

"The Art of Travel"

At the Linden Centre in Yunnan Province

October 24 - November 6, 2018



Cover photo by Cynthia Johnson



LINDEN CENTRE

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*Life is simple
yet we insist on making it complicated
Confucius*

Nestled in the verdant vestiges of the Himalayas, the ancient kingdom of Dali enchantingly hugs the shores of one of Asia’s largest alpine lakes - Er Hai. It is in this basin that the spiritual traditions from South Asia and the Middle East collided with the greater Sino-Tibetan religious beliefs. The result is one of the most vibrant and diverse spiritual environments in the world.



Located just below Tibet and near the Theravada Buddhist Kingdoms of Siam and Burma, Dali served as a major crossroad for traders traversing the Southwest Silk Road. This constant flow of visitors, many of whom carried with them their spiritual traditions and iconography, helped Dali take on a mystical quality among its neighbors - becoming a Buddhist 'Shangri-la' where spirits intercede to uphold the virtuous and repel the belligerent. Dali remained a fabled destination for travelers through the 20th century, often being compared to the exotic travel destinations of Kathmandu and Goa.

Travel with The Linden Centre on a journey into Asia’s spiritual past, where daily lectures and engaging, thought-provoking workshops are followed by visits to ancient temples, mosques, cathedrals, and sacred mountains. The Ben Zhu beliefs of the Bai ethnic group who inhabit Dali exist alongside the timeless traditions of Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam.

The Art of Travel takes place in a nationally-protected villa in the small historic village of Xizhou. The Centre is housed in the former home to one of the Southwest Silk Road's leading merchants and has been restored to its dynastic elegance by Americans Brian and Jeanee Linden. They are the first and only foreign couple to take over a Chinese Nationally Protected Relic, and their quest to preserve China’s past has garnered domestic and international media attention and unprecedented government support. They lead only a few retreats a year to select group of visitors who participate in the Centre's programming.

喜林苑



Corey and Laurene Chan from San Francisco 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 is 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 inspires her to keep learning how to cultivate bridges between cultures and people.

Corey's love for Chinese culture began in his childhood when his mother showed him pictures of Chinese warrior figurines from a book. At the age of 12, he began practicing Chinese martial arts, not knowing that he was embarking on a lifelong journey. In the midst of his gongfu training, Corey was given the opportunity to learn the Chinese lion dance, a performance art which had fascinated him since he was a child. He learned that lion dancers also had to be accomplished martial artists, something that made him admire the art even more. It wasn't until years later that he was introduced to the deeper nuances of the art—the traditional performances of lion dance puzzles. Sharing the arts through performances, 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.

This same symbolism and these same stories surround us today in Chinese culture. Corey and Laurene hope to share their love of these arts with you so that you too can enjoy a healthier life with a deeper understanding of this unique part of Chinese culture.

*You have brains in your head,
you have feet in shoes...
you can steer yourself in any direction you choose.*
Dr. Seuss



PROPOSED ITINERARY

Wednesday, October 24 : Depart from Los Angeles, CA.

Leave LAX on overnight flight and cross International Date Line to arrive in Guangzhou. Here you will clear customs and take a flight to Dali, Yunnan Province.

Friday, October 26 : Arrival to the Linden Centre

We will meet you at the Dali Airport (approximately 11:00 a.m.) and travel one hour in a private bus through the fertile plains between Lake Er Hai, China's sixth largest lake, and the 14,000 foot snowcapped Cang Shan mountains, the southeast vestiges of the Himalayas. After checking into the Centre, which is located in the renowned and protected heritage village of Xizhou, we will have an orientation and a local lunch cooked by the Linden Centre's chefs. You will have time to rest and get acquainted with the area. 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 confidence to venture out later on your own or with a Linden Centre guide.

Saturday, October 27 : Getting to know Xizhou Village

Every morning before breakfast, you are invited to join in a sequence of movement exercises called "Threading the Nine Pearls" with Laurene Chan.

