

INFORMATION PACK

Northern YUNNAN

Christmas in the Canyon

21st-29th December 2021



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Introduction

Northern Yunnan



Yunnan is one of China's most beautiful provinces, renowned for its spectacular scenery, its cuisine, and for the many diverse ethnic minorities within its borders.

For centuries Yunnan's proximity to Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Vietnam, as well as the provinces of Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Tibet, has made it a vibrant hotbed of cultural exchange, driven by trade and migration.

Lying east of the Himalayas, the province boasts some of the world's most stunning mountain landscapes. Its rugged terrain shielded local people from much of the turbulence of China's past, helping to insulate and preserve the traditions of its many ethnic minority cultures.

Trekking the Tea Horse Road with us, you'll tackle arduous terrain and interact with local communities along an ancient trade route which, for over a thousand years, connected the peoples of Southwest China.

Get ready to experience China like never before and take home a new, unique perspective of the Middle Kingdom.

Tea Horse Road Map & Details



LOCATIONS

Lijiang	1	丽江
Wenhai Lake	2	文海湖
Shaxi	3	沙溪

DEPARTURE DATE

21st December, 2021
Tuesday

RETURN DATE

29th December, 2021
Wednesday

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



Tea Horse Road Destinations at a Glance

The Hutong's Northern Yunnan itinerary gives travellers the chance to experience multiple areas of Northern Yunnan.

Baisha Old Town

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The oldest and best-preserved of the three old towns in the Lijiang valley, Baisha was once the capital of the Naxi. The village offers a glimpse into the rich history of the Tea Horse Road and the colorful culture of the Naxi people.

Wenhai Lake

The beautiful Wenhai Lake is located high above the Lijiang Valley, on Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, at approximately 3,300 meters. Here we will have the opportunity to explore an authentic Naxi Village, as well as make our way further up the mountain to a Yi Minority Village, home to our good friend and Yi Beimo (Shaman), Mr. Hong.

Shaxi Valley

Sleepy Shaxi Valley was the last outpost on the Tea Horse Road before caravans headed for Tibet and the harsh terrain ahead. Predominantly populated by the Bai people, Shaxi offers interaction with another of Yunnan's distinctive local cultures alongside the chance to take in more breathtaking natural beauty.

Tiger Leaping Gorge

Formed by the upper reach of the mighty Yangtze River, the Tiger Leaping Gorge is truly a sight to behold, flanked by Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (5596m) in the East and Haba Snow Mountain (5395m) in the West.

Tea Horse Road Itinerary

DAY 1 // Lìjiāng - Báishā

Our first stop is Baisha, former stronghold of the Lijiang Valley, which sits in the shadow of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (5,596m).

Whether you fly into Lijiang or fly to Kunming and take a train or bus, our team will coordinate to meet you at your point of arrival and bring you to our cozy accommodation in Baisha Old Town. Baisha is the oldest of the Lijiang Valley's three ancient Tea Horse Road hubs. The town offers a glimpse into a bygone era, where rich traditions abound.

Our team will help you check in and you'll have a chance to explore Baisha. In the evening, we'll kick off the trip with a delicious traditional Naxi Meal, which includes homemade tofu, Yunnan boiled dumplings, and yak meat hot pot. Our accommodation for the evening is in one of the town's beautiful wooden courtyard guesthouses.

DAY 2 // Báishā – Shùhé

This is an acclimation day, where we'll explore Lijiang Valley's rich cultural heritage and history.

In the morning, we'll take a dive deep into Naxi culture and the history of the Tea Horse Road, with a tour of Baisha Old Town and some hands-on activities. In the afternoon we will hike up to Puji Monastery, a 350-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

Idyllic Shuhe old town, another former hub of the Tea Horse Road, will host us in the evening for dinner, along with some night-time yoga, if you wish, and of course exploring.



DAY 3 // Báishā – Wénhǎi

After breakfast, we'll head into the hills for a full day hike along parts of the ancient Tea Horse Road in the shadow of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. We will begin our hike at Lashihai Lake, an ecologically preserved wetland high on a plateau of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

Hiking up and over a mountain pass, we will make our way to Wenhai Lake and the rural villages surrounding the lake. We will have a lakeside picnic and meet a local Yi Shaman, and learn more about local Shamanism and Yi culture. We will complete our hike by walking back down into the Lijiang valley and into Baisha.



DAY 4 // Báishā – Hǔtiàoxiá

On day 4, we'll head out to Tiger Leaping Gorge, and begin our hike along China's most epic trail, following the same mountain paths once traversed by horsemen carrying tea into Tibet.

Over the course of two days, we will hike through bamboo forests, steep rocky climbs, sleepy villages, bright green countryside, and dramatic cliffs, all while enjoying incredible panoramic views of the snow capped peaks of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

We break up the hike by staying overnight at a comfortable Naxi family guest house perched high on Haba Snow Mountain, where we'll celebrate Christmas Eve with a warm bonfire, share stories from an epic day of hiking, and take in the incredible sky of stars.





DAY 5 // Hǔtiàoxiá

Today is all about celebrating Christmas in the Canyon! We'll wake up in the unparalleled environs of Tiger Leaping Gorge and open our Christmas stockings. After a Christmas Breakfast, we can opt for a morning yoga session, overlooking the gorge, or a short hike exploring the valley. We'll come back together for a celebratory Christmas lunch of roasted chicken and roasted lamb and a smorgasbord of Christmas-themed treats. We'll cap off the feast with caroling, songs, games, dance and drinks. The revelry will continue into the evening, where we'll enjoy a night of Christmas games and reflections over the bonfire.



