



## Northern Yunnan Trip

Provided by SEEK Travel Consulting 云南喜临文化, 2024

Yunnan is considered one of the most beautiful and diverse provinces in China. From rainforest and tropical flora, to lakes and torrential rivers, to plateaus with grassy and forest landscapes with snow mountains over 6000m high, Yunnan offers a stunning variety of landscapes.

Culturally the province is home to 25-ethnic minorities (56-ethnicities live all over China) who actively live their own customs and festivals and at the same time lead a harmonious coexistence. It can be said that Yunnan offers a unique variety of colors that might not be found anywhere else. Located at the very southwest of the country, on the border with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam, Yunnan offers a counterpoint to the widespread image of China's hypermodern megacities in the east, as well as a refreshingly simple, very humane world in this enormously large, Han-dominated country.

Promise: Every trip offers an insight into the cultural diversity and nature of Yunnan.

Season: Yunnan is a suitable destination all year round, with flowers and trees in bloom and locally grown fruits and vegetables, depending on the season.

- Spring and early summer (late Feb-March-April-May) and autumn (October-November) are generally the nicest months.
- Summer (June to September) and winter (December-January- early Feb.) each offer moderate temperatures, in summer never too hot, in winter never too cold. The rainy season in summer and the cooler evening temperatures or sometimes strong winds in winter require suitable clothing. The most beautiful blue skies with bright sunshine are generally found in winter.

Recommended travel period: 4-5 days or 10-14 days, with its great variety in natural environments and rich ethnic diversity Yunnan offers endless opportunities to discover different places and engage in different activities.

## I) Route

Important: the following selection are so-called "main destinations" or examples of places that can be reached quite easily on a first Yunnan trip offering a first impression of the province. In addition, there are of course many, many other interesting and beautiful places, which may take a bit longer travel time, but are definitely worth it.

Each journey with SEEK is individually designed according to the interests and needs of the travel group, as well as the available time, and the season.

## II) Possible stops and Highlights

### 1) Dali

Dali is the capital town of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture in northwestern Yunnan. The old town of Dali 大理 古城 with its location between mountain range CangShan and lake ErHai was once a well-known meeting place for backpackers. In recent years the scene has changed due to local tourism and a new interest of young Chinese to escape the big city-life, but Dali remains still today a place of cultural discovery, as well as a place to relax and feel good.

Dali has a historic importance that can be found today in its unique architecture and cultural traits. Its history extends back as far as to the Kingdom of Nanzhao in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, which became later on the Dali Kingdom. The Old Town with its stone city wall dates back to 1382 (Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644) and has long been the political, economic and cultural center of the South.

Geographically Dali is located at an altitude of about 2000m, and its surroundings offer many possibilities for exploring, by bike, car, by electric scooter or on foot, in the CangShan mountains (up to 4000m) or through the villages around ErHai Lake.



## 2) WeiShan

Weishan 巍山 with its old town is one of the "four famous cultural cities" in the province of Yunnan, in the autonomous district of Weishan Yi and Hui, about 70km south of Dali. It was the first capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom and is in fact the cradle of Nanzhao culture: In 738, the Tang Dynasty Empire supported the leader PiLuoGe in Mengshe 蒙巖 (original name of WeiShan) with the aim of pacifying the region around Lake ErHai. From six warring tribes emerged the independent Nanzhao kingdom, literally translated as "kingdom of the southern tribe", tolerated by the emperor in Xi'An, led by PiLuoGe in WeiShan. The majority of people (about 35%) in WeiShan belong to the YiZu group, but they peacefully share the place with five other ethnic groups, including the HuiZu, who are Muslims.

About 20km south of the old town is Weibaoshan 巍宝山, one of China's 14-holy mountains of Tao. On a walking tour you can not only admire many ancient temples, beautiful old trees and plants, but also experience an example of harmonious coexistence of religions. In fact, among the more than 20 temples spread out over the mountain are Taoist, Buddhist and Confucius temples.



## 3) Shaxi

All of Shaxi 沙溪 is a reminder of the time of the Tea Horse Road, also known as the Southern Silk Road, which started in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and was an important trade route between Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan with India and the Middle East for centuries. Shaxi is still one of the best preserved historical market centers in the region, with traditional BaiZu minority courtyard architecture, wooden houses and narrow alleys as well as a unique theater temple in the old market square.



Shaxi is located in a remote valley surrounded by mountains, the surroundings offer various possibilities for activities such as walking along the river to a surprising bookstore in an old

grange, a trip on horseback to small farming villages in the area, or visiting the temples and grottoes of the ShiBao mountains. Those temples are considered an early proof of the spread of Buddhism in Yunnan, from 1300 years ago. The Stone Bell Temple and the Hanging Temple, as well as the 139 stone carvings spread over the mountains are unique masterpieces of construction and craftsmanship of that time.



