Kunming (Mon, 1 June)

B

Am: Depart the hotel after breakfast.

Lijiang by night



Extension to Xishuangbanna

1 – 4 June 2026

Day 14: Kunming / Xishuangbanna B D

(Mon, 1 June)

Am: Depart Kunming by high-speed train to the lush, tropical beauty of Xishuangbanna.

Pm: Arrive and transfer to the hotel. Sometimes shortened to Banna, this is the hometown of the Dai people and 13 other ethnic minorities, all of whom showcase beautiful traditional costumes in bright colours. Its attractions range from ancient temples and gardens to vibrant markets and festivals, as well as Thai-influenced foods such as Dai grilled fish, pineapple rice, spicy rice noodles and many tropical fruits.

Day 15: Xishuangbanna (Tue, 2 June) B L

Am: Explore Xishuangbanna with a local guide, including the beautiful Buddhist Temple, Peacock Garden and Lake.

Pm: At leisure.

Day 16: Xishuangbanna (Wed, 3 June) B D

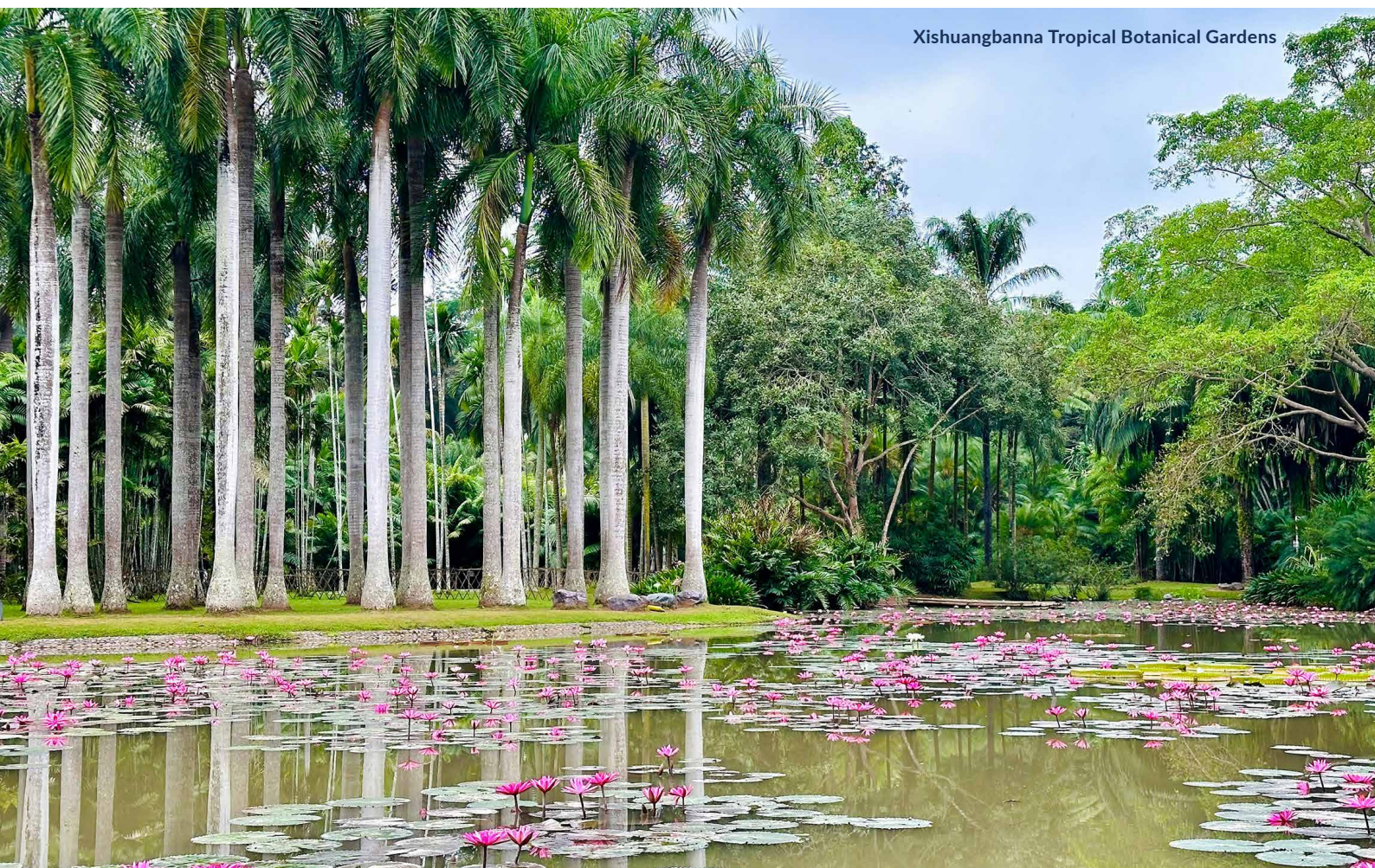
Am: Half day tour of Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden – China's largest botanical garden, containing the nation's richest collection of species.

