



TOUR INFORMATION FOR YUNNAN, CHINA

These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING CHINA: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure and a tourist visa to enter China. This visa must be applied for individually through the Chinese Visa Application Service Centre (CVASC) website which can be reached via www.chinese-embassy.org.uk, or by telephone 0207 842 0960.

There are Chinese Embassies in London (tel: 020 7631 1430), Manchester (tel: 0161 2248672) and Edinburgh (tel: 0131 3164789). Citizens of other nations should contact the nearest Chinese Embassy for entry requirements.

We will send you details on how to apply for a visa when we issue the final invoice. Our ground agent's address should be included as the company or person to visit in China.

When completing your visa application form it is only necessary to put **Beijing, Kunming, Lijiang and Tengchong** as the areas to be visited. Please do not mention any other places we visit on this tour.

Important: As soon as you book on the tour, please email the Sunbird office a colour scan of the passport you intend to use on this tour – the page(s) with your photograph and passport details. These are needed by our ground agent in order to obtain the internal air tickets. It is then very important that you do NOT change your passport or get a new one, otherwise extra costs may be incurred to make any necessary changes.

We recommend that you apply for a visa only within three months of the start of the tour as this is usually valid for entry within 3 months from the date of issue. Please check with your nearest Visa Office for the most up-to-date information.

There are visa service agencies that can provide you with an information pack on how to obtain a visa. They will also process your application for you however they will charge a handling and processing fee. One such company is Trailfinders Visa Service <http://visas.trailfinders.com> (tel: 0207 368 1504) while another, this time based in Manchester, is China Visa Bureau <http://www.chinavisabureau.co.uk> (tel: 0161 870 9048). Paul can personally recommend the latter.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously, you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

CURRENCY: The Chinese currency is called the yuan (CNY) and there are currently just under 8.8 yuan to £1 sterling (March 2018). It is possible to change cash and traveller's cheques at the airport in Beijing. It is often difficult to change traveller's cheques elsewhere however and participants are encouraged to take cash. US dollars, Sterling and Euros are all OK. Foreign credit cards are still not widely accepted in China and ATM machines accepting foreign cards are still rare and should NOT be relied upon.

As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature.

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LANGUAGE: Still rather few people speak English in China, especially in the countryside, where we'll be most of the time. Our Chinese guide will, of course, speak good English.

CLIMATE: The weather in Yunnan in winter can be essentially similar to England at the same time of year, although rain is less likely, it's typically warmer and the sun is stronger. The average daytime temperatures on this tour can range from as low as 2 or 3°C (35-37°F) to possibly as hot as 31°C (88°F). Humidity is usually low and conditions for birding are often ideal.

Temperatures at Lijiang, the highest place that we will visit, can be as low as 2°C (35°F) in the early morning while during the day temperatures here can climb as high as 16°C but probably no higher. There is a small chance of snow here. Temperatures can vary considerably at Gaoligong Shan – dawn temperatures will typically be around 5 or 6°C (41-43°F)(but could drop as low as 2 or 3°C) and are expected to rise to the high teens, low twenties by the early afternoon. Our previous visits at this time of year have experienced daytime temperatures that have peaked at 23°C (73°F).

Tengchong will be warmer than Gaoligong Shan and it can be positively hot at the other places we will stay - Ruili and Yingjiang are both in the lowlands near the Myanmar border. Daytime temperatures at both of these sites are likely to range from 7-28°C (44-82°F) but it can occasionally be hotter (up to 31°C or 88°F). Ruili is very slightly higher and typically very slightly cooler than Yingjiang. There is occasionally some early morning mist over the river in the Ruili area.

We expect that Beijing will be slightly cooler than Lijiang with early morning temperatures hovering around freezing. It can warm up quickly however and might reach 18 or 20°C (64-68°F) by the early afternoon.

Precipitation is rather scarce throughout the tour but is still a distinct possibility and, as mentioned above, this may fall as snow at Lijiang. Precipitation is perhaps most likely in the Gaoligong Mountains.

We recommend that you bring a variety of clothing suitable for hot and cold days and also cater for the possibility of heavy rain. The leader intends to take shorts, long trousers, T-shirts, long-sleeved shirts, a warm sweater, waterproof jacket and waterproof over trousers, gloves and both a sun hat and a warm woollen hat.

