



HiddenChina.net

Yunnan Discovery Tour

- Discover Northern Yunnan, one of China's most famous travel destinations
- Travel from the "Spring City" Kunming to Tibetan Northern Yunnan
- Visit must-sees such as Kunming, Dali, Shangri-La and Lijiang
- Learn more about the matrilineal Naxi society and its Dongba Shamans
- Enjoy a fauna and flora of one of the world's most diversified ecological areas, which boasts half of China's animal and plants species



12-DAYS YUNNAN DISCOVERY TOUR

This trip is ideal for people who would like to get an overview of Yunnan and its scenery and cultures. Yunnan is not only famous for being one of the richest ecological systems world-wide; it also boasts many of China's minorities, such as Tibetans, Yi, Naxi and Mosuo.

- Best travel dates: April, May and September, October
- Destinations: Kunming, Dali, Shangri-La (Zhongdian), Lijiang
- Duration: 12 days
- Starting in: Kunming
- Ending in: Kunming
- Group size : min. 6 pax, max. 12 pax

QUICK INTRODUCTION

Yunnan is probably one of the most visited destinations by Chinese travelers. Nevertheless, Chinese travelers mostly visit the obvious tourist attractions such as Lijiang and go on less adventurous journeys than most western travelers.



Yunnan boasts half of China's animal and plant species and is also China's most diversified province, offering more or less everything from rain forest to close to 7000 meter high peaks. With one third of China's ethnological minorities, it provides an insight into these cultures.

With its mild climate, Yunnan basically means "south of the clouds" and its capital Kunming is also known as "spring city". During this trip we take you from Kunming

northwards to Dali, which is mostly inhabited by the Dai minority. From the shores of Dali's Erhai Lake, we travel further northwards to China's self-proclaimed Shangri-La (Zhongdian) named after the famous novel "Lost Horizon" by James Hilton¹, where we discover the local Tibetan area.

From Shangri-La we head southwards to the "Tiger Leaping Gorge", one of the earth's deepest gorges. Later in the afternoon we head to Lijiang where we spend the rest of the holidays and learn more about the fascinating matrilineal Naxi society and its Dongba Shamans. From Lijiang you will take the flight to Kunming for your flight back home.

¹ recommended literature: „Lost Horizon“ Author: James Hilton ISBN: 0-671-66427-1

DAY 1 KUNMING (D)

Pick up from the airport by bus, transfer to the Green Lake Hotel****. First explore the city and its interesting local markets. Welcome dinner in an excellent Muslim restaurant.

DAY 2 KUNMING (B/L/D)

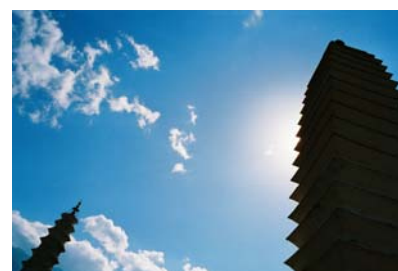
After breakfast visit the Green Lake and the nearby Yuan Tong Monastery, a unique Buddhist site which unites all 3 great schools of Buddhism, then you will have time to stroll through the center of the city. Enjoy a Korean meal for lunch in the area of the Yunnan University with its restaurants from all over Asia. In the afternoon, transfer to the Western Hills, site of a great system of temples and alleyways carved into the towering rocks by a Taoist monk. Weather permitting, you will have wonderful views over Dian Chi Lake and Kunming City and its environs. Ascent by cable car optional.

**DAY 3 KUNMING - DALI (B/L/D)**

By plane we transfer from Kunming to Dali in the morning, which is the former capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom, an empire that stretched from Burma to Canton and Vietnam between the 7th and 13th century. Check-in at the high-class Landscape Hotel**** in the centre of the Old Town. Exploration of the picturesque ancient town and traditional Bai dinner (the Bai are famous all over South-West China for their culinary skills).

DAY 4 DALI (B/L)

In the morning departure for a boat trip on the massive Erhai Lake, taste local seafood on the 'Golden Island' with its almost Mediterranean flair, accompanied by a Tea Specialty of the Bai People. The rest of the day is free for strolling through the old town and relaxing in one of Dali's famous cafes.

