



INFORMATION PACK

YUNNAN

Bike Journey

*An adventure through the
rolling hills of Xishuangbanna*

26 Dec 2020 - 3 Jan 2021

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Introduction **Southern Yunnan**



Bordering on Laos, Burma, and Vietnam – and only a short boat ride from Thailand – Yunnan is one of the most ethnically diverse and geographically stunning areas of the world. 26 of China's 56 ethnic minorities reside in Yunnan, and The Hutong's Yunnan Bike Journey gives riders the opportunity to experience the variety in Chinese culture while taking a challenging, yet fun, ride through remote mountain villages and verdant tea forests.

This 385km ride takes us through Xishuangbanna, the southernmost prefecture of Yunnan Province – China's most southwestern province. Renowned for its tropical climate and lush rainforests, the region is teeming with wildlife, rare plants, and historical & cultural significance. Xishuangbanna is the birthplace of tea cultivation, and is home to the Pu'er tea industry.

Each day, adventurers meet a different ethnicity and savor their unique specialties. The secluded villages bring new flavors, new recipes, new stories, and new friends. From the area's most populous minority, the Dai, to the region's most remote ethnic groups like the Jinuo or the Hani, The Hutong's Yunnan Bike Journey explores one of the last virgin lands where one can find undisturbed but welcoming cultures.

Bike Journey Map & Details



LOCATIONS

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Jinghong | 1 | 酒店 |
| Manzhang | 2 | 曼掌 |
| Jinuoshan | 3 | 基诺山 |
| Menglun | 4 | 勐仑 |
| Ganlanba | 5 | 橄榄坝 |
| Nannuoshan | 6 | 南糯山 |
| Menghun | 7 | 勐混 |

DEPARTURE DATE

26th December, 2020
(Saturday)

RETURN DATE

3rd January, 2021
(Sunday)

CYCLING DIFFICULTY

7 / 10
(see page 7 for more details)

PRICE

RMB 9,900
(does not include airfare)

SIGN-UP PROCESS

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

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

Bike Journey Itinerary

26th December

Travel Day: Arrive in Jinghong

Flights to Jinghong typically transfer in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan. Flights to and from Kunming are plentiful; flights to and from Jinghong are not. This might mean that there's a bit of a layover in Kunming, depending on when you book your flight and where you are flying from.

After a day of air travel, you will have the chance to check into the hotel. Depending on when you arrive, you might have a bit of time to explore Jinghong – a sleepy yet vibrant tropical town – full of markets and delicious minority food.

On this day, we will organize pick-ups upon arrival, and a hearty local welcome dinner for the group, where we'll get acquainted and get ready for the journey ahead.

DAY 1 // 48km

Jǐnghóng – Mǎnzhǎng
酒店 — 曼掌村

A quick bike fit and exploratory ride around Jinghong before taking off past rubber plantations and over the hills and towards Manzhang Village. Here we will learn to make Dai cuisine, experience Dai Village life and enjoy a bonfire as we wrap up our first day on the road!



DAY 2 // 60km

Manzhang – Kūngé – Jīnuòshān
曼掌村 — 昆格 — 基诺山

We start our day biking from Manzhang village, passing Kunge and continuing towards Jinuo mountain (total distance 60km).

We'll pass the tropical rain forest of Kunge Mountain area, biking through fields of dragon fruit, Chinese dates and rice paddies. We will finish the day with a traditional Jinuo style dinner.



DAY 3 // 45km

Jīnuòshān – Měnglún
基诺山 — 勐仑

Today, we begin with a visit to a tea plantation on Jinuo mountain where we will get a chance to make our own pu'er tea bricks, and sample different types of pu'er tea. An early lunch, then back on the road as we continue cycling past tea plantations and through a tropical rain forest.

Our destination today will be the Dai village of Menglun, where we will stay with local families and experience Dai Minority life.





DAY 4 // 54km

Měnglún – Ganlanbà

勐仑—橄榄坝

Today will be a more relaxing day, with a shorter distance and less hills. Stopping for a quick temple visit and another Dai style 'peacock' lunch, we will reach Ganlanba in the early afternoon, check into our hotel, rest and enjoy a swim in the hotel pool and an optional massage in town before celebrating New Year's Eve together.



