

Western SICHUAN

The Hutong
Travel 



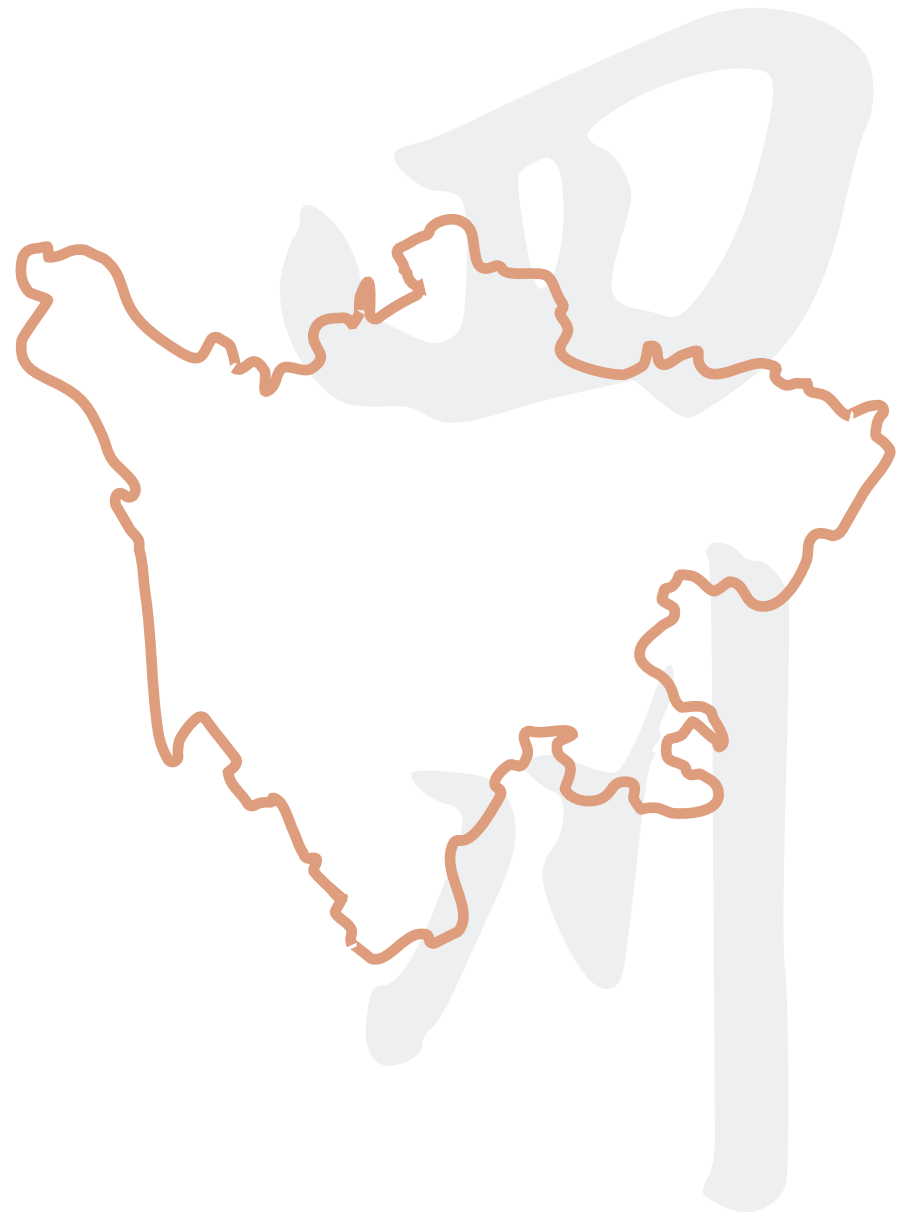
*Mountains, Majiao & Mindfulness:
A Winter Journey to Western Sichuan*

INFORMATION PACK

27th Dec 2020 - 3rd Jan 2021

Contents

- 03** Introduction
- 04** Map & Details
- 05** Destinations at a Glance
- 08** Itinerary
- 11** Important Information
- 12** A Bit About Us



Introduction Sichuan



Our Western Sichuan Journey explores the ancient landmarks, the vibrant culture, and the fiery cuisine of China's *land of plenty*. Soak up Chengdu's relaxing *shua* culture, and explore the winding alleys and bustling markets, all the while sampling the best bites of China's most famous cuisine. Beyond the city limits of laid-back Chengdu lies a bucolic mountain landscape of picturesque cliffs, hilltop temples, and meandering rivers. Alongside its awe-inspiring vistas Sichuan hosts some awe-inspiring creatures, including its most famous resident: the giant panda.

