



GUEST ITINERARY

CURATED CHINA JOURNEY
Dragon Discover


Western Sichuan


14 Days 13 Nights


Plateau Temples & Tibetan Craft


BEFORE YOU GO

Key Travel Prep


 Book your own international flights to and from Chengdu.


 Please arrange your own travel and medical insurance.

 Please arrange your own mobile data plan before departure. Mobile signal is limited or absent in remote plateau areas (Dege, Baiyu, Batang).

 Check China visa requirements for your nationality before booking.

See the full "Prepare for Travel" section later in Before Booking.

 Bring any personal prescriptions you need. Pharmacies are scarce in Western Sichuan county towns. Consult your doctor about altitude sickness prevention (acetazolamide/Diamox) before departure.

 Please inform us of any dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions when booking. Western Sichuan cuisine is milder than lowland Sichuan, but spice levels can be adjusted.

Overview

A 14-day privately guided loop from Chengdu deep into the Tibetan highlands of Western Sichuan and back.

Kangding, Tagong Grassland, Moxi Stone Park, Dege Printing House, thangka painting, handmade Tibetan incense, and high-altitude lakes — then south through Litang and the golden light of Xinduqiao. Giant pandas on Day 2, silence above 4,000 metres by Day 8. The route is designed as a gradual altitude arc: plains to pass to plateau, with rest days built into the climb, and the final leg returning you to Chengdu's warmth and low elevation for one last evening before departure.

Trip Snapshot

Accommodation

City hotels in Chengdu, Tibetan guesthouses in highland towns. Best available at altitude — vetted for safety, hot water, and rest.

Airport Transfers

Private airport transfers in Chengdu on arrival and departure.

Guide & Transport

Bilingual guide and private SUV for 14 days. High-altitude mountain driver. Private group, no mixed joiners.

Meals

Daily breakfast plus Sichuan and Tibetan meals throughout. Yak stew, mushroom hotpot, highland barley, adjusted for international palates.

Signature Experiences

Tibetan incense workshop, thangka painting, gold-leaf ceremony, Guozhuang dance, Dege woodblock printing, panda base morning.

Trip Style

Gradual altitude arc with built-in rest. Long scenic drives, photo stops, and deep Tibetan cultural immersion over 14 days.

Where You'll Stay

4-Star Equivalent

Modern City Hotels

4 Nights

New-generation Chinese city hotels in Chengdu — smart rooms, fresh design, well located for the itinerary. Your comfortable base before and after the plateau.

Heritage Stay

Tibetan-Style Guesthouses

4 Nights

Character stays in Kangding, Bamei, Xinduqiao, and Litang — local Tibetan architecture, warm hospitality, and the feeling of sleeping inside the landscape.

Best Available

Highland County Hotels

5 Nights

The best available in Luhuo, Ganzi, Dege, Baiyu, and Batang — higher than Mont Blanc. Not luxury, but vetted for safety and rest. Hot water and a warm bed after a day on the plateau.

Itinerary

Day 1 — Arrival in Chengdu

Your driver meets you at **Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport** or **Chengdu Tianfu International Airport** with a name sign — from here, everything is handled. A private vehicle takes you to your city-centre hotel (approximately one hour depending on airport).

The rest of the day is yours to recover from the flight and settle in at your own pace. If you arrive early enough, your guide can recommend nearby options for a first taste of Chengdu's street food scene — but tonight's dinner is self-arranged, and there is no pressure to do anything except rest.

Day 2 — Giant Pandas & Kuanzhai Alley

 Giant Panda Base  Kuanzhai Alley  +1 more

The morning opens at the **Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Research Base** — the world's largest panda conservation centre, where giant pandas, red pandas, and cubs go about their morning routines behind bamboo screens and in open enclosures. Arrive early for the most active window; your guide navigates you past the crowds to the best viewing spots.