ALTITUDE: The areas that we will visit in Beijing, where we essentially start and finish the tour, are at only about 80 metres elevation. However, some of the rest of the tour is operated at modest altitude and the following paragraphs detail, on a day by day basis, the altitudinal changes we will make.

When at higher altitudes we will attempt to limit our activities, will try to avoid excessive up-hill walking and will move at a fairly slow pace. We do not expect anyone to have problems such as headaches and breathlessness due to the altitudinal. **However, participants should note that this is a fairly strenuous tour and a modest amount of fitness will be required.**

On our first full day in China we will fly from Beijing down to Mangshi where we will overnight. Mangshi and Ruili, where we will spend the following two nights, are both at about 800 metres elevation & the birding sites that we'll visit around Ruili vary in altitude from 750 to 1720 metres. Leaving Ruili we'll head to Yingjiang crossing a modest road pass (at 1760 metres) on route.

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Yingjiang is at a similar elevation to Ruili and the birding we will do there will be immediately around the town or at lower elevations (down to perhaps 450 metres) close to the Myanmar border.

Leaving Yingjiang we'll have a relatively short drive to Tengchong. Our hotel there is at about 1700 metres and, when birding near the town, we don't expect to venture any higher than about 2150 metres. We'll spend just one night there before moving on to Baihualing in the Gaoligong Mountains. Our drive to Baihualing will take us over a series of modest road passes, the highest of which is also at about 2400 metres. Our guest house at Baihualing is at 1520 metres and we're likely to bird areas above there, perhaps venturing up as high as 2400 metres. After three nights at Baihualing we'll drive on to Baoshan (1700 metres) where we'll spend one night.

Leaving Baoshan we'll have the longest drive of the tour as we head north to Lijiang. Our hotel in Lijiang is at just over 2400 metres above sea level and, the day that we'll spend birding there, we'll drive to a birding site that is about 350 metres higher (2755 metres). We'll spend much of the day between these two elevations and this will be the highest elevation that we reach anywhere on the tour.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: This is not an easy, relaxing tour. There is a fair amount of travelling and a couple of the days are long and tiring. There is a reasonable amount of walking involved on this tour, although none of it is particularly strenuous. Although we are in mountainous area for much of the tour there will only be a few uphill walks and these will be taken at a gentle pace. We reach altitudes of about 2755 metres near Lijiang (see above). If you have any questions about your ability to take part in any of the walks, please contact the Sunbird office. The tour leader will be happy to discuss this with you.

It is worth noting that sunrise in western Yunnan at this time of year is at about at 07.15 and sunset at around 18.30. On a clear and cloudless day, it is usually sufficiently light to bird watch for 20 minutes either side of these times.

Due to the early morning bird activity in the areas that we visit, we will want to be out in the field early each day. This will often mean being out before 07.00, driving to our first site and having a picnic breakfast there. Throughout most of China, hotel breakfasts are rather poor so instead we will have picnic breakfasts provided for us by our ground agent on a good number of days. These will usually consist of cereal (often muesli or cornflakes), yoghurt, fruit juice, instant noodles, biscuits, muffins, bread with jam or possibly honey, peanuts, sausages and boiled eggs plus tea and coffee and supplemented, where possible, by fruit, chocolate and steamed local bread.

On our first day in China we expect to leave our hotel in Mangshi at about 06.30 and have about a 1 hour drive to our first birding site. We will have snacks before we leave Mangshi and a picnic breakfast in the field after we've done some birding. We expect to also have a picnic lunch at this same birding site before moving one to another site before continuing on to Ruili. We will spend three nights and two full days in and around Ruili. Most of the birding sites are about a 30-minute drive from our town centre hotel and we expect to leave at about 06.15 or 06.30 and will then be out for the rest of the day.

We'll have leave Ruili for Yingjiang – probably as early as 05.30. This means that we should be able to reach the morning's birding site about 1.5 hours later at sunrise. We will spend the morning there before continuing on to Yingjiang where we will spend two nights. We will make another fairly early start, probably at about 05.40, on the day that have around Yingjiang and that particular day could be a long one as there will be an option to return to the hotel late.

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We anticipate taking two vehicles with us that day and there will be an option to return to the hotel earlier for those who wish.

