



RIVER
ADVENTURES

YANGTZE

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Key to images

Top cover image: Pudong district, Shanghai
Main cover image: Cormorant fishing on the Yangtze
Previous page: Cormorant with alligator gar fish
This page: The Three Gorges Dam, Hubei province, China.

Note to Teachers and Parents

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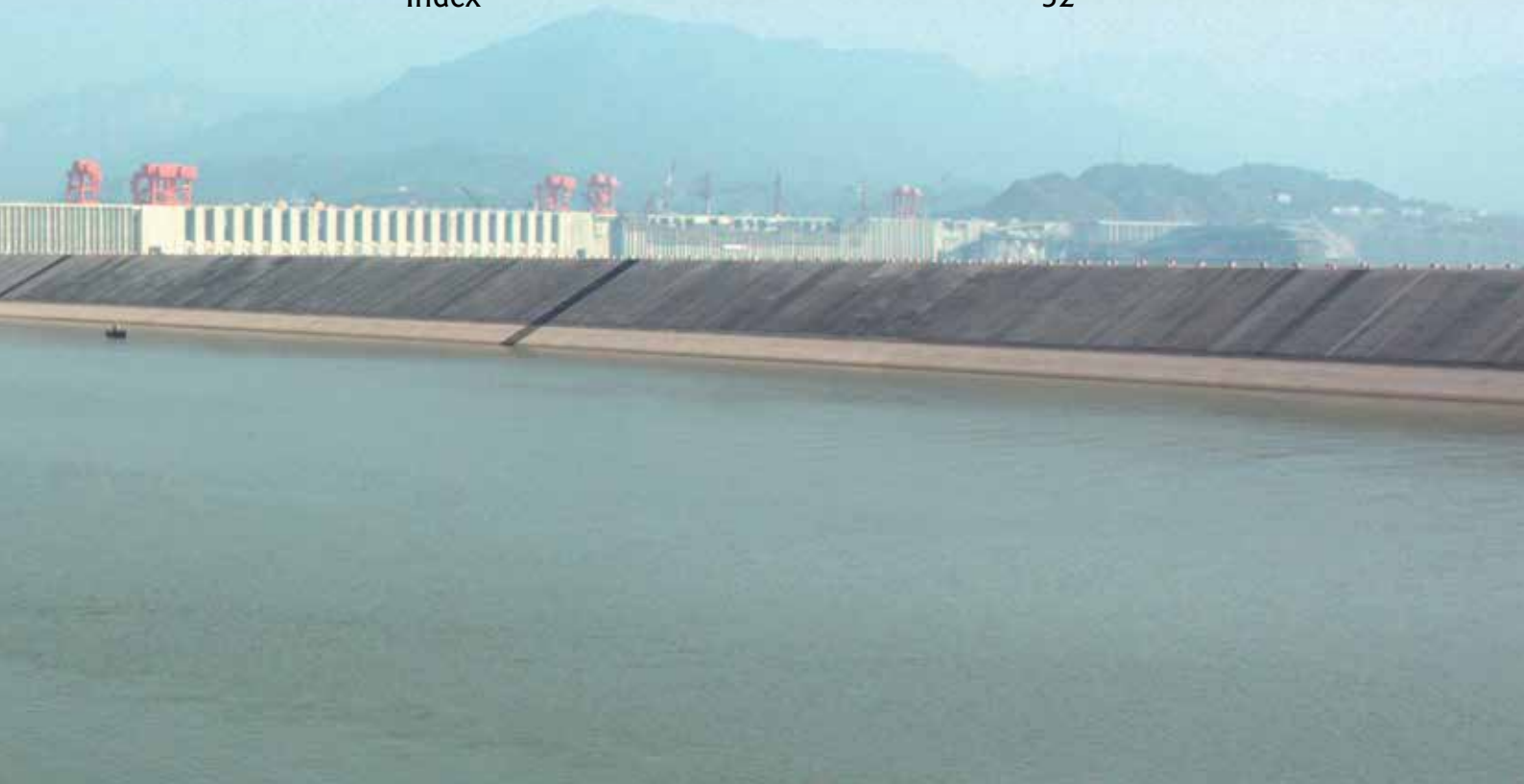
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A Yangtze Journey

The Yangtze is Asia's longest river, stretching for 6,300 km (3,915 miles). Its Chinese name is 'Chang Jiang', which means 'the Long River'. You will follow the river from its source on the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau to where it drains into the East China Sea near Shanghai.

