

EXPLORE!



Yunnan's Fire Sacrifice Festival

14 days

China - Trip code SFF

Yunnan's Fire Sacrifice Festival

This exciting trip takes us through China's Yunnan Province, home to the Bai and Yi minority tribes. We attend four unique, traditional festivals including the Fire Sacrifice Festival where we watch locals with dramatically painted bodies performing dances to celebrate the day they discovered fire. We also join in with a festival to celebrate the spread of Buddhism, an ancestor worship festival and attend a local food festival. Travelling through a rarely visited part of southern China we experience a traditional lifestyle that few westerners have the privilege to see.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Unique Festivals** - Join locals to celebrate the Fire Sacrifice Festival in Mile, The Taizhi Festival in Shaxi and the Jiejingu Festival in Weishan
- ★ **Bai and Yi heritage** - Spend time with locals and learn about these minority cultures
- ★ **Tibetan Influence** - Visit Puji's monastery, run by Naxi Monks
- ★ **Incredible landscapes** - Wander through Kunming's Stone Forest, hike up JingPing Mountain and marvel at the dramatic scenery of Tiger Leaping Gorge

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 Kunming

Our journey begins today in Kunming. After checking in to our hotel time is left free to relax after the flight.



Accommodation: Green Lake View Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Share lunch with monks at the Bamboo Temple. Drive to Mile

After breakfast we walk through Green Lake Park. The park is in the centre of the city and is formed around four small lakes, linked by traditional Chinese bridges. Each morning locals make their way to the park for their daily Tai Chi session and we'll stop to watch this peaceful exercise session and perhaps have a go ourselves. Leaving the park and the city behind we will drive a short distance to the Qiongzhu Temple, also known as the Bamboo Temple. The temple is well known for housing 500 unique life size sculptures of Buddhist arhats, a person who has advanced along the path of enlightenment but not yet reached nirvana. The arhats were created in 1883 by Li Guangxui, a sculptor from Sichuan. We will share a vegetarian lunch with some of the monks and take the chance to learn a little of their simple way of life. On leaving the temple we drive for around three hours to Mile where we are based for the next two nights.



Accommodation: Haobang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 3 - Attend the Fire Sacrifice Festival in Hongwa Village

This morning we travel to Hongwa Village, home to the Axi, a division of the Yi minority people. The Yi people as a whole worship fire, something that keeps them warm, cooks food and scares wild animals away, but the Axi take it to a higher level with their annual festival. Legend has it that a group of Axi men were out hunting when heavy rains made them seek shelter under an old tree. As the rains continued they were stuck, freezing cold and without anything to eat until Mu Deng, a local wizard appeared and used two pieces of dried wood to create a fire. That day has since been celebrated with locals painting their bodies to represent the fire and then dancing and singing in the centre of the village. There is a large community lunch, the food is simple and we will sit on pine leave mats on the floor and have a chance to share this special occasion with the village. After the festival concludes we drive back to Mile for the evening.



Accommodation: Haobang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Meet Jinping Mountain's Smiling Buddha. Fly to Lijiang

A short bus transfer this morning takes us to the foot of Jinping Mountain. We stretch our legs with by climbing 1999 shallow stone steps and we are rewarded by the sight of the Smiling Buddha, a 20m rock carving of the Future Buddha. People come here to pray for their future happiness in the small temples that dot the route up to the viewpoint. It will take us approximately 2 hours for the walk. In the afternoon we will visit the Stone Forest, this national park is named because the towering rock formations look like petrified trees. We walk through a section of the forest that is popular with visitors but then walk on a second trail that skirts the outside of the forest, this trail is much quieter but offers spectacular views over the forest. In the early evening we transfer back to Kunming for a short flight to Lijiang.



Accommodation: Lijiang Azeroth Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Visit the Tibetan Monastery at Puji Village


We start today with a visit to Puji, a small village which is home to the Naxi People. Naxis have a language and culture that shares many similarities with Tibetan and the village is home to the only remaining Tibetan Monastery in the region. The monastery is more than 300 years old and features a beautiful copper roof. Only a few monks are based here and take care of the monastery and we hope to spend a short time with them during our visit. After soaking up the peaceful atmosphere of the monastery we drive to Yuhu Village, set at the foot of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, where we visit the Museum of Dr Rock, a botanist that lived in the village during the 1930's and through his work introduced the village of Yuhu to the rest of the world. We return to Lijiang in the late afternoon.



