

Sichuan to Shaanxi

China's Alpine Flora & Cultural Heritage

China

The alpine meadows and green valleys amongst the high peaks of China's Sichuan province are famed for their rich assemblages of plants and animals. Contiguous with the Tibetan plateau and the mighty peaks of the Himalayas, the region also offers some of the most magnificent panoramas on Earth.

Shaanxi, to the north, is regarded as the cradle of Chinese civilisation, and its ancient capital, Xi'an, still home to the famous Terracotta Army, was a starting point for the Silk Road, a vast network of trade routes that connected the East and West and shaped the development of Eurasian cultures.

This expedition offers you the chance to experience some of the best wildflower locations in China, including multiple locations where orchids (including several *Cypripedium*, as well as *Orchis* and *Calanthe*), *Primula*, *Corydalis*, *Incarvillea*, *Paeonia*, *Rheum* and even the incredible and rare *Saussurea medusa* can be seen, along with various bird species and giant panda. A bullet train will fly you north to Xi'an, where you will visit the Terracotta Army, but also admire, en route, the rare and beautiful golden snub-nosed monkey up close!

COST: US\$3,450 per person for 14D/13N (inclusive from start to end point)
(equivalent to approximately UK£2,660 or €2,990). Single supplement US\$550

START POINT: Chengdu, China

END POINT: Chengdu, China

DATES: Monday June 17 to Sunday June 30 2019.

GROUP SIZE: 6–8

Email sales@redfernadventures.com for more information and to make bookings.

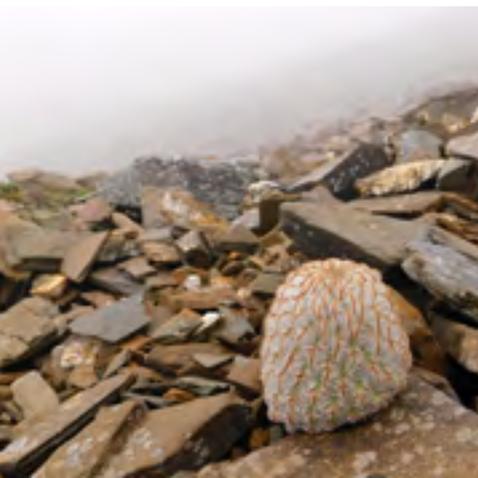
Optional post-expedition extension: 3D/2N Beijing excursion (cost dependent on number of participants):

Day 1: We explore the Great Wall of China at Mutianyu, before returning to Beijing to experience the city's vibrant street food night market.

Day 2: We visit the extraordinary Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven. The Forbidden City lies at the heart of Beijing and its 8,700 rooms, built over 14 years, once served as the imperial palace for 24 emperors during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368–1911). It was forbidden to enter the vast structure without special permission of the emperor, hence its name. In the afternoon, we will visit the Temple of Heaven, a world heritage site since 1998 and a site of prayer for Chinese emperors. We finish with a famous Beijing roast Duck dinner.

Day 3: Departures from Beijing or a return flight to Chengdu.

Getting there: Chengdu International Airport is served by numerous airlines serving Western Europe, Australia and the United States. These include Air Asia, Air China, China Eastern, ANA, China Airlines, China Southern, Etihad, Garuda, KLM, Qatar Airways, Thai Airways and United Airlines.



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Day 1: An orientation day exploring the historic city of Wangjiang and its bamboo park, home to 146 species of bamboo. Wangjiang features Qing Dynasty architecture, including officer's accommodation and teahouses, with opportunities to sample local food.

Day 2: We visit a giant panda research facility, home to over 100 giant pandas of different ages, as well as red pandas and a variety of birds. After a traditional Sichuan lunch, we drive to our destination, Baoxing county (1000 m), where giant pandas and dove trees (*Davidia involucrata*) were first documented by Westerners.

Day 3: We travel to the Mt. Jiajin pass (4114 m), passing from evergreen forest to alpine meadow in search of alpine wildflowers like *Meconopsis punicea*, *M. integrifolia*, *M. lancifolia*, *L. lophophorum*, many *Primula*, *Cypripedium tibeticum* and varied animal life amongst Tibetan pastoral lands. In the late afternoon we drive down to Rilong (3200 m) on the other side of the mountain.

