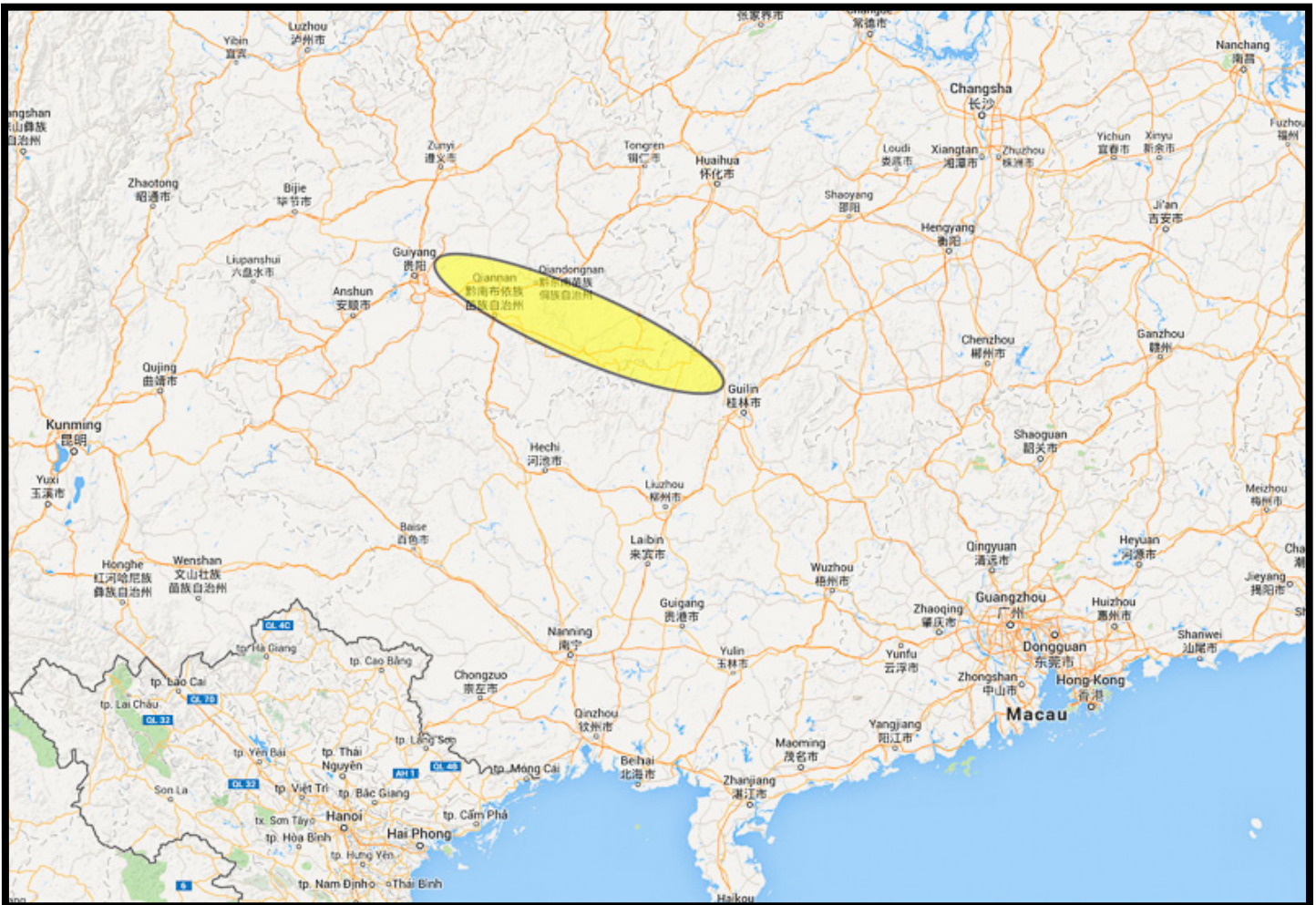


CHINA

THE PEOPLE

This issue is dedicated to the memory of my friend Todd Houghton



The highlighted area on the above map is the approximate area we traveled. The distance from Guilin to Guiyang is about 500 kilometers (or 300 miles) in a direct line. As one would expect, driving the mountain roads and taking many side trips off the main track, the distance we covered was significantly more than that and probably better measured by time than by miles. It took us about 8 days driving anywhere from 4-8 hours a day. There are few highways in this area, although they are just about to open a new super highway which will make the travel time much less in this area... and, I suspect, will make many of the areas we visited much more accessible and exposed to tourism than they are now.

