

Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award

Residential Project & Adventurous Journey

Student Trip Series

YALA MOUNTAIN TREK & SERVICE

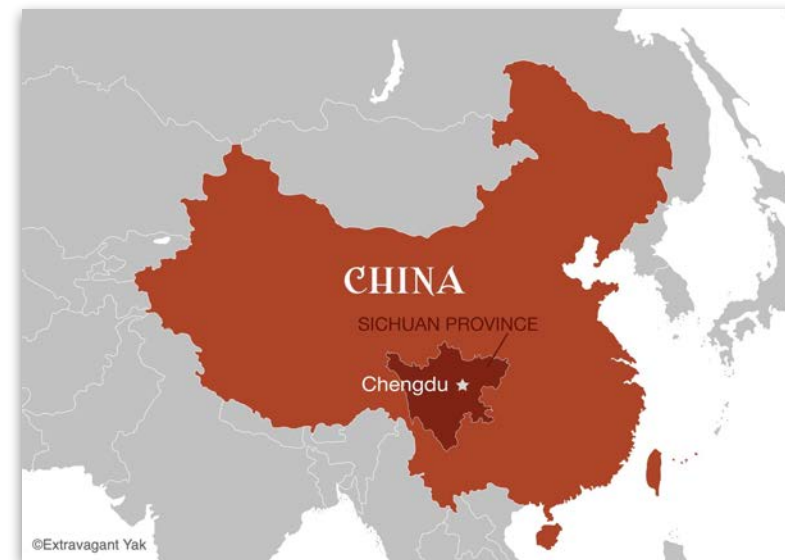
14-16 DAY ITINERARY: 5 DAY TREK

Who We Are

Extravagant Yak is a China based, Wholly Owned Foreign Enterprise (WOFE), with local partnership. We are a registered travel company in Chengdu, Sichuan, with operations primarily focused on the culturally rich minority areas of southern China. We aim to deliver authentic, personally crafted travel experiences that exceed expectations. Our passion is travel that champions local interests in creative ways that fosters genuine relationship between the traveler and the host culture.

Student Trip Series

Students who travel become global citizens. We believe in the power of young people to change the world and are passionate about fostering world changing thinking and behaviour among students. Each EY trip becomes a kind of innovative laboratory to combine the curiosity and passion of students with practical ways to achieve lasting positive impact in local communities.



Chengdu, Sichuan, is the gateway city to the riches of southern China



Extravagant Yak is certified to act as an official Supervisor/Assessor on Adventurous Journeys for licensed Independent Award Centres.



What to Expect on Student Trips

Extravagant Yak seeks to deliver the perfect blend of fun-filled cultural experiences with international standards of quality and safety, looking after all the details so that students and teachers alike are free to absorb their trip experience to the fullest. Whether the purpose of the trip is wilderness adventure, cultural studies, or service oriented, each student trip offers an experiential introduction to local culture, history, and lifestyle.

Child Safety

We take child safeguarding seriously. Our safeguarding policy is comprehensive, frequently reviewed according to industry best practice, and a required part of the EY guide training process. Copies of this are available upon request.



Yala Trek & Service - Trip Overview

The backbone of this trip will be one of our more popular routes in **Kham Tibet**, the trip we call **Tibet's Wild Frontier**. The trip begins with a drive from the lowlands of the Sichuan basin to **Danba**, a farming area in Eastern Tibet. At 2200 meters, the lush, steep mountains surrounding Zhonglu offer a perfect place for acclimatization for the days ahead, as well as providing an up-close look at the farming lifestyle that has been dug out of these mountain valleys for centuries.

Over the next 5 days students will have opportunity to be stretched physically with village projects, learn new skills, use phrases in a new language, and be introduced to an ancient worldview that has given rise to a very different way of life. There will be time to spend time with less fortunate young students at a village school, help some local farmers with field labor and maintenance of water ditches, and even learn some ancient trade crafts such as embroidery and basket weaving.

Students will then ascend to the Tibetan grasslands for a taste of nomadic life before heading to the Eastern Tibetan gateway town of **Kangding**. This historic trading town remains a city of commerce and communication between Han Chinese and Tibetan peoples, and perched at 2600 meters, it serves as a base for Minya Konka treks.



Danba, Tagong, and Kangding set the stage for this 17-day trip

From here, students will set out for 5 days (4 nights) on a trek in the backcountry. Yala Mountain (5820m) is an awe inspiring alpine peak of rock and ice that projects straight up out of the surrounding grasslands on the Eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau. Two mountain passes will be crossed over these five days of trekking.

