



A Journey along the Ancient Trade Routes of Yunnan

This trip beckons those seeking to explore the **lesser traveled borderlands** of southwestern China -- Yunnan Province – with its **multiple of cultures** whose customs and traditions survive by their remoteness; and whose vibrant natural wonders are indeed blessed by the gods.



Brief Itinerary: 14 days in country

- 1. Arrive in Kunming**, capital of Yunnan called the city of “Eternal Spring.” Visit Green Lake and the flower market. Dinner in a traditional style.
- 2. Fly to Dali**, day hike in the mountains, and visit Xihou town, a vital trade center beside Erhai Lake (*photo upper right*). Welcome to a Bai merchant’s stone home with its elegant courtyard. Visit Choucheng, where local people make 'tie and dye' printed fabric. Take a walk to the local market shaded by ancient trees and enjoy the color and bustle of the market.
- 3. Travel to Shaxi** through the stunning Laojushan Mountains. Shaxi dates back 2400 years. On the way visit Xizhou, a small town where prosperous tea merchants once made their homes. Enjoy the beauty of the Bai stone architecture. The caravan route from Puer to Dali stretched through Shaxi on to Burma and Tibet. Sideng market square houses a temple, theater, shops and stables around a red sandstone paved square with ancient trees and small side streets.
- 4-6. Shaxi and to Lijiang:** Drive through picturesque countryside stopping in several quaint villages and at the Pear Orchard Temple. Visit famous grottos with carvings of ancient local life. See how the ethnic peoples – Bai and Naxi – farm and how their architecture differs. Enjoy a morning walk through the Friday Shaxi market. Arrive in Lijiang and visit the historic home of Joseph Rock, an early British botanist. Attend a Naxi Orchestra performance with aged musicians using antique instruments. Overnight in Lijiang (*right*) and explore the city on foot.



- 7-8. Tacheng:** Continue driving northward through fruit orchards and vegetable fields into alpine forested mountains, coming into view of the first bend in the Yangtse River.



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Explore Baima Reserve, home of the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey, which lives at the highest elevation of any wild primate. They are known to be able to endure sub-zero temperatures in the winter. From Tacheng, take walks to Naxi and Tibetan villages.

- 9-10. Dechen and Sacred Mt. Kawakarpo:** Drive along the Yunnan-Tibet road toward Mt. Kawakarpo, the second most important sacred mountain to Tibetans after Mt. Kailash and the highest mountain in the Hengduanshan range at 6740m. Tibetans do an inner or outer kora circling the mountain, the latter taking 2 to 3 weeks. Overnight in Dechen, and in the morning, hope for a clear view of Mt. Kawakarpo with the peaks of Gewaringha, Metsomo and 5-wisdom Buddha Mountain flanking it on either side. Drive closer, to Meyung village and taking a cable car then walk to a point close to the Minyong glacier, the lowest glacier in Asia.



Further north encounter alpine forests and rhododendron forests full of brilliant pink and white blooms in May and June in higher altitudes, and high alpine grasslands where one can see primula and pedicularis in bloom through the summer. Stop to see the half-moon bend of the Yangtze river cutting through the rugged mountains (*left*).

- 11-13. Gyalthang (Shangrila):** Now turn south to visit Dhondupling Monastery, the second largest in the region, located in the rugged mountains. In the small villages of Nixi, you will see the special black earth pottery for butter tea, soup tureens, hotpots, and coal pots made only in this region. Continue to Gyalthang or Shangrila as the capital of the Prefecture is now named. Take it easy as Shangrila sits at elevation 3300 – 3400m. Spend three nights here, visiting local markets and Ganden Sumsanling (*right*) housing 700 monks. Built in the 17th century by the 5th Dalai Lama, the monastery is a living museum of Tibetan culture. Stay in a traditional style lodge in the old town, once a center for caravans on their way to Lhasa. Visit Ringha temple of the Five Wisdom Buddhas where local people pray to leave their problems behind. Visit the Napha grasslands with a wetland lake. The hills are rich in herbs and shrubs and one may see early plants of the famous Blue Poppy here which bloom in July. There are good chances of gentian and primula in spring. This is also the home of the rare Black necked crane that comes for fall and winter. Enjoy a farewell dinner of traditional Gyalthang hot pot.



- 14. Depart for Home:** Fly to Kunming and connect to your departure flight.