

12-Day Best Yunnan and Zhangjiajie Tour

Trip overview

This meticulously crafted 12-day journey seamlessly weaves together the misty, ethereal stone pinnacles of Zhangjiajie with the vibrant cultural tapestry and dramatic landscapes of Yunnan. Your expedition begins amidst the towering sandstone spires of Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, the real-world inspiration for the floating mountains of Avatar, and takes you across the heart-pounding Glass Bridge spanning the Grand Canyon. From the dramatic heights of Tianmen Mountain, you will journey through the riverside romance of Fenghuang Ancient Town before flying to Yunnan. Here, the adventure elevates as you wander the timeless cobblestone alleys of Lijiang Old Town, stand in awe beneath the sheer cliffs of Tiger Leaping Gorge, and immerse yourself in the sacred, snow-capped serenity of Shangri-La. Combining ancient ethnic heritage, striking natural wonders, and seamless high-speed rail and private transfers, this tour offers an unparalleled immersion into the very best of Southwest China.

- **Durations:** 12 Days
- **Destinations:** Kunming - Lijiang - Shangri-La - Zhangjiajie - Fenghuang - Changsha
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://asiachinatour.com/12-day-best-yunnan-and-zhangjiajie-tour/>

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Kunming (The Spring City)

Upon your arrival in Kunming, you will be warmly welcomed at the airport or railway station by our dedicated local guide and driver. A comfortable, private vehicle will be at your service to transfer you smoothly to your hotel for check-in. The rest of the day is yours to unwind, adjust to the altitude, and begin exploring the pleasant, tree-lined streets of China's "Spring City" at your own leisure.

Meals: None (Departure Day)

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Expert Tip for Day 1:

Since Kunming sits at an elevation of approximately 1,900 meters, we recommend taking a relaxed stroll around the scenic Green Lake Park (Cuihu) or the bustling Jinma Biji Archway this

evening to help your body gently adjust to the plateau climate while enjoying the city's year-round mild weather.

Day 2: Kunming — Discover the Stone Forest & Cultural Heritage

We begin the morning with a drive to the extraordinary Stone Forest (Shilin), a UNESCO World Heritage Site located just outside the city. This geological wonder features an awe-inspiring landscape of towering limestone spires, labyrinthine paths, and deep dramatic gorges that collectively resemble a massive, magical forest frozen in stone. We have included an eco-friendly sightseeing tram inside the park to ensure you can comfortably explore the most spectacular vantage points without unnecessary fatigue.

After a local lunch, we return to the city to visit Yuantong Temple, a magnificent 1,200-year-old Buddhist sanctuary that blends unique architectural styles and offers an authentic glimpse into the rich spiritual tapestry of Yunnan Province. We conclude our day with a leisurely stroll through Green Lake Park (Cuihu), a vibrant urban oasis where you can watch locals gathering to play traditional instruments, practice tai chi, or perform lively dances in colorful regional attire.

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Tip for Day 2:

The Stone Forest requires a fair amount of walking on uneven, stone-paved steps, so wearing sturdy, comfortable walking shoes with good grip is essential; additionally, because the limestone formations reflect heat and the plateau sun is intense, remember to pack your sunglasses, sunblock, and a wide-brimmed hat for the outdoor excursion.

Day 3: Kunming to Lijiang — Dayan Town Awaits

This morning, you will be transferred to the Kunming Railway Station to board a modern bullet train bound for Lijiang. Upon your arrival, a private local guide and driver will be waiting at the station to greet you and escort you into the city. We begin your Lijiang exploration at Black Dragon Pool Park, a tranquil oasis renowned for its classic architecture, glass-like waters, and the iconic, postcard-perfect view of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain framing the background. Afterward, immerse yourself in the labyrinthine charm of Lijiang Ancient Town (Dayan Town), a beautifully preserved UNESCO World Heritage Site inhabited by the indigenous Naxi minority, where you can spend the afternoon strolling along ancient cobblestone streets, crossing stone bridges, and admiring traditional timber-frame houses lined with flowing canals.

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Tip for Day 3:

Lijiang sits at an elevation of approximately 2,400 meters, which is higher than Kunming, so remember to pace yourself while walking the undulating cobblestone streets of the ancient town and stay well-hydrated throughout the afternoon to help your body adapt effortlessly to the change in altitude.

Day 4: Lijiang — Explore Jade Dragon Snow Mountain

This morning, we journey to the majestic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, the sacred sanctuary of the indigenous Naxi people. You will ascend to the breathtaking Glacier Park via a large cable car, reaching an incredible vantage point at 4,680 meters where you can marvel at a dramatic Alpine landscape of ancient ice formations, dense pine forests, and jagged, snow-capped peaks piercing the clouds. After descending, we will explore the magical Blue Moon Valley, a stunning alpine canyon where an impossibly vibrant, turquoise-blue river winds its way through lush meadows against the dramatic backdrop of the mountains.