After a Chengdu-style lunch, the afternoon shifts to **Kuanzhai Alley** (*Kuanzhai Xiangzi*) — three parallel Qing-era lanes where teahouse life, ear-cleaning barbers, and courtyard restaurants occupy restored garrison houses. The pace here is deliberately slow; your guide introduces the neighbourhood's history as a Manchu military quarter and how it evolved into Chengdu's most emblematic cultural street.

The evening is free. An optional **Traditional Chinese Medicine** massage or acupuncture session (60–90 minutes) is included in the optional **Wellness Package** — select when booking.

Day 3 — Tea Culture & Tibetan Scripture Museum

 Rongfu Tibetan Scripture Museum  People's Park tea culture

A gentler day designed to slow the pace before the highlands begin. The morning offers a choice: head to **People's Park** (*Renmin Gongyuan*) for covered-bowl tea among locals — the most authentic window into everyday Chengdu life, where retirees play cards, street performers set up, and the entire park operates at a famously unhurried tempo. (Alternatively, a premium health screening at a Chengdu medical centre is available as part of the optional **Wellness Package** — select when booking.)

After lunch, you visit the **Rongfu Tibetan Scripture Museum** in Wenjiang — a privately curated collection of Tibetan manuscripts, woodblock prints, and religious artefacts with a dedicated English-speaking guide. This is a deliberate cultural primer: the museum introduces the Tibetan written tradition, religious art forms, and cultural geography that you will encounter in person over the next ten days.

Dinner rounds out the day before returning to the hotel.

Day 4 — Chengdu to Kangding — Gateway to the Plateau

 Kangding

 Tea Horse Road

Today the journey leaves the Sichuan lowlands behind. After breakfast and checkout, you drive west toward **Kangding** — the river-valley town that has served as the meeting point between Han Chinese and Tibetan cultures for centuries. The 4–4.5 hour drive passes through Ya'an and climbs steadily through the Erlang Mountains; your guide narrates the **Tea Horse Road** history that shaped this corridor.

Lunch in Kangding features highland Sichuan flavours — yak meat and wild mushroom hotpot, hearty enough for the cooler air. The afternoon is a gentle walk through **Kangding's old town**: prayer wheels lining the river, Tibetan shopfronts, and a short introduction to the prayer-wheel ritual (*mani*) that your guide demonstrates. The town sits at 2,560 m — high enough to notice the thinner air, but low enough to ease in gradually.

Dinner is early, with a quiet evening at the guesthouse. Hot tea and a foot soak help the body adjust. Your guide briefs you on the altitude protocol for the days ahead.

Day 5 — Tagong Grassland & Moxi Stone Park

 Tagong Grassland

Moxi Stone Park

Yala Snow Mountain

+2 more

If yesterday was the doorstep, today the landscape opens. After breakfast, you drive north from Kangding toward **Tagong Grassland** (about 2–2.5 hours, with a short photo stop along the way). The open plateau stretches out under **Yala Snow Mountain** in the distance — your driver pulls over at the strongest viewpoints, and the group spends an unhurried hour walking the grassland, photographing prayer flags, snow ridgelines, and morning cloud.

Lunch is in Tagong town. Nearby, your guide introduces **Tagong Temple** and the prayer-flag culture that covers every hillside in this region — entrance is optional depending on the temple's open hours and the group's interest.

The afternoon shifts to **Moxi Stone Park** (*Moshi Gongyuan*) — a geological anomaly where soft, dark stone has eroded into spires, pillars, and ravines that look imported from another planet. A two-to-two-and-a-half-hour walking circuit threads through the formations along plank-and-stairway boardwalks; the colours shift as the light changes, and there is almost no one here.

A short final drive (about 30 minutes) brings you into **Bamei**, where you check in to a Tibetan guesthouse with hot tea and blankets. Elevation climbs to approximately 3,500 m; the guide checks in on everyone's condition and recommends hydration and early rest.

