



China

In search of Shangri-La – Trekking & Pandas

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

Itinerary

China • In search of Shangri-La – Trekking & Pandas

11 DAYS • 10 NIGHTS

Chengdu – Leshan – Four Girls Mountains – Shangri-la – Research Base of Giant Pandas – Shangri-La – Songzanlin Monastery – Napahai – Tiger Leaping Gorge – Lijang – Yuhu Village – Lugu Lake – Gesa Ancient Village – Chengdu

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the amazing Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding
- See the tallest Buddha statue in the world – Leshan Giant Buddha
- Sing and dance around a fire together with Zang people
- Have a walk on the famous Walking Marriage Bridge, located in Lugu Lake

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Trekking Adventure
Tour Start	Chengdu
Tour End	Chengdu
Accommodation	Hotel / Guest Houses
Included Meals	10 Breakfasts, 9 Lunches, 10 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium - Difficult

IN SEARCH OF SHANGRI-LA



The mountain areas in the Southern provinces of China have been largely inaccessible to outside adventure travelers until relatively recently. On this trip we have the opportunity to see and experience some treasures of this fascinating region – from hiking in the scenic beauty of mountain areas as high as the Alps, to local minority groups which still retain their traditional clothes, cuisine and culture – and their warm hospitality. We will see ancient monuments and temples, including the largest stone Buddha the world has known, completed in 803AD. Of course, no trip to this region would be complete without getting close to the Giant Pandas – protected and bred in Chengdu, also home to the famous Sichuan spicy hotpot.

WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

Pioneer Expeditions are one of the few specialists that really *do* off the beaten track and unique adventures. The team have a real passion for wildlife and adventure travel which we love to share with our clients. We delight in searching the world for new destinations, new experiences and creating the most incredible adventures.

We like to introduce our clients to unique, the different, and the incredible. Whether it is through wildlife tracking, sea kayaking, snorkelling, trekking, rafting, cycling or observing wildlife in its natural environment, we want to give you the real Pioneer experience.

From the moment you choose to travel with Pioneer Expeditions until you return back home, you are supported by our dedicated team. We listen to what you want and can create an itinerary around your specific needs, working with your budget and with a commitment to responsible travel.

ITINERARY



DAY 1: Arrive in the relaxing city of CHENGDU

Arrive in the relaxing city of Arrival at Chengdu Airport. We will transfer from the airport to our hotel and settle in before heading out for dinner. Sichuan is famous for its fantastic (spicy) food. This evening will give you a chance to become acquainted with this surprisingly relaxed city.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
D



Driving distance:
Short Transfer



Activity:
Arrive

DAY 2: Visit the LESHAN GIANT BUDDHA



Travel this morning to Leshan Giant Buddha (157km) - the largest stone Buddha and by far the tallest pre-modern statue in the world at 71m. We explore the park and walk around the temple and get a boat to see the whole view, seeing this extraordinary seated Buddha from several angles. We will have real local food then head back to Chengdu.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:
Approx. 2hr drive



Activity:
Exploring

DAY 3: Hiking at FOUR GIRLS MOUNTAIN

Today we head off early to go hiking at Four Girl's mountain (239km).

This is a great mountain for hiking with lovely views and a picturesque river. It is highly thought of amongst hikers in China. We will hike 4-6h, stopping to share a lunch, enjoy the amazing views and peace of this area, The surrounding mountains rise to 6250m. 4000m below the peaks, where we will walk, is the forest with flowers everywhere, grassland, rivers and local minority groups Zang and Qiang with their unique cultures.

We stay in a Zang house at the foot of Snow Mountain, relaxing in their very peaceful town.



Overnight:
Zang House



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:
Varies



Activity:
Hiking

DAY 4: Visit the CHENGDU RESEARCH base of Giant Pandas and flight to SHANGRI-LA

This morning we walk around Chengdu research base for giant pandas, hopefully also seeing lots of baby pandas. This is a panda sanctuary where they are housed in a primordial forest with many endemic plants. There are lots of bamboo stands, nice flowers, plenty of fresh air and, natural hill scenes and there are more pandas here than you will ever see outside of China. There are opportunities for feeding and close interaction as well as taking photos with these wonderful creatures. You may also have the chance to see young babies which are born here. Following our relaxed day with these beautiful creatures, we fly to Shangri-la.



Shangri-la: Most people will have heard of this town. It is a Zang nationality town with wooden buildings. Zang people often have fire parties, traditional mixing with modern.



Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:
Varies



Activity:
Wildlife



DAY 5: EXPLORE THE ANCIENT MONASTRY: SONGZANLIN MONASTERY AND NAPAHAHAI

A short journey from Shangri-La takes us to this ancient monastery (3 km). We explore the monastery and experience this amazing temple. In the afternoon we cycle from our hotel to Napa Lake (8km), with lovely views on the way. Local people call this "Plateau Pearl" grass land. It is 3270 meters above sea level and covers 660 square kilometers. There are many rare animals beside the peaceful lake. During the evening, we will walk in the ancient town also seeing the biggest prayer wheel in the world.



Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:



Activity:
Exploring

DAY 6: Take on one of the World's Classic Hiking Lines: TIGER LEAPING GORGE and discover LIJIANG



We drive (106km) to go to Tiger Leaping Gorge; it is one of the world's classic hiking lines. It is one of the deepest canyons in the world, with a maximum depth of approximately 3790 meters from river to mountain peak. The river passes between the 5596 meters Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and the 5396 meters Haba Snow Mountain. We will go hiking for around 4 hours, then head to Lijiang Shuhe Ancient Town (81km).

Lijiang town has varied local minority customs and entertainment. Naxi (one of the smaller minority nationalities) have their own ancient music, the Dongba ceremony and the torch festival. There are delightful wooden buildings and different styles of restaurant around a small river. People are often singing on the street, dancing with fire at night. We stay in a delightful local hotel, classical wooden structure with modern style. We will BBQ in the attached gardens before resting.



Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:



Activity:
Hiking

DAY 7: Discover the cultural YUHU VILLAGE

This morning we go to Yuhu village (26km). With houses made of stone and at the foot of Snow Mountain, the holy water from Snow Mountain flowing by contributes to the mysterious culture surrounding this delightful village. Naxi people live here, they follow Dongba culture (with its own archaic religion). We can still find hieroglyphics everywhere in this village. We walk in the old town and explore the local Dongba culture, have lunch in a local place, trying traditional Naxi food. The lovely atmosphere is why Joseph Rock chose this place to live when he came in 1922. He lived here 27 years and we can still see his house in the village. He sent large numbers photos to American National Geographic magazine and, because of him, people from the outside world got to know a little about Lijiang. He wrote to his friend just before he died, he'd "rather die here than lie alive on a sick bed in Hawaii".





Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:



Activity:
Exploring

DAY 8: Head to “The Kingdom of Women”: LUGU LAKE

Head to Lugu Lake (180km) , also called “the kingdom of women” as this has remained a maternal society, a culture strange to us with different customs and a very different way of life.

This nationality still has unusual marriage traditions. Families are matriarchal. The woman is powerful here. Children may not know their father, but are brought up in the mother’s home with the uncle being the bigger male influence. They still have a tradition of “walking marriage” about which we will learn. The beautiful blue lake has a large drainage catchment and has many minority ethnic groups and ancient villages.



We will take a local wooden boat for an hour or so to get to an island in the middle of the lake that has a temple which we will walk around there before heading back for our local dinner



Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:



Activity:
Exploring

DAY 9: Explore the ancient village of GESA and learn about their culture and traditions



We start the day with a cycle around Lugu Lake. There are many minority ethnic groups by the lake. We will visit a local home in Gesa ancient village. It is a beautiful natural village where people still wear traditional clothes. We will experience the very different life they lead and they will cook for us. Grandma will make local butter tea and we will sit around a fire and talk with them. They will share with us about their life and we will get a glimpse of another world



Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:



Activity:
Cycle

DAY 10: Journey back to LIJIANG TOWN

Today we head back to Lijiang town (180km), with a flight back Chengdu later in the day. We will stay in Chengdu tonight before preparing to leave next day



Overnight:



Meals:
B, L, D



Driving distance:



Activity:
Cycle



DAY 11: Head to Chengdu Airport where the TRIP ENDS

Now is the time for any last minute activities before you are transfer to Chengdu airport for your return flight home or on to other destinations.



Overnight:



Meals:

B



Driving distance:



Activity:

Cycle

Extension Options:-

We are happy to organise an extension if you are hoping to explore a bit more of China.

E.g. – a short 2 -5 day extension - flying from Kunming to Beijing and then seeing the Great Wall (we recommend one of the less crowded parts!) , the forbidden City and Tienanmen Square, the old and new Summer Palaces as well as experience a traditional hutong. It is then possible to fly back directly from Beijing to London on BA or go back via Chengdu.

Photos courtesy of Mark Stratton

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INCLUDED

- 🍽️ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- 🍷 A soft drink &/or local beer with meals
- 🏠 Accommodation as described
- 🚲 Use of bicycles & boat
- ✈️ Internal Flights (Chengdu-Shangri-La and Lijiang-Chengdu)
- 🗺️ Experienced, English-speaking local guide
- 🚗 All transfers with air conditioned vehicle + driver
- 🎫 All National Park & attraction entrance fees
- ✈️ Domestic flights

NOT INCLUDED

- Meals other than mentioned
- All other drinks
- Visa Costs
- International flights
- Personal expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Gratuities



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITY DURATION	2 – 6 hours
SEASON	August - November
GROUP SIZE	The price is per person & based on a private trip based on 2 people travelling
EXPEDITION SCHEDULE	This is run as a private trip, so we are able to suit your dates and requirements. We can also tailor the trip to suit.
DIFFICULTY LEVEL	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'Medium' to 'Difficult level' (2 – 6 hours of activities per day). This means that you will need to an average level of fitness with regular trekking.

THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website www.pioneerexpeditions.com to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

1. Contact us -

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

2. Leave everything to us -

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

3. Wait for your adventure to begin -

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

