

PANORAMIC CHINA

# YUNNAN

## “Shangri-La” over the Horizon

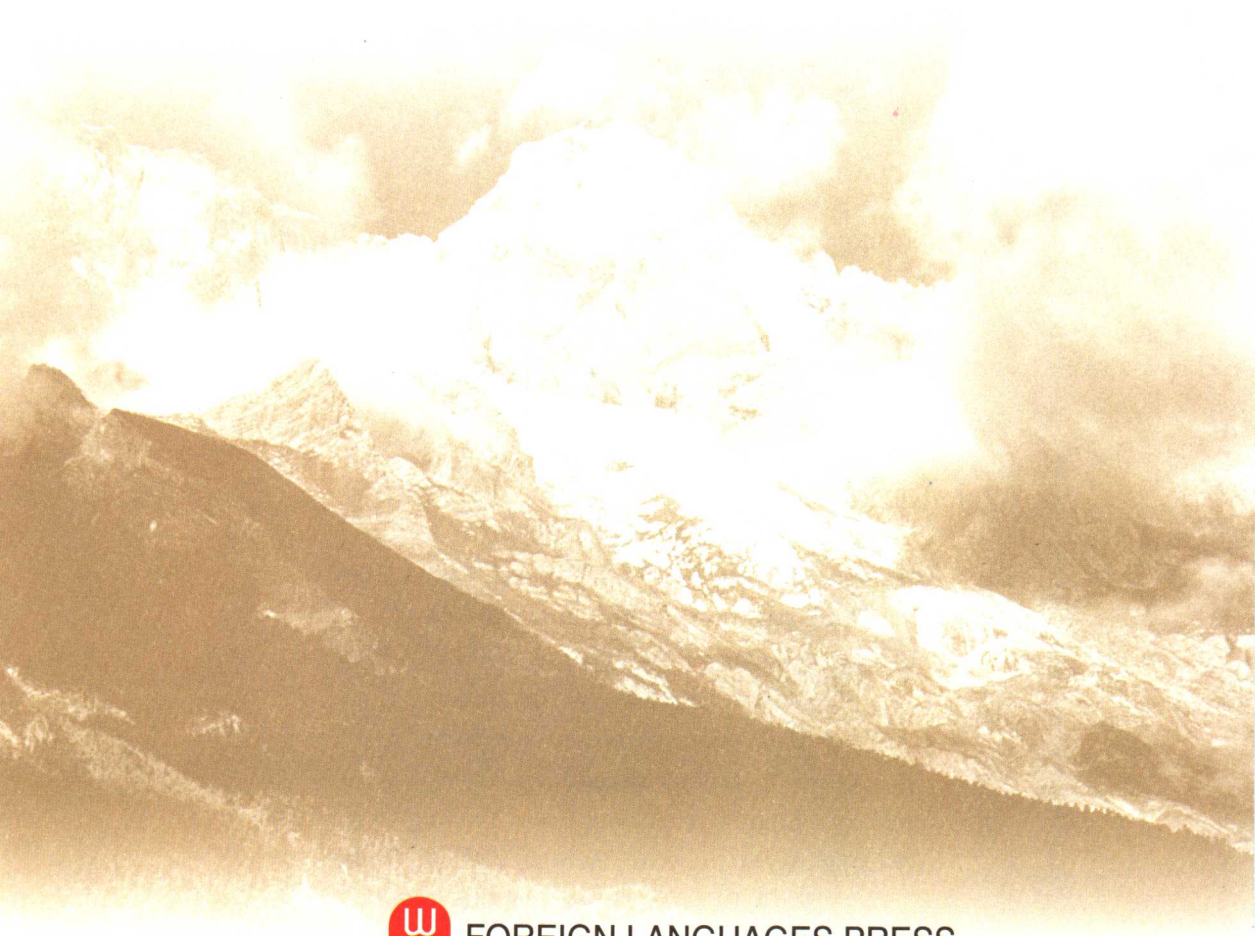


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# Introduction

China has 23 provinces, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions. Due to geographical and topographical differences and climatic variations, each area has its own unique natural scenery. The mountains in the north of the country are rugged and magnificent, the waters in the south are clear and turbulent, the Gobi in the northwest shines brilliantly in the sunlight, the hills in the southeast are often shrouded in floating fog, green waves of sorghum and soybean crops undulate over the vast fields of the northeast, and the mountains in the southwest, with sequestered villages and terraced fields, look tranquil and picturesque.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China. The Han, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, mainly live in the eastern and central parts of the country, while many ethnic groups with smaller populations live in the west. In China, all ethnic groups, regardless of size, are equal and respect each other. Each ethnic group has its own folk customs, religious beliefs and cultural traditions, and most use their own language and script. Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities. All the ethnic groups call themselves "Chinese." They are courteous and friendly. In the ethnic-minority areas, the quiet environment, quaint buildings, exquisite fashions, unsophisticated folk customs and hospitality of the local people hold a great appeal to visitors from afar.