****Extravagant Yak provides pack horses for the duration of the trip. They carry tents, food, and kitchen equipment, which makes it the perfect adventure for students so they carry nothing more than personal clothes and a sleeping bag. The horses also provide a means of evacuation in case of emergency.***





Sichuan Opera



Bamboo trekking poles

Trip Itinerary

D1: **June 20.** Chengdu Arrival

Arriving late in the evening in Chengdu at Tianfu International Airport, students will be met by their friendly guides and shuttled to their accommodation for check-in.!

Accommodation: **Holiday Inn Express Wuhou, Chengdu**

D2: **June 21.** Chengdu

A day of cultural and hands-on activities in one of the fastest growing cities in all of China will not disappoint! Following breakfast, the morning will start off with a shuttle to a riverside park for some Taichi and Kungfu lessons with a local master. The afternoon includes an opportunity to make a creative and personal mark on your trip: students will spend several hours making their own set of beautiful bamboo trekking poles, with the option to engrave their names on them! The finished result is a sturdy, resilient, lightweight, and artistic handmade souvenir that students will use on the Yala trek and take home with them at the trip's conclusion. A delicious dinner at A're Tibetan Restaurant (yak meat, anyone?) will precede a very entertaining evening



program of comedy, singing, and much more at the Sichuan Opera Performance. A highlight for every visitor to Chengdu!
Accommodation: [Holiday Inn Express Wuhou, Chengdu](#)

D3: **June 22.** [Chengdu to Four Sisters Village](#)

After a hotel breakfast this morning, you will load the bus and embark on the 4.5 hour drive to Four Sisters Mt. Passing through the Qingcheng Mountain area, students will drop in to say a friendly hello to China's national treasure: the Giant Pandas. You will pass through a virtual time warp where everything becomes new: landscape, climate, cuisine, language, customs, and of course, the people. The alpine scenery at Four Sisters offers a breathtaking sight as your lungs literally try to adjust to the drop in oxygen at 3160m. Following check-in at the hotel, a 2-3 hr return trek to an adjacent ridge before dinner offers beautiful views of the Four Sisters mountains on a clear day. A local dinner will greatly satisfy on your return to the village!
Accommodation: [Above the Clouds Guesthouse, Four Sisters Village](#)



Four Sisters Village



Ancient watchtowers of Zhonglu village





Zhonglu is perched on a mountain slope



Helping in the fields

D4: **June 23.** Four Sisters to Danba (Zhonglu Village). Residential Activities.

Leaving early this morning from Four Sisters will get you to the base of Zhonglu Village by mid morning (2 hr drive). A 1.5 hr walk up to the terraced heights of this quaint mountain community feels like entering a different world (elev. 2200m) as you arrive around noon. The local Tibetans here have cultivated an existence from this mountain enclave for generations. This area is also famous for its ancient tower ruins that date back hundreds of years to the warring period between Tibetan clans. After settling in, the afternoon will be spent with some orientation to the village and, time permitting, an introduction to the primary family that will benefit from your work of love over the coming days.

Accommodation: Zhonglu Village Tibetan Homestay, Danba

D5: **June 24.** Zhonglu Village - Residential Activities.

Following breakfast, and a short language class, students will begin their work for the day. The family that will primarily benefit from this year's service project is elderly and has been beset with illness recently. An unfinished building project sits derelict on



their property waiting for some help from JIS students. As with each day, today's activity will be centred around benefiting the elderly, ill, and poor in the village. Students will complete a full day gathering firewood and assisting with backfilling the first floor of a new building on their property. Dinner will be prepared by one of the JIS work crews after spending the day alongside the locals in the kitchen! Each of the work crews will have the opportunity to assume the task of food prep (and meal clean-up!) for one day during their stay in the village. This evening's activity will be centred around traditional crafts as students learn Tibetan style embroidery and bamboo basket weaving

Accommodation: **Zhonglu Village Tibetan Homestay, Danba**

D6: **June 25. Zhonglu Village - Residential Activities.**

Building off of yesterday's new found vocabulary, students will aim to add a few more words to their knowledge base. After language class, students will head out into this increasingly familiar village. Students will spend another full day assisting the local family to complete their building project. In doing so, students will be coming alongside this family with the hope of ensuring their new building will be ready for the winter. The task of preparing lunch and dinner today will again be done by JIS



Meal prep with your host!



Learning embroidery in the evenings





Collecting firewood for the elderly



Moving rock and earth for construction

students alongside the local women. This evening's activity will allow students to finish any traditional craft projects that they have been working on this week.