A great river

Chinese civilization began on the banks of the Yangtze. For thousands of years, Chinese people have relied on the river for transport, for irrigating crops and for food and water. Today, about half of all the food in China is grown in the Yangtze basin, including more than two-thirds of the country's rice crop. Almost 500 million people live and work along its banks.

▼ *As well as farmed hillsides like this, the Yangtze flows through many different landscapes, including mountains, forests, fertile plains and wetlands.*

Threats to the Yangtze

In recent years, the river has become badly polluted by factory and household waste. Wildlife habitats have been destroyed, and many types of fish that once lived in the river have disappeared. The Chinese government is working to repair the damage and to protect endangered species. Some sections of the river have now been made into nature reserves.

The Yangtze's source

Finding the source of a river like the Yangtze is not easy because many other streams, called tributaries, flow into it. People once thought that the Jinsha Jiang River was the source. Then, in 1976, a small lake was discovered at the foot of Mount Geladandong near the border with Tibet. Most now agree that this lake is the Yangtze's source.



▼ Because of pollution and other threats, scientists fear that the Yangtze dolphin may have died out completely.





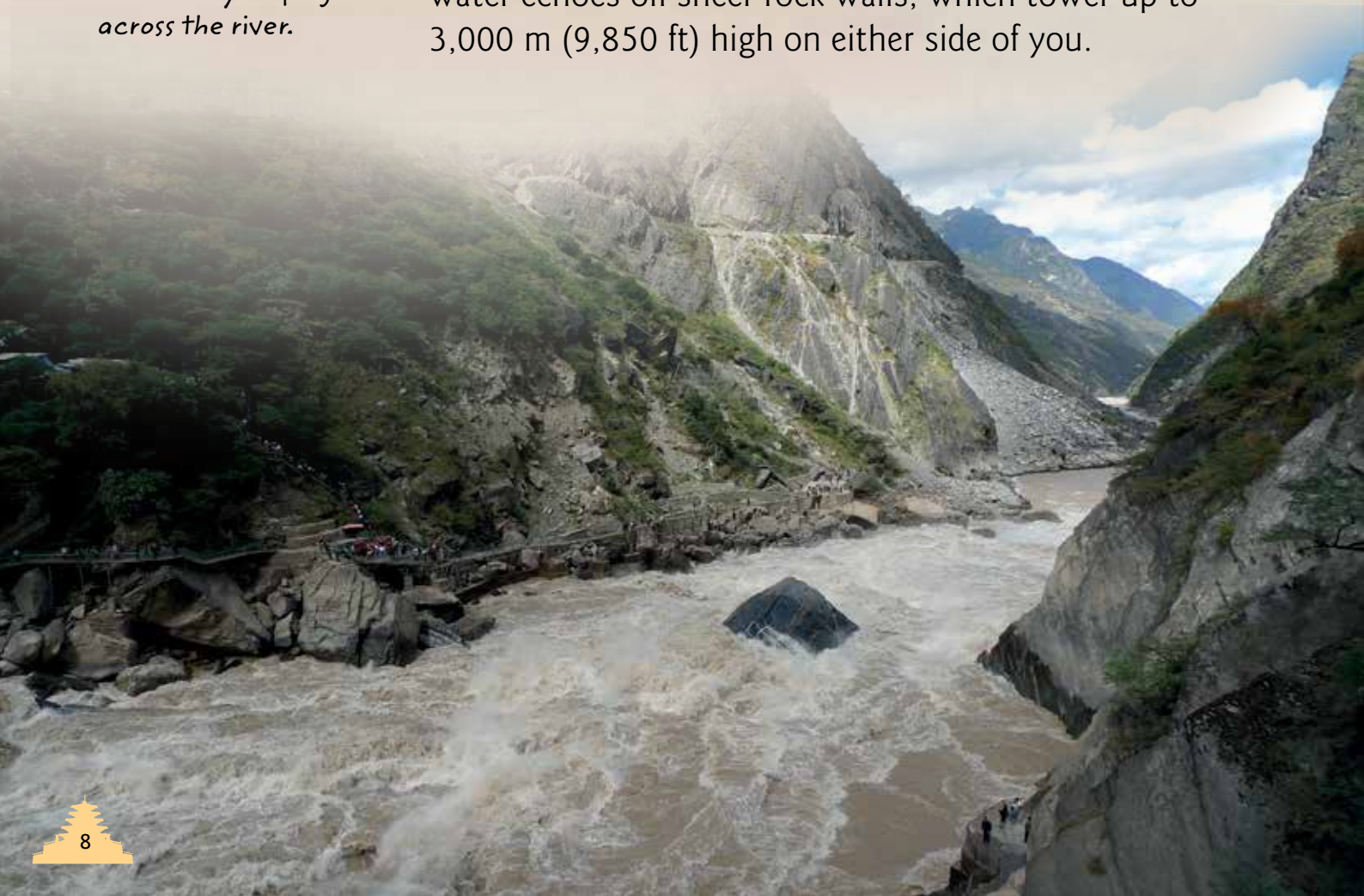
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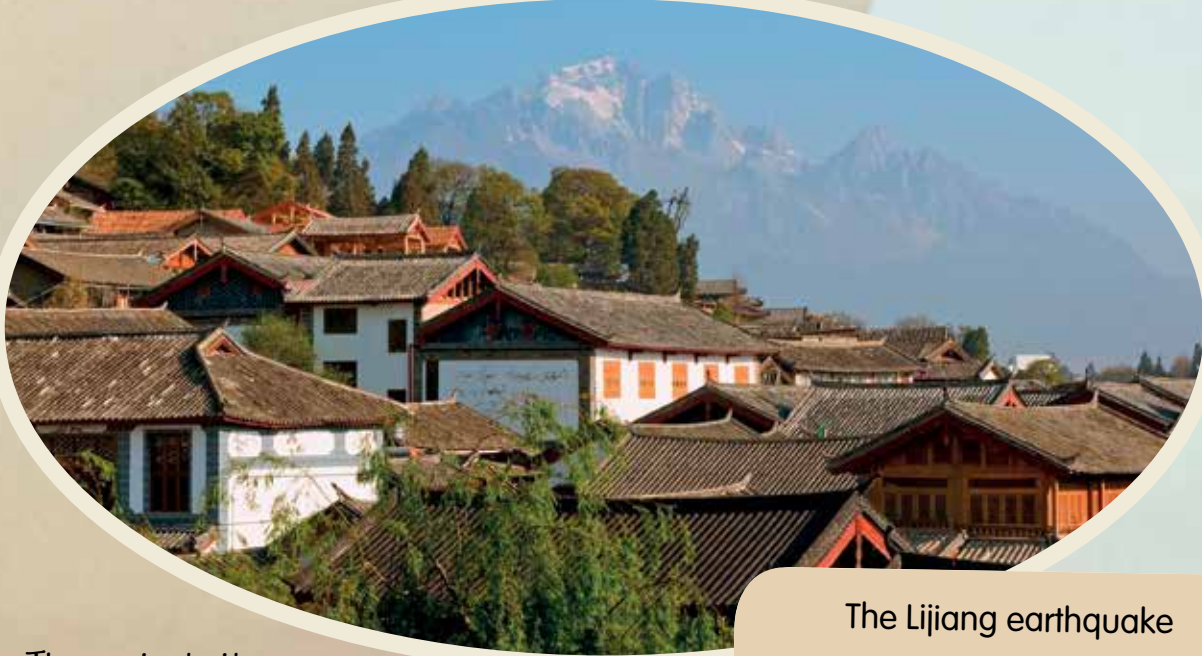
Tiger Leaping Gorge

At Lijiang, roughly 20 km (12 miles) east of Shigu, you catch a bus to Tiger Leaping Gorge. Over millions of years, this dramatic gorge has been carved out of the rock by the fast-flowing Yangtze River.

▼ *Tiger Leaping Gorge is one of the world's deepest gorges. Its name comes from a local legend in which a tiger escaped from a hunter by leaping across the river.*

At Tiger Leaping Gorge, the Yangtze falls 300 m (984 ft) over a series of 18 rapids. Below the viewing point where you are standing now, the river hurtles through a gap just 30 m (100 ft) wide. The roar of the water echoes off sheer rock walls, which tower up to 3,000 m (9,850 ft) high on either side of you.





