

EXPLORE!



Festivals of Yunnan

14 days

China - Trip code SFY

Festivals of Yunnan

This adventurous tour takes us into China's Yunnan Province where we spend time watching fascinating annual festivals and discovering ancient minority cultures. We welcome in the New Year at Dejilin Monastery before walking through the dramatic Tiger Leaping Gorge and take the chance to watch colourful dances and statues being paraded through towns. This tour explores a rarely visited part of southern China and gives a chance to see a lifestyle that few visitors to China ever see.

Trip highlights

- ★ **New Year celebrations** - Welcome in the New Year at Dejilin Monastery, watching traditional dances, listen to lamas chanting and taking blessings for good luck
- ★ **Shangri La** - Visit the dramatic Songtzing Monastery, known as the 'Small Potala'
- ★ **Ancestor Worship Festival** - Join the residents of Zhoucheng Village as statues of gods are paraded from the temple to the village square
- ★ **Midu Huadeng Festival** - Watch dancers in colourful dragon, lion and crane costumes perform unique displays
- ★ **Shaxi** - Wander through the Friday market where brightly dressed Bai women trade rice and vegetables

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Chengdu

Our tour begins this evening in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province. After a tour briefing the evening is left free to rest.



Accommodation: Wenjun Mansion Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Meet the pandas and visit Wenshu Temple

This morning we head to the outskirts of the city to meet Chengdu's most famous residents, the giant pandas. The research centre opened in 1990 and covers an area of more than 90 acres. The resident pandas are said to be China's spoilt children and they spend their days relaxing in large enclosures whilst the staff bring them bamboo by the bucket load. The centre works hard to breed the pandas with the ultimate aim of releasing them back in to the wild. After visiting we head back to Chengdu to discover the Wenshu Temple. Built during the Tang Dynasty the monastery is home to more than 500 paintings and calligraphy exhibits as well as over 300 Buddha statues, including a rare jade Buddha bought from Burma in 1922. This evening we take the flight to Shangri La.



Accommodation: Shangri-la Impression Boutique Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Visit Songtzing Monastery and visit a local market

Travelling by local public bus we start with the Songtzing Monastery, known locally as the 'Small Potala' as it bears a resemblance to the Potala Palace in Lhasa. The monastery follows the Yellow Hat sect of Buddhism and is home to 500 lamas. After spending some time soaking up the peaceful atmosphere we stroll around the lake which sits in front of this beautiful monastery. Making our way back to town we walk through the old streets until reaching the temple marking the centre of the town.



Accommodation: Shangri-la Impression Boutique Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Watch the New Year celebrations at Dejilin Monastery

A short drive this morning takes us to Dejilin Monastery where we watch the New Year Celebrations. The New Year is celebrated from the 1st to the 10th of the first lunar month. For the first nine days people celebrate in their own villages and then on the final day a large community celebration is held around the monastery. The activities last most of the day and locals come to picnic in the grounds of the monastery, often singing and dancing to entertain the gods as they pray for good luck in the coming year. In the early afternoon we leave the monastery and drive to Tiger Leaping Gorge, said to be named after a local watched a tiger leap from one side of the gorge to the other to avoid crossing the river.



Accommodation: Tina's Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Walk through Tiger Leaping Gorge. Drive to Shaxi

After breakfast we take a short drive to Upper Tiger Leaping Gorge and then walk for approximately 30 minutes down towards the Yangtse River. During the walk there are views of the gorge which in some places is less than 30 metres across. We return via the same route. The path is mainly steps so a walking pole is useful. After our walk we will make our way to Shaxi, a small village on the Tea and Horse Trail and our home for the next two nights. On the way we stop at Jianchuan where we can see traditional houses of the Bai People. The Bais hold the colour white in high esteem and typically women wear white dresses with sleeveless jackets in red or blue with shoes embroidered in white cloth. Clothing is often adorned with Bai symbols for snow, the moon, flowers and the wind.



Accommodation: Aoxiu Zige Hotel (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Explore Shaxi and Xinjiao Temple

This morning we will wander through the streets and village square of shaxi and visit the Xinjiao Temple before leaving the village through the east gate and taking a short walk across farmland to reach a small village. If we're lucky we'll meet with the locals and learn a little more about life in this remote region. We'll walk back to Shaxi village in the late afternoon.



Accommodation: Aoxiu Zige Hotel (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Hike on Shibaoshan Mountain before travelling to Zhoucheng

Leaving Shaxi this morning we drive to Shadenqing where we leave our bus and hike up Shibaoshan Mountain. The walk will take approximately three hours and follows a defined path, with sections of steps that can be steep in some places. During the walk we visit ancient grottos and small temples that dot the mountain. Leaving the mountain we drive to Erhai Lake before spending tonight in Zhoucheng Village, one of the biggest Bai villages in the region. On arrival we will visit the weekly market where the locals trade rice, vegetables and often pigs and cattle. We will stay in a small guesthouse whilst we are here, depending on the size of our group we may be split across two guesthouses.