China boasts 5,000 years of recorded civilization and a brilliant culture. The country is home to such world-renowned cultural treasures as the Great Wall, terracotta warriors and horses of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, and Ming and Qing imperial palaces and mausoleums, and large numbers of ancient architectural masterpieces, including temples, Buddhist pagodas, residential buildings, gardens, bridges, city walls and irrigation

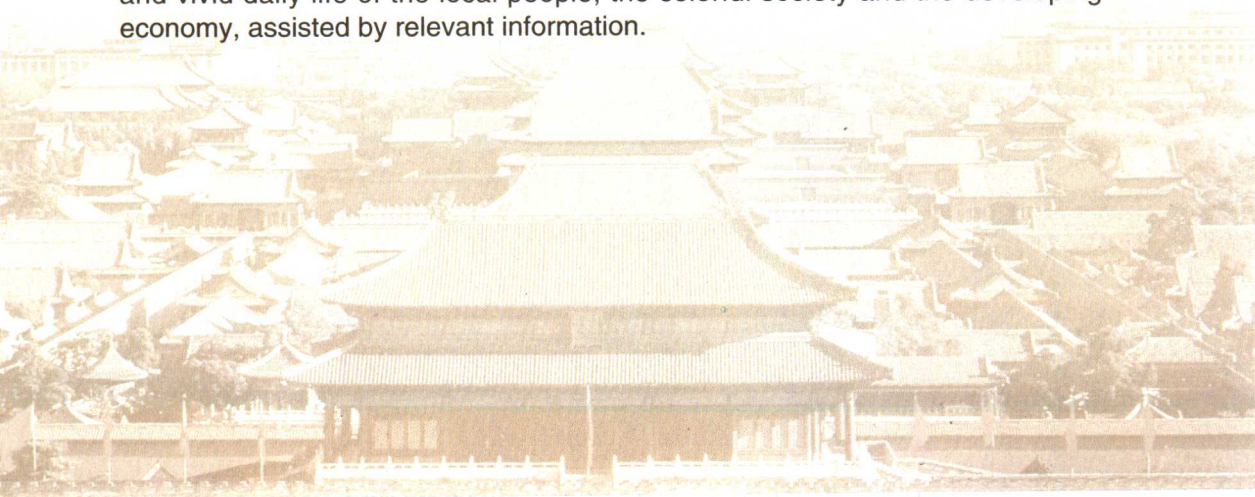




works. There are also cultural relics unearthed from ancient sites, including painted pottery, jade ware, bronze ware, large and ornate tombs and foundations of historical buildings, and many more as yet undiscovered. The museums of China's various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions house thousands of cultural relics and works of art, among which are treasures rare in the world, displaying the long history of China and the splendid Chinese culture from different aspects. The strong, deep-rooted Chinese culture has always influenced the mentality and moral standards of the Chinese people, having developed continually in pace with the civilization. A careful study of today's Peking opera, kunqu opera, shadow plays, calligraphy, painting, paper-cutting, and even the flower-shaped steamed buns on the kitchen range of farmers will reveal elements of traditional Chinese culture as well as replications of the art of the past.

