

10 Days Best Sichuan & Yunnan Highlight Tour

Trip overview

Embark on an extraordinary 10-day journey through China's most mesmerizing southwestern provinces—Sichuan and Yunnan. Beginning in the relaxed capital of Chengdu, you will come face-to-face with adorable giant pandas and marvel at the colossal 71-meter-tall Leshan Giant Buddha carved into stone cliffs. Transition seamlessly into Yunnan, where ancient trade routes, sacred snow mountains, and vibrant ethnic cultures await.

Discover the cobblestone lanes of UNESCO-listed Lijiang Old Town, gaze across the turquoise waters of Blue Moon Valley, and feel the thundering power of the Jinsha River at the world-famous Tiger Leaping Gorge. Ascend onto the edge of the Tibetan Plateau in Shangri-La to tour the majestic Songzanlin Monastery ("Little Potala Palace") and walk pristine alpine boardwalks in Pudacuo National Park. Conclude your adventure in Kunming, China's "Spring City," exploring the prehistoric 270-million-year-old Stone Forest and cliffside Taoist grottoes overlooking Dianchi Lake. With seamless private transfers, high-speed rail connections, and handpicked local guides, this classic itinerary offers the ultimate introduction to Southwest China.

- **Durations:** 10 Days
- **Destinations:** Chengdu - Leshan - Chengdu - Lijiang - Shangri-La - Kunming
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://asiachinatour.com/10-days-sichuan-and-yunnan-highlight-tour/>

Itinerary

Day 1: Touchdown in Chengdu — Private Airport Welcome & Relaxing Leisure Evening

Nihao and welcome to Chengdu, the vibrant capital of Sichuan Province and the celebrated world home of the Giant Panda! Upon stepping out into the arrival hall, you will be warmly greeted by your private local guide and personal chauffeur. Sit back and enjoy a smooth, hassle-free transfer directly to your hotel in a comfortable, air-conditioned vehicle while your guide shares your first insights into the city's relaxed pace and rich culinary history. Once checked in, the remainder of the day is entirely yours to unwind from your journey, recharge your energy, or begin your

personal discovery of this charming city at your own leisure.

If you feel inspired to step out for a preliminary stroll, Chengdu's inviting streetscapes offer an ideal introduction to authentic local life. You might choose to wander through the nearby tree-lined alleys, drop into a neighborhood teahouse to observe locals playing mahjong, or sample your very first bowl of mild, aromatic Sichuan noodles at a cozy local eatery. Whether you prefer a quiet evening resting in your room or a gentle walk around the neighborhood, your guide will ensure you have all the insider recommendations and maps you need for a safe, enjoyable first evening.

Meals: Excluded

Expert Journey Insights:

Chengdu is exceptionally well-connected via two major international aviation hubs: Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport (CTU) and the ultra-modern Chengdu Tianfu International Airport (TFU). Smooth, direct domestic flights connect the city to all primary gateways across China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an, Lhasa, Guilin, and Hong Kong. If you are arriving by China's high-speed railway, fast bullet trains connect smoothly from Xi'an in 3 to 4 hours or Chongqing in under 2 hours. Your private driver will track your incoming flight or train arrival time in real-time, guaranteeing a prompt, stress-free pickup regardless of any schedule changes.

Day 2: Monumental Wonders of Stone and Spirit — The Leshan Giant Buddha and Baoguo Temple at Mount Emei

Set off from Chengdu after breakfast on a scenic two-hour private drive south into Sichuan's lush countryside, bound for one of the most magnificent UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Asia: the **Leshan Giant Buddha**. Carved directly into the red sandstone cliffside over 1,200 years ago during the Tang Dynasty, this gargantuan stone statue sits serenely watching over the surging confluence of the Min, Qingyi, and Dadu rivers. Standing an astonishing 71 meters (233 feet) tall with shoulders spanning 28 meters wide and big toes measuring 8.5 meters long, its monumental scale truly honors the local saying: "The mountain is a Buddha, and the Buddha is a mountain."

