

An armchair holiday shopping spree (page 14)...How to have a boat built in Sulawesi (page 9)...Work your way around the world as a model (page 19).



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■ ENTREPRENEURS ABROAD

A cornucopia of Irish opportunities

by Steenie Harvey

Last month, Steenie Harvey, a free-lance writer living in Ireland, told readers of International Living about the property market in her home country ("A country home in Ireland—a bargain and a good investment," page 1). This month, she details business opportunities (primarily agricultural) in the Emerald Isle. Steenie is also working on an article explaining how North Americans can become Irish innkeepers. Watch for this in an upcoming issue.

Anyone with the inclination, the know-how, and the capital to start his own business will find that he is welcome in Ireland. Self-employed North Americans do not have to obtain work permits to run their businesses. Nor are they required to bring any fixed amount of money into the country with them.

The business opportunities available in Ireland are primarily agricultural, ranging from farming to organic gardening, from raising deer and dairy goats to afforestation, from cultivating herbs and mushrooms to tending cattle and sheep.

Land is inexpensive, costing from £500 (\$980) to £3,000 (\$5,882), depending on the location and

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Photo courtesy of James Ward

Yes, it is possible to buy an exotic and custom-built cruising boat for less than \$10,000. All you have to do is travel to Sulawesi, Indonesia, where traditional *pinisi* boats, such as the one shown above, are built using methods unchanged from those used hundreds of years ago. See page 9.

■ REAL ESTATE

International Living's end-of-1990 guide to the property market in Britain (and elsewhere)

The British property market is on the road to recovery—and other European markets are likely to reap the benefits

by Vivian Lewis

If your dream house is a rose-covered thatched-roof cottage with an inglenook and oriel windows situated at the end of a hedgerow in a picturesque English village, now is the time to buy—or at least to start looking. British real estate prices will pick up in the first half of 1991. And you will kick yourself if you hesitate too long.

Despite the ads by British building societies (the British equivalent of thrifts) after the Chancellor of the Exchequer cut interest rates in October,

it will take months before their mortgage rates have all been adjusted downward. (Upward adjustments take place almost instantaneously.)

The boom in buying will not be immediate. But the overwhelming majority of British mortgage-payers will benefit from the 1% drop in the government discount rate announced in conjunction with Britain's joining the European Monetary System in October.

And they will benefit too from

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Yangshuo—prettier than China's prettiest

by Bradford G. Boyle

Immortalized in writing and painting, perhaps even more than the Great Wall, Guilin, China, is considered by the Chinese to be the most beautiful place in the world.

But because of its fame, Guilin is crowded, packed with tourists anxious to see what all the hoopla is about. Few realize that only 80 kilometers (50 miles) to the south, there exists a place that is even more beautiful than Guilin. A place where the crowds are much thinner.

Yangshuo.

Yangshuo is an ancient city, dating back 1,300 years to the Sui Dynasty, which ruled from 581 to 618 A.D. Although slightly off the beaten track, Yangshuo offers ample tourist facilities, including comfortable and affordable lodging and clean and affordable restaurants. It is the closest thing you'll find in China to a resort town.

Twin peaks

Yangshuo is nestled between the mountain peaks. It is a quiet, restful place, a small town, accessible by foot.

You won't have any problem finding a place to stay. Upon your arrival, you will be swarmed by representatives from local hotels urging you to stay with them. Don't be talked into staying with the first person who approaches you. Shop around until you find a hotel that really suits your tastes.

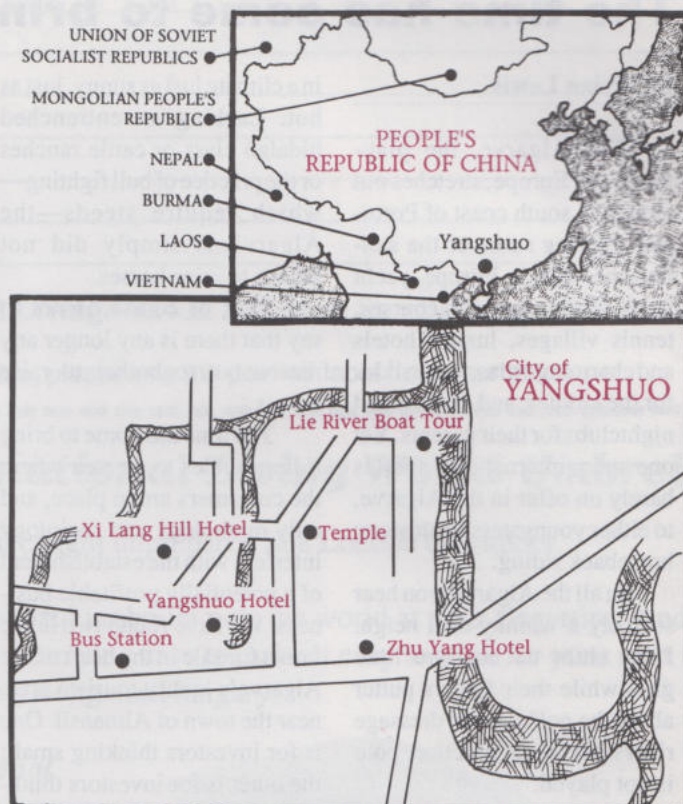
I stayed at the Zu Yang Hotel, near the Li River. A single room was 20 renmimbi (\$4.25). The staff spoke English, and the hotel restaurant, called the Moonshine, was excellent.

