



Ai Lao Mountain

A RETURN TO QIAN JIA ZHAI

The Ai Lao range is China's most vibrant evergreen forest, with vegetation covering more than eighty percent of the mountains, comprised of hundreds of species of plants and more than seventy kinds of large arboreal trees, including several varieties of *Camellia sinensis*. The highest peak is around 3,000 meters. There are also vibrant ecologies of animals: everything from Bengal tigers and leopards to bears, rare birds, cobras and monkeys. Yunnan is a lush and vibrant province, with fertile soil, mists and fog and crystalline waters that flow down from the Himalayas to the West. Ai Lao is mostly situated between the two most important of these "Nine Dragons," as the major rivers are called: the Lishi/Yuanjiang and the Lincang. There are eight traditional villages in Ai Lao and seven tribes. They have all cooperated for as long as they can remember, most recently working together to build their own roads, electrical grid, water treatment facilities and schools.



*Our first fifteen-hour bus ride, called
“Getting to Know Each Other.”*



*Our Ai Lao cake, available now,
called “Mountain Gate.”*

Auntie Ai and her niece.