As you explore the cliffside park, your guide will lead you along the winding stone staircases to examine the statue from multiple angles. Walk right alongside his massive head to admire the thousands of sculpted hair curls, then descend the narrow cliffside pathways to stand directly beside his colossal feet looking up. Along the mountain trails, discover ancient Buddhist temples, sacred rock carvings, and quiet meditation caves. In the late afternoon, continue your drive to the base of sacred **Mount Emei** to visit **Baoguo Temple**, the mountain's largest and most historic monastery. Stroll through its serene, incense-scented courtyards and ancient wooden halls before transferring to your nearby mountain hotel for a peaceful evening.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

The cliffside Nine-Bends Plank Way descending alongside the Buddha is carved directly into the rock face and can be quite steep and narrow during peak hours. If any member of your family prefers to skip the stair climbing, we can seamlessly substitute or add a sightseeing river cruise. The boat option glides across the water right in front of the cliff face, providing a relaxed, unobstructed panoramic view of the Buddha's entire 71-meter frame that is perfect for family photos. Baoguo Temple at the base of Mount Emei is completely flat and very easy to navigate, offering a calm and relaxing cultural experience to conclude your day.

Day 3: Standing Above the Clouds — The Golden Summit of Mount Emei and Return to Chengdu

Rise early for an unforgettable mountain journey up **Mount Emei**, one of China's four sacred Buddhist mountains and a renowned UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site. Situated along the eastern rim of the Himalayan highlands, this majestic peak boasts dramatic sea-of-clouds vistas, rich biodiversity, and centuries of spiritual heritage. Your family will enjoy a comfortable, low-fatigue route ascending the mountain: ride the park sightseeing bus up through lush alpine forests to Leidongping, take a gentle 30-minute walk through fresh mountain air to Jieyin Hall, and then glide smoothly through the mist aboard the high-altitude cable car straight to the breathtaking **Golden Summit**.

Reaching the summit plateau at over 3,000 meters above sea level, you will stand in awe before the towering, 48-meter-tall multi-faced golden statue of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva glittering against the blue sky. Take an unhurried stroll along the high-altitude viewing platforms to admire the golden temples, listen to the distant chanting of monks, and look out over sweeping panoramic views of rolling mountain ridges. If the weather is clear, you may witness the legendary "Sea of Clouds" rolling beneath your feet like a soft white ocean. After capturing incredible family photos at the peak, descend the mountain using the same seamless cable car and shuttle combination, meeting your private driver for a comfortable late-afternoon return transfer to Chengdu.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

Utilizing the eco-shuttle and high-speed cable car system eliminates hours of strenuous uphill climbing, making this high-altitude experience highly accessible and enjoyable for both children and older family members. Because the Golden Summit sits at an elevation of 3,079 meters, temperatures can be significantly colder than at the base, so we recommend bringing a warm jacket or fleece layer in your daypack. You may also encounter wild Tibetan macaques near the lower hiking paths around Leidongping; your private guide will safely navigate your family past them and ensure you keep a respectful distance.

Day 4: Cuddly Icons & Slow Life — Giant Panda Encounter, Historic Temples, Teahouse Living, and Jinli Old Street

Delight in an early morning departure from your hotel as you head 17 kilometers north to the world-famous **Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding**. Arriving early allows you to see the pandas at their most active hours as they munch on fresh morning bamboo, tumble across grassy play structures, and climb trees. You will meet pandas of all ages—from playful toddlers to grand adults—and during the autumn months, you may even spot tiny pink newborn cubs in the nursery houses. Don't forget to visit the outdoor Red Panda Playgrounds, where these curious, rust-colored creatures roam freely along wooden walkways, before visiting the on-site Panda Museum to learn about global conservation efforts.