The first thing to do after

you've settled into your hotel is to visit the China International Travel Service (CITS), located near the bus station. Many Yangshuo residents speak English (especially at hotels and restaurants), so just ask someone for directions. At CITS, book return tickets to Hong Kong. The cost is 212 renmimbi (\$45), including the bus ride to Wuzhou, where you must stop over for a night, and the high-speed hovercraft to Hong Kong. The boat leaves Wuzhou only every other day, and it is a day's journey to get there, so plan your itinerary accordingly.

Once you've booked your return passage and you know how long you have in the city, begin to explore.

In the center of town is a small peak, called Man Hill, surrounded by Yangshuo's Central Park. Visit in the morning to see the local residents practicing Tai Chi, a slow-motion martial art. Make the short climb up Man Hill to visit the temple on top. Temples are scarce throughout China (most were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution), so don't pass up this chance to see one. And the view from the temple is sensational, especially in the morning as the mist rises from the river.



Another worthwhile sight is Moon Hill, located a couple of kilometers outside town. The best way to get there is by bicycle, the most common form of transport in China. (You can rent a bicycle in Yangshuo for about 1.5 renmimbi, 30 cents, a day.) The ride to Moon Hill takes 40 minutes; it is over flat, paved roads that twist through the rice fields and mountain peaks. Be sure to take your camera.

While you'll find little American influence throughout China in general, Moon Hill is

an exception. It is actually a crescent-shaped arch with a well-maintained trail comprised of about 1,000 steps. The trail is called Nixon's Lane. Former President Nixon climbed Moon Hill during his visit to normalize U.S. relations with China and planted a tree beneath the arch. The tree, known as Nixon's Tree, is thriving today.

The former president is remembered fondly by residents of Yangshuo, many of whom possess issues of *Time* magazine with Nixon on the cover.

Capitalism is evident on top of this hill in other ways as well. When you reach the top, you'll find ancient Chinese men who have carried coolers of cold beer, water, and Coke to the top to sell to visitors. They also offer souvenirs. Beware of 100-year-old coins from Vietnam. They are fake. I speak from experience.

Another excursion to take

Yes, Yangshuo is safe

Many travelers fear journeying to China because of concerns about political instability. However, Yangshuo is located in southwest China, an area largely free of political disturbance. If you want to see China, this is the ideal place to do so.

To be on the safe side, however, Americans may want to contact the State Department prior to the trip for up-to-the-minute information on the political situation in the country. Contact the **China Desk**, (202)328-2500.

And once you're in the country, you should register your stay with the local consulate for your country: Americans, (86-1)52-2033; Canadians, (86-1)5323536; Australians, (86-1)5322955; and New Zealanders, (86-1)532-2731.

—B.G.B.

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"Guilin scenes are the finest under Heaven, but Yangshuo's are still better."

—Ancient Chinese poet

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from Yangshuo is a trip up the Li River. Tickets can be purchased from CITS and from most hotels. The boats do not go all the way to Guilin; they stop at a small town called Fuli, where you can catch a bus back to Yangshuo. The entire excursion costs 30 renmimbi (\$6.50).

Spend the rest of your time in Yangshuo bicycling through the countryside, enjoying the

tranquil atmosphere and the incredible scenery. Or simply relax at the outdoor cafés, where most waiters speak English and may join you for a chat after they've served your drink. They are friendly and anxious to improve their English and to learn about the Western world. **IL**

Bradford G. Boyle, a free-lance writer living in Taipei, Taiwan, encourages IL readers to plan a visit to Yangshuo, China, a unique and undiscovered resort-style destination.