Accommodation: [Zhonglu Village Tibetan Homestay, Danba](#)

D7: **June 26. Zhonglu Village - Residential Activities.**

Building off of yesterday's new found vocabulary, students will once again aim to add a few more words to their knowledge base. After language class, students will head to their respective worksites. Depending on progress at the building site, there is additional possible yard work and gathering of firewood for other elderly couples in the village. Students will spend another full day partnering with the local community to complete meaningful yearly maintenance tasks, giving particular attention to the homes of the elderly. In doing so, students will be coming alongside these villagers helping to ensure their homes are protected from the elements and ready for the seasons to come. The task of preparing lunch and dinner today will again be done by JIS students alongside the local women. As your last evening in Zhonglu, tonight will be filled with dancing. Students will learn traditional Tibetan circle dancing and perform their newly



acquired skills for their hosts as a farewell. How can participation be considered optional? :-)

Accommodation: [Zhonglu Village Tibetan Homestay, Danba](#)

D8: **June 27. Zhonglu to Kangding, via Tagong.**

This morning students will spend their final morning in the village over breakfast with their hosts. After a warm goodbye to their new found “home” they will walk down the hill to the bus and head to the nomadic trading village of Tagong. This high altitude area is home to many nomadic families. Leaving the steep canyons of Danba, they will climb toward the heights of the Tibetan plateau. This is one of the most scenic drives in all of Tibet. On a clear day the route provides stunning views of [Mt. Yala](#), one of the most beautiful mountains in Eastern Tibet, and the location of their 5 day trek beginning the day after tomorrow. Students will pass through this highland trading post, considered the “wild west” of Kham Tibet, and continue on to [Kangding](#). Weather permitting, as you wind your way up and over Zheduo Mountain pass (4200m) you will see the peak of Minya Konka (7566m) — the highest peak in China outside of the Himalayas. Accommodation: [Kawala Hotel, Kangding](#)



Making dumplings (momos) for dinner



Learning some Tibetan language





Nomad lifestyle around Tagong



The pass above Kangding (4200m)

D9: **June 28.** Kangding: acclimatization trek + final trek preparations.

The first thing you notice the next morning is that everywhere you look goes up! Kangding is perched on the edge of the Tibet—Qinghai plateau. Following breakfast, a one hour shuttle to the top of Yajiageng pass for a half day acclimatization trek to an alpine lake (4200m) will greatly assist with adjusting to higher altitude in the days ahead. After a picnic lunch, a small service project involving litter clean-up will be a great opportunity to put Leave No Trace principles into practice. Once back in town, shopping for food for the trek in the local market before dinner will reveal the key role this historic town has played in trade between Tibetans and Chinese for centuries. After dinner, a short walk to the Kangding square for the community dance is a must do (feel free to join in now that you know the moves!). Evening will be spent doing final orientation and preparation for the trek that begins the following morning.

Accommodation: **Kawala Hotel, Kangding**

D10: **June 29.** TREK DAY I.



After a 45 min shuttle from Kangding, you will rendezvous with the horsemen at the trailhead (3200m) to load the equipment on the ponies for the day ahead. The first 15 minutes of the day's trek is a very gentle ascent accompanied by the sound of Yala river's rushing waters squeezing through this narrow part of the valley. After about a kilometre of walking, the trail makes a steep transition up the hillside and away from the river, zigzagging up to the next section of trail. With the day's steepest section behind you, the rest of the day is a comfortable undulating ascent up the valley through patches of alpine forest and bush, with surrounding ridges visible high above. Passing through grassy meadows along the route you will encounter local nomads grazing their yaks and cows in the fertile valley. The first night's camp is found at the far end of one of these meadows beside a gentle stream. After setting up camp, dinner preparations begin!

Day's trekking distance: 11km
Sleeping elevation: 3500m

D11: June 30. TREK DAY 2.

After breakfast and breaking camp, there is a short and steep ascent up to the next section of trail. The route then continues its gradual ascent up the valley to more breathtaking views of



Gentle ascent on Trek Days 1-2



Mt pass #1 on trek Day 3: 4200m





Pack horses carrying the gear



Trek Day 3 crossing pass #1

alpine ridges and peaks at the higher elevations. As you trek further in, more evergreen forest becomes visible on the surrounding hills and further adds to the alpine beauty. The climb up to tomorrow's pass becomes visible in the afternoon as you unload at another pasture to set up camp for the evening. Steep rock slides at the base of Yala's main massif are visible at the head of the valley as you enjoy dinner at your riverside campsite.

Day's trekking distance: **8km**

Sleeping elevation: **3850m**

D12: **July 1. TREK DAY 3.**

Adrenaline will do its job this morning as you anticipate the trek's climax ahead: the glacier views and alpine lakes at the top of the pass. Shortly after leaving camp, the trail begins to traverse more steeply along the adjacent hillside to the stunning rock faces that guard the approach to Yala's main peak. As you crest the top of the pass, the valley you've been ascending the previous two days stretches out behind and below you, and ahead of you green highland grasslands and alpine lakes lie below the glacial heights of Yala above. The pass is a several kilometre long 'table-top' of undulating scenic beauty maxing out just over 4200m at the highest point. The descent down to the night's campsite is via a



stunning gorge which follows the river flowing out of the lakes above. Weather permitting, tonight's campsite offers one of the world's most stunning alpine views imaginable.

