

EXPLORE!



Tribes and Festivals of Southern China

14 days

China - Trip code SFG

Tribes and Festivals of Southern China

We take an extraordinary journey into the mountains of southern China to witness the lives and centuries-old festivals of the minority tribes of the Guizhou region. We've timed our visit to coincide with four exciting village festivals. During these colourful and photogenic celebrations everyone turns out in their most spectacular traditional costume to enjoy singing, dancing and sports. For a rare and fascinating insight into the lives of a traditional Miao family, we spend two nights living with them and learning about their customs and traditions.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Tiaohuacha festival of the longhorn Miao** - Attend the 10th and final day of courtship festival celebrations of this isolated minority tribe
- ★ **Huangguoshu Falls** - Walk behind the 'water curtain' of this 84m high waterfall
- ★ **Family homestay** - Spend 2 nights living with the Miao in Nande village
- ★ **Lusheng courtship festival** - Enjoy the music and dance of a village festival
- ★ **Fire-dragon dance festival** - See the spectacle of Leishan's firework laden dancing dragons
- ★ **Zhenyuan** - Scenic Miao village
- ★ **Kaili's Lusheng festival** - Attend the festival celebrations of the Miao in Zhouxi and Kaili

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:

Relaxed

You can enjoy easy-going activities and experiences on these Relaxed pace tours, with opportunities to absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings, but still come home feeling relaxed and refreshed.

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

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 Guiyang, Guizhou's capital

Our tour starts in Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou Province. The city lies on the banks of the Nanming River on the central slopes of the Miaoling Mountains. Guizhou has an extremely rich mix of minority tribes including the Miao, Bouyi, Dong, Zhuang, Yao and Bai. Its landscape of karst mountains, plunging waterfalls and terraced rice fields provide a spectacular setting for this journey into the heart of the region's tribal culture.



Accommodation: Guiyang Karst Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available




Meals Provided: None


DAY 2 - Explore the markets of Guiyang. Drive to Liuzhi

Guiyang is now very much a modern city and representative of China's booming economy. After our tour briefing this morning, we plan some easy-going sightseeing to mingle amongst its inhabitants and soak up the atmosphere of some of the more interesting spots such as the bustling Flower and Bird market. We also see Guiyang's landmark, the 20 meter high Jiaxiulou Tower which dates back to the 16th century. In the afternoon we drive west out of the city to Luizhi, the base for our visit to the Longhorn Miao villages of Longga.



Accommodation: Zhejiang Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 3 - Attend Tiaohuacha festival of the Longhorn Miao

This morning we drive into the mountains around Longga to attend the Tiaohuacha festival of the Longhorn Miao. Their name comes from the large 'horns' of hair with which the woman adorn themselves and both these and their traditional embroidered clothing are very striking. There are approximately four thousand Longhorn Miao people living in 12 villages around Longga. Poor transportation has historically prevented them from having much contact with the outside world and life has changed little, keeping the old traditions alive. Even today, marriage is still arranged within the tribe and the Tiaohuacha festival is an important opportunity for young people to find a marriage partner. We will attend on the 10th and final day of the festival when locals from all the villages gather together in their best outfits to sing and dance throughout the day in the open air. Each evening during the festival, young boys from a village go together to another village to look for girls. At the same time, the girls in the village gather together to wait for the boys coming. When the boys arrive, they all sit together in a communal room with a fire in the middle and sing to each other to express their affections throughout the night. The boys go home the following morning and return again in the evening if they find a girl who takes their fancy. At the end of the day we return to Luizhi for the night.



Accommodation: Zhejiang Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 4 - Visit Huangguoshu Falls and a Bouyi stone village

Today we will 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 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. Later we visit a Bouyi village built of stone. The Bouyi have inhabited this region since Stone Age times, mainly occupying the fertile landscapes along the valleys and rivers and their deft skills with embroidery and brocade are renowned. We overnigh in the nearby city of Anshun.



