



Black Dragon Pool and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang

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

18 May – 31 May 2027

‘Excellent itinerary with a good balance of outdoor
nature locations and culture/craft. Very well paced.
Tim was an outstanding specialist tour leader.’

Lesley King, Botanical Histories of Yunnan, May 2026

CATO
Council of Australian Tour Operators

 **JON BAINES
TOURS**

Level 4
ACTIVE





A slipper orchid (photo: Bernadette Maguire – *Botanical Histories in Yunnan*, 2026)

This exciting tour has been designed with tour leader and renowned botanist, Professor Tim Entwisle, to one of the most spectacular areas of China. This is a repeat of our highly successful inaugural tour in 2026.

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 TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 4 | Active



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

This spectacular region of lakes and mountains is dotted with beautiful old towns, such as Lijiang and Dali. You will come away with a deeper appreciation of this region's rich culture and history, as well as its botanical highlights and stunning landscapes.

Tour Leader

Professor Tim Entwisle, AO 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. 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 memoir, *Evergreen: The Botanical Life of a Plant Punk*, describes many of the gardens 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. *The Sceptical Botanist*, takes you deeper inside the mind of an always entertaining plant obsessive. *Three Worlds Oak*, to be released in 2026, is the first memoir dedicated to a plant genus (*Quercus*) and offers fresh botanical insight, charm, and humour.

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. Tim led the highly successful inaugural *Botanical Histories in Yunnan* tour in 2026.



'Tim is an exceptional tour leader, who wears his knowledge lightly.'

Ian Lennie, *Botanical Histories of Yunnan*, May 2026



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 gave me an insight into this country that has changed my entire perception of China. His care was above and beyond.'

Lorraine Casey, *Botanical Histories of Yunnan*, May 2026

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



Day 1: Kunming (Tue 18, May)

D

Am/Pm: Arrive in Kunming, a relaxed city known for its year-round spring-like climate and flowers, and transfer to the hotel. May is a beautiful time to enjoy the city's parks and botanical gardens as well as the multitudes of flowers that line the roads – jacarandas, roses, salvia, geraniums, and more.

Eve: Local dinner.

Day 2: Kunming (Wed, 19 May)

B D

Biodiversity in the Kingdom of Flowers

Am: Visit Dounan Flower Market, the epicentre of China's flower trade, with 4–6 million flowers from around 300 species 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, 20 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 interactive display.

Pm: Visit the Zeng Xiaolian Gallery of Botanical Art, situated in the 1999 Kunming Horticultural Expo grounds. 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, 21 May)

B D

The Origins of Tea

Am: Take the train to Dali, situated on the shores of 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. Bags transferred by private van.

Pm: See the Three Pagodas, take a walking tour of Dali and ride a cable car up Cangshan Mountain.

Day 5: Dali (Sat, 22 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, 23 May)

B L

Ancient Roots - Indigo in China

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

Pm: Local lunch and at leisure in Dali.

Day 7: Dali (Mon, 24 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 beautiful monastery gardens, 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, 25 May)

B D

Silk Roads, Trade and Diversification

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

Pm: Take part in tea tasting and learn about the distinctive teas of Yunnan at a local tea shop. Visit the Museum of the Naxi People and Black Dragon Pool, which boasts spectacular views of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, and explore the old town. Check in to the hotel before a local dinner.

Day 9: Lijiang (Wed, 26 May)

B D

The Plant Collectors

Am: Visit the field station at Lijiang Alpine Botanical Garden, built jointly by the

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the Kunming Plant Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The field station, not usually accessible to visitors, focuses on biodiversity conservation of rare and endangered plants and endemic groups of the sub-alpine regions. Lijiang is one of the world's top ten regions for biodiversity research.

Pm: Return via charming Baisha Ancient Town with beautiful views of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Visit the Dongba Cultural Centre to try your hand at some Naxi pictographs and see exquisitely fine Naxi embroidery and Dongba paper making. Time at leisure before dinner.

Day 10: Lijiang (Thurs, 27 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.

See Tiger Leaping Gorge



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

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

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

Day 11: Lijiang / Shangri-la (Fri, 28 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. 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, 29 May)

B D

National Parks and Botanic Gardens

Am: Visit Shangri-la Alpine Botanical Gardens, the highest in Yunnan and among the highest globally. Visit Pudacuo National Park, China's first national park, and take a walk alongside a stream in a forest to see local plant species.

Pm: At leisure.

Eve: Enjoy dinner in a local Tibetan restaurant.

Day 13: Shangri-la / Kunming (Sun, 30 May)

B D

Am: Train to Kunming.

Pm: At leisure.

Eve: Farewell dinner

Day 14: Kunming (Mon, 31 May)

B

Am: Depart the hotel after breakfast.

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

Lijiang by night



Flowers of Yunnan



Primula rosea
Rosy Primrose / Photo: Rowena Slater



Sinopodophyllum hexandrum
Himalayan Mayapple / Photo: Rowena Slater



Incarvillea mairei var. *grandiflora*
Hardy Gloxinia / Photo: Jane Dennithorne



Daphne aurantiaca
Photo: Lorraine Casey



Thermopsis barbata
Black Pea / Photo: Tim Entwisle



Rhododendron hippophaeoides
Photo: Tim Entwisle

Taken on *Botanical Histories in Yunnan* tour, May 2026



Lake Erhai Lake in Dali

Hotels

Kunming: Crowne Plaza City Centre IHG

A comfortable, modern 4-star hotel with a gym and pool in a downtown Kunming, Crowne Plaza is a 10-minute walk from Nanping Street shopping area and Dongfeng Square.

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: InterContinental Lijiang Ancient Town Resort by IHG

Nestled alongside the historic old town of Lijiang, this stunning 5-star hotel has spacious and tastefully decorated rooms dotted within beautiful, expansive grounds, with a picture window featuring a spectacular view of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain from the bar. The service and food are excellent and the staff very friendly and helpful.



A Bai woman preparing indigo in Dali

Shangri-la Diqing Resort, Shangri-la

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



Harvesting marigolds near Kunming, Yunnan (top);
Water meadows near Lijiang;
Nanqiang Street Night Market, Kunming (above)

The cost of the tour is AUD \$6,868 per person sharing

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is AUD \$8,138

The cost includes:

- The services of a tour leader (Professor Tim Entwisle AO)
- 13 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in medium grade and first-class hotels
- Breakfast and lunch or dinner daily
- An allowance of soft drinks, tea and beer with included meals
- All admission fees
- Services of an English-speaking national guide (Zhang Zhong Jiu, known as John)
- 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)

ALTITUDE

Altitude ranges from approximately 1,900 metres above sea level (Kunming) to approximately 3,500 metres above sea level in Shangri-la. The tour ascends at the slow pace recommended by medical advice and oxygen will be available at the higher points, but please consider bringing medication for altitude sickness if you are concerned about symptoms. Please consult your GP if unsure.

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. We also ensure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to.

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Traditional Sani dress in the Stone Forest, Dali (top);
Watering street planting on the road to Dali; Songzanlin Monastery
or 'Little Potala Palace' in Shangri-la (photo by Colleen Chin) (above)



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