Day's trekking distance: 11km

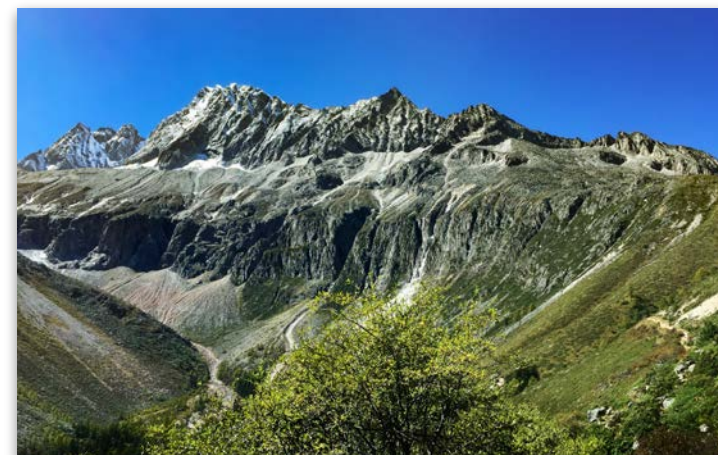
Sleeping elevation: 3750m

D13: July 2. TREK DAY 4.

Leaving camp today, there is not much opportunity for limbering up before a steep and challenging climb of a couple kilometres demands a slower pace to ensure steady and deep breathing. The lower section is the most challenging, with some loose rock, and it will feel good to get this section behind you early in the day. The consolation is the fragrant alpine forest that surrounds you on the ascent. Once you reach the transition where the forest gives way to the grasslands, the pitch of the ascent relaxes considerably. From there it is about 8-9 kilometres of steady climbing, following a wide valley, to the top of the pass (4,350m). Weather permitting, there are stunning views of Yala's peak over your left shoulder. Tonight's campsite is on a gentle grass slope just beyond the pass.

Day's trekking distance: 13km

Sleeping elevation: 4100m



Stunning views of Yala's rock ridges: Days 2-3.



Descending pass #1 on Trek day 3





Crossing the river on Trek Day 3



Trek day 3 campsite

D14: **July 3. TREK DAY 5.**

Downhill is the name of the game this morning. After breaking camp, it is a gentle 7km descent down the grasslands to the nunnery for a rendezvous with the bus and a shuttle back to Kangding! After settling into the hotel and enjoying a hot shower, a post trek feast and celebration will be enjoyed in Kangding. You may want to have some cash on hand to reward yourself at one of the cafes in town after dinner. You've earned it!

Day's trekking distance: **6km**

Accommodation: **Kawala Hotel, Kangding**

D15: **July 4. Kangding to Chengdu.**

Leaving the mountains for good today, students will enjoy a visit to one of China's iconic sites on the way back to Chengdu: Leshan Big Buddha. The scale of this historical and religious monument cannot be appreciated until you are standing at the base of it. Getting there requires 30 minutes of navigating stone stairways down to the riverside where students come face-to-face with this national attraction. After lunch at a local Leshan restaurant, it is a 2 hr bus ride back to Chengdu to settle into your hotel for the final evening.



Tonight's celebration dinner will be Hotpot (of course)!

Farewells with your trip guides will follow.

Accommodation: **Holiday Inn Express Wuhou, Chengdu**

D16: **July 5. Departure.**

Following an early breakfast, your bus will shuttle you to Tianfu airport for your mid-morning flight.



Ascending pass #2 on Trek Day 4



World renowned Leshan Big Buddha



Dates & Inclusions

Dates: Yours to choose 14 – 16 Days

Inclusive of:

- All transport, including airport pick-up and transfers
- All accommodation based on double occupancy for students (16 nights); single occupancy for teachers. Includes 2, 3 or 6 man tents while camping
- Extravagant Yak guides (4)
- Meals
- All activities and entrance fees enroute (per the itinerary)
- All camping gear, tents, sleeping pads, etc.
- Backcountry satellite phone communication throughout the trek, plus comprehensive backcountry first aid kit + wilderness first aid certified guide
- Detailed daily risk assessment for all activities, with clear risk mitigation plans in place ahead of time
- Horse guide + 10 horses for packing gear
- Comprehensive pre-trip packing list for the trek
- Comprehensive liability insurance

Excludes:

- Transport to/from Chengdu
- Medical, travel, and trip interruption insurance
- Activities not included on the trip itinerary
- Souvenirs, laundry, items of a personal nature
- **Personal backpack** (50L max)
- **Sleeping bag** (rated to 5 degrees celsius)