We will have several walks near Yingjiang – the longest one will be no more than about 2.5 kilometres in length and will be almost exclusively on a well-paved, quiet road. Another walk will take us from our vehicle about 700 metres on a forest trail to a bird blind where we expect to stay for two or three hours. That trail is gently undulating and not strenuous.

We'll stay in another nice hotel in Tengchong and expect to leave there at about 06.00 the following morning. We will have a picnic breakfast on route to Baihualing. Most of the birding sites around Baihualing are about a 20 or 30-minute drive from our guest house and we expect to have breakfast there from about 06.30 and to leave after that. We then expect to be out for the rest of the day.

Our birding in the Gaoligong Mountains will start in earnest about a half-four drive above our hotel and we'll aim to be in the field before first light. This will mean leaving at about 07.00 on all three of the mornings that we're there. We will explore a series of old logging tracks that go through the forest above Baihualing. These are often of vehicle width, though several have fallen in to disrepair and are single file in places. One of the trails descends for about two or 2.5 kilometres through an area of fairly open forest from 1630 metres down to about 1500 metres. We will walk back the same way.

Another 2½ or 3 kilometre trail above Baihualing leads from where we will leave our vehicle at about 2075 metres and slowly climbs up to an extensive stand of bamboo at 2350 metres. We will walk back the same way. Neither of these two trails are particularly strenuous, nor is the walk along the driveable but rough section of the road above Baihualing.

We expect it to take us only a couple of hours to drive from Baihualing to our next hotel in Baoshan. Leaving Baoshan we will have a lengthy drive north to Lijiang. We expect this journey to take about seven hours and aim to arrive at this historic city in the early afternoon. We will spend two nights in Lijiang and will leave there early the following morning, probably as early as 06.00, in order to drive to our final birding site in Yunnan. We'll spend the morning searching for White-speckled Laughingthrush at a site about a 45-minute drive from our hotel in Lijiang town and expect to spend most of our time walking along an old, poorly paved, but driveable, quiet road. Our vehicle should be able to catch us up at intervals and, since there is only one road out and it's the same way back, anyone wishing to take a longer break at the vehicle will easily be able to do so. The section of this road that we will walk on is fairly flat and not particularly strenuous though we might walk as much as three miles. We will have a picnic breakfast and lunch there before heading slowly back to the city. We will spend that night back in Lijiang and the following day will go birding close to the city in the morning and early afternoon before taking an evening flight back to Beijing.

Depending on the weather we'll probably either have picnic breakfasts in the leader's room or out in the field before we start our birding. We expect to have picnic lunches almost every day and will compile a checklist of the birds we've seen just before or just after dinner and then retire early to bed (especially when we are making an early start next day).

We will occasionally have more than one vehicle with us and will try to make as many of our birding excursions as possible optional, so that if you find the pace too tiring it is possible to take some time off and relax. Essentially, we aim to provide dawn to dusk birding for those who want it and as many opportunities as possible to opt out for those who wish to pursue other interests or simply relax.

Most days we will have a picnic lunch 'in the field' and only on very quiet, windy or wet days will we return to the hotel for a sit-down lunch in a restaurant.

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The emphasis will be on flexibility and we try to make optional as many of the birding excursions as possible so that anyone who is tired, or who fancies a break, possibly to pursue other interests, can do so. However, we are frequently moving on and it is not always possible to take an entire day off. We will also cater for those who wish to enjoy dawn to dusk birding.

We usually have dinner together in one of the hotel's restaurants at about 19.00 and will have a meeting and log call there or in the hotel bar after that.

LOCAL PEOPLE: Westerners are still something of a novelty in China and Western birdwatchers even more so. China is very safe and almost all local people are very friendly but will often be intrigued by someone peering into a bush with a pair of binoculars and may often stand and watch to see what is going on. In addition, China is a country where some things don't happen quickly. Sometimes even simple operations like buying something from a shop can become convoluted and, by our standards, take a long time. In order to make the trip as easy and enjoyable as possible it is wise to be prepared for these situations. Patience and a sense of humour will be a great asset at such times.

HEALTH: **It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting.** Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

Although we will not see many mosquitoes anywhere on the tour a malaria preventative is recommended and, as there is some resistance to chloroquine and mefloquine most pharmacists now recommend mefloquine, doxycycline or Malarone. Again, you are advised to consult your own doctor.