Like other countries of venerable age, China has suffered grievous calamities. During the century and more before the 1950s, the Chinese people made unrelenting struggles for the prosperity of the country, and national independence and liberation. A large number of insightful people and revolutionaries, cherishing all kinds of dreams for a strong China, studied the ways of the West in a quest for prosperity and strength, and borrowed the revolutionary experience of foreign countries. At last, the Communist Party of China, proceeding from the reality of China, and relying on the working people, founded a brand-new country, the People's Republic of China, in 1949. Since then, the Chinese people have made persistent efforts and explorations for the grand revitalization of the Chinese nation. The Chinese people's efforts in the past two decades and more have resulted in outstanding achievements, with rapid social progress, a well-developed economy, and a modern civilization and traditional culture enhancing each other.

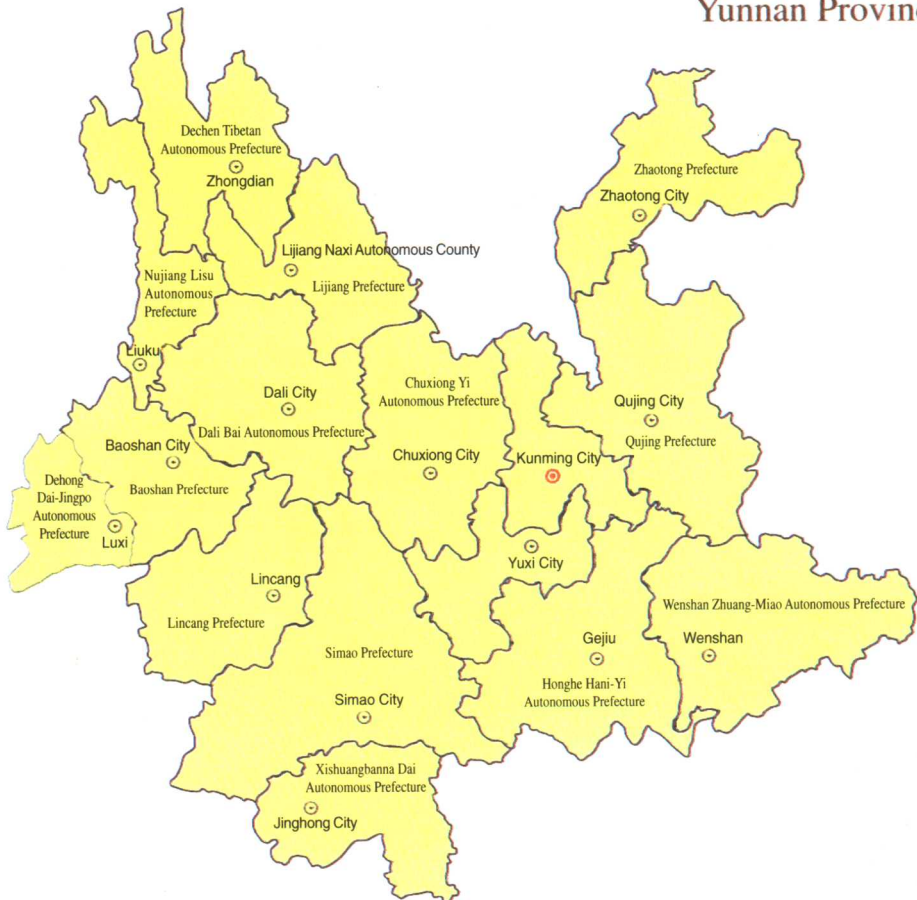
It is easy to have a quick look at China's past and present, but it takes time to gain a panoramic knowledge of China. The "Panoramic China" series is meant to assist readers, especially those overseas, in this respect. Each volume in the series focuses on a province, municipality or autonomous region, describing, with illustrations, the outstanding characteristics of each area from different perspectives. Through this series, the reader will acquire knowledge of the real and vivid daily life of the local people, the colorful society and the developing economy, assisted by relevant information.