Geographically and culturally distinct from the fertile Chengdu Basin to the east, Western Sichuan climbs the Tibetan steppe towards the foothills of the Himalayas. You'll witness a geological and climatic shift as we move from the misty, green flatlands below to the pointed peaks, blue skies, and pine trees laying ahead. We'll move out of the basin's Han heartlands, through territories of the Qiang, and ascend the Tibetan plateau, where Tibetan is spoken more frequently than Mandarin. On our way, don't be surprised to see roving herds of yaks on the mountains above you.

This incredible expedition is the perfect way to spend the holidays, and to reset and recharge ready to ring in the New Year.

Sichuan Map & Details



DEPARTURE DATE

27th December, 2020
(Sunday)

RETURN DATE

3rd January, 2021
(Sunday)

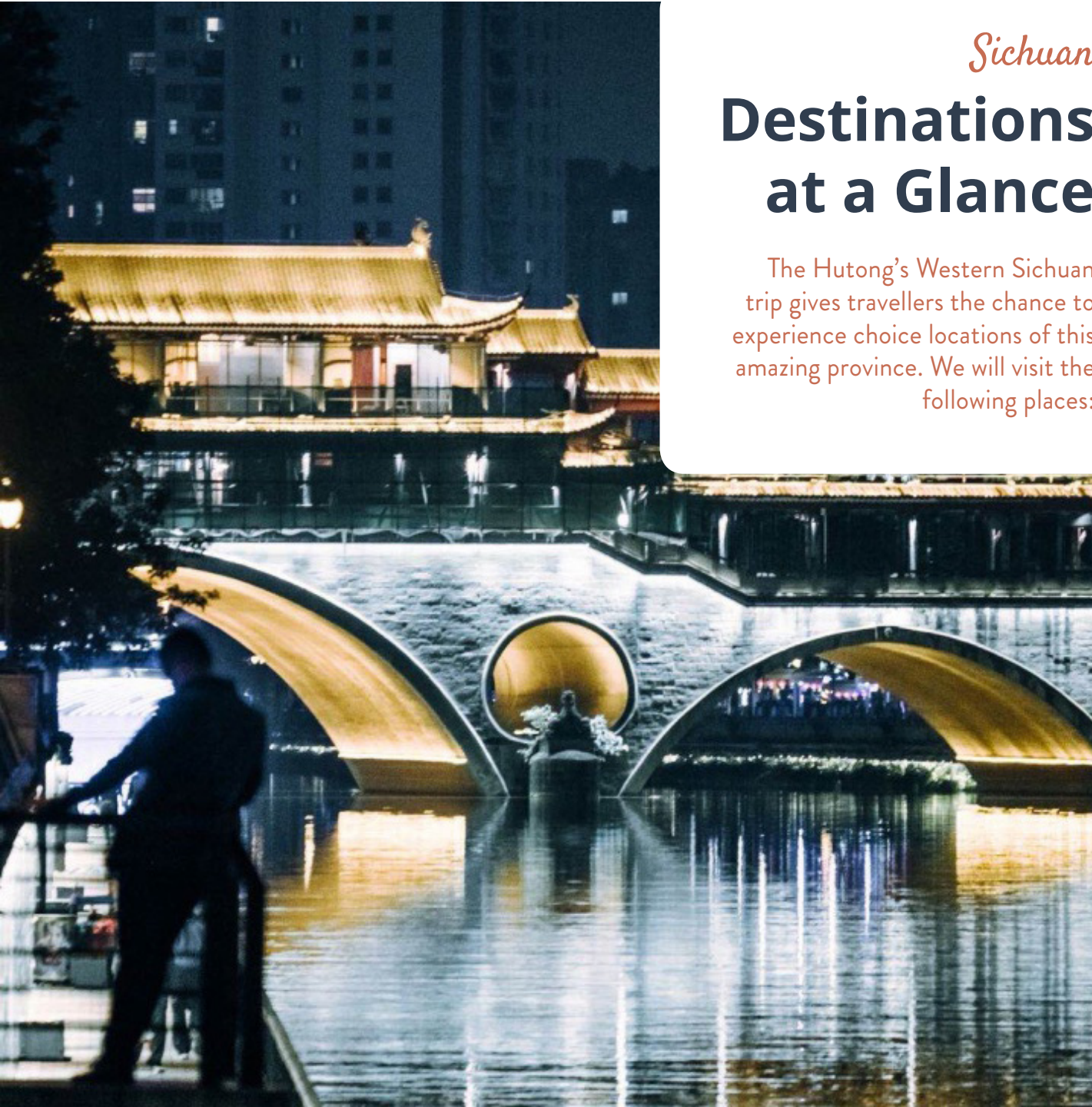
PRICE

RMB 9,850
(does not include airfare)

SIGN-UP PROCESS

To express your interest and reserve your space, please email travel@thehutong.com.

Our team will provide a registration form to complete, give updated travel information, and answer any questions you may have.



Sichuan Destinations at a Glance

The Hutong's Western Sichuan trip gives travellers the chance to experience choice locations of this amazing province. We will visit the following places:

Chengdu

Our adventure will begin in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. We'll dive right into its world-famous culinary delights with Chengdu Food Tours, who'll share with us their unparalleled knowledge of Sichuan's sensational food scene. You'll also have some time to explore Chengdu and experience Sichuan's famous *shua* culture.

Ya'an (Bifengxia)

No visit to Sichuan is complete without a panda encounter, and this trip will be no exception. Against the mountainous backdrop of the Bifengxia Nature Reserve, we'll visit a research base to see these fascinating international icons up close.

Danba