▲ The ancient city of Lijiang was once an important trading and cultural centre. Today, its income comes mainly from tourism.

The Naxi

Returning to Lijiang, you explore the old part of the city, with its narrow cobbled streets and traditional wooden houses.

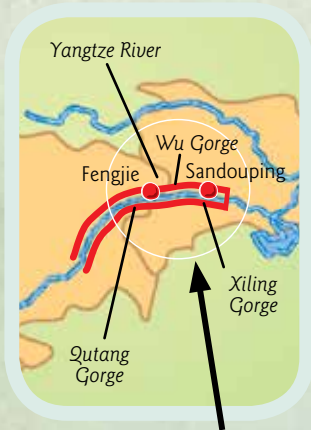
The people of this area, called the Naxi, have a rich history. They originally came from Tibet, but settled here more than a thousand years ago. In the past, the Naxi lived by farming and herding. Since tourists started to visit Lijiang, many Naxi people now earn a living by making goods to sell in local shops.

► Naxi people follow an ancient religion called Dongba. They worship the natural world around them, including the sun, moon, mountains and rivers.

The Lijiang earthquake

In 1996, a major earthquake struck the Lijiang region. About a third of the city was destroyed, including many of its oldest buildings. Afterwards, Lijiang was rebuilt and developed as a centre for tourism. Many people now come to visit the region and to learn about the culture of the Naxi people.





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The Three Gorges

At Fengjie, you board a cruise boat to explore the Three Gorges. These spectacular limestone gorges stretch for 130 km (80 miles). They are among the most famous sights in China.

▼ *River cruises on the Yangtze are a growing source of income for the Three Gorges region.*

Qutang Gorge, the first of the three gorges, is the shortest and narrowest. The mountains on either side are 1,200 m (3,900 ft) high, and tower over the river. Along the sides of the gorge you can still see ancient pathways carved into the rock, where teams of men used to haul boats upstream.





◀ The point where the river passes between these mountains is called the Kuimen Gate. It marks the entrance to Qutang Gorge.

