

YUNNAN GUIDE





HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Each city section includes: where to stay, what to do, foods to try, and how long to spend.
- Links you see are our personal recommendations for hotels, tours, and transport — using them helps support our work at no extra cost to you.
- Don't forget to use our code VOYAGEWITHMC for discount on your Klook bookings!

Happy Travels!

DALI, YUNNAN

A laid-back lakeside town framed by Cangshan Mountain and Erhai Lake, known for its Bai heritage, slow café culture, and scenic cycling routes.



How many days to spend?

2–3 days is enough time to explore the Old Town, cycle Erhai Lake, and visit one nearby village without rushing.

We wanted to spend extra time soaking in the views around Erhai Lake, so we stayed for 4 days.

How to get there

Our Tip:

Book an early morning train so you have time to explore Dali in the afternoon.

👉 Where we booked our trains from Kunming to Dali

Where to stay

🏠 Amber Tour Hotel

Convenient location, very clean, spacious and modern interior.

🏠 Xingyun Seaview

This was one of our favourite stays of the trip. The views were immaculate.

Things to do

- Cycle around Erhai Lake
- Visit Dali Ancient Town
- Explore Xi Zhou Ancient Town
- Visit Wenbi Village
- San Yue Jie Market

Our Tip:

Highly recommend getting a driver to take you around the smaller towns nearby with ease. The ancient towns can be covered in 1-2 hours.

👉 Dali Erhai Lake Day Tour

Local specialities to try

- Rushan (乳扇) – grilled Bai milk cheese, lightly sweet and chewy
- Erkuai (饵块) – Yunnan-style rice cake, often stir-fried or wrapped
- Crossing-the-Bridge Noodles (过桥米线) – Yunnan's most famous noodle dish
- Fresh rose pastries

LIJIANG, YUNNAN

A UNESCO-listed old town known for its canals, stone bridges, and Naxi heritage, set against the backdrop of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. It's more lively and touristed than Dali, but incredibly atmospheric in the early mornings and evenings.

How to get there

👉 Where we booked our trains from Kunming to Dali

Where to stay

🇨🇳 We stayed at The Secret Garden of Cats and Wolf's Den

Did we book it for the cats? Absolutely. Any regrets? None.

Room was basic but clean, and the host was incredibly friendly and helpful.

Local specialties to try

- Naxi-style hotpot
- Yak Milk Tea

How many days to spend?

2 days is enough for Lijiang Old Town and a nearby mountain or cultural site; 3 days if you want to explore at a slower pace.

Things to do

- Wander Lijiang Old Town (best in the evening)

- Lijiang Banquet

A lively cultural dining experience where you're served a multi-course Naxi-style feast while watching traditional music and dance performances. in an immersive setting.

👉 Discounted tickets for Lijiang Banquet

- Explore Shuhe Ancient Town (highly recommend)



- Take a trip to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (cable car + viewpoints)

Our Tip:

We booked an English speaking tour guide and would 100% recommend. No hassle with booking tickets, getting lost or figuring out what to do.

👉 This is the tour we booked

TIGER LEAPING GORGE

One of China's most dramatic hikes, where towering cliffs drop into the Jinsha River below. It's raw, rugged, and feels worlds away from Yunnan's old towns.

How many days to spend?

1 day for a shorter scenic section; 2 days for the classic high trail hike with an overnight stay.

We opted for a 2D1N hiking experience.

How to get there

Reaching the start of the hike is straightforward. You can either choose to book a direct bus or shared transfer.

We opted for a shared bus that picked up from Lijiang.

We booked the transfer service via WeChat. The WeChat ID: [tubuzhitongche](#)

Where to stay

🇨🇳 We loved our stay at [Half Day](#)

This was such an iconic stay, perched on the mountain side.. Waking up to mountain views here was a highlight of the trip.

Our Tip:

If you're not planning on doing the full hike, or just want to visit Tiger Leaping Gorge, consider a scenic day tour instead..

👉 [\[Non-hiking\] Tiger Leaping Gorge Leisure Sightseeing Day Trip](#)

What to expect

Tiger Leaping Gorge is one of the most scenic hikes in Asia.

It's moderately challenging but manageable for anyone with reasonable fitness. The standard route is typically done over 1-2 days. The trail is well-marked and passes through small rest stops and guesthouses where you can buy drinks and simple meals.

The most physically demanding section is the ascent early in the hike, but once you gain elevation, the trail becomes more gradual with continuous panoramic views.



SHANGRI-LA, YUNNAN

Shangri-La sits at a higher altitude and has a distinctly Tibetan character. Expect cooler temperatures, wider landscapes and a slower pace.



How many days to spend?

3-4 days if for a relaxed pace and to explore the vast nature spots.

How to get there

✌ Book trains from Lijiang to Shangri-la

Where to stay

Modern and spacious hotel, walking distance to Dukezong Ancient Town.

🇨🇳 CRUE Kulilan Hotel

Things to do

- Visit Songzanlin Monastery (the largest Tibetan monastery in Yunnan)
- Walk through Dukezong Ancient Town
Make sure to check out the daily Tibetan-style evening dance in the main square and spin the giant prayer wheel.
- Explore Pudacuo National Park
- Visit Balagezong (highly recommend)
- Visit Napa Lake grasslands

Our Tip:

we hired a private driver in Shangri-La, and it made everything so much easier since many of the most scenic spots are outside the main town with limited public transport. This allowed us to visit places like Balagezong and Pudacuo National Park with ease.

✌ How we explored Shangri-la

KUNMING, YUNNAN

Known as the “Spring City” for its mild climate year-round, Kunming is a relaxed urban base with vibrant markets, peaceful lakes, and easy access to nearby natural wonders.



How many days to spend?

1–2 days in the city is enough to see the highlights; add a day trip if you want to explore the Stone Forest or other nearby sights.

How to get there

✈️ Book trains from Shangri-la to Kunming

Our Tip:

Some people choose to fly back to Kunming because the train takes 6 hours, but we didn't want to deal with the hassle of the airport.

Instead, we got first class train tickets so we could lie flat and sleep on the journey. Total game changer and highly recommend if you have the budget.

Where to stay

A basic room on the smaller side, but very well-located.

🇨🇳 Yunxi CLOUD Designer Hotel

Things to do

- Stroll around Green Lake Park
- Feed seagulls at Dian Chi Lake
- Explore Yuantong Temple (Kunming's largest Buddhist temple)
- Check out Kunming Old Street
- Take a day trip to Stone Forest (Shilin) for dramatic limestone formations

✈️ Stone Forest Day Tour