

Songtsam Trip “Yunnan & Lhasa” 7N/8D



“In Tibetan culture legend has it that in another time and space there is a kingdom called Shambala. It is a quiet and peaceful kingdom because everybody there knows the source of happiness.”

Mr Pema Dorjee
Founder & Chairman of Songtsam

The Three Parallel Rivers area of Yunnan encompasses a majestic land hemmed in by the mighty Yangtze, the free-flowing Mekong, and the wild Salween. Many of the twenty-five different ethnic minorities currently living in Yunnan can be found in this area, which features snow-capped peaks more than 6,000m high, glaciated gorges, and terraced rice fields. The peaceful people that inhabit the region have not only preserved this area for generations, but have also nurtured this “Shangri-La”.

Songtsam have built a series of hotels and lodges in eighteen carefully selected locales, which enable guests to experience the different cultures and landscapes inherent in these regions. By combining stays at the different Songtsam properties our circuit tour takes you into the heart of the Three Parallel Rivers area and lets you explore this magical land.

Songtsam Lodge Lijiang (2,400m)

Our retreat is located at a nearby small Naxi-ethnic village named Ciman, where the traditional way of living still thrives. Surrounded by pinewoods and a pear garden, Songtsam Lodge Lijiang offers spectacular views of the old town, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, and Lashi Lake. The hotel's design is grand in appearance and has an interior layout in the style of a Naxi courtyard that is decorated with exquisite Hui-style stone sculptures.



Songtsam Linka Shangri-La (3,300m)

Hidden in the city's peaceful and green valleys between Tibetan villages and Himalayan barley fields, our hotel is located a short distance away from the Songzanlin Monastery. Tibetan-style rooms, dining facilities, spa, and other modern amenities are housed in lovingly hand-built stone structures spread over 21 acres of hillside surrounded by snow-capped mountains.



Songtsam Linka Lhasa (3,700m)

Built on the edge of an old park our retreat offers spectacular views of the nearby Potala Palace located only 5 kilometers away. From the hotel's slaked lime coloured walls to the indigo carved windows and fish-fin shaped facade, all of these architectural details pay great respect to traditional artisans, Tibetan culture, and ancient wisdom. Rooms exhibit a unique combination of modern and traditional Tibetan aesthetics that are elegantly decorated with wooden floors, wall tapestries, and handcrafted copperware. Each room is also fully equipped with oxygen concentrators to relieve AMS and ensure good rest.



Trip Schedule

The program starts from Lijiang and ends in Lhasa. All information in this itinerary is accurate to the best of our knowledge but please note that changes to our trips can and do occur.

Day	Overnight Location	Activities
Day 1	<u>Songtsam</u> <u>Lodge Lijiang</u> <u>(2,400m)</u> <u>Deluxe Room</u> <u>D</u>	➤ Pick up from Lijiang Sanyi International Airport. Check into the hotel (1-hour drive) and have welcome dinner at Songtsam Lodge Lijiang. ➤ If your flights arrive early, you may visit Baisha Old Town . It still preserves an authentic Naxi heritage. Elderly Naxi women in traditional costumes sell homegrown vegetables along the streets; at the village entrance, old men perform the centuries-old Baisha Fine Music. Nearby, the Baisha Murals blend the style of Tibetan Buddhist painting. Created during the Ming and Qing dynasties, they stand as a precious testament to art and faith.
Day 2	<u>Songtsam</u> <u>Lodge Lijiang</u> <u>(2,400m)</u> <u>Deluxe Room</u> <u>B, L, D</u>	➤ After breakfast, visit Dayan Ancient Town (20-min drive). Then stroll along the route described by Russian writer Peter Goullart in Forgotten Kingdom, and uncover the former glory of this vital Tea Horse Road town and the resilience of its people over centuries. The walk ends at Zhongyi Market, where you'll immerse yourself in the daily life of the Naxi people, explore local ingredients, and experience the vibrant charm of the ancient town. ➤ Have lunch at Songtsam Lodge Lijiang. ➤ At dusk, visit Wenfeng Temple (40-min drive), one of the "Five Famous Temples of Lijiang." It is the only temple in northwest Yunnan where monks undertake long-term meditation retreats lasting more than three years. After visiting the main hall, you may follow the stone path or take a vehicle up to the mountain meditation cave. The mountaintop is one of the best places to enjoy the sunset, with sweeping views over Lijiang Valley, Beacon Hill, and the distant Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. As the sun goes down, the sky glows with warm colors, casting a breathtaking golden light across the entire landscape. ➤ Have dinner at Songtsam Lodge Lijiang.
Day 3	<u>Songtsam</u> <u>Linka Shangri-La</u> <u>(3,280m)</u> <u>Deluxe Room</u> <u>B, L, D</u>	➤ After breakfast, drive to Tiger Leaping Gorge for hiking (1.5-hour drive). Tiger Leaping Gorge is a scenic canyon on the Jinsha River, a primary tributary of the upper Yangtze River. It is one of the top 10 famous hiking trails in the world. In particular, we choose the most beautiful and less difficult route from Chama Guesthouse to Half Way. <i>The route can be extended according to your physical strength and preference.</i> ➤ Have lunch at a local restaurant. ➤ In the afternoon, depart for Shangri-La (2-hour drive) and visit Napa Lake, which is both an ideal field for herdsman and a paradise for many species of birds.