In the afternoon, we transition to a scenic open-air tram ride through Yuhu Naxi Village, a historic settlement built entirely of local stone. Here, you will discover the serene beauty of Longnu Lake and witness the snow mountain's majestic reflection perfectly mirrored on its glass-like surface. To unwind, we will treat you to a fresh cup of coffee at the charming Xing Cafe, where you can savor the breathtaking mountain views from their panoramic balcony or rooftop. Finally, you will step directly into the daily life of a Naxi family by trying on their vibrant, hand-embroidered traditional attire, followed by an immersive cultural workshop where you will uncover the ancient secrets of Dongba papermaking and learn to write the enigmatic, pictographic Dongba characters from a local expert.

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Tip for Day 4:

Because you will be ascending rapidly to 4,680 meters on the glacier cable car, it is highly common to experience the effects of thin air, so we strongly advise renting a heavy down jacket and purchasing a small, portable oxygen bottle at the mountain base before your ascent; remember to walk slowly, avoid sudden physical exertion while on the observation wooden decks, and dress in warm layers as temperatures at the summit remain freezing year-round.

Day 5: Lijiang to Shangri-La — Tiger Leaping Gorge

This morning, enjoy a seamless and scenic private drive from Lijiang to Shangri-La, journeying deeper into the dramatic landscapes of northwestern Yunnan. Along the way, we will stop to explore the awe-inspiring beauty of Tiger Leaping Gorge, globally renowned as one of the deepest and most spectacular river canyons on earth. Here, you will witness the raw power of nature as the mighty Jinsha River rushes fiercely through a narrow valley, crashing wildly around a legendary central rock formation where a tiger is said to have leaped across the roaring waters. Following lunch near the canyon, we will continue our ascent up to Shangri-La, reaching an altitude of 3,200 meters. The remainder of the afternoon is dedicated to checking into your hotel, allowing you plenty of quiet time to rest, relax, and comfortably adjust to the higher elevation.

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Tip for Day 5:

As you ascend to Shangri-La's 3,200-meter elevation, it is crucial to prioritize your acclimatization: avoid drinking alcohol or taking an overly hot shower this evening, and plan for a light dinner.

While walking down to the Tiger Leaping Gorge viewing platforms is relatively easy, the climb back up the stairs can be strenuous in the thinner air, so take frequent breaks and pace yourself steadily.

Day 6: Shangri-La to Kunming — Unveil the Hidden Gems

We begin this deeply immersive morning by dressing in exquisite, traditional Tibetan attire, complete with authentic local hair-styling. Embracing this cultural transformation allows you to truly feel the spiritual heritage of the region and capture unforgettable, stunning photographs against the dramatic Himalayan backdrops. Fully attired, we proceed to discover the grandeur of Songzanlin Lamasery, Yunnan's largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Often referred to as the "Little Potala Palace," this architectural masterpiece is perched on a hillside and filled with priceless golden Buddhist statues, intricate frescoes, and sacred cultural treasures that provide a profound insight into Tibetan spirituality.

Afterward, we wander through the winding alleys of Dukezong Old Town, a vibrant and historic Tibetan community. Here, you will visit Guishan Park and Moonlight Square, home to the world's largest spinning prayer wheel, where you can join locals in turning the massive golden structure to send blessings into the wind. Following lunch, you will be transferred to the Shangri-La Railway Station to board a comfortable bullet train back to Kunming. Upon your evening arrival in the Spring City, a private guide and driver will be waiting to welcome you and escort you smoothly to your hotel.

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Tip for Day 6:

When visiting Songzanlin Lamasery, remember that it is an active place of worship, so please remove hats and sunglasses when entering the prayer halls, refrain from taking photos inside the chapels, and always walk clockwise around the stupas and halls; additionally, turning the giant prayer wheel at Dukezong requires a coordinated effort, so feel free to join hands with the locals to spin it clockwise three times for good fortune.

Day 7: Kunming to Zhangjiajie — A Change of Scenery

Enjoy a relaxing morning exploring the scenic streets or local markets of Kunming at your own leisure during your free time. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to Zhangjiajie. Upon your arrival amidst the dramatic karst landscapes of Hunan Province, your private local guide and driver will be waiting to warmly welcome you at the exit and transfer you smoothly to your hotel for a restful evening.