Danba is a mountain escape which basks in nearly year-round sunshine. It is home to the Jiarong Tibetan community, who have farmed the surrounding region for centuries. In Zhonglu village, 2600m above sea level, you'll meet our incredible partners from the NGO Yunhe Forest Center. As we hike, cook, meditate, explore, and learn about Tibetan Buddhism, our friends at Yunhe will shed light on the things which make this region truly special.

Western Sichuan Itinerary

DAY 1 // Chéngdū

We'll dive tastebuds-first into one of China's most flavorful cities and kick things off with an extraordinary culinary initiation led by our friends from Chengdu Food Tours. Along the way you'll get to treat your tastebuds, sampling some of the best-kept secrets of Sichuanese cuisine.

We'll follow the bang with a burn, in the form of a fiery hotpot welcome dinner to end our opening day in style.



DAY 2 // Chéngdū

After breakfast, we'll take in People's Park, one of the liveliest public spaces in the city. We'll sip green tea and learn how to play the oh-so-addictive game of Mahjong.

Later, we'll reunite with our friends at Chengdu Food Tours for a cooking class, following that up with a baijiu tasting workshop.



DAY 3 // Chéngdū – Yǎ'ān

We'll check out of Chengdu and begin our journey to the west, heading to beautiful Bifengxia Panda Base in Ya'an, where we'll spend some time getting to know Sichuan's gentle giants in their nature paradise surrounded by mountain peaks and lush trees.

Later in the afternoon, we'll arrive at Shangli Ancient Town, one of the best preserved villages in Sichuan, where we'll settle into a quaint and comfortable guesthouse house before feasting on a



DAY 4 // Yǎ'ān – Dānbā

Today, we'll ascend the QinghaiTibetan Plateau towards stunning Garzê Prefecture. We'll take a drive up some winding mountain roads with gorgeous views before we finally reach Danba.

After exploring the village, the group will settle into a mountain guesthouse, before learning about our hosts at the Yunhe Forest Center — an important environmental and cultural organization dedicated to empowering locals and enriching their lives through sustainable tourism development.

While we're up here, there will be the chance to climb to the top of one of the village's tallest Himalayan watchtowers to see the sweeping views of the mountaintops, and the valleys below.





