

WildChina Songtsam Circuit: Secrets of Shangri-la



The Three Parallel Rivers Area of Yunnan encompasses the 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 6,000 meters high, glaciated gorges and terraced fields. These peaceful people have for generations not only preserved, but also nurtured this "Shangri-la."

Songtsam has established a series of lodges in five carefully selected locales, enabling guests to experience the different cultures and landscapes inherent to these regions throughout all four seasons. Incorporating stays at different Songtsam lodges; this Circuit takes you into the heart of this mysterious land, and lets you unlock the secrets of Shangri-la.



May 21, 2011 – May 27, 2011
September 24, 2011 – September 30, 2011

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- Introduction-

Imagine waking up in a room facing the dramatic snow-capped peaks of the holy Mt. Kawagebo; sipping a cup of freshly brewed coffee in a courtyard garden on the upper-reaches of Great Mekong River, or meditating with a Tibetan master surrounded by farmland and Buddhist temples. Alternatively, spend the day trekking along an ancient Tibetan pilgrimage route or driving through the barren majesty of the Baima National Reserve, before returning to an elegant and comfortable hotel room.

This trip takes you through stunning Himalayan valleys into up to the edge of the Tibetan Plateau – “the Roof of the World”. Travelers have long sought to unlock the secrets of Shangri-la, a semi-mythical paradise described by James Hilton in his book *Lost Horizon*. Now, you too can discover some of the world’s most breathtaking landscapes and cultures, and maybe even find *your* heaven on earth.

Program **highlights** include:

- *Explore untamed and wild terrains at Meili Snow Mountains and Yangtze Valley*

Every year many Tibetans as well as travelers travel from all over the world to worship Kawagebo, the major peak of Meili snow mountain range. At tranquil Songtsam lodge away from main tourist spots, we know some of the most beautiful and untamed paths. Guided hikes or even leisure walks take you to the heart of this mysterious land and allow you to avoid dense crowds.



- ***Understand the rich culture through experiential activities:***

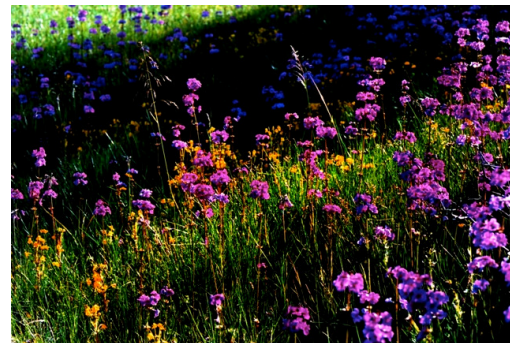
This circuit is a voyage through breathtaking landscapes and wonderful cultures, all activities are designed for travelers to experience the living heritage intimately:

- Enjoy tea and private audience with a high lama in his chamber;
- Taste traditional Tibetan food followed by singing and dancing at a Tibetan family;
- Attend handicraft workshop at Gonjo painting traditional lacquer wooden box;
- Meditate with a Tibetan master at a idyllic village



- ***Enjoy the great diversity of the area, experience four seasons in just one day***

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, travel between Songsam Lodges, you can quickly move from cold snowy mountains to warm flower-filled valleys within a couple of hours.



- *Go off-the-beaten path in comfort*

Throughout the journey, guests will be staying in Tibetan style luxury boutique Hotels – Songtsam Lodges. All lodges feature exquisite level of amenities and services that guests wouldn't expect for such remote places:



Songtsam Shangri-la is situated right next to the Songzanlin Monastery, the largest Tibetan monastery in Yunnan province. The lodge is housed in a traditional Tibetan dwelling within this typical, self-sufficient Tibetan farming village where the founder of Songtsam, Baima Dorjie, spent his childhood.

In a small green valley, sits **Songtsam Benzilan**. Amid barley and wheat fields, the lodge is surrounded by white-walled Tibetan houses and close to a white Stupa. From the hotel, it is an easy walk to the nearby hills and traditional Tibetan villages, where temples are decorated with beautiful murals.