In the afternoon, dive deep into the city's rich heritage with a visit to **Wenshu Monastery**, Chengdu's best-preserved ancient Buddhist sanctuary, where incense smoke drifts through tranquil, courtyard-filled halls. Next, step into the vibrant greenery of **People's Park (Renmin Park)** to experience Chengdu's legendary "slow-living" culture. Sit back at the historic Hemingway-esque **Heming Teahouse** to sip fragrant jasmine green tea, observe locals playing animated games of mahjong, or try a traditional ear-cleaning service. Conclude your day with an

immersive stroll through **Jinli Old Street**, a lantern-lit, stone-paved pedestrian precinct rich with Three Kingdoms history, handicraft stalls, and mouthwatering Sichuanese street food.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

Giant pandas prefer cool weather and tend to sleep indoors during the warmer hours of the afternoon, which is why your guide will ensure you arrive right when the park opens to catch them at their highest energy level. The walking paths inside both the Panda Base and People's Park are wide and flat, making today a very pleasant and easy walk for travelers of all ages. If you would like to extend your evening, your guide can easily arrange tickets for a captivating Sichuan Opera performance featuring famous face-changing acts, or book a relaxing night boat cruise along the illuminated Jinjiang River.

Day 5: Journey to the Kingdom of Naxi — Flight to Lijiang, Dayan Old Town, Mu Palace & Black Dragon Pond

Enjoy a relaxed morning in Chengdu before your private driver escorts you to the airport for a short, scenic 1.5-hour flight southwest to Lijiang, the crown jewel of Yunnan Province. Nestled at the foot of the snow-capped Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the cultural heartland of the Naxi ethnic group. Upon touchdown, your local Lijiang guide and driver will welcome you at the exit and transfer you directly to your hotel near the ancient town quarter to check in and settle in comfortably.

This afternoon, step into the 800-year-old labyrinth of **Lijiang Old Town (Dayan)**, a major historical trading post along the ancient Tea Horse Road. Stroll along cobblestone lanes lined with traditional timber houses, stone bridges, and bubbling mountain streams. Visit the grand **Mu Palace**, often called the "Forbidden City of the South," to uncover why Lijiang uniquely lacks a city wall and learn about the ruling Mu chieftains. Climb to a hilltop vantage point for panoramic views over tiled rooftops framed by snowy peaks, then wander through bustling **Sifang Street**. Conclude your day at **Black Dragon Pond Park**, where clear spring waters perfectly reflect the majestic silhouette of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

Meals: Breakfast

Expert Journey Insights:

The flight from Chengdu to Lijiang takes just ninety minutes, making for a smooth transition from Sichuan to the Yunnan highlands. Lijiang sits at an elevation of approximately 2,400 meters (7,800 feet), so we recommend keeping a comfortable, relaxed pace today to allow your body to acclimate smoothly to the mountain air. The ancient town streets are paved with historic cobblestones that can be slick when wet, making supportive walking shoes essential. Black Dragon Pond Park is flat and easily accessible, providing one of the most famous photography angles in southwestern China.

Day 6: Sacred Peaks & Alpine Waters — Spruce Meadow Cable Car, Blue Moon Valley, Baisha Murals & Shuhe Ancient Town

Journey north from Lijiang Old Town after breakfast toward the awe-inspiring **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain**, a UNESCO World Heritage site revered as the sacred dwelling of the Naxi deity Sanduo. To ensure a relaxing, comfortable mountain experience without the physical demands of

extreme altitude, you will board a scenic cable car up to **Spruce Meadow (Yunshanping)** at 3,240 meters. Step off onto flat wooden boardwalks that wind through ancient pine and spruce forests, emerging into a tranquil alpine meadow with panoramic views of the glacier peaks towering against the sky.

