

EXPLORE!

Naxi and Miao Festivals of Southern China

14 days

China - Trip code SNM



Naxi and Miao Festivals of Southern China

In the southern Chinese states of Yunnan and Guizhou we'll encounter many interesting ethnic groups and visit the festivals of two - the Naxi and the Small Flower Miao People. Joining the Eryueba Festival we witness how the Naxi people worship the gods of nature and at the Tiaohuapo Festival we join the Miao as they commemorate their migration to the region some 2000 years ago. Our journey takes us through wonderful mountain scenery stopping at waterfalls, lakes and small villages along the way.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Eryueba Festival** - Join the Naxi people as they celebrate and worship the gods of nature
- ★ **Tiaohuapo Festival** - See the colourful costumes of the Small Flower tribe of the Miao as they celebrate their migration to the area 2000 years ago
- ★ **Baishuitai white water terraces** - A spectacular natural wonder and the spiritual home of the Naxi people
- ★ **Shangri La** - Visit the dramatic Songtzing Monastery, home to 500 Buddhist lamas who spend their days passing on their spiritual wisdom to others
- ★ **Hualong village** - Meet local families in their homes for an insight into an ancient way of life
- ★ **Family homestay** - Spend two nights living with the Miao in Nande village

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 trip in Chengdu

With a history that stretches back nearly 2500 years, Chengdu marks the spot where the southern Silk Road began. The city boasts a rich cultural pedigree that has produced some of China's most famous poets, including the 'Chinese Shakespeare', De Fu, who lived in the 8th century and is survived by almost 1500 hugely influential poems. Chengdu is also famed for its cuisine, with chili being one of the main ingredients, and is considered to be home to the tea drinking culture of China.



Accommodation: Wenjun Mansion Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Explore Chengdu and visit the Panda Research Centre

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. In the afternoon we visit the old town of Chengdu. Originally built 300 years ago, parts were destroyed and rebuilt in recent years, but it is still possible to experience what the old Chengdu was like with narrow streets, pretty courtyards, tea houses and shops. Later we visit Qingyang Palace, the largest and oldest Taoist Palace in China. Constructed during the Tang dynasty over 1000 years ago, most of the buildings we can see today date from the 1600s and have been restored to their original state in recent years. After our visit we take the early evening flight to Shangri La.



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



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Discover Songtzing Monastery and visit a local market at Shangri La

Shangri La is at an altitude of 3200m so our sightseeing here is kept relaxed to help us acclimatise. Travelling by public bus we visit 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 tranquil atmosphere we stroll around the lake which sits in front of this beautiful monastery. Making our way back to town, we'll walk through the narrow streets stopping at a local market before reaching the Guishan Temple which marks the centre of the town and is the location of an enormous prayer wheel.



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



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Explore Napa Lake and the Baishuitai White Water Terraces. Meet the people of the Yi tribe

Napa Lake is a large peaceful wetland area which attracts many birds including bar-headed geese and elegant black-necked cranes, a rare species revered by Tibetan Buddhists who believe that previous incarnations of the Dalai Lama were carried from monastery to monastery on their backs. We'll walk along the shore for a couple of hours to enjoy the beauty and serenity of the area, spotting yaks and sheep grazing in the nearby fields and visiting a couple of the small Tibetan hamlets that are located along the edge of the lake. In the afternoon we drive approximately four hours to Baishuitai White Water Terraces. On the way we stop at villages of the Yi people where the houses are mostly made of wood and mud, the way they have been for generations. We'll learn how the Yi have a belief system that recognises many gods, reveres their ancestors and is strongly influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, and we'll see how they still farm their land with age old traditional methods. The terraces of Baishuitai are a spectacular sight set amongst lush green scenery. Formed by calcium in the spring water leaving deposits as it tumbles down the mountainside, the pure white basins are filled with clear blue water.



Accommodation: Baodan Hotel (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Join the Naxi People as they celebrate their Eryueba Festival

The Naxi are an ethnic minority group that consider the white water terraces to be the origin of their culture. At the time of the

Eryueba Festival they gather near the terraces to worship the gods of nature and the spirits of the natural world. The 'Akabala Dance' will be performed in a forest clearing accompanied by traditional songs. The dance venerates nature and the gods and is performed by people from Wushuwan village just once a year for the festival, a truly rare event to witness! Each family finds a place in the forest, makes a fire and cooks a lunch of chicken, pork and vegetables. We'll wander round the area and meet the hospitable Naxi, who will be more than happy to talk to us about this special time and their culture. We'll enjoy our own picnic lunch in the forest before joining the large gathering next to the terraces where there'll be more dancing around a musician playing a Lusheng, an ancient instrument made of bamboo. Once the day's festivities draw to a close, we depart for Middle Tiger Leaping Gorge, a journey of around two and a half hours by road.



Accommodation: Tina's Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Walk through Tiger Leaping Gorge and drive to Shaxi

After breakfast we take a short drive to Upper Tiger Leaping Gorge and then walk for approximately forty minutes down towards the Yangtse River. During the walk there are spectacular views of the gorge which in some places is less than 30 metres across with sheer vertical sides. The path is mainly steps so a walking pole is useful. After returning on the same path we will make our way to Shaxi, a small village on the Tea and Horse Trail that is around an hour's drive away. On the way we stop at Jianchuan where we can see the old houses and way of life of the Bai People. The Bais hold the colour white in high esteem and typically women wear white dresses with sleeveless jackets of red or blue and 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 7 - Visit Shaxi and Hualong villages and drive to Lijiang

We will wander through the main village square of Shaxi and visit the peaceful Xinjiao Temple, famous for its Buddhist murals painted by master Bao Zhang in the 15th Century. Leaving the village through the east gate we take a short walk across farmland to reach Hualong village. A small and welcoming village, we'll meet with the locals and learn a little about life in this remote region before taking a different path back to Shaxi. In the afternoon we drive to Lijiang, a journey of around two and a half hours.



