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China : Southern Yunnan Birding Tour

13 DAY/ 12 NIGHT TOUR

OVERVIEW

Covering almost 10 million square kilometers, The People's Republic of China is the world's second-largest country. It is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, has a written history of 4,000 years and boasts rich cultural relics and historical sites. It is the inventor of the compass, paper-making, gunpowder and printing. The Great Wall, Grand Canal and Karez irrigation system are three great ancient engineering projects built over 2000 years ago.

As one would expect from a country spanning 35 degrees of latitude and 65 degrees of longitude, the geographic diversity is equally enormous; tropical rainforests in southern Yunnan, alpine valleys of the eastern Himalayas, endless grasslands, the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts and cultivated valleys surrounding some of the world's longest rivers.

This incredible biodiversity provides habitat for lots of birds; around 1400 species, with over 60 endemics, including the Crested Ibis, Brown-eared Pheasant and Cabot's Tragopan. China is the centre of distribution of pheasants, with 62 species out of a global total of about 200. Another particularly Chinese group is the laughingthrushes, of which China boast no fewer than 36 species, or more than half the world total. China is very rich in crows and rosefinches, and is also especially rich in ducks, swans and geese, its 50 species being about a quarter of the world total. Perhaps closest to the heart and culture of China, however, are the cranes. Nine of the world's 14 species live in China, breeding in the north and migrating in winter to southern wetlands.

On this Nature Travel Birding trip we will visit only the southwestern portion of this vast country, and more specifically the Yunnan province. Yunnan is China's province with the most abundant biodiversity, and is often called the "Kingdom of Plants and Animals". Yunnan is also well known for its year-round mild climate and the word Yunnan actually means "South of the Clouds". It is a huge and colourful province that borders Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan and Tibet. It also has international borders with Burma, Laos and Vietnam. From the snowclad 6000m high peaks of Meilixue Shan in the northwest to the jungles of Xishuangbanna in the south, Yunnan boasts every kind of habitat, and the longest provincial birdlist in China with 800+ species. Star birds we will hope for include Lady Amherst's and Mrs. Hume's Pheasants, Yunnan and Giant Nuthatches, Red-tailed and the rare and endangered White-speckled Laughingthrushes, superb Scarlet-faced Liocichla, Chinese Babax, Chinese and Black-breasted Thrushes, Rusty-capped, Yellow-throated,

Spectacled and Yunnan Fulvetta, Grey-headed Parrotbill, Black-headed Greenfinch, Beautiful and Black-headed Sibia, Chinese Blue Flycatcher, Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler, Godlewski's Bunting, Black-bibbed Tit and many others.

DAILY SUMMARY

DAY 1	Arrive in Kunming
DAY 2	Kunming to Baoshan to Baihualing Reserve in Mt.Gaoligongshan
DAY 3	Baihualing Reserve in Mt.Gaoligongshan
DAY 4	Baihualing Reserve in Mt.Gaoligongshan
DAY 5	Gaoligongshan to Yingjiang
DAY 6	Yingjiang to Tongbiguan Nature Reserve
DAY 7	Tongbiguan Nature Reserve
DAY 8	Tongbiguan Nature Reserve
DAY 9	Tongbiguan Nature Reserve
DAY 10	Tongbiguan Nature Reserve to Dali
DAY 11	Dali to Diqing
DAY 12	Diqing to Kunming
DAY 13	Departure

DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrive in Kunming

Our tour starts when you arrive in Kunming at the Kunming Changshui International Airport located 25 km outside the city. Our local guide and driver will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel in the city.

Kunming is the capital and largest city of Yunnan province in southwest China. It is also called the “City of Eternal Spring” due to its mild and pleasant weather. The headquarters of many of Yunnan's large businesses are in Kunming. It was important during World War II as a Chinese military center, American air base, and transport terminus for the Burma Road. Located in the middle of the Yunnan–Guizhou Plateau, Kunming is located at an altitude of 1,900 metres (6,234 feet) above sea level and at a latitude just north of the Tropic of Cancer. Kunming is home to almost 7 million people

and is located at the northern edge of the large Lake Dian, surrounded by temples and hilly landscapes.

Kunming consists of an old, previously walled city, a modern commercial district, residential and university areas. The city has an astronomical observatory, and its institutions of higher learning include Yunnan University, Yunnan Normal University and a medical college. On the outskirts is a famed bronze temple, dating from the Ming dynasty.