DAY 5 // Dānbā

Following a holy mountain welcome ceremony, we'll hike to a meditation cave where we'll learn about Tibetan Buddhism. After some mindful time in this peaceful spot, we'll hike back to base for a home-cooked feast.

In the afternoon, we'll get the chance to visit local women who create traditional Tibetan handicrafts, empowered by a program that focuses on advancing them economically.

As tonight will be New Year's Eve, we will break up into teams and go head-to-head to make a celebratory dinner via The Hutong's classic "Hook-n-Cook" competition, in the kitchen of the Forest Center. After dining on our own creations, we will start off the New Year



DAY 6 // Dānbā

Kicking off the first day of the New Year in style, we'll take a day-hike from Zhonglu village to Suopo to see its mountains, villages, and mystical Himalayan towers.

We'll eat lunch along the trail as we'll get acquainted with this fascinating region and the Jiarong Tibetan people who call it home. With our friends from the Forest Center acting as our culture and nature guide, we will stop to take in the sounds and sights of Danba's beautiful surrounds. A much-deserved rest and a hearty Tibetan banquet will finish off the evening.



DAY 7 // Dānbā

We begin the morning with mindfulness practice. Then we'll visit Zhonglu's Salakasi temple, learning more about the Jiarong's Buddhist tradition. After some further roaming in this stunning valley, we'll trek back to the Forest Center for an introduction to a Tibetan cooking class, making some delicious meat-filled pies (vegetarian options will be available).

Preparing to say goodbye to this magical place the following day, our local friends will invite us to join a traditional fireside Guozhuang dance workshop beneath the stars. Then we'll gather together over a final dinner celebration.



DAY 8 // Dānbā – Chéngdū

We'll wave goodbye to Danba and our gracious hosts as we prepare to make the drive back to Chengdu. Taking in the beautiful roadside scenery as we wind back down the plateau, we'll stop midway for one last, sumptuous, Sichuanese meal. Our journey will end at Chengdu Airport, making any drop-offs along the way, as travellers make their way home on afternoon flights.*

**This is a long day of travel, approximately a seven hour drive from Danba to Chengdu. If participants wish to break their return journey up, we recommend staying a final night in Chengdu and flying out on January 4th. If you choose this option, we can provide lodging and dining recommendations for your final night in the city.*

Flights

The Hutong will recommend flights, and can help purchase tickets upon request, though we find it's often easiest for participants to book on their own. If we do help you purchase your ticket, we will not mark up flights. Please let us know your preference. If you have to cancel your flight or change your schedule, the terms and fees of the final booking will ultimately be the responsibility of the traveler.



Arrival & Departure

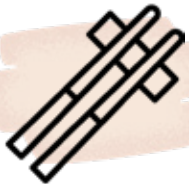
This trip will begin and end in Chengdu. We will arrange a pick-up and drop-off service at Chengdu Airport, as well as provide necessary details if you are arriving a day or two earlier by train or plane.



Meals & Snacks

Thought by many to be the finest of all of China's many cuisines, Sichuanese food is exquisite and we will do our utmost to bring you to the best spots around. Come with a sense of adventure as we taste the vastly different cuisines of the Sichuan Basin and the Tibetan areas of the west. In the lead up to the trip, we'll ask about any food allergies or dietary preferences, including if you can't eat spicy foods, and our Hutong guides will make every effort to accommodate you on the trip as well.

The Hutong will organize three meals a day, including plenty of snacks along the way. We recommend that participants bring along comfort foods of their own liking as well (eg. energy bars).



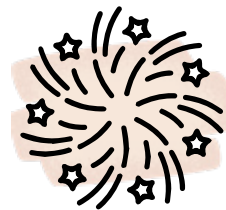
Accommodation

Part of the adventure of staying in Sichuan is visiting local villages and getting to know the people within. We will stay in a comfortable hotel on the first two nights of our program, followed by a cozy guesthouse in Ya'an.

For our four nights in Danba, we will have the honor of staying in a local Jiarong Tibetan guesthouse whose courtyard is home to the village's tallest Himalayan tower.