Pm: At leisure until farewell dinner in the evening.

Day 17: Xishuangbanna (Thurs, 4 June) B

Am: Depart hotel after breakfast. Options to return to Kunming or take the high-speed train to Luang Prabang or Vientiane in Laos. (Please contact us for details. We can purchase and organise onward tickets to Kunming, Luang Prabang or Vientiane and additional accommodation if required.)

All itineraries are subject to change, according to local conditions.



Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Gardens



Lake Erhai Lake in Dali

Hotels

Kunming: Holiday Inn Hotel

A comfortable, modern 4-star hotel with a gym and pool in a central location.

Dali: Iridescent Clouds Hotel

In the very heart of the old city, this hotel's architecture blends contemporary and traditional Chinese styles. The rooms are very spacious and well-equipped, and the hotel compound contains several lovely, themed gardens that create a serene atmosphere as you walk through them. There is a fitness centre and gym.

Lijiang: Lux Hotel

Nestled in the historic old town of Lijiang, the lovely Lux Hotel has spacious and tastefully decorated rooms, featuring traditional Naxi architecture and striking design elements. The service is excellent and the staff very friendly and helpful.



Bai women making indigo batik in Dali

Shangri-la Diqing Resort, Shangri-la

Situated in the centre of the city and facing Dragon Lake, this comfortable resort is a blend of Tibetan and local Yunnan features. The 1000-year-old Dukezong Old Town is only 10 minutes' walk. Facilities include a lovely pool and spa area and various dining options.



Rhododendron in June, Yunnan (top);
Dounan Flower Market, Kunming; Nanqiang
Street Night Market, Kunming (above)

The cost of the tour is €3,868 per person sharing

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is €4,606

The cost includes:

- The services of a tour leader (Dr Tim Entwisle)
- 13 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in medium grade and first-class hotels
- Flight from Shangri-la to Kunming
- Breakfast and lunch or dinner daily on the tour
- An allowance of soft drinks, tea and beer with meals on the tour
- All admission fees
- Services of local botanical guides
- All transport services and taxes in China
- All tips

The cost excludes:

- International flights and airport transfers
- Meals not mentioned
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Travel insurance
- Visa (if required)

The cost of the extension is €1,234 per person sharing

The cost of the extension is €1,472 with a room to yourself

The cost includes:

- Three nights' accommodation in twin-bedded or double rooms with private facilities in medium grade hotels
- High-speed train from Kunming to Xishuangbanna
- Breakfast and lunch or dinner daily
- All admission fees and local guides.

The cost excludes: As main tour, plus tips on the extension.

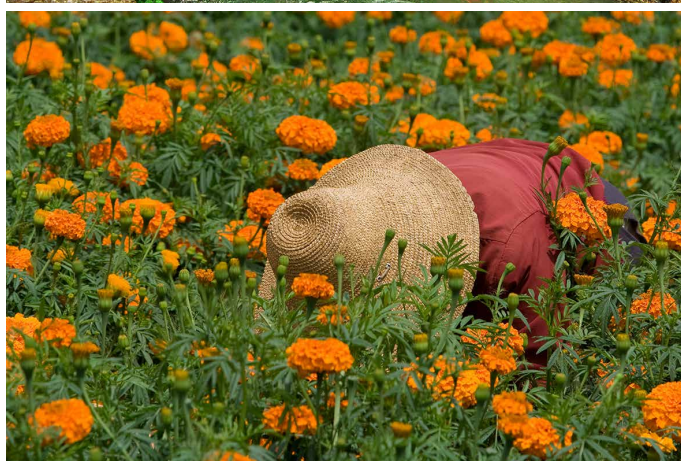
About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Lijiang (top); Harvesting marigolds near Kunming, Yunnan; On the streets in Dali: The Ganden Sumtseling Monastery in Shangri-La



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