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- Have dinner at Songtsam Linka Shangri-La.
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Day 4
Songtsam
Linka Shangri-
La(3,280m)
Deluxe Room
B, L, D

- After breakfast, visit the Songzanlin Monastery (15-min walk), the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Yunnan province and sometimes referred to as the “Little Potala Palace”, which is also the most important monastery in southwest China.
- Enjoy an outside BBQ lunch overlooking the meadow and monastery.
- In the afternoon, you can choose which activity to participate in based on your personal preferences:

Option 1: On the grassland in front of Linka Shangri-La, experienced instructors will start with teaching you how to saddle a horse and lead a horse, guiding you step by step to become a graceful equestrian. After the horse-riding lesson, an archery experience will be held—draw the bow, nock the arrow, and enjoy the carefree time on the grassland.

Option 2: The thangka painting experience offered by Songtsam allows you to explore this profound art form under the guidance of a master painter and complete your very first piece. As an "encyclopedia" of Tibetan culture, the thangka features distinctive ethnic characteristics, rich religious elements, and a unique artistic style.

Option 3: Making Tibetan incense by hand. For thousands of years, the Tibetan people have preserved the essence of Tibetan incense with their devoted hearts and hardworking hands. Tibetan incense originates from a daily ritual activity—"Weisang" (smoke purification offering). When this natural fragrance spreads across the snowy plateau, it is believed that one's prayers have been heard by the divine.

- Have dinner at Songtsam Linka Shangri-La.
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Day 5
Songtsam
Linka Lhasa
(3,700m)
Deluxe Room
B, L, D

- After breakfast, drive to the Shangri-La airport (25-min drive) and take the flight to Lhasa. (MU 5774 Shangri-La/ Lhasa)
- *If your flight is scheduled for a later time, you may visit the Songtsam Museum.*

You will be given an explanation of the cultural knowledge contained in the museum's collections.

- Arrive in Lhasa and check into Songtsam Linka Lhasa (1-hour drive).
 - Enjoy afternoon tea. The slow-paced life of Lhasa easily infects every visitor. The lunch break here is particularly long, and sunbathing and drinking sweet tea are beloved pastimes shared by all locals. Songtsam skillfully brings this laid-back atmosphere into the hotel, creating a dedicated afternoon tea space in the lobby. Even local guests often come here to reminisce about the old afternoons on Barkhor Street. Here, you can savor sweet tea slowly and enjoy pastries and fruits; on selected dates, a band will be in residence, performing traditional Tibetan songs and dances to honor this leisurely way of life.
 - Have dinner at Songtsam Linka Lhasa.
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Day 6
Songtsam
Linka Lhasa
(3,700m)

Whether you are visiting Lhasa for the first time or seeking a deeper understanding of this sacred land, you will find a direction for your walk

Deluxe Room
B, L, D

here. Today, follow in the footsteps of Songtsam's travel guide to embark on a Citywalk around the ancient city of Lhasa — you can explore the historical culture carried by the city, feel the daily life and warmth of local Lhasa residents, and learn how Tibetan people in Lhasa spend each day and approach life and things. This walking experience will show you a different Lhasa and a different culture: immerse yourself in Tibetan style in a sweet tea house, stroll leisurely on Barkhor Street, soak up the sun in the ancient city, wander around Chomsigkang Market, and step into the most traditional Tibetan ancient courtyard for a sincere conversation with local people.