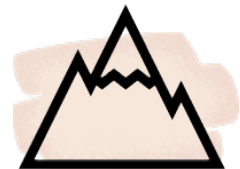
New Year's Eve

We will have a mindful start to our New Year's Eve, spending time in a meditation cave, perhaps dreaming up the perfect New Year's resolutions. In the evening, we will engage in a Hutong Classic, the Hook 'n' Cook culinary competition, where we will whip up a delicious feast together. Afterward, expect a merry mountain-top party under the moon and stars of Danba.



Hiking & Elevation

In Danba, we'll find ourselves at around 2,600m above sea level. After acclimatizing, this should pose no issue to most travelers, but we will walk frequently in the hills around Danba as a key part of our journey and it may pose an issue to people prone to mountain sickness.





Health & Covid-19

We recommend that you visit a travel medical doctor or consult with the CDC and ask about the following vaccinations: typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A.

A Covid-19 test may be required prior to trip departure depending on current travel guidelines. We'll notify you in advance of the trip if this is the case.

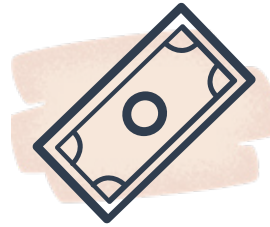
Weather

Chengdu winters are cold and often overcast, though there is very little rain. We will combat the cold through heaps of steaming local delicacies and cozy hotel rooms. Western Sichuan's Danba sees dry clear winter days. Temperatures get below freezing at night time but generally get up to around 12°C during the peak of the day, making for brisk but sunny daylight hours. You will need comfortable breathable layers and a warm winter jacket.



Serendipity

Hutong trip leaders travel regularly to destinations to develop relationships with local contacts to provide the most authentic cultural experiences possible. As such, trip itineraries are subject to change, pending the discovery of an even better activity or destination. Itineraries may also be subject to change due to weather, traffic, or government policies.

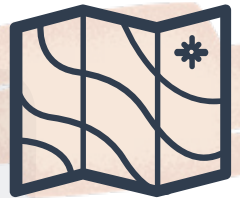


Money & Extra Expenses

ATMs are plentiful in Chengdu, but hard to find in the smaller villages and towns. In most places you won't need money, except for snacks or drinks. There will be several stops along the way for local keepsakes, in which case you may wish to have a little bit of money; no more than a few hundred RMB should be sufficient, unless you'd like to stock your tea collection (in which case, you can spend as much as you like). Of course, you can always pay with Wechat or Alipay, too.

Guides

Our Western Sichuan Adventure comes fully-equipped with English-speaking guides who are familiar with the terrain and extremely knowledgeable about the area's culture, industry, and history. We also work very closely with amazing local guides who know and love the area; they help to provide all kinds of wonderful experiences.



People

Sichuan's people have their own distinctive cultural traditions. Along our route, you'll meet many of our knowledgeable local partners who'll happily share with you their cultures and traditions, meaning we're all sure to learn a lot and have some great conversations along the way.

“
The trip surpassed my expectations. I had a great time, made wonderful connections with others, and enjoyed new scenery and food!
Can't wait to go on another trip.
”

Elena B
2020 Trip Participant





The Hutong **A Bit About Us**

The Hutong creates unforgettable travel experiences throughout China for students from International Schools, and for people of all ages from around the world. Since 2009, we have run educational, and adult-travel, programs to off-the-beaten-track destinations across China. From the rainforests of southern Yunnan to the grasslands of the Mongolian steppe, all of our programs are meticulously researched and planned to optimize cultural exchange and to offer fun, innovative, and immersive experiences.

As well as being a licensed travel operator across Greater China, The Hutong is at heart a transformative education company. We partner with leading schools to build programs that incorporate learning objectives and life skills, all the while maintaining absolute professionalism and an impeccable safety record. From our team of international educators to our travel specialists, each and every Hutonger shares a passion for providing exceptional learning experiences.

Hutong programs engage with global issues and leave participants with broadened horizons, a renewed sense of their strengths and abilities, and incredible memories. No matter where we go, we aim to make a positive impact on the communities we visit and on the groups we lead.



Contact Information

thehutong.com
travel@thehutong.com

The Hutong Courtyard

1 Jiudaowan Zhongxiang
Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

中国北京东城区北新桥九道湾中巷1号

Social Media

Facebook / Instagram / Wechat:
thehutong