Day 6 — Huiyuan Temple & Longdeng Grassland

 Huiyuan Temple

Longdeng Grassland




+1 more

A gentler, more grounded day after the dramatic landscapes of Bamei. After breakfast, a short drive (about 30 minutes) brings you to **Huiyuan Temple** (*Huiyuan Si*) — a quiet Tibetan Buddhist monastery commissioned by Emperor Yongzheng in 1728 and best known as the seven-year residence of the Seventh Dalai Lama and the recognised birthplace of the Eleventh. Your guide walks the group through the prayer halls, explains the etiquette for entering active spaces (head uncovered, voices low), and translates the wall iconography. The atmosphere here is everyday rather than monumental — monks at their routines, juniper smoke drifting across the courtyard.

The road continues for an hour or so to **Longdeng Grassland** (*Longdeng Caoyuan*) — known to locals as *Gesar Tong*, the grassland where the legendary King Gesar once camped his army. After a simple roadside lunch, the group spends roughly two hours on a flat walking loop: open meadow, grazing yaks, fenced pasture and the snow ridges of the surrounding range in the distance. If your trip falls in late July, this is the site of the Longdeng Horse Racing Festival — a state-recognised intangible heritage event that fills the grassland with riders, song, and Buddhist ceremony.

A further drive of about 1.5 to 2 hours brings the group into **Luhuo**, where you check in to the county hotel for the evening. Elevation is approximately 3,250 m — slightly lower than Bamei, giving the body a small reprieve.

Day 7 — Donggu Temple & Tibetan Incense Workshop

 Donggu Temple  Tibetan incense workshop  +1 more

Today is built around two experiences that bring Tibetan culture from observation to participation. After breakfast, the drive to **Ganzi County** takes approximately 2.5 hours through open highland valley.

The first stop is **Donggu Temple** (*Donggu Si*) — a working Tibetan Buddhist monastery where monks go about their daily routines, prayer halls hum with chanting, and the atmosphere is thick with juniper smoke. Your guide translates the iconography and rituals as the group moves through at a respectful pace. This is not a museum — it is an active place of worship, and the experience is most powerful when the group simply observes and absorbs.

The afternoon is a full **Tibetan incense workshop** at a local artisan studio near Donggu. Over three hours, you learn the raw ingredients — cypress, juniper, medicinal herbs — and work through the traditional hand-rolling process from grinding to shaping. The finished incense sticks are yours to take home: small, fragrant, and one of the most tangible souvenirs of the trip.

Dinner and overnight in Ganzi. Elevation approximately 3,390 m.

Day 8 — Dege — Printing House & Sacred Lake

 Dege Printing House  Yulong Latso Lake  gold-leaf offering ceremony  +1 more

The deepest day of the journey — both geographically and culturally. After breakfast, you drive to **Gala Juewo Monastery** (*Gala Juewo*), where a **gold-leaf offering ceremony** lets the group participate in a Buddhist devotional ritual: applying thin gold leaf to a sacred statue under monastic guidance. The ceremony is quiet, deliberate, and surprisingly moving even for non-religious travelers.

The drive continues to **Yulong Latso Lake** (*Yulongla Cuo*) — a glacial highland lake where turquoise water, prayer flags, and absolute silence combine into one of the route's most contemplative moments. The group stops for 40 minutes of lakeside walking and photography.

Arriving in **Dege** in the late afternoon, you visit the **Dege Printing House** (*Dege Yinjing Yuan*) — the most important surviving centre of traditional Tibetan woodblock printing. Inside, monks ink and press carved wooden blocks exactly as they have for 300 years; the air smells of sutra ink, and the rhythmic thud of the printing process fills every room. Over 320,000 woodblock plates are stored here — the largest collection of Tibetan scriptures in existence.

Dinner and overnight in Dege. Elevation approximately 3,270 m.