- In the morning visit the magnificent Potala Palace (30-min drive). Built in the 6th century, it is the iconic heart of Tibetan Buddhism and the highest palace in the world.
- Have lunch at a local restaurant.
- Afterwards go to Barkhor Street to experience the most vibrant bazaar in Lhasa. A popular circumambulation for pilgrims it is seen as "a saint road" in the eyes of the Tibetan people. Here you can feel the local spiritual belief from pilgrims with different dresses and dialects from all over Tibet who pray devoutly along this street.
- Have dinner at Songtsam Linka Lhasa.

Day 7

Songtsam
Linka Lhasa
(3,700m)
Deluxe Room
B, L, D

- After breakfast, departure to Yamdrok-Tso Lake (2-hour drive). Visit Yamdrok-Tso, one of Tibet's three holiest lakes, is a breathtaking sight. Spanning Shannan and Lhoka Prefectures, it's about 110 kilometers from Lhasa. With a circumference of around 250 kilometers, the lake twists and turns, its shape far from circular. The name "Yamdrok-Tso" means "Jade Turquoise Lake" in Tibetan. Under sunlight, its waters shift between vivid turquoise, deep blue, and emerald. For centuries, it has been a sacred site in Tibetan Buddhism. (4440m)
- Have a picnic lunch along the lake. Afterwards, return to the hotel and take a short rest.
- "Before the Jokhang Temple, there was no Lhasa city." In the evening, follow your Songtsam guide to avoid the peak crowds and pay homage to the life-size Jowo Shakyamuni enshrined in the Jokhang Temple. Step into the frozen memories of old Lhasa and experience the spiritual heart of Lhasa and all of Tibet (20-min drive).
- Have a farewell dinner at Songtsam Linka Lhasa.

Day 8

Departure

- After breakfast, Visit Gongga Qude Monastery (1-hour drive). The monastery was built in 1464, which is home to well-preserved murals, guided by your guide, you can quietly admire these centuries-old murals, as if walking through an art gallery.
- Transfer to Lhasa Gonggar Airport (20-min drive).

Trip Costs

Price unit: CNY per person

Date	Shoulder Season	Peak Season	Holidays
Private Tour (2 PAX)	39,900	42,600	45,700
Private Tour (4 PAX)	31,900	34,000	36,500
Private Tour (6 PAX)	32,700	34,900	37,400
Private Tour (8 PAX)	31,500	33,600	36,000
Single Room Supplement	8,300	9,900	12,900
Tibetan Permit & Documents related	- Tibetan Permit : CNY 700 per person, - Travel documents of Nyingchi, Shannan and Changdu district CNY 150 per person. - These costs are already included in the quotation above. - Songtsam will assist with your application. The fee is non-refundable once the application is submitted.		

Shoulder season: 3 Jan-12 Feb, 24 Feb-31 Mar, 21 Apr-30 Apr, 6 May-9 Jul, 26 Aug-27 Sept, 8 Oct-23 Dec, 2026

Peak season: 1 Jan-2 Jan, 1 Apr-20 Apr, 10 Jul-25 Aug, 24 Dec-31 Dec, 2026

Holidays: 13 Feb-23 Feb, 1 May-5 May, 28 Sept-7 Oct, 2026

Land Costs INCLUDE:

- All land transfers on best-in-class local transportation indicated in the itinerary.
- All admission fees and activities indicated in the itinerary.
- All accommodation based on double occupancy.
- All meals starting from dinner on the first day to breakfast on the last day.
- Standard drinking water and snacks throughout the trip.
- Complimentary minibar in guest rooms.
- Service of English-speaking local guides.

Land Costs DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- Medical, travel insurance or evacuation insurance plans.

- Domestic or international airfare to Shangri-La and from Lhasa.
- Domestic or international airfare to Lijiang and from Lhasa.
- Personal telecommunication.
- Excursions and activities not included in itinerary.



Trip Expectations

Trip difficulty: This journey is considered moderate when touring and moderate when hiking. Our itinerary includes full days of activities, which start early in the morning and end in the evening. Each person can respond to a change in altitude differently. In the event of altitude sickness, we would move to a lower altitude. After plenty of rest, symptoms usually subside. For more information, please consult your doctor.

Road conditions and transportation: Depending on the size of the group, we travel in well maintained SUVs or vans. Experienced Songtsam drivers drive all vehicles. Some sections of the road follow winding mountain paths and are bumpy especially when some parts are under construction. We will make stops at beautiful villages and scenic spots on the way and will prepare water and snacks for the road trips.