Next, take a short park shuttle down to the breathtaking **Blue Moon Valley**, where meltwater streams create four brilliant, turquoise-colored lakes situated against snow-capped peaks. Walk along the edge of Jade-Liquid Lake during midday when the sunlight turns the water into a glassy, crystal-clear mirror. In the afternoon, head to **Baisha Village**, the historic ancestral home of the Naxi chieftains, to examine the ancient **Baisha Murals**—a rare artistic blend of Han Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Taoist, and Naxi Dongba religious traditions. If time permits, conclude your day with a peaceful stroll through **Shuhe Ancient Town**, a quiet stop on the ancient Tea Horse Road, sampling local delicacies like flower cakes and grilled milk fan before returning to Lijiang.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

Choosing the Spruce Meadow route provides a low-fatigue alpine experience at 3,240 meters that allows your family to enjoy high-mountain scenery while avoiding altitude discomfort. The wooden boardwalks through the forest and around Blue Moon Valley are flat and paved, making walking very effortless for travelers of all ages. If you would like to enrich your afternoon, your private guide can arrange tickets for the open-air "Impression Lijiang" show staged by director Zhang Yimou directly against the backdrop of the snow mountains.

Day 7: Overland to Lost Horizon — First Bend of the Yangtze, Roaring Tiger Leaping Gorge & Gateway to Shangri-La

Board your private vehicle after breakfast for a dramatic highland drive heading north from Lijiang into the heart of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Your first stop is the famous **First Bend of the Yangtze River**, where Asia's legendary river makes a remarkable V-shaped turn from south to east amidst quiet farmlands. Ascend to the panoramic observation deck for high-angle views of the sweeping riverbed, then continue into historical **Shigu Town** to walk along the historic Iron Chain Bridge and visit the Red Army's Long March Memorial Monument.

Driving deeper into the canyon system, arrive at the **Upper Section of Tiger Leaping Gorge**, one of the deepest river canyons on Earth. Nestled between the towering cliffs of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and Haba Snow Mountain, you will follow a well-maintained boardwalk down into the gorge to stand directly above the churning Jinsha River at Tiger Leaping Rock, feeling the thundering roar of white water spray. Afterward, relax on a scenic 2.5-hour mountain highway drive upward toward **Shangri-La** (formerly Zhongdian), the legendary mountain paradise described in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*, arriving at your hotel in time to settle into the high-altitude atmosphere.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

The drive from Lijiang to Shangri-La transitions gradually from alpine valleys to the edge of the Tibetan Plateau, rising from 2,400 meters up to 3,160 meters. At Tiger Leaping Gorge, the walking path consists of sturdy wooden staircases leading down to the river rapids; for travelers who prefer to save energy on the climb back up, an outdoor escalator system is available on site. Wearing layers is recommended today as temperatures grow cooler as you approach Shangri-La, and keeping a relaxed pace helps your body adjust comfortably to the higher elevation.

Day 8: Sacred Sanctuaries & Highland Lakes — The Little Potala Palace, Pristine Pudacuo, Tibetan Hospitality, and Moonlight Castle

Begin your morning at an elevation of 3,380 meters with a visit to the magnificent **Songzanlin Monastery**, the largest Tibetan Buddhist complex in Yunnan Province. Modeled directly after the Potala Palace in Lhasa, this grand 17th-century sanctuary houses 700 monks across hundreds of traditional residence halls. Climb the monumental stone steps into the three primary assembly halls—Zhacang, Jikang, and Sakyamuni—to witness monks meditating amidst ancient thangkas and golden statues. From the upper terraces, look out over sweeping views of Lamuyangcuo Lake before taking a short 30-minute drive to **Pudacuo National Park**, a pristine highland sanctuary nestled within the Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage region. Ride the park shuttle to alpine **Shudu Lake** and **Bita Lake**, walking along flat, wooden lakefront boardwalks flanked by sacred forests, wildflower meadows, and grazing yaks.

In the late afternoon, step into an authentic Tibetan home to savor warm yak butter tea, roasted barley flour (*tsampa*), and local dried yak meat while chatting with your host family about daily life on the plateau. Conclude your day in **Dukezong Ancient Town**, a 1,300-year-old trade hub along the Tea Horse Road known as the "City of Moonlight." Walk through stone-paved alleys draped with colorful prayer flags, then climb Guishan Hill to join local residents in spinning the world's largest gilded prayer wheel for good fortune. As evening falls, watch the town light up in a warm golden glow and catch locals gathering in Sifang Square for traditional circle dances before returning to your hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

Exploring Shangri-La involves traveling at higher altitudes between 3,300 and 3,700 meters above sea level, so taking a slow, steady pace today helps prevent fatigue. The boardwalk paths around Shudu and Bita Lakes in Pudacuo National Park are completely paved and gently graded, making alpine hiking easy for travelers of all ages. Your private guide will ensure you have plenty of warm water and oxygen canisters available in your vehicle for extra comfort throughout the day.