After a Western and Chinese breakfast, including bottomless cups of Yunnan coffee and teas, guests will be taken on a more in-depth walking tour of Xizhou, including stops at the morning market, our local cheese and noodle makers, and charming visits to local families who have become part of the Linden Centre's family.

After lunch, you will have a few hours to wander the village, explore the fashionable boutiques and dusty antique shops, take a bike ride, or just read a book on our sun-kissed terrace. In the late afternoon we will gather in the kitchen to make our region's special bread. Called "Xizhou Baba," this pizza-like bread is a remnant of the Mongol invasions into this region some 800 years ago. We will share our secret recipes with you and allow you to create your own flavors by incorporating ingredients we found at the morning market.

Tonight, our local villagers will entertain us with a performance of traditional music in our courtyard. 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.



Sunday, October 28 : Zhoucheng Village and the Art of Indigo Textiles

This morning we continue our morning exercises in the courtyard. We also will have the first of our lectures on the religions of the Dali region. Today's lecture will be on Taoism - one of China's few indigenous religions. After lunch we will travel ten minutes north to the village of Zhoucheng to design and make our own textiles using the traditional tie-dye methods of the Bai people. We will sew and dye our own pieces in one of Zhoucheng's renowned historic courtyards. 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.

Monday, October 29 : Shaping Village and the Art of Cooking

After morning exercises and a buffet breakfast, we travel twenty minutes north to the Shaping morning market - the largest ethnic market in the region. Peruse the stalls of fresh spices, teas, produce, pastries, handicrafts and local household items, and hobnob with the local Bai and Yi people. For lunch, we will enjoy a classic Yunnan dish, "Across the Bridge Rice Noodles".

In the late afternoon, we will congregate in the Linden Commons' Cooking School for an afternoon of culinary explorations. We will teach you how to make some of China's classic dishes, demonstrate secret cooking techniques, and review valuable insights about Chinese condiments. We will later enjoy the fruits of our labor for dinner in the majestic gardens of the Commons (everything tastes better with our homemade plum and papaya wines!)

Tuesday, October 30 : Touching the Tao - A Journey up the Sacred Mountain of Weibaoshan

Today we will travel two hours south to the Taoist pilgrimage site of Weibaoshan. On the mountain, we have about three hours for exploring, interspersed with famous stories of Chinese art, culture and history from Corey Chan. You can visit a few of the closest temples or walk the entire mountaintop visiting all 22 temples. At Weibaoshan, we can drive close to the peak, thus the amount of vertical climbing is mainly limited to the beginning. On the way home, we will stop in the ancient Tea Horse Road caravansary - Dong Lianhua. This is one of the most authentic Muslim villages in the region, and we will visit the mosque and a small museum introducing the history of the village. This is an all-day activity and we will return to have a late dinner at the Centre.



Wednesday, October 31 : Exploring Lake Er Hai and a Muslim Dinner

Guests can continue to wake up and participate in morning exercises in the courtyard before breakfast. After breakfast we will have a lecture on Buddhism, followed by an enchanting horse-cart ride to the shores of Lake Er Hai. Dinner is with a local Muslim family next to Xizhou's mosque. Our local Muslim leaders will share stories about the history of the Muslim religion in Southwest China.

Thursday, November 1 : Three Pagodas and Ancient Town of Dali

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Buddhism flourished throughout the Dali Kingdom. The most iconic symbol of this heritage is the Three Pagodas. The middle pagoda is the one of the tallest ancient pagodas in China standing at 229 feet. This central pagoda is flanked by two sister towers built during the 10th Century. It was believed that the space on which the pagodas were built held such power, only an exceptional edifice would be strong enough to ground it. Behind the pagodas, a reconstructed complex of temples is filled with sculptures of Guanyin, Dali's most revered deity; Caisheng, the Wealth God; Milufo, the Buddha of the Future and others. Rebuilt in 2005, the temple complex spans a length of about one mile, a distance that we will leisurely explore at our own pace.