Accommodation: Lijiang Azeroth Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel

 Single room available


 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Follow the Yangtse River to Tiger Leaping Gorge

After breakfast we walk through Lijiang's old town. The houses here are built in the tradition style with wooden frames and tiled roofs. The streets are cobbled and there are small streams that meander through the town, often lined with small planted flower gardens. There is a daily vegetable market for locals to trade the items they grow up in the hills and we'll stop here to see what's in season. We then leave Lijiang and drive to the First Bend of the Yangtse River where the Red Army crossed the river during the Long March in 1935, trying to evade the Chinese Nationalist Party. We follow the river until we reach Tiger Leaping Gorge, a 19km section of the river with steep drops of almost 4000 metres and in some places as narrow as 30 metres - the name comes from these narrow sections where legend has it that tigers used to jump across the gaps. We spend the night in a small family run guesthouse.

 **Accommodation: Tina's Guesthouse** (or similar)

 Simple Guesthouse

 Single room available


 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Travel to Shaxi via the Bai town of Jianchuan

After a short walk to another view point in Tiger Leaping Gorge 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 8 - Attend the Taizhi Festival in Shaxi Village

We join locals today in celebrating the annual Taizhi Festival. Taizhi is the local name for the Buddha Sakyamuni, born as a prince into a royal family in northern India he left the family home to learn about the principals of Buddhism. The festival recreates the time the prince left his family and the journey he took to enlightenment. The celebrations begin at the temple where the Buddha statue is gently cleaned before being paraded through the village to the centre square. Traditional songs and dances take place through the day and we spend the day soaking up the party atmosphere.

 **Accommodation: Aoxiu Zige Hotel** (or similar)

 Simple Guesthouse

 Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Hike on Shibaoshan Mountain before travelling to Dali

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, whilst fairly gentle for the main part there are some steep sections of steps. During the walk we visit ancient grottos and small temples that dot the mountain. Leaving the mountain we drive to Erhai Lake where we hope to spot cormorant fishing. 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 10 - Discover the Three Pagodas and ChongSheng Temple

After breakfast today we take a short drive to the nearby village of Xizhou, a traditional Bai village with a thriving vegetable market which we will visit before taking in some of the beautiful traditional houses that make up the village. Returning to Dali we will visit the ChongSheng Temple, home to the Three Pagodas which are over 1000 years old and Dali's most famous landmark. In the afternoon we can walk from the South Gate of Dali up on to the city wall for great views across the city where it becomes clear that the city gently slopes from the mountains down to the lakeside.



Accommodation: Landscape Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Drive to Weishan and sample local snacks at the Food Festival

Today we drive to the town of Weishan, another major Bai town. On the way we stop at 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. When we reach Weishan we will head straight for the centre of town where a local food festival is due to take place. We can sample local dishes and tea with families who come together to share a meal.



Accommodation: Shengxiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Respect Bai ancestors at the Jiejingu Festival

An hour outside of Weishan are the West Big Temples where we plan to spend the day. With more than 50 temples of different sizes we can see offerings to Buddhism, Taoism, Ancestor-worship and temples dedicated to the Nature God. We join in the celebrations of the Jiejingu Festival. The Bai people of Dali and Weishan believe that their gods and ancestors have two homes, basing themselves in either Dali or Weishan at different times of the year. The Jiejingu Festival sees people from Dali travelling to Weishan to invite the gods back to Dali! Families will prepare food, pray, sing and dance to amuse the gods and make them feel welcome. The festival takes place all day and often goes on long in to the night. In the late evening we will leave the festivities and return to Weishan.



Accommodation: Shengxiang Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 13 - Drive to Kunming and visit the flower markets

We head to Kunming today; a drive of approximately five hours takes us to Yunnan's capital city. The city is large but with a very relaxed atmosphere. We will spend time exploring the bird and flower market and then the rest of the day is free.



Accommodation: Green Lake View Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Trip ends in Kunming

Our trip ends in Kunming this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Lunch: 3



Transport

Bus
Flight



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

3 nights simple guesthouse
10 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

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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. 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

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 guesthouses. 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, Flight

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.