**DAY 5 DALI (B/L/D)**

In the morning excursion to the Zhonghe Temple by cable car, located beautifully on Cangshan Mountain about 500 m above Dali Old Town. Have lunch at the "Higherland Inn", only a short but steep hike away from the cable car station. Possibility for some hiking in the forests of Cangshan. Before dinner visit the Temple of Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy in Chinese Buddhism, who is said to have saved the Dali Kingdom in the disguise of an old woman.

DAY 6 DALI - STONE TREASURE MOUNTAIN - SHANGRI LA (B/L/D)

From Dali, the road is traversing marvelous landscapes until reaching the Yangtze Valley. En route, the grottoes and frescoes of the Stone Treasure Mountain wait to be explored, located beautifully in the green pine forests of Jianchuan. In the late afternoon, we reach the Tibetan Plateau, with an altitude of 3300 m the highest county in Yunnan Province. Overnight in the Holy Palace Hotel**** near the centre of the town, and a special hot-pot-dinner in a fine restaurant in the Old Town.

DAY 7 SHANGRI LA (B/L/D)

After breakfast, visit the Shangri-La Old Town with its interesting mix of ethnic groups and different housing styles. Optional walk uphill to the "100-Chicken-Temple", overlooking the Old Town, New Town and the surrounding villages. In the afternoon, explore one of the most important strongholds of Tibetan Buddhism in Yunnan, the Songtsanlin Monastery with its over 700 monks and eight ceremonial halls. Get to know the Lhasa cuisine during a Tibetan dinner.

**DAY 8 SHANGRI LA (B/L/D)**

The morning offers an easy hiking tour amidst impressive scenery near a little monastery in the environs of Shangri-la. The monastery belongs to the Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism and is located on top of a little hill above an unspoilt Tibetan village. The afternoon is free for relaxing, drinking coffee in one of the old town's nice cafes or for shopping on one of Shangri-La's local markets. Local meal for dinner.

DAY 9 SHANGRI LA - LIJIANG (B/L/D)

Transfer back south to Lijiang. En route, visit the Tiger Leaping Gorge, one of the deepest gorges in the world. During the millenniums, the Yangtze River carved a gorge into the massifs of the Haba and Jade Dragon Snow Mountains, both over 5000 m high with their glacier peaks towering over the rice terraces on the Yangtze banks. After arrival in Lijiang in the afternoon, check-in at the excellent Grand Lijiang Hotel***+. In the evening the Old Town of Lijiang invites the visitor to explore its winding alleys.

DAY 10 LIJIANG (B)

In the morning, excursion up onto Lion Hill, with its beautiful views over the tiled roofs of the Lijiang old town and its quiet surrounding parks. The rest of the day is free; one might take a stroll through the ancient town, go shopping or just relax near the little streams that flow through picturesque Lijiang.

DAY 11 LIJIANG (B/L/D)

After breakfast transfer to Yuhu, home to Austrian-American explorer Joseph Rock, who lived there from 1922 until 1949, pioneering in exploring the indigenous flora and various peoples in the Sino-Tibetan border area. From his home, we go to the Yufeng Temple and further to Baisha Village, the former capital of the Naxi Kingdom, located on the Lijiang plains, through which the Mongols led by Kublai Khan invaded the Nanzhao Kingdom and conquered the Chinese Imperial armies in the 13th century. Baisha's old Taoist/Buddhist frescoes are some of the last of their kind in China and show a gathering of immortals and deities of both religions. In the evening visit a unique concert of traditional Chinese Taoist music performed on original instruments.

**DAY 12 LIJIANG - KUNMING (B)**

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Kunming.

[Contact us](#) per mail for a tailor-made itinerary.

Our other classic tours in China:

[18-days Highlights of China](#)

[15-days train and bus trip Almaty - Beijing along the Silk Road](#)

RATES

RATE PER PERSON IN TWIN: ON REQUEST

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: ON REQUEST

INCLUDED SERVICES:

- experienced tour leader and local tour guides for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- all transfers as mentioned in the itinerary in comfortable tourist bus (air conditioned)
- accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- full board except on free afternoons/evenings (outlined as B,L,D: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)
- all highway fees as mentioned in the itinerary
- flight tickets Kunming-Dali, Lijiang-Kunming economy class
- all entrance fees as mentioned in the itinerary
- boat tickets and cable car for days 4 and 5

NOT INCLUDED:

- expenses of personal nature such as laundry, tips, etc.
- alcoholic drinks
- cable car ticket at the Western Hills (about 2,50 Euro per person)
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies (REGA membership is recommended)

INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT!

IMPORTANT NOTE

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and carries also a certain amount of surprises and risks. HiddenChina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides are trying to get out a maximum of comfort for our clients. All our guides are carefully chosen and selected by their abilities and experience. Nevertheless, there might be surprises. We hereby express that a voyage in China needs patience, adaptation and tolerance. In addition due to lack of infrastructure, in rural areas in China there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of hiddenChina.net accept - upon signing a contract - to be aware of these circumstances, and accept changes which may occur in order to keep security and comfort of the clients according to the circumstances to a maximum during the trip.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS

Traveling in China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from “top” in selected 5* Hotels in the big cities to “very poor”. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, the clients have to be ready for unexpected changes (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides or flooding) or other surprises. In hotels by example, it can happen that you will get phone calls in the middle of the night, offering you a special massage service. The following chapters will tell you more about what you should consider when traveling in China.

FACE

You may have heard it before and for the experienced China traveler it's a “must know”: In China, everything is about “giving and losing face”. Chinese people are very proud of their culture, food and traditions. Respect this fact and try not to bring a Chinese into an embarrassing situation, as he or she might lose his face in front of coworkers, friends, family members or even the authorities. Try to be polite, smile and - especially to English speaking Chinese - always praise their language skills. Chinese can be considered as reactive people. If you treat Chinese people in an arrogant and harsh way, you will be treated the same way. When you feel cheated, try to solve the situation in a gentle and charming way. You will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. For every problem in China there is a solution. It's up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is contra productive in the most cases.

SECURITY

Especially large cities in China are extremely safe. Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters when foreigners are involved. However, be aware that pick pocketing happens everywhere, so keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your luggage unattended. When going out at night, China's large cities are much safer than practically all European cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking in a dark alley even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

HEALTH

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor before you go on a China trip and make all the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of Malaria remedies. As the avian influenza is getting more and more a serious issue in Asia and a pandemic outbreak will happen sooner or later, the traveler should also consider buying a box of “Tamiflu” before the trip begins.

When traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. We will always take care of taking you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, your body will have to deal with a wide range of unknown food, spices and other ingredients in China and also with different bacteria and viruses than in Europe’s clean environment. When being on a 3 week China trip, you have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. To cure them it is recommended to take pharmaceuticals, which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you will lose during a diarrhea. From our longtime China experience, one of the best remedies is to eat well-boiled Chinese mushrooms and bananas as well as to drink tomato juice. On many of our private trips, this helped much better than the Western medication like e.g. Imodium. Always take toilet paper with you, as you won’t find any in public toilets! Travelers going to high altitude areas such as Tibet are also recommended to take a supply of Diamox in case of altitude sickness. Please get advice from your doctor.

CLIMATE

China has several different climatic zones. From high-altitude to sub-tropic and desert climate, there is everything. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. E.g. in southern China, this time mostly starts late May / early June and lasts until August. This year, in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt the trip according to your travel time and avoid the areas with heavy rain.

LUGGAGE

Most airlines allow you to check-in 20 kg of luggage (economy class). It is not allowed to take nutrition products (cheese, meat) as well as pornographic material. Please ensure that your “Swiss army knife” and other “dangerous products” are checked in with your luggage and not in the hand luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. So if you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of luggage to China. However, whenever you forgot something, don’t worry, more or less everything you need in daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Be aware that many customs authorities like the ones in Paris and Milan can fine you heavily when finding out that you try to import faked products from China such as Yves St Laurent bags, Gucci items or Prada clothes.

SHOPPING

Except for imported luxury goods and high-end electrical equipment such as beamers or imported laptops, more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Western Europe. Especially clothes can be bought at a very low price. Many shopping areas offer faked products (sometimes in extremely good quality). However, in many places where no prices are indicated you have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a faked product, especially at the airport in Paris, you can get into trouble. The fight against faked products is now at a point, that authorities can or will take away your purchase and will heavily fine you. For the golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls etc. at a very low price. For most Europeans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD you pay between 8 and 10 RMB (about 1 EURO) and most of the movies are available even before they are shown in European cinemas. The advantage is that DVD's take away only little space and weight. But be aware that in many cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards are only accepted in major stores, 3* hotels and upwards and western restaurants. Money can be withdrawn at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels. Please note that you need to show your passport for changing money.

BARGAINING

As mentioned in the "shopping" chapter, in many places you have to bargain for your price. Western tourists are mostly looked at as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the price will be set 400 – 500% above the price the vendor is ready to sell his or her merchandise. The first rule is to go below the first offered price. So when the vendor asks for 100 RMB, you can set your offer to 20-25 RMB. Then it depends on your bargaining skills at what price you will get it. A simple trick is, when it seems too expensive for you, to walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also note, always stay friendly and smile when bargaining. Once you agreed for a price, you have to buy the product. Otherwise you and the vendor will lose face.

LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English speaking taxi drivers or personnel in the shops. Therefore it is recommended to take a phrase book with you, where you can show what you need.

Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners. However, Chinese are also very proud of their country and culture and some behavior will be strange for travelers who come to China for the first time. In many places (even sometimes in public buses) people smoke a lot and for the non-smoker, China can be a terrible place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by strange noises. The best way to get around it is to ignore it and live with it. For the smoker on the other hand China is a paradise, as it is more or less everywhere allowed to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap, although some foreign brands might be faked. Please also note that you might be invited to test your drinking skills. The easiest way to avoid it without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to liver problems you're not allowed to drink.

TIPPING

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in the 5* surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants or taxis and hotels (except 5* hotels) tipping is a no-no. However, tour guides and drivers of organized tours should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid with 10 Euro per day and rely on additional income. With Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides always get a commission in the shops, where they make most of their salary. As European groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, guides and drivers have to rely on tips.

Generally a tip of RMB 30 per person and day is reasonable. When you are in a tour group it is recommended that the group collects the tips and hands it to the guides and drivers in an envelope. It is also very helpful to take some souvenirs with you, like for example watches or picture postcards from your home country.

SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe, but there are also topics which should be avoided and topics which are perfect for small talk.

One of the most common greetings in China is “Ni chi fan le ma?” which literally means “Have you eaten yet?” This emphasizes the importance of eating in China, and it is much more a social event than in the West, therefore food is always a welcomed topic.

In some cases you also might be confronted with rather private questions such as about your marital status and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don't feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it's just small talk. Sometimes, especially in business surroundings, people also might ask you about your salary, which is quite normal in China. Here you can escape (if you don't want to tell the truth) by telling some fictional figure, or when telling the truth and your counterpart's eyebrows rise, you explain how expensive the life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political related such as the Cultural Revolution, critics against the system or chairman Mao, the Tibet and Taiwan question, human rights or how to treat animals. If you want to have answers to these questions you might do it through your guide. Do not overload your guide with too many hard questions in the beginning though. Tactically it is wise to hide these questions in some compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are more open to discuss critical topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people tend to touch you, which is not a sign of homosexuality but just a sign of sympathy. In such a situation, when you feel uncomfortable, don't react in a rude or harsh way; just try to escape the contact by elegant means. Mostly a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

TRAFFIC AND TAXI

The public transport system in China is basically quite convenient. Every major city has an airport; there are many train routes (even though there is mostly only one train per day between two destinations) and public buses. Public buses are very cheap although the comfort is sometimes a bit poor.

In the cities, the most convenient public transport is the taxi. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be careful that on major tourist sites there are also drivers trying to make extra money. When a taxi has no taximeter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. However, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end. Just tell him that you pay the negotiated price, nothing more, and nothing less. Please also note that most drivers don't speak English. So take a bilingual map, a taxi card or a guidebook with you. Tell the reception in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway fares have to be paid by the customer and not the driver (for example, in Beijing the fee for the airport expressway is 10 Yuan for passenger cars). This fee will be added to the amount shown on the taximeter.

USEFUL THINGS TO TAKE ON A CHINA TRIP

Several Swiss army knives, a compass, pharmaceuticals (see health chapter), a first-aid kit, tape, watches (not too expensive), money clip, camera (films can be bought and developed on spot for a very reasonable price), deodorant (rarely available in China), sunglasses, altimeter (for Tibet and Himalaya tours), GPS, safety belt for money, literature, guidebooks, credit-/bank card and a lot of patience.

For ladies: tampons are rarely available in China.