The Department of Health and Social Security currently recommends inoculations against typhoid and polio. Some doctors also suggest inoculation against Japanese B-encephalitis and tetanus and strongly recommend gammaglobulin against hepatitis. As some of these inoculations cannot be given concurrently you should contact your doctor straight away and obtain advice about when to start your treatment. Biting insects are not numerous although mosquitoes can be present in very small numbers at a number of lowland sites such as Nabang and Ruili. A can of spray repellent should provide adequate protection. We recommend bringing antihistamine if you are sensitive to insect bites.

On some of the forest trails during the early part of the tour we may encounter a very few small terrestrial leeches. These are well known to travellers in Asia and are not harmful. They are found on the forest floor and the best way to prevent them from getting onto your ankles is to spray your boots with insect repellent. Be careful however to ensure that your boots will not be damaged by the chemicals in the repellent, which is mildly corrosive on rubber and some synthetic materials. Canvas and especially suede desert boots are not affected and are ideal for spraying with repellent.

The other widely used technique is to make or buy a pair of 'leech socks'. These are made from material such as densely woven cotton and come above the ankles onto the calf. They should have a drawstring at the top to hold them in place. These can also be sprayed with repellent (which leeches hate) and should guarantee that the little beasts will not get through to bare skin!

Leech socks are available from the Oriental Bird Club sales, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, or visit their website: www.orientalbirdclub.org.

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Tap water is not safe to drink anywhere on the tour. Bottled water and soft drinks are readily available, and hot, boiled water (for coffee or tea) is usually available in all our hotels and guesthouses. We suggest bringing anti-diarrhoea medicine such as Imodium in case of an upset stomach. Be sure to bring adequate supplies of all personal medication, as it may be difficult to obtain them during the trip.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: Our hotels in Mangshi, Ruili and Yingjiang are of a Chinese three or four-star standard. All the rooms are clean and all have 24 hour hot water with western toilets and a shower. We will spend one night in Mangshi, two in Ruili and three nights in Yingjiang and there's wireless internet access in the rooms and in the lobby of all three of our hotels.

After Yingjiang we will spend one night in a large 4- star hotel in Tengchong. Here again it has all the amenities that you would expect from a hotel of this standard such as a bar, a business centre, internet access in the rooms, a gym and a (cold) indoor swimming pool.

Our next overnight will be in a guest house at Baihualing on the edge of the Gaoligong Mountains. We will spend three nights in a new building here and this is the poorest place that we will stay. It is still perfectly acceptable however. All the rooms are clean but simple - each has two beds, 24 hours of electricity, and an ensuite bathroom with hot showers and western toilet. There's also internet access in the rooms and the guest house restaurant is rather simple but the food tasty and in ample supply.

After Baihualing we will spend just one night in a 4-star hotel in Baoshan city. Here all the rooms have ensuite bathrooms with western toilets, showers and 24 hour hot water. There's also internet access in the rooms.

Our final port of call in Yunnan is Lijiang and here we will stay in an excellent 4-star equivalent hotel close to the scenic old town. The hotel has all the amenities that you would expect from a hotel of this standard such as a bar, a business centre, internet access in the rooms, a gym and an indoor swimming pool. There are also facilities for changing money here and, as at the hotel we will use for our last night in Beijing, many of the staff speak English.

Leaving Lijiang, we will fly back to Beijing where we will spend our final night in a good hotel close to the airport. It is of a high standard with ensuite bathrooms, proper restaurants and other facilities that you would normally expect such as gift shops in the lobby and facilities for making international phone calls etc.

LAUNDRY: Laundry facilities are available in our hotels in Yingjiang hotel and Beijing. Our hotels in Ruili and Baihualing do not have organised laundry services but, in the past, we have been able to persuade some of the staff to do laundry for us – for a fee.

ELECTRICITY: The Chinese current is 220 volts, 50 cycles and often both two and three pin sockets are found in the same room. There are occasional problems when trying to use adaptors but the leader has found the Swiss World Travel Adapter to work virtually everywhere. Many hotel bathrooms have 110 and 220 volt sockets for shavers. It is advisable to bring a plug adapter if you intend to take any electrical equipment. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

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FOOD: Chinese cuisine is well known and widely appreciated. Beer, soft drinks and green tea will be served with the food. The Chinese often also drink hard liquor, bai-jiu, with the food. Western brands of alcohol are not always easily obtainable (and where they are available, they are usually expensive), so you may wish to consider bringing your own supply.