DAY 5 // 6km

Ganlanbà – Nánnuòshān

橄榄坝—南糯山

After a good rest, we'll jump on the bus in the morning as we circle back around Jinghong city, and follow the Mekong River towards Nannuoshan. Arriving at the bottom of the beautiful climb up to our mountain top guesthouse, there will be a chance to challenge ourselves on this steep climb. For the riders who want to push themselves, we'll see who can top the Strava segment! For the rest of us, it's as nice a hill as any to push our bikes up!

After a rolling into our guesthouse mid-morning, we'll check-in, take a short rest, eat, and get ready for an afternoon hike past ancient tea trees, with views across the mountains villages and stunning valleys.



DAY 6 // 58km

Nánnuòshān – Měnglún

南糯山—勐仑

One of the most spectacular days of biking sees us pass villages of the Hani and Lahu Minorities; expect some steep hills and magical scenery as we pass fields of corn, rice paddies, tea, fruit and pine tree plantations. After a Hani style lunch, we will descend towards Manzhao village where we will get a chance to make our own paper and experience village life in one of the more 'well-to-do' villages in the area.

DAY 7 // 80km

Měnglún - Jǐnghóng

勐混—酒店

A tougher last day, if for nothing else than being the longest distance we manage on the trip. The good news is that most of the day is spent on flat or descending roads as we trace our way back to Jinghong city, past small towns and villages, including two small towns whose residents converted to Islam in the 1930s.

Arriving back to the Ramada Plaza, there'll be a chance to rest our weary legs in the hotel pool, before heading out for our final dinner and visit to the bustling Jinghong night market.

3rd January

Travel Day: Depart Jinghong

Sign off on the bike ride of a lifetime, sharing your stories with new friends. Flights depart out of Jinghong for Kunming, or anywhere else your travel plans may take you.

Important Information

Fitness, Attitude & Difficulty

You don't need to be a Tour de France caliber rider to complete this ride. It is a physically challenging ride, and we recommend that you do some training before you join us. Riding around your city is a good start, but try and find some time to ride up a hill or two, and change gears. As long as you're in good shape, stay healthy, eat well and get enough sleep, you shouldn't have a problem riding every day and making it to each day's destination. We've built the itinerary specifically to ensure everyone is fully capable of succeeding.

Parts of our ride will take us to elevations beyond 5,000 feet (over 1,000 meters). This isn't terribly high, but it means there are some serious hills – be ready and keep this in mind when training. Jinghong, our starting and ending

point, is at approximately 600 meters; the highest point on the trip is approximately 1,600 meters, which should give you an idea of the hills involved. All in all, it's a fun ride, but fitness will be an asset.

The Hutong's Yunnan Bike Journey is just that – a journey on a bicycle. It's not a race or a competition, but an opportunity to move at just the right speed through beautiful villages, say “hello” to locals, stop for an impromptu pineapple snack stop, or sneak off into the rainforest for a look at ancient tea trees. It is by no means an easy journey – while some might enjoy an “All Downhill” bike trip, we at The Hutong think that the wonderfully fresh meals and expansive scenery are enjoyed best when earned with a tough uphill.



Support



We will be supported by a small bus that will carry our food, water, luggage, and equipment. The backup bus will sweep the route. So if feel like you're tired, have some sore legs, or just want an easy day, the bus will be there to pick you up. We will also have a mechanic following the group for patching flat tires or fixing any other problems that may arise.

Safety

The Hutong requires all riders to wear helmets. Your guides are trained in first aid and bicycle safety, but it is your responsibility to ensure you ride safely. For more information on safe cycling, we will provide our Bicycle Safety Guidelines before the departure date.



Meals & Snacks



The Hutong will organize three meals a day, including plenty of carbohydrates and protein to fuel you for the ride. Most breakfasts are rice noodles, accompanied by a variety of local spices and pickled vegetables. Lunches and dinners are at local homes and restaurants and are invariably fresh, colorful, and often spicy. 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.

While we will provide some snacks, we recommend that participants bring along comfort food they know they will like (granola bars, energy gels, powerbars, or anything they know will get them through the day). We'll also provide fresh fruit as it appears along the route.