Accommodation: Standard Hotel

Meals: Breakfast

Expert Tip for Day 7:

As you transition from the high-altitude plateau of Yunnan to the humid subtropical climate of Zhangjiajie, you will notice a significant change in air moisture and temperature; we recommend checking the local weather forecast before packing your day bag, as Zhangjiajie's mountainous

terrain is prone to sudden showers, making a lightweight rain jacket or compact umbrella an essential carry-on item for the days ahead.

Day 8: Zhangjiajie — Explore Zhangjiajie National Forest Park

Step into a real-life otherworldly realm today as you explore the core wonders of Zhangjiajie National Forest Park. Your adventure begins with a ride on the Bailong Elevator—the world's highest outdoor glass lift—ascending to the breathtaking Yuanjiajie Scenic Area in just 2 minutes. As you step out, you will stand in awe of the towering Hallelujah Mountain, the stunning inspiration behind the floating peaks in the movie *Avatar*, and marvel at the spectacular natural stone arch known as the "World's No. 1 Bridge."

Next, travel by shuttle bus to the pristine Tianzi Mountain. A panoramic cable car and tram ride will unveil its most iconic vistas, including the brush-like stone spires of Yubi Peak and the majestic Tianzi Pavilion. From the summit, enjoy an unforgettable, misty view of thousands of sandstone peaks spreading out beneath you like an ancient scroll painting.

In the afternoon, descend to the valley floor for a refreshing contrast. Conclude your day with a peaceful stroll along the Golden Whip Stream, a serene, verdant canyon famous for its crystalline waters, lush overhanging greenery, and gentle cascading waterfalls, before returning to your hotel.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Expert Tips:

To ensure the most seamless flow and beat the standard tour-group crowds, your guide will reverse the classic route by steering you to the Bailong Elevator early in the morning. When it is time for lunch, we have carefully selected a scenic viewpoint restaurant on the mountain that offers a local Hunan lunch, tailored with non-spicy options to comfortably suit western palates. Since the total walking time today is around 2 to 3 hours with significant steps, comfortable walking shoes or trail runners are highly recommended to ensure your ultimate comfort. Please also keep in mind that Zhangjiajie's peaks are famous for their mystical sea of clouds, so if heavy fog rolls in, your guide will flexibly adjust the viewing sequence to ensure you catch the clearest vistas possible.

Day 9: Zhangjiajie — Discover the Grand Canyon

Prepare for another day of sensory wonders and thrilling heights as you dive into the heart of Zhangjiajie Grand Canyon. Your expedition kicks off with a trek through A Strip of Sky, a dramatic, razor-thin mountain pathway so narrow that it accommodates only one person at a time, creating an unforgettable sense of intimacy with the raw rock. From there, you will ascend the Sky Ladder, a steep wooden walkway and steps intricately carved into the sheer cliffs, rewarding your effort with breathtaking, panoramic views of the emerald abyss below.

The ultimate highlight awaits as you step onto the world-renowned Glass Bridge, the world's longest and highest glass-bottomed bridge. Suspended between two massive cliffs, it offers a heart-pounding, 300-meter-high walk where the canyon floor unfolds directly beneath your feet. After conquering the heights, you will head deeper into the valley and venture underground to explore the majestic Yellow Dragon Cave. Here, you will admire towering stalagmites lit like

hidden treasures and enjoy a peaceful cruise through an ancient underground river, home to rare and ancient aquatic creatures.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Expert Tips:

To fully enjoy the Glass Bridge experience without any stress, please note that large cameras, backpacks, and metal-tipped objects are strictly prohibited on the glass for safety reasons, so your guide will help you store your larger belongings beforehand. If you would rather not cross the bridge, your guide will seamlessly arrange alternative walking paths along the canyon side so you can still enjoy the stunning scenery comfortably. Given that the cave interior maintains a constant, cool temperature year-round and involves navigating damp, slippery steps, bringing a light jacket and wearing sturdy, non-slip walking shoes will ensure you stay perfectly warm and safe throughout this unforgettable day.

Day 10: Zhangjiajie to Fenghuang — Experience the Tianmen Mountain

Embark on a breathtaking journey today as you conquer the legendary Tianmen Mountain before traveling to the countryside. Your ascent begins with a ride on the world's longest cableway, taking you from the bustling city center straight into the clouds. As you travel up to the 1,400-meter peak, you will enjoy dramatic, panoramic views of the twisting mountain roads below. Once at the summit, you will challenge your senses on the famous 60-meter Glass Skywalk, a transparent pathway suspended an exhilarating 1,430 meters above the sheer drops of the valley.