Weather: During this trip you will experience diverse temperatures. The temperature can change from 20 degrees centigrade to 5 degrees centigrade within one day. Wearing layers of clothes is advisable to allow for changes in temperature.

Meals: During your journey you will get to try Tibetan cuisine, which includes a good amount of barley flour-based items, such as dumplings and noodles, as well as red meat, such as yak, beef and pork. At linka Shangri-La, and lodges Lijiang, Tacheng, Meili, and Benzilan, we provide set menus, which combine Tibetan and Chinese cuisine.

Emergency evacuation and procedures: We suggest all travellers purchase an International SOS (an AEA company) Service Plan, which provides emergency evacuation to the nearest medical facility of international standards.

Trip escorts: Our well-trained local guides are specialists in Tibet and the local region and will travel with you throughout the trip. All originating from different villages and areas, all Songtsam guides have stories to share about their hometowns, which provides deeper travel experiences for all guests to understand the local culture and geography.

The Songtsam Story



Some memories never fade. It seems like only yesterday that Songtsam founder and Chairman Mr. Pema Dorjee was on his way back to Shangri-La with ambitious plans to shoot a documentary of his childhood home. While it had been many years since he had last set foot in his native land, fond memories came pouring back. He remembered the excitement of climbing local mountains as a young boy, the intimate solitude of his town's temples, and the people who helped define him as a person.

Finally, he was home. The rush of emotions made him wonder: How could he give back? What more could he do? Soon it all became clear. He thought about the region's rich culture and how he could create a way for travellers to come and experience a new way of life. A place that was more than the usual hotel and gift shops, a place where guests could immerse themselves in living history. So, Pema turned his family's small guesthouse into the first Songtsam lodge.

Inspired by the rich Tibetan culture, he worked with local artisans and members of the community to help produce and run Songtsam Lodge Shangri-La. Eleven properties and eighteen years later, Pema's vision continues to grow, and so does the Songtsam experience.

About the Area



The great China tectonic plate runs into the Tibetan Plateau in northern Yunnan, forging high mountain ranges with soaring snow-packed peaks. Three major rivers, the Yangtze (Jinshajiang), Mekong (Lancangjiang) and Salween (Nujiang) run through deep gorges with wild, untamed scenery. This charming destination is diverse in nature and culture due to its unique geography; indeed, one can experience all four seasons in just one day. Due to the vast range in altitude, travellers can quickly move from cold snowy mountains to warm flower-filled valleys.

Northwest Yunnan is the richest area in China in terms of biodiversity, boasting unique flora and fauna, and is possibly the most biologically diverse temperate region on earth. This is the original location of the world's gardens: in spring and summer, the surrounding hills are blanketed with rhododendrons and camellias. The Victorians collected and brought these to the Western world. The temperate forests and lowlands contain over 3,000 species of orchids and more than 200 of the world's 400 species of rhododendron. In summer time, striking blue irises are in blossom along the mountain paths.



Bird watching and cycling bring travellers in close proximity to all kinds of migrant birds at their winter heaven around Napa Lake, including the black-necked crane – the holy bird for Tibetans. High in the forests between the Mekong and Yangtze River lives the rare Yunnan Black snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus biteti*), one of the world's most endangered primates - fewer than 2,000 are now found in the wild. These monkeys live at the highest altitude (3,000-4,500m) of any animal primate.



Historically, people were separated by the soaring mountains and deep gorges in this area, facilitating the development of the most distinctive ethnic cultures. Kham Tibetans in Diqing is characterized by their big white wooden houses and colorful customs, which differ from Tibetans in other areas of Tibet. In this area along the Lancang River, although the shining golden roofs of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries sparkle in the light, Tibetans here follow Catholic teachings and practice their ceremonies at small Catholic churches surrounded by vineyards. Travelling from the highlands to the banks of the rivers, styles of housing and costume change. The Lisu people, another ethnic group, dwell close to the water in the mountain valleys.



The Tea Horse Road, an ancient trade route linking tea-producing areas with Tibet, connects the mountains and deep gorges as well as different ethnic groups. For hundreds of years, horse caravans travelled along this route carrying tea to Tibet and India and bringing other commodities back home. This route has formed a corridor rich in culture, as different groups interact with each other in their daily lives. Today, one can travel around this area, journeying along different parts of this ancient trail.