Road Conditions

While most roads are paved, there are occasional cobblestone sections and sections with gravel or potholes. The bikes available for rent will be basic 21-speed Chinese mountain bikes. While we welcome participants to bring their own mountain bikes, we strongly discourage anyone from bringing a road bike as the roads will tear your tires to shreds.

Hydrating

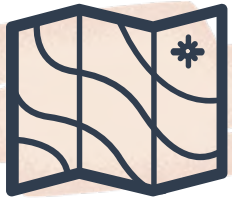
We bring plenty of clean, bottled water along for the ride, and make sure to provide lots of rehydration stops. We also include sugary drinks at meal times for a bit of an extra boost, as well as plenty of cold beer when the day's riding is done. We do not provide energy drinks or sports drinks.



Accommodation



The first and last nights of this ride, as well as the third night, will be spent in hotels (with swimming pools!). Other than these three nights, this is not a 'luxury' vacation. Riders will be staying in local guesthouses and hotels along the route, as well as homestays. Outside of Jinghong, accommodations are very basic. There is hot water at each place of accommodation, but at times no wifi (and other times no cellular service).



Guides

Each Yunnan Bicycle Journey comes fully-equipped with two 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 two amazing local guides who know and love the area; they help to provide all kinds of wonderful experiences.

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.



Weather

Xishuangbanna is tropical and hot: the highs will be in the mid-20s, and the lows will be in the teens. November through April is dry season in Southern Yunnan, however we very likely encounter rainfall at some point. While the rain will cool you off, it can also come down heavily. In short: you will need rain gear and clothes you feel comfortable wearing during a hot day in the saddle.

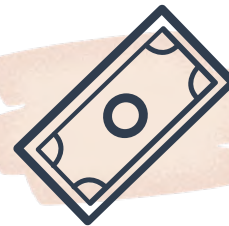
Arrival & Departure

This trip will begin and end in Jinghong. If you are flying on the group flights, our Hutong guide will help you check-in at the airport in Beijing.



Health

We recommend that you visit a medical doctor or consult with the CDC and ask about the following vaccinations: typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A. Cases of malaria in this area are almost non-existent, though the CDC still lists it as an area where infection is possible. Please consult with your travel doctor or other medical professional as to whether or not anti-malarials are necessary. In the past, there have been cases of dengue fever, in which case The Hutong takes precaution to provide mosquito nets, as well as mosquito repellent at all possible occasions.



Money & Extra Expenses

The Chinese currency is the Ren Min Bi (The People's Currency), or the yuan. ATMs are plentiful in Jinghong, 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.

Cultural Tidbits

China is a country home to 56 unique ethnic minorities. Yunnan is one of the most culturally diverse province, with 26 of the nation's 56 ethnicities. 13 of these ethnicities call Xishuangbanna home.

Tea was first cultivated in Yunnan, before India or anywhere else in China. Many of Xishuangbanna's ethnicities still consume teas in ways we might find strange – scrambled into eggs, mixed into salads, or cooked into soups.

Though Xishuangbanna is now officially Chinese, it was once ruled as a part of the Thai Kingdom. The tribal leaders in this area paid tribute to Burmese Kings, Thai Royalty, or the Chinese Emperor – as opportunity saw fit.

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 wactivity or destination. Itineraries may also be subject to change due to weather, traffic, or government policies.

New Year's

For New Year's Eve, we'll spend the evening together at a nice hotel relaxing by the pool, ahead of what will be a light day of cycling. On New Year's Day, we'll have the chance to experience some unique local ceremonies as we bike through villages. Whatever happens, it's bound to be an unforgettable and truly unique welcoming in of 2021, as we all happily say goodbye to 2020 together.



What a fantastic time! Travelling in China can be challenging in many ways, so having an authentic experience is not always easy. The Yunnan Bike Journey is the absolutely perfect way to experience a new travelling frontier, sink into a culture genuinely and truthfully, and have a great time the whole way. If you want to see China, cycle, eat great food, meet real locals and learn what it is to be in China nowadays, look no further. Outstanding value and the best imaginable way to see China.

Charlie Winn

Yunnan Bike Journey 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 been running 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.



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