After braving the heights, you will take a series of unique, mountain-embedded escalators down to the majestic Tianmen Cave. Known as the Heaven's Gate, this towering natural karst arch showcases the immense power of nature and serves as a spectacular viewpoint. In the afternoon, you will board your comfortable private vehicle and journey to the captivating Fenghuang Ancient Town. Arriving at this riverside jewel, you will immediately be charmed by its iconic stilt houses, winding alleys, and rich minority cultural heritage.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Expert Tips:

Tianmen Mountain requires a passport or ID check for entry, so please make sure to carry your physical passport with you today. The mountain operates on strict, time-slotted ticket routes, meaning your guide will carefully coordinate your morning departure time to align with our pre-booked cableway slot, and we ask for your punctual cooperation. The summit walkways are fully exposed to the elements and can be significantly cooler and windier than the city below, so keeping a windbreaker or light layers handy is highly recommended. Upon arriving in Fenghuang, the historic core is entirely pedestrianized with traditional uneven cobblestone pathways, so your guide will assist you with a streamlined luggage strategy to ensure a smooth check-in at your riverside boutique hotel.

Day 11: Fenghuang to Changsha — Discover Fenghuang Town

Immerse yourself in the timeless romance of old China this morning as you explore Fenghuang Ancient Town. Your day begins with a peaceful cruise along the Tuojiang River, allowing you to

witness the waking town from a unique riverside perspective. As your traditional wooden boat glides down the emerald waters, you will admire the magnificent Duocui Building, one of the town's tallest and best-preserved stilt houses, pass beneath the arches of the historic Rainbow Bridge, and conclude your river journey near the elegant, multi-tiered Wanming Tower.

After stepping back ashore, you will take a leisurely walking tour through the heart of the ancient city. Winding through narrow stone lanes, you will explore notable historical landmarks including the imposing East Gate Tower, the intricately carved Yang's Ancestral Hall, and the Ancient City Museum, which brings the local Miao and Tujia heritage to life. In the afternoon, you will take a comfortable private transfer to the train station to board a sleek high-speed train to Changsha. Upon arrival in Hunan's vibrant capital, your local guide and driver will be waiting to ensure a completely smooth transfer to your downtown hotel.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Expert Tips:

The morning Tuojiang River cruise is highly popular, so your guide will arrange an early boarding time to allow you to enjoy the misty, quiet river scenes before the daytime heat and crowds arrive. Since you will be transitioning directly from the walking tour to the train station, we recommend wearing your comfortable walking shoes and keeping your backpack light, while our driver securely handles your main luggage in the vehicle. The high-speed rail platforms can involve a short walk and some stairs, so having your passport easily accessible for the station security gates will help ensure a completely seamless and stress-free boarding experience.

Day 12: Changsha Departure

Conclude your memorable journey with an enriching dive into the history and modern pulse of Changsha. Your morning begins with a visit to the world-renowned Hunan Provincial Museum, where you will discover the exceptionally preserved artifacts of the legendary Mawangdui Han Dynasty Tombs, including astonishing ancient textiles and cultural treasures. Next, you will transition to the middle of the Xiang River to enjoy the charm of Orange Island. Traveling by a scenic open-air tram, you will explore its variety of beautiful parks and gardens, culminating at the southern tip to stand before the iconic, monumental Mao Zedong Youth Sculpture.

In the afternoon, experience the city's vibrant contemporary energy with a shopping spree at Huangxing Road Pedestrian Street, a bustling hub packed with local boutiques, modern brands, and enticing street food aromas. After selecting your final souvenirs, you will board your comfortable private transfer and head directly to the airport for your departure flight back home.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Expert Tips:

The Hunan Provincial Museum enforces a strict daily visitor quota and requires advanced reservations with your passport details, so your guide will secure these high-demand tickets well ahead of time. To maximize your comfort during the afternoon, we recommend checking out of your hotel in the morning and leaving your large luggage securely in the trunk of our private vehicle, allowing you to stroll Orange Island and shop freely with just a light backpack. Please ensure your passport, flight details, and tax-refund documents are easily accessible in your hand

luggage before arriving at the airport terminal for a smooth check-in.

Booking Policy

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation by Customer

- Cancellation received before 60 days: FREE of charge
- Cancellation received from 30 days to 59 days prior arrival date: 20% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 15 days to 29 days prior arrival date: 40% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 7 days to 14 days prior arrival date: 70% of total rate
- Cancellation received less than 7 days prior arrival date or No show: 100% of total rate

Children Policy

The rate for children applicable for one child sharing a twin or double cabin with two adults.

- For infant (<04 years old): Free of Charge
- 04 - 11 years old without bed: 50% adult rate
- 04 - 11 years old with extra bed: 75% adult rate
- Above 11 years old with extra bed: 100% adult rate

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