Hot water, or a kettle, and often even loose green tea are normally readily available in Chinese hotel rooms and restaurants. Coffee and real tea are still uncommon in China so you may wish to bring your own, plus perhaps some drinking chocolate, cocoa or tea-bags (and powdered milk and sugar, if you like). Some people also take packets of soup, Oxo cubes or other items that only need to be rehydrated with water.

The Chinese way of eating differs from that in the west in that those sitting at the table share selections of different dishes. Food is almost always plentiful. Only a small number of the restaurants that we will visit provide knives and forks. Instead chopsticks, often disposable wooden ones, are used. If you are not used to eating with chopsticks, we suggest you start practising right away or bring your own cutlery.

A variety of Chinese sweets can be bought in some shops in the larger towns that we will visit. They are certainly available in Ruili, Yingjiang, Tengchong and Lijiang. Chocolate is now also fairly widely available, but few other western sweets are so again you may wish to bring a supply of goodies to enliven your diet. In contrast to evening meals typical Chinese breakfasts are disappointingly poor and unappealing to most westerners. They consist mostly of cold dishes – soya milk, steamed dumplings and rice porridge. Consequently, away from the international style hotels in Lijiang, Tengchong and Beijing where a variety of more western style dishes are available, we will have very few hotel breakfasts opting instead to have picnic breakfasts. These will usually consist of items such as cereal (often muesli or cornflakes), yoghurt, fruit juice, instant noodles, biscuits, bread with jam or possibly honey, peanuts, sausages and boiled eggs plus tea and coffee and supplemented, where possible, by fruit, chocolate and steamed local bread. On most days we will also have picnic lunches and unfortunately these will consist of many of these same items.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated.

Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay. As it can get hot and dry, we recommend you bring a large, good quality canteen and keep this topped up.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: As you would expect all the hotels and guest houses that we use now have internet access. We expect this situation to continue, and for the internet speeds to possibly improve, in the future. The hotels that we will stay in at in Mangshi, Ruili, Yingjiang, Tengchong, Baoshan, Lijiang and Beijing all had wireless internet in the rooms with some of them also having access in the lobby and dining room.

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At several of these places internet speed was also quite fast (for a developing country that is). The only place with limited internet access was Baihualing and even there there is internet access – but it was slow and the service was occasionally interrupted. Participants should be aware, however, that internet access is occasionally suspended in China – perhaps because of floods, landslides or political issues. You should also be advised that quite a few foreign websites are actively blocked by the so called ‘Great Firewall of China’ and these include all Google services including Google Earth, gmail and YouTube. Mobile phone coverage is superb over most of China and, while not all foreign mobile operators have agreements with the Chinese carriers, many do. You are advised to contact your mobile phone provider in advance of the trip to confirm this.

FIELD CLOTHING: The following items are recommended basic requirements:

Sun hat	Shorts
Short-sleeved shirts	Light-weight trousers
Long-sleeved shirts	Lightweight waterproof jacket
Light shoes or sandals	Small folding umbrella
Sturdy footwear	Sweater or fleece

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: We suggest you bring the following:

Notebook and pen	Alarm clock
Small rucksack/shoulder bag	Water bottle
Pocket knife with bottle opener	Sun glasses
Torch (with spare batteries)	Sun protection cream
Personal medication	Insect repellent

Optional: Telescope and tripod, camera and memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), and field guide. Telescopes are only useful on a two or three of days on this tour (the days where we’re looking for waterfowl and the likes near Baoshan and Lijiang). Elsewhere they are only really useful for scanning some of the hillsides for raptors.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this.

It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADERS' EQUIPMENT: The leaders will provide the following:

Telescope	Tape recording/playback equipment
Small selection of reference books	Small First-aid kit

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LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain, some birds such as herons and egrets can be obliging photographic subjects but smaller birds can be difficult to photograph. Bring all the memory cards you are likely to need. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution. 'Digiscoping' is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope will not be available for this activity. Please note that this is essentially a birdwatching tour.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: At the start of the tour we will fly from Beijing to Baoshan via Kunming while at the end of the tour we will fly Lijiang back to Beijing. Most of our other journeys will be by a small minibus or coach.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

Many Chinese men, and an increasing number of women, smoke heavily. We will not permit our drivers or locals guides to smoke in our vehicle or in close proximity to the group but we have no control over anyone else and inquisitive strangers may come up to us and smoke nearby. While we can and will ask them not to smoke near us we **cannot** stop them doing so. Moreover, while we will eat most, if not all, of our sit down meals in private dining rooms, very occasionally this is not possible and we might have to eat in the common dining hall where there might be smokers. This does not happen on every tour, or even on every other tour, but it can happen.