Accommodation: Lijiang Azeroth Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Wander the old streets of Lijiang, discover the Black Dragon Pool and the Naxi village of Yuhu

A maze of cobbled streets and canals wind between rickety wooden buildings in Lijiang old town and we'll spend a couple of hours exploring before moving on to the Black Dragon Pool, a large lake which is a haven for birdlife with a pretty bridge and a temple on its banks. If the weather is clear we'll get lovely views of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain dominating the distant horizon. In the afternoon we'll head to Yuhu, an ancient Naxi village with houses made of local stone which is situated at the foot of the mountain. There is a small and fascinating museum dedicated to Joseph Rock, an explorer that made the village his base for researching and documenting the area, and who became one of the foremost experts on the Naxi people.



Accommodation: Lijiang Azeroth Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Fly to Guiyang, visit Xiashi village and stay with a local Miao family in Nande

We fly to Guiyang this morning, arriving around midday before driving for approximately two hours to Xiashi. A traditional village of Dong people, we'll wander Xiashi's old streets discovering old houses and ancient drum towers. Highly impressive pagoda-like structures, the Dong drum towers are intricately carved and designed to represent the four seasons and 12 months of the year. Originally used to call the villagers to a gathering to hear the punishment that the council of elders would dispense to wrong-doers, they now serve as a social centre for the old men of the village who meet to play cards, drink tea, smoke and chat - a great place for us to experience village life. We will continue to Nande village where we will stay with Miao families, a unique opportunity to observe the everyday rural existence of this minority people. The number of homestays used will depend on the size of our group. Please be prepared for very simple accommodation with between 2-4 persons sharing a room and also sharing the simple toilet and washing facilities of the family which are located outside of the house. All bedding will be provided although you may wish to bring your own sleeping sheet. You will also need to bring a small towel.



Accommodation: Homestay (Nande) (or similar)



Simple Homestay



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Spend time learning about the Miao culture and lifestyle

We spend today both with our hosts in Nande and enjoying a visit to other Miao villages in the area. One of the larger of China's ethnic minorities, the Miao are a deeply spiritual people who are thought to have originated from the Yellow River valleys of northern China some 4,500 year ago. Famed for their exceptional skills with embroidery and handicrafts, they are known for the ornate headdresses that they wear during festivities, the women adorning themselves with elaborate silver headdresses and jewellery, and their hand woven and brightly coloured clothes bedecked with intricate embroidery. Even the men dress to impress, sometimes wearing light coloured turbans and huge silver ringed necklaces.



Accommodation: Homestay (Nande) (or similar)



Simple Homestay

DAY 11 - Drive to Shuicheng via the Huangguoshu falls

Today we have a long drive to Shuicheng stopping on the way to visit the spectacular Huangguoshu (Yellow Fruit Tree) Falls, the largest in China and reputedly the longest drop of any falls in Asia, measuring an impressive 84 metres and over 80 metres in width. A climb up a series of steep, water soaked steps leads to a suspension bridge that crosses into a verdant, forested landscape, where there may be an opportunity to walk behind the falls and enter the impressive 100m long 'Water Curtain Cave' that lies behind it.



Accommodation: Island International Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 12 - Attend the Tiaohuapo Festival of Small Flower Miao people

An hour and a half drive through dramatic mountain scenery will bring us to Nankai Santangkou village, where we'll attend the Tiaohuapo Festival of Small Flower Miao people, one of the oldest festivals of the tribe which commemorates their migration to the area two thousand years ago. Tens of thousands of local Miao people gather from all the nearby villages, most wearing their traditional outfits. For men this means short coats and trousers, while women decorate themselves with dazzling jewels and skirts with up to forty layers. The celebrations begin mid-morning with dances in the square and onlookers watching from the mountain slopes nearby, and continues to early evening. We'll have as much fun mingling with the crowds as we will watching the celebrations, as we rub shoulders with the elaborately dressed Miao people, and occasionally members other tribal communities that like to attend such an important event in the region. After the festival finishes in the late afternoon we'll drive back to Shuicheng.



Accommodation: Island International Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 13 - Drive to Guiyang and explore the city

This morning we travel to Guiyang by road (around three and a half hours), very much a modern city and representative of China's booming economy. We'll soak up the busy atmosphere with a visit to some of the more interesting spots such as the bustling Flower and Bird market. We also see Guiyang's landmark, the 20 metre high Jiaxiulou Tower which dates back to the 16th century.



Accommodation: Guiyang Karst Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 14 - Trip ends in Guiyang

Our trip ends in Guiyang after breakfast.



Why book this trip

Southern China is rich in tribal communities that maintain age old traditions and provide wonderful insights in to the old China. The festivals are particularly important events and allow us to mix with the locals when they are in celebratory mood as well as learn about their culture. The scenery is mountainous and beautiful, making the drives between destinations a delight, and the people are warm and friendly so we'll be welcomed at every stop.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

3 nights simple guesthouse
2 nights simple homestay
8 nights standard 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 and something sturdy for the walk in Tiger Leaping Gorge.

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

You will need a towel for the nights spend at the homestay. Bedding is provided at the homestay but you may wish to bring a sheet sleeping bag. Walking poles may be useful for navigating the steps at Tiger Leaping Gorge.

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.