## Location of Yunnan Province in China



## Yunnan Province





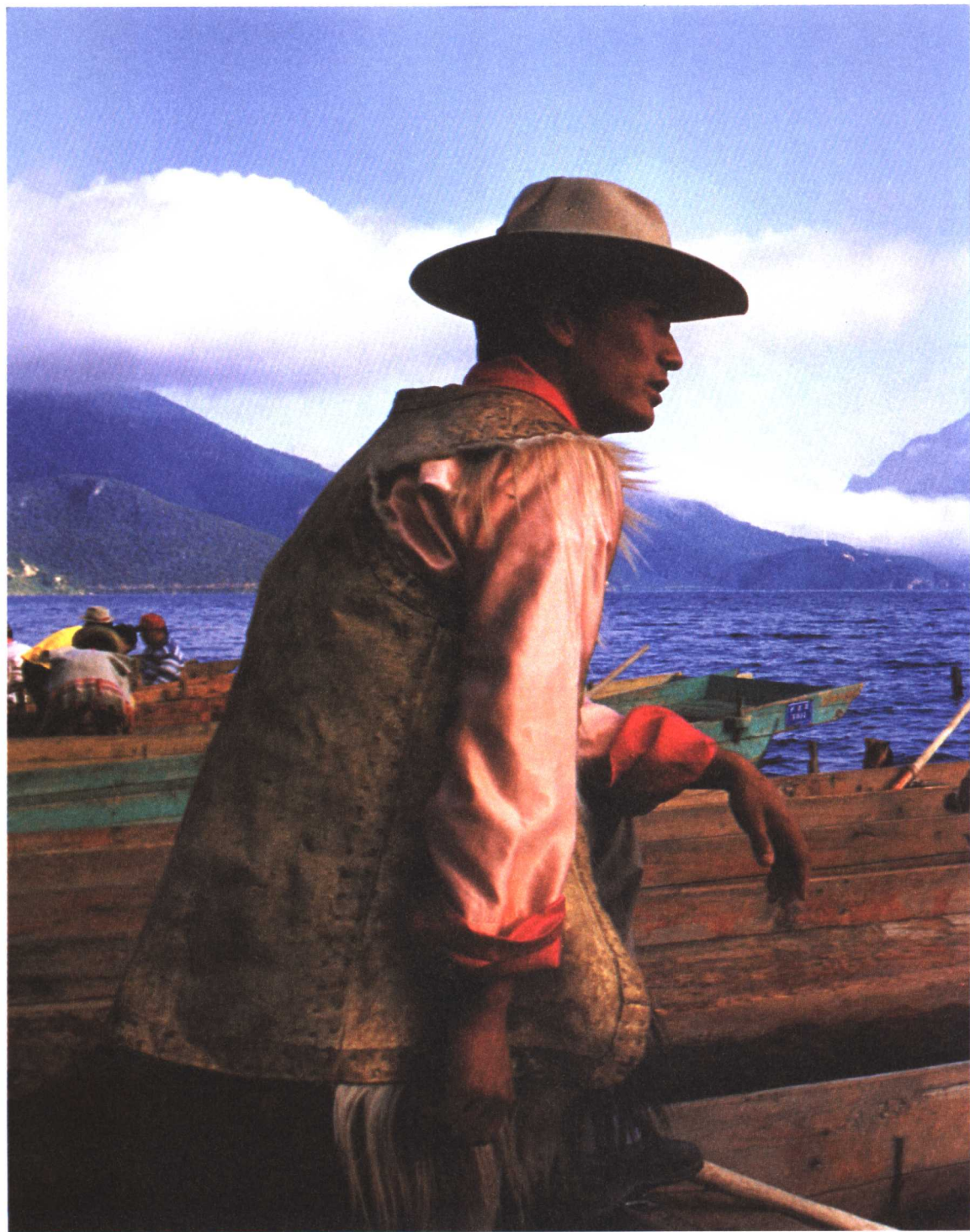






The Baimang Snow Mountain



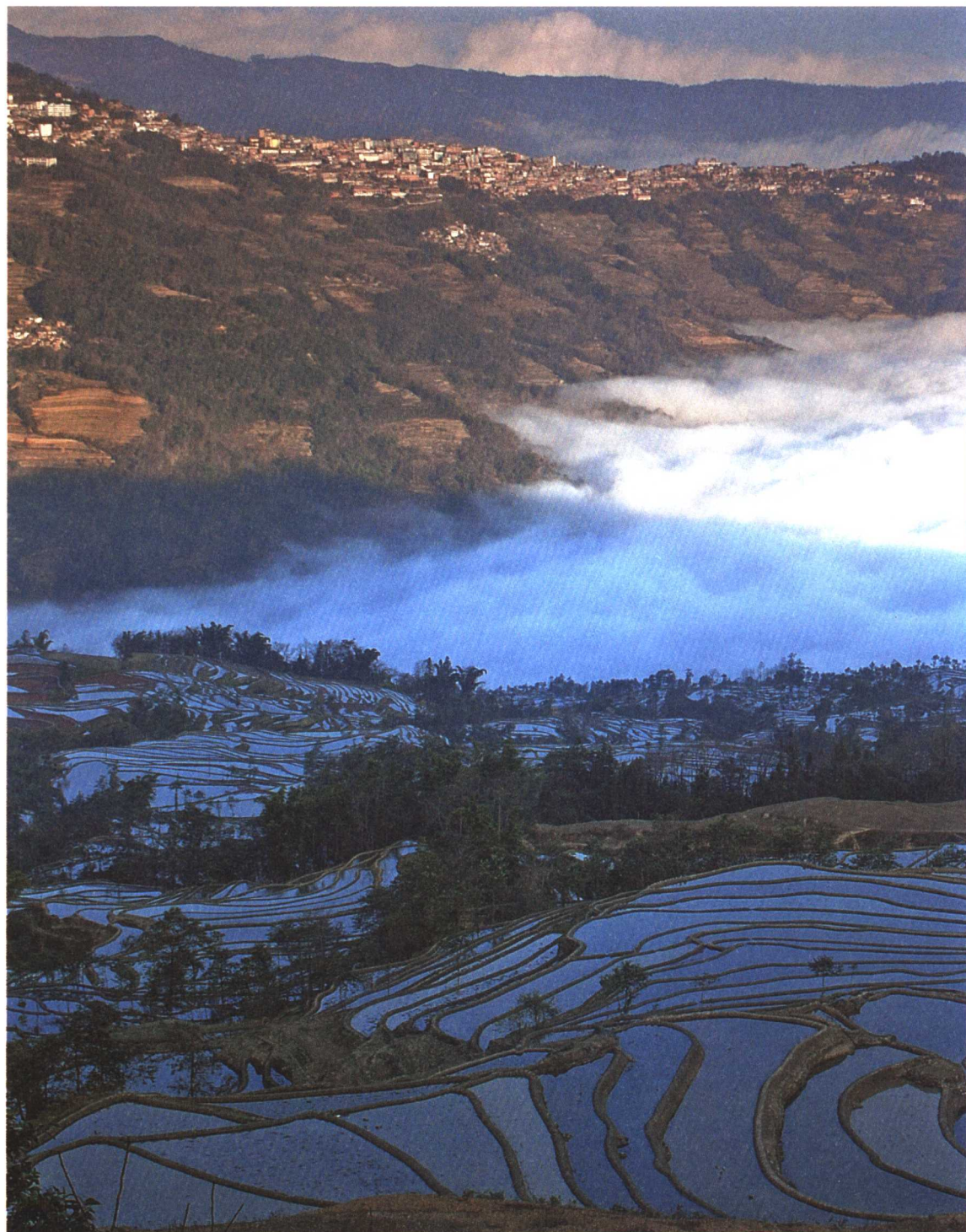






Mosuo man on the Lugu Lake









Hani terraces and village in a sea of cloud



# Getting to Know Yunnan

Yunnan, a province located in the far southwest corner of China, is a fertile and beautiful land, a land where ancient mysteries and dynamic energy combine.