#### 4) Tiger Leaping Gorge

It is the JinSha River which flows with enormous power through the famous Tiger Leaping Gorge 虎跳峡, becoming later on the Yangtze River. Located between Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (5596m peak) and Haba Snow Mountain (5396m peak), the water flows at 1800m above sea level, making it one of the deepest and most spectacular river canyons in the world. The area offers various hiking opportunities, but the drive through the gorge and a visit to different viewing platform (one being right down by the riverside) also give an unforgettable perspective on the natural spectacle of water and rocks.



## 5) Lijiang

The city of Lijiang 丽江 is located in a valley plain at the foot of the Jade Dragon Mountains, on the other side of the Tiger Leaping Gorge. It is mainly populated by the NaxiZu minority, with two old towns called DaYan and ShuHe. They are also around 800 years old, but never had a political significance like Dali which is probably why there is no city wall in Lijiang.

1996 a terrible earthquake shook the area, many houses were destroyed and had to be rebuilt. At this time the Chinese population as well as the world became aware of Lijiang and tourism began to develop. The following year Lijiang was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But indeed, in the 1920s, an Austrian-American botanist had already discovered the particularity of this area and studied it in detail. Joseph Rock lived here for about 25 years in a village called Yuhu, a few kilometers outside Lijiang, where he not only studied biodiversity, but also gave the world a special insight into the ethnic minority of the Naxi culture and its language.



## 6) Shangri-la

Shangri-la 香格里拉, originally called Zhongdian 中甸, or Gyalthang in Tibetan, is part of Diqing Tibet Autonomous Prefecture. The largest Tibetan monastery outside Tibet is located here, built after the example of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, surrounded by mountains, lakes and grassland. The town itself, located at 3300m above sea level, consists of the larger modern part and the old town Dukezong. In 2014 a large part of the old town was destroyed by a devastating fire, but was subsequently rebuilt almost completely and (they say) faithfully to the original.



The Shangri-la region has its own charm, somewhat out of touch with modern reality, where you can get to know Tibetan life and learn more about their lifestyle, religion and traditions or their cuisine. It is surrounded by impressive landscapes full of natural wonders, snow-capped mountains and plateaus as well as yak-populated grasslands. Together with the fascinating ethnic culture and hospitality of the Tibetan people a visit to this area of Yunnan becomes for many a cutting-edge experience.

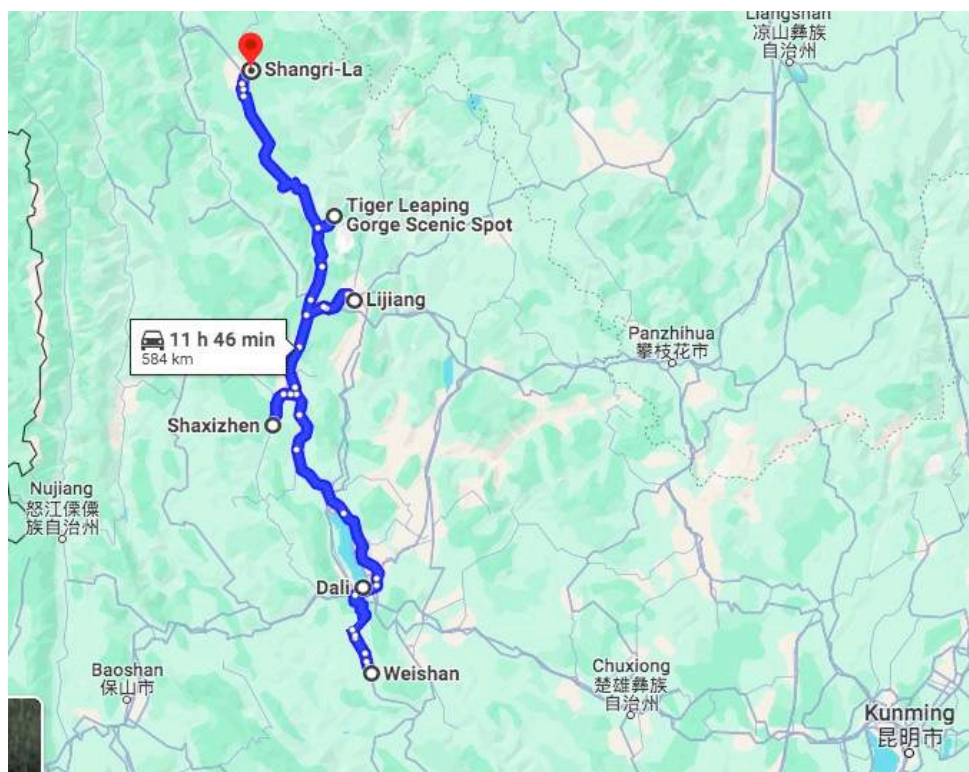


And if you have the time and are not afraid of the altitude, one can go even further north: Deqin is the administrative center of the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and the northernmost city of Yunnan with about 80% of Tibetan population. It is about 70km straight line away from the border to Tibet and the area offers not only diverse hiking and trekking opportunities, but also a wonderful view of the Meili Snow Mountains with peaks up to 6700m high.