Songtsam Meili Lodge (3,600m) overlooks the majestic Meili Mountain Range. Most of the rooms have a stunning view of Meili, a memorable experience for every guest who stays here.

- Itinerary-at-a-Glance -

Program starts and ends in Shangri-la

Day	Overnight Location	Activities
Day 1	Shangri-la (Songtsam Shangri-la)	- Arrive at Songtsam Shangri-la Lodge
Day 2	Shangri-la (Songtsam Shangri-la)	- Visit Songzanlin Monastery - Old town of Shangri-la and local NGO work - Dinner party at a traditional Tibetan family
Day 3	Benzilan (Songtsam Benzilan)	- Visit handicraft villages - Handicraft workshop - Walk through Tibetan village
Day 4	Meili (Songtsam Meili)	- Morning Meditation - Visit Dongzhulin Monastery - Drive to Meili over Baima Snow Mountain - Visit Tibetan village and families
Day 5	Meili (Songtsam Meili)	- Morning sunrise at Kawagebo - Small ceremony worshipping holy Mt. Kawagebo - Day hike pilgrimage route and picnic
Day 6	Shangri-la (Songtsam Shangri-la)	- Morning Meditation - Free morning (optional Feilai Si temple) - Drive back to Shangri-la - Farewell dinner
Day 7	Depart for home	

Note: 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. This may be due to our effort to improve our program or logistical reasons such as changes in train/flight schedules, traffic conditions, weather conditions, or government policies. We will make every effort to keep you informed of any changes, but cannot be held liable for any alterations made to the published



- Itinerary-in-Detail -

Day 1 Arrive in Shangri-la

Guests arrive in Shangri-la in the evening or late afternoon, and check into Songtsam Shangri-la Lodge. It's a cozy hotel located right by the Songzanlin Monastery, with a large collection of Tibetan furniture and carpets. Depends on the arrival time, we will arrange welcome dinner.

Day 2 Shangri-la

We will have a private visit to Songzanlin Monastery in the morning. We start our visit with tea and a private audience with a high lama in his chamber. As a tradition, the introduction begins with chants and prayers and is followed by a half hour introduction to the basic concepts of Tibetan Buddhism. We then visit the Monastery and learn more about its history, its structure, and the daily life of monks.

In the afternoon, we drive to Shangri-La old town. An important trade town in the ancient Tea and Horse Caravan Road, it is now booming once again, with shops and tea houses for travelers. We walk through the old parts of town, and then stop by a tea house for a cup of tea and to learn more about the history of Tea and Horse Caravan Road. We continue our exploration of the old town, and stop by a small cheese shop where you can find the yak cheese from nearby villages and a traditional Tibetan rugs workshop. During the old town excursion we also have a chance to visit some local and international Non-Governmental Organizations that work to protect and promote local culture.

Tonight, we enjoy an authentic traditional Tibetan dinner, prepared by a local family in their home, with some help from the hotel staff. Kena village was historically very important, as the economic and cultural center of this area. We have a chance to listen to stories of Shangri-la while sipping savory yak-butter tea, tasting stewed yak meat, and cheese made from yak's milk, all staples of the local diet. This is followed by night-life Tibetan style – singing, dancing and drinking!

Day 3 Shangri-la – Benzilan

We will drive for about 2 hours along Yangtze River to Benzilan. Stop at Nixi on the way and learn about their locally produced black pottery. Then, at Gonjo village, we will attend a handicraft workshop to learn how to draw a traditional lacquer wooden box.

After checking into the hotel, we will walk around the charming village where the lodge is located and visit some local families in their homes as well as the village center.

Day 4 Benzilan – Meili

Guests can get up early in the morning and take part in an optional morning meditation session with a Tibetan master. The tranquil lodge and surrounding farm fields make for a fantastic environment in which to meditate.

