

16-Day China Ethnic Minority Exploration Tour

Route: Beijing - Xi'an - Guiyang - Anshun - Kaili - Rongjiang - Zhaoxing - Congjiang - Guilin - Shanghai
Duration: 16 days

Highlights:

- Take a river cruise among the beautiful karst pinnacles in Guilin
- Get a taste of ethnic minority culture at Zhaoxing Dong Village
- Witness the life-size Terracotta Warriors, each with one-of-a-kind expression
- See the breathtaking Great Wall at Mutianyu
- Take a stroll along the Bund, Shanghai's iconic waterfront

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival in Beijing **Overnight:** Beijing

Arrive at Beijing Capital International Airport where your personal tour guide will greet you and take you to the hotel and assist with the check-in. Make the most of the rest of the day to relax and recover from the jet lag.

Day 2: Beijing **Overnight:** Beijing

After breakfast, head to the Tiananmen Square, one of the largest city squares in the world as well as China's spiritual heart. If you want to see the flag raising ceremony held at sunrise, don't forget to rise early. After passing through the Tiananmen Gate, arrive at the imposing 600-year-old Forbidden City which served as the residence of 24 emperors in the Ming and Qing dynasties and only those who had the permission of the emperor could enter. Explore the Summer Palace afterward, an imperial garden where Qing emperors vacationed during the hot days in summer. You can take a short boat ride on Kunming Lake (unavailable from November to next April because of the frozen lake).

Day 3: Beijing **Overnight:** Beijing

The magnificent Great Wall of China is a must-go site for any visitors to Beijing. Built over 2,000 years ago, it stretches around 6,700 km across northern China. This morning, you will be able to witness it at Mutianyu, a less visited part of the wall with beautiful mountain views. You may want to take a cable car up and down due to its steep stairs. Afterwards, head to Chang Tomb, the largest and best preserved of the 13 Ming Tombs, and end today's tour in a jade gallery.

Day 4: Beijing - Xi'an **Overnight:** Xi'an

After breakfast, visit the Temple of Heaven, which is actually not a temple, but a large altar for ancient Chinese emperors to carry out rituals in order to achieve good harvest and eternal peace. Nowadays, it's a popular place for the locals to do exercise, practicing Tai Chi, playing instruments, singing or dancing. After lunch, be escorted to the railway station for the high-speed train tour (4.5-6 hours) to Xi'an. When you arrive, be met by your personal guide and taken to the hotel.

Day 5: Xi'an **Overnight:** Xi'an

After breakfast, discover the awe-inspiring army of Terracotta Warriors. What makes these clay soldiers so fascinating is not only its great number and life-size, but also their one-of-a-kind facial expression. After that, continue to Xi'an Art Ceramics Factory where you can learn how to make these terracotta warriors. Visit the Ancient City Wall which is the best-preserved in China before exploring the Muslim Street where you can try some local delicacies, or hunt for souvenirs.

Optional: Watch an evening Tang Dynasty Show to appreciate the art of the golden era in Chinese history.



Day 6: Xi'an - Guiyang **Overnight:** Guiyang

In the morning, try your hand at writing Chinese characters in the Small Wild Goose Pagoda which offers Calligraphy class in an exhibition hall. Then be transferred to the airport for the flight to Guiyang. On the way to the airport, visit Hanyang Tomb of Emperor Jing and his wife in the Han Dynasty. On arrival in Guiyang, meet your local guide and be escorted to the hotel. Spend the rest of the day at leisure.

Day 7: Guiyang - Anshun - Guiyang **Overnight:** Guiyang

After breakfast, drive about 2.5 hours to Anshun to see the famous Huangguoshu Waterfall - China's largest waterfall which is 243 feet high and 266 feet wide. Afterwards, visit the historic town of Tianlong Tunpu where the centuries-old customs and traditional houses remain intact. With a bit of luck, you may have the opportunity to watch the local Ground Opera, once a sacrificial ceremony that was performed by local soldiers to pray for victory in battle.