Yangshuo travel tips

A concern of many travelers to China is food. It is wise to be cautious and to carry a supply of Lomotil or Imodium. As a precaution against hepatitis, carry your own chopsticks, because the ones supplied at restaurants are usually simply rinsed in cold water after each use. And keep in mind that at the farthest point, you are only two days away from Hong Kong, where medical service is on par with the best in the Western world.

Once you cross the border into China, you must exchange money. The unit of Chinese currency is the yuan. The current exchange rate is \$1 buys 4.72 yuan.

To complicate matters, there are two currencies on the mainland: Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC) and renmimbi (RMB). Travelers are required to buy FEC when entering the country. The official government rate for FEC and renmimbi is 1 to 1. But the black market rate is closer to 1 to 1.25.

It is not illegal for travelers to use renmimbi. It is simply that most restaurants and hotels will not accept them from foreigners. It is best to carry a combination of the currencies, which will mean changing at least some money on the black market.

This is not as ominous as it sounds. During your trip, you will be approached by Chinese asking if you're interested in changing money. And because the money changers have much more to lose than you do, they will not approach you if the authorities are nearby. But you must be careful. Money changers can be slick operators. Count your money immediately to make sure you have received the correct amount of renmimbi.

The restaurants in Yangshuo are staffed with English-speaking Chinese and serve a great assortment of dishes, both Chinese and Western. You can order anything from an American-style breakfast of toast, eggs, and sausage to fried snake and rice.

—B.G.B.

Getting from Hong Kong to Yangshuo

The jumping-off point for Yangshuo is Hong Kong. Because the city is off-the-beaten-track, you must use a combination of Chinese mass transit to make the trip. But this makes it more interesting and gives you a chance to see the country and the local people.

Accommodations along the way are not first-class by any standard, but they are acceptable. Language is not a problem; English-speaking Chinese will approach you asking if you need help. There are foreign tourist offices in every major city in China, so you always have someone to turn to in case of emergency.

Tickets for public transportation can be purchased through the China International Travel Service (CITS) office in each city. You should be aware that CITS adds about 75% to the cost of each ticket. But if you do not speak Cantonese or Mandarin, you have little choice. The CITS representatives are not service oriented. In fact, they can be quite rude. But they will answer questions and give directions.

From Hong Kong, you must first get to Wuzhou, accessible by boat or bus. It is located down river from Yangshuo, but tourist boats are not allowed to travel on the river between the two cities. So the only way to travel from Wuzhou to Yangshuo is by bus.

For this reason, I advise that you take the boat from Hong Kong to Wuzhou, to give you the chance to experience both kinds of travel. The fastest boat is the hovercraft. (At least that's what the Chinese call it. In fact, though, it is not a hovercraft, but simply a high-speed boat.) The ride takes 10 hours and costs HK\$270 (\$35). It leaves Tai Kong Tsui Wharf at 7 a.m. every other day. Tickets can be bought at Hong Kong travel agencies. The ride is comfortable, with meals and drinks (for an additional fee), airplane seats, and movies (Chinese martial arts films in Cantonese).

Border formalities are less bothersome than you might expect. There is paperwork, and you must declare any electronic devices and other items the Chinese fear you may try to sell for profit. You also may have to show any published material you are carrying.

It will be evening when you arrive in Wuzhou, and because Chinese buses do not travel at night, you must spend the night. Lodging is sparse. I recommend the **Yiyuan Hotel**, on the outskirts of town, tel. 22168. (When placing a call to China, you must first call the international operator, who will complete the call for you.) The staff speaks English, and the hotel runs a free shuttle service.

In the morning, have the hotel shuttle take you to the bus station. Tickets to Yangshuo are 8.65 renmimbi (\$2) (you probably will pay more because you are a foreigner). Air-conditioned buses are available for a higher fee. The ride takes eight to 10 hours. Most of the buses do not have restrooms, but they do make rest stops at irregular intervals. Usually there is also a short stop for lunch. At most stops, you'll be approached by vendors offering mineral water, Coke, beer, crackers, and cigarettes.

This bus ride is your foray into the real China, so sit back and enjoy the experience. The scenery between Wuzhou and Yangshuo is sensational, as the landscape changes slowly from rice paddies, complete with farmers and water buffalo, to the famous limestone peaks. The route is mountainous, and the buses must struggle to clear the summits. The ride is bumpy and hair-raising at times. Get used to the sound of the bus' horn, which will be used often to warn oncoming vehicles, bicycles, and water buffalo.

If you are much more than six feet tall, buy a seat in the first row, where the leg room is greater. Otherwise, you may have to sit with your legs in the aisle.

And be prepared for the bathrooms at the rest stops. They are worse than you can imagine.

—B.G.B.