Drive to Dongzhulin Monastery after breakfast, which sits overlooking the beautiful Jinsha River Gorge (Yangtze). Dongzhulin, though not as famous as Songzanlin, is more popular with the local Tibetans. It has several "living" Buddhas and each year the Mask Dancing Ceremony attracts thousands of followers. It was built in 1667, before Songzanlin, and at one time housed treasures which rivaled Potala Palace. Unfortunately it was badly damaged during the Cultural Revolution and the current structure was restored in 1987.

After freshening up at Meili lodge, we will visit the small village of Meili which has a stunning view of the Meili Snow Mountain Range.

Day 5 Meili

An early start in order to capture Kawagebo at sunrise – this is an excellent photographic opportunity.

A day hike will be arranged, depending on guests' fitness levels. The Meili Snow Mountain Range has become a very popular destination for tourists; however our trip will enable you to explore some of the most untouched corners of the area.

Day 6 Shangri-la

The morning is free for you to explore the village and beautiful surrounding area on your own. Drive back to Shangri-la in the afternoon, we will have a farewell dinner at Songtsam Retreat.

Day 7 Depart

- Trip Expectations -

To and from starting city: Shangri-La has regular flights connecting to Kunming, which offers daily flights to major international gateway cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Flights from Kunming to Shangri-La are usually scheduled around 7-8 AM morning or 8 PM at night.

Trip Difficulty: This journey is considered moderate touring and moderate hiking. Our itinerary includes full days of activities, which start early in the morning and end in the evening. We take hikes of up to 5-6 hours and our longest drive is 2-3 hour long on mountainous, winding paved roads.

We reach heights of up to 3,200 meters (10,500 feet) above sea level at Shangri-la and 3,600 meters at Meili. Each person can respond to a change in altitude differently, with symptoms such as headache, nausea, fatigue, breathlessness, limited capacity for physical exertion, and loss of appetite. 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 group size, we travel in well-maintained sedans or vans. All vehicles are driven by experienced local drivers. Our journey includes a drive of approximately 2 hours from Shangri-La to Benzilan, 3 hours from Benzilan to Meili, and 4-5 hours from Meili to Shangri-La on paved, yet winding roads. Some roads, however, can be unpaved and bumpy, particularly those leading to our village visits.

Weather: This trip takes you to diverse temperatures, from snowy high land of Meili to green Yangtze Valley of Benzilan. Also, at an altitude of 3,300 meters or even higher, temperature can change from 20 degree centigrade to 5 degree centigrade within one day. Wearing layered clothes is advisable to allow for changes in temperature.

Meals: During our journey, we enjoy Tibetan cuisine while in Shangri-la, which includes a good amount of barley flour-based items, such as dumplings and noodles, as well as red meat, such as yak and mutton.

At Meili and Benzilan, we provide set menus at Songtsam lodges, which combine Tibetan and Chinese cuisines, include complimentary soft drinks.

While some of our meals may be somewhat different from that which many guests are accustomed to, we believe in offering the opportunity to experience this vital aspect of ethnic minority culture. A Western meal can be arranged in Shangri-La upon request.

Emergency Evacuation and Procedures: We suggested all travelers purchase an International SOS (an AEA company) Service Plan, which provides for emergency evacuation to the nearest medical facility of international standards.

In the event of a medical emergency, our first call of action would be to contact the International SOS 24-hour center, where doctors would instruct our staff on appropriate next steps, which may include rest, a visit to a SOS-recommended hospital, or, in extreme cases, evacuation.

Trip Escorts: Our well trained local guides will travel with you throughout the trip. From different villages around the area, everyone has a story to tell about their hometown, helping to provide a vivid travel experience for all our guests.

- About Us -

Songtsam Lodges

The concept behind Songtsam lodges emerged after their founder, Baima Dorji, made a trip to Shangri-La in 1999 to make a TV documentary about his hometown. Upon realizing that the area, which was just emerging as a tourist destination, lacked comfortable hotels, Baima decided to turn his family home, just down the road from the imposing Songzanlin Monastery, into a small guest house. Traditional and complex Tibetan building methods were used throughout the structure, and local artisans were commissioned to produce art for the hotel. The project took close to two years to complete. In October 2001, Songtsam Shangri-la (originally named as Songtsam Green Valley) opened its doors to guests.