Day 9 — Kathok Monastery & Thangka Painting

 Kathok Monastery

 Thangka painting session

+1 more

Today pairs the spiritual intensity of a major Tibetan monastery with the quiet focus of a hands-on art session. After breakfast, you drive to **Kathok Monastery** (*Gato Si*) — one of the six great mother monasteries of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, founded in 1159. The monastery sits high on a hillside, its golden rooftops visible for miles; prayer flags stretch across the ravines below, and the scale of the complex is striking even from the approach road.

Inside, your guide walks through the main prayer halls, explains the murals and statuary, and introduces the monastic community that still studies and practices here. For most Western visitors, Kathok is a name they have never heard — which makes the experience all the more powerful.

The afternoon shifts to a **thangka painting session** (2–3 hours) with a local master. Thangka are the painted scroll-banner icons of Tibetan Buddhism — intricate, symbolic, and traditionally produced with mineral pigments on cotton or silk. You work on a simplified section under the artist's guidance, learning the colour symbolism and brushwork that make each piece a devotional object as much as an artwork. The small piece you complete is yours to take home.

Dinner and overnight in **Baiyu**. Elevation approximately 3,260 m.

Day 10 — Blue Pine Lake & the Road to Batang

 Blue Pine Lake


+2 more


A day shaped by landscape rather than scheduled stops. After breakfast, you drive to **Babasong Valley** and **Blue Pine Lake** (*Lansonggou*) — a three-hour journey into some of the most pristine alpine scenery on the route. The lake sits in a forested valley, perfectly still, ringed by dark pines and snow-dusted peaks. The group spends three hours here: walking the lakeshore trail, photographing reflections, and simply absorbing the silence.

The afternoon is a long transfer to **Batang** (approximately 2.5 hours, with one rest stop). The terrain changes markedly — drier, warmer, more open — as you descend into the southern corridor of Western Sichuan.

Dinner and overnight in Batang. Elevation approximately 2,580 m — a noticeable relief after days above 3,200 m.

Day 11 — Litang — The World's Highest Town

 Renkang Ancient House

 Guozhuang circle dance

+1 more


The drive north from Batang to **Litang** takes approximately 3.5 hours. Litang calls itself the World's Highest Town — at 4,014 m, the sky is enormous, the light is hard and brilliant, and the air is thin enough that you feel every step.

After checking in and a rest to adjust, the afternoon is a guided deep tour of **Renkang Ancient House** (*Renkang Guwu*) — a multi-generational Tibetan family compound that doubles as a community museum and exhibition space. Over five hours, your guide leads you through the architecture, the family history, the religious artefacts, and the social structure that the house represents. This is not a quick visit — it is one of the most immersive cultural experiences on the route.

In the evening, the group watches a **Guozhuang circle dance** (*guozhuang*) performance — a traditional Tibetan communal dance that is part prayer, part celebration. The energy is infectious, and visitors are often invited to join.

Dinner and overnight in Litang.

Day 12 — Xinduqiao — The Photographer's Paradise

 Xinduqiao scenic area

+1 more

The drive from Litang to **Xinduqiao** takes approximately 2.5 hours — a descent from Litang's extreme altitude into a wide valley of golden-green grassland, wooden Tibetan farmhouses, and poplars that catch the afternoon light.

After check-in and a midday rest, the afternoon is given over to **Xinduqiao's surrounding scenic area**. This is the spot that earned its reputation as the Photographer's Paradise: the combination of high-altitude light, low-angle sun, wide grasslands, and isolated farmhouses creates compositions that change by the minute. Your guide takes the group to the local viewpoints; the pace is entirely unhurried.

Dinner at the guesthouse and an early night. Tomorrow is a long drive back to Chengdu.

Day 13 — Return to Chengdu

After breakfast, the group departs Xinduqiao for the return drive to **Chengdu** via Kangding — approximately 4.5 hours with two rest stops along the way. The descent from the plateau is dramatic: snow peaks give way to green river valleys, then to the humid Sichuan Basin, and the temperature rises with every hour.