Accommodation: Gudao and Shuyuan Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Attend Zhoucheng's Ancestor Worship Festival

Today we witness the village's annual Ancestor Worship Festival. The villagers come together to worship the gods of the village, which can be a real person, an animal or a hero from history or folklore. The festivities begin at the village temple with lots of singing and dancing and then people parade through the village carrying statues of their gods to reach the main square for a performance of Chinese Opera. We will have dinner with the villagers tonight, either in the temple or at a local farmhouse.



Accommodation: Gudao and Shuyuan Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 9 - Travel to Mizhi Village for the Midu Huadeng Festival

We start early this morning and travel approximately three hours to Jinli Village where we spend the day watching the locals celebrating the Midu Huadeng Festival - also known as the flower lantern festival. The festival originates from the Ming Dynasty and was a display of soldiers practising defence and attack moves. As there were no battles to be fought the displays transformed into dances and now villages from all around come to display their unique dances. Often costumes are animal themed with many dragon, lion and cranes being depicted.



Accommodation: Juli Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 10 - Watch the closing day of the festival. Drive to Dali

This morning we watch some more dances from the Midu Huadeng Festival. After lunch we will drive to Dali, set on a lake with a beautiful mountain backdrop.



Accommodation: Landscape Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Discover the Three Pagodas and ChongSheng Temple

After breakfast we travel back to Zhoucheng Village to see the final part of the Ancestor Worship Festival. The villagers carry statues of their gods from the village square back to the temple where they will remain until next year's festival. Returning to Dali we will visit the ChongSheng Temple, the largest Buddhist Temple in the area and home to the Three Pagodas which are over 1000 years old and Dali's most famous landmark.



Accommodation: Landscape Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Explore the Taoist Temple on Weibaoshan Mountain en route to Weishan

Today we drive to the town of Weishan, another major Bai town. We will explore the old section of the town which was once the ancient capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom and former stop on the old Tea and Horse Road. In the afternoon we drive approximately 12 kilometres out of town to Weibaoshan Mountain where we follow a path to the Taoist Temple and Ancestor Temple of the Yi People which are built in the forest. We follow good, paved paths but there are some steep sections and some steps.



Accommodation: Shengxiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Drive to Kunming and visit the flower market

We head to Kunming today; a drive of approximately eight hours takes us to Yunnan's capital city. The city is large but with a very relaxed atmosphere and we will spend time exploring the town and its famous bird and flower market.



Accommodation: Green Lake View Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends in Kunming

Our tour ends in Kunming this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

5 nights simple guesthouse
7 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple hotel

Trip information

Country information

China Holidays & Tours

Climate

China has primarily a temperate climate, with a wide spectrum of extremes due to its huge area. Summer months are hot and rainy though in the south the climate is tropical and we can experience rain at any time of the year, often falling in sharp tropical rain-storms which are heavy but short lived. Winter is colder and drier, temperatures in Beijing can be as low as -12c.

Time difference to GMT

+8

Plugs

3 Pin Flat

Religion

Mainly Buddhist

Language

Mandarin

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

It is best to pack lots of layers for this tour, as although day time can be warm, temperatures can fall to below zero at night and even during the day whilst in Shangri La. It can be wet at this time of year so a light waterproof is useful.

Footwear

Comfortable footwear is recommended.

Luggage

15Kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Bedding is provided at the guesthouse but you may wish to bring a sheet sleeping bag.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £35 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

China Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£5

Dinner price

£6.00 - 10.00

Beer price

£2

Water price

£1.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Renminbi/Yuan

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Either EUR, USD or GBP.

Where To Exchange

In all towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. When changing money ask for a receipt so you can change Yuan back into your own currency when leaving China.

ATM Availability

All major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Most major restaurants and stores.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques can be changed in Hong Kong and at the Bank of China in all major cities but only during bank opening hours. Please note this is very time consuming and is not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

China: A visa is required by all nationalities. A single entry visa should be arranged in advance of travelling. In order to apply for your Chinese visa you will need to submit supporting documents from our local supplier confirming your itinerary and travel arrangements, which we will obtain on your behalf. So that we can provide this for you, and to ensure all local arrangements are in place, we require a copy of your passport no later than 8 weeks before you are due to start your trip. Once we have your passport copy we shall process and pass on the documents you require 6-8 weeks before your trip, please be mindful of this when applying for your visa. If you require the supporting documents earlier than this, please contact Explore so we can arrange this. Passengers wishing to extend their stay in China should be aware that current visa regulations only allow foreigners to stay in the country for up to 30 days. Please consider this when planning your trip. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

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Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.