Accommodation: Puhua Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Attend a Lusheng festival near Kaili. Continue to our Miao family homestay

Today we will attend a Lusheng courtship festival near Kaili. The Lusheng is a traditional reed pipe wind instrument of the Miao that is played at and has given its name to the courtship festivals of the tribe. Lasting two days in each village, the festivals take place on the 5th - 23rd of the 1st lunar month in different villages around Kaili. During the festival, Miao villagers gather together and dance in the village square, wearing their finest costumes. These outfits can be so complicated to dress and undress that the girls' mothers

are always in attendance to lend a hand. In the square, people dance in circles while in the middle folk musicians play the Lusheng. As the girls dance in the square, the men watch buffalos fighting in the fields. After enjoying the festival we will continue to Nande village where we will stay with Miao families. The number of homestays used will depend on the size of the group. This is a unique opportunity to observe the everyday rural life of this minority 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 & Dinner

DAY 6 - Spend time with our hosts and visit other Miao villages from our homestay

We spend today both with our hosts in Nande and 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 some 4,500 year ago. Famed for their exceptional skills with embroidery and handicrafts, the Miao are known for the ornate headdresses that they wear during festivities, the women adorning themselves with elaborate silver headdresses and jewellery, 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



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7 - Drive to Leishan for the Dragon Festival

Driving to Leishan, we'll meet the villagers who will teach us the Dragon Dance. We'll join them in the parade in to the town and take part in the festival with our own Dragon and colourful waistcoats.



Accommodation: Shengchengjiayuan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Visit the Miao villages of Shudian, Paika and Datang. Attend fire-dragon dance festival in Leishan

Today we visit the nearby Miao villages of Shudian, Paika and Datang for the chance to mingle and take in village life. We will enjoy walks in the fields where water wheels are still used to get the water from rivers to the fields. In the afternoon, we return to Leishan to see the preparations for the evening fire-dragon dance festival celebrations. When it's getting dark, 20 to 30 firework-laden dragons will dance through the streets of the town with people setting off fireworks on the way. They dance from one family to another to give blessings and good wishes for the coming year.



Accommodation: Shengchengjiayuan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Full day in Leishan to attend the post festival village feast

Following last night's festivities we have a relaxed day in the town today. Traditionally the locals will spend the day cooking up a feast that is shared by all. We'll take the opportunity to share this meal with the locals and take time to hear how they enjoyed the festival.



Accommodation: Shengchengjiayuan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 10 - Drive to Zhenyuan via Tailjiang and Shidong. Explore the town.

Today we take a drive through the Miao heartlands to Zhenyuan via the town of Shidong. Shidong is famous for its 'Sisters' rice festival', an annual event that sees villagers descending on the area from the remote mountain regions in search of a partner. Ancient Zhengyuan was founded as a Ming outpost guarding the trade routes into central China and covers an area of just over 3 square kilometres. It has been inhabited by the Miao for centuries and is an atmospheric place littered with relics of the past. We aim to explore the old quarter on foot and take a walk up the hillside behind the town for a bird's eye view of the traditional style houses.



Accommodation: Fucheng Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Optional walks, drive to Kaili

Today we walk along the Wuyang River and if the water is high enough we'll cross at the old dock by a traditional ferry which is held by a cable across the river and pulled by a boatman. Locals have been crossing the river on this kind of boat for hundreds of years and still do to this day. We then walk on part of the old city wall, through old streets and along the riverside back to the hotel. Later we drive to Kaili.



Accommodation: Jintaiyuan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Attend Lusheng Festival

Kaili is the regional capital for both the Miao and the Dong people with tribal people making up about 70% of its population of around half a million. The city and its surrounding villages will play host to a major Lusheng festival with some of the most spectacular costumes, music and traditional dancing. We plan to attend the opening ceremony and watch the dances in nearby Zhouxi village. At festival time the Miao women wear their stunning silver jewellery often piling on five or six neck rings at a time as well as chains, coins, chest locks and multiple headdresses. Much of this silver was originally obtained from melting old coins. The festival is very much a time for the people to get together and socialize and be entertained by singing and dancing with markets also set up for trading goods.



Accommodation: Jintaiyuan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Drive to Guiyang and visit Qianling Park

Today we drive to Guiyang and visit Qianling Park, a beautiful green area just outside the city centre which includes a lake and several temples, and is named after Qianling Hill.



Accommodation: Guiyang Karst Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends in Guiyang

The tour ends in Guiyang after breakfast. Those departing on the group flight to London will depart for the airport early morning.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

2 nights simple homestay
11 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

Optional activities

Some free time has been allowed for you to explore on your own or with your travelling companions.

Clothing

Comfortable shoes or trainers. Please pack for colder temperatures. You are best to bring in multiple layers of clothes that can be added or removed according to your level of activity. Thermal winter clothing is ideal. We also suggest a warm hat and gloves. Although it is not the wet season, some form of rain protection is recommended.

Footwear

Comfortable lightweight walking shoes are most suitable for the walks.

Luggage

20kg

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.

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 £30 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

Food and drink

Please note that it will be hard to cater for vegetarians, vegans and those with dietary requirements in this region.

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.