After our visit to the Three Pagodas, we will descend to the old town of Dali and have lunch in one of this ancient city's charming restaurants. Dali was the capital of the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms, which dated from roughly 700-1300 A.D.

We will visit an old mattress factory now turned into art galleries and studios and get a special tour of one of China's only photography museums dedicated to historical images.

Friday- Saturday, November 2 & 3: The Buddhist Grottoes of Shibaoshan National Park

Today, we will pack up our bags and head north toward the Tibetan plateau. After breakfast we will drive two hours to the village of Shaxi where we will first explore its renowned and colorful Friday market. Shaxi was an important stop on the ancient "Tea and Horse Road"- a route that carried tea from southern Yunnan and horses from Tibet. Shaxi, whose market square is now protected under the World Monuments Watch List, is being preserved by local and international groups, including the Lindens.

On our second day, we will visit the 1200-year old Buddhist grottoes in Shibaoshan National Park. A breath-taking 30-40 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 which demonstrates the cosmopolitan nature of old Yunnan where Chinese and Indian culture collided.



Furthermore, the grottoes, which are geographically balancing the divide between Sino-Tibetan and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions, are considered a middle ground between their respective spheres of influence. The second set of grottoes we visit are revealed after a hike up a stone staircase. Gregarious monkeys will generally join us at some point along the path, but don't worry... they won't bother you unless you have snacks to offer.

Sunday - Monday November 4 & 5: Lost Horizons/Shangri-La

After breakfast, our bus will make the dramatic three-hour climb through the mountain-dwelling Yi ethnic area to the Tibetan plateau. Our destination, Zhongdian, also known as Shangri-La, was an important trading site between Tibet and Southeast Asia. It is predominantly a Tibetan region, and we will spend our two days here exploring the Tibetan spiritual and artistic traditions, including an extended visit to one of the most important Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the world - the Songzanlin complex.

We will also spend time at a local Thangka school, learning about these spiritual paintings and the Buddhist traditions that inspire them. We also will explore the restoration of the old city, which was devastated by fire in January 2014 but has since been rebuilt.

Tuesday, November 6 : Thank You

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

Summary

What—13 day Cultural tour exploring the spiritual traditions of Yunnan, China.

When—October 24-November 6, 2018

Who - Those who wish to peer beyond China's modern veneer and touch the artistic traditions that have persevered for thousands of years; and the traveler who hopes to experience many different cultural challenges and shares their ideals with others.

Cost-----\$4,995 Includes Round-trip, international airfare to Dali from LAX, all domestic travel after arrival in Dali, all accommodations, most meals unless specified, and all activities and cultural services. Single supplement is an extra \$600. Medical evacuation insurance is included with round trip air ticket and tour price. Medical evacuation insurance is required. Trip insurance is recommended and will be offered for purchase separately. All guests should be fit to travel at altitudes of 11,500 feet and should be able to walk at least three 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 10 people; we reserve the right to cancel any tour if the minimum size is not met. All rooms are non-smoking.

Not included: Guests are responsible for obtaining their own Chinese visa, costs related to alcohol, beverages not included in regular meals, laundry, personal items, souvenirs, and long distance telephone calls. Trip interruption and cancellation insurance is not included but highly recommended.

The Lindens have been living in China since 1984. Their unique contacts developed over these thirty 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 of China have been among the most memorable in their lives. Please come and enjoy an indigenous travel experience to one of the world's most storied cultures.

How to reserve space for the tour:

- 1) Call and/or email us for the Tour Contract, or to complete your forms on-line, visit www.linden-centre.com and under the "What We Offer" tab, click Themed Programs.
- 2) Print all forms, then initial and sign the Tour Contract and Contract Terms and Conditions/General Information forms.
- 3) Send completed forms with your non-refundable deposit check or credit card information for \$500.00.
- 4) Keep a copy for your records.