Its economic importance derives from its geographical position. Positioned near the border with Southeastern Asian countries, serving as a transportation hub in Southwest China, linking by rail to Vietnam and by road to Burma and Laos. This positioning also makes it an important trade center in this region of the nation. It also houses some manufacturing, chiefly the processing of copper, as well as various chemicals, machinery, textiles, paper and cement. Though having a nearly 2,400 year history, its modern prosperity dates only from 1910, when the railway from Hanoi was built. The city has continued to develop rapidly under China's modernisation efforts. Kunming's streets have widened while office buildings and housing projects develop at a fast pace. Kunming has been designated a special tourism center and as such sports a proliferation of high-rise buildings and luxury hotels.

We will meet up as a group for the first time at our hotel tonight and enjoy our first dinner together.

🏠 **Accommodation: Wan Jian An Hotel or similar**

DAY 2: Kunming to Baoshan to Baihualing Reserve in Mt. Gaoligongshan

This morning you will take an one hour flight westwards to Baoshan Airport in the city of Baoshan. From there we will drive for about 4 hours to Baihualing Reserve in Mt Gaoligongshan on the border with Myanmar(Burma), and we'll stop for birds in the farmlands along the Nujiang River.

The Gaoligongshan National Nature Reserve (GNNR) is a protected area comprising the Baihualing Nature Reserve, Dahaoping Nature Reserve and Nankang Nature Reserve. Baihualing is by far the best, and also the most easily accessible part of the Gaoligong Mountains.

Covering a total area of 4055 square km with 85% forest coverage, the reserve is 9 km wide from east to west and 135km from south to north. The nature reserve protects a series of vertical vegetation types from subtropical evergreen forest, montane evergreen forest, subalpine conifer forest and alpine woodland and meadow, and especially the rare and endemic species in the Gaoligongshan range. The lower edge of the reserve ranges between 1,500 to 2,500 m and the Wona is the highest peak in the reserve at almost 4000 metres above sea level. A unique multilevel climate and diversity of

subtropical ecosystems result in strikingly splendid landscape that leaves people with an impression of having different seasons in different parts of the Gaoligongshan mountains.

The reserve is home to more than 200 species of wild animals, 525 species of birds, and 49 species of fish. The immense biodiversity of the reserve is matched only by its astonishing landscape and natural beauty.

Here we hope to see Crested Bunting, White-throated Kingfisher, Burmese Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Black Drongo, Ashy Drongo, Sand Martin, Hill Prinia, Rufescent Prinia, Plain Prinia, Mountain Tailorbird, Common Tailorbird, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Red-vented Bulbul, Sooty-headed Bulbul, Oriental Reed Warbler and many more.

🏠 **Accommodation: Baihualing Guesthouse or similar.**

DAY 3 & 4 : Baihualing Reserve in Mt.Gaoligongshan

We will spend two full days in the Baihualing Reserve, with breakfasts, lunches and dinners included every day. We will drive and walk the trails and roads in this incredibly biodiverse reserve and also spend time at the many water and feeding stations and bird hides in the reserve.

Extending more than 300 miles along Yunnan's border with Myanmar, the narrow, jagged Gaoligongshan mountain range meets with the Salween River in a dramatic 500-mile-long gorge. The mountains form a divide between two major rivers in Asia, with the Salween, known to the Chinese as the Nu River to the east and the Irrawaddy to the west. Two more great rivers, the Yangtze and the upper Mekong, converge where the mountains meet the Nujiang River gorge. Remote and rugged, the Gaoligongshan Mountains are recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot, the epicenter of plant endemism in northwest Yunnan, and a must-do for birders to Yunnan Province.

Over the next two days we will look for Mrs. Hume's Pheasant, Rufous-throated Partridge, Stripe-breasted, Great Spotted and Bay Woodpecker, Red Headed Trogon, Brown Wood Owl, Scarlet Finch, Black Eagle, Ashy Wood Pigeon, Speckled Wood Pigeon, Hodgson's Frogmouth, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Lesser Coucal, Long-tailed Broadbill, Asian Emerald Cuckoo, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Spotted, Grey-sided, Blue-winged, Black-throated, Striated, Scaly and Red-tailed Laughingthrushes, Red-faced Liocichla, Silver-eared Mesia, Red-billed Leiothrix, Streak-breasted, Spot-breasted, Coral-billed and Slender-billed Scimitar Babblers, Grey-bellied Wren Babbler, Black-headed and White-browed Shrike Babbler, Golden-breasted, Rufous-Winged, White-browed, Rusty-capped, Grey-Cheeked and Yellow-throated Fulvetta, Long-tailed, Black-headed and Beautiful Sibia, Great Barbet, Golden-throated Barbet, Blue-throated Barbet, Lineated Barbet, Green-eared Barbet, Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Maroon Oriole, Yellow-bellied Fantail, White-throated Fantail, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Striated Bulbul, Flavescent Bulbul, Mountain Bulbul, Black Bulbul, Rusty-fronted Barwing, Streak-throated Barwing, Spectacled Barwing, Streaked Barwing, Blue-winged Minla, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Red-