None of the hotels that we will stay in have designated non-smoking rooms and the rooms that we stay in might have been previously occupied by a smoker. While the bed linen will certainly be clean, unused cigarette odours in the bed rooms are fairly common. This has never proved to be a serious problem on any of our tours but if you are hyper-sensitive to cigarette smoke it could be.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage.

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Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

SOUVENIRS: There is a wide supply of wood and stone carvings, pottery, laquerware, silk paintings etc. These are widely available, often even in a couple of our hotels such as the ones at Lijiang, Tengchong and in Beijing. The prices are usually fixed, except in small private shops, where you may bargain.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: The leaders will have some books for group use during the event. Books which you may find useful are listed below.

Birds:

China Ornithological Society. *China Bird Reports for 2003, 2004 2005, 2006 & 2007-2008*. China Ornithological Society, Beijing. These attractive, well produced paperback books detailing many of the birds seen in China during a particular year. Copies of these reports starting in 2003 might be available from Paul in China. If you would like to reserve a copy (130 yuan each – currently about £13.00) please contact the Sunbird office in advance of the tour.

Cheng Tso-Hsin. 1987. *A Synopsis of the Avifauna of China*. Science Press. Hamburg. (ISBN 3 490 12518 5) A monumental work on the systematics and distribution of China's birds. It is on sale in Britain for the equally monumental price of £115! It is not recommended to anyone but the most avid book collector. MacKinnon, John & Karen Phillipps. (2000). *A Field Guide to the Birds of China*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Paperback. (ISBN 0198549407). Useful field guide with some fascinating information on ornithology in China.

Meyer de Schauensee, R. (1984). *The Birds of China*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. The plates and descriptions are of limited use but it contains useful notes on ranges, races and habitat preferences for most of China's 1200 or so birds. Previously useful for Chinese endemics but now largely replaced by MacKinnon & Phillips.

Rasmussen, P. C. and Anderton, J. C. (2005) *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide*. Vols. 1 and 2. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D.C. and Barcelona. (ISBN: 8487334679). An excellent and useful field guide that, although doesn't specifically covers any part of China, does included a number of the species we expect to encounter on this tour.

Robson, Craig. (2011). *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. 2nd edition. New Holland, London. (ISBN-13: 9781780090498). An excellent and very useful field guide that, although doesn't specifically covers any part of China, does included the majority of species we expect to encounter on this tour. **Recommended**.

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Mammals:

Sheng Helin *et al.* (1999). *The Mammalian of China*. China Forestry Publishing House. (ISBN 7-5038-2072-1). A rather poor field guide with photographs, maps and limited English text on a number of the mammals we are likely to encounter. Now largely replaced by Smith & Xie (2008) – see below.

Smith, A. and Xie, Y. (2008) *A Guide to the Mammals of China*. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford. (ISBN 978-0-691-09984-2). A ground breaking, well-illustrated and informative guide that covers all the mammals of China - but bulky and currently only available in hard back.

Francis, C., M. (2008). *A Field Guide to the Mammals of South East Asia*. New Holland. (ISBN-13: 9781845377359). The first comprehensive guide to the mammals of South-east Asia this book doesn't specifically cover the areas in South-west China that we'll be visiting but, because it includes all the mammals from Myanmar through Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia and south to Malaysia almost everything that we will see can be found in this excellent book.

GENERAL TRAVEL GUIDES:

Harper, D. et al. (2007). *Lonely Planet: China's Southwest*. Lonely Planet, Melbourne. Another very useful guide book from the Lonely Planet team.

VIDEOS:

Wild China. (2008). BBC. Co-produced by the BBC and China's CCTV this two DVD set running for 350 minutes is beautifully filmed and soothingly narrated. *Wild China* takes an in-depth look at the fourth largest country in the world, delving into its vibrant habitats to reveal a land of unbelievable natural complexity. Programme 2 'Shangri-La' focuses on Yunnan.

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.orientalbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour.