



Hiddenchina.net

Western China Mountain & Grassland Motorbike Tour

- Explore Sichuan on this 250cc motorbike tour
- Gain an insight into local Tibetan families' way of life, their customs and culture
- Visit two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Huanglong and Jiuzhaigou Valley
- Contribute to the survival of endangered Chinese animals with your visit to the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding



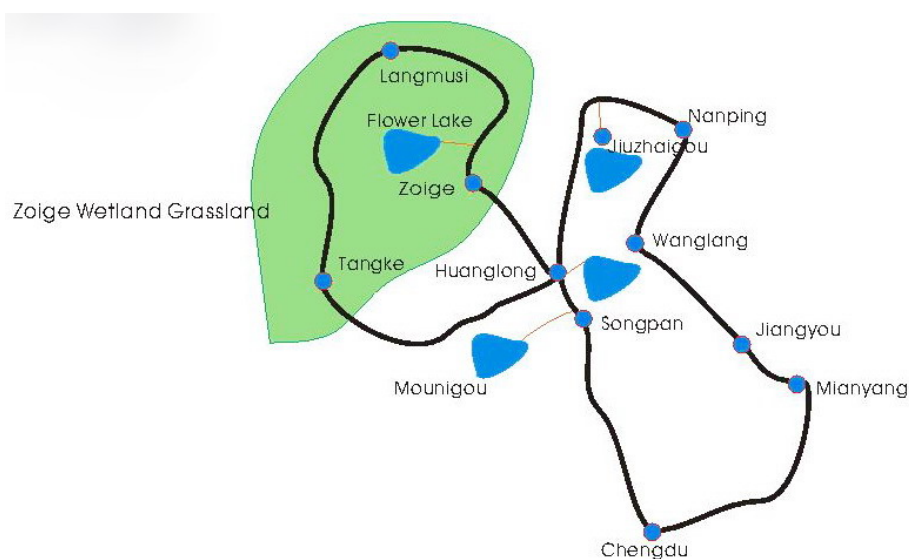
MOUNTAIN & GRASSLAND MOTORBIKE TOUR

This tour will lead you to rural parts of Sichuan province, its grasslands, marshes, mountains and lakes and is specially designed for people, who want to explore this remote and unspoiled region by motorbike to get away from the cities hustle and bustle.

- Best travel date: June, July, August (rainy season in July and August); other dates also possible upon request
- Destinations: Chengdu, Songpan, Huanglong, Zoige, Langmu, Tangke, Jiuzhaigou Valley, Nanping, Wanglang, Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding
- Duration: 11 days
- Starting in: Chengdu
- Ending in: Chengdu
- Group size: min. 2 pax, max. 15 pax

QUICK INTRODUCTION**Sichuan:**

The province of Sichuan lies in central-western China and is one of the country's major industrial bases. The territory of the province and its vicinity were the cradle of unique local civilizations, which can be dated to at least 15th century BC. The area lies in the Sichuan basin and is surrounded by the Himalaya to the west, Qinling range to the north, and mountainous areas of Yunnan to the south. The Yangtze River flows through the basin and thus is upstream to areas of eastern China. The Minjiang River in central Sichuan is a tributary of the upper Yangtze River, which it joins at Yibin. The majority of the population is Han Chinese, who are found scattered throughout the province. Significant minorities of Tibetans, Yi, Qiang and Naxi reside in the western portion, which is a part of historic Tibet's Kham region.



DAY 1 CHENGDU (D)

Upon arrival, you will be picked up at the airport by our guide and transferred to the "Sichuan Hotel" (4*). In the hotel your guide will brief you on the program of the days ahead and we will make final preparations for the trip.

The capital of Sichuan - Chengdu - is located in southwest China. It is the fifth most populous city in China and also one of the country's most important transportation and communication hubs. More than four thousand years ago, the prehistorical Bronze Age culture of Jinsha established itself in this region. The fertile Chengdu Plain, on which Chengdu is located, is called "Tianfu Zhi Guo" in Chinese, which means "the Heavenly Country".

DAY 2 CHENGDU - SONGPAN (B/L/D)

After breakfast we transfer from Chengdu to the ancient town of Songpan by bus. En route we will traverse the cities of Dujiangyan and Wenchuan and stay overnight at the "Songpan Hotel".

Songpan is located at an altitude of more than 3000m. It was originally built during the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) and rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644). Songpan used to be one of the important battle grounds and also an important hub for horse and tea trade.

DAY 3 SONGPAN - HUANGLONG: 69KM (B/L/D)

In the morning we check the motorbikes and then start our bike tour driving from Songpan to Huanglong Valley via Chuanzhusi.

The Huanglong Valley is situated in the north-west of Sichuan Province. It is made up of snow-capped peaks, waterfalls, hot springs, spectacular limestone formations, diverse forest ecosystems and the easternmost of all the Chinese glaciers. The area also boasts a population of endangered animals, including the Giant Panda and the Sichuan golden snub-nosed monkey. Huanglong was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1992.

You can go sightseeing or do some hiking in the valley. In the evening we drive back to Chuanzhusi and stay overnight at the "Huanglong Hotel". Although the road conditions are good, we will meet some traffic.

DAY 4 HUANGLONG - ZOIGE: 141KM (B/L/D)

Today we drive through Ganhaizi Nature Reserve to Zoige County and stay overnight at "Zoige Hotel". The town of Zoige (also called Roige or Ruoergai in Chinese) sits in the center of the Zoige Plateau, a high marshy plain that serves as breeding ground for many bird species. As we will be driving on unpaved roads, we will not encounter a lot of traffic.

DAY 5 ZOIGE - LANGMU: 112KM (B/L/D)

After breakfast we ride our bikes to the ancient town of Langmu via Axi Pasture, Wanmu Grassland and Mona Village. We will also explore the uninhabited Flower Lake region, where you can drive at top speed.

The small town of Langmu basically comprises a group of Tibetan monasteries around a valley, which are collectively known as the Langmu Monastery. Langmu means fairy in Tibetan. The monastery was so named because inside the cave is a rock bearing the resemblance of a beautiful young lady, believed to be the transformation of a fairy.



Again, we will not encounter much traffic as we will mostly be driving on unpaved roads. We stay overnight at a basic but clean guesthouse in Langmu.

DAY 6 LANGMU - TANGKE: 136KM (B/L/D)

We drive from Langmu through Zoige Grassland - at an altitude of 3400m to 3900m one of the world's highest altitude peat lands – to Tangke, which is situated on the banks of the Yellow River. On the way



there you can visit a Tibetan herdsman's family to taste fresh milk, cheese and butter tea. We will lodge in a small guesthouse in Tangke.

We will meet very little traffic today. If you want to drive at great speed, you will get the chance to leave the main road from time to time and explore the marshes. These marshes consist of approximately 10'000 km² of peat bogs, sedge marshes, lakes and

wet grasslands, interspersed with low hills and drier grasslands, which are inhabited by Tibetan people, who are almost exclusively pastoralists with vast herds of horses, sheep, yaks and goats.

DAY 7 TANGKE - HUANGLONG: 167KM (B/L/D)

From Tangke, we make our way back to Huanglong via Waqie, Sedi and Huangsheng and stay overnight at the "Huanglong Hotel". Enjoy the beauty of nature around Jiuqu (Nine-Bend) Yellow River. We will encounter little traffic.

DAY 8 HUANGLONG - JIUZHAIGOU VALLEY - NANPING: 71KM (B/L/D)

Toady we drive to the Jiuzhaigou (lit. "Valley of Nine Villages") Nature Reserve, where you get the opportunity to take a hike in this jagged valley stretching over 720 km². It reaches a height of more than 4,800m, thus comprising a series of diverse forest ecosystems and is particularly interesting for their narrow conic karst land forms and spectacular waterfalls.

Some 140 bird species inhabit the valley, and it boasts a number of endangered plant and animal species, including the Great Panda and the Sichuan takin. Afterwards we drive to Nanping County via White River and stay overnight at the “Nanping Hotel”.

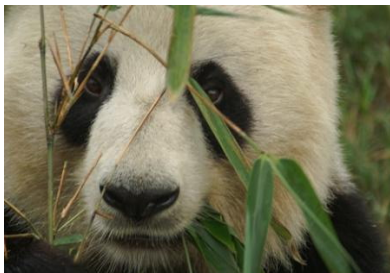
DAY 9	NANPING - WANGLANG: 50KM	(B/L/D)
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From Nanping we drive to Wanglang Town. After check-in at the “Wanglang Hotel” we ride to “White Horse Tibetan Village”, where you can visit a Tibetan family, have lunch in their house and gain an insight into their customs and culture.



DAY 10	WANGLANG - CHENGDU - GIANT PANDA BREEDING STATION	(B/L/D)
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We leave for Chengdu by bus via Jiangyou and Mianyang. HiddenChina.net works in close cooperation with the Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding. With your visit you can contribute to the survival of this endangered species. We provide the opportunity to get to know the pandas under the guidance of an experienced keeper, feed the animals, and help perform a keeper's daily tasks. Furthermore we provide access to the laboratories under the guidance of experienced scientists.



During one day you will gain an insight into current research, for example, an understanding of breeding and artificial insemination (AI) and its problems and successes.

The Research Base was founded in 1987. It has recently become a high profile tourist attraction and endangered species research and conservation facility, attracting visitors and scientists from around the world. Leaders of the Central Government, Provincial Government, and Municipal Government, as well as foreign parties, have contributed to building the 370'000 m² facility, which includes research buildings, laboratories, veterinary facilities, a nursery, a welcome center, a giant panda museum, and naturalistic enclosures for giant pandas, red pandas and black-necked cranes. With an active research program and plans to expand to 2 km², the Research Base represents China's highest goals for environmental protection, conservation, and wildlife management. Its mission is the preservation of endangered indigenous Chinese wildlife through research, conservation, and education. The animals at the Research Base live in large naturalistic habitats, which help visitors understand how these animals live in the wild. Many types of bamboo, trees, and flowers thrive at the Research Base, creating a feeling of immersion into a natural landscape.

You will stay overnight at the “Sichuan Hotel” (4*).

DAY 11	CHENGDU	(B)
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According to your flight schedule, we will arrange a sightseeing program in Chengdu City. Transfer to the airport for your flight home. End of trip.

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

Our other motorbike tours in China:

[20 days sidecar tour Xinjiang, Gansu, Shaanxi](#)

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
- 250cc motorbikes throughout the trip
- temporary motorbike driving license in China
- third party liability insurance for motorbikes
- cargo trailer for luggage, equipment, motorbikes and transfers on day 2 and day 10
- car phone and walkie-talkies for communication during the trip
- steel-made oxygen bottles which will last approx. 3 hours every time they are used
- medicine bag, first aid bag, one bath tent and solar-powered camp shower for each person
- accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- outside the cities accommodation in basic, but clean guest houses in double rooms
- full board except on free afternoons/evenings (described as B,L,D: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner); including coffee and picnic lunch
- entrance fees to sightseeing spots mentioned in the itinerary
- all transfers and highway fees mentioned in the itinerary
- simple cooker and dishware for each person

NOT INCLUDED:

- personal expenses such as laundry, tips etc.
- transports not mentioned in the itinerary (such as taxis in the evening, etc.)
- drinks and all meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies

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.