The venture was a great success, encouraging the Tibetan entrepreneur to bring this concept to the heart of northern Yunnan, the core of the Three Parallel Rivers area. With liked minded partners joining in, by 2010, four other lodges (Benzilan, Deqin, Cizhong, and Tacheng) had been built, bringing comfort and style to these beautiful and remote areas. All of these four lodges are situated in charming villages with great views and, most importantly, with friendly and personalized service. www.songtsam.com

WildChina Company Limited

WildChina is a premium, sustainable travel company based in Beijing, providing ecologically sensitive, in-depth journeys to all corners of China. WildChina caters to an intrepid clientele interested in seeing the real China, away from the crowds, and off the beaten path. Working with a wide range of universities, Fortune 500 corporations, museums and non-profits, WildChina helps all of our guests “Experience China differently”!

Wildchina was recently named by *National Geographical Adventure* as one of “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth”, and has also been recognized by *Travel & Leisure* as the only A+ ranked travel agent in China.

For more information, please visit our web-site at www.wildchina.com.

- Trip Costs -

Promotional Price: USD 1,985/person

Cost of Single Supplement: USD 508 / person

Land Costs INCLUDES: • All land transfers on best-in-class local transportation as indicated in the itinerary • All admission fees and activities as indicated in itinerary • All accommodation based on double occupancy • All meals starting from Dinner on Day 1 to Breakfast on Day 7 • Drinking water and snacks • Complimentary drinks and wine at Songtsam lodges • Service of local guides

Land Costs DOES NOT INCLUDE: • Alcoholic or imported beverages during meals • SOS Evacuation Insurance (US\$30 per person) • Domestic and International Air fare to and from Shangri-la • Personal telecommunication / laundry charges • Excursions and activities not included in itinerary • Travel Insurance

Program starts and ends in Shangri-la. WildChina would be happy to assist you in your pre and post trip travel arrangement. Please contact us for further information.

- Enquiries -

The workshop is limited to a maximum of 15 and minimum of 4 persons. If you would like to participate, or require further information, please contact:

JIA Li-ming, Director, WildChina

Tel: (86) 10 6465-6602 ext 339

Email: liming.jia@wildchina.com

- Reservation Form -

Enclosed is our non-refundable deposit for US\$200 on "Secret of Shangri-la." I understand the balance of the program price is due at least 45 days prior to departure. Deposit payment may be made by a US-denominated dollar check, Visa, or MasterCard credit card. Final invoicing will be sent within two weeks of receipt of the reservation form, and must be paid through check or wire transfer.

NAME _____

(MUST BE as it appears on your passport)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____

PHONE (DAY) _____ (EVENING) _____

E-MAIL _____

I will share my room with _____

I desire a single room (limited availability)

Please note: The undersigned has read the schedule of activities for "Secrets of Shangri-la," and agrees that the signature below represents my acceptance of the program. I also agree to pay a non-refundable US\$200 deposit to secure my reservation.

Method of Payment

CHECK (in US Dollar payable to WildChina) MASTERCARD VISA

For Credit Card Payment, please complete the following:

Account # _____

Expiry Date (MM/YR) _____ Security Code _____

Name as it appears on card _____

Billing Address: Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Country _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Please fill in information required, and fax the completed form to +86 10 6465 1793.

Alternatively, please mail or courier the form and enclosed check to
Room 801 Oriental Place, No. 9 East Dongfang Road, North Dongsanhuan Road,
Chaoyang District, Beijing, 100027, PR China

For details on WildChina's Booking Conditions, please contact

JIA Li-ming at liming.jia@wildchina.com

*All information entered will be kept strictly confidential by WildChina
Your travel consultant will contact you once your reservation is confirmed.*

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