

**“The Art of Travel”
At the Linden Centre in
Yunnan Province
OCTOBER 20-30, 2025**



*Everything has beauty
but not everyone sees it
Confucius*

Yunnan Province is one of Asia's most popular tourist destinations due to its natural beauty, year-round spring-like weather, and cultural and ethnic diversity. In 2008, the first heritage mansion-to-hotel opened outside the ancient city of Dali, founded by American couple Brian and Jeanee Linden. As co-founders of the Linden Centre, they attempted to create a sustainable tourism model for China's rural villages. They lead a select group of people every year throughout this dynamic region.

When the Linden family first set foot in Yunnan in 2004, the province's significance struck them as unforgettable. They sought to establish a hub for travelers to explore the less-widely known parts of China's cultural traditions. They discovered their own Shangri-La, situated just below Tibet and close to the Buddhist Kingdoms of Thailand and Burma.

On this trip, the Linden Centre team will take participants on a journey that mimics their beginnings in Dali, Yunnan. They will arrange lively experiences with interesting people, guide thought-provoking discussions, and walk you into sacred mountains. For the Lindens, the journey, not the destination, has always been the reward.

Corey and Laurene Chan will be Travel Mentors on the Art of Travel program, accompanying the group throughout its itinerary and providing opportunities for Chinese art, culture, and history storytelling, personal reflection and inspiration, and Chinese qigong exercises (Threading the Nine Pearls and Jingang Ruyigong, a Baugua exercise).

Laurene was formerly the Director of Youth Ministries at the Donaldina Cameron House in San Francisco's Chinatown. Her daily work for immigrant children from Asia and their families taught her how to cultivate bridges between cultures and people.

Corey's love for Chinese culture began in childhood when his mother showed him pictures of Chinese warrior figurines from a book. At 12, he began practicing Chinese martial arts, not knowing he was embarking on a lifelong journey. During his gongfu training, Corey learned the Chinese lion dance, a performance art that had fascinated him since childhood. He realized that lion dancers also had to be accomplished martial artists, which made him admire the art even more. Years later, he discovered the deeper nuances of the art—the traditional performances of lion dance puzzles. Sharing the arts through dance, lectures, and storytelling in the communities opened the doors to new opportunities to reach widespread audiences. He worked with several filmmakers to explain and uplift the arts to viewers outside his community. The same symbolism and stories surround us today in Chinese culture. Laurene and Corey look forward to integrating their love of these arts during our travel together.

The recent opening of Linden Centre's hotels in Shaxi and Shangri-La fulfills their dream of creating a safe and attractive adventure circuit through alpine lakes to snow-capped mountains. Enjoy a carefree, all-inclusive, and intellectually stimulating journey with the Lindens while getting to know the Tibetan, Bai, and Yi peoples. Together, let's travel through colorful regional cultures, historical sites, and culinary arts with other like-minded travelers.

Proposed Itinerary

Saturday/Sunday October 18-19: International Travel

Monday, October 20: Arrival at the Linden Centre

Arrive in Dali (Dali offers easy air, train, and road connections with the rest of China), where our Linden staff and drivers will meet you. After checking into the Linden Commons in the renowned and protected heritage village of Xizhou, enjoy local cuisine cooked by the Linden Centre's chefs. We will take you on an afternoon walk through the village and learn about the architectural traditions of the Bai people. Xizhou village is small and charming, and this initial walking tour will give you the confidence to venture out on your own.

Tuesday, October 21: Getting to know Xizhou Village

Every day before breakfast, you are invited to join a sequence of movement exercises with the Chans. After a Western and Chinese breakfast, including bottomless cups of Yunnan coffee and teas, we take a more in-depth walking tour of Xizhou. Jeanee's favorite thing in Xizhou is to walk in the Xizhou morning market to see how the seasons change through food. Going to the market is always a delight; besides checking out the food, you can meet local people who have become part of the Linden Centre's family. Afterward, we gather to make our region's special bread and dumplings. Called **Xizhou Baba**, this pizza-like bread is said to be a remnant of the Mongol invasions into this region some 800 years ago. In the late afternoon, we will take you to Lake Er by horse cart to take photos and walk along its shores. Our local villagers will entertain us with a traditional music performance in our courtyard tonight. The Bai music traditions date back to the Tang Dynasty and are known around China as a 'living fossil' - a tradition that survived because of its region's remoteness and isolation.

Wednesday, October 22: Top Chefs and Local Crafts

We have fun bargaining at the morning market to buy ingredients for today's cooking school class. Jeanee wishes to inspire you to cook one of these dishes back home. Our chefs will share their favorite techniques while you practice cooking with big woks and breaths of fire! In the afternoon, we will visit a local courtyard to learn how to make our indigo tie-dye textiles using the Bai people's modern and traditional methods. Sewing and dying our own in one of Zhoucheng's renowned historic courtyards, you will feel like you stepped into another world. We will explore this ancient hillside village, tracing the traditional spiritual path from the old market square to the Ben Zhu temple, which houses carved memorials to Zhoucheng's past heroes and leading citizens.