tailed Minla, Whiskered and Stripe-throated Yuhina, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Hill Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Vivid Niltava, Large Niltava, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Plain Flowerpecker and Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Streaked Spiderhunter and many many more.

🏠 **Accommodation: Baihualing Guesthouse or similar.**

DAY 5: Gaoligongshan to Yingjiang

Today we'll leave from Gaoligongshan to Yingjiang through the old forest road and stop by the pass of Gaoligongshan for birds. Our drive will take about 4 to 5 hours in total, but we will make many stops along the way for birding. Yingjiang is a county in the Dehong Prefecture of the Yunnan province bordering Burma's Kachin State to the west. Yingjiang county is mountainous with several alluvial plains. The county has various climate types, with ranges from the tropical, the subtropical, to the temperate zones. The elevations vary from 210 to 3400 m (689 to 11,170 ft). Yingjiang is abundant in hydroelectric, forest, and geothermal resources. There are many ancient ruins and structures in the area, as well as beautiful waterfalls and lakes.

The possible birds here are Slender-billed Oriole, Crested Goshawk, Shikra, Great Barbet, Golden-throated Barbet, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Rosy Minivet, Yellow-bellied Fantail, Eurasian Jay, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Red-billed Scimitar Babbler, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Blue-winged, Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed Minla, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Black-headed Sibia, Beautiful Sibia, Whiskered Yuhina, Elliot's Laughing-thrush, Red-faced Liocichla, Silver-eared Mesia, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, Chestnut-vented and Yunnan Nuthatch, Black-collared Starling, Black-breasted Thrush, Little Pied Flycatcher, Verditer Flycatcher, Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Russet Sparrow, Scaly-breasted Munia, Black-headed Greenfinch and many others.

We will settle in at our guesthouse for dinner and a good night's rest.

🏠 **Accommodation: Yingjiang Guesthouse or similar**

DAY 6: Yingjiang to Tongbiguan Nature Reserve

After an early breakfast we will drive to Tongbiguan Nature Reserve, about an hour and half away. This area is at the border between China and Myanmar, it contains most of the birds in East Myanmar and North Thailand and the accessibility is quite easy. The Tongbiguan Natural Protection Area was established in 1986. With an area of 341.6 square kilometres (131.9 sq mi), it covers part of Yingjiang and Longchuan counties as well as Ruili city.

Situated at the transitional zone between the South Subtropics and the North Tropics, blocked by a plateau in its north, and alternatively influenced by the India Ocean Monsoon and dry air masses of Arabia and the India Peninsula, the nature reserve has long-duration sunshine exposure, and exhibits apparent dry and wet seasons. The annual precipitation here is 1,500 mm, with an annual average temperature of 19.5C (67.1F). The vegetation in the area displays an obvious vertical distribution and offers a shelter to many rare or endangered species.

Here we will look for Blossom-headed, Grey-headed and Red-breasted Parakeet, River, Red-wattled and Grey-headed Lapwing, Green Bee-eater, White-throated, White-throated and Stork-billed Kingfisher, Common Snipe, Black-collared Starling, Red-headed Parrotbill and Blue-bearded Bee-eater.

🏠 **Accommodation: Hongbenghe Guesthouse or similar**

DAY 7-9: Tongbiguan Nature Reserve

We will spend 3 whole days at Tongbiguan Nature Reserve. We will have breakfasts, lunches and dinners here and stay in the same guesthouse or lodge for the full three days.

The possible birds here are Grey Peacock Pheasant, Kalij Pheasant, Silver Pheasant, Jerdon's Baza, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Oriental Hobby, Blue-throated and Blue-eared Barbet, White-browed Piculet, Greater and lesser Yellownape, Long-tailed and Silver-breasted Broadbill, Blyth's and Black-eared Shrike Babbler, Grey-eyed Bulbul, Grey-bellied Tesia, Golden Babbler, White-hooded Babbler, Greater and Lesser Rufous-headed Parrotbill, Chinese Blue Flycatcher, Sapphire Flycatcher, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Golden-fronted and Blue-winged Leafbird, Ibisbill, Red-billed and Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, Streaked Wren Babbler, Spot-winged Starling, Collared Myna, Spot-winged Grosbeak, Black-backed Forktail etc...