Arrival in Chengdu in the early afternoon. Hotel check-in and free time to decompress — the contrast between the high plateau you left this morning and Chengdu's low-elevation warmth is striking.

The afternoon is yours. An optional **spa massage** (60–90 minutes) is included in the optional **Wellness Package** — select when booking. Otherwise, explore Chengdu's shops, cafes, or simply rest.

Day 14 — Departure from Chengdu

A final breakfast and time to prepare for departure. Your driver meets you at the hotel and takes you to **Chengdu Shuangliu** or **Tianfu International Airport** — arriving three hours before your flight with assistance through the check-in process.

The 14-day loop is complete: from Chengdu's lowland ease to the silence of the Tibetan Plateau and back.

Before Booking


✓ What's Included


Transport — Private SUV or business vehicle for the full 14 days, plus airport transfers in Chengdu on arrival and departure. Driver experienced on high-altitude mountain roads. **Guide** — Professional bilingual guide for the entire journey, including all plateau segments and cultural site interpretation. **Accommodation** — 13 nights: 4 nights at comfortable city hotels in Chengdu, 4 nights at Tibetan-style guesthouses (Kangding, Bamei, Xinduqiao, Litang), and 5 nights at the best available county hotels (Luhuo, Ganzi, Dege, Baiyu, Batang). **Meals** — Daily breakfast plus included lunches and dinners throughout (local Sichuan and Tibetan cuisine, adjusted for international palates). Only Day 1 dinner is self-arranged — your guide provides recommendations for Chengdu's famous street food scene. **Entrance Fees** — All scheduled sightseeing including Chengdu Giant Panda Base, Kuanzhai Alley, Rongfu Tibetan Scripture Museum, Moxi Stone Park, Huiyuan Temple, Longdeng Grassland, Donggu Temple, Dege Printing House, Kathok Monastery, Renkang Ancient House, Xinduqiao scenic area, and Blue Pine Lake (Babasong Valley). **Experiences** — Tibetan incense workshop at Donggu, gold-leaf offering ceremony, thangka painting session, Guozhuang circle dance performance at Litang, and Renkang Ancient House guided deep tour. **Pricing Promise** — Everything in the itinerary is included in the tour price. Optional packages and room choices, if any, are shown clearly before payment. No hidden on-trip charges.


+ Booking Options


Wellness Package Traditional Chinese Medicine massage or acupuncture session in Chengdu (Day 2 evening, 60–90 minutes), premium health screening at a Chengdu medical centre (Day 3 morning, replaces People's Park tea), and spa massage in Chengdu on return (Day 13 afternoon, 60–90 minutes). All three sessions are bundled into one package — select when booking. **Single-Room Supplement** Available for solo travelers or those who prefer their own room throughout the journey. Select when booking.


Prepare for Travel


 Book your own international flights to and from Chengdu.


 Please arrange your own travel and medical insurance.


 Please arrange your own mobile data plan before departure. Mobile signal is limited or absent in remote plateau areas (Dege, Baiyu, Batang).


 Check China visa requirements for your nationality before booking.

 Bring any personal prescriptions you need. Pharmacies are scarce in Western Sichuan county towns. Consult your doctor about altitude sickness prevention (acetazolamide/Diamox) before departure.

 Please inform us of any dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions when booking. Western Sichuan cuisine is milder than lowland Sichuan, but spice levels can be adjusted.

 Credit cards are rarely accepted outside Chengdu. Carry sufficient cash (CNY) for personal purchases in county towns and remote areas.

 This tour reaches sustained altitudes of 3,500–4,500 m for eight consecutive days. Moderate fitness required. No technical climbing, but long daily drives (3–5 hours) and walking at altitude demand good cardiovascular health. Not recommended for travelers with heart or severe respiratory conditions.