Thursday, October 23: Shilongcun Village

After breakfast, we will drive for 1.5 hours to the Linden Centre in the village of Shilongcun. Our retreat in Shaxi is a newly constructed rammed earth complex (ten elegant and spacious villas on a mountain ridge) that won the American Architecture Award. A small lake and pine-laden mountains surround the hotel, and a short walk to the Shilong village will take us into the homes of the Bai ethnic people. On the first day, we will settle in, have lunch, and stroll around the lake and to the square to see our social impact projects like the volunteer library and Benzhu museum.

Friday, October 24: Weekly Market Day in Shaxi

Our favorite market in Yunnan is the Friday Shaxi weekly market. During the Tang Dynasty, the ancient Tea and Horse Road passed through Shaxi; today, the tradition of gathering every Friday to sell tea and other wares remains. You will have time to wander and taste the delicious bean noodle salads, soups, and snacks. Their fresh variety will delight even a seasoned foodie.

Saturday, October 25: Shibaoshan Grottoes

We will visit the 1200-year-old Buddhist grottoes in Shibaoshan National Park. A 20-30 minute hike will lead us to the main grottoes. The Buddhist iconography in this park is very unusual, for the carvings here exhibit a Hindu sensibility, demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of old Yunnan, where Chinese and Indian culture collided. Furthermore, the caves, which geographically balance the divide between Sino-Tibetan and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions, are considered a middle ground between their respective spheres of influence.

Sunday, October 26: Lost Horizon

After breakfast, we will drive 1.5 hours north, passing the region where the upper reaches of the Yangtze River pass by. We will stop at a weaving workshop that supports the local Tibetan women. The Linden Centre began working in the Tibetan area in 2022. We will then visit the Linden Centre by Napa Lake for lunch. Our scenic drive will wind through a mountain pass summitting at 12,000 feet. The 1.5 drive will end at the Linden Centre Mountain Retreat, a newly opened hotel in the northwest corner of Yunnan and Sichuan province, deep in the heart of historical Tibet.

Monday, October 27: The Bend in the Yangtze River

Yunnan Shangri-La is the county seat of the Diqing Tibetan Prefecture. This area is the site of stunning gorges and soaring snowcapped mountains. Its Three Parallel Rivers, the Mekong, the Salween, and the Jinsha, are UNESCO-designated sites and are considered the heart of China's biodiversity. We will stop where the Jinsha, a.k.a. Yangtze River, makes its first 180-degree moon-shaped bend as it naturally flows southward. One of the region's most important Tibetan temples, Dongzhulin, is an active Gelu Sect monastery, an orderly architecture complex home to hundreds of monks. We can visit a Tibetan household this afternoon to participate in their custom of drinking butter tea and traditional dance.

Tuesday, October 28: Make a Tibetan Prayer Flag

Today is a leisurely day. You can choose to sleep in, and we will meet for brunch. Our schedule is free today. An optional activity is making a Tibetan prayer flag and hanging it at a small temple by the forest's edge to reflect on our journey thus far. Prepare to pack for home; tomorrow, we head back to Dali before your trip home or your next destination.

Wednesday, October 29: Return to Dali Old Town

On our drive back, we will stop at the Shangri-La Old Town, where the world's largest prayer wheel turns by the power of everyone's hands. We will stop for a short visit and lunch before we head back to Dali. Our last night will be in Dali Ancient Town at the Silver Line Hotel, a newly built courtyard hotel managed by the Linden Centre. Its location next to the North Gate market has become a popular place for young people to shop and enjoy the local life.

Thursday, October 30: Thank You.

Sadly, our journey ends today. After breakfast, we will accompany you to the airport in time for your flight back home.

The Lindens started coming to China in 1984 and started the Linden Centre in 2004. Their unique contacts developed over these forty years will ensure that all participants see and experience aspects of China unknown to other visitors. For most of their previous guests, the experiences throughout these regions are said to have been the journey of a lifetime.

Summary

Join us on a journey to look beyond China's modern veneer and touch the artistic traditions that have persevered for thousands of years; dive into different cultural perspectives and share this experience with others.

Cost: \$4,995 per person, double occupancy room. Includes all domestic travel after arrival in Dali, all accommodations, all meals unless specified, and all activities and cultural services. Trip insurance and medical evacuation insurance are highly recommended and will be offered for purchase separately. All guests should be fit to travel at altitudes of 12,000 feet and should be able to walk at least two miles on uneven ground.

Group Size: This tour group is limited to 18 people to ensure that all participants receive more personal attention from the staff. Our minimum group size is 12 people; we reserve the right to cancel any tour if the minimum size still needs to be met. All rooms are non-smoking. There is limited space in the hotels we stay in. To ensure accommodation for as many people as possible, double occupancy is encouraged. A single supplement is an extra \$1000 if available.

Not included are international Airfare and Travel Insurance, Chinese visa, alcohol-related costs, beverages not included in regular meals, laundry, personal items, tips, and souvenirs.