🏠 **Accommodation: Hongbenghe Guesthouse or similar**

DAY 10: Tongbiguan Nature Reserve to Dali

After breakfast and maybe some extra morning birding, we'll embark on the long drive to Dali. The ancient city of Dali, which lies at the base of a fifty kilometre line of 4000m high peaks is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Yunnan, known for its natural scenery, historical and cultural heritage, and vibrant nightlife. Building codes mandate that new construction in the old town and surrounding countryside must conform to the traditional Chinese style, with tiled roofs and bricks, plaster, or white-washed walls. Dali is situated in the transition area between the dramatic valleys of the eastern Tibetan Plateau and the distinctive mountains of the western Yungui Plateau. The city surrounds Erhai Lake between the Cang Mountains to the west and Mount Jizu to the east.

Upon arrival, we will check in at the hotel and you will have some time to explore the city. Sights in and around the city include the Dali Municipal Museum, Three Pagodas and Chongsheng Temple, the rather high-class tourist destination of Shuanglang on the east side of the lake and many others.

Dinner and our overnight stay will be at the hotel.

🏠 **Accommodation: Dali Hotel or similar**

DAY 11: Dali to Diqing

After breakfast this morning we will start our 5 hour drive and make our way toward Diqing. We will do some morning birding at a wetland and look for Purple Swamphen, Common Coot, Common Moorhen, Water Rail, Rubby-breasted Crake, Black-headed Gull, Red-whiskered, Sooty and Red-vented Bulbul and many others.

Diqing is an autonomous prefecture in the northwest of Yunnan province. It has an area of 23,870 km² (9,220 sq mi). Its capital, which is also the largest city in the prefecture, is Shangri-La City. This prefecture is in the southern part of a historical region called Kham, which belonged to the Tibetan Empire many centuries ago. Shangri-La was formerly called Zhongdian County but was renamed in 2001 and upgraded into a county-level city in 2014 as Shangri-La after the fictional land of Shangri-La in the 1933 James Hilton novel *Lost Horizon*, in an effort to promote tourism in the area.

We will enjoy dinner and a good night's rest in our comfortable city hotel.

🏠 **Accommodation: Shangri-La Old Town Hotel or similar**

DAY 12: Diqing to Kunming

After an early breakfast this morning we will do some birding at Napahai (Napa) Lake and the surrounding reserve.

Napahai Natural Lake Reserve is 3,270m above sea level and covers 660 square kilometers. It is about 8km northwest of Shangri-La town. It is a paradise for many species of birds. This is, in the true sense, a seasonal lake. When summer comes, snow on the adjacent mountains melts and flows down into about ten rivers forming a vast lake. In the dry season, Napahai becomes a boundless green grassland - the best time for herding sheep cattle. Every September the lake again turns into a temporary habitat for migratory birds, such as Bar-headed Goose, many duck species and even Black-necked Crane, which is one of the 12 rarest bird species in the world.

Other possible birds we will search for include Black Stork, Mallard, Spot-billed Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Greylag Goose, Gadwall, Garganey, Common Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Hoopoe, White-throated Needletail, Himalaya Griffon, Lammergeier, Daurian Jackdaw, Red-billed and Yellow-billed Chough, Spotted Nutcracker, Elliot's and Giant Laughingthrushes, Chinese White-browed Rosefinch, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Chinese and White-browed Fulvettas, White-throated Redstart, Rufous-vented and Grey-crested Tits, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Goldcrest and many others.

After lunch, you will take a 75 minute flight from Diqing Shangri-La Airport back to Kunming.

🏠 Accommodation: Lvshun Hotel

DAY 13: Departure

Today you'll take a flight back to your home after a fantastic Chinese birding trip!

Included:

- All transportation
- Accommodation (Based on a shared room)
- 3 Meals per Day (12 breakfasts, 11 lunches and 11 dinners) and Drinking Water
- Park permits and conservation fees
- Internal flights as per the itinerary (Economy flight ticket from Kunming to Baoshan, from Diqing to Kunming. Taxes are included)

Excluded:

- Extra beverages in hotel
- Personal beverages alcoholic drinks and soft drinks,
- Laundry
- Phone calls,
- Personal travel insurance
- Tips
- Visas
- International Flights

Thank you for choosing Nature Travel Birding.