

16-DAY SOUTHWEST CHINA (APR 29-MAY 14, 2010)

Beijing - Chengdu - Lijiang - Shangri-la (Zhongdian) - Kunming - Shanghai

Day 1/Thu, Apr 29: Departing Home City

The journey begins with your transpacific flight departing from a city of your choice. We lose a day upon crossing the International Date Line.

Day 2/Fri, Apr 30: Arrival in Beijing

Meet our guide on arrival in late afternoon and transfer to the hotel. The balance of the day is at leisure.

Day 3/Sat, May 1: Beijing

Beijing, capital of China, is the country's second largest city in terms of population. Following a brief orientation we visit Tian'anmen Square, the Forbidden City and an old hutong - alleyway flanked with traditional residential courtyards. Welcome dinner features delicious Beijing roast duck, a local delicacy. (B/L/D)

Day 4/Sun, May 2: Beijing

Morning visit to the majestic Summer Palace, a royal resort during the Qing Dynasty. After lunch we tour the National Stadium, nicknamed the "Bird nest", where the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games were held. Those who have no interest in the Olympic venue may want to spend the afternoon exploring Panjiayuan flea market on their own. The evening Peking Opera show is optional if available. (B/L)

Day 5/Mon, May 3: Beijing

Enjoy a full-day excursion to the legendary Great Wall, 90km northwest of the city. Zigzagging over 6,000 kilometres from east to west along the undulating mountains, the Great Wall, said to be visible from the moon, was built to hold off tribal invaders from the north. On the way back to the city in the afternoon we stop by at the Spirit Way at Ming Tombs. The Spirit Way, serving at the entrance to the Ming Tombs, is lined with statues of guardian animals and officials. (B/L)

Day 6/Tue, May 4: Beijing - Chengdu

Morning sightseeing at the Temple of Heaven. Built for emperors to worship Heaven, the Temple of Heaven is China's largest existing complex of ancient sacrificial buildings occupying an area of 273 hectares and three times the area of the Forbidden City. We fly to Chengdu in late afternoon. (B/L)

Day 7/Wed, May 5: Chengdu

Tour of the Giant Panda Breeding Centre is followed by a visit to the museum built on the archaeological site of Sanxingdui Culture (Bronze Age). First chanced upon by a farmer in 1929, Sanxingdui, 40km west of Chengdu, continued to surprise the archaeological community in the decades to come. In 1986, two major sacrificial pits were discovered and the breakthrough aroused widespread academic attention from around the world. The Sanxingdui finds are exciting, but they remain enigmatic. So far no written records of this 5,000-year-old civilization have been found. (B/L)

Day 8/Thu, May 6: Chengdu - Lijiang

Morning schedule includes Wangjianglou (river view) Park and a traditional tea house. Fly to Lijiang in late afternoon. Lijiang is home to the ethnic Naxi people whose intriguing Dongba religion and unique customs coupled with the region's enchanting scenery combine to make Lijiang and its vicinity a fascinating place to explore. The old town known as Dayan is protected as a UNESCO-designated World Cultural Heritage Site. (B/L)

Day 9/Fri, May 7: Lijiang

A walking tour of the old town is followed by an excursion to Yunshanping or Spruce Meadow, an alpine pasture surrounded by virgin forests at the foot of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. En route we stop by an ancient village. The evening concert of classical Naxi music is optional if available. (B/L)

Day 10/Sat, May 8: Lijiang - Shangri-la (Zhongdian)

After breakfast we embark on an overland journey to Zhongdian. The day-long driver covers 200 kilometres of country road snaking through scenic river valleys and high mountains dotted by villages of various ethnic nationalities. En route we stop by at Tiger Leaping Gorge, the first bend of the Yangtze. (B/L/D)

Day 11/Sun, May 9: Zhongdian

We spend the morning visiting Bita Lake surrounded by virgin alpine forests and a Tibetan village along the way. Afternoon sightseeing takes in Songzanlin Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism, and a local market. (B/L/D)

Day 12/Mon, May 10: Zhongdian - Kunming

The morning flight to Kunming takes less than one hour. Capital of Yunnan Province, Kunming is widely known as the "city of eternal spring" due to its temperate climate year-round. Our sightseeing in Kunming includes the historic Western Hill Scenic Area. (B/L)

Day 13/Tue, May 11: Kunming

Enjoy an excursion to Stone Forest. Located 126km southeast of Kunming, the Stone Forest is a massive collection of gray limestone pillars created by water erosion. The tall rocks seem to emanate from the ground in the manner of stalagmites, with many looking like trees made of stone. Afternoon sightseeing at Bamboo Temple and a flower market. (B/L/D)

Day 14/Wed, May 12: Kunming - Shanghai

Morning flight to Shanghai. Afternoon sightseeing includes Shanghai Museum, Yu Garden and the Bund. The evening cruise on Huangpu River to enjoy the city's spectacular neon-lit skyline is optional and subject to availability. (B/L)

Day 15/Thu, May 13: Shanghai

Today is a free day. Exploring China's most dynamic city on your own has never been easier. Our recommended list includes a visit to glitzy Pudong New District, a ride aboard the world's only commercially run Maglev train, and the popular evening cruise on Huangpu River to enjoy the city's spectacular neon-lit skyline. (B)

Day 16/Fri, May 14: Shanghai - Home City

Free morning to pack and relax. Transfer to airport by taxi (cab fare approx. \$18) to board return flight. Arrive home the same day. (B)

City	Nights	Hotel	Star Rating
Beijing	4	Sunworld Dynasty	★★★★★
Chengdu	2	Jinjiang Hotel	★★★★★
Lijiang	2	Guanfang Hotel	★★★★★
Shangri-la/Zhongdian	2	Paradise Hotel	★★★★★
Kunming	2	Bank Hotel	★★★★★
Shanghai	2	Sheraton Shanghai Pudong	★★★★★

This is a guaranteed departure. Please contact us for cost details.