Day 4: Today we visit an important alpine site, Mt. Balang (4484m) where spectacular sunrise views may greet us. The Balang pass is 400 metres higher than that of Jiajin, allowing us to encounter higher montane species, such as *Meconopsis racemosa*, *Primula optata*, *Orchis wardii*, *Saussurea medusa*, *Paeonia veitchii*, *Paraquilegia microphylla*, endemic birds such as Tibetan Snowcock, Snow Partridge, Grandala, Chinese Monal, Rosefinches, Accentors and Pipits. If we are lucky enough, we have chance to see some animal life such as Blue Sheep, Chinese Goral, Himalayan Marmot and even Red Panda. Overnight in Rilong.

Day 5: We travel to Mt. Mengbi (4100 m) via several Jiarong Tibetan villages with their unique architecture. We spend the afternoon searching for *Primula palmata*, *Dolomiaea souliei*, *Boschniakia himalaica* and various birds. In the late afternoon we drive to Maerkang County, capital of Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture. Our Tibetan hotel is located in Xisuo village (2700 m). We will guide you through the village and explain the unique Jiarong Tibetan culture. Overnight in Xisuo.

Day 6: Today we reach Anduo on the Tibetan Plateau, arriving at its lip via an ascending gorge. This part of the plateau is regarded as one of the most important wetlands in China. It is a paradise of flowers and birds. It is the best time to see some beautiful alpine birds including the rare black-necked crane, ruddy shelduck, raptors and larks. We arrive at our hotel in Ruergai (3450 m) in the afternoon.

Day 7: We drive towards Huanglong World Heritage Site. We first spend time on the plateau searching for flowers and birds missed yesterday, then drive to Chuanzhusi for lunch. The afternoon sees us at Xueshanliang pass (4000 m), to search for *Meconopsis henrici*, *M. punicea*, *M. integrifolia*, *Primula stenocalyx* and more. Good weather may offer a view of the immense Mt. Xuebaoding (5588 m)! We overnight in Huanglong (3200 m).

Day 8: Today we search for wildflowers and birds, with a picnic lunch to ensure that our forays are not interrupted! A cable car takes us to the highest part of the mountain and we make our way slowly to its foot. This beautiful park is famous for its travertine terraces and many *Cypripedium* species, including *C. flavum*, *C. bardolphianum*, *C. tibeticum*, *Calanthe delavayi*, *C. bulbosa*, *Orchis chusua*, *Corallorhiza trifida*, *Oreorchis nana* and *Amitostigma monanthum*. Overnight Huanglong.

Day 9: In the early morning we depart for a long journey to Tangjiahe and its panda reserve. We stop along the beautiful Danyun gorge to search for *Cypripedium sichuanense*, *Calanthe alpina*



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and *Oreorchis fargesii*. After lunch in Shuijing, we visit ancient walled village of Qingxi, where shops stock local agriculture products like dried wood ear mushroom, bamboo mushroom, local teas and honeys. We encounter the Hui Chinese and their mosque built by the city wall. We arrive at the Tangjiahe reserve (1400 m), searching for barking deer, Sichuan takin and tufted deer along the way.

Day 10: We explore Tangjiahe reserve for takin, golden pheasant, tibetan macaque, Reeve's muntjac deer, Chinese goral, serow, wild boar, Asiatic black bear and yellow-throated martins—and giant panda if lucky. Overnight in Tangjiahe.

Day 11: We drive for two hours to the Chengdu bullet train station, stopping at mushroom farms en route. We board the bullet train from Chengdu to Xi'an, disembarking at Foping in the Qinling Mountains. Here we hope to encounter the Golden Snub-nosed Monkey, easily approached within the park. Overnight inside the park.

Day 12: We spend additional time with the golden monkeys or search for birds along the stream and forest margins. After lunch, we board a train to Xi'an, a city steeped in ancient Chinese history. In the evening we visit the Xi'an old city wall, then explore the bustling Muslim Quarter to marvel at the variety of Chinese Muslim food. The merchants here are mostly descendents of Silk Road traders. Over time they have lost their native languages and speak Mandarin, but still strictly observe their own cultural practices. Overnight Xi'an.