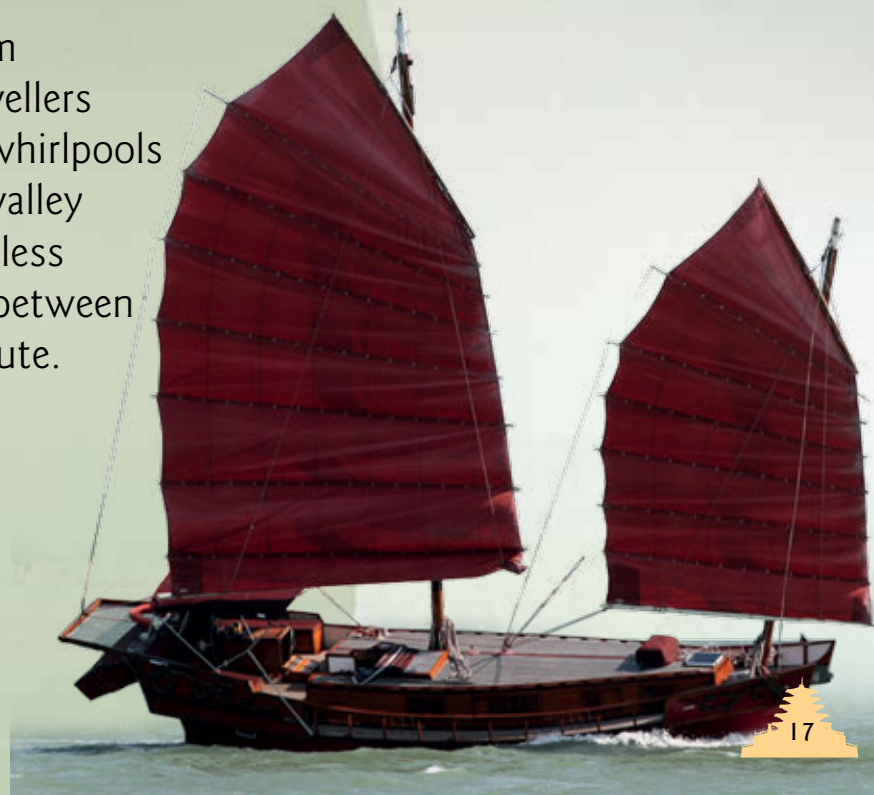
The Yangtze Gorges

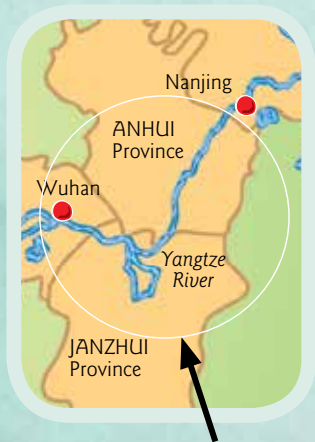
Experts believe that the Yangtze River first began to cut a path through the mountains around 45 million years ago. The transport route formed by the river has been vital to China ever since. Without it, the fertile Sichuan Province, 'China's rice bowl', would have been almost completely cut off from the rest of the country.

In **Wu Gorge** an ancient legend tells how 12 wild dragons who brought chaos and floods to the land were defeated by Yao Ji, daughter of the Queen Mother of the West. After her death, Yao Ji and her sisters were turned into 12 great mountain peaks – six on either side of the gorge.

The third gorge, **Xiling**, is 76 km (47 miles) long. In the past, travellers often drowned in the powerful whirlpools and rapids here. Since the river valley was flooded, Xiling has become less dangerous, but boats still keep between markers that show the safest route.

▶ People have been travelling the Yangtze in boats since ancient times. This traditional type of sailing boat is called a junk.





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The Lower Yangtze

Beyond the city of Wuhan, you enter the 'land of fish and rice'. This fertile region produces around 70 per cent of China's paddy rice and more than half of its freshwater fish.

Rice growing

Rice is China's single most important food. Most of it is grown in fields called paddies by the river. Rice plants need lots of water to grow. Some of the water comes from rain, but most is pumped from the river and piped to the nearby fields.

Once the rice has been picked, it is threshed to separate the waste from the grain, then stored. Finally, the field is ploughed, ready for a new crop to be planted

▼ *These flooded paddy fields need to be supplied with water all the year round.*





◀ Planting rice by hand is hard work in the hot sun.

Yangtze silt

When the Yangtze floods, it brings with it a rich layer of sediment called silt that helps to nourish the soil and make it fertile. Since the building of the Three Gorges Dam, the river brings less silt. This is because much of the sediment gets trapped in the huge reservoir behind the dam.

Fish from the river

The Yangtze has always been a rich source of fish, including carp, bream, perch and sturgeon. There are thousands of lakes around Wuhan, and fishing and fish-farming are vital industries. Because of pollution and overfishing, the number of fish has fallen recently. In some areas, fishing is now banned altogether during the breeding season, so that fish stocks have a chance to recover.

▶ *This fisherman has birds called cormorants, which he has trained to help him catch fish in the river.*





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▼ Shanghai's Pudong district is on the east bank of the Huangpu River. Its tallest building is the 468 m (1,535 ft) high Oriental Pearl Television Tower.

Shanghai

At Shanghai, on the south side of the Yangtze delta, you reach your journey's end. This busy city grew up as a trading centre where the Huangpu River joins the Yangtze. Today, it has a key role in China's booming economy.

Pudong

Across the river from old Shanghai, Pudong is a powerful symbol of the new China. In 1990, it was little more than farmland. Today, it is a thriving business centre covering more than 100 sq km (38 sq miles). Many big companies have their headquarters in Pudong, and high-tech products manufactured here are exported all over the world.



► *Shanghai Port is the world's busiest container depot.*



Puxi

Leaving your boat at Shanghai Port, you stroll along the Bund, the main street of Puxi on the west bank of the Huangpu River.

Puxi is the historic centre of Shanghai, and home to nearly half the city's population. Along the riverfront, many of the old buildings were built by foreign traders. Today, luxury hotels and entertainment complexes are based here, and the wide embankment is a popular place for local people and tourists to stroll.

▼ *The famous street known as the Bund stretches for 1.6 km (1 mile) along the west bank of the Huangpu River.*

A high-rise city

Shanghai's population of nearly 24 million makes it the largest city in China and the world. With so many people to house and so little land to build on, the city's planners decided that the only way to build was up! In Shanghai, every skyscraper has to be built on deep concrete piles to stop it sinking into the marshy ground of the delta.

