

## **A Serene Culinary Adventure in the Land of the Poets**

Yangshuo is prose brought to life, a locale that has inspired artists for centuries and is immortalized in Chinese heritage as the land of the poets. Distinguished by the pristine Li River that runs through it, and surrounded on all sides by the unfathomable Karst Mountains that jut up from the land like lush towers, Yangshuo is a destination beyond compare.

Surrounded by this heavenly natural oasis and embedded in the rich traditional culture of its diverse ethnic minorities, is the Yangshuo Cooking School. This local institution does more than introduce its guests to the savoury cuisine of Guangxi, it also introduces them to the region's diversity, to its history, to its people. and to its astonishing beauty.

Our weeklong Serene Culinary Adventure will afford exquisite tastes and memorable culinary experiences. You will return home having learned to prepare some of China's best dishes - homemade, savoury, delicious village cuisine made with fresh seasonal ingredients. And you will also have connected with an unspoiled oasis, a sliver of China that will filter into your impressions like the sonnet of a serene poem.

### **Day One - Sunday**

Arrival

We'll arrive throughout the day and check into our imperial suites. Each room is the embodiment of luxury; airy and spacious, impeccably furnished with individually selected pieces, en-suite bathrooms with bathtubs, and balconies with stunning views. There will be a welcome dinner at JIN LONG JAI (a short walk from our hotel). A restaurant that specializes in local cuisine and one of our favourites for dinner. We'll enjoy dinner with fellow guests and stroll around Yangshuo later that evening before retiring to our suites for the night.

### **Day Two - Monday**

The Essentials of Guangxi

We will depart from our hotel at 9:30 and head straight to Yangshuo's food market. This is a buzzing little bazaar (IT IS A BIG MARKET) filled with colourful stacks of freshly picked vegetables from local farms. Our guided tour will introduce guests to all the wonders of the local Chinese market, while also demystifying the intimidating factor of its novelty.

We will take a close look at the different ingredients we will use during the week: the vegetables, the fruits, the legumes, the spices, the different cuts of meat used in Chinese cuisine and so on.

After our market tour it is off to The Yangshuo Cooking School. The school is situated on the bank of the Li with gorgeous views overlooking the pristine river and the lush Karst scenery.

We will start the day's cooking lesson by learning to pickle seasonal vegetables. Chinese cuisine employs a huge variety of pickled produce, and we will look at variations on how to brine different vegetables to give them a range of sweet and sourness.

Our first dishes will be staples of Guangxi cuisine, and we will explore many of the basics that keep a Chinese home kitchen going, including a crash course on knife skills and how to chop vegetables efficiently, the Chinese way. We will make stirfried eggplant, Guangxi Egg dumplings, and beer fish, which is arguably the area's most popular dish, freshly caught carp cooked with rice beer.

We will enjoy our homemade LUNCH together with one of our local chefs. He loves to impart the stories and secrets of Chinese cuisine, and we will informally explore Chinese traditions, folklore and customs.

### **Day Three – TUESDAY**

Meet at the hotel at 8am.

We will join the locals and eat the famous rice noodles for breakfast at a local noodle stall. We will then visit one of the local markets which sell all sorts of different goods as well as food. Quite often you can see the dentists operating on their customers in the middle of the market, ethnic minority people selling herbs from the mountains to be used as medicine, local geomancers telling fortunes and all sorts of baskets and clothes.

In the Kitchen:

- Knife skills. Chopping meat the Chinese way
- Duck with pickled ginger and chilli
- Spicy chicken with star anise
- Whole Steamed fish with ginger and shallots
- Xiao Fan's famous chilli and cilantro sauce
- Green vegetable with garlic

### **Day Four - Wednesday**

Bike from Yangshuo to Chao Long

We start the day with a leisurely bike trip through the beautiful countryside, up and over rolling hills and through villages nearly unblemished by time and tourism. The ride is just over five kilometres, so we will arrive at Chao Long still in the morning. Chao Long is a traditional farming town and is home to the original Yangshuo cooking school - a tastefully renovated traditional farmhouse made from mud brick. The afternoon's class will focus on healthy steaming techniques. We will make pork dumplings from scratch - both the wraps and the fillings - as well as steamed chicken, spare ribs braised with pickled plums (NOT STEAMED) and of course fresh steamed seasonable vegetables. The emphasis of this class will be on bringing out the natural flavour of ingredients and their mild overtones.

During the evening we'll bike back to retire in Yangshuo, where we will enjoy one of the town's many nighttime activities.

### **Day Five - Thursday**

Qi Gong

We'll start the day with a morning Qi Gong session, followed by breakfast. Qi Gong is a fortifying and rejuvenating traditional Chinese practice based on breathing and gentle movement that promotes health, good energy and relaxation.

Feeling refreshed and renewed, we will visit a hillside eco-farm run by a local farmer who makes homemade organic tofu. The farmer will give us a hands-on lesson and we will learn to make our own tofu from scratch. We will then tour the farm grounds, the vegetable gardens and the animal pens. Our host will prepare a lunch featuring freshly picked ingredients and our homemade organic tofu.

In the afternoon, we will all take a raft trip on the stunning Yulong River and enjoy dinner at OUR FAVOURITE SICHUAN RESTAURANT TO GIVE YOU A TASTE OF WHAT YOU WILL BE COOKING TOMORROW.

### **Day Six - Friday**

Explore Sichuan

On this day, we will explore Sichuan cuisine, which is best known for its spicy, pungent flavour and a generous use of chilli AND TONGUE NUMBING SICHUAN PEPPER . Aside from its spiciness, Sichuan is a delicious and complex cuisine with a plethora of ingredients and cooking techniques. Today's cooking class will introduce the best of Sichuan to you, and you'll learn a variety of popular dishes and sauces, among them: mapo tofu, dragon eggplant, spicy beef and Sichuan green beans.

In the afternoon YOU WILL HAVE FREE TIME TO EITHER REST OR ENJOY ONE OF THE MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES ON OFFER IN THE AREA. KAYAKING, ROCK CLIMBING, CALLIGRAPHY, SHOPPING OR JUST A LEISURELY WALK.

### **Day Seven - Saturday**

Last Day

We'll start the day with a morning Qi Gong session, followed by breakfast. In our final day of cooking classes we will return to where we started: revisiting how to make homemade, savoury, delicious village cuisine using fresh seasonal ingredients. The menu will feature local free-range chicken, fresh tofu and a variety of seasonal vegetables.

We will spend the afternoon with one of our local chefs, who will explain how to take the lessons learned this past week back home, and how we can make the best use of fresh seasonal produce to prepare balanced Chinese dishes in our kitchens back home.

We will hold our last dinner at Yangshuo's acclaimed vegetarian restaurant Pure Lotus, where we will enjoy a remarkable vegetarian banquet. Our journey has come to an end, but we are ready to bring back home the skills we learned on our serene culinary adventure in the land of the poets.

Fly to Shanghai for 3 days tour of the old city before returning to Australia.