...and many, many other locations.....!

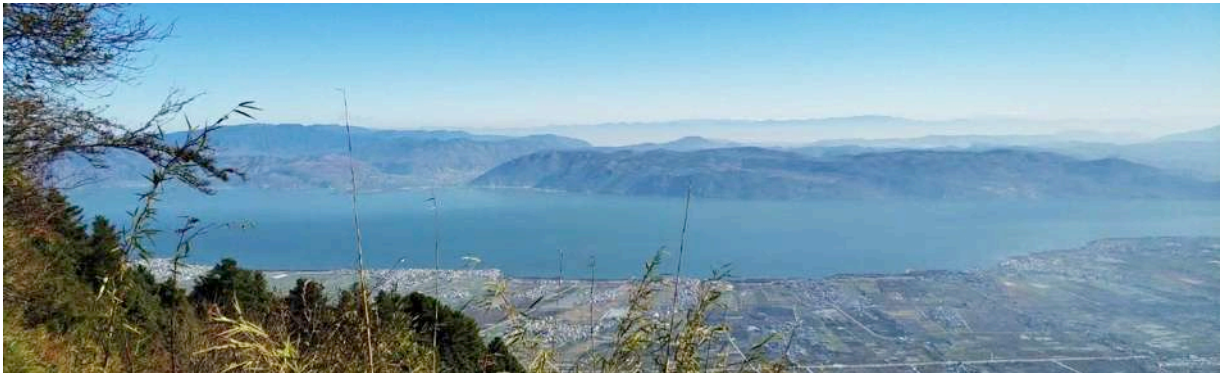


### III) Optional Visits and Activities (in most cases can be decided on site, depending on the itinerary and interest of the participants)

- The Dali Old Town, located between Cangshan Mountain Range and Erhai Lake.
- Walk on the Cangshan Mountains (with/without cable car), overlooking Lake Erhai.
- Walk or bike along Lake Erhai, or take a boat trip.
- Visit the Three Pagodas, historical landmark of Dali, built about 1200 years ago.
- Visit of artisan workshops in the tradition of BaiZu culture, e.g. indigo batik, silk embroidery, wood carving etc.
- Introduction to the Chinese tea ceremony, visit a tea field and/or get to know the production process.

- Day trip to WeiShan and WeiBaoShan Holy Dao Mountain, visit a Hui Mosque, possibly a local weekly market (TBC).
  - The Old Town of Shaxi and its surroundings, following the footsteps of the Southern Silk Road.
  - Visit the Horse Caravan Museum, enjoy a typical caravan meal (TBC).
  - Excursion to ShiBao Mountains, 1300-year-old Buddhist temples and stone carvings.
  - Stop in the Tiger Leaping Gorge, including options for shorter or longer hikes.
  - Visit Lijiang Old Towns, insight into the Naxi Ethnic, Yuhu Village and Joseph Rock Museum, Baisha Village with 500-year-old frescoes.
  - Visit the Jade Dragon Mountains and Blue Moon Valley (by cable car) in Lijiang.
  - Introduction to Tibetan culture.
  - Visit the largest Tibetan monastery outside Tibet (with local guide TBC).
  - Bike tour around Napa Lake wetland outside of Shangri-la (depending on season and weather conditions).
  - Visit Pudacuo National Park, bathing in hot springs outside of Shangri-la.
- For sportive or active travellers, depending on the route and weather conditions, the following outdoor activities can be organized: hiking or trekking, cycling, kayaking or SUP, river rafting, sport climbing or Via Ferrata.

...and much, much more.....!



For questions or special requests as well as for detailed travel advice, we look forward to hearing from you!

Sunny greetings from Yunnan!

Sylvie Krauss

### SEEK Travel Consulting

云南喜临文化传播有限公司

Dali, Yunnan Province, P.R. China

Phone: +86-136-2112-0574 (Sylvie Krauss)

Email: [info@seekforculture.com](mailto:info@seekforculture.com)

[www.seekforculture.com](http://www.seekforculture.com)