Day 9: From Highland Sanctuaries to Karst Labyrinths — Flight to Kunming and The Stone Forest

Enjoy a unhurried final morning breathing in the fresh mountain air of Shangri-La before your private driver transfers you to the airport for a short, scenic one-hour flight southeast to Kunming. Celebrated worldwide as the "Spring City" for its year-round pleasant climate and perpetual blooms, Kunming welcomes you with a comfortable descent into lower elevations. Your local guide and personal chauffeur will greet you at the arrival hall and assist with your luggage before setting off into the Yunnan countryside.

This afternoon, travel into a magical prehistoric realm at the famous **Stone Forest (Shilin)**, a UNESCO World Heritage site and natural geological wonder formed over 270 million years ago. Board the park's sightseeing shuttle to navigate between the soaring limestone pillars of the **Big Stone Forest** and **Small Stone Forest**, where towering rock formations resemble petrified trees reaching toward the sky. Walk along stone pathways through narrow gorges and natural arches while your guide brings local Yi ethnic folklore to life, including the romantic legend of Ashima and tales of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King. After discovering these ancient geological formations, return to downtown Kunming for a restful evening.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

Flying from Shangri-La (3,160 meters) down to Kunming (1,890 meters) brings a welcome increase in oxygen levels and warmer temperatures, making today's sightseeing very comfortable and refreshing. The drive from Kunming airport or downtown to the Stone Forest takes approximately 1.5 hours on modern expressways. Walking paths through the stone park are paved and mostly flat with electric shuttle connection points throughout, ensuring a low-fatigue experience suitable for family members of all fitness levels.

Day 10: Cliffside Grottoes & Sacred Waters — Western Hills Dragon Gate, Yuantong Temple & Departure

Begin your final morning in Kunming with a scenic drive to the lush, green ridge of the **Western Hills (Xishan)** overlooking the vast blue waters of Dianchi Lake. Known for its ancient mountain pine forests and Taoist sanctuaries, the hillside features the legendary **Dragon Gate (Longmen)**, a remarkable cliffside grotto complex hand-carved into sheer rock walls over several decades by ancient stone artisans. As you walk along the cliff pathways, visit the peaceful, forest-shrouded courtyards of **Huating Temple** and **Taihua Temple**, two of Kunming's most revered Buddhist retreats, while taking in sweeping panoramic views across Dianchi Lake and the city skyline.

Returning to central Kunming, step into the peaceful sanctuary of **Yuantong Temple**, a 1,200-year-old architectural jewel known as China's oldest Guanyin sanctuary. Uniquely designed as a "downhill temple," you descend gradually into a tranquil water-encircled courtyard housing a grand central pavilion over a lotus pond. Yuantong Temple uniquely unites Han, Tibetan, and Theravada Buddhist traditions under one roof, showcased by its Southeast Asian-style Bronze Buddha Hall gifted by the Kingdom of Thailand. After absorbing the peaceful atmosphere, your private guide and driver will escort you to the airport or high-speed railway station for your onward flight or bullet train connection, wrapping up an unforgettable 10-day journey through the wonders of Sichuan and Yunnan.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Expert Journey Insights:

Exploring the cliffside pathways at the Western Hills involves stone staircases and mountain paths, so wearing sturdy walking shoes is recommended for today's excursion. The walking route at Dragon Gate can be fully customized by your private guide to suit your preferred fitness level, offering lighter, flat walks around the lower forest temples if you prefer to avoid steep climbs. Your guide and chauffeur will coordinate your luggage and departure schedule precisely around your afternoon flight or high-speed rail ticket, ensuring a smooth, stress-free transfer directly to your terminal or platform.

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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