 Western Sichuan has large daily temperature swings year-round: warm sun during the day, near-freezing nights above 3,500 m even in summer. Bring layered clothing, a warm fleece or down jacket, sun protection (UV is intense at altitude), and waterproof outerwear.

? FAQ

Where does the tour start and end?

Starts and ends in Chengdu. Private airport transfers are included on arrival and departure.

What is the cancellation policy?

Our cancellation and refund policy is tiered based on how far in advance you cancel. Full details at [Terms & Conditions](#).

Can I fly a drone during the tour?

China requires all drone operators (including foreign visitors) to register with the CAAC before flying. Many heritage sites and monasteries are no-fly zones. Inform your guide in advance if you plan to bring a drone.

Should I book pre/post-tour accommodation?

Day 1 includes hotel check-in from arrival onward, and Day 14 includes airport transfer. If you arrive very late or depart very early, an extra night in Chengdu may be worth booking.

How physically demanding is this tour?

No technical climbing or strenuous hiking. The main demands are sustained altitude (3,500–4,500 m for eight days) and long daily drives (3–5 hours). Moderate cardiovascular fitness is recommended. Consult your doctor about altitude preparation.

How do we get around during the tour?

Private SUV or business vehicle with an experienced high-altitude driver for all 14 days. All roads are paved national highways, but mountain passes and switchbacks are part of the route.

What altitude will we reach?

The highest overnight stop is Litang at approximately 4,014 m. Several driving passes exceed 4,000 m. The route is designed as a gradual altitude arc — you acclimatize over several days rather than jumping straight to maximum elevation.

What if I get altitude sickness?

Your guide carries basic altitude-sickness supplies and monitors the group daily. The itinerary includes acclimatization rest built into the first two highland days (Kangding at 2,560 m, Bamei at 3,500 m). Severe cases are evacuated to the nearest medical facility.

What kind of food should I expect in Western Sichuan?

Tibetan and highland Sichuan cuisine — yak meat, mushroom hotpot, highland barley, butter tea. Meals are adjusted

for international palates. Chengdu days feature more familiar Sichuan dishes.

What booking options are available?

The optional Wellness Package bundles three sessions: TCM massage or acupuncture in Chengdu (Day 2 evening), health screening at a Chengdu medical centre (Day 3 morning), and spa massage on return (Day 13 afternoon). A single-room supplement is also available.

Local Names

Chengdu CHUNG-doo

Sichuan's capital — giant pandas, covered-bowl tea, and the gateway to Western Sichuan's highlands

Kangding kahng-DING

The river-valley town where the Sichuan plain meets the Tibetan Plateau — immortalised in the Kangding Love Song

Tagong tah-GOHNG

Tagong Grassland — wide-open highland pasture at 3,700 m with Yala Snow Mountain as its backdrop

Moxi moh-SHEE

Moxi Stone Park — black rock spires eroded into alien-looking formations, unlike anything else on the plateau

Huiyuan hway-YWEN

Huiyuan Temple near Bamei — built by Emperor Yongzheng in 1728, residence of the Seventh Dalai Lama and birthplace of the Eleventh

Longdeng long-DUNG

Longdeng Grassland — wide pasture known to locals as Gesar Tong, the legendary camping ground of King Gesar

Dege duh-GUH

Home to the Dege Printing House — where Tibetan woodblock scripture printing has run unbroken for 300 years

Kathok kah-TOHK

Kathok Monastery — one of the six great mother monasteries of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism

Litang lee-TAHNG

The World's Highest Town at 4,014 m — where sky feels closer, light is sharper, and Guozhuang dances fill the evening

Xinduqiao shin-doo-CHEE-ow

The Photographer's Paradise — golden grasslands, Tibetan farmhouses, and light that changes by the minute

Guozhuang gwoh-JWAHNG

A traditional Tibetan communal dance performed in a circle — part prayer, part celebration, open to everyone