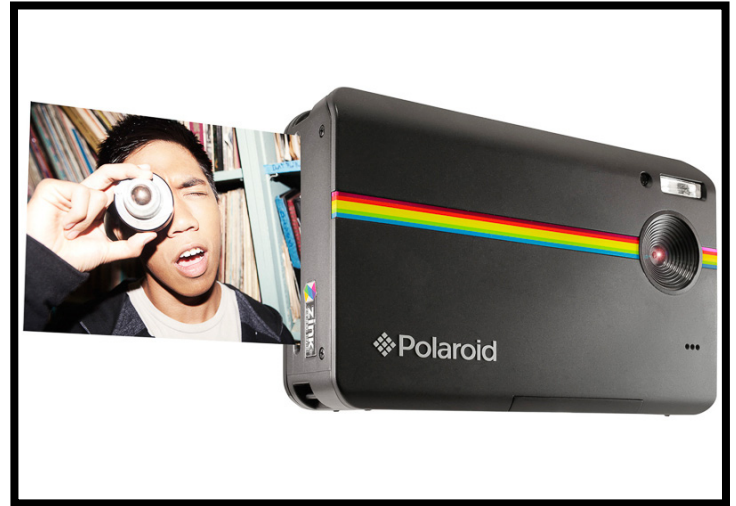
My New “Ambassador Camera”

For many years I carried an old Polaroid SX70 Land Camera on all my travels. I used that camera to give instant Polaroid photographs to the people I met, making instant friends, and thus I gave it the nickname “My Ambassador Camera”. Most of the time, my new friends allowed me to also photograph them using whatever my camera du jour was.

Polaroid had ceased manufacturer of the Polaroid SX70 cameras for many years, but continued to manufacturer the film, called “Time-Zero Film”. Then, in 2006 Polaroid ended the manufacture of the Time Zero, ending the use of an important tool and part of my travels and travel photography. It also ended an art form based upon that specific type of film, for myself and an entire community of artists that created what I call ‘Altered Polaroids’.

Before this last trip I happened to come across a newer version of the Polaroid instant camera, the Polaroid Z2300, (shown in the photograph above). While it did not revive the Altered Polaroids art form, it did provide for instant prints and is now “My Ambassador Camera”.

I bring this up because most of the portraits that follow were only possible because prior to me making the portrait photographs with my fancy DSLR camera, I had made and given a small Polaroid Z2300 instant print to many of them.



A couple of souvenir vendors outside our hotel in Yangshou.





This is one of my favorite images from this trip.

On a hike through some small hill-top villages we happened upon a group of men of which this man was one. I made a portrait of this man with my *Ambassador Camera* and gave it to him. You can see him holding it in his right hand. I have to be pretty close to the subject to make a portrait like image with my *Ambassador Camera* and I think due to that he was pretty solemn, nonplused and yet accommodating with my stranger self being in his personal space.

I felt I was imposing a bit on this man so did not make any further exposures other than the one. I continued on down the path a 100 feet or so and stopped to take in the potential photographic material there. Looking back up the path, the man I had photographed was watching me with a decidedly different expression. I thought, well maybe he would provide me a bit of an expression now that I was out his personal space, so I attached a long lens to my DSLR camera and took this image.

My subject, given some time to maybe reflect and watch me, now had a subdued smile and the gaze in his eyes making for what I feel is an expression of acceptance, appreciation, interest and fleeting friendship.

For me, this man is a kindred spirit.... a Chinese Flâneur...





Foot Bridge Tender
(Toll Collector)



A village “Situation Room”. These guys all shop at the same clothing and shoe store





These two fellows were watching Chris, a fellow traveler, perform some magic tricks. They were amazed at Chris's card and rope tricks, the enjoyment very clear in their expressions.



The elder lady thanked me for the *Ambassador Camera* print and smiled for me, the child not so much. I think he tried to eat the print soon after this was taken. He was not the only one. Several children seemed to like the Polaroid taste.



This elder lady was doing something like crocheting, but very different. She used her feet to hold things and the detail of her work was amazing, defying her apparently aging eyes. In an upcoming Flying Pig Adventures travelogue, I will be showing some street scene photography and will include a photograph of her actually doing this. Maybe someone has the right name for what she was doing.



I took a photograph of this young girl with my *Ambassador Camera* and gave it to the lady on the right. She smiled in approval, but did not seem to want to smile so openly when I photographed her. I like this image that she did allow me to take because even though she did not smile openly, I think she has a great expression of joy.





These fellows are allowed to have rifles, unusual in China. They are a small caliber black powder kind of rifle used for small game, not too much of a revolutionary threat to the current government.

This young man kept a pretty close eye on me while I walked through *his* village.



Okay, not quite up to Herb Ritts standard, but the best I could do in the hill towns of China...



Wally & Wendy Hampton

.END