Day 8: Guiyang - Kaili **Overnight:** Kaili

After breakfast, take a 2.5-hour drive to Kaili, home to 48 ethnic groups including Bai, Dai, Dong, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Naxi, and Hani, as well as the cultural hub of the Miao people. Visit the Kaili Folk Museum that houses exhibits including costumes, handicrafts, paintings and architecture of these ethnic groups, then Matang Gejia Village which is known for its batik and colorful costumes, and Qingman Miao Village where you have the chance to admire its traditional silk felt and cloth weaving.



Day 9: Kaili **Overnight:** Kaili

Today, you will discover three villages of the Miao people around Kaili: Jidao Miao Village, a lovely quiet village perched by the Bala River where you will find old barns, drums and a traditional singing hall; Shiqiao Miao Village whose age-old way of using hemp to make paper survives the time; and Paika Miao Village where you can learn about its unique traditional musical instrument called Lusheng.

Day 10: Kaili - Rongjiang **Overnight:** Rongjiang

After breakfast, take a private transfer (3.5 hours' drive) to Rongjiang. After arrival, visit Chejiang Dong Village which is considered the birthplace of Dong people who are famed for their drum towers and "wind and rain" bridges.

Day 11: Rongjiang - Zhaoxing **Overnight:** Zhaoxing

Today, drive to Congjiang and visit the Basha Miao Village whose inhabitants still live in wooden houses and follow ancient customs. You may be surprised that men here have unique hairstyles and are allowed to keep guns. After that, head to Yintan Dong Village that is situated on the mountaintop and known as Guizhou's best preserved Dong village. Continue to Zhaoxing and visit Zhaoxing Dong Village where you will be amazed by its beautiful wooden houses, drum towers, and "wind and rain" bridges.

Day 12: Zhaoxing - Congjiang - Guilin **Overnight:** Guilin

In the morning, transfer to the railway station for a 1-hour high-speed train to Guilin. Upon arrival, be met by your private guide and escorted to the hotel. After a short rest, explore the Reed Flute Cave where you may marvel at its extraordinary stalactites and stalagmites lightened by multi-colored lights. Then visit a Pearl Shop that boasts 2,000 different kinds of sea pearls, which is good to look around or find souvenirs.

Day 13: Yangshuo **Overnight:** Yangshuo

After breakfast, drive for about 40 minutes to the pier where you will leave for Yangshuo with a leisurely Li River cruise (about 3.5-4 hours), which is considered a must-do in Guilin. En route, see spectacular limestone peaks, crystal-clear water, flourishing bamboo groves, and buffaloes grazing on the banks, all of which are picture-perfect for your photo album. Arrive at Yangshuo and transfer to the hotel. The remainder of the day is at your own disposal. You may want to take a stroll along the famous West Street, eat or drink at a local eatery, pub, or café, or shop for some nice souvenirs.

Optional: In the evening, enjoy the show of Impression Liu Sanjie with the stunning Li River and limestone hills as the backdrop.

Day 14: Yangshuo - Guilin - Shanghai **Overnight:** Shanghai

After breakfast, explore Yangshuo's countryside (1.5-2 hours) either by bike or by car. During the trip, you can absorb amazing views of rice paddies and hills. If you like, it's also possible to arrange a home visit to learn about the everyday life of the local people. In the afternoon, transfer to the airport with the escort of your private guide and driver, and fly to Shanghai. On arrival, your guide there will pick you up and take you to the hotel.

Day 15: Shanghai **Overnight:** Shanghai

After breakfast, embark on a guided tour of this vibrant, futuristic city. Start from the state-of-the-art Shanghai Museum (closed on Mondays), home to an excellent collection of ancient Chinese artifacts, then wander around the classic Yu Garden with pagodas, pavilions, fountains and flowers to see, and the adjacent Yuyuan Market. Make a stop at a Silk Workshop to learn about how silk is processed before heading to the Former French Concession which has leafy boulevards, boutiques, bars, cafes, etc. Today's tour ends with a walk along the Bund, a waterfront area which has long been seen as the symbol of Shanghai.

Optional: In the evening, enjoy an entertaining Acrobatic Show, a perfect blend of opera, Kungfu, and dance.

Day 16: Shanghai - Departure

Today, spend some free time until you are escorted to the airport for your onward flight.

