

**“The Art of Travel”
At the Linden Centre in
Yunnan Province**

SEPTEMBER 20-30, 2026

OCTOBER 12-22, 2026



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September 20-30, 2026

*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 Baogua 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 September 18-19: International Travel

Monday, September 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, September 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, September 22: Cang Shan Mountain Tea Plantation

Yunnan, the birthplace of tea, is renowned for its rich biodiversity of plants. The teas grown in the Cang Shan mountain range of Dali produce some of the best large-leaf green teas in the area. The natural snowmelt from the Cang Shan mountain is a bountiful source for the unique flavor and terroir of these green teas.

We will visit an ecological tea producer at the foot of the Cang mountain, where we will pick and make our own green tea, which you can take home to taste and share. We will sample and learn to discern the types of teas produced in this region.

Thursday, September 23: Shilongcun Village

Today 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 social impact projects like the volunteer library and Benzhu temple.

Friday, September 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. Close to Shaxi is the Librarie Avant-Garde bookstore, renowned as China's most beautiful rural bookstore which will be our last stop before heading back to the hotel.

Saturday, September 25: Shibaoshan Grottoes

Our trip today includes a must-see visit to the 1200-year-old Buddhist grottoes, a collection of structures in the Shibaoshan National Park. We will see the main Shizhong Temple and Baoxiang Temple, also known as the Hanging Temple, since it is carved into a mountain cliff. The Buddhist iconography in this park is unusual, as the carvings here exhibit a Hindu sensibility, demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of old Yunnan, where Chinese and Indian cultures 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, September 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 the Shangri-La Old Town, where the world's largest prayer wheel turns by the power of everyone's hands. Our scenic drive will wind through a mountain pass summitting at 12,000 feet. The rest of the 1.5 hours drive will end at the Linden Centre Mountain Retreat, a newly opened hotel located in the northwest corner of Yunnan and Sichuan province, deep in the heart of historical Tibet.

Monday, September 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 Yangtze River, a.k.a. Jinsha, 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 Gelug 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, September 28: Hiking in Shangri-La

Today we will take a Forest Bathing hike in one of the region's most beautiful spots-the Baima Mountain Reserve. Starting at the village of Niding, at 10,000 feet, we will follow the road, passing through grassy knolls and cool, running streams as we gain an altitude of 550 feet among the ancient oak and pine forest. At the end of our 3-kilometer walk, we will enjoy a delicious lunch while friendly yaks graze nearby.

Wednesday, September 29: Return to Dali Old Town

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 spot for young people to shop and experience local life. You can wander around the Old Town, stop in at the Bai-style Catholic church, or visit a free museum to see local pottery and the latest temporary exhibit. Today's bus ride will take approximately 4.5 hours, with stops and a lunch break along the way.

Thursday, September 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 discover the artistic traditions that have endured for thousands of years; delve into diverse 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. International airfare and medical evacuation insurance will be offered for purchase separately. All guests should be physically fit to travel at altitudes of 12,000 feet and be able to walk at least two miles on uneven terrain.

Group Size: This tour group is limited to 18 participants to ensure that each individual receives more personalized attention from the staff. Our minimum group size is 12 people; we reserve the right to cancel any tour if the minimum group size is not met. All rooms are non-smoking. There is limited space in the hotels where we stay. To ensure accommodation for as many people as possible, we encourage double occupancy. A single supplement, if available, is an additional \$1000.

Not included are international airfare, travel insurance, Chinese visa fees, alcohol-related expenses, beverages not included in regular meals, laundry, personal items, tips, and souvenirs.

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Proposed Itinerary

Saturday/Sunday October 10-11: International Travel

Monday, October 12: Arrival at the Linden Centre

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Wednesday, October 14: Cang Shan Mountain Tea Plantation

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We will visit an ecological tea producer at the foot of the Cang mountain, where we will pick and make our own green tea, which you can take home to taste and share. We will sample and learn to discern the types of teas produced in this region.

Thursday, October 15: Shilongcun Village

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Friday, October 16: Weekly Market Day in Shaxi

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