DAY 6 // Hǔtiàoxiá – Shāxī

In the morning we'll finish our hike through Tiger Leaping Gorge. After lunch, we transfer by bus (3 hrs) to Shaxi. After checking into our local guesthouse, we'll explore our neighborhood and Sideng Square, once a vital trading hub's center of commerce. We'll then relax and reflect on our journey to this point over a delicious Bai minority meal.

In Shaxi, we'll have another chance to engage with the rich history and cultural heritage so well-preserved throughout the sleepy valley.



DAY 7 // Shāxī

In the morning we'll venture out into the terraced fields and picturesque villages of the valley, and our local partners will help us stray even further from the beaten path to explore yet more remote sights and meet with some of the valley's remarkable people, learning about how life is lived here and about their past. We'll also take to two wheels, touring more of this beautiful valley's intriguing villages and fertile fields.

In the evening, we'll start to welcome in the New Year by joining in and, if you're brave, dancing in the old theater to the local traditional music.



DAY 8 // Shāxī – Lìjiāng

Our final full day is dedicated to one of our most special experiences: a hike around the centuries-old Buddhist grottoes and temples of Shibaoshan. We'll also tuck into a local BBQ fish lunch on the shores of an idyllic mountain lake. With the help of our local guides, we'll unlock the magic of this sacred mountain and learn about its importance as a sanctuary for traveling horsemen in days of old. In the evening, we'll transfer back to Lijiang where, in Dayan Old Town, we'll enjoy a final dinner, capping the end of our journey.

DAY 9 // Depart Lìjiāng

Our Northern Yunnan journey has come to an end. Whether you are staying on or heading home, flights/trains depart out of Lijiang for Kunming, Beijing, Shanghai, or anywhere else your travel plans may take you.

Important Information

Fitness, Altitude & Difficulty

You do not need to be an experienced hiker or Tour de France rider, but you will need to be able to take on some steep ascents.

HIKE 1: WENHAI LAKE-LONGPAN

Full day // Difficulty: 4 / 5

Begin at 3,200m, hiking up to 3,400 meters, then a long descent to Longpan.

HIKE 2: TIGER LEAPING GORGE

Two days // Difficulty: 4 / 5

Begin at 3,200m, hiking up to 3,400 meters, then a long descent to Longpan.

HIKE 3: SHIBAOSHAN

Half-day // Difficulty: 3 / 5

Steep ascent at the start.



CYCLE: SHAXI VALLEY

Half-day // Difficulty: 2 / 5

Undulating hills on parts of the trail.

Cycling is not a mandatory activity - if you would prefer not to cycle, we can make suggestions on alternative activities.

We will do our best to accommodate participants who would like to ride, however, please note there is limited availability of smaller type bikes, with smaller children's bikes not available.

For hiking activities, a safety vehicle will be available to support if you prefer not to exert yourself.

Trail conditions vary between mostly cobble stone and dirt trail, with some mountain road as well.





Serendipity

Hutong trip leaders travel regularly to destinations to develop relationships with local contacts so we can 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.

Christmas Day

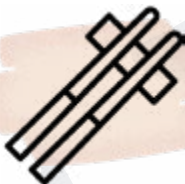
We will be celebrating Christmas Eve in the stunning environs of the Tiger Leaping Gorge. For our Christmas eve celebrations we will host a White Elephant-style Secret Santa paired with drinks and a scrumptious roasted lamb feast.



Meals & Snacks

The Hutong will organize three meals a day, including plenty of snacks along the way. 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 can be spicy. In the lead up to the trip, we'll ask about any food allergies or dietary preferences. If you can't eat spicy foods, our Hutong guides will make every effort to accommodate you.

While we will provide some snacks, we recommend that participants bring along comfort foods to their own liking as well, e.g. energy bars and gels. We'll also provide fresh fruit that we can get along the route.



People

Of China's 56 officially recognized ethnic minorities, 25 can be found in Yunnan; about one-third of the province's population are not ethnic Han Chinese. Along our route you'll meet many of our awesome local partners who'll happily talk to you about their cultures and traditions, meaning we're all sure to learn something and have some great conversations along the way.

Hydration

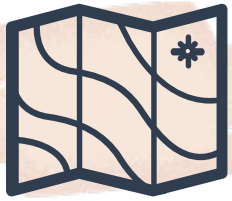
We bring plenty of clean, bottled water along for the ride, and make sure to provide lots of rehydration stops. We also include sugary drinks at meal times for a bit of an extra boost, as well as plenty of cold beer when the day's riding is done. We do not provide energy drinks or sports drinks.



Accommodation

Part of the adventure of going to Northern Yunnan is staying in guesthouses in the beautiful old towns of the Tea Horse Road. Nights 1-6 will be spent in clean, comfortable guesthouse accommodation with private Western-style ensuite bathrooms, and the final night in a hotel.

Larger family-style rooms are also available upon request.



Guides

Our Northern Yunnan 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.

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

December is one of the best months to visit Northern Yunnan. Expect clear, cool weather with sunny blue skies and low precipitation. Daytime highs typically reach 15°C, with nighttime lows of 3°C. You'll need comfortable, breathable layers and a warm jacket.

Arrival & Departure

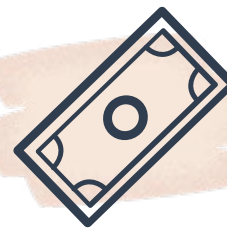
This trip will begin and end in Lijiang. We will arrange pick-up and drop-off service for you at Lijiang Airport. If you are arriving by train we may also be able to help with transfer.



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.



Money & Extra Expenses

ATMs are plentiful in Lijiang, 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 with local keepsakes for sale, 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.

“

Unforgettable trip!

What seemed a great challenge ended up as an amazing experience around beautiful landscapes, delicious food, interesting towns, and wonderful people - both staff and other travellers.

”

Tania

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 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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