Since antiquity Yunnan has been reputed as “South of the Rosy Clouds” and the “Homeland of the Rosy Clouds.” Later the province has become famous for its abundant resources —wildlife, plantlife, non-ferrous metals, natural scenery, ethnic cultures, and ethnic minority music and dance. Yunnan is known to the world as the seductive Shangri-La, an imaginary utopia for which all men yearn, depicted in James Hilton’ novel *Lost Horizon*.

Yunnan, one of the regions where humans first appeared and multiplied, can trace its history back 1,700,000 years, to the age of Yuanmou Man. The Neolithic Age discoveries at Zhaotong, Xichou, Lijiang, and Longtan Mountain in Chenggong, further testify to Yunnan’s long history. The ancient Dian Kingdom culture that grew up between the 8th century BC and 3rd century AD (between the Spring and Autumn and the Three Kingdoms periods), the Cuan Clan culture that flourished between the 3rd and 8th centuries (Wei and Jin to mid-Tang dynasties), the Nanzhao Dali culture that thrived between the 11th and 13th centuries (mid-Song to early Yuan dynasties), and, from the Yuan Dynasty to the present day, various ethnic cultures, with Han culture as the main body... all these elements combine to create Yunnan’s 2,000 year-old civilization, a civilization rich in historical and cultural resources.

Yunnan shares a 4,060 km-long border with Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar. Since remote antiquity, people of 16 ethnic groups have been living on both sides of this long border and their frequent cross-border trade greatly boosted development on both sides of the line.

Yunnan’s superb natural conditions and landscape are a delight. Agreeable climate, majestic mountains, elegant lakes, and harmony between man and Nature have won Yunnan an international reputation as an ideal tourist destination. As soon as you enter the province, you will be captivated by its clear blue skies dotted with patches of colorful clouds, its holy mountains and lakes basking in gentle sunshine, its green, green grasslands set off by white snow





mountains, its peaceful deep valleys bathed in bright moonlight, the romance of its rainforests....

Yunnan, a land of 390,000 sq km, is home to 44,000,000 people of 26 ethnic groups. Through the ages, people of all ethnic groups have lived together in solidarity and harmony, striving with energy and dynamism for common development, creating unique lifestyles and diverse cultures. Of all China's provinces Yunnan has the greatest number and most concentrated population of ethnic minority groups, and its rich ethnic diversity and multi-cultural coexistence are rare even in a world context.

These coexisting, inter-dependent cultures of Yunnan are a jewel in China's cultural crown. The precious cultural and natural heritage that Yunnan has bequeathed mankind is a vital part of the world's cultural and natural heritage. As a member of China's huge family, Yunnan has played its part in the development of the Chinese people, and also played an active role in advancing human civilization as a whole.

Yunnan's past and present alike are deserving of the world's attention and appreciation, are well worth experiencing and communicating with in person. Visit Yunnan, and you will discover the age-old past and brand-new thriving present, miraculous moving myths and vivid true reality, brilliant graceful scenery and industrious painstaking people..... they all go to make up the mysterious yet real, moving landscape of the Yunnan red earth plateau, creating this splendid land where simplicity and diversity combine.

Yunnan's extraordinary landscape is the world's common bounty. An appointment with Yunnan will bring you boundless blessings.

Whether now or in time yet to come, Yunnan will always fulfill your dreams. Yunnan, open and developing, brimming with enthusiasm and confidence, is creating an even more alluring Shangri-La, constructing an even more glorious future.

■ Yan Youqiong









A wondrous land whose ocher soils, rich in iron oxide, have been worked by farmers for thousands of years.