Day 13: Today we visit the famous Terracotta Warriors, known as the 8th wonder of the world, built at the order of Emperor Qin to defend his tomb. The site was discovered by accident in 1974 by a local farmer when he tried to dig a well into the ground; it became a UNESCO world heritage site in 1987. After lunch we catch the train back to Chengdu, where we overnight.

Day 14: Departures from Chengdu airport. Those doing the post-trip extension will fly to Beijing and overnight before commencing their trip.

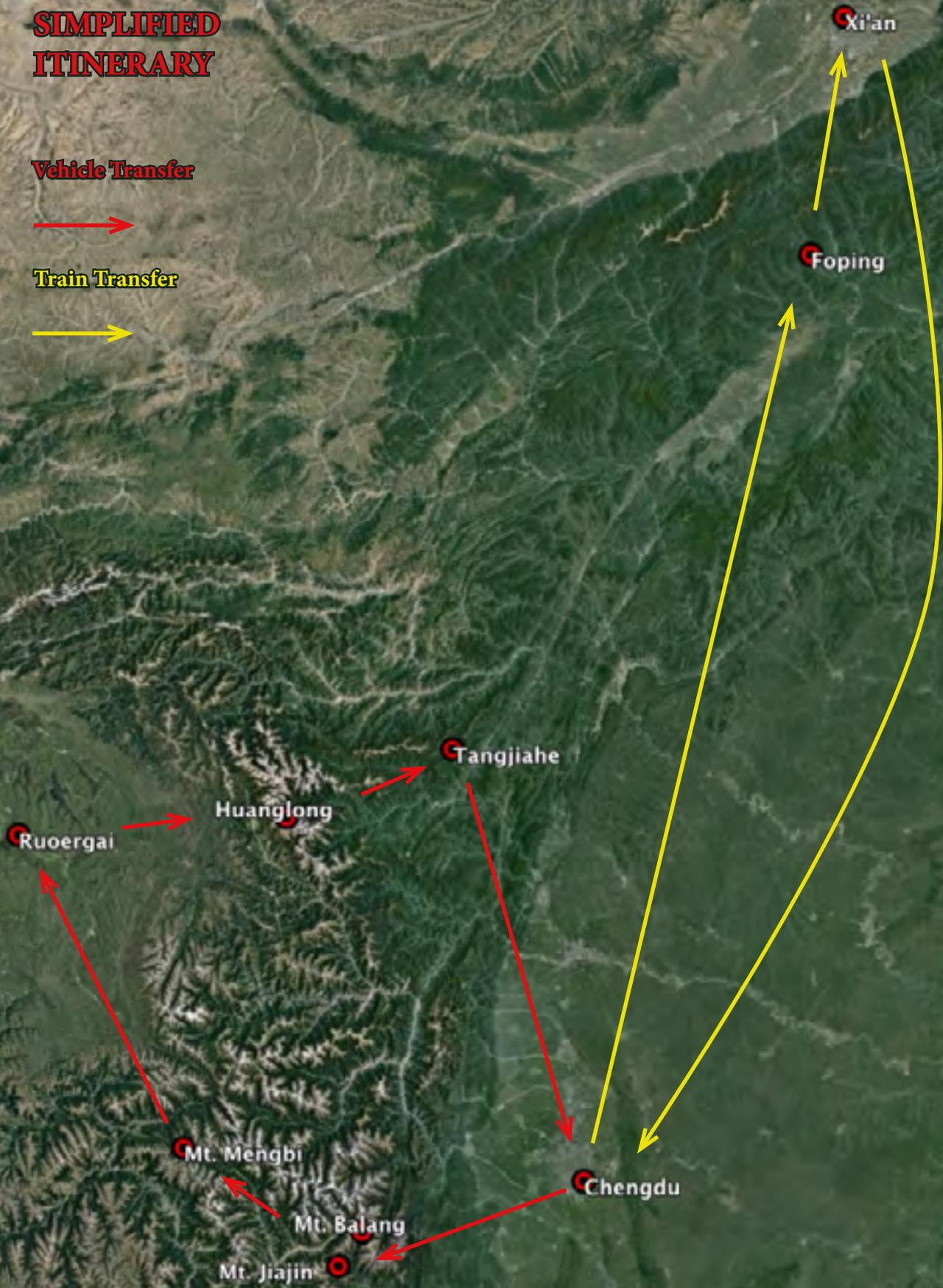


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